

EI-833

RUTH HARTWIG HINZ WILLIAMS

BIRTHDATE: May 27, 1926

INTERVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 13, 1996

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 70

RUNNING TIME:

INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

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**US CITIZEN OF GERMAN DESCENT INTERNED AT ELLIS ISLAND JUNE
1942 - MAY 1943**

SIGRIST: Good afternoon this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Friday, December 13, 1996. I'm at the Ellis Island Recording Studio with Ruth Hinz Williams. Mrs. Williams was born in Cleveland, Ohio. And-- in 1942-- at the age of 16, ended up at Ellis Island, coming across the Atlantic on the Drottningholm, and-- was detained here for eight months—from-- July 4 of 1942 until the second week of February 1943, and her parents were held until May of '43. So anyway, it was a pleasure to bump into you here. And may I begin by asking you your birth date please.

WILLIAMS: May 27, 1926.

SIGRIST: And you were born in?

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WILLIAMS: Cleveland, Ohio.

SIGRIST: And, do you know anything about your birth?

WILLIAMS: About my birth? No, not really.

SIGRIST: A story about the day you were born that your mother might have told you, or--

WILLIAMS: Well, no. Except they dislocated my hips and I was in a cast for a year and a half.

SIGRIST: How old were you?

WILLIAMS: From birth until about a—year and a half old.

SIGRIST: Well, that's interesting. Any other bit of information—

WILLIAMS: No.

SIGRIST: --having to do with that, or?

WILLIAMS: No. No, I don't remember much of that at all.

SIGRIST: I see, well you told me earlier that-- that Hinz is actually an adopted name.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was your original maiden name?

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WILLIAMS: Hartwig.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

WILLIAMS: H-A-R-T-W-I-G.

SIGRIST: And the name of your-- of your biological father.

WILLIAMS: Rudolph, Rudolph Hartwig.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your dad, what you know about him.

WILLIAMS: Well, that, I don't know too much about him either. I was four and a half when he passed away.

SIGRIST: And how did he die?

WILLIAMS: We had a house fire and he was dragging furniture out and got wet. And it was in December and he got pneumonia and he passed away.

SIGRIST: I see, what year was that?

WILLIAMS: That was 1931.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about his-- his family background, his ethnicity, anything like that.

WILLIAMS: Well he originally was from Buffalo. I never knew too much about him. My mother never talked about him too much. She re-married two years after he

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passed away. And Rudy was sort of in the background then. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you have any firsthand recollections of him?

WILLIAMS: Yes I do, yeah.

SIGRIST: Would you like to tell us?

WILLIAMS: Well we had a farm out in Vermillion, Ohio and I can remember going to the bank with him. I had one of these little silver banks and the bottom fell out and all the change rolled into the chicken coop [Laughs]. I can remember that. And I've got a scar on my forehead from trying to bring him a tool and I tripped on a rock and-- did my head in.

SIGRIST: You said that the farm was in Vermillion, Ohio. Can you spell Vermillion for me please?

WILLIAMS: Vermillion, Ohio. V-E-R-M-I-L-L-I-O-N.

SIGRIST: Great. What was your mom's name?

WILLIAMS: Anna Bautz. B-A-U-T-Z Bautz.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about her family background and her ethnicity.

WILLIAMS: Well she was born in Tegel, Germany, that's a suburb I guess of Berlin.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

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WILLIAMS: T-E-G-E-L.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: And then they moved to Bernau. B-E-R-N-A-U. Where my grandfather had a—
a home. And he was into horticulture, grafting trees and things like that. He
was also a master stonemason and bricklayer.

SIGRIST: When did she come to the United States?

WILLIAMS: She came in 1924.

SIGRIST: And do you know anything about why they came or--

WILLIAMS: Well they had the big Depression in Germany after the First World War. And
there wasn't any work. And so the-- I-- I think there was one aunt here. My
Grandmother's sister was already in Cleveland. And then she brought over the
other two sisters and their families. So the three sisters were together then.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your mother's personality.

WILLIAMS: I don't know if we want to go into that or not. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Just give me-- or perhaps--

WILLIAMS: She was a very strong woman.

SIGRIST: --give me a story that would reflect what her-- what her character was like.

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WILLIAMS: She was a-- she was a very strong woman, she was a very hard worker. But we didn't get along too well so-- maybe we better slump over that [Laughs].

SIGRIST: All right. Now you said your mother remarried fairly soon after your father had died. Do you remember the year that they remarried?

WILLIAMS: 1933, June the 30th, 1933.

SIGRIST: And the gentleman that she re married, his name was?

WILLIAMS: Fred Hinz. H-I-N-Z. Or Hinz.

SIGRIST: H-I-N-Z.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what do you know about his background?

WILLIAMS: Well he came from West Prussia, from a little town called Finckenstein F-I-N-C-K-E-N-S-T-E-I-N. And I got to spend some time up there. It's beautiful country up there. It's near the Lithuanian - Latvian border up there. And--

SIGRIST: When did he come to the United States?

WILLIAMS: He also came in 1924. And they met through a German organization. You know, it was a social club sort of thing.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the organization?

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WILLIAMS: Oh yeah. Deutschen Zentrale. The German Central in Cleveland, Ohio.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

WILLIAMS: Which, the German or the English?

SIGRIST: Deutschen Zentrale.

WILLIAMS: D-E-U-T-S-C-H-E-N and then the second word is Z-E-N-T-R-A-L-E.

SIGRIST: Thank you, didn't think this would be a spelling bee.

WILLIAMS: I know [Laughs]. It's a good thing you don't have my husband in here.

SIGRIST: You're doing very well so far. What are your firsthand recollections of the marriage? Do you remember the actual ceremony for instance?

WILLIAMS: Well no, they went down to the city hall. And they were married. And I do remember that my grandmother gave me ten cents to go to the little mom and pop store and buy a box of rice. And we sat out on the porch and waited for them to come and threw rice at them.

SIGRIST: Were there other brothers and sisters?

WILLIAMS: I just have a sister. She's four years younger than I.

SIGRIST: So she was alive at this time?

WILLIAMS: Oh yeah. She-- she and I left Ellis Island together.

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SIGRIST: But I mean, at the time of the re-marriage--

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: --she was-- she was in the picture.

