

EI-925

EMIL EITEL

BIRTHDATE: JUNE 14, 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 5, 1997

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 93

RUNNING TIME: 1:59:17

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

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GERMANY, 1923

AGE: 19

SHIP: THE MUNCHEN

PORT: BREMERHAVEN

RESIDENCES:

SIGRIST: Okay. I'm Paul Sigrist from the Ellis Island Museum.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Today is Tuesday, August 5th, 1997.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: We're in Union, New Jersey.

EITEL: New Jersey.

SIGRIST: Yeah. And I'm here with Mr. Emil Eitel.

EITEL: You're right. Don't talk too loud because my—my one ear is—when you talk too loud—

SIGRIST: Okay.

EITEL: So—

SIGRIST: Well, if I talk to loudly, just tell me and I'll back down.

EITEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Mr. Eitel came from Germany in 1923. He was 19 years old at that time.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And I also should say that in the room with us is a fish tank with a very large goldfish. [chuckles]

EITEL: And he's nine years old.

SIGRIST: And he's nine years old, which is old for a—a goldfish.

EITEL: Did—did you see my things what I make? I make all that stuff what you see.

SIGRIST: All the seashells and things.

EITEL: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Does the fish have a name?

EITEL: No.

SIGRIST: No. [chuckles] Well—

EITEL: I don't know if it's a him or a her.

SIGRIST: [chuckles] And how old are you, Mr. Eitel?

EITEL: I'm—I'm 9—93 years old.

SIGRIST: Wh—

EITEL: And you wanted to know the months?

SIGRIST: Well, what is—what's your birth date? The actual date?

EITEL: June 14, 1904.

SIGRIST: Great.

EITEL: And it's on Flag Day.

SIGRIST: You were born on Flag—

EITEL: The 14th, June.

SIGRIST: [chuckles]

EITEL: You can put that down.

SIGRIST: Okay. Where in Germany were you born?

EITEL: I was born in the town—you want to know the town?

SIGRIST: Yes.

EITEL: Hinterweithal.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

EITEL: Oh, my.

SIGRIST: Well, actually, it's—

EITEL: I don't know.

SIGRIST: It's right here on the—

EITEL: Oh, oh—

SIGRIST: Mr. Eitel has a certificate.

EITEL: I can spell it, I think.

SIGRIST: Well, here. I can do it. Like I said [unclear]—

EITEL: All right. Okay, all right.

SIGRIST: It's H-I-N-T-E-R-W-E-I-T-E-N-T-H-A-L.

EITEL: That's correct.

SIGRIST: Say it one more time for me.

EITEL: H-I—

SIGRIST: No, just say the na—just say the town.

EITEL: Oh, Hinterweithenthal.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Where in Germany is that?

EITEL: Rhinefalz [PH]. Der Rhinefalz. Rhine. You know the River Rhine but it is a—[unclear] there, the [unclear], like, you know.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm.

EITEL: It's called Rhinefalz.

SIGRIST: Is that the southern part of Germany?

EITEL: It is, yeah. [unclear], yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

EITEL: Near—near Alsace-Lorraine.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, uh-huh. What—what do you remember about the town when you were growing up?

EITEL: It was a beautiful town.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

EITEL: It was beautiful town and you didn't have much industry—industry because—oh, that doesn't make any difference.

SIGRIST: No, tell me. I'm—I'm interested.

EITEL: Well, yeah. But it was—they didn't want industry in the—in—in the town that, if anybody moved into the town you had to wait three years before the—became a—a [unclear]. Was true, you could vote in the town. You wanted to see the man or whoever was—was a—a good person. That—that was our—our town and—

SIGRIST: What did the town look like?

EITEL: Oh, it had three—three streets, like, you know, where the wagons there that—oh, [unclear]. The—the wagons and the horses and our—our most—industry, what we lived from, was from the f—forest.

SIGRIST: Forest.

EITEL: It was all around, the town forest, and—

SIGRIST: What did they do in the forest?

EITEL: We had two sawmills. And most of the people, they w—they work out of town. We had three railroad stations. So we—we got the—the old and the new. Anything new came out in the world, we got it too. But also, the old fashioned, you know, people had different [unclear] and [unclear]. It was a beautiful town.

SIGRIST: So it was a kind of combination of the old and the new.

EITEL: And the new.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, interesting.

EITEL: They—I don't think there was a—in the good time, before the—the lousy war [chuckles]—I don't know—

SIGRIST: First World War.

EITEL: I don't know if you can put that down. I called it a lousy wars. Everybody had a job and—

SIGRIST: Is there—is there a building that was in that town that sticks out in your mind?

EITEL: Well, the sawmills.

SIGRIST: The sawmills.

EITEL: The sawmills and then the mills, what ground the—ground the wheat and—no wheats would not grow in my town. But the—the rye—you know, the people brought it in the mills and they got the rye and they got bread for it and things like that. Yeah.

SIGRIST: This is rye, like the grain.

EITEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Grain.

SIGRIST: So there were fields also.

EITEL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Everybody had the—well, we had two cows. But I come to that a little bit later. Yeah, you know.

SIGRIST: Well, can you tell me what your house looked like?

EITEL: Oh, yeah. My house was built in the 1700s. And—and so it was a three-family house. And it was—it was—one time, it was owned by three owners, that—our house. And it's a—it's a three-story and—

SIGRIST: What was it made out of?

EITEL: Oh, boy. It was made from—from wooden branches, big beams. There was the beams, their casing and all. It was—it was made from—nobody, you know, they—this—the nice things. And they were—they was [unclear] this all right now for the 1700s. And—and then you had everybody—everybody had 'em fixed, everybody what owned the house later had something fixed in the house. And it became a modern house.

SIGRIST: Which part of the house did you live in?

EITEL: In the first floor towards the Haupt Strasse [PH], the Haupt Street. That's where we really lived.

SIGRIST: How many rooms did you have?

EITEL: We had five—five rooms. One was—was once—one room was taken for a—oh, there—for food and potatoes and things like that. And the other ones was for the family.

SIGRIST: So one room was like a storage room.

EITEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have electricity in this house?

EITEL: Oh, we got the electricity in 1900—after the First World War.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about when they put electricity in the house?

EITEL: Oh, they put it there—what you call—on the roof. Instead of [unclear], the [unclear] was on the roof. And each house had two—like, was allowed two a house. And I was one for the [unclear] and one for the kitchen. That was it for lights. But the town—the town paid for most of it because the town itself was rich on lumber. And we—we got a—[several words unclear] and also the electric—the electric, what it cost to build. And the [unclear] was \$10 to build and then it was free. But that was in the olden times. That's not now anymore. See.

SIGRIST: Did you have running water in your house?

EITEL: Yeah, we had running water, two faucets. Just two—two—no, only one faucet.

SIGRIST: One faucet.

EITEL: Yeah, and there was running water and there was—if water ran out, you catch it again, you know, outside. It did not go in the ground but we catch the water again because it was fr—fresh. Better water, came out of the mountain itself. Of course, now it's different. You got pumps there because, you know, you have five times as many people as there was in th—in that time.

SIGRIST: Is th—

EITEL: In my [unclear] time.

SIGRIST: Is there a piece of furniture that you remember very vividly as being in that house?

EITEL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. I remember a—a de—a desk was made. We—we really got that from a rich man and also the chairs around table, you know. We did—had the seats, red and green and—and so on, and then a desk. We built—you open it up and you have—you could write on it and things like that. And then we had—first, when I was really young, we had straw beds, which—

SIGRIST: Straw beds.

EITEL: Straw beds. You know. And then later on, we got one—one mattress with springs. And I know all the boys there, we had a lot of fun with that, jumping up and dow—[chuckles] up and down, you know. I remember all this. Now—

SIGRIST: I'd like to talk about your father.

EITEL: That's what I—coulda come to.

SIGRIST: Yes, what was his name?

EITEL: George.

SIGRIST: George.

EITEL: Gaylord is the right name. George is French but everybody—

SIGRIST: In German, it's Gaylord.

EITEL: Gay—Gaylord, yeah. And he was born in Paris. My—my grandfather and my grandmother, which I never knew fr—on my father's side, he—he was a—a—a—he used to travel to Paris with a shoe—another—the same as a shoe. This was in 1870 when the—one of the stinkin wars started.

SIGRIST: The Franco-Prussian War.

