

**EI-795**

**ANN ENGERT**

**BIRTHDATE: DECEMBER 8, 1916**

**INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 22, 1996**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 79**

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**INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST**

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**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG**

**GERMANY, 1927**

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**RESIDENCES:**

- **GERMANY: VEITZHOCHHEIM, VERSBACH**
- **US: BROOKLYN; EAST GREENBURGH, NY**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1996. I'm in East Greenbush, New York in the Albany area and I'm here with Mrs. Ann Engert. Mrs. Engert came from Germany in 1927. She was ten years old at that time. Present, also, are various children and spouses of children and so there may be some background noise.

Mrs. Engert, can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

ENGERT: I was born December the 8<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

SIGRIST: And what was your name when you were born?

ENGERT: Well, that I didn't tell you. You see, I was born illegitimate and my mother married a man, so I was really—I had my grandfather's name, which was Schäflein, which also means little sheep in German. And then when I was six, I think she married a Sauer. That was my name, and he adopted me, which gave me the name of Sauer.

SIGRIST: And your name was Ann or Anna?

ENGERT: My name really was Annalise. A combination of the two names.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

ENGERT: E-A-N-N-E-A-L-I-E-S-E.

SIGRIST: And spell Sauer for me please.

ENGERT: S-A-U-E-R.

SIGRIST: And spell your grandfather's name for me, please.

ENGERT: S-C-H-A-F-L-E-I-N, but there are two little umlauts on the A.

SIGRIST: And where were you born?

ENGERT: The town's name was Veitchoheim, V-E-I-T-Z-H O-C H-H E-I-M.

SIGRIST: Yes. Where in Germany is that?

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ENGERT: Bavaria.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did your mother ever tell you a story or anyone in the family, about the day you were born?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No. What is your earliest memory?

ENGERT: The earliest memory really is from where—where they put me because they came to America and I was put with relatives in a different town, which was Versbach, V-E-R-S-B-A-C-H, because one of those daughters was supposed to bring me to America when the time came.

SIGRIST: So this is your—your mother and her husband?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Went to America.

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: How old were you when they came?

ENGERT: Well, I—probably nine because they were only here a year.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Do you have any memories before you were nine?

ENGERT: Well, I had a—

SIGRIST: Like when you were a small child.

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ENGERT: Well, I had --- I have a memory of the place where I was—who took me in because it was in the middle of steep stairs going up to a church, and they were related somehow to us. But how, I don't remember, and the daughter that was supposed to bring me, she was very nice. It was—she was always under the impression she was going to bring me over here, but then in the end when we went for our tests, she didn't pass it. She had horrible burn marks on her back.

SIGRIST: From what?

ENGERT: From a fire.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about that?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No?

ENGERT: That all happened before I got there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when your mother married? —

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: Mr. Sauer?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No? Do you remember where you were living at that time, the house itself?

ENGERT: Yes. Yes, the house was my grandfather's house and it was more—a lot of families used to live there. In other words, we had like a little apartment. Another lady had another little apartment. The owner had an apartment. There might have been one more little apartment.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the apartment for me? Sort of walk me through it?

ENGERT: Well, it's more like an L-shape. It was this way and then that way. Like an L-shape.

SIGRIST: Right, and what did you see inside the apartment? What—what was there? Just kind of walk me through it as you remember it.

ENGERT: I don't remember it much. I think I willed myself not to remember. That could be possible, but I do remember a—a table and they had those lights, you know, that, gaslights. And I remember breaking a lot of them because I was dressed on the table and my head kind of knocked the—the—the light off.

SIGRIST: [Laughs] Do you remember a kitchen in that apartment or a—

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: Why don't we start talking about your mother? What was her name?

ENGERT: Lina, L-I-N-A.

SIGRIST: And her—her last name would be Sauer—would be—

ENGERT: Schäflein.

SIGRIST: Schäflein, and what do you know about your mother's family background?

ENGERT: Well, she was—she had a sister and a brother, and they were—it was a real mixed up family because she has step—I mean sisters and brothers that were the father's before he married their mother. They had children.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm.

ENGERT: Then he married my grandmother and they had my mother, her sister and a boy. Then when she died, he married again, and they had two more children. Two or three more children. So that was common at that time because people died more younger, you know.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever talk about her childhood? Do you know any stories that she would tell from her own childhood?

ENGERT: Not really. No, she was very—she did not relate to when she was smaller. She had a brother and they got along very well, I think.

