

EI-674

GRETCHEN HINTZE

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SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, September 28th, 1995. I'm in Jersey City, New Jersey, at the Hamilton Park Healthcare Facility, and I'm here with Gretchen Hintze.

HINTZE: Hintz-eh.

SIGRIST: Hintz-eh. H-I-N-T-Z-E.

HINTZE: T-Z-E.

SIGRIST: And that's Hintz-eh.

HINTZE: Hintz-eh, yeah.

SIGRIST: And Mrs. Hintze came from Germany in 1923, she believes, and she thinks she was around nineteen when she came.

HINTZE: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Hintze, can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

HINTZE: Yeah, January 22, 1904.

SIGRIST: And where in Germany where you born?

HINTZE: Hamburg.

SIGRIST: Yes.

HINTZE: In Hamburg.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about Hamburg when you were a kid, what sticks out in your mind?

HINTZE: Well, Hamburg is [unclear] like New York, as a main [speaking German].
[Laughs]

SIGRIST: That's okay. You can do that if you want.

HINTZE: It's a city. It's a real city.

SIGRIST: What are some of the buildings in Hamburg that stick out in your mind as a child?

HINTZE: Oh, well, in the last time they builded big houses, like they have here now. They started with big building houses. Otherwise, the houses was not too big, but big enough to live in.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house that you grew up in?

HINTZE: Let me see. Yes. Well, it was a single house. My husband—

SIGRIST: Father?

HINTZE: No, the father from the husband, he owned the house, and there we was living when we got married.

SIGRIST: Were you married in Germany?

HINTZE: In Germany.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you were married when you came to the United States.

HINTZE: Oh, I was sure married.

SIGRIST: Oh, okay.

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah. I was married in Germany. I had even my own home and my husband, he was the manager in a delicatessen store.

SIGRIST: What was your husband's name?

HINTZE: Hintze.

SIGRIST: What was his first—

HINTZE: Adolph.

SIGRIST: Adolph.

HINTZE: Adolph Hintze.

SIGRIST: Well, let's—we'll get back to your husband. Let's talk about your childhood first.

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about when you were born? Did anyone ever tell you a story about when you were born?

HINTZE: No, not this, but I know only that I had a very nice house—home with my parents and the sister and brothers.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

HINTZE: My father's name was Rudolph.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

HINTZE: He had his own store in the house, in the front. There I was there and was selling all the—because he had a bicycle and motorcycle store. And he was in the back. We had a big—where he was working. Back steps they called it, and he was working. Then the people came with their bicycle to repair. So I brought them in the back to my father and he was working with my oldest brother, his oldest son. He was working with him because he should after, when he was not there no more to take the store over and the house and everything.

SIGRIST: What was your father's last name? Your maiden name? Your name before you were married?

HINTZE: Oh, Dettmann.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that please?

HINTZE: D-E double T M-A double N. Dettman.

SIGRIST: D-E-T-T-M-A-N-N. Dettmann.

HINTZE: Yeah, that's right. And his name was Rudolph, his first name, my father. Rudolph Dettmann.

SIGRIST: Can you talk to me a little bit about the motorcycles and the bicycles that your father sold, what you remember about it?

HINTZE: Well, he had more the bicycle than the motorcycle because motorcycle is different than the bicycle. You know what a bicycle is, right? With the [unclear], with the [unclear], right and has only two—oh—

SIGRIST: Wheels.

HINTZE: Wheels, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have your own bicycle as a young girl?

HINTZE: No, I didn't—was not getting on a bicycle because the one brother, he had an accident and that's make me doing not to go on a bicycle. But that I was all right, but I sell the bicycle and I took the bicycle for repairing and brought them, or let them bringing in the back step. The back step was in the back from our house.

SIGRIST: And that's where the bicycles were repaired?

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah, and my father had a store in the front where I was working because my sister got married. So then I came have to work ever since seventeen years old and that was very fast for me to do this.

SIGRIST: So your father put his children to work in the store.

HINTZE: Yes, that's right.

SIGRIST: What was your father's personality like?

HINTZE: Oh, he was working and working. A very fine man. He likes to be good dressed. When he went out, he was always dressed and I never saw him without a—what do you call it?

SIGRIST: A tie?

