EI-812
FRANK (FRANC) JOSEPH RIEDER
BIRTHDATE: JANUARY 9, 1898
INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 1996
AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 98
RUNNING TIME: 1:26:53
INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 4/2007

HUNGARY, 1908
AGE 9

SHIP: THE VATERLAND or THE KROONLAND
PORT: ANTWERP
RESIDENCES: MOR, HUNGARY
MANCHESTER, CT

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Saturday, September 28th, 1996. I'm in South Windsor, Connecticut, and I'm here with Mr. Frank J. Rieder.

RIEDER: Okay.

SIGRIST: Mr. Rieder came from Hungary. They arrived December 31st, 1907.

RIEDER: 1907.

SIGRIST: And actually set foot in New York on January 2nd, 1908.

RIEDER: That's right.

SIGRIST: Right. Present also in the room is his granddaughter, Sherry Heldman [PH], her husband Mike and their daughter Maryanne. I should also say for the sake of the tape that the tape recorder is being extremely

temperamental. Maryanne has been instrumental in helping me set everything up and we're going to do this interview with our fingers crossed.

Mr. Rieder, can we begin with you giving me your birth date please.

RIEDER: January 9th, 1898.

SIGRIST: And can you give me your name as it was when you were born in Hungary? How was it different? Maybe it wasn't different.

RIEDER: It was Franc, Franc Rieder.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Franc?

RIEDER: F-A-R-N-C. [sic]

SIGRIST: F-R-A-N-C.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Franc.

RIEDER: That's in German.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, and what does the J stand for?

RIEDER: My middle name, Joseph.

SIGRIST: Joseph. And then Rieder, it was spelled R-I-E-D-E-R, which would be Rieder.

RIEDER: Rieder.

SIGRIST: But you use Rider.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Here in the United States.

RIEDER: Called—called by "Rider." This is my birth certificate.

SIGRIST: Oh, good. We'll look at that when we're done here. I'm afraid to pick anything up. [Laughs]

RIEDER: Okay.

SIGRIST: Because of the tape recorder. Where in Hungary were you born?

RIEDER: In Mor, M-O-R.

SIGRIST: And do you know anything about your birth? Did your parents ever tell you a story about the day you were born?

RIEDER: No, but I know I—I was born on the 9th and then I was baptized the next day, the 10th.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the town of Mor?

RIEDER: Well, it's a small town. I say small town, when I—I would suggest, at my—that it was a town of about fifteen thousand people.

SIGRIST: What do you remember as a child about what the town looked like?

RIEDER: It's an average country town, as far as I can remember at nine years old. Up to nine years old, and it's—it was a nice town. Very nice town.

SIGRIST: What kinds of buildings were in the town?

RIEDER: Very—very poor looking buildings. They were mostly, I don't know what the material was for building the home, but all the roofs were thatched with straw. Straw thatched roofs, as far as I—in fact, I know they are because my grandfather used to go up to his attic in the wintertime and we'd pick up—pick grapes that he put up there for the winter to dry or whatever, and that's how I knew they were straw thatched.

SIGRIST: So the houses had straw thatched roofs on them. Did you ever see people thatching their—their houses?

RIEDER: I never did, no.

SIGRIST: But most of the houses had these thatched—

RIEDER: Most of the houses that I recall were thatched, yes.

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

RIEDER: No, I don't remember that.

SIGRIST: You don't remember the house that you lived in—

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: When you were a child?

RIEDER: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: No.

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: You mentioned your grandfather.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: What can you tell me about your grandfather's house?

RIEDER: Well, my grandfather was a—a very exceptional hardworking man. He used to make pitchforks, wooden pitchforks and I used to see him bend the curves on the—on the forks to fit them in for—for work in—in the fields with them. Yeah, and he has—had a big garden. He had a small vineyard. He had apple trees, pear trees. Fruit trees, in other words and it was very—very interesting. I always liked to go to grandpa's house.

SIGRIST: Whose father was he? Was he your mother's father or your father's father?

RIEDER: My mother's father.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Can you describe for me what he looked like in words?

RIEDER: Really I can't, no. No, I—I couldn't—I just can't visualize what he looked like, you know, in comparison to anybody that I know. But he was a very gentle man. Very—very sedate man.

SIGRIST: You—you mentioned that he had a garden and he had a vineyard.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things that your grandfather enjoyed doing for himself for fun, for entertainment?

RIEDER: [clears throat] Well, as far as I know, he was—he was very sociable—social and he used to talk to us children, my sister and myself. To the best of my ability, that's about—like I said before, he was very busy. Always kept working. It seemed as though he didn't have much of a

social life outside of his work. He really enjoyed it because it—it kept him busy. He always had work to do to make these forks. He—he sold them as fast as he made them.

SIGRIST: Was there a grandmother to go along with grandfather?

RIEDER: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandmother?

RIEDER: Well, she was a nice person, too. A hard-working person. They—they seemed to be, when I look back, they seemed to be elderly people, older than—than I really would say that—at my age they looked old, anyway, you know. I can't say that sometimes when you're younger, you know, you think people are older than they really are because you are so young yourself.

SIGRIST: Sure. They could have maybe been in their fifties or something at that time.

RIEDER: That's right. Yeah, they could be.

SIGRIST: Did you—how—did—how far away did you live from your grandparents?

RIEDER: Ah, well, I would say about one, one and a half to two miles.

SIGRIST: So they lived in Mor, also?

RIEDER: They lived in More outside of the so-called city limits or town limits, you know. And it was—it was very—very hard, I mean, to get around because everywhere we go, we had to walk. We had no bicycles, no—no any kind of vehicle for transportation.

SIGRIST: What kind of roads did they have to walk on?

RIEDER: All dirt roads.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

RIEDER: Positively all dirt roads. Not a—not a road in the whole town that was outside of dirt. Oh, well, that was back in 1907, from there back, you know, and I—I remember my first automobile I saw in one of the places that I lived. It was a red car, red and that was the biggest thrill of my life, at the time at least. Never saw an automobile before. Didn't know what it was in the first place and came—

SIGRIST: Do you have any other stories about—about walking on the roads or what you saw when you were walking on those roads? Something that happened once when you were walking on the roads?

RIEDER: Yes, one time my father and I took a walk one Sunday morning and while we were walking, there was a balloon in the air and we followed it. It was drifting slowly. So we followed it for, oh, maybe half a mile or so and it fell down, or it dropped down into a—a field. A wheat field and that was—that was thrilling, too. Never—never had seen one of those before. Never heard of one. It was very interesting.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

RIEDER: Joseph.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living in Hungary?