WILLIAMS: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

WILLIAMS: Margaret.

SIGRIST: Margaret. Tell me a little bit about -- just family life at that time. After the re-marriage.

WILLIAMS: Well we lived upstairs over my grandparents and--

SIGRIST: Is this in Cleveland?

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes. And these are your maternal grandparents?

WILLIAMS: Yes, yes. And it was a tough time. It was during the Depression. And people were out of work. It was-- things were tough.

SIGRIST: Was this a German neighborhood that you lived in or--

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WILLIAMS: Well yes sort of. It was Bohemian and-- and German. The older section right in the center of Cleveland on the west side. And it was nice growing up there though, very nice.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a few details about how your mother and your stepfather maybe held onto their German culture? Some of the things that they did in the house that-- that were sort of old-world German ways of doing things?

WILLIAMS: No. They didn't. They really didn't. They were very americanized.

SIGRIST: Food for instance?

WILLIAMS: Oh well, food. I still cook German. [Laughs] Yes, my mother cooked German.

SIGRIST: And they belonged to a German organization.

WILLIAMS: Well yeah, it was a-- it was a social club. Like I say they had dances, and you could go there on a Sunday afternoon and have dinner and then stay for the dance in the evening. And they had *Jahrmarkt* (annual market) that was just once a year. It was like a big mar-- market where you could play games of chance and drink wine and win things and--

SIGRIST: What was that word again?

WILLIAMS: Jahrmarkt.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

WILLIAMS: J-A-H-R-M-A-R-K-T. Jahrmarkt.

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SIGRIST: Thank you. I guess what I was sort of going for was, you know, ways that-- ways-- sort of old-fashioned German ways. But you say they didn't really, they were very americanized.

WILLIAMS: They didn't. They were very America-- Americanized. Very.

SIGRIST: What language did you speak in the house?

WILLIAMS: English.

SIGRIST: But did your-- did your mother and your stepfather ever lapse into German?

WILLIAMS: No, no. My grandmother spoke German. She spoke English. She had to when she learned for her citizenship papers. I still remember her trying to say Massachusetts which was a stitch. And-- she spoke German. And so I could understand the language, but I did not speak, read, nor write German.

(Off Mike Conversation)

SIGRIST: What religion were you?

WILLIAMS: Lutheran.

SIGRIST: And can you just give me a little-- a little taste of how you practiced your religion in Cleveland at that time in the 1930's.

WILLIAMS: Well I belonged to a-- I went to a Lutheran church school. A parochial school. And they taught German. Well it was third, fourth, and fifth grades I went there.

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And it was a German congregation. My parents didn't belong, nor my grandparents. I went-- I went alone. My sister and I went to school there and then we went to church there. But their Christmas programs and things like that were always really special.

SIGRIST: Well I was just gonna ask you, I mean, were there sort of traditional German ways that Christmas might have been celebrated or--

WILLIAMS: Well, yes, we had-- we had Santa Claus, grandfather, usually played Santa Claus until we were too old to fool anymore. I know he-- he used to have a big machete. And he'd say to me "If you don't stop chewing your fingernails, I'm gonna smack your fingers off." [Laughs] Scare me half do death.

SIGRIST: What was his name?

WILLIAMS: Fritz. Fritz Bautz.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living in the United States?

WILLIAMS: He was a stonemason and--

SIGRIST: As he had been in-- in-- in Europe.

WILLIAMS: Yes Uh Hmm.

SIGRIST: And what about your stepfather, what was he doing in Cleveland?

WILLIAMS: Well he was a sheet metal worker. But during the Depression he couldn't get work in his line of work. So he worked at a bakery for a while. And then when

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he lost that job, why, he was working as a laborer for my grandfather. Things were pretty-- things were pretty tough then.

SIGRIST: Did your mother work?

WILLIAMS: Oh yeah. She worked for the Loew's Theaters.

SIGRIST: L-O-E-W apostrophe S.

WILLIAMS: L-- yeah, yeah. She did upholstery and things like that. And then the one theater closed down and they brought in a-- a nightclub. And they brought in acts from New York. It was the Mayfair Casino and she was the wardrobe mistress. Oh I thought that was wonderful 'cause I got ostrich plumes and organdy and all sorts of wonderful things to play with.

SIGRIST: [Laughs] Tell me a little bit about how your family ended up going back to Europe?

WILLIAMS: Well in 1939, of course, like I say, things were really tough and my dad didn't have a decent job. And the Arbeits Front from Germany-- you want me to spell that?

SIGRIST: If you would please.

WILLIAMS: A-R-B-E-I-T-S F-R-O-N-T. That was like a-- a workmen's department or something like that. They were looking for skilled workers. Well you can imagine --- 1939, they were looking for skilled workers. And they offered my parents a house. They would furnish it completely, everything, up from-- right down to the-- to the linens and the pots and pans --- everything. The house was

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furnished and he had a good job. And he was going to work for the Heinkel factory, the Heinkel bomber factory.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Heinkel please?

WILLIAMS: H-E-I-N-K-E-L.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: And he decided that he really didn't like the political view. Now we went over in - it was May of 1939.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about this decision being made to go to Germany?

WILLIAMS: I had nothing to say about it.

SIGRIST: I know but how did it-- how did it make you feel?

WILLIAMS: Well I felt bad leaving my grandparents because my grandmother was more like a mother to me than my mother was. And-- but we had-- they didn't ask our opinion or anything like that. It was "we're going." And that's that.

SIGRIST: How old were you?

WILLIAMS: I was 12.

SIGRIST: And what do you remember about-- this is sort of a reverse immigration in a way. What do you remember about getting ready to leave for Germany? What did you-- what did you choose to take with you to Germany?

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WILLIAMS: Well we took very little really. My mother sold most of the-- the furniture and things like that. And I remember I had just a little-- little cloth bag with a couple of my favorite toys and things like that. And our clothing, that's all that we took 'cause we didn't need anything else. Everything else was gonna be furnished.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the ship going to Germany?

WILLIAMS: New York. The S.S. New York.

SIGRIST: And how long did that take?

WILLIAMS: It was about nine days.

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about that trip? Going to Germany?

WILLIAMS: Going to Germany? Oh we met lots of friends-- lots of people who were in the same situation we were. They were also going back to Germany through the Arbeits Front.