SIGRIST: Can you describe your mother's personality for me?

ENGERT: Well, she was a seamstress and she—she worked. She was supposed to marry my father. I think it was announced three times in church, and I—nobody would ever tell me what he really died of. So that is a mystery to me and I suppose it always will be.

SIGRIST: So your—your real father died.

ENGERT: Before they married.

SIGRIST: Before they married. What do you know about him?

ENGERT: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Do you know his name?

ENGERT: Yes. The name is Paul R-A-U-E, Raue.

SIGRIST: And did your mother ever talk about—

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: Nothing, but you know that he died before they were actually married.

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that your mother was a seamstress. What sticks out in your mind about your mother being a seamstress? Do you remember her doing that work in the house?

ENGERT: No, actually not. Exactly what she made were corsets. At that time ladies wore corsets and that was her trade, to make corsets, and they were more or less made to specifications and she had to be in touch with the woman that got the corset to measure and pr -- practice it, you know.

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SIGRIST: We're talking really about your mother's profession. Can you describe her personality? What she was like as a person?

ENGERT: Well, she was warm. She was very good-hearted, but very close. I didn't get to -- to really get to know her that much because I later found out that she had had another child while I was in Germany and it died. But never did she mention that to me, either.

SIGRIST: You found that out later?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah. I was wondering if when you were in Germany, was there something that you and your mother would do together in the house or maybe a recreational activity?

ENGERT: Well, at that time I went to school and I remember—the only thing I remember is she and the priest. You see, at that time the priest was very highly honored and she—I was supposed to—I was brought up Catholic. I was supposed to go for my first confession and she and the priest got into a terrible argument because I did not put the sins in my—before we went to the first confession, we were supposed to make up our sins and he had to approve of it, but you see, he never approved mine until my mother got out and she says, "Why don't you approve of her? Whatever she wrote?" And he said, "Well, she must have"—it had a sexual content—content and because I would not admit to that or talk about it, that's why he never—he never accepted my confession. So then they had an argument and the next Sunday at the pulpit he talked about or he said that one woman was trying to educate him, you know, and from then on, religion didn't mean much to me anymore. I don't know if you understand that or not, but—[Laughs]

SIGRIST: Were there—was your mother a religious woman to begin with?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No. Were there any ways that you remember that you practiced your religion at home?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No. So that was not a major part of—

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: Of your life. So your mother married when you were six to Mr. Sauer. You said when you were six?

ENGERT: I think so.

SIGRIST: Do you know how she met Mr. Sauer?

ENGERT: Well, that was I think—wasn't that a wartime, 1920. I was born '16. I have her marriage certificate some place, but no. He worked in a machine—in a—in a large machine and tool company that was in the area. That's probably how they met.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what he looked like to me?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No.

ENGERT: I have never had a --- seen a picture of him.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what your mother looked like, in words?

ENGERT: Well, she was small, maybe five-three, three and a half. She was always not too heavy. No, other than that.

SIGRIST: What color hair?

ENGERT: Dark. Dark hair.

SIGRIST: Was there something that you remember your mother enjoyed doing for herself? Something that, you know, when she had a few minutes—

ENGERT: She liked to knit.

SIGRIST: And what would she knit?

ENGERT: Oh, I don't know. Little baby sweaters she used to make.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any article of your own clothing that she made when you were a girl?

ENGERT: No, not that I still remember. I'm sure she did, but I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, was there anything that your mother taught you how to do when you were—?

ENGERT: Knitting.

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SIGRIST: Do you remember her doing that, teaching you how to knit?

ENGERT: But that was such a long time ago, I don't think. I'm sure she taught me, but how I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Well, what do you remember about your mother and your stepfather going to America? When you were nine, what do you remember—?

ENGERT: I have completely blocked that out of my mind.

SIGRIST: Do you know where they went when they went to America?

ENGERT: Yes, because, you see, she ---he—the one that she—he—she married, he had a sister who came here as a nursemaid to a rich family because at that time you had to have somebody in this country in order to be able to come here. And she is the one that persuaded her brother, who was married to my mother, and his wife to come here to see if they liked it.

SIGRIST: And do you know what town that was in or what city?

ENGERT: Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: They were in Brooklyn.

ENGERT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Had either your mother or your stepfather ever been in America before?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No. You don't remember them leaving, you said.

ENGERT: No. They must have taken me to that other town before they even left.