RIEDER: Ah, mostly—mostly he worked in what do you call it? Worked in a store—for a store. I mean he was the maintenance man, in other words. [clears throat] He done all the maintaining around the store and this store had happened to be a dry goods store, a grocery store and they had a liquor store there, too. Or a tavern, I would say or them days they was saloons. And this—they had also a bowling alley and he used to set up pins for the people that bowled.

SIGRIST: It's okay, I'm just—

RIEDER: Yeah, that's all right.

SIGRIST: I know, it threw my concentration. I saw something out of the corner of my eye. That's all right. We were talking about your father. Yeah, he set up bowling pins you said.

RIEDER: Yeah, then he also—it was all seasonal work. He worked in the wheat fields cutting—cutting wheat. I used—one time my mother sent me there with [clears throat] for some lunch from the town. It must have been about three, four miles out of town and I walked there with this lunch and after the—after the day's work they used to—this was on a weekend, you know, after school. It was on a Saturday, I believe, and they—all the help there after work, they all sat around and they enjoyed theirselves, like—almost like a party or a picnic. They had their social drinks and whatever, but it was interesting how they—they done this—this saw—with scythe.

SIGRIST: A scythe.

RIEDER: At least forty, forty men—I say forty. I'm probably [unclear]. They, one after the other, they would just along and they would mow down the—and the women would come along with these rakes that my grandfather made and they would rake up and make sheaves out of them and stood them up. And they would—the wagons would pick them up and take them into the—oh, very big area where they put the—put the sheaves down, spread them out and they would thrash them with these thrashers. It was interesting. I—I always remember all that.

SIGRIST: Did children participate in the harvesting of the wheat?

RIEDER: No. No, I never saw any children.

SIGRIST: You never had to go out and help do this?

RIEDER: No. No.

SIGRIST: What time of the year was this done?

RIEDER: This was in the fall.

SIGRIST: In the fall, and what would—you said that the wheat was bundled up.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: What would become of the wheat? What was then done to it?

RIEDER: Well, it was bagged up and this how they—they paid their help. They got so much wheat and very little money. Just money for stable articles, that's all. And this was for everything that people done, as far as I remember. In the whole—the whole town people worked in this way and they got—they got paid this way. Like potatoes in the potato fields, too, I imagine. I don't know anything about it, only that I know my parents had potatoes that way. And—

SIGRIST: What other crops were grown that you can remember?

RIEDER: Pardon?

SIGRIST: Crops? What other crops were grown?

RIEDER: Just potatoes and—

SIGRIST: Wheat.

RIEDER: Wheat, yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What was your father's personality like? How would you describe him as a person?

RIEDER: [Laughs] How can I—he had—as far as I remember, he—I don't remember too much about my father because he was always out working and there was no—no set working hours. You worked from dusk to dawn.

SIGRIST: And he was doing actually all these different kinds of jobs, too.

RIEDER: Yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember—I'm sorry, go ahead.

RIEDER: Well, like I said before, it was seasonal work. When you—when it was time to go out in the fields, they'd go there, and in wintertime, I believe it was that's when he worked in the—in the store. And I think that—that's what he did all his life. There was no manufacturing of any kind until about the last few weeks that I was there. They started to build a—a building to manufacture brick in the—in a sand bank. A very big—very big sandbank. I used to go there and slide down the sand bank myself. And also my father worked in the place where they made brandy, now that I remember.

SIGRIST: Can you talk about that?

RIEDER: Well—

SIGRIST: What you remember about it.

RIEDER: I just remember this much of it, that—that that place where they made this stuff was right across from where the store was that he worked at, and they had piles and piles of the grapes that they used after they were all pressed out, you know. They made mounds of it as big as this house here of the pulp, I guess that's what [clears throat]. And that was interesting, too, you know, to me.

SIGRIST: Who drank the brandy?

RIEDER: [Laughs] Whoever could afford it, I guess.

SIGRIST: Did your family ever have brandy in the house?

RIEDER: I believe so, yes. More for medical service—use than anything else. My father used to drink wine. He used to send me to the—one of the neighbors every Sunday to buy a liter of wine for fifteen cents and that was—that was our treat for Sunday dinner. [Laughs] Very interesting, you know, when you come to think of it in comparison to what there is here.

SIGRIST: Well, and you're talking about a lifestyle, you know, almost a hundred years ago.

RIEDER: That's right. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do—what memories do you have of your father at home? You said he was out working a lot of the time, but what do you remember about him being at home, if anything?

RIEDER: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Nothing.

RIEDER: No, it don't seem as though my father was—I must have been—he must have been—he worked all day and by the time he got home, I probably went to bed. When he—by the time—when I got up, he was gone again. That's all I can remember.

SIGRIST: Hmm.

RIEDER: He worked—there were no set hours for work. They—he worked anywhere from sun up to sun down.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

RIEDER: Marie.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

RIEDER: Moder.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

RIEDER: M-O-D-E-R.

SIGRIST: And what do you know about your mother's family background?

RIEDER: Ah, well, not too much. Only that—I wish I'd brought the picture here. I got a picture home of my mother's family.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about her growing up? Her childhood?

RIEDER: No. No, I don't.

SIGRIST: Anything that she ever told you?

RIEDER: No. No, I don't. No, she never talked about it. My mother was a very, very busy woman. I mean she kept busy doing all the time and the—how—how we happened to come out here was her idea and she got the idea. She worked as a cook for some more richer people than we were and she heard them talk about America all the time. So she thought that's the place that we should go to, and this is how we got here.

SIGRIST: So she was the responsible for it.

RIEDER: She's the one responsible, yes.

SIGRIST: Well, you said that she worked outside of the home.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about that, what you remember about her job?

RIEDER: No, no. She never talked about it. Only this one time that I remember she talked about this, that this is how we got here.

SIGRIST: What memories do you have of your mother at home? Like what did she have to do around the house when you were growing up?

RIEDER: Well, I really—really, I can't tell. Only that she does housework and, oh, I—I believe she did some housework for—for other people, too, and I don't know how much, but I think—now that I think back, she did go out and do some housework for people.

SIGRIST: Now, you mentioned that you had brothers and sisters.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me their names and—

RIEDER: Well, I have—I have two brothers, John and another brother Joe. And I have two sisters, Mary and Ann.

