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CLARA (KLARA) LOUISE STORZ SCHMIDT

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- **GERMANY: SCHRAMBERG, WÜRTEMBERG**
- **US: NEW YORK, NY; WHITING, NJ**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Monday, September 25th, 1995, about one-thirty in the afternoon. I am in Whiting, New Jersey, which is the sort of lower middle of New Jersey, with Mrs. Clara Schmidt. Mrs. Schmidt came from Germany in 1923. She was eighteen, not quite nineteen but almost, when she came. We are in the home of her daughter, Clara Norton. Anyway, Mrs. Schmidt, what is your birth date?

SCHMIDT: My birthday is February 23rd, 1905.

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SIGRIST: And can you say your whole name for me before you were married, and spell everything out?

SCHMIDT: The whole name?

SIGRIST: The whole name?

SCHMIDT: Klara Louise Storz. S-T-O-R-Z.

SIGRIST: Spell Klara for me.

SCHMIDT: Klara. Well, in German it's a K. I mean, here I write it with a C.

SIGRIST: But in Germany it was K-L-...

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...A-R-A?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Where in Germany were you born?

SCHMIDT: I was born in Schramberg, Württemberg, Germany.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that for me, please?

SCHMIDT: Schramberg? Schramberg, S-C-H-R-A-M-B-E-R-G. Schramberg.

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SIGRIST: Yes, and the other.

SCHMIDT: Württemberg?

SIGRIST: Please.

SCHMIDT: W-- W-U-R-T-T-E-M-B-E-R-G, Württemberg.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Thank you. Where is in Germany is that?

SCHMIDT: In the Black Forest.

SIGRIST: And, and, where in, where is the Black Forest in Germany?

SCHMIDT: South Germany. Near France.

SIGRIST: Oh, so, so over on the western...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Southwestern side of Germany?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: As a child, what do you remember about the town that you grew up in?

SCHMIDT: Oh, it was beautiful home. We were in a small town. It grew after a while. It, it was fifteen thousand inhabitants at that time. That was when it first

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started up.

SIGRIST: Talk about the buildings in the town. What do, what sticks out in your mind about the buildings that were in Schramberg?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we have a beautiful church, an old church. And then we had, we had an old city hall. But after a while, when we grew up, they build a new one. And then we had a small post office. What else do I --- and we had one, about three factories.

SIGRIST: And what, what were the factories making?

SCHMIDT: One --- two of them made clocks and watches. Pocket watches, mostly. And, and [Laughs] that was Junghans. Then we had the "*Hamburg-Amerikanische Uhren Fabrik*" (Hamburg-American clock factory) Oh, can I talk German?

SIGRIST: You can, but I'll have to have you spell it all if you do. [Laughs] The, let's talk about the factories a little bit. You said two of the factories made watches. Then you said...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Clocks and watches. All kinds.

SIGRIST: And then you said the name of the factory.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that name, please?

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SCHMIDT: Junghans.

SIGRIST: Right. How do you spell that?

SCHMIDT: An I---U-N-G-H-A-N-S.

SIGRIST: And why does, why does that stick out in your mind? Why do you remember the watch factory so well?

SCHMIDT: That's where everybody worked there. Everybody. And it was like, like our neighbor.

SIGRIST: So that was the main industry in this town then.----..

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Junghans.

SIGRIST: --- most of the people worked for that.

SCHMIDT: And then there was the other one ----- was on, on the other side of the town. The *Hamburg-Amerikanische Uhren Fabrik*.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

SCHMIDT: It's no more there now.

SIGRIST: Can you spell all that for me?

SCHMIDT: Hamburg. H-A-M-B-U-R-G. Amerikane. A-M, the spelling is a little hard. A-M...

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SIGRIST: Take your time.

SCHMIDT: K-, we, we used the K. A-M-E-S-C-H-E. Amerikanisch, *Amerikanische Uhren Fabrik*. Uhren, can I say in German?

SIGRIST: Yes, but spell it as your doing...

SCHMIDT: U-H-R-E-N. *Uhren. Fabrik*. F-A-B-R-I-K.

SIGRIST: Thank you. [Laughs] That was, you did a great job.

SCHMIDT: Well, I'm not good anymore.

SIGRIST: That was, that was the hardest part of the interview, the spelling. [They laugh] What did they make there?

SCHMIDT: In this *Uhren Fabrik*?

SIGRIST: Yes.

SCHMIDT: Clocks and watches.

SIGRIST: Oh, they also made clocks and watches.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yes. The same thing. Same thing there. But then there was a, a furniture factory. My, my mother, oh my mother is originated from there. Moser, my mother's mother was a *geborene* (native) in Moser.

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SIGRIST: How do you spell Moser?

SCHMIDT: M-O-S-E-R.

SIGRIST: And is that a town nearby?

SCHMIDT: It's in our town...

SIGRIST: [superposed] It's part of there.

SCHMIDT: on the, on the end of the town.

SIGRIST: Was your mother's family involved in the furniture-making factory?

SCHMIDT: Yes. Her relatives before her. She was a *geborene* Moser. Her mother was a *geborene* Moser. Her mother. So much I don't know, but we used to go there. We were children --- we were five children. And she used to send us there to ask them for some hand out, because we were poor. And they used to give...

SIGRIST: And they were a little more wealthy?

SCHMIDT: Yes. And they used to fill up a basket full of stuff for us. Food, clothes, anything.

SIGRIST: And was that, that would be your grandmother who was doing that?

SCHMIDT: No. No. They were my mother's grandmother. My mother's mother. So it was on my mother's side ---they were.

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SIGRIST: I see. Let's talk about your mother. What was her name?

SCHMIDT: My mother was Frida Haller.

SIGRIST: Can you spell -- spell that?

SCHMIDT: She, she was a *geborene* Moser.

SIGRIST: Spell Frida Haller.

SCHMIDT: F-R-I-D-A, Frida. H-A-L, now I don't remember. I think it's two L's. E-R, Haller.

SIGRIST: H-A-L-L-E-R.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: And that was her maiden name before she was married?

SCHMIDT: That was her maiden name. Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me what your mother looked like to you as a child. Describe her in words for me.

SCHMIDT: Oh, she was a beautiful woman. She was a good mother. Wonderful. She...

SIGRIST: What did she look like?

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SCHMIDT: Well, she looked something like me.

SIGRIST: Describe what that some...

SCHMIDT: I had pictures, but I gave them all back to my sister in Germany.

SIGRIST: How tall was your mother?

SCHMIDT: She was about, maybe a little taller than what I am now.

SIGRIST: Which is five six, maybe, or...

SCHMIDT: Maybe five and a half foot.

SIGRIST: Five and a half. What color hair did she have?

SCHMIDT: Brown.

SIGRIST: Brown hair.

SCHMIDT: Same as what I had.

SIGRIST: And how did she wear her hair when you were a child?

SCHMIDT: She wore it up in a bun right here. [She indicates] Up, combed up, and she made a bun right here.

SIGRIST: And what was your mother's frame like?

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SCHMIDT: Something like myself.

SIGRIST: Which is what? Say it. Say how she was built.

SCHMIDT: She was, she was heavy built down below here. Heavy legs. [She indicates]

SIGRIST: Heavy legs.

SCHMIDT: Only, you know, she had, my mother had long skirts. We never saw her legs. But she had, I have --- have legs like her.

SIGRIST: What, what kinds of, what was her personality like?

SCHMIDT: Her personality was a wonderful one. She was a wonderful mother to us.

SIGRIST: Is there a story that you like to tell about your mother when you were a small child? Something that you maybe did with your mother, or something she did for you?

SCHMIDT: Oh, she al ---- she always took us by the hand if she went someplace. And we were at home --- the one that was at home ----took ---- took. She kept --- she kept taking us wherever she went. She didn't leave us home.

SIGRIST: Where would she take you?

SCHMIDT: To my grandfather. To her fa ---- her father. He lived a long time, my grandfather. I had a wonderful grandfather.

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SIGRIST: What, what sticks out in your mind about those visits with your grandfather?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I was so happy when we went there. He used to make a plate of milk soup.

SIGRIST: A plate of milk soup?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Milk with bread in it. And that tasted so delicious.

SIGRIST: Did he live by himself?

SCHMIDT: He lived by himself. Well, he lived with a daughter, but the daughter died. I was a little girl, and my mother took me to there. When she died, she was laying on the deathbed. That was my mother's sister.

SIGRIST: Do you know how she died?

SCHMIDT: No, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any?

SCHMIDT: But she was thirty-three years old only.

SIGRIST: Oh, a young woman.

SCHMIDT: My mother died young also. And then she had a brother. They all died young. My mother was the oldest. She lived the longest. My, my uncle,

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Ferdinand was their name. My father, my grandfather was Ferdinand Haller. And his son was having his name, the same name. And he only lived until forty-nine years old. My mother was, yeah, I think my mother lived longer, because she wrote to me that he died.

SIGRIST: So you were already in America by the time your uncle died? By, by the time...

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes. I was here.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

SCHMIDT: And my mother died after I was here only a short while. I was here --- she died in 1925.

SIGRIST: So you were here just, not very long.

SCHMIDT: No, I wasn't. She was sick when I left, even. And when I left she went partways with me. And we had, we had no clinic in our hometown. She had to go to the clinic. She had something wrong in her intestines. And she went with me when I left for America, and went to the clinic on the same day when I left.

SIGRIST: What...

SCHMIDT: And she said to me, "Oh, kiss me. Because I'm not going to see you anymore." ----she said.

SIGRIST: How did that make you feel when that happened?

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SCHMIDT: I --- I felt bad. I felt bad. Poor moth ---, I should have never left her. But my other sister was home yet, and she had her and my father, too.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did your mother have to do around the house when you were a child? What were some of her responsibilities in the house?

SCHMIDT: Just everyday, everyday whatever a household is.

SIGRIST: What were some of those things?

SCHMIDT: Get up in the morning, make breakfast. We, we all had to eat together. That is one thing. We all had to sit around, and we all had to pray together before we started sitting down, we prayed our pray --- morning prayer.

SIGRIST: Do you remember that prayer, that you prayed?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you say it for us in German?

SCHMIDT: I can say it.

SIGRIST: Please.

SCHMIDT: *O Gott, Du hast in dieser Nacht so väterlich für mich gewacht. Ich lob' und preise dich dafür, und dank' für Alles Gute Dir. Bewahre mich auch diesen Tag vor Sünde, Tod und jeder Plag. Und was ich denke, red' und*

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tu', das segne, bester Vater, Du. Beschütze auch, ich bitte dich, o heiliger schützensengel, mich. Maria, bitt' an Gottes Thron für mich bei Jesus, deinem Sohn. Der Hochgelobt sei alle Zeit, von nun an bis in Ewigkeit. Amen.