HINTZE: Tie. Without a tie. Never. No matter what he is, he always had that tie, and then he had [unclear] like this—

SIGRIST: Collar?

HINTZE: Collar, a collar, yeah. Collar and then his tie. So he was always dressed as a good, so that when people came to buy or repair, that he was always dressed and looks good. [Siren in background]

SIGRIST: Very presentable?

HINTZE: Yes. Yeah, yeah, he was very and he was always singing. When he makes shaving or the hair, he was always singing.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the songs that he used to sing?

HINTZE: Well, the old songs. So—

SIGRIST: Can you sing one of them for me in German?

HINTZE: Let me see here. [singing in German] [Laughs] That's it. I was always singing it, the song.

SIGRIST: Thank you very much for singing that. What does it mean?

HINTZE: It means, it's a [unclear] man and a girl and she said he could not [unclear]—he is not true because he goes with other, not with her alone. So that is the story. She didn't trust him.

SIGRIST: I see.

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, what did your father enjoy doing when he wasn't working? His leisure time activities?

HINTZE: He had a restaurant where he always go and then there was to playing to get cards. So Sixty-Six, that was a game that they play in the family all over, and he plays this because he don't want nothing heavy to play. Only for company. I remember one time drinking a glass beer with this, maybe two glasses, but never drunk, no. And he was a very lively when he was standing on [unclear], he always [unclear] and he was always singing with this I sing to that.

SIGRIST: So he'd stand in front of the mirror and comb his hair and sing.

HINTZE: And combed his hair or make shaving and he always singing.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did he do with his children?

HINTZE: Well, there was three boys and three girls and the boys, when they got older, they had to work with him in the back. That was the back step they call it, in German.

SIGRIST: But was there—was there something fun that he did with his kids, maybe on his day off?

HINTZE: Not fun. Father was very strict, but he loves us all. But he was very strict. We could not do something that was not right.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the rules that you had to follow? Some of your father's rules?

HINTZE: Well, we had to, in the evening to the right time, going inside the house and early to bed.

SIGRIST: What time did you go to bed?

HINTZE: Well, seven, seven thirty when we were just kids and when we got older, then was a little bit later. Yeah.

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

HINTZE: My mother, Louisa.

SIGRIST: What was her maiden name?

HINTZE: Krack.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

HINTZE: K-R-A-C-K. Krack.

SIGRIST: Krack.

HINTZE: Yeah, Krack.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

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HINTZE: Yeah. My mother was working when she came from the country that there was she born, and she went to Hamburg [unclear] and there she was working by very rich people. My father, he was repairing like electric the lights and all the lamp. Everything with electric. He was repairing this. So he saw her and then they fall in love.

SIGRIST: Do you know what year they got married?

HINTZE: Oh, that I cannot say. It was in the 1800s, yeah?

SIGRIST: Can you name your brothers and sisters for me?

HINTZE: Yes. Willie, that was the oldest brother and then came Rudy and then the other was Max.

SIGRIST: So Willie, Rudy and Max.

HINTZE: Rudy and Max.

SIGRIST: And then there were three girls.

HINTZE: And three girls. Margaret. Her name was not Margaret. Her name was—the real name was Eda and she hate the name Eda. [Laughs] So she gave herself the name Margaret.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Eda?

HINTZE: E-D-A. Eda.

SIGRIST: So Margaret. Then the next one? Who was after Margaret?

HINTZE: The next, me.

SIGRIST: You, Gretchen.

HINTZE: Gretchen.

SIGRIST: And then the youngest?

HINTZE: And then one sister, she was many years younger than I, Thea, was her name.

SIGRIST: How do you spell that?

HINTZE: T-H-E-A, Thea.

SIGRIST: And you said she was much younger than you.

HINTZE: Yes, she was—she is, oh, five years.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when Thea was born?

HINTZE: Not when she was born, no.

SIGRIST: Okay. Do you have any stories you like to tell about your brothers and sisters when you were growing up, when you were children?

HINTZE: Well, they had the bicycle because my father had the bicycle store. So the brother gets a bicycle if they behaves himself. If he was very strict. Bicycle and then sometime—then they took me sometime along because then they had in the back a seat where I could sit on. My mother, when she had the time, she was looking out the window and when we came home, she said, “Gretchen, [unclear]” because that was so dangerous.