SIGRIST: Marie? Murray? What was the first sister?

RIEDER: Mary.

SIGRIST: Oh, Mary, I'm sorry.

RIEDER: Mary, yeah. Mary and I came here from Europe. The other children were born here.

SIGRIST: Is Mary older than you?

RIEDER: No, Mary was eighty-eight years old. She was born in 1900.

SIGRIST: 1900.

RIEDER: Two years after I was born.

SIGRIST: I see. So, you two came from Europe and the rest of the children were born here.

RIEDER: That's right, yes.

SIGRIST: Who took care of you and your sister when your mother and father were out working?

RIEDER: Well, as far as I know, we—we took care of ourselves. Definitely we took care of ourselves. We had a—we had—my mother was a strict person as far as discipline goes. We had to tow the mark. There was no shenanigans about it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the rules that you had to follow in the house? Some of the things you could and couldn't do?

RIEDER: Ah, no. It seemed as though we knew what to do and we knew what not to do. Somehow or other, that's been that way all my growing up days. I never got into any trouble because I never done anything I wasn't supposed to do.

SIGRIST: I see. So—so she was sort of the disciplinarian in the family.

RIEDER: She sure was, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember in Hungary a time where maybe you didn't do what you were supposed to do and were punished?

RIEDER: Well—[Chuckles]. No, not outside of school but in school one time I had the—we had—our school was more of an academy because they

were all boys and my teacher's name was John Namit [PH] and he carried a—a rod, bamboo stick. Bamboo stick and the boys that didn't behave or done something wrong, they had to hold out their hand and they got a smack on the hand for doing the wrong thing. And he was my—he was a neighbor of ours and once a week he—he used to—he used to—once a week he—he asked me if I could—would bring him his breakfast from his mother's house. [clock ringing/chiming in background] So I did. I brought his breakfast once a week. He had a room on the school property and he had the—he had a bunk there and I used to—after I left his breakfast to him, he was having his breakfast, I had to take care of his bed. Make his bed for him and tidy up the room and then I went to school. That was—that was an experience I liked and I liked it because his mother had a nice—nice yard and also a nice orchard and every time I would go over there, she would load me up with apples and pears and peaches and grapes. That was a big thrill for—for poor people, you know, and I enjoyed it. I remember it.

SIGRIST: This is a good time for me to ask you about what kinds of food you ate when you were a child in Hungary? You've mentioned all the fruit.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What other kinds of food did people eat on a daily basis back then?

RIEDER: Ah, they were—they were [Chuckles]. During the week we had a lot of what you'd call pasta here, you know. Like noodles and cottage cheese that my mother would cook the noodles and then she would put the cottage cheese in with it to—well, make a dish out of it. That was it. That's one of the dishes and then sometimes [pause] on Sundays [clears throat] we always had—had meat on Sunday. We had soup. My mother used to make soup with the—the meat that she made out of it and then we had the soup and then the meat with it. Vegetables, potatoes, I believe they were. Yes, they were potatoes.

SIGRIST: What kind of meat was it?

RIEDER: It was just like you might say stew, stew beef.

SIGRIST: Beef. It was from a cow?

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did you have animals?

RIEDER: No, no animals. Couldn't afford them. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: What—what time during the day were your mealtimes? Like what time was the first meal that you ate during the day?

RIEDER: Well, we had the meals, especially week days before breakfast, you know. Breakfast in the morning before school time.

SIGRIST: What time would that be at that time?

RIEDER: I would say, what, eight o'clock.

SIGRIST: Did you have a clock in the house?

RIEDER: Yes, we did.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

RIEDER: Yes, we had a clock.

SIGRIST: Do you remember something about the clock?

RIEDER: No, you don't.

SIGRIST: You remember that there was one, though.

RIEDER: There was a clock. That's all I remember, and I remember also the—the—when my mother cooked. Anywhere we lived, we had a—what they called a hearth. They cooked on the outside. There was always one between two tenements. One side used one side of it and the others used this side and they done their cooking outside of the—the room and you usually had one room, one living room and that was the dining room and everything.

SIGRIST: I see, that would be in Hungary. The house in Hungary.

RIEDER: That would be in Hungary, yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

RIEDER: Catholic.

SIGRIST: You were Catholic.

RIEDER: Yes.

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

RIEDER: Well, we had a—we had to say our prayer every day and we did go to church every Sunday and the church was, I would say, about a mile and a half. I believe I said that before. And it was a long—a long journey for young people, you know, every Sunday to go to church and that's about as much as I remember about religion.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a prayer that you were taught as a child?

RIEDER: A prayer?

SIGRIST: Yes, do you remember any of your prayers in Hungarian?

RIEDER: No, I never—I never could talk Hungarian.

SIGRIST: What language did you speak?

RIEDER: German.

SIGRIST: You spoke German in Europe?

RIEDER: Yeah. I don't know why. I can't—I don't know why to this day why this town that I lived in was ninety percent German speaking people, and yet they had a Hungarian church, a small one. Then they had a cathedral where the rest of the people used to go to.

SIGRIST: Is there a prayer in German that you can say on tape—

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: That you learn as a child?

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: No, okay.

RIEDER: No, I don't remember any prayers.

SIGRIST: Can—can you tell me how you celebrated Christmas in Hungary?

RIEDER: Well, yeah, that was—that was exciting because always looked forward to Christmas. We also got an orange and—and walnuts. That was the—the main thing we used to get. Once in awhile we would get a—like a pair of stockings, but mostly looked—us children, my sister and I used to look forward to getting an orange and some candy. And they used to put shoe pegs in the walnuts. My mother used to put them and hang them on the tree for ornaments. Walnuts and oranges,

too, and they had some religious little—little religious things that you hang on the tree, you know. That's as far as I remember.

SIGRIST: Was there a special meal that was served at Christmas time or special foods that you had at that time of the year?

RIEDER: Well, we used to—we'd have chicken on Christmas or on any holiday. Chicken was the main fare on any holiday, like I say. Yeah, it was a big—nice change.

[END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 1]

SIGRIST: Was there another holiday, also, that was very important to your community to celebrate?

RIEDER: Only Christmas and Easter that I remember. They're the only two holidays that we—we celebrated. That's about it, yeah.

SIGRIST: What were you like as a little boy? Tell me—tell me what you were like when you were a little boy?

RIEDER: Well, I was I guess no different than any other boy. I used to like to play with other children. I remember one time [clears throat] we went to my father's brother's home and he had a neighbor that the boy was a cripple. He had—he had two—

SIGRIST: Crutches?