(Oh God, Thou hast this night watched so fatherly over me. For which, I praise and commend You, and thank You for all Good. Keep me, also, this day from Sin, Death, and Torment. And bless what I think, say and do, Thou Best of Fathers. Protect me too, I pray you, oh holy Guardian Angel. Mary, intercede for me at God's throne with Jesus, Thy Son. May He be praised on high always, from now to Eternity.)

SIGRIST: Thank you.

SCHMIDT: That is my morning prayer. And my night prayer I know, too.

SIGRIST: Oh, would you say that for us, too?

SCHMIDT: *Bevor ich mich zu Ruhe leg', ich Händ' und Herz zu Gott erhebe'. Und sage Dank für jede Gab, die ich von dir empfangen hab'. Und was ich denk, was ich, [she pauses], I got a little mixed up.*

SIGRIST: That's okay. Take your time.

SCHMIDT: *Was ich von dir,* I have to start all over again.

SIGRIST: Go right ahead. It's okay.

SCHMIDT: Can I start over again?

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SIGRIST: Sure. Absolutely. Go ahead.

SCHMIDT: *Bevor*, the night prayer. Or was it the morning prayer?

SIGRIST: This was the night prayer.

SCHMIDT: Bevor ich mich zu Ruhe leg', ich Händ' und Herz zu Gott erheb'. Und sage Dank für jede Gab, die ich von Dir empfangen hab'. Und habe ich beleidigt Dich, verzeih' mir's, Gott, ich bitte Dich. Dann schließ' ich froh die Augen zu, mein Engel wacht ja, wenn ich ruh. Maria liebste Mutter mein, o lass mich Dir empfohlen sein. Und Du, mein Heiland Jesus Christ, der ja mein Gott und Alles ist. In deine Wunden schließ mich ein, dann schlaf ich ruhig, keusch und rein. Amen.

(Before I lay me down to Rest, I raise my hand and heart to God. And say thanks for every gift that I have received from You. And if I have offended You, pardon me for it, God, I pray you. Then I happily close my eyes, my Angel watches as I sleep. Mary, dearest Mother mine, let me be acceptable to You. And You, my Salvation Jesus Christ, Who is my God and my All, I shelter in Thy wounds. Then I sleep quietly, chaste and pure.)

SIGRIST: Thank you.

SCHMIDT: That's my night prayer. I say that every night.

SIGRIST: Who taught you those prayers?

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SCHMIDT: I, I guess we, we, we got it from our mother. Our mother, she was a very good Catholic, too. And then the grandmother and grandfather, I had a grandmother on Father's side. She was just as good. I only had the grandfather on Mother's side, and I had a grandmother on Father's side. And they both were very good people.

SIGRIST: Were there other ways that you practiced your religion at home?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes. We always went to church. We never, we was never allowed to miss mass on Sunday. Never. When we came to school on Monday, the teacher asked us who, who was not in church Sunday. And we had to get up and tell why.

SIGRIST: In the church in, in the town did you have a specific place-----

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: ---- where your family sat?

SCHMIDT: No. Not where my family sat, but the children. All the children from the school, I went to Catholic school. We had a Catholic school on this side of the building. And on the other side of the building was the Protestant children.

SIGRIST: Well, that's interesting that, that they segregate them like.that..

SCHMIDT: Yes. It was a big schoolhouse. And, and the girls, the girls were separate and the boys were separate. On both sides. So there was four different places. The girls on this side, and the girls on this side. [She] Those over

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there was the Protestant, and these were the Catholics. And then the, the, the boys was in the back on, on our side, too. And we weren't allowed to be together.

SIGRIST: So...

SCHMIDT: We all had our, when we had recess, we all had our own little territory. And we were not allowed to go over there to them. That was, we wouldn't even try to do it.

SIGRIST: So not only were you segregated by religion, but you were segregated by sex as well.

SCHMIDT: Yes. And there was no fences. No fences. We, we just wasn't allowed and we didn't go. The things were so much better years ago when we were brought up. We were brought up wonderful.

SIGRIST: But let's, I want to talk some more about your mom, too, and the house.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You mentioned she got up and she made breakfast. Talk...

SCHMIDT: Made breakfast.

SIGRIST: Talk about the kitchen that you had in the house. What did it...

SCHMIDT: We had a small kitchen.

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SIGRIST: What did it look like?

SCHMIDT: Well, an ordinary kitchen. She didn't have, well, we had about normal, what everybody, everybody else had. She had the table and benches. So we had room to sit. We had a table with a drawer. And in the drawer was the knives, forks and tablecloth. When, when we were eating, we took it out and, and set the table. That was all in the table. A nice, big drawer.

SIGRIST: Where did you keep the dishes and the crockery?

SCHMIDT: The dishes was in the dish closet. On, on the side. And we had to bring them out.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what the dishes looked like that you ate off of?

SCHMIDT: Yes. The plates were something like this with a rim on it. [She indicates]

SIGRIST: So they were white and round.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. With a rim on it. The plates. And the cups...

SIGRIST: Did they have a design on them? Or how -- were they decorated?

SCHMIDT: That I can't remember. I don't think so. I don't think we had a design. Maybe there was a little design sometime.

SIGRIST: Well, there was always food on top of it probably.

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SCHMIDT: Yeah. [They laugh]

SIGRIST: How did your mother cook the food?

SCHMIDT: In, she, we had a stove, and she had to make a fire. She had to put little, little pieces of wood. We used to go to the woods and collect it. And she put, started the fire, and she put the wood on it. And then after a while we had briquettes. They were that big. [She indicates] And you laid one or two and that keeps the fire going all day.

SIGRIST: These, these briquettes were...

SCHMIDT: We...

SIGRIST: ...rectangular and about six inches long, or eight inches long?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, they were about this size. [She indicates]

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SCHMIDT: And it said "briquettes." And they got hot, and, and cooked.

SIGRIST: And what kinds of food would she cook for breakfast?

SCHMIDT: For breakfast, we only had coffee and bread.

SIGRIST: Where did the bread come from?

SCHMIDT: Well, the children used to get milk. The bread came from the baker.

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SIGRIST: And what time of the day would you eat breakfast?

SCHMIDT: Oh, about, maybe half past seven, eight o'clock.

SIGRIST: And then when would be the next meal?

SCHMIDT: At twelve o'clock.

SIGRIST: And what would that meal consist of?

SCHMIDT: That was our main meal. That was a soup, and if you, if you had meat, you had me---- my mother used to cook a pound of meat for seven people, we were. A pound. Well, the German pound is a little bigger. And, and the broth from the soup we got from the meat, she made the soup. She made either "*Einlauf*" soup or a "*Kartoffel*" (potato) soup, a po – po --- you know? Can you talk German?

SIGRIST: No. No.

SCHMIDT: No?

SIGRIST: [They laugh] And, well, let's back up. What was the first kind of soup you said?

SCHMIDT: *Einlauf*. That was, that's made with an egg.

SIGRIST: And how is that spelled?

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SCHMIDT: E-I-, Ein, N-L-A-U-F.

SIGRIST: And, and...

SCHMIDT: *Einlauf* soup.

SIGRIST: And what did that, what, you said it was made with an egg. What, how was the egg used in the soup?

SCHMIDT: She took the fork, and, and, and the dish where she put the egg, she maybe had to put two in if we were a lot of people. And she "*kleppert*" *und*, you know.---..

SIGRIST: Scrambled it.

SCHMIDT: .---.scrambled it. [She gestures]

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SCHMIDT: And put a little water to it, and then she poured it slowly into this broth. And that used to be a wonderful soup.

SIGRIST: That would thicken the broth, I would think.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: And then what was the second kind of soup that you said.

SCHMIDT: What kind, then she used to make a good noodle soup.

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SIGRIST: No, no. You said a German word.

SCHMIDT: Did I?

SIGRIST: Yes.

SCHMIDT: How did I say it? Einlauf. I forgot what I said.

SIGRIST: Oh, well, maybe, maybe you'll think, well, talk about the noodle soup.

SCHMIDT: Maybe it will come to me.

SIGRIST: Maybe it'll come to you.

SCHMIDT: Oh, *Kartoffel* soup.

SIGRIST: That's it. They laugh]

SCHMIDT: We used to have a, a lot of *Kartoffel* soup. And the...

SIGRIST: Spell it first.

SCHMIDT: The potato. *Kartoffel*. K-A-R-T-O-F-E-L.

SIGRIST: And that's a potato soup?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Okay. Explain to me...

SCHMIDT: *Kartoffel*.

SIGRIST: Explain to me how she made that.

SCHMIDT: You cut the potatoes up into small pieces. And I guess she took ---- she must have had water, because she put afterwards the frankfurters in it, and they made the, the, they made the soup good. We used to have a good, ----and then she used to take a piece of butter and onion and put it in a pan, and brown that, and with that she'd, she put it ---- we call it "löschtet" off. You know, you put it in, too, and it sizzles, and that makes the soup good. I...

SIGRIST: This is the melted butter that...

SCHMIDT: I make a *Kartoffel soup* sometime here.

SIGRIST: What, I can tell...

SCHMIDT: I love...

SIGRIST: ...that you like the soup...

SCHMIDT: I love the German...

SIGRIST: ...you're very enthusiastic about it. [Laughs]

SCHMIDT: I love soups.

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SIGRIST: Tell me, you used the German word again for the melted butter that began with an L. You called it Lih...

SCHMIDT: "*Löschtet*" off.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Can you spell that, please?

SCHMIDT: Oh, in German?

SIGRIST: Please.

SCHMIDT: L-O-, but there is two, two...

SIGRIST: The umlaut.

SCHMIDT: That's, yeah, we have them on. Lösch, S-C-H-E-T. Löschtet. *Löschtet* off.

SIGRIST: And that, that'd be the melting of the butter that you poured into the soup.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So that was your main meal, the noontime meal?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Kartoffel soup, and then she had some meat, and sometimes a potato salad with green salad mixed.

SIGRIST: Would you come home from school to eat this meal? How, how, did the

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family, how did that work?

SCHMIDT: Yes. The whole family eat, ate always together. We always ate together when Father came home from the factory.

SIGRIST: So, so what time did you eat, when was the next meal? That was the noontime meal. Now when was the next...

SCHMIDT: Oh, in the, in the evening we just ate maybe, we had very little coffee. Coffee was expensive, but she used to make the "Malzkaffee". That is an, a substitute. We had that a lot. Called...

SIGRIST: Marzkaffee?

SCHMIDT: Malzkaffee. "Katherineinas Malzkaffee".

SIGRIST: Dear. [Laughs]

SCHMIDT: It's like a Postum.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SCHMIDT: What they had here. When I came here to this country I went to buy it, the, the Postum.

SIGRIST: Right, right. Because it's a similar kind of thing.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: What time would?..

SCHMIDT: We had, we had, we had to grind it, you know, the beans. And sometimes she put a couple of good beans in. Good coffee. But only about five or six, because it was very expensive. We couldn't buy it. We didn't have the money to buy all that. We were just a middle class family.

SIGRIST: What time of the day would you eat this last meal?