SIGRIST: Had there been like a recruiter or something in Cleveland? Is this--

WILLIAMS: Oh yes. Oh yes.

SIGRIST: This is how they did it?

WILLIAMS: Mr. Kessler, yeah. He'd go to the German club and he would recruit people. And if-- you know, they didn't have work why it sounded pretty good.

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SIGRIST: Well and all these promises--

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: --certainly of a lovely house all furnished. Although it's sort of a questionable time to--

WILLIAMS: It certainly was.

SIGRIST: --to go into--

WILLIAMS: And my teachers said too is your father crazy going now there's going to be a war? And my dad said there's not gonna be a war because they had just finished off with Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain you know it was-- peaceful. And he said there wasn't going to be a war. We were going to go.

SIGRIST: I'm wondering if you as a 12-year-old girl in school at that time did you feel any kind of prejudice from your friends when they learned what your family was going to do?

WILLIAMS: No. Not here in the States.

SIGRIST: No?

WILLIAMS: No, no. I did run across quite a few bad times over in Germany though because I couldn't keep my mouth shut.

SIGRIST: Well we're heading-- we're heading there. So the trip took nine days you think?

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WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did you land in Germany?

WILLIAMS: Cuxhaven.

SIGRIST: And then where did you go from there?

WILLIAMS: Then we went to Berlin and we stayed with-- my stepfather's sister and then we went up to West Prussia to meet the other brothers and sisters and my grandmother, or my stepfather's mother. And-- we stayed there for about a month. And then we came back and they took us-- or didn't take us, we kids stayed with my aunt. But my parents went around to different-- different towns where the plants were in other words there was a, Magdeburg--my dad could've worked in Magdeburg or Rostock or Leegebruch where we finally ended up.

Just to see where they would like to settle. And this Leegebruch was a brand new-- subdivision. It had a very small village pond and so forth with just a few homes and then the workers-- the workers' homes were built around that. It was all-- all new, our house was still under construction we couldn't--

SIGRIST: So this was a type of company housing of some sort?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the town?

WILLIAMS: Leegebruch. L-e-e-g-e-b-r-u-c-h.

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SIGRIST: Thank you very much.

WILLIAMS: Leegebruch.

SIGRIST: Tell me what your impressions are of-- of arriving there as a 12 year old and what you're seeing and how you feel about being there?

WILLIAMS: Well I-- we were-- I was excited. .I-- we were meeting new relatives that we-- you know we didn't know and they didn't know us. And-- it-- it was exciting. And to get to see the different parts of the country that we did.

SIGRIST: What are your impressions of meeting your stepfather's mother--

WILLIAMS: Well she was--

SIGRIST: -- for the first time?

WILLIAMS: --she was-- she was a wonderful old lady. She raised seven children by herself. Her husband died before the last one was born. And-- we stayed with her-- during the air raids on Berlin. I was up there for six months. So I got to know her real well and she was-- she was really a super lady. She really was wonderful.

SIGRIST: Speaking of the air raids makes me wonder what other kind of interaction your family had with the war. I mean you're there in Ber-- you know not in Berlin but in this area-- for these few years. Tell me about -- you know the --- what you saw during World War II being there?

WILLIAMS: Well-- it started out in 1939 after-- after England went into the war with-- Germany they would come over at night and bomb. We dug a-- a big hole in the

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backyard and covered it over with-- with dirt and rock and stuff like that and that was our air raid shelter. It was nine times out of ten it was full of water. That was the real kick in the head.

But-- we had a-- we had a lot of air raids. And my dad would take my mother's pot, cook pot, and put it on his head and he'd stand outside to watch until the shrapnel got too bad. And then on Sunday afternoons or something like that we'd go for walks in the woods and pick up shrapnel. It was just all over the place.

SIGRIST: And what would you do with that?

WILLIAMS: Oh it was just a souvenir. I guess we threw it. It was awfully sharp. It was very heavy and-- and-- and terribly sharp. The boys usually liked to have-- have that. But we didn't have any daylight raids at all. It was always at night. Always at night.

SIGRIST: What about shortages at that time?

WILLIAMS: Oh, oh, oh, ho. Well let's see, I saw one orange in the three and a half years we were there. I think we got one egg a month. And if you had chickens or anything like that they would deduct from your food allowance the chicken feed because they figured you were getting eggs, you know. It was-- there were hungry times, that's for sure. I used to get up at night and steal a hunk of bread. And my sister said, "I'd hear you chewing in bed and I wish that I had some." And I'd say, "Why'nt you say something? I would've stolen some for you too" [Laughs].

SIGRIST: Was there a military presence in the town where you were?

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WILLIAMS: No. But we were situated between the Heinkel plant and the airfield, so they were looking for-- they were looking for us almost every night. And it was—off limits. I mean you couldn't-- it was very heavily guarded. And the Heinkel plant itself was in the woods in a-- in a forest. You couldn't see it until you were right on top of it and you came across the barbwire fence.

SIGRIST: What did your mother think about you know leaving America to come into this war zone?

WILLIAMS: She was mad. She was mad. 'Cause she couldn't get cigarettes, she couldn't get liquor. She couldn't buy food. Oh she was just-- she was just furious all the time.

SIGRIST: How would you assess your mother and your stepfather's knowledge of what they were getting into before they got there?

WILLIAMS: They didn't know what they were getting into. I started to say that we-- when they looked around and they decided they really didn't like the lay of what they saw, and we were given the option of you can go back, by then Germany was into the war. And then Italy went in. We had-- we had someone from the States send us tickets, we were to leave over in Genoa Italy and Italy went into the war and there went our last chance to get out until we came back as exchange-- not prisoners but exchange people for German nationals who wanted to go back. That's how we--

SIGRIST: That's how you ended up--

WILLIAMS: That's how we ended up—

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SIGRIST: --getting back here.

WILLIAMS: --getting back.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your father's job in the plant and what he was doing specifically your stepfather.

WILLIAMS: Well he was-- he was working on the Heinkel bombers. I don't know--

SIGRIST: You don't know the specifics of it?