SIGRIST: Putting a little kid on the back of a bicycle.

HINTZE: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Were bicycles popular at this time?

HINTZE: They was, yeah. There was bicycle and after bicycle came the motorcycle.

SIGRIST: What about automobiles?

HINTZE: Oh, yeah. There was between the time already, but not so big than they are today.

SIGRIST: So more people had bicycles than automobiles?

HINTZE: Yes, that’s right. Motorcycle or a bicycle.

SIGRIST: Did your family buy an automobile before—

HINTZE: My father, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about when you got the automobile?

HINTZE: Well, that was not a new one, but he had to repair this and the man he passed away, and the woman, she don’t want the bicycle, and she sold it—

SIGRIST: The automobile?

HINTZE: Yeah, the automobile. She sell very cheap to my father. So that what I know.

SIGRIST: She sold it cheap and he fixed it up.

HINTZE: And he fixed it up.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about having a car in the family?

HINTZE: Well, we was not even too long in the car sitting because we had to work, and we worked from twelve and thirteen we had to work because my mother, she had they called it a [unclear] that is here that the man who are working and they come to us and they go for eating. I think it was eighty cents, the meal, but good. Real homemade and that was mama's, yeah. Mama, she had for people. The people came for eating and then we had a whole house and the front—in the front in the up was four, five rooms and rented the rooms out, and single man.

SIGRIST: Like a boarding house?

HINTZE: Like a boarding house, and they was working and there was a big cemetery—no, not cemetery. Like a hospital. Very big hospital and there they was working and they come to [unclear] and then they came, five of them, yeah. They was living in the house. My parents had the five rooms because that was her business, the rooms and the cooking. Mother was a very, very good cook.

SIGRIST: So she brought in extra money by taking in these men.

HINTZE: That's right. That's right, yeah.

SIGRIST: Talk to me about the kinds of food that your mother made.

HINTZE: Oh, everything.

SIGRIST: As a child, what were some of your favorite foods that she would make?

HINTZE: Zoladin.

SIGRIST: Zoladin?

HINTZE: Holadin. Holadin.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

HINTZE: It is the meat—what do they say here? I think it's—

SIGRIST: Meat of some sort? You said meat?

HINTZE: Yeah, meat. And there slice, and it's cooked, then it's sliced up and then a slice of bacon and onions and then they roll it up. They make it here, too. I make it. And then you put a stick in through so that it stays together, and then you make. All depend how many person they are, four, five in the pot and make a nice gravy.

SIGRIST: What other kinds of food? What would you eat for breakfast, say?

HINTZE: Well, we had to eat everything, anyhow. Bread and butter and a little bit the bologna.

SIGRIST: For breakfast?

HINTZE: For breakfast.

SIGRIST: What time would you eat breakfast?

HINTZE: Well, we was here in for the most of the time to school. Then we got two slices along to eat in the school. And that's nice, something very good.

SIGRIST: What time would you eat lunch?

HINTZE: Well, when we was children, we eat not lunch. We ate between our bread and mother had no time for sitting down because she had to—she was her cooking. People came in her house. We had a big room, eating room and there was them sitting. When I get older, when the oldest daughter got married, then I had to do it, to bring the meat in, the food in and bring it to them. This was always ten or eleven men.

SIGRIST: Always men?

HINTZE: It was—yeah, working in the office, and my mother was a good cook and not too expensive, so they came for eating. They had their meals. There was sometime working very long and—

SIGRIST: And they were always men?

HINTZE: Men.

SIGRIST: No women lived—

HINTZE: No, no.

SIGRIST: They were always men.

HINTZE: Yeah, always men.

SIGRIST: Tell me about school. You mentioned school. What sticks out in your mind about going to school in Hamburg as a young girl?

HINTZE: Well, it was a plain school, as in German they say [unclear]. [unclear] that means people together. It was like here only here's is in English and there was—in Germany, the same have the same which reading and writing and singing and spelling. It is all the same, only German and here's English.

SIGRIST: Did you enjoy school as a child?

HINTZE: Yes, we had to. Oh, my father was very strict. Then we got another [unclear].

SIGRIST: How were your parents educated?

HINTZE: Well, my mother, she came from the country. Very plain, but she was a cook. Oh, my God!