SCHMIDT: Oh, about six o'clock in the evening.

SIGRIST: So your father would be home from the factory by then...

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...and you, of course, were home from school.

SCHMIDT: That's right. We always together.

SIGRIST: What would your make for a special occasion? What, what, what kind of a meal would she present for a, for a special occasion, like maybe a religious holiday?..

SCHMIDT: We never, we never had a special occasion. When there was a special occasion we were invited to the grandmother, and she had a lovely table. When, when we received our first communion everyone had, came to the grandmother. She --we, she invited the, the communicant. We never had a special, yes, sometimes my father brought ----- he used to work for a *Konsum* (co-op).

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SIGRIST: For the what?

SCHMIDT: *A Konsum?*

SIGRIST: *Konsum?*

SCHMIDT: Yeah. It was...

SIGRIST: Is that a German word?

SCHMIDT: It was, yes, *Konsum*.

SIGRIST: How do you spell that?

SCHMIDT: K-O-S-U-M.

SIGRIST: Kosum.

SCHMIDT: Konsum.

SIGRIST: C-O-N-S-O, S-U-M? K...

SCHMIDT: *Konsum*.

SIGRIST: K-O-N, *Konsum*.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: K-O-N...

SCHMIDT: S-U-M.

SIGRIST: And what is that?

SCHMIDT: It, it was an organization, I think. I, I don't know. We called it a Konsum, and he used to work there, my father. He was all, all over.

SIGRIST: Was this aside from his usual job?

SCHMIDT: Yes, I think so. Yes.

SIGRIST: We should actually, what was your father's name?

SCHMIDT: Karl.

SIGRIST: With a K?

SCHMIDT: With a K.

SIGRIST: And what do you know about his family background?

SCHMIDT: Oh, he, he came from a family, a beautiful family. Eight children. Six boys and two girls. And I know everyone's name.

SIGRIST: Say it if you'd like.

SCHMIDT: My father was Karl. Then came Friedrich. Then came ---- I only, not long

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ago I mentioned it. Then came, see, sometimes it goes out of my head. Friedrich, Karl, Friedrich. Oh, see when you want to have, when you want, [she pauses]...

SIGRIST: These were his brothers and sisters?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes.

SCHMIDT: Friedrich. I forget him now. It comes to me later on again. You see...

SIGRIST: Well, let's, we'll keep talking and it will come back to you.

SCHMIDT: Friedrich. Eugene Friedrich, Eugene My goodness. I knew them all.

SIGRIST: [Laughs] Well, that's okay. Tell me, what did your father's father do for a living.

SCHMIDT: Oh, we didn't know him. He died young. We didn't know him. We only knew the grandmother.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about your father's mother.

SCHMIDT: Oh, she was a beautiful, tall woman. She was tall. And she was, she loved all our ---- what --- all the children. And we used to come to her, and she'd go a make a --- a butter bread. A piece of bread with butter on it. And we loved it.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SCHMIDT: When.sh---..

SIGRIST: Was that, was that unusual for you to eat, then, the butter on the bread?

SCHMIDT: Yes. She, she used to do that. We came to, to her. Maybe we had to bring something there. I forget. But she used to give us a butter-bread. Like another child would get candy, but we got always a butter-bread. And even, even strangers, or, you know, friends in the neighborhood, if we went to the store for anybody, they give us a Butter, a *Butterbrot* we call it.

SIGRIST: Talk...

SCHMIDT: And it was good.

SIGRIST: Talk to me about your father's relationship to his mother. How did they get along?

SCHMIDT: Oh. They got along fine. When I came to America, when I came here, she said to him, "*Du lasst das Mäde so weit weg?*" "You let that girl go so far away?" She didn't like it, my grandmother. Oh, my.

SIGRIST: So you enjoyed visiting your grandmother obviously.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

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SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about the house where she lived?

SCHMIDT: She has, she had a beautiful house. I, I got the pictures here.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me on tape. What, what are some of the things about the house that stick out in your mind?

SCHMIDT: She had a four-story house. And the bottom was a family, and the next was a family. It was all her own children in it. And then another one, and she was on the top. My grandmother lived on the top floor in a four family house. After a while she made a store downstairs. And in the back there was the kitchen and another room for my father's brother, Friedrich. He was a *Gärtner*. He was a gardener. And he had a lovely piece of garden a little ways away from the house. And she made this for him. So he started up a store in that room. And sold vegetables and, you know, what a fruit store sells. That's what he did. Friedrich.

SIGRIST: What do you re ---- is there an object in her apartment that sticks out in your mind? Something that as a child you were very attracted to that she owned in her house?

SCHMIDT: What did, she, oh, well she had a lovely garden.

SIGRIST: But something in the house. An object that she had, or a piece of furniture, or something that she liked to show you, or that you played with as a child in that house.

SCHMIDT: No.

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SIGRIST: Nothing.

SCHMIDT: No. We had no toys much. Very little toys.

SIGRIST: What do you remember for, for playing as a child? You say you never had toys.

SCHMIDT: Oh, we used to play outside. We used to make our own things up. We used to make with the chalk, a piece of chalk, we made a, a, I don't know what you would call it.

SIGRIST: A square?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, a square. And we, we cut it off. Now the top was the *Himmel*. We used to play. We had maybe a piece of stone, and we had to throw it, and if we didn't get it, we were out, and the next one came, and...

SIGRIST: Himmel, meaning heaven?

SCHMIDT: It, it was a game.

SIGRIST: Yeah. What was it called in German?

SCHMIDT: I wouldn't know. I don't what we called it. I remember that so well.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any, like rhymes, or, or little poems that you would say while you were playing?

SCHMIDT: Yes. One I know. "*Wir reisen nach Amerika, und wer will mit? Alle*

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Kinder dürfen mit als du bleibst zurück.” So we, we was in the ring. And then the one that had to stay back had to go out. We were playing; you know, around --- a ring around. We, we held our hands together. Maybe six, seven or eight children. However they were here, you know, we were playing together, neighbor’s children.

SIGRIST: And what does that rhyme mean in English?

SCHMIDT: “We’re going to America, and who will want to go? Who wants to go? Everybody can go with us, but you have to stay.” You see. It was a game we played. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Well, that’s great.

SCHMIDT: [Laughs] All these things when I think of it. [Laughs] We used to, we used to have wonderful times.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

SCHMIDT: I wish the children today would play like that. There was no bad things going on in our place. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: What about at home? Was there a game or something that you did with your parents at home? Was there some, how did they, how did they play with the children?

SCHMIDT: Oh. What did we do? I don’t think we played anything. We didn’t have time. We didn’t have time. We had to help working when we grew up. We, oh, I was maybe six, seven or eight. I don’t know how old I was. I

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used to have to go in the *Strohhut Fabrik*. (Straw-hat factory). You know those kind of hats they use that, [Aside] you remember Mama's "*chapalia*"?

CLARA S Yes, it was like a straw ----

SCHMIDT: Them kind of hats.

CLARA S; A straw hat, a man's straw hat.

SCHMIDT: My mother --- my mother, we had big boxes. We had to go and get them. And my mother sewed the bands in, on, on inside, the leather bands --- inside of those hats. And we used to, had to go and get them, and bring them back to the *Strohhut Fabrik*.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

SCHMIDT: Straw, straw hat factory.

SIGRIST: Right. Spell it in German, though.

SCHMIDT: S-T-R-O-H-U-T. Strohut. Strohut. Yeah, that's right. Did I do it right? Now I'm wondering.

SIGRIST: I think so.

SCHMIDT: I can write it, too.

SIGRIST: I think so. Your mother did this at home?

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SCHMIDT: Yes. She...

SIGRIST: Why did she do this?

SCHMIDT: She took homework because we needed the money to get along on.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much she would make for how many hatbands she would sew?

SCHMIDT: I wouldn't know that. That I don't know. And then after a while ---- later on we were bigger already ---she took ---- we had these kind of clocks, like that, you see that clock over there? [She indicates]

SIGRIST: Like, the alarm clock over here.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. They made them in our factory. We had, we went to get the glasses. We had to go and get them and, I suppose --- in a box, or, they were packed in. And we brought them home. And we had to clean them.

SIGRIST: These are the glass over the face of the clock.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. You had to clean them and put them back again. That was all work which we did on the side.

SIGRIST: So the children were expected to help out with this?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes. When you were big enough.

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SIGRIST: What was your father's daily job? What job did he do to bring in money?

SCHMIDT: Oh, he used to, when he was younger, he had a bakery to start with. He was a baker. But he lost it. Too many children came, and they couldn't, just couldn't make a go of it. That's what my aunt told me when I went home the first time with my daughter. She was six years old when I went back home. And she told me that's what he did.

SIGRIST: But what did he do when you were a child? Did he work in one of the factories, or...

SCHMIDT: Yes. He was a baker, but he lost that, and that's how he went to the factory to work.

SIGRIST: And which fac, one of the clock factories?

SCHMIDT: The same one where ---- there's only this one. The other one was so far away, we only was to the nearest one.

SIGRIST: And did he work in the clock factory your whole life in Germany? I mean, is that what he was doing?

SCHMIDT: No.

SIGRIST: No.

SCHMIDT: Not the whole life. I don't know how long he was there. And then he, when the First World War started, that was in 1914. And I was just, what was I? Nine years old.

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SIGRIST: Nine.

SCHMIDT: Yes. He, when that started, he joined The Red Cross. And he, he volunteered. Right away when the war broke out, he volunteered right away. And he was in the Balkan States, where they're fightin' now.

SIGRIST: Yes. The Balkans.

SCHMIDT: In Macedonia and Serbia, and all these states. And he was with the, with The Red Cross.

SIGRIST: Did he ever told you stories about his experiences when he was with The Red Cross?

SCHMIDT: No, he didn't.

SIGRIST: Did...

SCHMIDT: Not with us children. He used to come home on furlough, but not long. He had to, like, go back again. But he did, he worked with The Red Cross, and the -- they --- women also worked with them. The, the women were there. And they, there was a war, and they had to get the wounded in the field. It was hard for him. But he did it.

SIGRIST: I, I'm, and you say he never really talked about it afterwards?

SCHMIDT: No. No.

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SIGRIST: How old was he in 1914?

SCHMIDT: How old was he? I don't know when he was born. That I don't know. He, he died in 19, in 1934. My mother died in 1925. He lived nine years longer. And he died in '34. I was here already. And he, what did I want, it goes out of my head so fast what I'm thinking. He died in 1934...

SIGRIST: Do you know how old he was when he died?

SCHMIDT: Yes. Yes. He was sixty-three and a half.

SIGRIST: All right. So...

SCHMIDT: You can figure that out.

SIGRIST: Thirty-four...

SCHMIDT: Or say sixty-four.

SIGRIST: Well, so he'd be born around 1870 maybe?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, around that

SIGRIST: Around that

SCHMIDT: And my mother, too.

SIGRIST: So, he's---- he isn't really ...