WILLIAMS: Oh no, we were never allowed in there. And he didn't-- he didn't talk about it too much. They did not send him out on what they called montage. When they were assembling planes somewhere else or-- or something like that. I think they figured he was a naturalized American citizen and they weren't gonna let him get-- too far away. But this little town where we lived, there must have been about 20 American families and I've kept in touch with some of them--

SIGRIST: People in the same situation as you?

WILLIAMS: Same situation.

SIGRIST: Who had been recruited in America--

WILLIAMS: Right.

SIGRIST: --to go work in the German factories.

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WILLIAMS: They came from Milwaukee, they came from St. Louis. They came from all over.

SIGRIST: This is very interesting. I've never-- I've never heard of this situation before. Tell me about your-- they made these promises about a house and linens and everything. How did the reality live up to the promises?

WILLIAMS: Oh that-- that they did, that they did. We had very nice furniture and-- and-- my mother I don't know how she did that but she managed to buy herself a washing machine. That was one thing they did not furnish and she was American enough to want a washing machine. But-- very nice furniture and feather beds and all the linens and pots and pans. And just everything that you could-- you could want.

SIGRIST: So you were there for three and a half years?

WILLIAMS: Uh-Hmm.

SIGRIST: Now you-- you-- you-- you've begun to tell me a little bit about the exchange business. Can you just sort of elaborate and-- and explain. Was this going on in all parts of Germany for--?

WILLIAMS: I don't know. We were on the last train out of Berlin. I would imagine-- wherever they had a consulate. And I would think that Berlin would've been about maybe the only-- only American consulate. My folks kept in touch with them to see if-- you know if we could get out and they finally said well yes there-- there is a chance, there's one more trainload going. And they took us from Berlin-- down through-- well Germany, France, Spain to Lisbon, Portugal. And that's where we picked up the Drottningholm home then.

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SIGRIST: So you were-- you were being exchanged, if you will--

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: --for German nationals.

WILLIAMS: Right.

SIGRIST: Who were where?

WILLIAMS: Here.

SIGRIST: In the United States?

WILLIAMS: That's right. That wanted to go back to Germany. And we met them at the Spanish border. And boy if we didn't give them a hoot. I mean they didn't know what they were getting into. They got off that train and they were handed ration cards for practically nothing. You know they-- they didn't-- you really had to feel sorry for 'em.

SIGRIST: One wonders if they wanted to return to Germany or if-- or if they were--

WILLIAMS: Deported?

SIGRIST: --or yeah or forced to go back somehow. Tell me what you remember-- oh I know I wanted to ask you, how long had your-- had your mother and your stepfather been in this situation before they started to decide that they really

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didn't want to be in this situation?

WILLIAMS: About four or five months. About four or five, just before the war broke out. And-- and they were negotiating to come back home and bang, I mean they just took our passports from us.

SIGRIST: So they-- they wanted to come back for quite a long time then--

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: --before it actually happened?

WILLIAMS: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about leaving the town itself? What were you allowed to take first of all?

WILLIAMS: Well we were allowed to take-- personal clothing. We had two steamer trunks and it was clothing. And a clock. Some-- some friend of my mother's had given her a clock that she'd brought from Vienna because my mother gave her a sewing machine and handwork and just all sorts of things we had to get rid of everything. And I have the clock now, that's mine. But-- we weren't allowed to-- bring much else.

SIGRIST: Were all the Americans who were there leaving at this time? Or did some choose to stay?

WILLIAMS: Well some left earlier. Mr. Wannamacher left in about '40 or '41 and I really don't know how he got out.

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SIGRIST: What was his name?

WILLIAMS: Wannamacher.

SIGRIST: Wannamacher, like the department store?

WILLIAMS: W-a-n-n-a-m-a-c-h-e-r. Wannamacher.

SIGRIST: Not quite like the department--

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: --store, but.

WILLIAMS: He was from Milwaukee. And he-- he left his wife there. But he came back to the States alone. And he never-- he never sent for her again. We saw him after we got back to the States in '43, '44 somewhere in there. I really don't know how he got out, but he was the only one.

SIGRIST: But-- but-- but not all the American families were leaving when you were leaving?

WILLIAMS: No, no.

SIGRIST: Right so--

SIGRIST: --some were staying?

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WILLIAMS: Yeah we were the only ones who got out. The rest-- the rest came out after the war was over. My friends in St. Louis came out in 1950. So-- we were lucky to get out when we did.

SIGRIST: You said you took a train.

WILLIAMS: Uh-Hmm.

SIGRIST: And it went to where, where was the first stop?

WILLIAMS: Well it just-- it just kept going. We went all the way through Germany, oh we stopped at-- we went through France and--

SIGRIST: Was there anything special about this train?

WILLIAMS: Well you had to take your own food for three or four days. That was interesting.

SIGRIST: What was interesting about it? You sort of smile when you say that. What are you remembering when you say--

WILLIAMS: Well--

SIGRIST: --that?

WILLIAMS: --my mother-- we had some rabbits and my mother-- canned rabbit meat and stuff like that. It was in jars. And-- we had-- we had to-- take turns-- there weren't enough berths and things like that. And it was-- it was a long trip. I

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forget how many days we were under way.

SIGRIST: Berths sleeping berths? Or—

WILLIAMS: Sleeping berths and then compartments. And so we had to take turns. Those who got a compartment one night would get a berth the next-- the next night and so forth and so forth. I was too busy talking to the boys out in the hall. I couldn't be annoyed with all that. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Mostly Americans on the train or?

WILLIAMS: Yes. All Americans, all Americans.

SIGRIST: And from different parts of Germany?

WILLIAMS: I would assume so.

SIGRIST: Yes.

WILLIAMS: At 16 I really didn't ask much--

SIGRIST: Was there a German military presence on the train?

WILLIAMS: No.

SIGRIST: No?

WILLIAMS: No. No. This was something arranged with the consulate and it was-- it was a nice train. Very clean and very modern. And then when we got to the Spanish

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border they put us on a Spanish train and that had gold-plated faucets in the bathroom. You had the two compartments had their own john and it was really fancy. And people were getting sick as dogs because they had stuff to eat that they hadn't had to eat for three and a half years. We had two people die before they got on board ship 'cause they over - ate.

SIGRIST: That's right. Because things had been so-- so bad in Germany.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Beforehand. Do you remember how long that train ride too till you got to Spain?