RIEDER: Two crutches and he used to sit on the ground and make—look—make toys out of cornstalks. Made animals with just sticking—by sticking a couple of sticks on either end and made a wagon out of the cornstalks for pastime. I remember that much, and [Laughs] one time at the same time—the same visit to my father's brother, I think I got my shoes wet and I was so scared that I—I was afraid to go home, go back to my father's brother. They were—my parents were visiting there, so I—there was a big hedgerow, oh, maybe a hundred yards away from the house there and I hid in that hedgerow. Well, when it was time to go home, my parents were looking for me and I was afraid. I hid there. I was afraid to call or go out. So they called me. Two or three times they called me and I finally came out and I remember I—he asked me why I did that and I told him I had my shoes wet and I was afraid I was going to get—get a licking. So—so I hid. [Laughs] I remember that.

SIGRIST: Were shoes—were shoes something—did you wear shoes all the time at the time?

RIEDER: No, not—not shoes all the time. I wore boots. Some shoes. Well, I wore boots when I grew up—when I got older, like I say, after six or seven or eight years old, but before that I had button shoes. Yeah, and I wore—then when I come out here, the children at school used to tease me about my button shoes. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Well, why don't we get you to America? You said your mother had an interest in coming to this country.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: How did your father feel?

RIEDER: Well, my father came first. He came in 1906, a year before we did. He came alone and—

SIGRIST: Where did he go when he came here?

RIEDER: Well, he went to friends. He lived with some friends and he worked labor, as a laborer.

SIGRIST: In what city, though? What part of the United States?

RIEDER: In Manchester.

SIGRIST: Oh, in Manchester, Connecticut.

RIEDER: Yeah, where we came to, yes. Yeah, and he worked there for—well, 'til we came and then—

SIGRIST: Do you remember what he was doing specifically?

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: No.

RIEDER: No, just laboring somewhere.

SIGRIST: Did he ever write to the family back in Hungary, that you can remember?

RIEDER: Oh, I believe he did, but I don't remember what—what it was all about. I suppose it was about what was happening. What was going on here, you know.

SIGRIST: How did your life change in Hungary after your father had gone away and went to the United States?

RIEDER: I don't remember much about that. I—I often wondered myself what I did. I don't—just all of a sudden it seemed as though I—this just simply disappeared. Well, outside of my—I have an uncle that did—I did go to see him, now that I remember, but I don't—I don't remember whether that was at that period or not, but anyway, I went. He—he had a vineyard and his mother had a tavern. A hotel, not a tavern. A hotel and he asked me one day to go picking grapes with him. So he bought me a knife, red-handled. A red-handled knife, and I went picking grapes with him and we had these open—open kegs. They were, oh, hundred gallon kegs. They were, oh, bigger than that, and we filled them full of grapes and brought them to the—they had a press where they pressed the grapes and made wine. And they used the wine in their hotel business. I remember that now. That just came to me.

SIGRIST: And you're sort of—you're sort of laughing. So that was sort of an exciting thing for you to do.

RIEDER: It was.

SIGRIST: Help pick the grapes, and cut the grapes.

RIEDER: That's right, it was. It really was exciting. I—I really enjoyed that, now that I remember that, and riding with him [clears throat] in the wagon, on this open wagon was a big thrill, too. Never had a ride before. Everything was walking. I'm still walking. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Walking's good for you. Do you think that happened during the time that your father was away?

RIEDER: I think so, yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: When you were a little boy, what did you know about America? How did you think about America?

RIEDER: Nothing. Nothing. Oh, I remember one time—I remember in school we had one of these world globes, you know, that spin around and I noticed it on there one time, but it didn't mean anything to me at that time because my mother had never said anything about it. About

coming to America until all of a sudden. This happened so fast that I—it just passed me by. That I don't remember that much about it, us coming to America.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your mother saying, "We're going. We're leaving Hungary now?" or, you know, "We're going to go to your father." Do you remember that—that—that conversation?

RIEDER: No. No, only that we're going. We just—she just told us that we were going to America and that's all I remember about it.

SIGRIST: What do you—what little bits of memory do you have about maybe packing your belongings to take to the United States?

RIEDER: Yeah, that I remember. My mother was packing everything, all our belongings, like—like a bed, a big, big, big bed cover and pillows. She—she had them boxed up and sent them out here. To me, that was—I don't know. When I used to think of it, that was such a big—big deal to send all this stuff, you know. I remember the trip very well.

SIGRIST: What else—you mentioned the bedding. Is there anything else that you remember about being packed up to take?

RIEDER: No, not to take. No, I don't remember anything.

SIGRIST: What about you, did you have a toy or—

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: Or an object that was yours that you took with you that you remember?

RIEDER: No, no. Only—only a few religious cards that I had. My mother was very, very pious, very religious and I remember I had—I still have the cards that I had. They were two little cards with a little writing on them and I—I used to say them on the board ship when I was there. Read them. They had a little writing to them, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandparents?

RIEDER: No. No, I don't remember that.

SIGRIST: Where—where did your—your—so it's your mother and your sister and you.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Is anybody else traveling with you?

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: No, just the three of you.

RIEDER: The three of us.

SIGRIST: And where did you go to get on the ship?

RIEDER: We went from Hungary we went to—to Vienna. From Vienna we went to Leipzig. From Leipzig we went to Antwerp, Belgium.

SIGRIST: And what sticks out in your mind about that whole trip going to Antwerp?

RIEDER: When we got to Vienna, they turned—they turned our eyelids upside down. They were looking for what? Some kind of disease. And I guess we passed that muster, so we—from there on we had no more trouble until, oh, we went—when we got to Leipzig I remember the railroad station was glassed in and my mother—we had some coffee there with buns. I remember that. Then we went—from there we went to Antwerp and we stayed in the hotel there overnight before getting onboard the ship.

SIGRIST: You have a very good memory for little details.

RIEDER: I have—I remember some things, yes. And [clears throat]—

SIGRIST: You stayed overnight before you got on the ship.

RIEDER: Yeah, we—

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the ship/

RIEDER: It was either—either Kroonland or Father—Vaterland they called it. I believe they were—they were Dutch ships. It was the Red Star Line that we came on and one thing, I really got scared when I saw the ships in the water. Never saw big water before. Well, I did—I did see the Danube River back—in Mor, in Hungary and, well, like I say, we got on—onboard the ship the next day and we were onboard the ship for eleven days.