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SCHMIDT: [superposed] They were both about the same age.

SIGRIST: So he's maybe in his early to mid-forties when World War One breaks out.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Right? He'd be forty in 19--- if he were born in 1870, he'd be forty in 1910.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: So...

SCHMIDT: He did a lot of work.

SIGRIST: What year did you parents get married?

SCHMIDT: He, he, he got the, what do you call it? The Iron Cross. I gave it to one of my foster children. Eli and I had foster children. I gave all these things; my father gave them to me. Whatever he got. An Iron Cross, and maybe more things. Whatever he, he earned it, you know. He was ver ---he was a good worker.

SIGRIST: Do you know what year your parents were married?

SCHMIDT: I think in 1899.

SIGRIST: 1899.

SCHMIDT: I think so, because my oldest sister was born in 1900. That I remember.

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She was born --- she died at twenty-two years old. And you know why she died? She had to work in the factory. And she worked on those radium dials.

SIGRIST: Radium dials?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. And she got very sick. She was in bed about two years. And that's why she died. She was a...

SIGRIST: She would have died right before you came to America, or soon before you came to America.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did she die in 1922?

SCHMIDT: Yes. That was the year.

SIGRIST: If she, if she was born in 1900.

SCHMIDT: She was in August, 1922 she died. My, I was already going with my husband. He came out from here. From Waterbury, Connecticut. His mother didn't wanted him at home. That's why he came out. During the war he was in Philadelphia. He worked, he was a machinist. He was a good man. I was forty-five years with him. I have no complaints.

SIGRIST: Well, good. We're going to be talking about him later. [They laugh]
We've got to get you to America first.

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SCHMIDT: We are going from one thing to the other.

SIGRIST: I know, I know. Well, there's so much information, and so...

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...I really would like to talk about World War One.

SCHMIDT: Okay.

SIGRIST: And I'd like to talk about, first of all your memories of the war. And especially, do you remember when the war started, and what do you remember of that?

SCHMIDT: Yes. Yes. I remember when that started. We had a *Redaktion*. (editorial entity). You know that was a, where they print the newspaper. What do they call it here?

SIGRIST: Like a printing place?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was the name that you used?

SCHMIDT: *Redakti* ---- *Redaktion*.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

SCHMIDT: R-E-D-A-C-T-, I, I could write it better maybe.

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SIGRIST: Here. Here's a piece of paper.

SCHMIDT: Here.

SIGRIST: You said R-E...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. [She writes]

SIGRIST: R-E...

SCHMIDT: Redaktion.

SIGRIST: And, and what does that mean? What is a Redaktion?

SCHMIDT: Where they print the newspaper.

SIGRIST: Oh, that was where they did it.

SCHMIDT: Where they print the newspaper. (She writes)

SIGRIST: R-E-D-T-A-C-...

SCHMIDT: *Redaktion*. Is it right?

SIGRIST: R-E-D-A-C-T-...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. I think that's what we called it. *Redaktion*.

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SIGRIST: I-O-N.

SCHMIDT: Now, maybe...

SIGRIST: Redaktion.

SCHMIDT: Maybe it should be a K here instead of the C.

SIGRIST: Okay. Well, and that was the actual place where the newspaper was printed.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Okay, what, what, what do you remember about that?

SCHMIDT: They put, every day whatever happened, you know. When things happened they put the --- the sign out. And everybody went there to read it. We didn't buy much newspapers. Then it broke out and everybody was very upset when the war broke out. The First World War. In 1914. I remember that so well. I was nine years old.

SIGRIST: And, and why? What sticks out in your mind about that?

SCHMIDT: The *Serbish*, the Serbian, the "*Serbisches Kronprinzenpaar*" (royal -crown princely - couple) was "ermordet" (murdered). They murdered the Crown Prince Pair in Serbia.

SIGRIST: Right. Right.

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SCHMIDT: Yeah. That's what they did.

SIGRIST: How did the war effect your life at that time?

SCHMIDT: Not much. I guess we, we didn't, I don't remember too much about it.

SIGRIST: Well, you father went away.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. I don't know --- did he go right away? Or --- I can't remember.

SIGRIST: What about?

SCHMIDT: It was really bad, that time.

SIGRIST: Did you know anyone who was called to serve for the German army?

SCHMIDT: Oh, they all had to come. Everybody who, who was of age.

SIGRIST: Did you have anyone in your family that had to go?

SCHMIDT: No. Only my father.

SIGRIST: Just your father.

SCHMIDT: My brother. I had a brother. He had infantile paralysis. And he never was called for anything. He died about two years ago. I had a wonderful brother.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

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SCHMIDT: I wanted him to come here, too, but they didn't let him in. And I wanted my youngest, I would have had my whole family here. My youngest sister couldn't come. She has a glass eye. And it was my brother's fault. He brought from the factory a shrapnel, or whatever it was home, and he started shooting it off in the garden downstairs. I was on the, on the third, on the fourth floor by my grandmother. Just came home from school. And he was with my cousin, with the cousin. And I was wondering what they were doing. And he was, the cousin went in and brought a hammer out. I was nose-y what they were doing down there. I was looking out the window by my grandmother. My mother was in the hospital at the time. And all of a sudden it was a, like a bomb broke. You know, what, what a shrapnel does.

SIGRIST: It's like a little explosive.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. It's something like that.

SIGRIST: Yes. Little and round.

SCHMIDT: He brought it home, I think from the factory. He worked on them. He was sixteen years old.

SIGRIST: So how did, how did you sister, how did this happen to her?

SCHMIDT: My sister lost her eye through that.

SIGRIST: Because it exploded and...

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SCHMIDT: Yeah. She got the powder in her eye. And my mother was in the hospital. And my youngest sister, her eye was running all the time. So we went to the hospital to tell my mother, and my mother said bring her here. We brought her there and the doctor found out she had to go to Tübingen to the clinic. That was about four hours away. And she was there a couple of years. She was there a long time, until she came home with a glass eye. That's what we had. We had troubles, too.

SIGRIST: During the First World War, do you remember anything being difficult to get. Were there any food shortages or anything like that?

SCHMIDT: Oh. Plenty. We didn't have much to eat. Towards the end, we had hardly anything to eat no more. And we had all certificates, you know. You got stamps. And you only got so much for each person. And we never had enough of bread. My grandmother used to give hers to us. We used to get them from different relatives, because we were five children, and we didn't have much to eat. But my mother was lucky that she had all the relatives, and they helped her. So...

SIGRIST: Where would your mother go to get the food at this time? Did you have to go to special place?

SCHMIDT: There was, there was always a special store where you had to go and get it. And you, you couldn't get it without the stamp. And they only gave you so much. They didn't give you much food. But we, we ate enough. We, we made it do. We had a lot of potatoes, you know. We grew the tomatoes --- the potatoes. The farmers, we had a lot of farmers around. But we had no relative farmers. And those that had relatives, they got always plenty to eat. And we, we used to get a little bit something. My

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mother had friends, too. But I remember we, we never was without anything. But towards the last there was no food anymore. And then America sent food over. And we used to get, from America, meat. But the meat, we couldn't eat it. It was such a funny taste. It wasn't good. We didn't even like it. I don't know what it was, but we couldn't eat it.

SIGRIST: How did the meat come? How was it packaged?

SCHMIDT: It was in pieces, from pigs. It was *Schweinefleisch* (pork). They call it pig's meat.

SIGRIST: Pig' meat.

SCHMIDT: Like a bacon. And it was, well, we had better bacon in Germany. But we couldn't eat that. But, well, sometimes when you're hungry enough you eat it. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: What about clothing or anything like that? Was there a problem during the war?

SCHMIDT: Clothes? Oh, I don't remember about the clothes anymore. We had not many clothes. That is one thing. We had a everyday dress to go to school, and a Sunday dress. And that everyday dress got washed on Saturday when we didn't have to go to school, so we had it fresh for Monday.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me...

SCHMIDT: They were made out of gingham. Gingham. You know what gingham is?

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SIGRIST: Gingham. Like a check fabric.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yeah. Very, very...

SIGRIST: How, how long were the dresses at that time, when you were a little girl?

SCHMIDT: Oh, about half way down. [She indicates]

SIGRIST: Half way down your calf?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. About, yeah, half way down.

SIGRIST: And, and sleeves, what was...

SCHMIDT: Oh, long sleeves, and round here. [She indicates] Everything closed up. They buttoned in the back, the clothes, the dresses. And they were very plain, but you see 'em sometimes. I see 'em sometimes on pictures, the older things.

SIGRIST: Is there anything else you remember about World War One, or that period? Did you ever see any soldiers during that time period?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we saw the, the enemies. The enemy, when they catch the, what do you call them? The, in "*Deutsch heisst, muss, Gefangene*". (In German, that must be called **prisoners**)

SIGRIST: The prisoners?

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SCHMIDT: Prisoners. Yeah.

SIGRIST: The prisoners.

SCHMIDT: We used to go where they were, and they used to come to the gate, and we used to talk to them. We children.

SIGRIST: And what nationalities were the prisoners?

SCHMIDT: What they, all kinds. All kinds. And I don't know whether, whether we could communicate. I can't remember much, but we were going there, and they were coming here, and talked to us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when the war was over? Do you remember when, when, when...

SCHMIDT: No. I don't remember when it was over. But when it was over, it was wonderful. You know, we had the Kaiser at that time. In Berlin. And in Stuttgart we had a king.

SIGRIST: Well how was, when the war was over, how did, what happened to your life?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we were so happy. Oh, they, they made a big festival. And the children gathered flowers, and they had a parade in the city. It was beautiful when the war was over. Everybody was running together, and was so happy.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about the economic situation after the war. Like,

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Germany, of course, experienced tremendous inflation of the money after World War One.

SCHMIDT: Oh.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that period?

SCHMIDT: Oh. Well, yes. I don't know now, when the war was over in 1914.

SIGRIST: The war was over in 1918, is when it ended.

SCHMIDT: Oh, in 1918.

SIGRIST: 1918.

SCHMIDT: Oh, that's right. I can't remember much about that. My uncle Friedrich, my father's second brother, he was taken a prisoner by the French the whole time. The whole time he was a prisoner over there.

SIGRIST: Did he ever tell any stories about that experience?

SCHMIDT: I can't remember that, because when he came home, we'd, we couldn't get near him. [Laughs] There, there was my grandmother. It was wonderful when he came home. And, of course, he was so happy, too. Four whole years he was, he was taken a prisoner right in the beginning.

SIGRIST: He probably was filled with stories. [Laughs]

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yeah.

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SIGRIST: When did your father come home?

SCHMIDT: That I can't remember.

SIGRIST: You said he was, he had furloughs occasionally.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yeah. I can't remember that. When he came home. I, you know, some things you can't remember.

SIGRIST: When you were a girl growing up in Germany, how did you think about America? What did you know about America before you got here?

SCHMIDT: Oh, not, not a thing. I didn't know anything. But my husband had friends. They sent him all the time the funny sheets. He loved the funny sheets.