EITEL: You—you ha—have it right. And—and—and it's just like it—it was just like in—about like—like in wars in—in today's time. There—there the same—it's there. You had to stamp in "Made in Paris" but it actually was made [chuckles] in Germany, one town from where we lived in Germany. So my father and, you know—it took in them days five weeks, six weeks, you know, if they went by horse and wagon from my town. Yeah. And so, naturally, my grandmother was very good and she went along. And then my father was born—was born there and th—there's the war—the war started. And it was pretty—pretty tough. You had to get—you had to get out. So my father was eight days old when they had to get out. And they had a—the—they got out in a—a—railroad—ride in a wagon, you know, where you have the cows in it and things like that. It took them three weeks to—to come home to Germany. That was that. And then—then he—he became a forester and my father was a forester. I think it was about—I don't know, at least—I—I—I guess at least 50 years or more.

SIGRIST: What does a forester do?

EITEL: He's taking care of the forest. That's the simplest thing. But the do the—they—they go in the woods and they have a little ax and they—they take a little off the—there—there—bark off which tree—which tree should be cut down. And in—in Europe, especially in my town and there was one tree taken out. A young tree was put in—in the place. And my father took care of—of all that stuff, planting small trees. He had a [unclear] woods. And, oh, my God. There are so many stories to it, it's not even funny.

SIGRIST: Did you, as a child—

EITEL: And—

SIGRIST: —ever go to help him?

EITEL: Yep.

SIGRIST: What—what kinds of things would you do when you went with your father?

EITEL: Well, we went once to the—I went with him to go after wild boars.

SIGRIST: Wild boars?

EITEL: Yeah, the [unclear]. And through the wars, they came to us for [unclear] for [unclear] grown in forests, you know. And so they made a lot of damage. You know, they used to take [unclear] of land in back of the—you know, ruin it. And so you went out. My father went out. He shot about 17 of 'em himself. And they come out with [unclear]. They're all—first of all, they're [unclear], have everything there, you know. And what else he did, he used to travel. My father was a very, very small man because, through the traveling, he went over all Europe. They [unclear] little seeds, little—little trees and things like that. [several words unclear] the people, you know, a lot. And you learn—and you learn, just like I learned a lot by going—going—coming to this country. You know.

SIGRIST: What was your father's personality like?

EITEL: Oh, my God! B—I guess everybody says you had the best father but he—he—he never laid a hand on anyone of his boys. We was four boys and one girl. And h—he—the—none of my brothers. I was hit once and [unclear] say why. I was [unclear] my—my sister. Everybody [unclear]—everybody was three years—three years older so—and my sister was sister was six years younger, you know, [unclear]. So I was supposed to k—keep [unclear]. We lived on a—on a little hill. And so my mother says—my sister was in the carriage. And my mother says, "Take care of the carriage." And boys are boys. I said, "Arhh, arhh, arhh, [unclear]." And I tried to—I [unclear] the thing, try to catch. And the thing went over the [chuckles]—over the, what you call. And that was about the only thing that my father just hit me. He never hit me before. But I want to tell you. Can I tell you that? How they raised all of us?

SIGRIST: Sure.

EITEL: You wouldn't believe it. You wouldn't—you never would. When we was born, my older brother first, he was nine years older. And—

SIGRIST: Okay. First of all, can you name your brothers and your sister for me?

EITEL: Oh, yeah. My—my oldest brother was Karl.

SIGRIST: Karl with a K?

EITEL: Yeah. Karl—I—yeah. Yeah, Karl with a K. And my other brother was Henry—Heinrich.

SIGRIST: Heinrich.

EITEL: Heinrich. And—and the other one was Albert.

SIGRIST: Albert.

EITEL: And then I came, Emil. And my sister was Lena.

SIGRIST: Lena?

EITEL: Lena, yeah.

SIGRIST: Lena.

EITEL: Lena had—I don't know if that was the—yeah. Yeah, not [several words unclear] Lena. Lena.

SIGRIST: How did you end up with a French name, Emil?

EITEL: We lived in French—in France one time.

SIGRIST: Did you?

EITEL: Yeah, in Alsace-Lorraine.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

EITEL: We lived there. It's so nice, just right there. It's in Germany, of course. Yeah. And we lived there because—and then, we—we [unclear] right now, we live only about—I was—I was in France and in Germany, just about six weeks ago.

SIGRIST: Oh. [chuckles]

EITEL: [chuckles] Bel—believe it or not. Oh, a wonderful time.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me about how your—your father raised the children.

EITEL: Oh, that's right. They raised—that's something never was before. When we was born and we was this high and [unclear] could stand, my father always said, "If you want to eat you have to work." That was his—that—that was his favorite saying, you know. He believed that you had to do.

And he says all the time [unclear] and, you know—and he—and he says, “I don’t care what he does. But he’s got to do work. He can work with his head, you know. write and things like that, or anything at all. But you got to do something in order to live.” That was [unclear]. And he was very funny. You could argue with my father but he—but he said a few times what he though and would add, you know, but he never h—hit any one of my—so—all right. So when we was thing big—just about could stand. Now, in Germany in them times you had wood to burn or a co—coal or something like this. See? And it had to be draw—brought into the—brought into the house in—in the box. And so when we was able that—to hold a piece of wood this big—

SIGRIST: About six inches long.

EITEL: My—[chuckles] yeah. My mother would—would give it in the little hands and—and with one hand, I guess, she had—had us—I—I—I—I—I—wouldn’t a know but my—my sister was six years younger. So I—and you did the same with her. [chuckles] That’s how I know it was that way. So—and then [unclear] hand [unclear] brought it into the house, this little bit of stick. And then my mother started—started dance and say, “Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Look at this guy! He’s got such a big piece of wood in.” [chuckles] And ev—every day or every week or so, this piece—big—becomes little bigger [chuckles] and bigger, you know. And—and then it was [unclear] always, you know, oh! Make a big thing out of, you know. And, oh, [unclear] you know, you was—

SIGRIST: You felt very important.

EITEL: Por—important, see. And she’s out there dancing around. [chuckles] And things like that.

SIGRIST: What was your mother’s name?

EITEL: Phillipina [PH].

SIGRIST: Philli—Philli—Phillipino?

EITEL: Yeah, Phillipina.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

EITEL: Mayer.

SIGRIST: Can you spell it?

EITEL: May—Mayer. Mayer or Mayer.

SIGRIST: How do you spell that?

EITEL: I think that was spelled with M-A—M-A—[unclear]—

SIGRIST: Y?

EITEL: Y-E-R, I guess. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Mayer.

EITEL: Yeah. By the—by the way, they had 12 children. But I want to finish this—

SIGRIST: Go ahead.

EITEL: —first, the—the w—wood business. So [unclear] then, of course— then—then I started—I started to bring the wood in [unclear], you know, and things like this. And you want to know something? On the way in, I—I [unclear] remember this. My daughter also. I used to go—on the way in, I used to stop and build a house, build a house [chuckles] with— with the wood, you know, the long pieces of wood, whatever [unclear], building a house. And it was a pleasure. That how we start working. [several words unclear] and today it is a lot of things I like to do. You know, with your hands and look how—look at this stuff here.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

EITEL: See them here. I did them.

SIGRIST: You've done all that? Uh-huh.

EITEL: Yeah. You know, and I liked it too. You know, like that. It's a pleasure today. And—and through all my life, of course, I—I did h—hard work in my life; believe me. Well, anyway, so for—now, you asked me something. This is my fault.

SIGRIST: You started to talk about your mother.

EITEL: Oh.

SIGRIST: You gave your mother's name. What do you know about her background?

EITEL: Well, her background, my grandmother, she was—had 12 children. All right. No. Let's—for my family first. Now, we had four boys.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm.

EITEL: And—and they all had to do what—what I was saying and they all was later on—the others—my—all this brother, he was on the—on the railroad. He had charge of the—the—the—the railroad, not—not the—the ones with the [unclear], you know, where the [unclear]. Well, anyway, in charge of—had a good job. And he became a soldier, you know, when he was around 18, 20. You know, you had to go if you wanted to go or not. And [unclear]. Then he [unclear] was nine years because—not that he wanted to be a soldier but he had to be for three or four years, and then the place was—war broke out. And he was also—terrible, what he went, [unclear]. He—he was shot right through the stomach and he was—he was wounded. He was laying in [unclear] that—that once. You know, what he told us. And after the war—after [unclear] First World War was over, he was missing. We didn't get no—we didn't know except, you know, missing. And he came home. He—he went in—went to work for a—for a farmer figuring, you know, he had a better [unclear]. But [unclear] farmer, he had cheap [chuckles] labor and all the letters he wrote home and things like this, we never got. See, and there's—that's why I say the lousy wars, you know.

SIGRIST: How did World War I affect you and—and the people who were still at home?

EITEL: And I'll tell you. You have no idea. I was 10 years old in 1914 when the war started. Yeah. Now, I told you I had four—four br—four brothers.

SIGRIST: Four brothers and a sister.