SIGRIST: Well, why don't you tell me what you remember about going to that other town and your life there?

ENGERT: The only thing that affected me or that I remember was, like I told you, there was many steps going up to this church and there were houses all at different levels of the steps. And the house that I lived in at that time was maybe perhaps half of it. Half up and I lived there, and I remember going up to the church Sundays, and—

SIGRIST: You smiled when you said that just now. Is there a particular memory that you associate with the church or a story that you have about something that happened?

ENGERT: No, I had a—there were small children there and I remember having a good time playing with those children.

SIGRIST: Did you have—oh, you mentioned that there was a child, a sibling of yours had died that you found out about later.

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: But—but the people that you went to live with, did they have children?

ENGERT: Yes. At that time I think it—it was also parents and a daughter. Perhaps a son-in-law, I don't remember, and they had children which I went to school with.

SIGRIST: And you think you were nine, you said, when—when your—

ENGERT: Oh, I must have been—yes.

SIGRIST: About nine. What do you remember about going to school in Germany?

ENGERT: Nothing much.

SIGRIST: Do you know how old you were when you started school?

ENGERT: Maybe seven.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm, possible. Do you remember—does a teacher stick out in your mind?

ENGERT: Yes. I had a very nice lady teacher and she even wrote me a letter after she—I came here to America. She was very good to me. Very nice. Sh  
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SIGRIST: Who —

ENGERT: Her name was Schiffer, S-C-H-I-F-F-E-R.

SIGRIST: Hmm. Do you remember any of the details of the house? Like the house—because you were there for how long before you came to America?

ENGERT: A year.

SIGRIST: You were there about a year. But can you describe the bedroom where you slept in the house?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: How about the kinds of food that you ate in Germany at that time?

ENGERT: No. I don't remember. I honest—either I blocked it out my mind or else I don't want to remember. I just don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how holidays were celebrated, like maybe how people—

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: In Germany celebrated Christmas at that time?

ENGERT: I just remember that was a big deal. When the lady that was supposed to bring me, she and I went to—in order for to come to America at that time, you had to go to a different city and be examined and all this kind of stuff. And that was a big event for me, and we—we had a good time. Of course, she was heartbroken because she couldn't come here. And then there was the problem of how am I going to come here all by myself.

SIGRIST: What—do you remember what city you had to go to be examined or to get your papers? What would be the nearest city?

ENGERT: Perhaps it was Bremen, B-R-E-M-E-N.

SIGRIST: That was fairly close?

ENGERT: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you know what you knew about America before you got here?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: Were you in any kind of communication with your parents?

ENGERT: I must have been. Not that I remember. Not that I recall, but I imagine she wrote to me and I wrote to her, although, I never knew that she was pregnant or anything. At that time things were different. Things were not as clear and as proper as it is now, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you know if your mother got a job when she came to the United States?

ENGERT: Yes. She was like—she always liked to sew. It was more her trade. She worked in a factory where she became forelady, or she worked herself up to running the place.

SIGRIST: This is in Brooklyn? Did they settle in Brooklyn?

ENGERT: Yes, they settled in Brooklyn. But you see, when I came—well, this is later on. I'll tell you about that after.

SIGRIST: Okay. All right. Well, let's get you to America.

ENGERT: Okay.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about what you took with you? Do you remember what you took to take to—?

ENGERT: Just one suit—little suitcase.

SIGRIST: And what was in the suitcase?

ENGERT: Oh, things that I normally wear. I mean they didn't wear pants or anything, and it was just dresses and skirts and blouses.

SIGRIST: And how did you wear your hair when you were a ten year old?

ENGERT: I had—

SIGRIST: You have to describe it in words. It's an audiotape.

ENGERT: Oh, I had pigtails. Pigtails.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, and did you take an object with you? Something that wasn't clothing, as—

ENGERT: Well, I had orders from my mother to bring her chocolate because she couldn't find it here. And I—they gave me chocolate, but you see, the lady that was supposed to look after me had children of her own, and I played with those children and we broke up the chocolate and played with it and it completely disappeared. So when I came, I had no chocolate for my mother. She was heart-broken.

SIGRIST: The woman that was supposed to take you, was this the woman who had the burned back?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes. When—when she was not able to take you, what different arrangements were made?

ENGERT: I don't know, but they got in touch with my mother and say—telling her that that lady could not come and take care of me, and I imagine it was more or less the—the company that took care of my ticket or something, that they said, well, there was this lady coming with two or three of her own children. She could keep an eye on me, and that's what happened.