SIGRIST: And where did you sleep on the ship/

RIEDER: In bunks and the one night—one night we had a storm. This was in December and the—the sailors or whoever the maintenance were onboard the ship, they strapped us in, in on the banks. Me and my sister. I don't know about my mother. I don't remember her, what she done, but I remember me and my sister, we slept up and down on the bunks and were strapped in. So it must have been pretty stormy. That's what I remember about that, as far as the beginning of the trip. On the trip, we—we had some nice weather because the people—the ship was loaded. There was—they had a full crew, a full load of people and they used to sing up there and dance. I think back now, I think there were a lot of Russians there. It's the way they danced. I—I put two and two together, feeling, seemed that they were Russians, the way they danced, you know. And on the ship we—my sister and I, we—my mother had apples. They were tart apples and so some of these other people that saw us eat them, they wanted to swap apples with us. So we gave them some of our apples and they gave us some what they call sweet apples, and when my mother saw that, oh, she was furious. She made them give us—made them give their apples back and we had to give them their apples back. My mother—my mother was aggressive that way. She was, oh, God, I can't tell you how much—the more I think of it, she was wonderful. A wonderful person that--that had—to try this trip, you know, without knowing anything about it. She never had any education. [clears throat] Any more than any ordinary schooling, you know, but she done well. She took—

SIGRIST: What else do you remember about being on the ship? What do you remember seeing like up on the deck of the ship?

RIEDER: Well, it was all—it was all something exciting to me because I never saw a ship before and it was—it was really exciting, the—especially the ocean, the waves and how the ship rocked up and down. I really—really remember that.

SIGRIST: Was there a storm or was it—

RIEDER: Not—not a big storm. No, just probably a little out of the ordinary storm, but it wasn't a bad—bad storm because the—the next day it seemed everything seemed to be calm again.

SIGRIST: You said how long—how long did it take, I forgot?

RIEDER: It took eleven days.

SIGRIST: Eleven days, and then do you remember the ship coming into—

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Into the New York Harbor?

RIEDER: Yeah, I remember.

SIGRIST: What do you remember?

RIEDER: I remember the ship coming in. We—we stopped and it was later in the afternoon because, well, all the union help was on the ship, you know, and they—they didn't work after five o'clock. So we must have got there after five o'clock and first and second class people got off, but third class had to stay on board the ship. And, oh, another thing. What amazes me today is that the cost of the fare. It cost twenty-five dollars for my sister and I and twenty-five dollars for my mother. I—I just can't imagine this, for that kind of a trip from Hungary all the way to the United States.

SIGRIST: Well, and it probably—you know, in 1907 twenty-five dollars—

RIEDER: Well—

SIGRIST: Meant something. [Laughs] It was a chunk of money.

RIEDER: My—my—my grandfather—my grandfather was a baron in Austria. My grandfather, my father's side of the family were Austrians and my mother's side of the family were Hungarians, and my father met my mother when he was on maneuvers in the army in Hungary. That's how they met. I just happened to think of that, too. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: And what year did they get married, do you know?

RIEDER: No, I don't, but I—it must have been around—around 1895 because I had a brother that preceded me and also a sister. They died in their early teens—early ages, yeah.

SIGRIST: They died—you died—they died before you were born or—

RIEDER: Oh, yeah, they died before I was born.

SIGRIST: Oh, they died as babies.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know what their names were?

RIEDER: Joseph was the boy's name and Agnes was the girl's name.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever talk about any of that? I mean why the children died or what she remembered about that?

RIEDER: No, no.

SIGRIST: Just that it had happened.

RIEDER: No. One other incident I'd like to say. We went—we used to go to the vineyard with my mother.

SIGRIST: This is in Hungary?

RIEDER: In Hungary. [clears throat] That's—we'd be—we'd be in the vineyard at sunup. We would walk. She would carry my sister and I would walk with her when she was that young and she would—they would—we'd go into the vineyards and she would tie up the grapes. Every year—they didn't do like they do here. They done them individually. They put stakes in every grape root and as the—as the grape grew, they would—they put this stake down and then they would tie them up with—with straw, wet straw. They used that as a string and how they got the wet straw was they would wet it and stomp on it to flatten it out and then it was pliable enough to tie. And my mother used to do that. I remember that. That came to me, too, just now. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: It's funny the way the memories just kind of flash.

RIEDER: That's right, it just—

SIGRIST: Yeah. When—when that happens, just—no matter what we're talking about, just stop and tell me what it is that just flashed through your mind.

RIEDER: Yeah. Yeah, well, that's—I mean that's the story of my life up to there. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: [Laughs] All right, well, let—let's get you back into New York and the ship has docked.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And the third class passengers are held—

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: On the ship. What did you do for that night on the ship?

RIEDER: I don't remember. No, I don't remember. Just we—I think I was—I was a little bit excited about seeing America, you know, see what it was like.

SIGRIST: But you couldn't get off the ship. You know, you couldn't—

RIEDER: No, no, I would just—just looking foresight like, you know, to see what I was going to see when I got here.

SIGRIST: Now, why did you have to stay overnight on the ship?

RIEDER: Well, because next day was New Year's Day.

SIGRIST: New Year's Day 1908.

RIEDER: 1908, yes, and I think the first and second class got off, but third class, they—they just had to stay onboard ship. That's all. I think union had something to do with that, and when—when we got off the ship, we had one of these redcaps carry some of my mother's luggage and when we got to the boat, when we got onto the—to get off to Ellis Island, you know? He—she offered him some money, you know, for a tip and he wanted—he didn't want to take the change she was giving him, probably twenty-five cents or fifty cents. He wanted folding money. He done this, you know. So I figured it was folding money he was looking for. So my mother—my mother hailed a policeman and the policeman come over and he seemed—she seemed to make him understand what was going on, and he made the—he made the man take what she offered him and beat it. [Laughs] I remember that, too. Now, and—

SIGRIST: Your mother was a feisty—

RIEDER: Huh?

SIGRIST: Your mother was a feisty woman.

RIEDER: She was, yeah. She—I don't know, she just seemed to know what the right thing to do. [clock chimes] I—

SIGRIST: So you got on a smaller boat.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And that took you to Ellis Island?

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That was after the whole incident with the folding money.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What happened at Ellis Island?