EITEL: And a father. [unclear] my father, I told you, was a small man. He predicted the First World War, see, because we—we wasn't far away from the—from the—from the soldiers where they trained and everything else, you know. And they had always maneuvers there, see. And so in 1914 it was [unclear] day, you know, as one people said, you know, "We're going to have a war." The other one says, "No, it's just"—he went through it with the horses in them day. And—

SIGRIST: What did you actually see? Did you actually see anything?

EITEL: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you see?

EITEL: I saw the—the soldiers—what the people thought—what the people thought—thought it was a maneuver. I saw—or my father actually saw it

and he—he—he pointed it out to me. Before, when they had a maneuver, when they had the [unclear], the [unclear], little things there, that was a fake in the Second World War from the Germans, you know. You—the French thought that they still had the horses. In the meantime, my father saw this [unclear] helmet. He said, “That is not a maneuver. That’s war.” Well, you know. You had people, “Oh, shush! You don’t know nothing!” You know.

SIGRIST: So he understood the difference between what looked like a maneuver and what was actually fighting—

EITEL: Yeah, that’s right. Not only this, but he was a soldier himself, you know. Every—ev—every German with a German-named boy going to be a—a—going to be soldiers. And the family, according to this and everything and the names and—our names and [unclear]—we only have about, I think—oh, if there’s 400 born Eitels in the world right now, I think that’s about it, what are born Eitels. I don’t—I’m not counting—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

EITEL: Oh—what—

SIGRIST: We’re talking about the First World War.

EITEL: Yeah, yeah. Now, all of a sudden, boom, boom, boom, boom. He heard it shoot. That’s how close he was in—what—what—what was that name? Our—our president, he was there.

SIGRIST: The Kaiser?

EITEL: Ah, yeah. Well, the—

SIGRIST: Wilhelm?

EITEL: Oh, yeah. I have to tell you this. Now we heard it shoot. The cannons go off. And—and I went—this—this time, I went—I went out there from where we was—was shooting, the big—the big cannons, you know. They have—they had a—a—a—[unclear] to build a—a wall, you know, [unclear] this whole—the whole [chuckles]—and he figured—they figured that the—n—it said nobody going to get there, you know. But what—what they did, they went to H—Holland. They came in the other way and they got in. Then you had a big [unclear] what you call. And they—they cleaned that thing out in no time. Well, anyway, and then I—later on, what I saw, the Red Cross—the Red Cross guys.

SIGRIST: Red Cross.

EITEL: And he h—had to stop by [unclear] by the haupbanhof [PH]. You know, that's a—used [unclear] on things. And—and we boys in—we had a—a—a [unclear], you know, and things. And I tell you, as a little boy, what I saw there. I saw one—and [several words unclear], you know. I saw one man. He had two legs off. He [several words unclear]. And of course, he died. And I was only 11 years old, something like this. I—I had to see that stuff. You know what I mean? And, oh, what else? Well—

SIGRIST: What about shortages of some sort? Did—did you experience—

EITEL: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I come to that. I'll come to that.

SIGRIST: Okay.

EITEL: No, just—just a minute, [unclear]. Oh, in sch—school, the first thing they did, also then took the schools for hospitals. So there was no school. Now, our—our teacher was a fanatic. And I was a fanatic for the Kaiser. I'll tell you, it was so bad for me. Oh, I forgot. My father, my brothers, they all had to go to war.

SIGRIST: All of them?

EITEL: There was nobody home. And there was nobody home except my mother, my sister and me. Now, we had two cows. My father was a forester but on the side we had—we had some land also. And we was a—you would call a middle class family. You know, we had once a—once a week, meat. On a certain day, you had some cake and Saturday you had white bread. [chuckles] And—and then the—the [unclear] and that was about it. And [chuckles] that's [unclear] my—my [unclear], you know. Then we had milk. We made our butter and—and things like that. And al—everybody, for the boys, you know, they had—they had jobs [unclear] the other way. You know, I could milk a cow like nobody's business. I had to. There was nobody there. And—

SIGRIST: With—with your brothers and your father off to war, how was your life different?

EITEL: How do what?

SIGRIST: How was your life different, once your father and your brothers were gone?

EITEL: Oh, my life.

SIGRIST: Yes.

EITEL: Oh, my life.

SIGRIST: How was your life—

EITEL: Work. I was behind the cl—that was [unclear]. Absolutely. Except some real old people, you know. And I [unclear] this as good as we can. I know one time I was on the—on the plow and we had to put the potatoes in. And—and I—we had to put the potatoes in and my mother and I, we was the only ones. And the cows—we had good cows. Do you know [unclear] wonderful team of cows, you know. One of them was—you wouldn't believe it. She had 18 calves. She was [chuckles] nice with the kids. That cow knew every—there was—that's—knew everything [unclear] like a—like a dog.

SIGRIST: Did the cow have a name?

EITEL: Strubel [PH].

SIGRIST: Strubel. [chuckles]

EITEL: [chuckles] Strubel. Because you had a Strubel in—in there. And I used to go, you know, to [unclear] get this when the—the flies bite them and things like—so I used to—there—go there. And she used to stay there.

SIGRIST: [chuckles]

EITEL: Oh, my God! Yeah, that—that's a—you know. And we was—oh, about—all right. That was—

SIGRIST: Back to the war.

EITEL: No, that was better—better times. And so—but while we're on that—on that also, see, h—his family was a little bit—he had a small bottle of wine in the—in the—in the basement, you know. So one time we was making hay, you know. And then we was there and helped raking. Then my father sent us home to get—get a wagon and the cows, you know. So we—my brother and I was—he was three years—was all but we went home. And then we got in the [chuckles] cellar they got some of his wine. [laughs] And—and, you know, was so hot and everything and all that we got sauced. So—so my father and mother, they said—all of a sudden they looked and here came—the cows know where to go already. They—they knew every—every acre of land, everything about

[unclear]. And so we was up on the wagon, you know, and the—he says—my father says [unclear] came. [chuckles] Cows was going like this. And we was sitting on the wagon when we got there. I—I was crying. [laughs] And—and my brother—oh, my God! And that's one of the things. Now, what—what did you ask me?

SIGRIST: We were talking about World War I.

EITEL: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And you had mentioned that your father and your brothers were in the service.

EITEL: Oh, yeah, yeah. And—yeah. Okay, in the school, when there was any school, [unclear] used to go—I only had four years of school altogether [unclear] because then there's a—a—we c—we came in—in school and first thing you know, everybody up, you know. And as we start marching around in school, they had us start around in school and then [singing in German], you know. And the teacher, "You [unclear] any soldiers," and so and so, this and that, you know. And, "our Kaiser this and our Kaiser that," you know. "Shame on you, [unclear], rattled away, you know, [unclear]. And I believed him. I be—believed it. And then he—he le—led us—on second morning, he, like—[unclear] was lazy, all used to get [chuckles] up in school, "Guten morgen, Herr [unclear]," [chuckles] when I was late. And I was late a lot of time because I brought the milk along and I had a very bad habit. I had to wait on the school till everybody was in, you know, [chuckles] that I got in. [unclear]. That why that teacher was good, you know. You was supposed to get it on the hinder, you know, so I got a couple but he didn't. He didn't because my mother, you couldn't get any—any pants and things like that. So I had—she—she sewed some things in there. And she put a little bit extra in there. [laughs]

SIGRIST: Just in case you got it on the hinder. [chuckles]

EITEL: [laughs] Yeah, my—my mother, you know. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about—

EITEL: Oh, no. Wait a minute. I'm—I'm—I'm not done.

SIGRIST: All right.

EITEL: I've got to—

SIGRIST: Okay.

EITEL: I've got to finish this.

SIGRIST: All right.

EITEL: Because that is very important.

SIGRIST: All right. Go ahead.