WILLIAMS: I would say four or five days at least. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. How long were you in Spain – the train travel ---

WILLIAMS: [superposed] Well no. We stopped at the border where we got onto the Spanish train. So it was just-- it was just a short stop and that's where we saw the other-- the Germans that were coming back. And then we went-- to Lisbon, Portugal. And-- they put us up in a hotel. And we were there I think for about three days. And we had to get all our shots and-- go to the-- consulate and get everything all straightened away before we could get on board the ship.

SIGRIST: Through that whole train trip did you see anything maybe out of the windows or going on in the train that made a strong impression on you? Or that you had never seen before?

WILLIAMS: Yes. In Spain we went through some pretty poor areas and by then they were-- they were feeding us well and we still had some of that food left over from-- on

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the German train and the train-- stopped in a small station and my mother was handing out plates of food. There were kids, little kids they were just so ragged and they-- they were starving. And the one-- the one little guy he got a plate and there was nothing left on it and he tried to bite into the plate. It was just-- that's the one thing I do remember, and it was such a poor looking landscape. It was not very-- very pretty at all.

SIGRIST: How was your younger sister coping through all of this?

WILLIAMS: Well she was pretty sick. She had-- we were so afraid that we weren't going to get her out of the country because she had-- oh what do they call it where the teeth get so loose? From lack of vitamins--

SIGRIST: Not rickets but--

WILLIAMS: No. No I can't think of what you call it right now.

SIGRIST: From a lack of nutrition?

WILLIAMS: From a lack of nutrition. And she was only 12 at the time and course she'd been over there since she was eight years old. And-- she was one sick cookie. We didn't-- and we were afraid to tell anybody, my mother kept saying don't say anything you know don't talk to anybody because if-- if they decide that you're too sick to go then we're going to be stuck. So--

SIGRIST: You've mentioned a lot about your mother on the train trip, what's your stepfather up to during all this time?

WILLIAMS: Well my father was trying to keep on eye on me. [Laughs]

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SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Talking to the boys out in the--

WILLIAMS: Right, talking to the boys out in the hall. [Laughs] No, I don't know what they did. I-- I had my own fish to fry.

SIGRIST: Well-- why don't we-- pause now and Peter's gonna flip the tape over and we'll get you to the Drottningholm and get you to America.

END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

SIGRIST: All right. We're now beginning side two with Ruth Williams, who was detained at Ellis Island for eight months--from 1942 into 1943. We've gotten you into Spain.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And from Spain you went to Lisbon, Portugal.

WILLIAMS: Um-hmm.

SIGRIST: Then what happened? When you arrived in Lisbon—sort of spin out the story from there.

WILLIAMS: Well—we walked around the city a little and looked at things, but we didn't have any money. I think—Mr. Chalks (ph), one of the people at the American

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Consulate, had given-- lent my father five dollars. That was all the money that we had with us. But—we were in a ---- in a very nice hotel, and after they had given us our shots and all, why—we were among the first ones on the boat because my mother got deathly sick from the shots and they—they carried her on.

SIGRIST: Why was that? Why did she get sick?

WILLIAMS: I—I don't know. The shots didn't bother the rest of us but she—she really got sick on them. She never made it out of the cabin the whole trip back. And—the boat was really loaded with people—the library—the different public areas-- people were sleeping on the floor. And she, she was loaded to the gunwales. But they certainly did feed us well.

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep on the Drottningholm?

WILLIAMS: Oh we had a—we had a very small cabin we had for four people. And -- but there wasn't much else to do, I mean you just sat outside on the—on the deck or whatever 'cause everything was just so full of people. Everybody—

SIGRIST: I was going to say, you—you remember there being so many people, does anything specific stick out in your mind? You mentioned the people sort of languishing in the public areas, anything else that would reflect how packed that ship was?

WILLIAMS: No. No I really—really didn't think too much about it. We just tried to amuse ourselves the best we could—

SIGRIST: You said they fed you well.

WILLIAMS: Oh yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

WILLIAMS: Yes. I can remember whipped cream and all sorts of things like that—things that we hadn't seen for years. And like I say – people were getting sick because they just could—they hadn't had it for so long. But the Swedish people were just wonderful to us. We had a –had a wonderful young steward and he took really good care of us. Now he even let us go into the kitchen and help polish silver. We didn't have anything else to do and we went in to help polish silver.

SIGRIST: How long was the trip to New York?

WILLIAMS: That again, must've been about eight or nine—eight or nine days. She wasn't a very big ship. And it never occurred to me that there were submarines out there or anything like that. She was painted white and she had a red cross on her, and of course the Swedish colors and all, but it just never occurred to me that somebody might take a potshot at—at us. You know, it just ---we were just so glad to be going home.

SIGRIST: Tell me what happened when the ship arrived in New York.

WILLIAMS: Well, we pulled up to the pier—I don't know which one it was but over on the east—East River there. We pulled up to the pier and – and they started unloading luggage and things like that. A lot of people were able to get off. I don't know who they were and why they were allowed to--to go, but most of us were kept on board ship and we were tied up to the dock for about three days. And they didn't say anything as to what was going on or—or what was gonna be

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done with us or why weren't allowed to leave or anything like that. And then on the fourth of July, which I always thought was a terrible thing to do, they came with –boats, ferryboats, and they took us to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Great. And so begins your tale—

WILLIAMS: So begins my tale. I could even tell you what we had for supper that night.

SIGRIST: That's all right; I'd like you to do that. What did you have here?

WILLIAMS: We had a cold—we had cold sandwiches. We had ham and hardboiled eggs and I—I couldn't eat my hardboiled egg and I decided I wasn't going to leave it and I stuck it in my hand bag and forgot about it and oh—you can imagine what I found about a week later. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: [Laughs] Tell me about, 'cause your sixteen at this time, tell me about how a "Sixteen" views all this. I mean what did Ellis Island—what impressed you and didn't impress you at that time.