SIGRIST: Could she read and write?

HINTZE: Yes.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read and write?

HINTZE: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And your father the same?

HINTZE: Oh, yeah. Father had his own store as his repair store and I was in the store where store they said in the German—I don't know what they would say here. Where you sell all this?

SIGRIST: A shop.

HINTZE: A shop, yeah, yeah. He had a shop and then with all the little things what belongs on the motorcycle or on the bicycle and if people come and have the accident, and they brought it. In the back there was the big room, where father and then one of the brothers.

SIGRIST: They used to work on the things back there.

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

HINTZE: Evangalish.

SIGRIST: Oh, Evangelical, as you would say that in English.

HINTZE: Oh, say it again.

SIGRIST: Evangelical.

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Say it in German?

HINTZE: Evangalish.

SIGRIST: Yeah, it's the same.

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is that Protestant?

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Is that a type—is it Lutheran Protestant or it's its own—

HINTZE: No, it's—

SIGRIST: It's a Protestant—

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you celebrated Christmas as a child.

HINTZE: Oh, that was the best. [Laughs] My father, he was very big in this because he likes to give and he put everything so nice paper, nice package, and we had to make it [unclear] took the time.

SIGRIST: To wrap the presents.

HINTZE: But he want—he want this the way, because he want to see our face, how excited we was to see what is in, in the package.

SIGRIST: Is there a Christmas present that you got as a child that sticks out in your mind? Something you still remember getting?

HINTZE: No, not exactly. Yeah, everything was good.

SIGRIST: How did you practice your religion at home?

HINTZE: Well, on the Sunday we had to go to church Sunday morning and during the week was always day where we had to go, too. Maybe afternoon, and that's all.

SIGRIST: Is there a prayer that you remember saying as a child in German? Did you learn prayers or anything like that?

HINTZE: No. No, no.

SIGRIST: Tell me how you met—oh, I know. Tell me about World War I. Tell me about the period of World War I, 1914, '15, '16.

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that period?

HINTZE: Well, then I remember that the English came over and put bombs in the cities. That was terrible. Then we had to go down in the cellar to be saved. And who had not a house, they build a big building where the people then go the time over when England was over there in the air and dropped the bombs.

SIGRIST: Did you see the bombs dropping?

HINTZE: Well, better not because they was so exploding, if you not too far away, you could pass away from this, could hurt.

SIGRIST: Did anyone in your family get hurt during the war?

HINTZE: No. No, no, no.

SIGRIST: Did anyone have to serve in the German army during World War I, your brothers or—

HINTZE: No. No. No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember perhaps food shortages at that time.

HINTZE: Oh, we had not food shortages because my mother, she was a cook and she cooked for other people. They came. They was working in the office, I remember in the office by the hospital, very big hospital and they had plenty people working there. They came over to my mother to eat there.

SIGRIST: So you always had enough to eat during the war.

HINTZE: Ach, yes, I can say yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when the war was over? Do you remember when World War I ended?

HINTZE: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

HINTZE: Let me see. It was just—I know it was all happy. That I know because we had always to go in the bunker that was here. If you have a cellar, that was way in the cellar and if not, they built as a bunker, they called it.

SIGRIST: Bunkers.

HINTZE: Yeah, and the people went into the bunkers because they were all safe, so that when the bomb fear, that didn't hurt the building.

SIGRIST: And that's what you remember the most about that time period, is having to go into these bunkers.

HINTZE: Yes, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

HINTZE: And because there was—[Makes Siren Sound] that was the sign of the long times. Then we know, oh-oh, the England is coming and then we took to what we need was very important, and then we went to the bunker.

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

SIGRIST: Tell me about how you met the man that would become your husband?

HINTZE: [Laughs] [Pause] Oh, through my sister because he was in the delicatessen store and he was there, the first man, and she was a customer and she liked to talk with him. And then he asked—and then she said, “Well, I have one sister.” Then he said, “She’s a good liking lie you?” [Laughs] “Oh, yes,” she said. I remember this, she told me this. So we came this way together.

SIGRIST: What were you attracted to? What did you like about your husband to be, before you married him?