SIGRIST: So it was a strange woman who—

ENGERT: Oh, yes. I had never seen her before.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to the—to the family you were living with?

ENGERT: No, because that was such a commotion when that ship—it was completely different at that time when the ships loaded. I mean, when it came to the pier. It was all alphabetically arranged. If your name started with an S, you had to be there. There was such a commotion and such excitement that I don't ever—I can't ever remember telling her goodbye or thanks. Maybe my mother did, I don't remember. Because we were all separated at that particular time.

SIGRIST: Before getting onto the ship?

ENGERT: Before coming—getting off.

SIGRIST: Well, I'm talking about getting on.

ENGERT: Oh, getting on.

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SIGRIST: Saying goodbye to—saying goodbye to the family that you were living with before you went to get on the ship.

ENGERT: No, I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do—where did you have to go to get on the ship?

ENGERT: Ah, I think it was Frankfurt.

SIGRIST: The ship left from Frankfurt, you think.

ENGERT: I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Let me look on your sheet here. Oh, I see. Your daughter put "possibly Bremen," yes. It probably wasn't Frankfurt. It could have been Bremer or Hamburg or Bremerhaven or, you know, one—

ENGERT: Yeah. I think it did stop though in Hamburg or some place to get more pass—to get more passengers onto the boat.

SIGRIST: Where did you meet the woman that was going to take care of you? Where—did you meet her before you got on the ship?

ENGERT: No, I think it was on the boat.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm, and do you remember the name of the ship?

ENGERT: York.

SIGRIST: You came on the York. And what did you think? You're a little ten-year-old girl and here's a great, big ship and you have to get on it.

ENGERT: I don't remember. It was a big undertaking. I mean, here you went to America, but I think as a child you don't realize it ---- what could happen or what is happening. I think you just accept everything that—or at least I did.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you slept on the ship?

ENGERT: You know, I was thinking about that because I remember a lot of nets. You know, these heavy nets. I think it was in one of those nets.

SIGRIST: A net like a hammock?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: That the kind of thing you're talking about? And were you with the woman that you were traveling with in this area? Where was she when you slept?

ENGERT: I was—I don't—I'm not a hundred percent sure, but I believe it was all in one room at that time.

SIGRIST: What other memories do you have of being on the ship itself?

ENGERT: I remember having a very good time with the children that came with this lady. I was more with them and played more with them, than I remember about the lady. Of course, I ate. I must have eaten, but nothing—

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SIGRIST: When you say you “played with the children,” do you remember where on the ship you would play with them? Do you remember being on deck of the ship?

ENGERT: I think they used the dining room as playroom and I think I was in—in the dining room mostly.

SIGRIST: Did you get seasick?

ENGERT: No. No. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Did anyone—do you remember anybody else getting seasick?

ENGERT: No. No.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember how long the ship took to get to America?

ENGERT: I think eleven days.

SIGRIST: Eleven days, and we looked on your passport. It was in July when you were traveling, right? That’s what it said, I think.

ENGERT: I think so, yeah.

SIGRIST: Although your daughter wrote October of 1927 on—on the form. Here it’s stamped July, but of course, this could have been stamped before you got on the ship. Well, anyway, it was sometime towards the end of 1927.

ENGERT: This says August. I don’t know.

SIGRIST: August.

ENGERT: I think it was in the fall of August.

SIGRIST: Oh, yeah.

ENGERT: Of—

SIGRIST: The fall of 1927.

ENGERT: Yeah.

SIGRIST: The ship takes eleven days. What do you remember about the ship coming into New York?

ENGERT: Excitement.

SIGRIST: Did you see the Statue of Liberty?

ENGERT: Terrible excitement, and—well, at that time, I don't think it affected the children at all much. Or it didn't affect me as much. We ended up in—in where it is, you know, where we went. What was the name of the place?

SIGRIST: Ellis Island.

ENGERT: Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

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ENGERT: And of course at that time, like I said, everything was arranged according to the last—your last name, and I had to be under S. It was all organized, you know. At that time it was very different than now.

SIGRIST: Do you remember who was with you when you were at Ellis Island?

ENGERT: I believe my mother got on board. No, she wasn't. No. Somebody must have told me where I had to go and then my mother, I think she did come up and get me and bring me down to one of these tables, where the S again was and finished up whatever was, had to be done.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you felt when you saw your mother?