WILLIAMS: Well, we were so young and you know, you don't really think about serious things. Now that I look back, I – I think about these poor people that had babies or had toddlers and things like that and the hardships trying to do laundry and stuff like that down there in that big—bathroom. They segregated the men and the women. The men went over to a dormitory and the women were in another one. Um—it was, well, it was really a prison. We had Coast Guard walking the perimeter with machine guns and what have you. You were counted when you went out to a meal--you were counted when you came back--you were counted at night, in the middle of the night. The matrons would come through with a flashlight and make sure that everyone was there. Um--and yet that didn't—that

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didn't seem to bother us young people. We—we were putting on shows—they brought in a portable stage for us and we put on some shows. Uh—they passed the hat and we went --- two of the matrons took us into New York—just about Christmastime—my girlfriend and I. And they were so nice. They took their badges off so people wouldn't know we were prisoners [Laughs]. They took us to Horn and Hardart. We had lunch, and they took us to Macy's and what have you and boom, we had a lot to tell when we got back. Uh—but it was hard on – on the—the parents.

SIGRIST: Why were you held here?

WILLIAMS: I have no idea. I guess they figured we were all spies. I mean they were the ones who said, "You can come back," and—and then the-they took so many of us and locked us up.

SIGRIST: I suppose it sort of puts you in the enemy alien category at that time even though you were American cit---.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Well they would interrogate us – the FBI would interrogate us. Sometimes they'd take the whole family, sometimes just my mom and dad.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that experience?

WILLIAMS: Well. I remember one very—unpleasant situation. We had been asked into the office so many times and they - -they'd go back to Cleveland and substantiate what you told 'me and then they would come back and ask some more questions. And this one man was very unpleasant and he had a real thick accent. And my Father'd had it – he had a short fuse anyway and he jumped up and he pounded on the desk and he said, "Who in the ___ do you think you are

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asking me questions when you just got off the last boat and you can't even speak English as well as I can." And boy that did it. They didn't interrogate us for months after that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the kinds of questions you were being asked?

WILLIAMS: No. I--I don't really. They wanted to know who you knew and—and how you had gotten to Germany and all this sort of thing. Well, Mr. Kessler was no longer in Cleveland, he was over in Germany too, uh—the one who had instigated this whole thing. And then they would go and ask questions of the neighbors that we had had in 1939. We always lived on the same street there and we knew—the people knew us from years and years back.

SIGRIST: What was the address?

WILLIAMS: 2227 Althen Ave.

SIGRIST: Althen?

WILLIAMS: Althen. Um-hmmm.

SIGRIST: A—

WILLIAMS: A-L-T-H-E-N.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

WILLIAMS: We—we moved from one house to the other on Althen Ave. But—

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SIGRIST: Do you remember during that—'cause that's a long period of time, you're here eight months. And your parents were here even longer.

WILLIAMS: Um-hmmm.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing other nationalities—

WILLIAMS: Oh yes

SIGRIST: --that—that made an impression on you?

WILLIAMS: Oh yes. Well we, I met—I wouldn't change that experience for anything. Some people say it's so terrible --- you know, you were locked up there. The Gripsholm, the sister ship to the Drottningholm, came in from Japan and—we met some people from there. There was a—man who was a—a writer for the old Collier's Magazine and he was married to a Japanese Opera Singer. Very tiny woman. She would put on her costume and sing *Madame Butterfly* for us. And they had three children – a boy and two girls, all in their late teens, early twenties – one was a concert pianist. These are people that I would never have had the opportunity to meet. There, well, we met a prostitute from New York. She was a German National. She was in our room. Ummm—

SIGRIST: Do you remember any other Japanese being here at that time?

WILLIAMS: Uh yes—one gentleman who worked for the State Department and why they locked him up I don't know. His name was Jiro Ara—Arakawa, and--

SIGRIST: Oh goodness. Can you spell any of that?

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WILLIAMS: Yes. It was J-I-R-O and A-R-A-K-A-W-A. And he even sent me a wedding gift when I got—got married years ago, and then all of a sudden we lost contact. I have no idea whatever happened to him. But he—he would try and teach us, uh, math and things like that 'cause you had nothing to do. You sat on wooden benches all day like that Adirondack furniture —that's all that was down in that big hall. And—we'd play monopoly all day, and cards and stuff like that.

SIGRIST: So they offered no educational –

WILLIAMS: No

SIGRIST: --things for the young people . . .

WILLIAMS: Well, there was a social worker named Ms. Pratt and she—she, for the smaller kids, she would give drawing lessons and some reading and things like that but for us older ones, no there was—there was nothing.

SIGRIST: Can you remember some people your age that you've befriended during this time?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Fact is I'm gonna try and find this one girl—in New York—Anna Lisa Boda (ph) -- and there was a Kate Guring (ph), and—there were two little girls—their name was Wachsmut [ph].

SIGRIST: What do you remember about these people? Why do they stick out in your mind?

WILLIAMS: Well, we were all in the same dormitory. First we were in the big dormitory in the back there, over the—where you—where you would come in where the—

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where the guard sat. You went up—up the stairway to the balcony and then it was way in the—in the—in the back. It was a big dormitory. Uh, that's where we were all at first and then we got to get into some of the smaller rooms along the side on the balcony. And I think there were six or eight beds in there so that, you know, we got to know each other pretty well. And this prostitute was really very nice, when her boyfriend would come to visit – or boyfriends would come to visit, she always shared cookies and sausages and she had a radio and--and stuff like that, stuff that we didn't have. So, she was a good roomie [Laughs].

SIGRIST: One wonders if she--she were plying her trade here.

WILLIAMS: No! There was no opportunity.

SIGRIST: I see.

WILLIAMS: There was no opportunity. Although there were-- merchant seamen that they—that were picked up when their ships were blown out from under them and they were also incarcerated here until they could figure out where they were—or where they belonged, or who they were. And there was one, his name was Jimmy – I don't know what his last name was but oh he was a good-looking man. And-- he had money and he would get the guards to take him into New York and then he'd get the guard drunk and he would bring the guard back [Laughs].

Interesting people. And then there was a-an old lady, Madam. She was of Russian nobility. She wrote political books under the name of Edna Fry (ph) and they wanted to get her on sedition. She had two boys who were in the Air Force, they were captains or something-or-another like that, and she was the one who finally got my parents off the island with a writ of Habeas Corpus. She

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knew her way around and she wrote to our Congresswoman, Frances Bolton, at the time – who did absolutely nothing for us. But just in trying to get something moving so that we could get home.