SIGRIST: Oh, the news, the comics in the newspaper.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, the comics. Oh, he was so happy that they send them from Waterbury, Connecticut. But his, his people, well, they ---- they weren't too close. My...

SIGRIST: What year did you meet your husband to be?

SCHMIDT: I met him --- I was sixteen. I, I was working in a hotel for fifteen months. My father brought me there. I was thirteen when he brought me there. I, I got out of school at that time. And he brought me right away to that hotel. And I had to do all around work. And fifteen months, I was there. And got thir---- thirty marks a month. That didn't even give me a pair of shoes.

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Then I thought, I'm not going to stay here. I go to the factory. And that was Junghans. They, they always took people in. You know. You could always get a job there. So I got a job there, and that is where I met my husband. His mother sent him out to his relatives.

SIGRIST: Was he born in America?

SCHMIDT: No. He was born in Lindau am Bodensee (Lake Constance).

SIGRIST: You've got to spell that for me, please.

SCHMIDT: Lindau. Lindau is a, is a city. And the Bodensee is a, what do you call it, what do they call a little water?

SIGRIST: A lake?

SCHMIDT: A lake. That's right.

SIGRIST: Spell Lindau. Lindau.

SCHMIDT: Lindau. L-I-N-D-A-U. Lindau.

SIGRIST: Okay. And then Bodensee?

SCHMIDT: Bodensee. B-O-D-E-N-S-E-E.

SIGRIST: And that's one word. Bodensee.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, that's all one word.

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SIGRIST: So he was born in Germany. When did he come to the United States?

SCHMIDT: Three months. He was three months old when his mother brought, brought him. The father came first. He had, he had a *Wirtschaft*. (inn) You know what a *Wirtschaft* is? It's like a saloon, but it's a, it's a better thing. They had tables and chairs to sit down and drink your beer or whatever you ordered. And he had that. And his, what I heard, he had trouble with a Jewish man. I don't know how. And he left. He, he didn't stay there, whatever the trouble was. A cousin to my husband told me that. That's how he came to America. He left America by himself. He left his wife there.

SIGRIST: And he came to America by himself.

SCHMIDT: And he came here. And went to work in a brewery. So after a while, he sent for her, and the baby was three months old. He, he had to leave her there. Now whether the ----- how long he was here I don't know, when he sent for her. So she came then with the baby, and he was three y--- three months old.

SIGRIST: So, so your husband-to-be was three months old when he first came to America.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: And we're going to just stop for a second, so that I can put another tape into the machine.

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SCHMIDT: All right.

SIGRIST: So, this the end of tape one with Clara Schmidt.

SCHMIDT: Oh, my goodness. You do it.---..

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Okay. This is the beginning of Tape Two with Clara Schmidt, who came from Germany in 1923 when she was eighteen. Mrs. Schmidt, we were just talking about your husband had been brought to America when he was three months old.

SCHMIDT: Right.

SIGRIST: You met him when you were working in a hotel in Germany...

SCHMIDT: Not in the hotel. I, I, I stopped working there and I went to the factory.

SIGRIST: To the factory.

SCHMIDT: That's where I met him or he met me. I was working down here, and he was working way down ----- There was a long assembly bench. You know. I was cleaning the, the watch covers on the inside. I was doing that. That was my job. And he was, what was he doing on the watches? He was fitting them. The cover, the cover, they were pocket watches, but they were that big. [She indicates]

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SIGRIST: Yeah. That's like four inches round, by your gesture.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. And he, they all had a cover on it. And he fitted the cover on there, the covers on them. And he was working way down there. And when I came to the factory, he saw me, and his next-door fellow had to come down to me and ask me whether I would like to go out with him. I never went out with nobody. I was sixteen. My father wouldn't let us out. So, I said I can't go anyplace with him. [Laughs] He has to come to my father and talk to him. That's what he did.

SIGRIST: Did you, were you attracted to him? I, did, did you...

SCHMIDT: He just happened to see me sitting there doing the work. And he said to him, "That girl I would like." He said to, to the next-door fellow. So he, I couldn't understand him. He had a very bad German language. I mean, he, he talked a broken Austrian. His mother was Austrian.

SIGRIST: Well, and he probably spoke English in America, right? Did he know?

SCHMIDT: Yes, yes. But he couldn't talk the German so good. I didn't understand him. So he had to make the interpreter. [Laughs] The I -- the fellow that sat next to him, he used to have to come down. But we were very --- they were very strict in the factory. He couldn't go and just do what he wanted to do. So it, it was all in the free time before we started working or after work.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me, tell me, after he came to meet your father...

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SCHMIDT: Oh.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the first time you went out with him. What was that like?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I didn't go out with him. He let --- my father let me go, but I had to be home at a certain time. And he took me to his relatives in the nearby village. It --- there all villages all around there. And he took me there to his relatives. But the relatives which he lived with, they didn't like it and they were so mad. Oh, they, they just didn't wanted him to get together with me. And he didn't let up. I didn't care for him.

SIGRIST: What did you talk about that first time you went with him to the, what did you talk about?

SCHMIDT: Well, I don't know anymore. [Laughs] I couldn't, couldn't make, I didn't even care for him. But he didn't let up and didn't let up. And I don't know how, how we got together like that. And then when I heard that the "Raggebechst" is their name. He's, Ragg is their name. They were bakers and my father was bakers. That's why they didn't like each other. They was --- there was jealousy.

SIGRIST: What was the name again? Rock...

SCHMIDT: Ragg. R-A-G-G. Two G's on the end. Ragg.

SIGRIST: Was that his mother's side of the family?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Mrs. Ragg was a sister to my husband's father.

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SIGRIST: Oh, I see. I see.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. She was a sister.

SIGRIST: And his name is what? Your husband, the man you would marry soon.

SCHMIDT: He was Joseph Schmidt.

SIGRIST: Joseph Schmidt.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. His name was really Schmid. But he always had a T on the end, and we left it that way. But the Schmid name is only with a D. But...

SIGRIST: S-C-H-I...

SCHMIDT: S-C-H-M-I-D.

SIGRIST: M-I-D.

SCHMIDT: But the T he put on, and we left it that way, because he did not ---- during the war he changed his name, too, because he was afraid. Here in America.

SIGRIST: During the Second World War?

SCHMIDT: The Second.

SIGRIST: The Second World War. Or the First?

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SCHMIDT: No, no. The First.

SIGRIST: Oh, that's right. Because he's in America during the First World War.

SCHMIDT: That's right.

SIGRIST: He hadn't come to Germany yet?

SCHMIDT: Let me see. [She pauses] Well, when was the First World War?

SIGRIST: 1914 to 1918.

SCHMIDT: Oh. He came in 1922 out there.

SIGRIST: Out to Germany?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Or in '21. '21 it was. He was there a little while before he met me.
And, what did you ask me?

SIGRIST: You answered it.

SCHMIDT: Oh.

SIGRIST: We were talking about when he came.

SCHMIDT: Oh.

SIGRIST: Well, did propose to you, did you propose marriage to you in Germany?

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SCHMIDT: No, not in a long time. We never even talked about marriage. But he wanted me. But I was too young. He was, he was older. He was twenty-seven, and I was sixteen. Let me see. He was eight and a half years older than I am. And you know at that time I was very young. I was just sixteen when I met him. And my father wouldn't let me out with nobody.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little bit about, about why you wanted to come to America, and how that all happened.

SCHMIDT: Oh, I was so happy to come.

SIGRIST: But why did you want to come? I mean, how did that all happen? Did he?

SCHMIDT: You know how it happened? An awful lot of people in my hometown had relatives here in America. And they all left. An awful lot of them. And then I got it in my head, too, if I only had somebody here. I did have somebody here, but my mother and her was on the outs. My aunt, Aunt Ida, she, I met her when I came here. She looked me up. She was married to my mother's brother. And she couldn't live with him, she said to me. She had a baby. So she went with the baby on the arm to America. How, how they did it I don't know at that time. She went to America by herself with the baby. And this baby's name was Paula. I met her when I came back here. They were wonderful people.

SIGRIST: But at, but at that time when you wanted to come to America it wasn't possible for you to hook up with Ida because she wasn't speaking to your mom, or they weren't getting along at that time? Is that what I'm...

SCHMIDT: You mean out in Germany?

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SIGRIST: Well, you, you said that you had somebody here in America, your Aunt Ida...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. My mother was saying, you have an aunt there.

SIGRIST: Right.

SCHMIDT: And...

SIGRIST: But you said they were on the outs.

SCHMIDT: No. Yes. They were on the outs. But relatives out there wrote to some here. There was always somebody from our hometown here. They wrote...

SIGRIST: When you say here, where do you mean specifically?

SCHMIDT: In Brooklyn, New York.

SIGRIST: In Brooklyn. Okay.

SCHMIDT: That's where I came to.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SCHMIDT: And they wrote that Frida, my mother's name is Frida. Frida's daughter is in America. They wrote to them. And they looked ---and sh--- they looked me up.

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SIGRIST: That was once you got here.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. But I had already my baby. I had my Elaine. And one morning, I was a janitor in a six family house.

SIGRIST: Wait, wait, wait, wait. Let's get you to America before we, this is, you're, you're still in Germany now.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Right. We haven't gotten you to America yet.

SCHMIDT: Oh, I see.

SIGRIST: [Laughs] What I want to know is, is how did you make the arrangements to come to America, and how your, your husband-to-be played into this.

SCHMIDT: Oh, he had to come back home, because his visa ran out. He only had two years there. And he had to get back home.

SIGRIST: To America?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. So he said, "I'm going to send for you. I'm going to have you come." I didn't believe it. I just didn't care whether he did or he didn't.

SIGRIST: You weren't married to him at that point?

SCHMIDT: No, no. Not married at all. So I thought, well, if he does, all right. If he

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has me come, all right. If not, all right, too. But my people didn't like it. And his people didn't like it. But we did it anyway. His ---- I, I knew he couldn't save any money. So I thought, he never gets no ship ticket together. But he got it together in about six months. He borrowed money from a, from a worker which worked with him, from my sister-in-law, and he sent me a ship ticket. I never thought he would do it. Never in my life.

SIGRIST: Surprise. [Laughs]

SCHMIDT: And he did it. And everybody over there was so jealous. They --- they thought, now she's going to America. They were, they didn't like it. His relatives mostly. His relatives was so against it that we was gettin' together.

SIGRIST: Well, when you got that ship ticket, how did you feel?

SCHMIDT: Oh. I couldn't believe it. I, I just was in heaven. I never thought he would do it. I never thought that. But it happened.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the whole process of getting ready to leave Germany, and what you had to do in order to leave Germany.

SCHMIDT: Oh, I had to go to get a visa. I had to go to the ---- to Stuttgart, and that's four hours away. My father, of course, he wasn't so happy. My mother, either. They didn't like that I should go, but I pushed it myself. And my brother is the one that helped me. Otherwise I couldn't have done it. My brother pushed it. And he made my father, he had to have, sign a paper. I got the papers here. But he had to sign. I brought all the papers. Do you want to see them?

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SIGRIST: Yes. When we're done I'll take a look at that. Yeah, yeah. Which brother, what was your brother's name who helped?

SCHMIDT: What?

SIGRIST: What was your brother's name?

SCHMIDT: Karl.

SIGRIST: Karl.

SCHMIDT: Just the same as...

SIGRIST: So Karl is, is helping this...

SCHMIDT: He engineered it. He was, he was two, two years older than me, or two and a half, something like that. And he is the one helped, because he wanted to come here, too. But he never did. I felt bad that he couldn't. But he came later on. He came to visit us.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about, you know, you say your father and your mother aren't too happy about this.

SCHMIDT: No, they didn't.

SIGRIST: What, talk a little more about that. I mean, what were their objections?

SCHMIDT: Well, they thought I was too young to go, to go and leave home, to

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America, to a man.

SIGRIST: To a man you don't really even care that much for.

SCHMIDT: No. I didn't care about him much, but he was very good to me. And I learned to love him. I loved him. I'm sorry I lost him. [she cries] Very sorry. Ah, now I'm starting to cry.

SIGRIST: Just, take a minute. Take a minute. You'll be okay. How long did it take from the time that you got the ship ticket in the mail until you actually left?

SCHMIDT: Oh, it didn't take long. It didn't take long, because I went right away to the city hall and got the papers together. And he sent it --- I had to ----- he sent it in ---- well, I left November 15th. The same year.

SIGRIST: 1923?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did you have to undergo any kind of physical examinations in Germany?

SCHMIDT: In Germany? I'm not sure. Yes, when we went on the boat, from Hamburg.

SIGRIST: But before, before you got on the ship...

SCHMIDT: No.

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SIGRIST: ...did you have to go to a doctor, or...

SCHMIDT: No, not, not in my hometown, or anything.

SIGRIST: What did you pack to take with you?

SCHMIDT: Whatever I had, I had very little, but I packed...

SIGRIST: Do you remember what that was specifically?

SCHMIDT: Well, my clothes what I had. I can't remember. I took an awf-- I didn't have too much, because I didn't have much money. And he didn't sent me any landing money. He said he would have it. He didn't have it. But he had it when I came.

SIGRIST: Did, did you take any objects with you...

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...something other than clothing?

SCHMIDT: I took little pictures for my sister-in-law. She was very good to me, too. I had a lovely sister-in-law.

SIGRIST: What kind of pictures were they?

SCHMIDT: Oh, they were pictures like --- a little girl on it, you know. A photograph, like.

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SIGRIST: Just nice little pictures.

SCHMIDT: Just, yeah. I didn't have much money to go and buy a lot. But then I brought some watches. My brother gave me a couple of watches, which were made in the factory. And I brought them to him. But what he did when, [Laughs] when I came, he took everything, and I don't know what happened to it. He must have sold them, because they liked the German watches at that time. They were, they were pocket watches, alarm clocks, too. If you set the alarm they will go off in, in your pocket. That's, that's the kind they were.

SIGRIST: What kind of luggage are you carrying, or what do you have that your carrying this...

SCHMIDT: I can't even remember what I had. But I had one of those baskets. My mother gave it to me. It was, you saw them at Ellis Island there. Them baskets.

SIGRIST: Was it, how big was it?

SCHMIDT: It was that high [She indicates]...

SIGRIST: It's about two feet high.

SCHMIDT: And this [She indicates], yeah...

SIGRIST: And about three feet long.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Like that.

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SIGRIST: Was it square --- was it square?

SCHMIDT: Square. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SCHMIDT: My mother gave me that along, and she gave me a little bed wash.
Whatever she could give me she gave me.

SIGRIST: A little what?

SCHMIDT: Bed. For the bed. To make the bed. Pillowcases, and...

SIGRIST: Oh, like, oh bedclothes...

SCHMIDT: Linens. Linens.

SIGRIST: Yes, linens. I see. You said your mother went with you to Hamburg to the
--- to the ship, or, she went with you part of the way, anyway.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Only part of the way...

SIGRIST: Part of the way.

SCHMIDT: ...because it costed too much to go to Hamburg.

SIGRIST: Before you left your village, your town, was there any kind of a gathering
in honor of your leaving?

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SCHMIDT: Oh, a couple of girls which were ready to come here, too, came to see me to say good-bye. And I met them when they were here. You know, all the, the Schrambergers, the people from Schramberg, got here together in America. They, they formed a club, and we got always together, the Schramberg people.

SIGRIST: When, what about your family, your, your father or your grandmother, did, did any of those people...

SCHMIDT: They didn't like it.

SIGRIST: They were unhappy that you were leaving?

SCHMIDT: Oh, they were unhappy that I left.

SIGRIST: How did that make you feel that they were unhappy?

SCHMIDT: My grandmother, my grandmother, "*Du*," she said, "*Du lässt das Mädle so weit weg?*"(You let that girl go so far away?) So far away. She said to my father. Well, what could he do? I, I wanted to go, and I was, I wasn't of age out there. He had to sign the paper. My brother had a lot of trouble getting him sign that paper.

SIGRIST: Because your father just did not want you to go.

SCHMIDT: He didn't wanted me to go. None of them wanted me to go.

SIGRIST: How long of a trip is it from Schramberg to Hamburg?

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SCHMIDT: Oh, a long time. From Schramberg to Stuttgart took four hours. From Stuttgart we were all night on the train. A whole night. Took about eight hours, maybe ten.

SIGRIST: Is your mom still with you at that point?

SCHMIDT: No, she didn't come with me.

SIGRIST: Where did she, what town did she get off in?

SCHMIDT: She left me --- I don't know whether she left me in Stuttgart. She had to go to Tübingen. And Tübingen is a little bit farther away, this side. Where she left me, I don't know anymore.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Tübingen?

SCHMIDT: Tübingen. T-U-, with the...

SIGRIST: With the umlaut.

SCHMIDT: B-I-N-G-E-N. Tübingen.

SIGRIST: Was anyone else traveling with you, or just, was it just you and your mother?

SCHMIDT: No, I was all alone.

SIGRIST: How did, when, when you said good-bye to your mother...

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SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...and she went to where...

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about, like from that point to before you got to Hamburg, how did you feel about?

SCHMIDT: Well, I was so alone. I was a little afraid. But there was other people in the train. The train was full when we went to Hamburg. Now I don't whether how many went there, wherever the people traveled, that I don't know. But I sat in my seat. The train was full. And I sat in my seat all night long until we got there. Now I can't remember when I got there where I went. I knew I had to go someplace, but I can't remember how, how it happened.

SIGRIST: Do you, do you know how long you were in Hamburg before you got on the ship?

SCHMIDT: Not long.

SIGRIST: Did you have to sleep somewhere? Were you there overnight?

SCHMIDT: That I don't know if I was overnight or not. I think so. Yes, I had to sleep someplace. Everything was marked out for me. You know, I was alone, and they, there were so many strangers and I was young. I was very young.

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SIGRIST: What, what happened in Hamburg before you got on the ship?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we had to get examined. And they examined you good.

SIGRIST: What do you mean by that? What, what...

SCHMIDT: You had to go naked before the doctor. And he looked you all over.

SIGRIST: Did you have any particular feelings about having to do that?

SCHMIDT: No. They all had to do it. There was a couple of other girls like myself. And we had to stand in line. Now I don't know whether where we left the clothes or had them on the arm, but we had to get all undressed. And I think it's the Americans that, that were there to examine you. Because they don't let anybody here in this country at that time. If you had an operation, they looked you all over. And my, when my sister came, they looked her over. She had an operation on the little finger. And she was so afraid that she wouldn't be taken. But she got here.

SIGRIST: That was the sister who came in 1927.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. She is still here. She is in Long Island.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship that you got on? The ship. What was the name of the ship?

SCHMIDT: The Minnekahda.

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SIGRIST: And tell me, was this the first time you'd ever been on a ship?

SCHMIDT: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you thought when you saw the ship.

SCHMIDT: Oh. [Laughs] You know, I --- I kind of was in heaven, because I was going someplace, and, and someplace where I never was, and I ---- it was an "*Abenteuer*". (adventure) They call it an *Abenteuer*. I don't know what they call it here. A surprise. It's was a surprise for me. And everything was new to me, whatever came along. But there was all people like myself.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me about what the, what happened on the ship? Tell me about where you slept and what you did while you were on the ship.

SCHMIDT: Oh, I slept in a cabin with two other girls. Something like myself. And we were together. The three of --- I must get the pictures to show you.

SIGRIST: Yes. When we're done, we can do that.

SCHMIDT: Oh. Well, we were together, we, three girls. And we were three in the cabin. I was, I was on the bottom, I think. Yes. And, and the other girl was up over me, and then there was one on the other side. There was four, four beds. And you know what happened during the trip? I, we were sleeping, and all of a sudden I hear something, and something jumped on my bed. And do you know what it was? A big rat jumped right on my bed. Oh, I was so scared. But she didn't do nothing, she ran away. [Laughs]

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SIGRIST: Lucky for you.

SCHMIDT: But jumped on my bed. I don't know where she came from. But it was that big, we saw it. [She indicates]

SIGRIST: That's like a foot long, or just...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Where did they feed you on the ship?

SCHMIDT: Huh?

SIGRIST: Where did they feed you on the ship?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we had good food. Very good food. I can't tell you what they fed us anymore.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what it looked where they fed you?

SCHMIDT: Wonderful.

SIGRIST: Where, well, what? Describe what the room looked like where they fed you.

SCHMIDT: There was round tables, and they all were sittin' on the tables, and the waiters was waitin' on us. I can't remember what the food was, but it was all good food.

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SIGRIST: I want to do a spelling of the ship for the tape. It's M-I-N-N-E-K-A-H-D-A.

SCHMIDT: Minnekahda.

SIGRIST: Minnekahda.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes. I've actually, I've interviewed other people who came on that ship, too.

SCHMIDT: What?

SIGRIST: I've interviewed other people who came on the Minnekahda.

SCHMIDT: Oh, did you?

SIGRIST: Yes, I have.

SCHMIDT: On the same?

SIGRIST: No, not on the same trip I don't think. I interviewed a woman who came in...

SCHMIDT: Oh, you've interviewed other people, too.

SIGRIST: Yeah. I interviewed a woman who came on the Minnekahda in 1924, which would be...

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SCHMIDT: What do you know?

SIGRIST: Yeah. So.

SCHMIDT: What do you know?

SIGRIST: What did you do all day on the ship? What was there to do?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we were always busy. We went up on the deck. It was a one, a one-class boat. We could go from the front to the back. We weren't tied down for anything. We could do what we wanted.

SIGRIST: And what, what was that? What did you do?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we mostly was watching the water and, and the sharks, and the fish that jumped up. That was something new ---- on the boat. We always was watching the water. And then sometimes there, way, way back there was another ship passing. Maybe a bigger one than ours. We passed a lot of ships on the way. It was a wonderful trip.

SIGRIST: I can tell. You're just --- you're getting excited just talking about it.

SCHMIDT: Oh, I, I loved it. I loved it.

SIGRIST: What...

SCHMIDT: But you know I got seasick, too.

SIGRIST: And, and what happened? When you got sick what...

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SCHMIDT: Oh, then I had to go down and lay down. I, I had to throw up a lot. I couldn't eat much. I was seasick because it was "*schauklin*" (swaying) all the time. What is, swinging. And that, that made me sick. Even when I used to go on the swing, I couldn't take it. And I was seasick all the way. And the second time I went, too, on, when I went home to see my parents again. I took my baby, my Elaine. I was six years old. No. She was six years old, but I had to go with my mother-in-law. She wanted somebody to go with her, and my sister-in-law came and asked me if I would go with her.

SIGRIST: What year did you --- was the trip back to Germany?

SCHMIDT: In 1931.

SIGRIST: Okay.

SCHMIDT: '31. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How long did the trip on the Minnekahda take?

SCHMIDT: From November 15th to December 1st. Before, the day before we landed, we landed and we had to stay out in the harbor. We couldn't come in until the first. They came in a day earlier. And we had to stay out in the harbor until in the morning. Then we went in.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

SCHMIDT: Yes. Oh, yes. We saw that.

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SIGRIST: Did you know what that was?

SCHMIDT: Oh, sure. I knew it, the Statue of Liberty. Yes. It was a nice --- it was a nice view. Everything.

SIGRIST: Did you think about?

SCHMIDT: Everything was so new to me.

SIGRIST: I was going to say, what did you think when you saw New York City from the boat when you were in the harbor?

SCHMIDT: Beautiful. Beautiful. And when he got me, he came only on Monday. They didn't get me off anymore.

SIGRIST: Well, wait. Let's get you to Ellis Island first. The ship comes in.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: And the ship docks.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then what happened?

SCHMIDT: They, well, so many got into a smaller boat. We have, we had to go down into a boat. I don't know how many they took. And brought us over to Ellis Island. And there we had to go in, and we had to get examined

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again. All the, all over again. The same thing as in Germany. And we had to stand in line, all the women, and I think the men had to go on another side. And...

SIGRIST: Did you have to take you clothes off at Ellis Island, too?

SCHMIDT: All, all. Everything off. And they looked you over. All over --- that you are perfect to --- to be coming in. They wouldn't take anybody that had an operation or any kind of trouble.

SIGRIST: Now, did you have to stay over night at Ellis Island?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: How many nights did you stay?

SCHMIDT: We came on Friday night, Saturday and Sunday.

SIGRIST: So you stayed three nights at Ellis Island.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And they let you off on Monday?

SCHMIDT: On Monday morning he came to get me. I was afraid. There was some people there, they, they made you be afraid. They were there a couple of months. And some of them got sent back. Oh, it was such a, such a sad thing there. Because some of them, they cried. And the room was full of people. They just had you in there like cattle. You know. In the one

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room.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: Tell me about where you slept at Ellis Island.

SCHMIDT: I slept on one of them beds. You know the Ellis Island, they showed the beds. And the spring, and they gave you just a blanket. And a blanket maybe to lay on and a blanket to cover yourself.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything else about the room where you slept, or anything stick out in your mind about that experience?

SCHMIDT: I don't think there was anything else there. I had to climb up and go on the second one.

SIGRIST: Like a bunk bed, a second, top, okay.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. I think there was three layers if I'm right. I'm not sure anymore, but I, I was up there.

SIGRIST: You were up on top...

SCHMIDT: I had to go up.

SIGRIST: Were there other people sleeping in this room?

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SCHMIDT: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: And do you remember any of those people at all, what...

SCHMIDT: Oh, no, I don't. I don't remember anybody, because everybody had their own troubles and they were so afraid. Everyone was afraid that they would get sent back. They were talking about, you know, just the talk was going around. Oh, that one is getting sent back, or this one is getting sent back. And, and it was not a good atmosphere when we were there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember there being other German people there?

SCHMIDT: Now, I don't know whether I, I was talking to any other Germans. I don't remember that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the staff? The doctors or...

SCHMIDT: Oh, there was nobody around. Only when there was examinations.

SIGRIST: Were you questioned at all at that time?

SCHMIDT: No. No. No questions. They had everything on paper.

SIGRIST: Where did they feed you at Ellis Island?

SCHMIDT: Oh, in a big room. A big room with a long table, and they were all sitting on that side and on this side [she gestures]. Everybody, and good food. My goodness, that food. When I saw the white bread, we had never any white bread in Germany at that time. My father couldn't afford the white

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bread. We ate always rye bread. And that nice white bread, when I think of it. [Laughs] It was really nice.

SIGRIST: Did you see anything, now, you're at Ellis Island for a whole weekend. Did you see anything during that time at Ellis Island that you had never seen before, that was totally new to you, other than the white bread?

SCHMIDT: I don't remember anything.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you felt during this whole weekend?

SCHMIDT: Well, I just was always wondering, is he coming to get me? That's all I was wondering. Because you never know what's happening. Because he couldn't get me off anymore on, on Saturday. They only worked until five or six o'clock, and then it was *Schluss* (over, finished). And so we had to stay. I thought maybe I'd get on yet, but I didn't. I...

SIGRIST: Sorry. Go ahead.

SCHMIDT: He must have been there, but I don't remember. And Monday morning early he came to get me. And they got us both together. But no, we weren't left alone until we were married.

SIGRIST: So they married you at Ellis Island?

SCHMIDT: No.

SIGRIST: No.

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SCHMIDT: A lady went with us to the Leo House. That is in New York. And when we were married she left us. She had to make sure that we were married.

SIGRIST: So they, so they sent an escort with you...

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...to witness the ceremony.

SCHMIDT: There was another couple. Another couple.

SIGRIST: Oh, well that's...

SCHMIDT: Same thing. But they were going to another city.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me how, when you saw Joseph, when he arrived?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...how did you greet each other?

SCHMIDT: I can't remember what we did. [Laughs] I don't remember anymore. Did we kiss each other, or we didn't. I can't remember that. But he was so happy. He was happy to have me.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing that Monday when you, when you...

SCHMIDT: What I was wearing? No. But I wore a nice dress. That much I know. I

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had a couple of nice dresses. One of them got taken on me, stole on me, where, wherever we lived after a while. I hung it out, I hung my wash out, and my dress was taken off the line. A nice, new dress. And it was such a pretty dress. We were living in a rear house. In the front was a big house, and we went through a big hall, and in the rear house we lived. But that was only about three months after.

SIGRIST: Did he bring a present for you when he came to meet you?

SCHMIDT: Did he bring?

SIGRIST: A present, or something when he came to meet you at Ellis Island?

SCHMIDT: No. No. He had nothing. He had only a furnished room. He brought me into a furnished room. And this furnished room had in the bedroom a little table like this in the corner [She indicates], with a little two burner gas stove where we could make our breakfast or whatever we wanted to eat. He didn't have anything at all. I had to start from scratch. We didn't even have a spoon or a cup. We had to buy it all. We had to go out to eat in the beginning until we had money enough to buy things gradually. Then I went to work. I said I want to go to work right away. And so he brought me into a candy factory. I couldn't talk English too good. Only couple of words. That's what held me back. So he is the one that brought me to work in, in a candy factory. And there was a German woman, and she could talk German to me. And, and I kind of held on to her. I held on that woman a long time.

SIGRIST: Did she help you learn English?

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SCHMIDT: Yes. She helped me.

SIGRIST: What did she, how did she teach you English?

SCHMIDT: How did she do it? I don't know anymore. [Laughs] But I catch, I caught on very fast. You know, when, when you hear English, and a little bit I knew. A little bit I knew. So I learned it very fast. In about three months I could converse.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the first words you learned in English?

SCHMIDT: Well, whatever you talked about. I don't know anymore which the words were. I, I learned a little bit by book at home.

SIGRIST: In Germany?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. I had a little, little book where you can learn English in it. And I don't know did I go to school or not. You know, everything costed so much money, and you didn't have no money.

SIGRIST: The, the woman, the woman who went with you from Ellis Island to Leo House where you were married...

SCHMIDT: She was very nice.

SIGRIST: ...did she speak German?

SCHMIDT: I don't, I don't remember. I think she did.

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SIGRIST: Did you understand why she was with you?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes. That I know. They, they made us understand, you know.

SIGRIST: Well, and Joseph spoke English.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. He's the one talked English when he came to get me.

SIGRIST: Is, before we leave Ellis Island and get you into your life, is there anything else about being at Ellis Island those three nights that sticks out in your mind?

SCHMIDT: Well, it's the way we had to do. You know, it was new. Everything was new. And what sticks in my mind is just that good food they served. That good food we had there. Wonderful.

SIGRIST: So they, so this woman escorts you to Leo House.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

SIGRIST: In New York. You get married.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You think there's another couple involved in this, that...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. They, they were, I don't know did they come with us or they didn't. I can't remember. But they got married with us. I think she had to take them, too. I think she took us all four together, but I can't remember

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anymore.

SIGRIST: How did you feel as you were actually standing there being wed to Joseph, after all this time, you know, you didn't think he was going to send the ticket. He did send the ticket.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So now you've come all this way, you weren't sure he was going to meet you at Ellis Island, well, he appears at Ellis Island. How did you feel as you were standing there being married to this man that you really don't even know that well?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Well, I was very happy. Very happy. And I always was not afraid, because he was very good to me. And he meant it. He wasn't no fly-by-night. That I know.

SIGRIST: Well, and everything he said he would do...

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...he did.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: You know, he sent the ticket, and...

SCHMIDT: He, he lied a lot. He lied a lot. He said he had money in Stuttgart which wasn't true, you know, when we first met each other. He had money

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there, and, oh, and when I came, he, in the letter he said, my mo --- my family will come to the boat to, to meet you. That wasn't true. He is the only one that came. And then his sister at the time was living in Brooklyn. She came then at nighttime to see me. And she is the one took me in her hands and helped me a lot. She was a dressmaker. She worked for a dressmaker family. A dressmaker place. It was an apartment where she worked with this lady. And she was very good. She made me right away a couple of dresses. She was, she was wonderful, my sister-in-law. And she's the one took me around a little bit. And she always took me along with her to sit there while she was working.

SIGRIST: So she really kind of helped you get accustomed...

SCHMIDT: Oh, she was a wonderful woman.

SIGRIST: You mentioned earlier in the interview that your husband said that he would have landing money when you got here...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Well, he must have had something. I don't know what he had. He didn't show me nothing.

SIGRIST: But, so that was sort of just taken care of, and you didn't...

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yeah. He, he never could save. That is, that is why I thought he'll never have me come.