HINTZE: Well, he was always happy like me and he was singing and he was interested in everything and could do everything. Repair. He had a bicycle, his own bicycle. He made it, if something was wrong, he repaired it. When my father was very busy in his workshop, then he came over when he had the time and helped him. Yeah, that I remember.

SIGRIST: And how did your father feel about this?

HINTZE: Well, he likes him very much because he saw how he is working and interested.

SIGRIST: Bicycles are very important in your life, aren’t they?

HINTZE: Yes.

SIGRIST: They keep coming up.

HINTZE: That was the time, the bicycle. Now is the motorcycle. Yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your wedding. Did you get married in Hamburg?

HINTZE: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: Tell me what sticks out in your mind about the wedding?

HINTZE: Well, the wedding Evangelish and we went—I was in white—that is [unclear] in Germany. If it is not now, I couldn’t tell. Everything in white, the white dress.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what the dress looked like?

HINTZE: Ach, beautiful and all the way down and here there’s—what you all over the—

SIGRIST: Like a veil over your head?

HINTZE: Veil, yeah, I couldn't get the word. A veil, white veil. Everything nice and especially a nice pocketbook. We got maybe before from the husband. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: That was his gift to you?

HINTZE: Yes. Yeah, and then was money in there.

SIGRIST: Where were you married?

HINTZE: In Hamburg.

SIGRIST: But where in Hamburg?

HINTZE: The [unclear – German].

SIGRIST: Was it a church or a house?

HINTZE: No, my parents had their own house. Father was a man who did everything and he know how to do, and we was married there. No, first in the church.

SIGRIST: You were married in the church.

HINTZE: In the church, yeah, Evangelish, and then from there to the—we was walking. It was not too far from our house to church. So all friends and for the boys they had girlfriend, they asked if she could visit. My father said yes. So it was the family all together.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you felt during the marriage ceremony? How did you feel inside during the ceremony?

HINTZE: Happy. I was very happy. Yeah, I was always happy because very certain that I was crying, oh, no. No.

SIGRIST: Tell me about how it was that you eventually then came to this country, to the United States in 1923?

HINTZE: Oh, my oldest—eldest? No, oldest—

SIGRIST: Oldest.

HINTZE: My oldest sister, she was from here.

SIGRIST: When did she come?

HINTZE: She was here eighteen years old and friends of her, they want to go to America. So they were so happy that she could take my sister along, and my sister was right away working. So then I, when I came over, then they say I have some from my sister, she had some for me couple places where I could go for cleaning. Not only cleaning, but the fine work. So nice, and table and when they have company, that was very rich people there.

SIGRIST: How did your husband feel about—how did he feel about going to America and all of that sort of thing?

HINTZE: Yeah, he was [unclear] here. No, he was—let me see. Mmmm. Well, I was going with him here and then my older sister, she was in America and then I told him that she would like to come over and so my husband, then he want that we get married first.

SIGRIST: So that's why you got married in Germany.

HINTZE: In Germany, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see.

HINTZE: Because, yeah, he had no—his father was not living and my parents. So this, he wanted all together.

SIGRIST: When you were Germany growing up, what did you know about America before you got here?

HINTZE: Well, only that what my sister wrote us. That she likes this here and was very happy and everything and has to work.

SIGRIST: Well, how did your husband feel about going to America? Did he want to go?

HINTZE: Well, yes. Yeah. He was young. He was young, anyhow. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Tell me about what you had to do to get ready to leave Germany?

HINTZE: Well, my parents were still living, my father and mother, so they was concerned that I had everything so what I need, the necessary things and everything was clean and nice.

SIGRIST: Were there things that they gave you?

HINTZE: Yes.

SIGRIST: What? What did they give you?

HINTZE: Because I was still working for my father. I never was working for other people, always in his store, and my brothers, two brothers, they was working in his [unclear] they called it. What to say here.

SIGRIST: What did your parents give you before you left for America?

HINTZE: Well, as a—not only money. Some money. Money, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much they gave you?

HINTZE: No. No, that I couldn't say. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you and your husband, did you have to undergo medical exams in Hamburg before you left?

HINTZE: Yes. Yes. Yeah. yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

HINTZE: Well, that only you go to the doctor. He examined you and he put paper out and he got the paper. Maybe he send it other places that I remember. That was all.