SIGRIST: And what was the woman's name again? The writer.

WILLIAMS: Madam Pacquita de Shishmareff. Want me to spell that one? [Laughs]

SIGRIST: If you can.

WILLIAMS: P-A-C-Q-U-I-T-A was the first name, and then it was a small D-E, and then her last name was S-H-I-S-H-M-A-R-E-F-F. And she was a—she was a beautiful old lady.

SIGRIST: Well, now you mentioned someone whose last name was Fry.

WILLIAMS: That was her—her—

SIGRIST: Her pen name?

WILLIAMS: Her pen name.

SIGRIST: F-R-Y?

WILLIAMS: F-R-Y. Edna Fry.

SIGRIST: Edna Fry was her pen name.

WILLIAMS: Um-hmmm.

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SIGRIST: What else sticks out in your mind about that woman? Maybe her personality or some of the things. . .

WILLIAMS: Well we called her "Granny". I—to—to look at her you would think that she wrote children's books and she was a wonderful well-educated woman, very well-educated woman. I came back to New York in—1945 to visit her—but then she moved out to California and I lost track of her. But she was, she was close to eighty when she was here.

SIGRIST: It's interesting that in that, that period of detention you actually made some rather important friendships with some of these people who were here. What about the staff? What sticks out in your mind about the staff here?

WILLIAMS: Well—normally they were-- they were—they were pretty good. We had one episode one night when we were in the big dormitory where there was smoke, you could smell smoke, and there was a fire somewhere in the place. And the matrons took off. We were locked in and they took off. 'Course it must've been a small fire because nothing happened, but—outside of that they were —they were pretty decent to us. And we used to pull tricks on 'em which wasn't very nice.

SIGRIST: Like, what kind of tricks?

WILLIAMS: Well, I would get into bed and I'd put the pillow over my face-- and of course then I weighed about ninety-eight pounds—and pull the sheet up. And this was when they'd come through to count in the middle of the night and the count would be off and on would go the lights. [Laughs] Or we'd crawl out of bed, my girlfriends and I, and we'd switch shoes under the beds, it was mayhem in the

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morning.

SIGRIST: Can you, th--that's one thing I want to ask is if you could just go me th—get me through a day, from the time you woke up, and the time that you woke up, and everything that you did throughout the day. Start with—with wake-up time.

WILLIAMS: Well wake-up time—we'd get cleaned up and—

SIGRIST: Well wait, but how were you woken up.

WILLIAMS: Oh that I don't remember. They must've come in and said, "it's time to get up" –

SIGRIST: Do you remember what time that was?

WILLIAMS: Oh, it must've been 'bout 7:30, eight o'clock.

SIGRIST: Ok. Then you said you cleaned up.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did that entail? Where

WILLIAMS: Well we –

SIGRIST: did you have to go and what did you have to do?

WILLIAMS: In the big dormitory, there was a large washroom up there and it was just a sponge bath, that's all you could—you could do.

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SIGRIST: No showers or anything.

WILLIAMS: No. Uh, showers you were allowed to use in the evening. And, I don't know if those three bathtubs are up there yet or not, but I was telling my husband, the social worker had given me a cake of Cashmere Bouquet soap, we hadn't had any decent soap in years. And I locked myself in that bathroom and I—the bathtub—and I stayed in there 'till that soap was all gone. They're bangin' on the door, but it was so wonderful [Laughs]. Now there were three bathtubs up there and then the showers were on the other side. But, uh, we got up and we got cleaned up in the morning and then you came downstairs and then they marched everyone out to the dining room.

SIGRIST: You had your own clothes, I assume?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes. And they, like I way, they counted you on the way out and of course you had guards and matrons going with you to--to get you to the dining room. And we ate, and then back again –

SIGRIST: What would you eat for breakfast at Ellis Island?

WILLIAMS: It was—it was mostly cereals-- oatmeal—stuff like that. Every once in a while they would throw in powdered eggs that were, sort of greenish lookin', I didn't go for them too much. The food was terrible. The food was terrible! They finally took up a petition to get-- decent food for kids under sixteen. They had a special table for the children so they had something decent to eat 'cause it was just awful.

SIGRIST: Ca-- does anything stick out in your mind about the whole procedure of eating, or, maybe things that you observed other people doing? Because you've got all

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these different people from different walks of life who probably have a different idea of what – what it means to sit down and eat. Does anything stick out in your mind about –what you saw during? . .

WILLIAMS: Well no. Most of the—most of the people that were with us were European, there were very few Orientals, really, and they seemed to be rather – I wouldn't call it Americanized, but you know, just like we were. They—they weren't here very long. They—they got off a lot sooner than we did.

SIGRIST: Were you served any food --- you mentioned the powdered eggs, ---any food that you'd never seen before, that was new to you?

WILLIAMS: No. No. I was lucky enough to get into the kids table, yet. But oh they—well, they did—they used to serve mutton, and to this day I can't look at lamb or mutton forget it. It's greasy and tallowy. And then they'd serve—herring, and they had these big tin pitchers, you know for the milk and for—milk, coffee, and tea. And those herring were about that long and the people took them—

SIGRIST: That's about a foot—

WILLIAMS: And put them into these pitchers, they looked like bunches of flowers with all the tails sticking out 'cause you just couldn't—you just couldn't eat that.

SIGRIST: You have a [Laughs]—you had a lot of detainees with senses of humor.

WILLIAMS: That's about all we had was a sense of humor.

SIGRIST: All right. So you had breakfast and then what. Where did they take you and what did you do.

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WILLIAMS: Well, then we would come back to the big hall. And then, sometimes I'd help my mother wash out a few things and we'd hang them up downstairs. There was one ironing board off in the one corner—I have a picture of it in a book of mine at home. You could tell if somebody was using it 'cause a light would be on over it and people were waiting to--to use the one iron and ironing board.

SIGRIST: Where did you wash things out? In what receptacle?

WILLIAMS: Well there was a—well there was a—th--the big bathroom, right down below us here, and there were like some—some stationary tubs in there. And that's where you would do what little personal laundry that you could. No dry cleaning or anything like that, I mean it was just – from day to day.

SIGRIST: So you might wash out some clothes. How else would you bide your time until lunch?