EITEL: I was really, really for the Kaiser. I would have give my life for—that—and that teacher, he—he was a fan—he believed—he believed that there was nothing but Germany. You know what I mean? He believed it, you know, and—and [unclear] was no good. Fra—France—anybody was against [unclear] was no good. And he taught—taught us to say, “God punish England. God punish French,” instead of “Good morning.” But boy, did I learn something there. My father came home one day on—to leave and he—he—we went through the town. Somebody was—he know. He stopped there and he talked a little. And I came there—there and a—a German boy—boy had to—had to have—you had to do what you get to—told from somebody old. You have to—to greet him, “Good morning, Herr so and so.” Not directly, you know, except not to the—so—so we tal—and I says, you know, “God punish”—I don't know Russia or whatever was, see. But you had to say that. And I was proud of—you know, proud of [unclear] because I was—I was the [unclear]. You know what I mean? And a young guy, you know, and I was full of—full of heck in the beginning when we had had enough each. So when—when this guy went—went away and my father took me on the side. He said, “Emil, what did you say to that man?” And I says, “God punish France,” or what—then I want to tell you something. He says, “Don't ever say this again.” He says, “In the world, there is all kinds of people. You got bad people. You got good people. You got more good people—people are”—then he told—hold—told me [unclear] a little piece from the world and what wars are. He says, “That's [unclear]. That's jealousy. That's exactly how that war started. And you could make a [unclear] start it.” England and Germany, just like that, before the First World War. That was the stinkingest war was ever fought. It was not necessary, that they had the best, the time. I—I learned that later, also from my father. They had a—they had a b—the—the best time ever. Even the smaller countries had it. Everybody was working. The Americ—living. You know what I mean? And all that. All they had [unclear] go together, England and the—French had nothing to say because they had to do what—what England told them to do, see. And—and all they had to do was go together. Now, al—already then, England had already over there—what do you call them? The countries, even India, they was on—had it on their side. You see? And—and actually, one of the German women—oh, I'm stuck again. She married

one—not married—in—in the family, the English family. You know what I mean? So—

SIGRIST: So, England and Germany were very much—

EITEL: Yeah. So just—so—so what happened—what happened is—now, and—and—and then it was just—there was no reason. You had no—none had a reason, see. And how the heck was I—now—

SIGRIST: Talking about your father telling you not to say—

EITEL: Oh, oh.

SIGRIST: —hate England.

EITEL: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And he—he told me—told me all this, that—you know, that England and—and [unclear] Germany, they had the power. And then when they took the—the—all the colonies [unclear] was going to bring before, Germany went and—they went [unclear] for Europe. They got all the—you know, Turkey and all that. Then the—you know. And that's how this started. That king was killed there in Yugoslavia there. That—that didn't mean nothing. That—that war—war would have start anyway, you see. And actually—actually, French—French started that war. They started it first. You know why? [unclear] to—to take the—the—the [unclear] and put [unclear] guns. And—and—and Germany had—had 'em fooled. And they thought that the soldiers when they sees that with their—you know, they—they went—they went [unclear] the thing, you know.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember—you remember about the end of the war. When the war was finished, what do you remember?

EITEL: Oh, boy. Now—now, it comes. All right.

SIGRIST: How did you find out the war had ended?

EITEL: Let me think. Just—just a minute. All war was ended.

SIGRIST: 1918.

EITEL: The wars did not end. It d—it didn't end. They stopped fighting. They—in Alsace-Lorraine, first thing, it—it—it was a shame how many the American k—kids was killed. They came. They was not—they was not trained right. And I don't know that the names of—of there. The—the—the boat—d—during—dur—during the war, I think it was, the boat killed [unclear] by the thousands, by the millions. You know, what I mean?

Germans and American boys. But the American boys, it was a shame h—what—how we sent them over there and were not trained, because Germany had—had—had one of the best, you know, [unclear] soldiers, you know.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me about your experiences, what—what you went through when the war was finished.

EITEL: Oh.

SIGRIST: How did your life change?

EITEL: All right, all right, all right. All right. Okay. When the war was finished, that was in 1918. But during the war, we had nothing to eat. I mean, not—when our—our fields didn't—didn't bring anything in and we didn't have no—we had to s—sell our c—our cows and—and things like that. And—

SIGRIST: What did you eat during that time?

EITEL: Oh, ou—our potatoes froze in—in the—in the basement, in—yeah. So we had three times potato soup without butter, without anything. [unclear]—and—and so on.

SIGRIST: [unclear] potatoes.

EITEL: But that was—that came a little later, you know, when I—when they throw me out. All right. Now—oh, oh. Then I know a lot from—from—from killing the people, the young people. You know, it was awful. It just was awful, you know. And the wars en—ended like that. And they—the French—oh, just the—all at once, and the German—all at once, they went together and they—they ac—they give each other presents. You know, the Americans, or the French or—you know, nice be—because [unclear]. If they had to shoot, they was shooting at the—that was just before the war ended, you know, because [unclear] sick of it. There was no reason. And—

SIGRIST: Do you remember when your father and your brothers came home?

EITEL: Yeah, oh, yeah. They're—they're—well, they—the—I'll have to tell you that la—that later. That [unclear] now when they got me. See.

SIGRIST: Well, you can tell me that now, if you'd like.

EITEL: All right. All right. Then, okay, we was home. Already, we started sports, the young guys. You know? I—we had no—no soccer team. I

helped build the soccer team, you know on—but—but I had no shoes for four years. So my—my—my [unclear] [unclear] standing just like this right now on a [unclear] inside kind of—kind of [unclear] from that. And—and then we—you know, well, that was not—the war was only the Versailles Treaty. That's when the war actually—actually stopped, when everybody—that was s—such a terrible thing, what—what he did. Now, okay. So now, when my father came home, you know, and my brother, Heinrich, was gas—gassed—

SIGRIST: He had been gassed?

EITEL: He was also engineer, a good—good engineer but, you know, was—yeah. And all [unclear]. I [unclear]. And I call a—a soldier. He went through—through awful things, you know. Okay. Now, we started the—the—to play, you know. Everybody started to have—be happy. But there was one ti—time, food. Food. All—yeah. Then when my father came home and he says to my mother, you know, because everybody was there. You know, my brothers, they was—they was already—one or two had got married already, you know, both of them married and all that. And I can tell you that later, what I—so, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you get a job after the war? Did you get a job or—

EITEL: No. No, I'm go—I just going to tell you. I got—so my father says—everybody had a job al—already. They went back to this—you know, [unclear], whatever. And on the way home, the French went—or came in right through the—two of my brothers came in. [chuckles] One brother, he came in and [unclear]. The French are—occupied already our town and things like this, was over—was over. I have to tell you that. So—but—but now, says my father—now, he says, "Now that Emil has to—has to get a—a [unclear], a—a job," for to do, you know. So we had friends and everything, you know. And so he says, "How about [unclear] making barrels while you put the wine in and things like that?" And my mother says, "Are you kidding? You going to make a [unclear] out—out of him?" [chuckles] You know, there was a lot of wine barrels around there and that's a good—can make good money. But now, my—my mother, she didn't want that. [chuckles] Of course, she was afraid. You know, I never was—ever [unclear]. I was [several words unclear]. That's what. You know. So my—so what became of it? See, it was—there was no business, no, you know, [unclear] business and things like that. So my older brother was on the [unclear], which I told you. And—and—and now I says, "I—I—I would like to be a painter." You know?

SIGRIST: Painter.

EITEL: Yeah. So what—in my town, you had to be the war—in the war and some to never have came back. And there was one painter, a boss, you know. And he worked on the railroad and—and also, my brother was on the railroads. And he saw to it that I learned painter and decorating. And that's what I did. Now—so that—that's where I sit. I didn't get paid for it or anything. Then it came to the end and I—I—you—you—you could have papers. Then he give you papers out of that, you know.

SIGRIST: You had decided that you wanted to leave?

EITEL: Ah, no, no. I had to leave. Now, just wait.

SIGRIST: Okay.

EITEL: And so the French came in. First, the Americans come in, you know, and the Americans were good to us, you know. But French wanted the—the [unclear] that—you know. Then they start, you know, get—get done. And you—and the French, you couldn't, that time, go on both places, take the [unclear]. I don't know if you know anything about that. That's—that [unclear] is—without the [unclear] German can't—cannot exist.

SIGRIST: Try not to play with the wire here.

EITEL: Oh, my God.

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Okay, keep going.

EITEL: Yeah. See there, you can't [unclear]—he said, "You can—Germany can't exist with this." And it's—it's occupied. They took everything away, you know, with machinery. You had coal. You had steel. It was—of course, Germany can't live by itself. There's not enough room to—to—to—you know, there. And—and all the other countries, they came and took a piece away from Germany. So the—the railroad, it was—it was operated from the right line, you know. Hindenburg was—was president th—then. But he was an old—old man, you know. And he—he—all the countries and things like this, they came and took a piece, a piece, a piece and there was nothing left. And so they had a union, you know, on the—on the right side of—of the Rhine. And they controlled the union. And they took the people what worked, like me; also, I was counted as a—a worker. Then, because I started to get paid, a state—the state, you know, paid for us. See. So first, the—the French, you know, they closed the bridges and, also, the—we—we didn't get no money and things like that. And so they went on a strike, and a general strike.

SIGRIST: Okay. Let's—we have to stop just for a second so I can put another tape in.

EITEL: All right.

SIGRIST: We're just ending tape one now with Emil Eitel.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

SIGRIST: Okay. We're now beginning tape two with Emil Eitel. This is Paul Sigrist and it's Tuesday, August 5th, 1997. Mr. Eitel, you were telling me about a strike.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And—and I certainly would like to get you to America also so—

EITEL: Oh yeah, I'm coming to that.

SIGRIST: Okay, good. Good.

EITEL: Now, I'm coming to that.

SIGRIST: Okay.

EITEL: All—all right. Now, I had to be on the strike to—too. So, see, the French came back again, you know, and we had to [unclear]. We had to get off the—the roads, you know. My father and my mother, they—somebody died and he was 10 minutes late. And they was terrible because they was jealous because they wanted our piece of land to be French. And they—they put every bad thing on us they could—they could. You had to—you know what I mean? My father and my mother, you was late. Somebody died. They came home with a—a—with a [unclear]. And they was about 10 minutes later or so. They got a fine for 75 francs. Was good money in them days.

SIGRIST: They were trying to make things just as miserable as they could for you.

EITEL: That—that's absolutely right, you know. So, okay. So the French gave us two, three days to go back to work. Now, I had nothing to say, of course. And otherwise, they would a throw us out on the—the right side of the Rhine. We couldn't come home anymore. See? And that's exactly what they did. They—in—my—they came in the morning around five o'clock. I know they—I saw that they come. And they came on—on

our house and with a [unclear] and things there, you know. And actually—I actually think—I know one of his—he was in the German Army during the war. And then he joined over to French and he make it really tough. So my father pleaded with him. He says, “He’s only—he’s only a kid yet,” you know. You know. “And he didn’t do anything, you know.” No, didn’t help. So, all right. So I had to go with him, you know. And there was a—a train full already for leaving for—for another t—towns. And, oh, yes. I—I—I wanted to tell you this. There was one—then when we came near the Rhine, we had to come—come out and walk, you know. And while we was walking for about—about 20 minutes or so to the Rhine Bridge, you know, and there was a old man there. He was a—he was a judge, you know, for—for the whole state. He was about 65 years old. He collapsed and he had a suit—the suitcase and things there. And this—this guy, this French guy, he came and kick—kicked him all around. And I went over there. I went and I says, “Leave him alone. Leave him alone.” You know what I mean. I even told him in French, you know. I could talk a little French. And, ooh, you know, had the gun on me, you know. See. And then, finally, I helped the man up. And he says—he asked me for my name. [unclear] all over. He says, “You come and see me.” You know. “Yeah.” And—

SIGRIST: Mr. Eitel, what religion were you in Germany?

EITEL: Protestant.

SIGRIST: Protest—which Protestant?

EITEL: L—L—

SIGRIST: Lutheran?

EITEL: Lutheran. Y—yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: I should have asked you that earlier.

EITEL: That’s okay. That’s all right. My wife was—my wife was Catholic. But things [unclear] as they go, you know. When I was married, I didn’t know and we didn’t have any—anybody. No—nobody. So [chuckles] I never was married before. [laughs] So [unclear] can and so—so I—I told her. I says, “If you want to get married Catholic,” and I says, “You do the arrangements. And if it’s the other way, I do.” So she agreed to the others. So our children—they are also—

SIGRIST: Catholic.

EITEL: Yeah. Well, yeah.

SIGRIST: [unclear]

EITEL: All right. Now, when—you know, I had the—this—this—this counts. So—and we go, you know. Then we came on the—on the—on the bridge. They went—that—that was done. That was a—a couple of hundred people. My brother had to go too. And he had to leave his two children. Oh, one—one child. And he—also, on the side, he had some land and had a cow or two. He had to leave that all and go. And he was that long already in the war. So imagine what a man went through. It was—was just terrible. So—

SIGRIST: And this is all leading up to your leaving the country.

EITEL: Yeah, that's right. So when we came over the Rhine—we had to walk then over—they disappeared. They—they got—got—they got afraid. Yeah, somebody had—has a gun and shoot them, you know. Because that's—life was so—so—so cheap, it's not even funny. I got to tell you about the—the food and things what—what happened there. Nobody believes this. The Holocaust—some of 'em is true. Some of 'em is not true, you know.

SIGRIST: This is after you went across the bridge.

EITEL: Oh, yeah. That—then I was on the other—yeah—side.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm.

EITEL: So I came to the city as—as—city. They ask us where we want to go, see. We was—we was paid. Then, you know, from—from the—from the state for the other side. There was no—no—no friends there, you know, on the—them places. And—but so, they asked us, you know, where we want to go, in which city. We was—we was then—what you call—we had no homes anymore, you know. Well, it's—and then we was overnight in the one city. And they asked me and my friend—friend—we was together. And they asked me where I want to go and I told them Munich. And that's where I was, in Munich. And, oh boy. A few weeks, we got paid a dollar. Started to go down to nothing. You had to—all—all the—the—you know. I—I got to go back to—to this, what the ordinary people had to—had to do. See, then they talk about—well, about 20 state or more [unclear] Americans had the—had [unclear], you know. English had up in the ocean—States. And the Russians had Berlin and,

you know, West Berlin and all that stuff. And the—the dollar went—I mean, the Mark went down to real—nothing. If you wanted a job—I didn't have a job. There was no job in Munich. If you didn't g—go right away when you got paid in the evening, you didn't get nothing. Then you had to sit in a line and get nothing. So your dollar was just nothing. You know. My father had given me 13,000 Marks. Well, I was lucky. When I came through, I had some American money. [sentence unclear]. And also in—in Munich, you could get, for a piece of rusty—rusty—it was so bad—the hunger was so—so bad for a piece of tin, rusty tin, you could get something, you know, or a—a—if you had earrings or rings or something that—that the black market came. And—and I was living to—was a good living, you know. See. The restaurants—went through the restaurants. Well, they had—Munich was known for their food, all the—through—throughout—you know, through the world and everything else. But then if you didn't get nothing on the black market [several words unclear]. Then the [unclear], there was sawdust in it, mixed—they mixed that with—with sawdust. And I—I just wait. And not so much wait but I wasn't the way I shou—I should be. I went from, oh—I went—that comes later. I went to the American—you know, the American—what—

SIGRIST: The consulate?

EITEL: —check our papers.

SIGRIST: The consulate.

EITEL: Consulate, yeah.

SIGRIST: And it's important—it's important, Mr. Eitel, that we start getting you to America because we're going to run out of tape. We're not going to have time.

EITEL: Oh, oh, oh.

SIGRIST: So how long were you in Munich before you—

EITEL: About a year.

SIGRIST: You were there about a year.

EITEL: Yeah, then—and—and I was so bad it was not even funny. When I went to the consulate—I have to tell you that—the American Consulate—

SIGRIST: The American Consulate.

EITEL: The first thing, he looked in my eyes and he said, "Well, you"—you know, I was still [unclear]. But [unclear], "Are you hungry?" And I says, "Yes." Says, "When did you eat late?" You know. I says, "A couple of da—days." But it was lousy meat. You know where I mean? And people killed each other. They sold the houses—home by me. They sold the house for—for f—food. You don't believe—nobody believes—

SIGRIST: People were that desperate.

EITEL: No [unclear], see.

SIGRIST: Right.

EITEL: That what brought the Holocaust on. That brought the Holocaust on. The people had nothing to eat. The—even the Germans killed each other. I was in [unclear] one time and I was sitting across there. And that was when he was—he was on the black market. You know, what he paid for. He opened up the rucksack. He brought out a ham. And I was sitting on the—on the other side. And, you know, I was so bad that I didn't care no more, was eating or not. So, oh, boy. And so he cut off a piece of meat, put it in his mouth, a piece of bread. And I—I was sitting. If I go over there—had—had a knife this long—they would stick a knife in me. Hon—honestly. And—or [unclear]. Now, I go farther fast. And then when I—I came to the consulate, he made me two sandwiches. [chuckles] They had a kitchen there, you know. And they made me—me one for on the—for on the—on the way, you know. And he says to me, "Don't worry. When you come to America, you get plenty to eat." Boy, that pepped me up. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Did you have relatives in America?

EITEL: No. No.

SIGRIST: What did you know about America before you got here?

EITEL: I didn't know America. I—I didn't know. I didn't know. I was young. I—I—I—I did not know.

SIGRIST: Who made the decision that you would go to America?

EITEL: Oh, my mother was going in school years and years back. His—his name was—and he sent me the papers. And there's nobody ever went as fast to America—or I did. No. You know why? The Americans are great. It was young. Three months, it only took.

SIGRIST: That is fast.

EITEL: That is fast.

SIGRIST: Sure.

EITEL: I—I know some Italians. They got to wait six years.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

EITEL: Yeah. So—

SIGRIST: What did you pack to take with you to America?

EITEL: Oh, just one suit, one [unclear] pair of shoes. One was too small because I—you know. I—my—my—was made from [unclear], you know. My—

SIGRIST: The shirt?

EITEL: My jacket—jacket.

SIGRIST: Oh.

EITEL: Wasn't made from [unclear].

SIGRIST: Yeah.

EITEL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. If you—if you washed it in hot water, it would [chuckles]—that was in Germany, you know. And—

SIGRIST: Did you go back to see your parents before you left?

EITEL: To America?

SIGRIST: To go to America.

EITEL: We—we met. No, that isn't [unclear] this. All right. That was it. Then I had to go to—I had to go up to—to—to Bremen. Oh, [unclear] shouldn't do.

SIGRIST: Okay.

EITEL: To Bremen, you know. And I had my last meal there. And—oh, before I went, when I went, my father told me. He says, "Don't belong to anything. Nothing. Don't—if you see people together and they—they was arguing or anything like that." He says, "Walk away." He said, "No,

run away!" [chuckles] You know what I mean? So when I went towards the—that was—oh, I forgot where I was. And I saw on—on the store in a building—a big building store, like we—we have here, something like it, you know. And I saw a lot of people there. And I had plenty of time. That wasn't—in Frankfurt, I guess. I don't know. I forgot. And I saw a lot of people. And there was [unclear] the hollering and things like that. And I saw—figured, 'I got plenty of time.' I went on the [unclear] for—in the middle of [unclear]. And all of a sudden, ba-da-ba-da-ba-da—starting shooting—shoot—shoot each other. Boy, did I [chuckles] run. Took my father's—and the train wouldn't even stop. You know, it—it broke out that, you know, the—they'd—they'd knocked the windows in there and they was shooting at us, actually shoot. I have to tell you. I saw Hitler once. I—I—I'm positive it was him. Yeah. In—in Munich al—also. And—but he had nothing to say then, you know, no—so—well, anyway, I went—

SIGRIST: Were you able to goodbye to your parents?

EITEL: Yeah. All—all right. Now, before, while I was in Munich they came down to—they had permission. They had passes to go over to the right-hand side. And I came there. And we went in a little café and—and we had little coffee, which wasn't coffee, you know, and a little pie made from [unclear], I guess. [chuckles] And—and then we was there and my mother, of course, cried. And my father, like fathers are, he told me what to do, to—I really was 19, though, you know. I—

SIGRIST: How did you feel about saying goodbye to them?

EITEL: Figure it out. Yes, I—I didn't want to go away from home. I had a nice home, beautiful people. I never saw my people again. And I knew that. I knew. See, then I—I—I—yeah. And then, just what I say. We—we talk a little bit, you know. First, little nice things, you know, and. "Emil, do this." And my father, you know, just like a father, he told me what to do. My mother was crying. And that was a goodbye and I never saw them again. [breathes sharply]

SIGRIST: Where did you go to get on the ship? Emil, take it easy. Just take a minute.

EITEL: [crying] Excuse me.

SIGRIST: It's okay. It's all right.

EITEL: I went on the ship in Bremerhaven.

SIGRIST: You went to Bremerhaven to get on the ship.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the ship?

EITEL: That—the name for the ship was M—Munchen.

SIGRIST: Munchen. Yeah.

EITEL: And—and it was a ship, a brand new ship.

SIGRIST: Brand new ship.

EITEL: But we had so much bad weather.

SIGRIST: Had you ever been on a—a boat before? A ship?

EITEL: Not on a big boat, no.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about getting on a boat?

EITEL: Not so good because I know—I figured I never s—going to see my home, my brothers, my friends. I thought [unclear] little [unclear]. I was in [unclear] and didn't know it. [unclear] a dan—a dance [unclear] with it, you know. [unclear] going down to the dance. And things like that. Yeah. And at that [unclear] was—really [unclear].

SIGRIST: Sure. You're just [unclear].

EITEL: So on the boat it was such bad weather, such bad—that boat was—it went down in—in New York. And [unclear]—

SIGRIST: Were you traveling—were you traveling with a group of people or were you alone?

EITEL: I was alone. That—that—then, of course, I—I was a—I was alone. That was—you know, I was going to America. I didn't—I didn't—I—I didn't speak—I didn't speak five words in English. Well, “thank you” and all this stuff. I'm going to tell you something, something you're—you're not going to put on there.

SIGRIST: Do you want me to stop the tape?

EITEL: It's very funny. You know, can you do it? Can you st—

SIGRIST: I—I can. You sure you want me to stop the tape?

EITEL: Yep, yeah. [tape off/on] [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Those were good stories about [chuckles]—

EITEL: [laughs]

SIGRIST: Tell me—tell me how long the trip took to get to New York.

EITEL: T—ten—just pert-near 11 days.

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep on the ship?

EITEL: Oh, in—w—we were with some other guy also in a—what you call it?

SIGRIST: Cabin? You had—

EITEL: Cost—cost \$145.

SIGRIST: A hundred and forty five dollars.

EITEL: Yeah, the trip.

SIGRIST: One way. One—

EITEL: That's one way, yeah.

SIGRIST: Right. Where did they feed you on the ship?

EITEL: Huh?

SIGRIST: Where did they feed you on the ship?

EITEL: Feed? Oh. Oh, my God! I told you I was hungry. Fish. But I ate 'em like nobody think. I must have gained five pounds on the—on the ship because I was [several words unclear], you know. That was [unclear].

SIGRIST: Did you get sick on the ship from seasickness?

EITEL: Yes. Yes—yes and no. Not [unclear]. Yeah—yes and—and no, you know.

SIGRIST: A little bit.

EITEL: Not—not really sick but still weak from—from not eating and things like that, you know. I didn't vomit or anything like this. I was like this for days after—days and days. I didn't hardly know—I—I can't explain it.

SIGRIST: Kind of sick.

EITEL: But some—there was something missing in me, you know. See. And I guess it was food. And, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me—

EITEL: Okay.

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

EITEL: Yeah. All right. We—we arrived there. And the people I knew from home, they got off—off—off the boat, you know, and—and the man came. You know, he—he looked on my paper and he said—the—the guy said, "That was—it's [unclear] somebody was to meet you there but was 21 years old." And I was underage. That's how—that's the way I—I un—understood it. See, but I—I'll tell you what was going on there was not right, as was—everything was wrong, my head and things like that. You see? So then we went in a boat. It—it took—another few people was like this, you know. And we went in a boat and that—that—then we came to—in the—in the evening, the—first, they kepted us on the pier there. And we had a boat. We went there—as much as—as I remember. And—

SIGRIST: Where did they take you?

EITEL: To Ellis Island. Yeah. So—well, was already in—in—in the evening, you know. See. And I don't know what happened but it was a lot of—a lot of—a lot of people there. There must have been two boats or so, must have come together. So nobody was paying any attention and I didn't either. You know what I mean? And I slept—I slept there. Don't know where the heck—I—I don't—I try to remember where I sleep at—at there. And—and—and the next morning, oh, my God. The people came in. The—

MAN: Would anyone like a drink?

SIGRIST: Oh, we're just going to [tape off/on]—we're now resuming.

EITEL: Where was we? Oh.

SIGRIST: You were—you just arrived at Ellis Island?

EITEL: Yeah. I didn't—I didn't know anything, what—just—nothing. For in America. So I had nobody here, no—no relatives. Yes, there was one in—I have to tell you, from the 12 kids, was my grandmother. And I think there was one in Pittsburgh. I never saw him though. So, yeah. So the [unclear] there must have been a ship coming now that—with the women from [unclear], from Africa, from [unclear], because they there and you can ima—you can imagine. See, by us, we don't—we call—[unclear]—I got examined already in Germany from the—you know, that I was okay to come to this country. And I didn't—I didn't be examined but I had to show my papers. And I show—papers. And the inspector says, "Oh, your—somebody was supposed to get you." See. Now, somebody didn't come. So I says, "I think I have to send you back again." And you want to know something? I was tickled to death when he said that because I got something to eat on the boat. Just for the boat, I would go back. You know. So the next day or so—he was a nice guy—and the same thing happened. He could talk a little German. And I talked a little Jewish. And he talked to me and he talked to me. And he said—and he asked somebody else something. And he asked something. And he says, "You know what I'm going to do?" He says, "I'm going to let you go." He says, "You are a nice—you look to me like a nice guy. And [unclear] you're going to make good." So he says, "Now, I'll tell you. When you go out from here, there is guys out there. They want to give you a job." But see, I had the address and everything, was Danbury, Connecticut, you know. And I could read [unclear] I could, you know. And—and he says, "When you get out there"—he says, "There's guys. They want to give you the whole world. Don't go with 'em. Don't talk with 'em." And so he says, "You go out there and you take the subway and you go to—to the railroad station. And you'll get yourself a ticket there. And you got a name on here." He explain everything—everything else to me, you know. And that's exactly what I do. The only thing is, I went full [chuckles] and back with the subway. You can imagine, you know. See. And then finally, I came and I saw Cen—I landed, in German, Central. Central Station. And—station, you know.

SIGRIST: Grand Central Station.