ENGERT: Well, I was happy, I suppose. I mean, this was different, you know.

SIGRIST: Did she look different somehow than how you had remembered her?

ENGERT: No, because it was such an exciting time. I mean everything was—you felt you had to do just what they wanted you to do, you know. You had to be there and stuff like that. It was—it's—for a child that's very important, you know. You—you get to be afraid because you—you know you have to be there at this time, you know.

SIGRIST: Where did your mother take you when you left?

ENGERT: I suppose to the—to the apartment that they had at that time. It was—it was near a hospital, near Brooklyn Hospital.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of that first night with—with your mother and your stepfather?

ENGERT: No.

SIGRIST: No. How long—how long was it before they put you into school?

ENGERT: Soon. I mean it was just a few—matter of two weeks, I think. And that's the first time I had ever seen a Colored child, you know.

SIGRIST: And what did you think when you saw a Black child?

ENGERT: Well, it was strange. I—I accepted them. I invited them to my home, until one of them, I think they stole and then, you know—I—I—that turned me off.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the experience of going into an American school and having to, you know, learn English and adjust?

ENGERT: It was hard, but I think at that age, you accept or at least I accepted anything they told me, you know. You had to learn. You had to do what the other kids did and that was it. There was no rebellin'—rebellion or, you know, that I said, "I'm not going to do this."

SIGRIST: Did anyone ever make fun of you because you were an immigrant?

ENGERT: I suppose they did, but I never paid too much attention.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about how you learned English?

ENGERT: I don't remember. I suppose when they talked to you in English, you either find out what they're saying or you—you—you're lost, you know. So you—in other words, I took it as I had to learn this language as quick as possible, you know. So—

SIGRIST: Could your parents speak English?

ENGERT: Not too much. I mean they were only there a year. No, not too much, but at that time my mother switched. She was doing housework at that time. It was only later on that she turned to her old job of running a machine, you know, the sewing machine shop.

SIGRIST: So when you first got there, she was doing housework in people's homes.

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: I'm just curious, did she—did your parents ever go to night school at all, that you can remember? No? Do you remember the neighborhood in Brooklyn?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Like the—like the—the nationalities that lived in the neighborhood.

ENGERT: A lot of Italians. Like I say, it was a real mixed—it was a mixed, all nations.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about how everyone got along or didn't get along in that neighborhood?

ENGERT: Well, like I said, I invited—I invited the—the Colored kids to my home until, like I said, they—they stole, and across the road was a store where we bought our stuff. We went to parks. Prospect Park was close by.

SIGRIST: Is that how—would that be like what you would do for recreational time, go to the park?

ENGERT: Go to the park, yeah.

SIGRIST: Were there other things that you did with your mother and your stepfather for recreation?

ENGERT: No, not—not with them. Well, I suppose if there was like—at that time they had quite a few nationalities and if you were German, you'd attend—you'd join German clubs. You'd go to their functions, to their parties and stuff. I suppose we did go to that for a few times.

[END OF SIDE A]      [BEGIN SIDE B]

SIGRIST: Did your parents become citizens?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: What—what do you remember about the process of them becoming United States citizens?

ENGERT: Well, my father could have made me a citizen, but at that time they had like an argument and he wouldn't do this. So I had to become my own citizen. My father became a citizen. You see, there was a war on at that time and—

SIGRIST: Is this during the Second World War?

ENGERT: Yeah, the—

SIGRIST: When you were—

ENGERT: They were all machinists. My—my husband came then a few years after and he used to visit us once in awhile and—but this was after we were married that he became a citizen. He didn't let me become a citizen. I was under the age yet. He could have, but he didn't, and then my mother and I became citizen and it was a terrible time because we learned a lot of English by going to the movies, my mother and I. And—well, that was it. We became more or less pals, you know, at that particular time, my mother and I because we didn't have any family to talk about. I mean, my my hub --- my father's sister, they moved to Connecticut. So we weren't too close to them either. So we were more or less alone.

SIGRIST: Did your parents have other children here in the United States?

ENGERT: Well, yes, I told you, my mother had one during the year that I was in Germany, but she never mentioned it. In fact, I only found that out after. I don't know why. At that time, those were secrets that you didn't tell to the children. It wasn't as open as it is today, you know.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm. Getting back to the citizenship, when—when you and your mother became citizens, what did you have to go through to become a citizen?