WILLIAMS: Well, we'd play ping-pong. There was a—the ping-pong table down there. We had access to the library, which was a very small room as I remember. It was small and dark. It was up on the second floor somewhere, I really couldn't tell you how to get to that now. Um, and there was some gal who was constantly playing the old upright piano. We'd play monopoly—we'd play cards, and then you'd go out to lunch again and you'd come back. And they did allow us to go upstairs to the dormitories to lie down in the afternoon, if you wanted to. And, uh, then you'd come back down and sit around some more. I was always into handwork and so was my mother so we were always crocheting or doing something like that. And then out to dinner, and I think lights out was about ten o'clock at night. Once every two or three weeks they would show a movie, a--one night a week—and that's when the men and the women were allowed to sit

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together.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where that movie was shown?

WILLIAMS: Downstairs in the big hall just before that—the big washroom they put a screen up—right where the stairway comes up. Yeah. They'd put a big screen up there and ---

SIGRIST: What do you remember seeing? Do you remember—does anything stick out in your mind?

WILLIAMS: No. It didn't happen too often. It didn't happen too often. I don't remember any of the movies that we saw.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit, we only have ten minutes left, but can you talk a little bit about your father's mental state at this time. I -- what is he thinking, how—how is this experience affecting him?

WILLIAMS: Well, they were very frustrated. I mean we were—we were helpless. We—you'd be interrogated and then the people would disappear and then you'd just sit there and you'd watch that door, waiting where the guard sat. And when—when that door would open, all eyes would go, "who's gonna get called today?" that sort of thing. And it must-- it must've been nerve-wracking for the —for the parents or for the older people. We kids didn't care but—

SIGRIST: Right. Because you have a whole different set of concerns.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: I'm wondering, your mother and your stepfather in their later years, did they talk about this experience?

WILLIAMS: No.

SIGRIST: Ever?

WILLIAMS: No.

SIGRIST: When—

WILLIAMS: It was over.

SIGRIST: and if they did, how did they talk about it?

WILLIAMS: No. They never—they never talked about it. We had to pay off our fares and they worked very hard to—I think it was two thousand dollars, it was a—five hundred dollars a piece. And my mother really worked pretty hard, along with my dad to pay that off and get that off. But they never talked about, about any of that.

SIGRIST: Why were you re — released before your parents. You were released in February of 1943.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: They remained here until May of '43.

WILLIAMS: I think Madam had something to do with that because—she was—she was

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always writing or—or—or—getting in contact with someone. She had a lot of — a lot of contacts. And, because my sister and I were born in Cleveland, Ohio it seemed rather ridiculous that we were—we were locked up too. My folks were naturalized citizens. I think they became citizens the early 1930s—and maybe, I just—I just don't know.

SIGRIST: So your sister was released with you.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Where did you go? Where did you and your sister go?

WILLIAMS: Well, the—social workers took us to the Traveler's Aid Society in New York, and I'll never forget that day. It was bitterly cold and I was feeling so rotten. And we sat in that cold place and waited. They gave us supper and then they were gonna take us to the train station, we were gonna take the train to go to my grandmother's in Cleveland Ohio. And she took us to Grand Central and then found out that it was out of Newark, New Jersey and that was the wildest cab ride that I have ever had in my life to make that train. Yeah, she —she kind of goofed up on that one.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about having to go away from your parents? About leaving them here?

WILLIAMS: I was—I was glad to get ---- to get off. And I'd wanted to go back to school. My father didn't want me to. He—he wanted me to get a work permit at sixteen and I still had friends from before we went to Germany. My girlfriend's father was a wonderful man and he said, "Ruth," he said, "why don't you start back to high school and—go as far as you can and if your--when your parents show up, if

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your dad says you can't, well then you can't," you know. So I wrote to my parents and told 'em what I'd done and my dad said, "If you can finish with the same class that you started out with in the seventh grade I'll let you go." So I got three years of high school into a year and a half and graduated with honors.

SIGRIST: I wonder how your parents felt about, I—I'm sure they were happy that you and your sister were released before they were released. But I wonder how they felt about — suddenly they were all along ---lone here on the island.

WILLIAMS: I don't know. My mother was never much of a writer, and my dad not at all. So—we wrote to them, but they never said much about it.

SIGRIST: And you said, I'm sorry, you went back to Cleveland?

WILLIAMS: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: You went back to Cleveland and you lived with—

WILLIAMS: My grandmother.

SIGRIST: With your grandmother. Tell me about seeing your grandmother again for the first time.

WILLIAMS: Oh that was great. That was so great. She was a sweet little lady, too. And, like I say, if it hadn't been for her I wouldn't have had much of a childhood 'cause she was more my mother than my mother was.

SIGRIST: The Russian writer, you think, was instrumental in getting—

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WILLIAMS: I think so

SIGRIST: --you off first, you think.

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

SIGRIST: But ultimately, getting your parents off also?

WILLIAMS: Yes. Through a writ of habeas corpus she got them off. Finally.

SIGRIST: And um, what do you know about their trip back to Cleveland, when they left the island. Did any of them ever tell you anything--?

WILLIAMS: No. No.

SIGRIST: That might have happened?

WILLIAMS: No. She — they never talked about it.

SIGRIST: How do you think this experience has — has affected your life?

WILLIAMS: Oh, I look—I look back on it with pleasure. Like I say, I -- I enjoyed meeting all of these different people and—and--- I've never been sorry. It was—it was a rough time but I've never really been sorry that we went through what we did. I just never understood why they locked us up when they asked us to come back, and provided the transportation and everything else and then—[Laughs] threw away the key. That never made sense to me and to this day I can't figure it out. But it was, there was a war on and—maybe they thought that there were spies on the boat or something or another. I have no idea. I don't know what a twelve

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and sixteen year old could spy, but—

SIGRIST: Those were different days.

WILLIAMS: Yeah, they were different days, all right.

SIGRIST: Ruth, I want to thank you very much for letting us interview you. This has been very interesting. Certainly, this information is unique to the Oral History Project in many ways and it's been a pleasure.

WILLIAMS: Well, it's been a pleasure for me too.

SIGRIST: Great. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Ruth Williams on Friday December 13, 1996, with Peter Hom at the helm with the recording equipment. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW