

**EI-789**

**PAULINE EMILY SIGRIST PERCH**

**BIRTHDATE: MAY 3, 1912**

**INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 16, 1996**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 84**

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**INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**

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**SHIP:**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES:**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1996. I'm in Worcester, Massachusetts, and I'm here with Pauline Perch.

PERCH: Pauline E.

SIGRIST: Pauline E. E?

PERCH: Emily. Pauline Emily Sigrist Perch. Paul is my great aunt and she is the youngest sister of my father's father. My grandfather's youngest sister, and Pauline did not come through Ellis Island, but I have decided to interview her because she grew up in a French household with immigrant parents. And because we find so few people who came from France, I thought this would be a good addition to the collection. Even though she was born in America, she can talk about what it was like to grow up in a French household.

So can we begin by you giving me your birth date please? Yes.

PERCH: May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1912.

SIGRIST: And can you tell me where you were born?

PERCH: I was born in Manchester, New Hampshire.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about the day you were born? Did anyone ever tell you any stories about the day you were born?

PERCH: Well, my mother was dead. My mother died eleven months before my birth, so my father had a neighbor come in and she helped with the delivery. Then he had a maid, naturally, because my mother had passed away. So they took over. And then we had a neighbor, Mrs. LaChance, who was very, very interested in this new baby. So she has always been—well, she and her husband and daughter were always wonderful to me. They used to buy me Christmas gifts and birthday gifts and they were forever buying me things.

SIGRIST: May I ask? You said your mother died eleven months before you were born. I think you mean eleven months after you were born.

PERCH: Right. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Just so there's no mistake. [Laughs] May I—we'll pause. [tape off/on] Resuming now. What was your father's name?

PERCH: My father's name was Eugene.

SIGRIST: Eugene, and tell me what you know about his family background.

PERCH: Well, all I know was that he was born in Alsace Lorraine.

SIGRIST: In France?

PERCH: In France. And then he probably was in his twenties when they moved to Maine. They were there several years and then they moved to Manchester, New Hampshire.

SIGRIST: What do you know, if anything, about his going from Europe to the United States?

PERCH: I really don't know much about his coming over.

SIGRIST: Do you know how old he was when he came? Or what year it was that he came?

PERCH: No, I don't. He had relatives by the name of Quirin, Q-U-I-R-I-N, and they were well-to-do relatives and they were in New Hampshire and I think they're the ones that sort of coaxed him to come and live here. And that's about what I know. Then they used to keep in touch and then he worked for them for a while. They owned a—well, they used to call-

they didn't call it liquor store then, did they? He worked in one of those for a while and then he bought his own manufacture.

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just—[tape off/on] Now we've been joined by Pauline's husband, Charlie Perch, my great uncle. Did your father ever tell any stories about his childhood? Or his growing up in France at all?

PERCH: No, he never did talk too much about his growing up. No. We knew very little about our background.

SIGRIST: What was his personality like? [paper rustling] Well, we're on audio tape, so they can't see that. [Laughs] You've stuck your thumbs under your arms. Can you describe what that means in words?

PERCH: Well, he was a—well, he was a religious man and he was very pompous. He was good to us kids. I will tell the whole truth, and he married my step-mother. He met her. Her sister died and she took care of the two youngsters she had. So that's how he met her. So then she used to come over and first thing. I don't think he went out with her very long and they were married.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you were married?

PERCH: I was three years old.

SIGRIST: You were three.

PERCH: When he was remarried.

SIGRIST: All right, before we get to when he remarried, tell me what you know about your mother. What was her name?

PERCH: Her name was Eugenie.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name, do you remember?

PERCH: Gaudet.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

PERCH: Yeah, Eugenie Gaudet. She was Eugene. Yeah, and—

SIGRIST: How do you spell Gaudet?

PERCH: G-A-U-D-E-T, and whether she put another T-E, could be, because they spell it both ways. G-A-U-D-E-T and then T-E.

SIGRIST: What do you know about her family background?

PERCH: Well, she was brought up in I think Victoria Ville, Canada.

SIGRIST: Where was she born, do you know?

PERCH: She was born in Canada.

SIGRIST: Canada, uh-hmm.

PERCH: I imagine Victoria Ville, probably. And she—I think she had heart trouble when my father married her and so she was up and down and down and up. But she had six children. One of them died in infancy.

SIGRIST: Do you know what year they were married?

PERCH: Well, they must have been—I think they were married a year before Andy was born.

SIGRIST: Andrew is your oldest brother.

PERCH: Yeah, your grandfather.

SIGRIST: My grandfather, right.

PERCH: So you must have the date that he was born.

SIGRIST: I was going to ask you. I don't know off the top of my head. It was 1903 or 1904.

PERCH: Yeah, somewhere around there.

SIGRIST: So you think they were married just before that?

PERCH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were her parents French? Was that a French family?

PERCH: Yes, they were a French family, yeah. From Victoria Ville.

SIGRIST: From Victoria Ville.

PERCH: That's what I told you, huh?

SIGRIST: Do you know how your father met your mother?

PERCH: No, I really don't know. I don't know. Is that something?

SIGRIST: Very few people do. [Laughs] I always ask that question, but very few people can actually answer it.

PERCH: No.

SIGRIST: All right, well, so they met. They married.

PERCH: They met and they married.

SIGRIST: Name their children for me. Name the children that they had.

PERCH: They had Andrew.

SIGRIST: He was the oldest?

PERCH: Andrew was the oldest. And then there was Georgette, and then there was Emile, but he died. He was—I don't think he was a year old when he died.

SIGRIST: And his name is Emil, E-M-I-L?

PERCH: E-M-I-L-E. In French they spelled it E-M-I-L-E. And then there was Lilly and myself. That's what we were, Andy, Georgette, Lillian and me, and of course the one that died.

SIGRIST: Emile who died. Do you know what he died of?

PERCH: In infancy.

SIGRIST: Or do you know anything? Don't know?

PERCH: No. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: Okay. Do you remember, growing up were there grandparents on either side?

PERCH: No. I remember my mother's grandmother coming to visit us from Canada, but other than that, I don't remember any other.

SIGRIST: Was that after your father had remarried?

PERCH: That's after, yes. She came to visit and she was from Canada.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your mother's grandmother? What sticks out in your mind about that visit?

PERCH: Well, all I remember is when—they my father had a, what do they call it? Sulkies or what? The horse. And she came. Of course, he'd gone to the depot to pick her up. She'd come from Canada and I remember her coming in and she had a satchel. She was a shrimp like I am, and that's really all that I remember about her. I don't remember being hugged or nothing.

SIGRIST: Did she bring you a gift, perhaps, from Canada that you might remember?

PERCH: No. As I tell you, all I remember is seeing her get into that sulky or whatever and she had her grip on the little bag. That's all I remember about her.

SIGRIST: How old were you at that time?

PERCH: Oh, I must have been two or three. Three years old, I guess.

SIGRIST: What do you know about the circumstances around the death of your true mother?

PERCH: My own mother?

SIGRIST: Your own mother.

PERCH: Well, she had a heart condition, and that's all I know is what I hear. She used to—well, off and on there, she used to have—she'd collapse and then they'd bring her to and then she'd go on. She always said that she felt better when she was pregnant. I remember that, those people that were so good to me. She's the one that told me that. She said she felt much better when she was pregnant because we used to say, "My Lord, getting pregnant all the time and having a heart condition," but she just felt better.

SIGRIST: Hmm. So that's what she died of, this heart condition?

PERCH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes. To the best of your knowledge?

PERCH: Yeah. Did your father ever talk about his first wife, your mother, ever, as you were growing up? I mean even later on.

PERCH: No. No, he never talked about her. No.

SIGRIST: All right, so your father remarries and the woman's name that he remarries is what? What's the name of the woman?

PERCH: What was the name?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

PERCH: Her name was Martha Giguere, G-I-G-U-E-RE. Giguere, the last name. Martha. Martine. They call her M-A-R-T-I-N-E in French, but that's Martha in English.

SIGRIST: And what do you know about her background?

PERCH: Well, her father was a doctor and they were moving from Canada and coming to the United States and he died suddenly on the way here. Then—well, that's the story with him. But then there were three boys and two girls. Yeah, I think there were three boys and two girls and one brother of hers was a pharmacist and he was very good to her, you know, before she was married. That's about all I know about them.

SIGRIST: What's your earliest recollection of your step-mother?

PERCH: Well, I remember she was a hardworking woman and all she worked for was to please my father. She used to call him Mr. Sigrist and we never could go anywhere without asking him because, you know, we'd ask her, you know, "Can we?" "You have to ask your father." So he was the boss, period, and she was very, very good to us. There's no other woman that would take in—well, there was Andy, Georgette, Lillian and myself and do all the work she did. I realize it now. I didn't then. And she used to see that we were well-dressed and in those days, you know, the girls had dresses with little ruffles. They had to iron those. She'd stay up until twelve, one o'clock in the morning ironing dresses for us. She was very, very good to us.

SIGRIST: You mentioned earlier that she was taking care of two children.

PERCH: Yes, her sister died and she left two children. They lived right next door to us and that's how she met my father. Well, she stayed—they were grown up when she married my father.

SIGRIST: Oh, so they were older than you were.

PERCH: And they adored her. Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about growing up with your brothers and sisters. What sticks out in your mind about being a child in the house with two sisters and a brother?

PERCH: Well, Andy and I always got along better than the others.

SIGRIST: The oldest and the youngest.

PERCH: Yes. Yes, we get along very well. We were just alike, she used to say. My sister, Georgette, she was very—she was beautiful because a doctor at the hospital knew her, you know. We'd go to church on Sunday and he told me once, he says, "She's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen." That was the nun. She—but she was bashful. Oh, my God, it was terrible.

SIGRIST: You should say for the sake of the tape that she later became a Sister. She later went into—

PERCH: Yes, she worked in an office in one of the stores. She worked there, I think from age twenty probably and she'd come home and there's several fellows wanted to take her out, but she never went out with them. And she used to play cards. My father was a card player. He used to love to play cards. So Sunday she'd play cards with my father and other than that—well, she used to, you know, help with the house. Clean house and—

SIGRIST: What did you and Andrew enjoy doing together?

PERCH: Andy and I always got along.

SIGRIST: But was there something that you enjoyed specifically doing together?

PERCH: Well, Andy was on his own. See, he never—we never went out together, but he—we always related, Andy and I, and well, Georgette used to be [unclear] and we used to wear these hats, see, they were cloth hats like, and I had a gray one and I loved it. And of course, kids, dirty hands and whatnot. So she threw it out. She threw it away, but she used to help around the house, and she used to play the piano. She played very well. Then she worked in that office there, questions.

SIGRIST: Was there a large French community in Manchester, New Hampshire?

PERCH: Yes. Manchester's very French. See, I went to French schools. I went to grammar school French. I went to high school French High School, and I went to—well, the hospital I graduated from really was French nuns.

SIGRIST: The hospital meaning, we should also say for the sake of the tape that you later became a nurse.

PERCH: What?

SIGRIST: You later became a nurse. When you say the hospital that you graduated from—

PERCH: Yes, yes. Yes, I went into training. I was eighteen years old. I graduated from this private high school and I was—well, I was seventeen or eighteen. No, I was eighteen.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl, what language did you speak in the house?

PERCH: French. Yeah, we always spoke—oh, yeah, my father is French. He used to speak—well, you could tell he was French, when he spoke English. But my step-mother spoke beautiful English, but of course, my own mother never knew.

SIGRIST: Well, and of course your step-mother is from Canada, French, correct?

PERCH: Yes.

SIGRIST: And your father is European French.

PERCH: Right. Right.