EITEL: Station. And—and I says, "That's for me," you know. And in them days, you go there and, you know, I knew what to do because I—I was on the railroad already, you know. Had a little experience in that.

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B]

SIGRIST: So you stayed overnight at Ellis one night, at Ellis Island.

EITEL: Y—yeah. About that, yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what it looks like, where you slept?

EITEL: [unclear]. Not—not—I—I was—I was really dizzy. Dizzy.

SIGRIST: Did they feed you at Ellis Island?

EITEL: Yeah, they gave me a sandwich. I got a—a—a warm sandwich there. Yeah, you know. So—so, all right. I went to the station. I went for a ticket. I only had \$20 to my name. German money, they didn't take. Nobody took German money. And—and, now, then, they holler out in them days. “[unclear],” you know. “[unclear], Danbury”—no, not Danbury. The other stations. You know. So inside, a guy came and took the tickets, you know. And he saw that I was a greenhorn, you know, and he started talking to me, you know, in English first. And then he says, “Are you talking German?” And I says, “Yes.” So he says, “Now, when you come to”—what's that city there—“you have to—to go to Danbury, you got to take another train. Because”—you know. He says, “Never mind. I'll tell you when you—when you do it.” So he did. So he did. So I went up and I went to—to Danbury, Connecticut, you know. And there was cold. There was—it was—what's the month again? Before December.

SIGRIST: November.

EITEL: No—November. And it was pretty cold when I got there. It was around five o'clock, nights, you know. And I went over in the house and the—the—the drapes was—was dark, you know. I ring the bell. Oh, this—this man—what the heck was his name? The—the guy was—signed the papers. He died while I was on the boat. That's why nobody picked me up. And he did—did not tell anybody that I was coming. And I never saw him, you know, because he was buried by the time. He was old. He had to be old. He had to be as old as my mother, you know. See. And so there I was standing. And what about—you going to do? That's [unclear]. And I was shivering too already. And so there was a house there. And I figured I have to go and—and see if they—you know—if there's anybody home, [unclear] the doors, ring the bell. Some lady came on the house and I started to talk the little bit, when I already know in English. And, oh, she says, she could talk a little German. And she said, “Horning [PH]—Mr. Horning died.” And so I—she says, “What?” Y-

ou—[unclear]. She says, “We don’t know anything about that.” So, now, what to do? She says, “Now, you go down. He’s got a—a—a niece,” or something. And you know, [unclear]. “Better yet, we take you down.” They’re nice people, you know. So I—I got there and they had about four or five children, you know, see. And there was the niece and what could they do? You had to take me—she had to take me in. Well, I—right away, I thought of my father. “If—you got to work if you want to eat.” So the next day already I went out to look for a job. And I—as good as I could, I went in every store. But Danbury—Danbury had a recession then. They had a—they had—oh, my God. Look what I’m—they had a—a—there were hats—factories up there, you know.

SIGRIST: A hat factory?

EITEL: Hat—hats for on their head.

SIGRIST: Men? Men’s hats?

EITEL: Men’s, women’s.

SIGRIST: Hats.

EITEL: That’s all they made in the—in that town.

SIGRIST: In Danbury.

EITEL: Because it wasn’t that big as it is now, you know. See.

SIGRIST: Right.

EITEL: And so one president, American president, didn’t wear a hat. I think it was—not Coolidge. Ah—

SIGRIST: Harding?

EITEL: Harding.

SIGRIST: He would have been the president before—

EITEL: Yeah—

SIGRIST: —Coolidge.

EITEL: A reason was the—before, he—he was a—a warmonger.

SIGRIST: Wilson was before, right.

EITEL: Yeah, and I—I—I read that later on, you know. I got some American—I got interested in politics and—

SIGRIST: Right. It goes Wilson, Harding—

EITEL: Oh, Harding.

SIGRIST: Right.

EITEL: He didn't wear a hat. So they—they—they sold hat to the whole world. They're—this town. I mean, the ci—it was a small city. And so there was no jobs. Everyday—then I had an old man; he spoke German. He went [unclear]. He went to his friends, were at factories. And in the wintertime, painting and decorating in them days was closed, period. There was no job, no-how. So—so everybody wanted to help me but nobody could. It was nice but we went to—one [unclear] says, "I'll take him tomorrow." I got a [several words unclear] people out—off. And it was bad. So that was that. But I didn't—I went out. I got to get a job no matter what. All of a sudden, a team of horses—horses came down the street. And an old man, he was in his 70s, "Whoa! Whoa! Whoa!" He couldn't stop it. So I ran over there and I hang onto the bridle, you know, and I stopped it. So the old man, "Thank you." You know how the old man talk, you know. You know, I couldn't—I says, "Not—nicht verstehe. [PH] No compree," [PH] in French, you know. [chuckles] But he—so he—he says, [unclear]—says, "Are you German?" And I says, "Yes." He says, "Come on up," of the seat. So he asked me. And he came here. He didn't go to the mill [unclear] about 30 years before that. [chuckles] You know. And—and he says, "I will tell you something." He says, "I got a farm." He says, "I have a nice farm, two horses," and all that stuff, you know, and everything else. He says, "I—I—I can't pay you," but he says—"Eat, you can have all you want." [unclear] eats. [chuckles] You—you can imagine.

SIGRIST: Sure.

EITEL: I says, "I go with you." And I went with him. The first month, I got a pair of overalls. The second month—then a [unclear] came—the [unclear] came, [unclear] came. And he couldn't sell the milk. He couldn't sell nothing. Everything was taken away. But the coal—the—the—sell that young bull for meat. So you can imagine, you know, [unclear] the meat in, the [several words unclear]. I had to take the wheelbarrow, you know, and bring it in—in his [unclear] down in there, you know. And only the good stuff. He had a barrow full of meat. And boy, did I eat it.

SIGRIST: What were—what were some of your responsibilities on the farm?
What—

EITEL: Oh, ev—everything to do with the horses. See, I was—[unclear] my neighbor home in Germany, he had horses. And I learned quite a bit from there, you know. See. So, well, I'll tell you something funny. And so I went with him. And the next morning he had no—except his wife was there. And she was old too, you know. She was in the 70s, both of them. And, oh, [unclear] the [unclear], you know. Boy, I went out a bit, you know. And down. And he was already in the—in the stable, you know. Was milking a cow. And I says, to him—you know, I says, “Good morning.” You know, like a nice guy. And I says, “Can I help you milk a c—a cow?” He had little glasses on. And he looked over them. Looked this way on me, you know. See? “Well, all right,” he says. He—he wanted to have a little fun, see. So I—I went and he says, “There’s a pail over there.” So I went over, took a pail, washed it out a little bit. And I went over to the cow—one of the cow. I knew which—what—which side to go on because I did at home. And, you know. And then I went [unclear], was waiting to—the cow goes, whoop, with—with her leg, you know. That’s what he was waiting for. See. And I went there and a cow, when they get a stranger, she stand there like that, you know. They don’t want to give the milk, you know. But I knew what to do. I took my hand and, whung! Whung! And by three, four times, the cow says, “All right. You [unclear] like this.”

SIGRIST: Your thumbs?

EITEL: Yeah, the thumb [unclear] you go like this and put a little bit, you know. I—all I had to do [chuckles] is just hold the—brrr—the [unclear], you know. See. Ee-ee! You know, he said, “Where did you learn how to [unclear]?” I said, “Home.” And from there on, you know, they always—well, they used to say was all right. “That’ll do.” [chuckles] I was there a long time. I used to say, “All right,” and things like that. I said, “That’ll do.” [chuckles] [unclear]—but he has one thing on—he made me read the newspaper. That’s what he did. And you’ll be surprised. I—I started—learn English. I had no school, which I didn’t know. You know, I—I didn’t know what I couldn’t go to school. It was eight—eight—eight—eight miles out of the city, you know. So there was no—no night school, you know, I could have to. I—I could a have it but I had nobody to tell me anything, what to do. I could—

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the first words that started to make sense to you when you were learning English?

EITEL: Da—danke—thank you. That—that’s—that’s for sure. Or what did you say? You know, I met somebody. I do this today or [several words

unclear] don't hear good, I make 'em r—repeat it. And like that. And ask what—you know, he had the old [unclear] language. And I talked some—some, you know, yeah. And then, well, [unclear] more then, the next job was in boy camp.

SIGRIST: How long were you with the old fa—farmer?