SIGRIST: Do you remember—do you remember packing to get ready to leave? What did you pack to take with you to America?

HINTZE: Especially things for my personal, for remembrance.

SIGRIST: What were those things?

HINTZE: Yeah, what was that? Maybe sometime only a very nice picture or the pocketbook or something that I like, what I would like to bring along to America.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of suitcases you had?

HINTZE: Oh, yeah. [Laughs] Had one, a big one with—let's just say in German for this. I don't know.

SIGRIST: Like divisions inside it?

HINTZE: Yeah. Yes, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Like a big trunk, you're gesturing.

HINTZE: Like a trunk, yes. That's I could say trunk and then for hand—the trunk goes on a ship, as I have nothing to do with the trunk. Only before I came home, but then that being on the ship, I got it in the house where I was living with my sister.

SIGRIST: What about your husband, did he take anything special that sticks out in your mind before he left?

HINTZE: No.

SIGRIST: You're traveling together with him, yes?

HINTZE: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your family give any kind of a party or a send off for you?

HINTZE: Oh, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about that?

HINTZE: Well, that was a real party for the aunt and the uncle all the whole family came together, and all that we was eating, my mother made it. She was a cook. Her own cook in her house and the people came here to her house and was eating there.

SIGRIST: Right. How did you feel about leaving Germany? How did you feel inside about leaving your home?

HINTZE: I was happy here. I was happy because his parents was very—no, the mother was not living no more. The father and the father, he likes me very much and I'm very honest. He likes me so much, he would marry me if I would not marry his son. [Laughs] That I remember. Yeah, he likes me so much. I could do anything, but I don't, only what you do.

SIGRIST: Where did you go to get on the ship?

HINTZE: First by train, Hamburg [unclear] that was the main barn, what do you say where they all did—my English and my German is terrible now.

SIGRIST: Did you say Bremerhoffen, is that where you went?

HINTZE: Bremerhoffen. Bremerhoffen with the ship.

SIGRIST: I see, so you went to Hamburg—you were in Hamburg already.

HINTZE: Hamburg, yeah, and then with the train and we even passed France and was—I'd say we was only two or three days in France. That was like here, not so expensive because it was all included.

SIGRIST: When you bought your ship ticket, all of that was included?

HINTZE: All, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much your ship ticket cost?

HINTZE: That I don't remember no more.

SIGRIST: Where did you actually get on the ship?

HINTZE: In Hamburg.

SIGRIST: In Hamburg?

HINTZE: Hamburg, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what—

HINTZE: There's a big—big water for all the big ship from all the other land coming on and from there they going out to America on the other citizen.

SIGRIST: Did anything happen to you before you got on the ship?

HINTZE: No.

SIGRIST: Did they examine you again or—

HINTZE: Oh, yeah. That you did on the ship.

SIGRIST: On the ship?

HINTZE: On the ship.

SIGRIST: Do you know what the name of the ship was?

HINTZE: No. No, I couldn't say that.

SIGRIST: Had you ever been on a ship before?

HINTZE: No.

SIGRIST: What did you think when you saw this big thing that you had to get into?

HINTZE: No, I saw that here when my oldest sister went to America. Then I saw how it looks. So I was not surprised. I knew it, as I came here.

SIGRIST: Did you stay with your husband in the ship?

HINTZE: Yes.

SIGRIST: And can you describe where you slept on the ship?

HINTZE: Yeah, this was really a nice little room in the ship, and elegant everything. It was nice.

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about the time that you spent on the ship?

HINTZE: Well, it was every day and every hour was happy and nice.

SIGRIST: What did you do on the ship?

HINTZE: Oh, we was playing games. What you go on ship, there is all—looks so nice. You don't do nothing, than standing on the railing and look and there down to the water or around you.

SIGRIST: Did you meet any of the staff on the ship? People who worked on the ship?

HINTZE: Yes, I met, not—yeah, I met them because my sister, she was before I went over she went to all this. She went over and she sent me the money to come after, and yeah, there was the first who was working there on the ship. Not really working, has to order everything to the other. So he introduced because mentioned my sister before, he was very nice and he show me everything. I had a very good time.

SIGRIST: What about your husband? Did he enjoy his time on the ship?

HINTZE: Yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did either of you get seasick?

HINTZE: No. No. No. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you remember what time of the year this is that you're traveling?

HINTZE: Let me see. That was in the winter time, I'd say. Yeah, in November. Yeah, in December I get married. 22nd of December. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And this is like a year later then, after you'd been married?

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about where you ate on the ship.

HINTZE: Oh, like here in the big ships going away, it's all the same only there in German and here in English. All the same. The same way like in—

SIGRIST: Did they have a special place where food was served on the ship?

HINTZE: Oh, yes. Sure. Ach. I will say the English people come, not with this how it is in Germany, the ships and everything. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you see anything on the ship that was new to you, that you had never seen before?

HINTZE: No, no, because it was not—so between the time we go sometime, then we want to going on a Saturday or a Sunday, so little, they let us go to the ship. We could go. It was some ship you could go on the ship.

SIGRIST: I see. This is back in Hamburg you could do that.

HINTZE: In Hamburg, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you know how long the ship took to get to New York?

HINTZE: Eight days.

SIGRIST: Eight days.

HINTZE: Eight days.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

HINTZE: Yes! Oh—

SIGRIST: Did you know what that was?

HINTZE: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did you—

HINTZE: Because that I know from school. Yeah, I had that in the school, Statue of Liberty. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did anything special happen when the ship went by the Statue of Liberty?

HINTZE: No, everything was so nice and smooth and good.

SIGRIST: Tell me what happened when the ship got to New York. What happened next?

HINTZE: Then I saw some—my sister standing waving. [Laughs] She was excited. So it is really like here, only German and English. But it's the same, really like here.

SIGRIST: When the ship came to New York, you said that you had to go to Ellis Island.

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about going to Ellis Island?

HINTZE: Well, then we had to go on the other ship, a smaller ship, to Ellis Island. To Ellis Island and the paper and so we was there for couple days.

SIGRIST: Oh, you had to stay a couple days at Ellis Island.

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Why did you have to stay there?

HINTZE: That was included in the price.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you slept on Ellis Island?

HINTZE: We had our room.

SIGRIST: You had a room when you were at Ellis Island?

HINTZE: Oh, yes, and everything perfect.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what happened to you while you were there? What did they do?

HINTZE: Well, that is up to you, what you do because you can do anything there, but I was always standing and looking in the water. I like to see it all the waves.

SIGRIST: But at Ellis Island—that's on the ship.

HINTZE: On the ship.

SIGRIST: But at Ellis Island, what happened at Ellis Island? What did you have to do at Ellis Island?

HINTZE: Well, it was only two days I think we went on there.

SIGRIST: Did they examine you at Ellis Island?

HINTZE: Always.

SIGRIST: You were always examined.

HINTZE: Examined, yes. Yeah, on the American ship, on the other ship. Yes, yeah, always examined. That's the main thing. You have to be healthy.

SIGRIST: Did anyone talk to you at Ellis Island?

HINTZE: Well, yes. Not much, but a little bit.

SIGRIST: Where did you meet your sister? Where did she come to meet you?

HINTZE: In America.

SIGRIST: Yes, I know, but where in New York—where did you meet your sister once you got here?

HINTZE: Yeah, in New York.

SIGRIST: Did she come to Ellis Island or did you go to New York to meet her?

HINTZE: No, she came to New York because that was too much for her. Ellis Island takes too much time and she made a chart when the ship goes here to New York. So I went in there and then I saw my sister.

SIGRIST: How did it feel to see your sister again?

HINTZE: Oh. [Laughs] Happy.

SIGRIST: Did your sister know your husband?

HINTZE: No. No, only writing. But there was writing.

SIGRIST: Oh, writing. Writing letters, I see.

HINTZE: Writing letters.

SIGRIST: Well, where did your sister take you after she met you?

HINTZE: To her house.

SIGRIST: Which was where?

HINTZE: In Hoboken.

SIGRIST: And can you describe where she lived, what it looked like?

HINTZE: Oh, yeah, a very nice house and very big because she had every day couple man coming for eating. That was her pocketbook money that she made extra. Yeah, that I remember.

SIGRIST: So your sister is doing the same thing that your mother's doing in Germany.

HINTZE: Like my mother. That's right.

SIGRIST: Bringing in boarders.

HINTZE: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the actual—it's a house that she has? You said she was living in a house or an apartment?