SIGRIST: Well, do you remember some of your father's favorite expressions that he would say in French?

PERCH: Not—

SIGRIST: No?

PERCH: No. No, I don't because he never talked to much. You know, he used to come home—of course, he worked a long day. He'd go to work in the morning. You know, he owned this grocery store and then he had a sausage manufacture. So his days were long, and then he had gardens. When he wasn't in the house, oh, he had this big garden. Oh! And then well he had a horse. Well, he used to clean the horse himself, you know, take care of the horse. But I never saw him lift a finger to pick up a fork off the table. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Was there some sort of activity that he enjoyed doing with his children?

PERCH: He loved to play cards with us, and of course—oh, poor Aunt Gabrielle, his sister. He had two sister and this sister, she lived about, oh, let's say twenty miles from where we did and every—and she used to work six days a week and on Sunday, so help me God, he'd bring us there. Then she'd feed us and boy was she a cook. That was awful. Oh, my God! And she—that's where we'd go and then he had a sister that lived in Lawrence.

SIGRIST: Why was that awful? What was the awful part?

PERCH: Oh, why did he? She worked and he'd bring us there every Sunday and bring all his kids with him and then she'd feed us all. Oh, wait a minute!

SIGRIST: Was she from France, also?

PERCH: I don't know whether she was born in France. I know the oldest sister was. He had a sister that lived in Lawrence. She was born in France. The other one, I don't think she was born. Aunt Gabriele. I doubt it.

SIGRIST: Was Aunt Gabriele married?

PERCH: Yes, she married. She had three sons.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about his older sister who lived in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

PERCH: Oh, she was—she was married to a jeweler and in those days they had their jewelry in the house. He used to have this room there and he used to, he had jewelry. And of course, those days the women—well, my Aunt Gabriele worked, but the one in Lawrence never worked. She was a good soul, but—

SIGRIST: Again, we're an audio tape. You're making a motion like she talked a lot.

PERCH: She was bossy. She wanted all her kids to be religious nuns and what not. Well, they weren't about to be.

SIGRIST: Did she ever speak at all about Europe?

PERCH: Well, they used to talk among each other, but we weren't interested and we wouldn't listen. See, we were kids so I never heard too much about it, and my father never talked too much about anything either. Because I remember these people, LaChance lived—they took me in after my mother died. They took care of me for probably six months or so. I don't remember now, and I was there. Oh, and I used to love them. I used to go there after school. Even in training, after I graduated, they'd get out

of work and I'd be over there. They—this undertaker came there and he was talking and so she introduced me. So he said, "You Gene Sigrist's daughter?" So she said, "Yes." He said, "He adored his wife," my mother. He said, "He adored her." Yeah. So that's all I know.

SIGRIST: Can you talk to me a little bit about going to French schools as a child? What did—how was that different than regular schools?

PERCH: Well, I imagine it isn't too much different than the public school, but you learned French and religion. See, they had French and religion, but other than that you had the same subjects. But we'd learn French and then we had religion.

SIGRIST: Did you celebrate Bastille Day or were the holidays the same?

PERCH: No.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that.

PERCH: No.

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

PERCH: What religion? We were Catholic.

SIGRIST: And was there a church that your family went to?

PERCH: Oh, yes. We went to St. Anthony's Church. It was about, oh, a ten minutes walk from home.

SIGRIST: Is that a French church?

PERCH: A French church, yes.

SIGRIST: It was a French church.

PERCH: St. Anthony's.

SIGRIST: Did you learn any—how did you practice your religion at home?

PERCH: Well, every night after supper we used to say—he used to the Holy Rosary, you know. Used to pray, every single night.

SIGRIST: Who is he?

PERCH: My father.

SIGRIST: Your father.

PERCH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And in what language—

PERCH: And we'd all kneel, you know.

SIGRIST: What language did you pray in?

PERCH: In French.

SIGRIST: Can you say a prayer for me in French on the tape? Slowly?

PERCH: I can say the Our Father.

SIGRIST: Yes? In French?