RIEDER: Nothing that I remember. We just got on the—on the boat. From the boat we got a train somewhere and we came to Hartford. Then from Hartford we came to Manchester by trolley and we got to Manchester about eight o'clock in the evening January the 2nd. And, well, she saw a policeman there and she asked him for the address. She showed him and right away she knew somehow or other—either she asked or he understood and he could talk German. So she told—told him in German where she wanted to go and he—he took us right up there. Up to where we were going.

SIGRIST: What do you remember? Of course, you're almost ten years old at this point. Just in another week you'll be ten. What do you remember as a little ten year old boy about what you were saw as you were going through New York and up on the train, I assume, you went up into Connecticut?

RIEDER: Well, everything was—everything was exciting, up to the point that, you know, never saw anything like this before. Especially big buildings and the houses, the different colors of the houses. And it—it was really--really exciting, you know, to see all this change. This is a big change for a peon. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: [Laughs] Where did you see your father?

RIEDER: We saw my father the next day, I guess. I'm trying to remember. Yeah, we—we saw my father. He was—he was excited. He was—he was thrilled to see us all. After all, we came a long ways. Had been—and had been apart for a whole year and then to see each other again, it was—it was a nice gathering. Nice greeting.

SIGRIST: Did he look different to you in any way?

RIEDER: No. No, he didn't. No, no. One year didn't make much difference, I guess, but he didn't—didn't make much difference. He didn't look much different, at least, as far as I remember.

SIGRIST: Where did he take you to live?

RIEDER: Well, we—we lived at this place just about a week then we found a rent—a rent right, oh, a couple a hundred yards away from there, and we started off that way.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that? Was that an apartment or a house?

RIEDER: No, no, just a little street up—the house that we lived—he lived in was down here, and we walked. We was up the street about like I—like I say, a couple a hundred yards and we just. Just a straight street up and then in Ashford Street, and we lived there for about a year. [clears throat]

SIGRIST: Can you describe that place for me?

RIEDER: Pardon?

SIGRIST: Can you describe that place for me?

RIEDER: Well, we lived up on—on the second floor. This was exciting, too, because we never—we never had any homes where I lived in Europe. They were all just one room and yeah, they were—

SIGRIST: How many rooms did you have?

RIEDER: Three rooms. We had three rooms, yeah.

SIGRIST: And how was that—how was that place lit?

RIEDER: How was it what?

SIGRIST: How did you light the inside of—

RIEDER: Oh, they had—we had lamps.

SIGRIST: What kind of lamps?

RIEDER: Kerosene lamps, yeah. We had kerosene lamps and we lived there about a year. Then that was too far out of town, so my mother found a rent. I don't know how she found it. She found a rent down in the center of the town and we lived there for—for about a year. This man that owned this—this rent, he also had other tenants. Tenements to rent and we lived there about a year I guess, then she asked him for one of his better tenants—tenements, and we moved there, just—it was just one street over from where we lived. And we moved there

and we had three—three rooms and an attic there. That was—that was it, yeah.

SIGRIST: So you're moving around quite a bit.

RIEDER: Quite a bit, yeah.

SIGRIST: When you first come to the United States.

RIEDER: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: This is all in Manchester?

RIEDER: All in Manchester, yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

RIEDER: And we lived there for about—from 1910—no, from 1909 to 1911. Well, I'm getting ahead of myself. I want to—I went to school there, too, and the school was right there. Right—I could throw a stone as far to the school.

SIGRIST: What I would like to do is I would like to put in another tape.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Because we've gone an hour and then maybe go for a little bit longer and talk about going to school and learning English and all of that.

RIEDER: Okay.

SIGRIST: If that's all right with you?

RIEDER: Okay.

SIGRIST: All right. We're going to—this is the end of Tape One with Frank Rieder on Saturday, September 28th, 1996.

[END OF SIDE B, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE 2]

SIGRIST: Okay, this is Paul Sigrist. We're beginning Tape Two with Frank Rieder. Today is Saturday, September 28th, 1996 and as I said at the beginning of Tape One, the tape recorder is being a little

temperamental—so. Mr. Rieder, we were just going to begin talking about school.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: You being put into school. What do you remember about the experience of being—being registered for school?

RIEDER: Well, when I went—when I went to school, I went—they—they had a [clears throat]—they had a room there for children that came, immigrants to learn—learn English and I believe I was—I was in that class for probably half a year and then they put me in sort of a—a higher grade like first or second grade. First grade to learn more English and in no time, it seemed, I picked up the English very well. From there I went to—gradually every year from 19—1908 I went to school for start. In 1909 I developed good English and I went to higher grades and by—by 1911—no, by 1910, 1910 we lived on Wells Street and I used to go to the library. I liked to go to the library and look at books for—for other reasons, too. That in the wintertime it was a warmer place than my own home and I enjoyed that. But anyway, I—I went from grade to other grades without any trouble. From 1908 to 1911 I went to from kindergarten to sixth grade and—and at that—in 1911 we also moved from Wells Street, after I graduated that year from fifth grade and I went to the sixth grade, but we moved in the meantime in May 1911. And my mother—my parents bought a home on the west side of Manchester. That was several miles, about three miles further west from where we lived on Wells Street, and I went to—in the—this was in May and that summer I spent around the new home—new home getting acquainted with the neighbors' children and in the fall I went back to the sixth grade. And I only went to sixth grade for several months and my parents asked me to—to leave school and earn some money and help pay for the house, which we paid—which they bought. At that time, we paid thirty-four hundred dollars for a seven room home, which to this day I can't figure out how this could be done. But anyway, I—I quit school and I—I had to go to the capital of Connecticut, Hartford, Connecticut to get a permit and work for Cheney Brothers for—as child labor.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the company?

RIEDER: Cheney Brothers.

SIGRIST: How do you spell that?

RIEDER: C-H-E-N-E-Y, Cheney Brothers. They had silk manufacturers they were. In fact, they were—were one of the biggest silk manufacturers in the country at that time. And—

SIGRIST: Be—before we talk about that, because I do want to talk about that, but can we go back just a little bit to going to school?

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You said when you first came they put you for about six months in a class just for immigrant children.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

RIEDER: Nothing much. Only that the teacher was very patient. Her name was Miss Jenkins and somehow or other, she—she was so good with the kids. I remember—I mean especially myself, too, that I—I keep remember this, even to this day when I think about school, how good—how nice and sensible she was with foreign children, you know. And I—I—like I say, I just can't get over this.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how they went about trying to teach the immigrant children English? What was the process?

RIEDER: Ah, I don't think there was any—any special process, only you learn you're ABC's and your arithmetic. Yes, I remember that. I remember learning my arithmetic especially because I wasn't so good at for a while. [Chuckles] Until I caught on to the trick of doing it. [clears throat]

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the first words that you learned in English? When—when you were first starting to make the association?

RIEDER: Ah, not really. No, no. No, I can't—can't recall anything special in that line.

SIGRIST: Do you remember trying to say something in English and making a mistake that sticks out in your mind?

RIEDER: No. No, especially not in school anyway. Yeah, and I—I did—like I say, I did really learn English good and fast because I never—never had any problems in that respect, you know.

SIGRIST: What about your mother and father?

RIEDER: They never—my father, no. Absolutely he was—he was not interested at all in changing languages. He was just working labor, labor work and that's all, like a man usually does. But my mother, she was very, very much interested in—in learning English, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember—do you remember how she learned English and—and—

RIEDER: No, she used to—no, she went out housework. Do housework and she also worked for—she done work for the church on the altar, you know. Done altar work and I think by meeting people that talk—that talk English to her, you know, she learned it that way quick. She learned good English, yeah.

SIGRIST: But in the home you spoke German?

RIEDER: No.

SIGRIST: No?

RIEDER: We talked—my father and mother talked German, but we children, my sister and I and my mother, we tried to help her, too, you know. My sister and I tried to help her with her English.

SIGRIST: But your father would only speak German.

RIEDER: That's all, yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

RIEDER: Yeah, he was—well, he was set in his way in that respect, I suppose, being the man and they—we had a lot of friends. I mean same people that came from—some people that came from the same town we did. In fact, there were a dozen of them in the town that we came from and they had gatherings and get together that way, you know. And it was—to them it was home like.

SIGRIST: What would they do when they gathered together?

RIEDER: Well, they had picnics. You know, they would—they would sing and they would—not much dancing because it was always outdoors. And so it was just singing and picnicking, that's all. Eating and drinking, I suppose. Beer, wine. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Why do you suppose that group of people from your hometown all settled in the Manchester area?

RIEDER: That I couldn't tell you. Only that my idea was that [clears throat] some of the first ones that came here, they let it be known that was a good place to be. So they let it—let it be known to their friends back home in Hungary and this is how the word got around and people that could afford or maybe not afford, but maybe wanted a change, they came to America. That's the only possible reason that I could say, you know.

SIGRIST: Hmm. That's interesting how, you know, all people from one town could end up in all—

RIEDER: That's right.

SIGRIST: In another town in America.

RIEDER: Yeah, yeah, but then on the other hand, too, they're pretty near all dead now, all of them. The old people, all of them. Oh, yeah, I had—I had the same uncle that bought me the knife to cut the grapes off with, he lived in East Hartford. Yeah, he—his name was George Heim.

SIGRIST: How do you spell Heim?

RIEDER: H-E-I-M, yeah. And he died here, oh, ten years ago. Yeah. And—

SIGRIST: Let's—let's talk a little bit—you started telling me about the job that you got in the silk manufacturer.

RIEDER: Oh, yeah, I worked—

SIGRIST: You started telling me that you had to actually get special permission.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: From the State of Connecticut because you would be how old when you—

RIEDER: Child labor. Fourteen.

SIGRIST: You were fourteen.

RIEDER: Yes. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember—you said you had to go to—[tape off/on] Okay, so we were just talking about you had to go to Hartford to get permission to work in the factories.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: You were fourteen.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the job and what you had to do.

RIEDER: Well, yeah, I worked in—like I said, I worked in Cheney Brothers as a bobbin boy and that would—that means carrying these spools of thread to the weavers that made silk neckties. And I done that for awhile and I—I asked—I got three dollars and eighty cents a month, a week, about forty—forty-eight hours a week. Eight hours a day, and I got tired of doing that work. I asked for more money and the boss kept putting me off for six months, so finally I told him I was getting through. "Oh," he says, "don't get through." He says, "I got—I'll get your raise for you." I says, "It's too late." I says, "I got another job." So I left Cheney Brothers, the silk mill, the necktie place and I went to the weaving mill, another part of Cheney Brothers, and I was handling velvet. Velvet. I used to put them—after it was wove and sized and treated, put it into—wrapped it up somehow and I put it in boxes and I used to ship it to—used to take it to the shipping room and they would ship it to different parts of the country. These were silk—I mean, velvet. I done that for two or three years. Then—

SIGRIST: How long were you at the first job? As bobbin boy?

RIEDER: I was there I believe, oh, I believe I was there about two years.

SIGRIST: Oh, a long time.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were—were there other children who were your age working there at that time.

RIEDER: I don't remember any of them. Not children, not as young as me.

SIGRIST: Do you remember other immigrants working there?

RIEDER: No. No, I never knew any immigrants there.

SIGRIST: Do you have any stories about your experiences when you were working in the Cheney Brothers factories? Things that—things that happened while you were there?

RIEDER: No, nothing really exciting. Not—nothing that I remember. Nobody got hurt or—as far as I remember, there wasn't anything. Only that when I got to my new job, like I say, I seemed to have broke out in some kind of problem. I used to get a lot of boils in my system, and they had—they had a doctor there and nurses and they—they usually took care—care of them. It must have been my—my blood wasn't in the right condition and I had a lot of problems in that respect. I have two or three of those I had cut and I finally got over that, anyway.

SIGRIST: Was that when you were working in the velvet?

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: With the velvets?

RIEDER: In the velvet mill, yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

RIEDER: I don't know whether it was the—the velvet part of it, but I don't remember that. But nobody seemed to have said that there was any occurrence from that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember—you said you worked forty-eight hours a day, roughly.

RIEDER: No, forty-eight hours a week.

SIGRIST: Forty-eight hours a week.

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were the hours during the day?

RIEDER: Oh, usually from seven to—seven to five.

SIGRIST: And that's six days a week?

RIEDER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

RIEDER: But that didn't last long. I worked that—I worked that about—I only worked that when I worked in the necktie business. The other places I worked five days—five days a week and only eight hours. Nine hours for a while, until they got back to eight hours. I don't remember what—what year that was either, but that's the way—that's what I remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if you were encouraged to join a union while you worked in the factories?

RIEDER: There was no unions them days. Not here, not anywheres that I recall. No unions at all, no.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that your mother was doing housework at that time.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was your father doing for a living?