ENGERT: We had to go to a court, to a judge, just like now. I have my citizen papers here.

SIGRIST: I was just wondering if you remember, you know, the kinds of things you had to learn for the citizenship or helping your mother.

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ENGERT: I think it was very easy at that time. I don't think the judge asked us many questions. It wasn't hard at all.

SIGRIST: How did you feel when you became a citizen?

ENGERT: Well, I felt good about it. I wanted to be a citizen because I knew we were going to stay here, you know.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me, because your daughter mentioned on the—the oral history form about meeting your husband-to-be and—because this goes back to Germany, doesn't—didn't he come from the same town or—

ENGERT: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell the story for me?

ENGERT: He said he knew me from when I was little, but I never knew him. But when he came here, it was—I think he had a friend that let him come over. They were—they had—they were all members of a music group, and at that time it was the custom, like if you came here and you knew of somebody that came from the same town that you came, you'd visit them. And that's why he came to visit us a few times and then I went to high school, but he also had a girl friend here, in Germany. But she met somebody else. She told him that she wasn't going to come here. He wanted her to come here. Then later on we got married.

SIGRIST: Do you—what was his name?

ENGERT: Joseph.

SIGRIST: Joseph Engert?

ENGERT: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: Yes. And what year did you get married?

ENGERT: 1936.

SIGRIST: Yes, and did you have children?

ENGERT: Two.

SIGRIST: And their names?

ENGERT: Joanne and Car—Carolyn and Joanne.

SIGRIST: Karen?

ENGERT: Carolyn.

SIGRIST: Carolyn and Joanne, and did you ever go back to Germany?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was the first time you went back?

ENGERT: As a matter of fact, my daughters went to Germany before I did.

SIGRIST: Right, but what was the first year you went back?

ENGERT: When I went—do you remember when I went back, Carolyn?

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SIGRIST: Do you remember how old you were when you went back?

ENGERT: Oh, I was married.

SIGRIST: Were the children born?

ENGERT: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Were they in school?

ENGERT: Yes. We went to my husband's brother. This is all one town that I came from, my husband came from. His brother's lived there. It's all one town.

SIGRIST: How did you feel when you went back to this town? How did it make you feel to be there?

ENGERT: Well, it made me—how I felt, I couldn't tell you, because here I was, I saw the house that I lived until I moved away from it, and I saw the park that I remembered a little bit. It was—it affected me, but how I couldn't tell you.

SIGRIST: I was just wondering if you felt some kind of a connection to what you were seeing or if you felt very distant from it?

ENGERT: Well, I wanted to see the house that I lived in and I remembered—I remember the door that we used to live, you know. But I mean it was—it was a prominent [sic] house. It was one of the first houses that you saw when you got off the train. You had to see the house, and you had to do a lot of walking. In the town you do a lot of walking. You don't—

you don't have a car right away, you know. So it was quite an experience.

SIGRIST: Did your parents ever go back to Germany?

ENGERT: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes. Did they go back to live or did they just go back to visit?

ENGERT: To visit.

SIGRIST: And do you remember them talking about how they felt to go back to Germany? What it felt like for them?

ENGERT: Well, my father had a brother that he visited. I don't know how they felt when they went back. I know they went on tours, you know. They—these organized tours because they really didn't have too many places that they could stay. So—

SIGRIST: How do you think about yourself as a nationality? Do you think of yourself as American? Think of yourself as German? How do—how do you perceive yourself?

ENGERT: I fe — like an American.

SIGRIST: Why? Why?

ENGERT: I don't know. I suppose because I went to school here. I have my family here. I don't have any family. You see, when I went to Germany with my husband, I went—you see, he worked at the IBM and they had these—at one time he flew to Germany for ninety-nine dollars. I think

that was the IBM that more or less subsidized. I don't know how that happened.

SIGRIST: So that's when you went.

ENGERT: When he went. He was more—you see, he was older than I. He was thirteen years older, so he knew a lot more people out there than I did because my family more or less disintegrated. You know, my grandfather died. My mother's sister was in a very different city. The brother—I think her father was still living the first time I went out there. It was strange. It was very strange.

SIGRIST: But now you think of yourself as an American.

ENGERT: Yeah, I think so.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Well, great. I think that's all I need to ask. Thank you very much.

ENGERT: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: For letting me interview you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Ann Engert on Thursday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1996, in East Greenbush, New York. Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