PERCH: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes, please. Slowly.

PERCH: [prays in French – forgets and continues] That's the Our Father.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Were you allowed to speak English in the house?

PERCH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, we spoke English and we spoke French, too. Oh, God, he never stopped us from speaking. But one time we had this French teacher that came from France, and of course she had that French accent. The nuns that we had didn't have the French accent. After all, they were Canadian French, but this one had the regular, and I said something and it was derogative, so he whacked me. Said I couldn't again. Oh, he hit me right in the ear there, oh. Yeah, my father was—oh, yeah, he used to hit. He never spanked us, but we got a clout across the—Andy got plenty of clouts across the face from him.

SIGRIST: Do you remember—do you remember a time like you just told me, but another occasion where you did something that made him unhappy and he punished you?

PERCH: Oh, well, I'd often have to stay in. He didn't always hit me, but see, I'd said something against the French. So that's what. But I used to have to stay in. You know, there was a back porch and I could stay on the porch like in the summertime there, but they wouldn't let me go down in the yard. But he never hit us too much. He hit me that time and he

whacked Andy more than once, too. But I don't think Lillian and Georgette ever got hit.

SIGRIST: But he hit you that time.

PERCH: He had—he had a temper.

SIGRIST: That's right, and he hit you because you had said something about—

PERCH: Against the French. Yes, that's the time. I don't ever remember him hitting us besides that, but boy did he give me a clout. Phew.

SIGRIST: Were there any other ways that your family maintained French culture in the house? For instance, what about food?

PERCH: Well, we always spoke French, and then, well, she used to make all that I know was pea soup because he used to say she made the best pea soup of anybody. [Laughs] But other than that, I don't remember anything real French. No.

SIGRIST: Could your father speak English if he wanted to?

PERCH: Oh, yeah. Oh, oh, he spoke English and of course some words were broken English. Oh, yes, after all, he had a business. So, oh, yes, he spoke English.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about his business? You said he had a grocery store and a sausage manufacture. What do you remember about that?

PERCH: When he had the grocery store, I don't remember the grocery store because I was too young because when I was old enough, he had the sausage manufacture. But the sausage manufacture, the downstairs was where he had the grocery store. Then there was an upstairs. So he still had the grocery store. Then he started making sausage upstairs, and then finally when things I guess got from bad to worse there, grocery stores weren't making money, then he rented it, the downstairs to this—oh, they were printers. A printing manufacture and then he had the upstairs. But then downstairs in back where the printing shop was, there was a big room where they used to string, you know, the sausages. You know, they put them on these long, long, I don't know what they call them. They're not sticks, but you know, they're about this big and then the sausages are tied on kind of not a string, but a rope, and then put onto that. Then he used to bring them down to smoke them. Smoked sausages, and that I remember.

Then I remember I think he used to do a lot of charity, too, because there were these people that lived next door to where that

sausage manufacture was, and he used to—well, she lived in an apartment where I lived and I found out who they were, and I really think he was going out with her. I wouldn't be a bit surprised.

SIGRIST: But what kinds of charity work? I mean what were some of the causes that he was interested in?

PERCH: Oh, the church. The kids. They used to come in droves and he couldn't afford to buy all those tickets.

SIGRIST: Tickets to what?

PERCH: To all these different things that they had at the church there. There was this—he had a garage. It was a double in the back of it was a grapevine come this way and then along that way. Well, the kids used to hide. They'd each take turns because he'd buy tickets from all of them. They'd come—you know, tickets to the church. They're for a chance on this and a chance on that, and I didn't—he really was—you know, he thought he was pretty special. That's—and he dressed well because Andy used to go out with his—what do you call those coats with the velvet collar there?

SIGRIST: Prince Albert jacket?

PERCH: No, it was a Chesterfield.

SIGRIST: Chesterfield.

PERCH: Yeah, and the—but he—she, well, she wasn't dressed like a poor, poor, but he never dressed her up. Oh, that was terrible.

SIGRIST: She meaning?