RIEDER: He was still laboring. Yeah, he was—he was labor work. He worked in [clears throat]. Well, let's see, he worked there for awhile in Case Brothers and then he got from the—from the laboring job he went into the paper mill. There were all those—that was labor work, too, there, whatever it was. Handling bales of paper and so-forth, to make paper with, you know. They used to bring in bales of—big bales of trash, paper and they would cut it—have to cut it open and put it in big vats and melt it down. So they—and then they made paper out of it from that. They made regular mush out of this stuff that they melted down. That's—that's what my father used to do, as far as I remember, and then from there in later years, a couple a years later, he went to the—he went to Cheney Brothers, too, and he worked there for I don't know how long. Until—until he died. He died young.

SIGRIST: How old was he?

RIEDER: He was—he was born in '70. He was born in 1869 and he died in 1919. He had a hernia and I guess them days they didn't know much about it and I guess that's what done him in, as far as I remember.

SIGRIST: What was the next job that you got after the velvet?

RIEDER: Oh, after the velvet [clears throat]. Well, like I say, my parents moved to the new house on the west side. That's where I—that's when I started work for Cheneys, and I worked for Cheneys until 1917. then I worked—I used to play baseball and these young fellows that I worked with, one of them was a supervisor in Colts factory so he asked me if I wanted a job, take a job in Colts Factory.

SIGRIST: Are you saying Coles?

RIEDER: Colts, C-O-L-T-S.

SIGRIST: Oh, uh-huh, Colts.

RIEDER: Gun manufacturing.

SIGRIST: Is that in Hartford?

RIEDER: In Harford, yes. Yeah. And I told them I would. So I said I didn't know how I would get a job in the Colts factory when I worked in the silk mill, but he says, "You talk to—to Mr. Coe." He was the—I guess he was the superintendent of this Colts factory at that time, far as hiring anyone, anyway. So I went in there. I talked to Mr. Coe and he said, "Yeah," he says, "Peter told me you was a good boy. He said you was a good boy. He said he thought you'd make a good machinist." So I talked to him and he—he gave me a job. So he asked me what I did, where I worked and I told him, and Pete told me to tell him I worked in the Springfield Arsenal. I don't know what that was. To do this day I don't know what it is, but anyway, I told Mr. Coe that and he laughed at me, you know. He says, "Well," he says, "that's okay. Pete said you'd make a good machinist." So from there on, I was a machinist and I worked in Colts during—until—during the war and I know I was, what, about seventeen, eighteen years old, and they had a lot of young boys in there, young fellows and they all wanted to join—to get into the army.

SIGRIST: This is during the First World War.

RIEDER: The First World War, yes. And Governor Holcomb said no. He says, "We need you here." So he wouldn't—he wouldn't let anybody that worked in the Colts factory go into the army, for that reason.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about that?

RIEDER: Well, I—on and off I felt—I felt pretty good. I didn't think too much of it, but I know my parents felt very good that I didn't have to go to war. It didn't really—it didn't' really faze me in any way at all. As far as I remember, I felt as though—some of my friends were in the army and I felt the same way up to a point. That well, why not me, too? That's it.

SIGRIST: How did your father and mother feel about the First World War? What were their feelings about that?

RIEDER: Well, no, they didn't feel—they felt bad in this respect that they had family back there, you know, and—but they never talked about it much. They just worried about it, about the—I know my—Mr. Heim had several brothers, they—three of them, in fact, they were all—they all died in the—in the war and my father's sister, they lived in Budapest. They had three or four boys and they all lost them during the war. So it was kind of a sad thing.

SIGRIST: Did your family in America—you, your sister, your mother, your father, ever experience any kind of prejudice against you at that time because you had come from Europe?

RIEDER: No, none whatsoever. No.

SIGRIST: Your father spoke German.

RIEDER: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: He never—had he talked about—

RIEDER: No. No, no, he never, ever mentioned it. No. Like I said, they were just sorry for all the family, the friends of the family that they were—that they were losing in the war. That's all, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, we should probably end this soon before the machine breaks down again.

RIEDER: Okay.

SIGRIST: But I just wanted—before we end, I just want to find out, when did you get married?

RIEDER: I got married in April 14th, 1921.

SIGRIST: And whom did you marry?

RIEDER: I married Pauline Jacobs.

SIGRIST: J-A-C—

RIEDER: O-B-S.

SIGRIST: O-B-S. And how did you meet Pauline?

RIEDER: Well, when we moved down to our new home, I met her when we went to school there. That's—and her father was a milkman, and she used

to get up—she was my age. In fact, she was two or three months older than me, and she used to get up four o'clock in the morning to milk the cows. Her father peddled the milk. He was a milkman.

SIGRIST: And did you have children?

RIEDER: Oh, yeah, we had six children.

SIGRIST: Can you name them for me, please?

RIEDER: Eh, Dorothy, Evelyn, Francis, Robert, Danny and Richard.

SIGRIST: And have any of those children gone to Hungary to see where you were born?

RIEDER: No, but my children's children had. Her brother.

SIGRIST: You're pointing to Sherry, who is your granddaughter.

RIEDER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Whose house we're in.

RIEDER: Yeah, he went to—he went to Budapest with a friend of his and he said he really enjoyed it. He says he—someday he intends to go back there again and also a brother Brett. Brett went to Innsbruckp, Austria and they went on a skiing exhibition—expedition in Austria, and I guess he said something about he was in the—in Tyrol, too, which was Austria.

SIGRIST: Have you ever been back to Hungary?

RIEDER: No, I never have. No.

SIGRIST: Did you ever want to go?

RIEDER: Yeah, I did. I wanted to go, just never got there. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

RIEDER: Oh, I feel a hundred percent American, and I feel good about myself, about my family. I had sixteen grandchildren and sixteen great grandchildren and Sherry is one of them.

SIGRIST: Sherry is one of your grandchildren and Marianne would be—

RIEDER: Is a great grandchild.

SIGRIST: Great grandchild.

RIEDER: And Sherry is one of the greatest.

S: Thanks.

SIGRIST: Well, that's probably a good place for us to end. Mr. Rieder, thank you very much. I apologize for the problems with the equipment.

RIEDER: You're welcome. Yeah, I—I'm—this is interesting to me. I wish I could have told you more, but—

SIGRIST: Oh, you have an excellent memory. You've told us a lot, really. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Frank Rieder on Saturday, September 28th, 1996 with his granddaughter Sherry in attendance and we're in South Windsor, Connecticut. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]