SIGRIST: Where, you, where was his one room apartment with the gas burner?

SCHMIDT: On Bedford Avenue.

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SIGRIST: On Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. 398 was the number. It was a small house. And they were Spanish people which had it. And I think they were just two ladies. And they accepted me, and was nice. But they didn't mingle in with us, with both of us. We had to make our own life.

SIGRIST: What was he doing for work, you husband?

SCHMIDT: He was working for an elevator company at that time.

SIGRIST: And doing what exactly?

SCHMIDT: He was a machinist by trade. And I think when anything broke he had to fix it. And, and then after a while he worked in the Intertype Corporation. There he was ten years.

SIGRIST: Intertype?

SCHMIDT: Intertype.

SIGRIST: Intertype.

SCHMIDT: In downtime, downtown Brooklyn. I wonder if it's still there?

SIGRIST: Might be.

SCHMIDT: Ten years he worked there. He had a good job. And he made always

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good money.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, after you got married, where did you go next? Did you go right to the apartment? Right, or did you go, did you get something to eat?

SCHMIDT: He, oh yeah. He took me to eat first in the restaurant where he ate. And he introduced me. And there I got a job washing dishes right away.
[Laughs]

SIGRIST: So that was your first job, washing dishes?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. I didn't stay there long, because dishes washing from morning to night, my back started aching.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much they paid you for doing that?

SCHMIDT: I, I don't think they paid me much. I remember I got in the candy factory fifteen dollars a week.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about your job in the candy factory, and what you had to do?

SCHMIDT: Oh, it was a, what do you call it? In German they call it a "*Laufendes Band*". [She indicates]

SIGRIST: It looks like a conveyor belt?

SCHMIDT: A conveyor. And I had to lay the candies there, which was; the chocolate

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was coming down on it. I had to take the candies and line 'em up. And you have to work fast so that nothing is missing. And the chocolate was dripping down to cover them. They were the chocolate candies. They were that big. [She indicates] They were...

SIGRIST: Small, round candies.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Like, like a little bit bigger than a marble. And flat on the bottom, and, well, that's what I had to do.

SIGRIST: And how, like, how many hours did you do that a day?

SCHMIDT: How many hours we worked? I don't know that. I can't remember how many hours.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if you stood or sat while you were doing it?

SCHMIDT: What?

SIGRIST: Did you stand or were you sitting?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we had to stand. You had to stand up. You couldn't sit. There was no chairs to sit. The band was quite high. And it was just even like that. [She indicates]

SIGRIST: And did you have a uniform, or something that you wore?

SCHMIDT: That I don't remember, either. But I got fifteen dollars a week.

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SIGRIST: And you mentioned there was another German woman who worked with you.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were, were they all immigrants who worked in this factory, or...

SCHMIDT: I don't even know that. I don't know that anymore, but I doubt it. I doubt it that they were immigrants.

SIGRIST: How did your husband feel about you were working?

SCHMIDT: Oh, he didn't mind it. He didn't mind it when I worked. We worked it out together. And then sometimes right in the beginning he didn't come home nights. But his, these friends which we had, they took care of me. We had them to go to. They were not directly related to my in-laws. [She pauses] How do I have to say it? Her, this woman's brother married a, a niece through my mother-in-law. That's how we got together.

SIGRIST: So they're distant relatives.

SCHMIDT: Yes. Distant. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: When you first got to America, those first six months, I mean, your life has changed so dramatically from what it had been in Germany, what were the hardest things to get used to here in this country?

SCHMIDT: Here in this country?

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SIGRIST: Yeah.

SCHMIDT: Oh, it we--- nothing was hard for me. I could fit in anyplace.

SIGRIST: How did you do that? How did you go about fitting in?

SCHMIDT: Well, I used to go, when I, when I first was here in Brooklyn, I used to go everyday take a walk to this lady, this friend of the in-laws.

SIGRIST: The distant relative lady.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. And she's the one took me around. When he, he went always to work, you know. My husband. But how did, did I work from the very beginning? Not in the very beginning. I had to wait a while until I got that job. But I went to her and she used to take me around. She was so good to me.

SIGRIST: And where would you go? What, where would you go?

SCHMIDT: To, to her daughter's. She had a daughter in -- in -- I think it was Richmond Hill. Yes. We lived in Richmond Hill a while, too, after a long time. She used to take me on the trolley car. There was trolley cars at that time. There was no buses. And we used to go to her daughter. [Laughs] And we used to go to the ---- she showed me her daughters. And they were, they were well off, you know. They each had a house. The one had a house in, in Long Island. I forget the name of the town now. And the other one had a house in Richmond Hill. And she had a baby was one year old. But I, after a while I grew up with them, and we were friends. And we, we were very good. I -- I'm mixed in all over.

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SIGRIST: Were there special ways that you tried to make yourself more American?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes. I fitted right in. And, and they were surprised that I could talk after a while so good.

SIGRIST: What about, what about the way you looked? Did you, did you change the way you looked?

SCHMIDT: Well, my sister-in-law made a couple of nice clothes for me.

SIGRIST: What about your hair? Did you do anything different?

SCHMIDT: Oh, my hair. I had two braids. They were long braids down the back. And I had them around the back laid over my ears. That's the way we, we had the hair at that time. Maybe you'll see it on the picture there. But I, I look so small on there. That's what, that's how I wore, my husband didn't like it when I cut my hair, but I did it on the quiet and he didn't even notice it after a while. My sister-in-law took me to give my hair cut to have a short bob at that time. [Laughs] It was very funny.

SIGRIST: Well, of course that would have been the style in the 1920's, would be a short...

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...a short haircut.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Why didn't he want, why didn't he like it?

SCHMIDT: He didn't wanted me to be different. He wanted me the way I was. But when I, I was a little afraid he would holler at me when she took me. I don't know which one took me to have my haircut. He didn't even notice it. We looked at each other and we didn't say nothing. [They laugh]) It was a funny thing.

SIGRIST: Well, I'm going to have to get going to another interview soon.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes. You...

SIGRIST: Let me just, I have a couple more questions for you quickly. [Laughs] One is in the early, the first year or two that you were here in America; did you experience any kind of prejudice against you because you were a foreigner?

SCHMIDT: Oh, no. No, I didn't.

SIGRIST: Did anyone ever make fun of you because you couldn't?

SCHMIDT: No. Not a bit. Everybody was very nice.

SIGRIST: Do you remember trying to say something in English, and having it come out wrong?

SCHMIDT: Oh, that I do, but I don't remember just what. I'm, I, I mixed up sometimes words which didn't even fit in. Yes.

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SIGRIST: But your husband help you in any way to learn English?

SCHMIDT: No, he didn't help me, nothing. I had to learn by myself.

SIGRIST: When was your first child born?

SCHMIDT: 192-- I only had the one. I wasn't going to put children into the world for somebody else to bring them up. So I had this one, my Elaine. I had her the 2nd of March in 1925.

SIGRIST: And can you spell that name? Elaine? How do you spell?

SCHMIDT: Elaine?

SIGRIST: Elaine.

SCHMIDT: E-L-A-I-N-E. And who gave her the name? A schoolteacher. She was a friend to my sister-in-law. And she said to her, name her Elaine. Her name is Clara, but it's Clara Elaine. But we call her always Elaine. That stuck with her.

SIGRIST: Are there any things, any rules of life that your parents taught you that you've used your whole life? Any ways to live by?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I live --- I live today that way. [Laughs] My, my Elaine sometimes gets mad at me, because her and I are so different in, in doing things. I'm doing the same way as I always learned from the very beginning from Germany.

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SIGRIST: Can you say what some of those, the ways that you think are, what, what are some of those things?

SCHMIDT: The cooking and the bed making and the cleaning. I do it the German way, the way I learned it.

SIGRIST: Well, if I may ask, what is the German way to make a bed? What, what, how, what is special...

SCHMIDT: Well, we have different beds over there. We have altogether different beds. The pillowcases are very big, and they have down feathers in them. These here are small. Only this big. [She indicates] But I, I got used to it. I got used to it. And then the, the cover is big, too. A lot of down. And they are high. They look like a balloon. They look all filled up. When you make the bed you have this whole thing. Maybe you saw it already.

SIGRIST: It's like a feather bed, isn't it?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yeah, that's it. And the pillows, too. The pillows are big and square. And here we got small ones. But I'm used to it. And I had nothing to start with. We had to just gradually get the things. I, I manage pretty good.

SIGRIST: When you think about your nationality, do you think of yourself as a German woman, or as an American woman? How do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

SCHMIDT: Well, I'm, I'm an American now. All American. Not German anymore. I

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don't think of Ge----- well, I think of Germany. It's my home place. And I went back quite a few times. I have a sister over there which I, which I saw about four times in a couple of years.

SIGRIST: What year did you become a citizen?

SCHMIDT: I became a citizen I think in 1928. In August.

SIGRIST: And how did that make you feel when you became a citizen?

SCHMIDT: Oh, it was wonderful that I got to be a citizen. We had to go downtown. And I had to do different things. You know, you couldn't be a citizen if you didn't know a certain things. I forgot what I had to know. I forgot it. But I knew it. I can't even remember what we had to say. There was other people got to be a citizen when I was there. They take so many, you know, in the room. And we all had to do. We had to know our things, what, what, what it is. I, I forgot what, what we had to do. But I know I, I, I could, I could do it.

SIGRIST: And, I guess my final question...

SCHMIDT: I learned English very fast. Very fast. And I can write English, too, now. And I learned it by myself. I never went to school.

SIGRIST: If you, ---- do you have any advice? You're ninety years old now, you've lived for most of this century. Do you have, if I were a young person coming to you and saying, you know, what is your secret for...

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: ...a successful, long, happy life, what would you tell me?

SCHMIDT: Well, do you know a --- the person that is there, if they, I don't know how to say it. If they are like me it comes natural. It comes natural to be an American. Everything comes to you and you are there. I can't say anything else. But there, there is a lot people that can't learn fast. There is some people that can't learn. My mother-in-law could not, could not even talk English. And she was here in the country a long time. My mother-in-law when I talked to her. Yeah?

SIGRIST: She may not have wanted to learn it. You know, she, she may not have wanted to become an American.

SCHMIDT: I think she just couldn't do it. She, she couldn't even write. I don't know. She came from a family of sixteen children. Sixteen. Mind you. And she could not write a letter. I had to write her letters when she wanted to write it, a letter to Germany. I had to do an awful lot for her. But I didn't mind it.

SIGRIST: We're going to sign off. I want to thank you very much...

SCHMIDT: Well, you're welcome. I hope I did all right.

SIGRIST: You did a great job. You're just a fountain of knowledge. I think we could probably spend another hour here, actually.

SCHMIDT: Thank you very much.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Clara Schmidt on Monday, September,

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what is the date today, Monday, September 25th, 1995 in Whiting, New Jersey. Thanks.

SCHMIDT: Isn't that wonderful.

END OF INTERVIEW