PERCH: My step-mother.

SIGRIST: Your step-mother.

PERCH: Because I realize now—I didn't then, but I do now.

SIGRIST: You mentioned your father had a grapevine out back.

PERCH: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did he make wine or anything like that?

PERCH: She used to make grape jelly and grape juice.

SIGRIST: Your step-mother.

PERCH: She spent the summer in the kitchen canning. She used to can everything you can think of. Yeah.

SIGRIST: You mentioned the pea soup. Were there any other kind of traditional French foods that were served in the house that you can remember? I mean, what kind of food did you eat back then?

PERCH: Well, we had roasts every single Sunday, different kind of roasts. Then we'd have—oh, we had chicken. You know, normal things, and you know, pork roast, chicken, lamb, and all those. Then we kids used to love spaghetti, so she used to make spaghetti off and on. The usual.

SIGRIST: Nothing sticks out in your mind. Another thing I wanted to ask you about was sickness in the house. I mean how did you—

PERCH: Well, her son. Oh, yeah. Her son had asthma.

SIGRIST: Now, this would be a son.

PERCH: From a second marriage. That's my step-mother that I was talking about when I'm talking.

SIGRIST: Right.

PERCH: That wasn't my own mother. I never knew my own mother.

SIGRIST: Right. No, I realize that. I get confused sometimes. Instead of saying, "she" you can say "my step-mother" or something.

PERCH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: But she had two children—your step-mother had—was taking care of the—

PERCH: No, she took care of her sister's two children.

SIGRIST: Oh, but she had a son of her own?

PERCH: Through my father.

SIGRIST: Oh, you didn't—I forgot about that.

PERCH: Yeah, I had a step-brother. He died.

SIGRIST: Right. What was his name?

PERCH: Eugene.

SIGRIST: Eugene and he was born of your step-mother and your father.

PERCH: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when he was born?

PERCH: I just remember what they used to say, and she—she was forty-four and he was, you know, and she used to be ashamed to carry him. That I know.

SIGRIST: What do you mean by this?

PERCH: She had a little small baby.

SIGRIST: Your gesturing and that's like a baby size.

PERCH: And when they'd go out, my father's sister used to carry the baby because she felt—isn't that something?

SIGRIST: Well, she was forty-four when she had the child.

PERCH: Yeah, she was forty-four when that boy was born.

SIGRIST: Do you remember her being pregnant or any of that? I'm just wondering how they would relay that to a child? You know, how would they explain to you?

PERCH: Yeah, well, of course, I was young. I was only three years old when he was born, so I don't remember, you know, the birth. No, I just remember him because he started having asthma when he was—and he had diphtheria when he was three years old. We had this apartment that—now supposing this is the kitchen and there's a door right there, well, that would go into the dining room and then living room was across. So she stayed in those two rooms and took care. She brought him back to health. He had diphtheria.

SIGRIST: Do you know how she did that? What kind of medications they gave at this time period?

PERCH: Well, I don't know in those days what they gave them, but she brought him back to health. After all, he was three years old, I was six.

END OF SIDE A  
BEGIN SIDE B

SIGRIST: Well, what about you children, how did they keep you from—

PERCH: Well, my sister and then he had this maid that used to take care of us when my own mother was living. He always had a maid, and then she—yeah, she came over and took care of us while my step-mother stayed in those two rooms, and then Georgette used to help, too, for the food there. See, those two rooms, then there was a door here that would go in the hallway. So she wouldn't come out at all. She'd go and she brought him back to health. He was three, but he used to have—oh, my God, I don't know how he ever lived. He used to be cyanotic. Oh, my God, it wasn't something terrible.

SIGRIST: Cyanotic?

PERCH: Yes, that's blue. Cyanotic means—oh, yes. And in our—well, I suppose this is this morning. Then by five o'clock he'd be fine, but he used to have these spells. It was something abominable.

SIGRIST: And this is something that you lived with because he obviously lived in the house.

PERCH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, as a child. Can you remember any other relatives that had come from Europe that you visited with when you were growing up that were related to your father?