HINTZE: Yes, let me see. Yes, yeah. She had, but very small everything there. Even two bedroom, bathrooms. I remember, yeah.

SIGRIST: Was your sister married at this time?

HINTZE: Yes.

SIGRIST: Oh, she was.

HINTZE: She was married when she got over with her husband.

SIGRIST: So she married, too, there.

HINTZE: Very, very young and very pretty she is. Oh, was she pretty.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay with your sister?

HINTZE: Well, until I got—no, when I came on, the next day I has to go rich people to help them. Not cleaning, but helping. The table and that everything is in order with the clothes.

SIGRIST: Who taught you how to do those things?

HINTZE: Because my sister knew that I'm very—I know it. I was in Germany I did it for a little while for other people, for rich people.

SIGRIST: How did your husband feel about you getting a job so quickly?

HINTZE: Well, he did everything. He knew I did everything what was right, so and he trust me. It was all right.

SIGRIST: Did he get a job?

HINTZE: Yes.

SIGRIST: What job did he get?

HINTZE: He was the first man in a delicatessen store.

SIGRIST: Which is what he was doing in Germany, right?

HINTZE: In Germany, yes.

SIGRIST: But this is in Hoboken?

HINTZE: This is in Ho—no, he was New York.

SIGRIST: New York, but you were living in Hoboken?

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, he always with the train in the beginning to save the money with a bicycle from Hoboken to New York. With a bicycle. You know what a bicycle is?

SIGRIST: Yes.

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He would have had to take the bicycle on the train to go into New York.

HINTZE: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me some more about your work at the home of the rich people.

HINTZE: Well, not cleaning. She had a woman there for cleaning, but I have to take care of her, of her dress and what she was wearing and helping her when she got dressed.

SIGRIST: Did she have clothes that were difficult to get into?

HINTZE: No. No, but everything elegant and rich because it was rich people there. My sister was giving me this job because when she told the people her sister will come and she likes to work, oh, she told me.

SIGRIST: Where did the rich people live?

HINTZE: In Hoboken in Weehawken.

SIGRIST: Weehawken.

HINTZE: Weehawken. They had the house in Weehawken.

SIGRIST: How long did you work for the rich people?

HINTZE: Well, not quite a year because then I get married.

SIGRIST: Well, you were married already when you got to America.

HINTZE: No, no, over here.

SIGRIST: You got married in America?

HINTZE: Yeah.

SIGRIST: I thought you were married in Germany.

HINTZE: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: Where did you meet your husband?

HINTZE: In Germany.

SIGRIST: Yes.

HINTZE: He was the first man in a delicatessen store.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, but—

HINTZE: And when my parents passed away, then I don't want to get married. So I got married here.

SIGRIST: Oh, okay. All right. How did you learn English?

HINTZE: I had to learn it.

SIGRIST: But how? Did someone teach you?

HINTZE: No, no.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the first words that you learned?

HINTZE: Every word what I needed I learned.

?: Time up yet?

SIGRIST: Just in a minute.

?: Okay.

HINTZE: Because here I could only speak German, but I learned it also very fast, anyhow. Nobody has to tell me. Soon from talking I know how to speak English.

SIGRIST: We have just a couple minutes left and you said that you like to sing, and I was hoping—you sang us one German song. Can you sing another German song for us on tape?

HINTZE: Uh-hmm. Not yet.

SIGRIST: No? Okay. I thought maybe you would like to.

HINTZE: No, not yet.

SIGRIST: Did you ever go back to Germany to visit?

HINTZE: I didn't get it right.

SIGRIST: Did you go back to Germany ever?

HINTZE: Oh, yes, four times.

SIGRIST: Four times!

HINTZE: But then I stopped because it was too expensive. Too expensive. Not only the trip, even what you bring to Germany or from Germany to America. It was expensive.

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

HINTZE: No, no. American, yeah, because I was in America. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Hintze, I want to thank you very much for letting me ask you these questions.

HINTZE: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: You're very kind to let me come and—

HINTZE: That's all right, yeah.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Gretchen Hintze on Thursday, September 28th, 1995 at the Hamilton Park Care Facility in Jersey City. Thank you.

HINTZE: Yes, you're welcome.

[End of Interview]