PERCH: No, I just remember cousins. Quirins. My father worked for them. I told you they had a—well, they didn't call them liquor stores in those days. What did they call them, saloons or what? Yeah, he had worked for them and they became very, very rich, that couple and their children are all very well educated. They used to come and visit us, then my father. She wouldn't want to go with him, you know. She felt inferior to my father, so he used to bring Georgette to a lot of places when she became a nun. Oh, yeah, my father used to be—well, she didn't want to go.

SIGRIST: But these cousins that you remember, they had come over from Europe?

PERCH: Cousins that I remember—no, I don't remember any from Europe.

SIGRIST: No. Was there a difference in the type of French that your step-mother spoke than the French that your father spoke?

PERCH: We spoke the same.

SIGRIST: But she is Canadian French and he is—

PERCH: She's Canadian.

SIGRIST: He is European French.

PERCH: Yes.

SIGRIST: I'm just wondering if there was a difference in the two languages?

PERCH: No. He—well, he came adapted to the one here because he didn't—my aunt in Lawrence, you could tell that she'd been born over there, but not my father. My father spoke English like we do. When he'd get excited. He used to talk. He'd have to get up and oh, boy. "Yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap." Then he sounded French, but other than that he didn't.

SIGRIST: Is there any other French that you could speak for us on the tape? I know from my own experience that you and your sister Lillian used to still speak in French.

PERCH: Oh, yes, we talked—that's the only time we spoke French. We'd call each other and we'd speak French. That's how we'd keep our French up.

SIGRIST: I was wondering if there was any—if you would like to speak a little more French on the tape before we end?

PERCH: Well, this really—

SIGRIST: It's hard to do it when you're not having a conversation.

PERCH: Yes, a conversation with anybody. I—

SIGRIST: What if you describe—

PERCH: I can say that I'm enjoying doing this on the tape.

SIGRIST: Yes, all right. Go ahead.

- PERCH: Wait a minute. [speaks French haltingly] Oh, how could I say that? Well, I'm happy that my nephew's come to see us, I said that. That's enough.
- SIGRIST: The only other question I have for you would be how do you think of yourself as a person? Do you think of yourself as a French person? Do you think of yourself—I mean, you were American born, obviously, but I mean how much of you is French, I guess is what I'm saying.
- PERCH: Well, I think of myself as French, but as I say, I'm American born. But when somebody that can speak a fluent French, I enjoy it very, very much. To be able to speak French, because see, Lil and I, other than that—well, we had this friend there that died last winter there. She used to speak French to us, but other than that, we'd never speak French.
- SIGRIST: And I should say for the sake of the tape that Lillian also has died just in the last few years.
- PERCH: Yes.
- SIGRIST: Right, so you haven't been able to speak French.
- PERCH: I haven't been speaking French to anybody.
- SIGRIST: Anyone. Did you ever want to go to France?
- PERCH: Not particularly, no. No. I've never been to Canada.
- SIGRIST: Let alone France.
- PERCH: Yeah. I've never been to Canada. I've worked and worked, twelve hours, seven days a week. I worked a long time.
- SIGRIST: That's right, you were a nurse for many years.
- PERCH: Yeah, so—yes, like Lil used to love to travel, but I never had that instinct that I want to travel. Well, after working seven days a week, then—well, I'd visit and that's what I'd go. That used to get Lionel mad. I said, "Well, we've got to go home. I got to shine my shoes and put buttons in my uniform."
- SIGRIST: I should say for the sake of the tape Lionel was Lillian's first husband.
- PERCH: Lionel was Lillian's first husband.
- SIGRIST: Right.

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PERCH: We didn't appreciate him. He was a heck of a nice guy.

SIGRIST: Yeah. All right, well, great. Thank you very much for letting me ask these questions.

PERCH: Well, you're very welcome.

SIGRIST: Thank you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Pauline Perch on Friday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1996 in Worcester. Thanks.

END OF INTERVIEW