EITEL: The fall [unclear] and the—in the spring [unclear] in the fall, get it in with the—with the cows. That was plows. I had—he had no tractor. He had an ol—old Ford [several words unclear], another old Ford. He had a Ford. But when it got cold a little bit, the battery was out and didn't use it anymore. [chuckles] [sentence unclear]. You know, how the old people was in there. And out and around it, you know. And a couple of times I went in the city where, you know, I had no license. [chuckles] And then on a—the sooner I came in the city in 1924, I already had a car. [chuckles] It was the first thing I bought. Of course, was junk. [chuckles] I think I paid about \$29. [laughter] And I—I had to carry a pail of water. That—you know, the—the—I'm talking about now coming away from New—went to New Jersey after—oh, after I had that, they came [unclear]. Now—

SIGRIST: This was your second—

EITEL: I—I brought the milk up there and then he let me—he let me after, that money from the milk. So I made about \$10 a—a month, you know. But I was happy for a while. But it was lonesome because where I came from home, I told you, we had three—three [unclear] and it was more like city, you know. See. And, yeah, and then I—I brought a milk—the milk up there to that camp and they was Jewish people, you know. And for one reason or another, sh—she was nice to me. I think—I heard she lost her son while—about my age. And she took—she took me to—they took me in their own house to sleep then in a room. You know, was a house, what they fix up, nice and—you know, she owned the place. And every time I brought the milk that, then I [unclear] buy the milk, you know. And that was about the only time that—that—you couldn't sell nothing. You couldn't sell it. It was just terrible. And—

SIGRIST: Were you writing to your parents in Germany?

EITEL: No, not very much. No, very little. I did a few [unclear]. But I told them. I says, "If I write, nothing goes good; I will not write much." And that's, I—I did that. But my wife later on, well, you know, sh—she wrote lots and [unclear] 'em back [unclear].

SIGRIST: Did you want to become a U.S. citizen?

EITEL: Of course.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about that?

EITEL: Oh, well, after that, then I came away from that—from the—from the [unclear]. I—I—you know. You—you [unclear] up in—in the fall. That's what the [unclear] for. See. Now, she asked me if I want to stay here, of course, do nothing, she says and everything. I should stay now, eight miles away from, you know, where, you know—was a young guy like me. You know. Besides, I saw some of the girls, you know. [laughs] Yeah, and so she says, "All right. I'll take you down with me to New York if you want to go." And that what happened. So in New York I could have a good job because she knew a fellow, an Austrian, and he was give me a job in—in hotel, you know. I—I learned a little bit from [unclear] up there, you know. Not—not really, but, you know, was a big table. Put the stuff on the table, you know, and eat as much as you want to in them days. And I get a dollar a tip when they—when they wen—went away. And I went away, get about \$350. That was a lot of money. You know, when they went away, they give me a dollar. And if you have 10 people, you get \$10. And I got—you know, I—I got—I didn't have any place to spend it. So that's what, I was rich already. [laughs] You know.

SIGRIST: That's how you could buy the car. [chuckles]

EITEL: Yeah. [laughs]

SIGRIST: Twenty-nine dollars.

EITEL: Yeah. Oh, I could have a—a job in—in a—in a [unclear]. I couldn't stand New York. I was used to being out—outside, you know, [unclear], you know what I mean. And—and this guy [unclear], he says, "Look." He says, "I was just like you." He says, "When I came in this country, I had nothing." He says, "Now, I own a ho—ho—hotel myself. You can do the same." But, you know. So I told [unclear]—you know, she was nice. She—she treated me like a—a—like her son. All I knew, you know, I was there a week or two. Now, I know I—I came on [unclear] back to my father. "If you want to eat you've got to work." You know, got to have a job. So I told her. I says—I says, "Aunt Kay." [PH] I walked across the street and [several words unclear] first, the smell from the gas and you know what I mean? I—I got, like, a headache. So she says, "Well, I going to try and see what—what—what I can do." So she's got a guy from New Jersey, from—you know, from New Jersey. Summit, New Jersey. I'll never—you know what Summit?

SIGRIST: Summit, uh-huh.

EITEL: Summit, New Jersey. And there, then I was—then I was [unclear]. But when a boarder—the car—I had no car then. That was just in the very beginning, you know, and I was there for a while, had nothing to do. [chuckles] Odd thing—odd thing, I was supposed to be a gardener or something but had no garden. Of course, he was an old guy. He got to—he got to be a millionaire. He u—used to have a [several words unclear]. And after the war, he bought a—one of them old boats and went to Florida and [unclear] for Florida. And got to be a big—you know, he got a big [unclear]. So from there, then one day I was in—in the trolley car. There was only trolley cars in them days. And—

SIGRIST: We only have a couple minutes left so—

EITEL: Oh, for—

SIGRIST: What were you going to tell me? What—is this about becoming a citizen? Remember, I'd asked you—

EITEL: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: —about becoming a citizen.

EITEL: Yeah, [unclear] became a citizen, you know.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

EITEL: So you had to have five years. The first [unclear] was five years. I think it's still that. Right? You got to be—first, papers. You got to have five years. And then—I don't exactly—just when but I—I got my citizen.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you had to do? I mean, what—what did you have to study?

EITEL: For—for the citizen? Sure, sure.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

EITEL: Sure.

SIGRIST: What did you have to study?

EITEL: Oh, he asked me about who was president and, oh, the guy know my boss and I already worked for a boss. I was the first—the first what used a spray gun in the—I guess in the whole world, it was, you know, w—when I worked for [unclear], you know. And he also was in the military and I—I—he went with me to get the papers. And he asked me what I—

a few—a few things, you know. I studied a—a little bit. I read it, you know, and things like that.

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

EITEL: Oh, [unclear]. Then—I—I was—I got to be a really good—even today, you know. I got to be a g—a ci—citizen. I always voted. I used to vote, you know. I—[unclear]. I was a Republican for quite a wh—while. [chuckles] Then I—I became a Demo—a Democrat but, [unclear]. And—

SIGRIST: [sentence unclear].

EITEL: My—my grandson, he's—he's in—in New York now in—in the—oh, was [unclear].

SIGRIST: Politics?

EITEL: Yeah, he's—he's a—

SIGRIST: Government?

EITEL: He's about as old as you. About 30 [unclear].

SIGRIST: Yeah, 30—I'm 37. Yeah.

EITEL: Yeah, he's 37 [unclear]. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Let—let—I have—I have a couple specific questions I want to ask you before we run out of time.

EITEL: All—all right. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What year did you get married?

EITEL: 1929.

SIGRIST: And what was the name of the woman that you married?

EITEL: Maiden name?

SIGRIST: Well, her first name too.

EITEL: Oh, Josephine.

SIGRIST: Josephine. And what was her maiden name? Do you know?

EITEL: What?

SIGRIST: What was her maiden name?

EITEL: Oh, [unclear]. Oh, boy. See—

SIGRIST: Well, that's all right. That's all right.

EITEL: All right.

SIGRIST: How many children did you have?

EITEL: I had two.

SIGRIST: And can you name them, please?

EITEL: Bob Eitel.

SIGRIST: Bob.

EITEL: Delores Eitel.

SIGRIST: And Delores.

EITEL: [unclear]. She has cancer now. Isn't that awful?

SIGRIST: Your daughter.

EITEL: She is 61 years old. She has the highest in—in—in medicine and things [unclear], the highest you can get. She's about 40 years in the—in that [unclear].

SIGRIST: That's too bad.

EITEL: [unclear]. And here she found out she has cancer. Not only has she—she was operated and she [unclear].

SIGRIST: Oh. Did you ever go back to Germany?

EITEL: Yes.

SIGRIST: When was the first time you went back? How old were you?

EITEL: 1957, I think.

SIGRIST: Did you go back to the town that you were born in?

EITEL: Oh, of course.

SIGRIST: What did it feel like, to be back in that town?

EITEL: It—it started—be wonderful in that town.

SIGRIST: Did you feel—

EITEL: After all I was through [unclear]—

SIGRIST: But how did you feel emotionally, being back there? Did you feel a connection—

EITEL: I—

SIGRIST: —or not?

EITEL: I cried. You see, in—in Germany, my name is still there. In the neighborhood there, there must be about 50 with the name Eitel. And I [unclear] here. I was there six weeks ago.

SIGRIST: That's what you said, yeah.

EITEL: And you have no idea what it did to—to me, to hold down in one day a—a—[unclear]. You know, they come. They want to give you wine. They got [unclear]. You have no idea, such a wonderful time. And the town is so—so nice now. We—we haven't got a town like this here [unclear]. [chuckles] I—I like it here.

SIGRIST: How do—how do you feel in terms of your nationality? How do you define yourself as a nationality?

EITEL: Well, I tell you, I like anybody what's decent to me. I don't care what he is.

SIGRIST: No, no. I meant you. How do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

EITEL: I like my country, the Americans.

SIGRIST: You think of yourself as American?

EITEL: I—yeah, yeah. There's no doubt. I—I like Germany, a lot of—I like the land. I like, even, France, you know, because we—close together. But I

love, as my children was born here. I was—every time I had a chance, you know. And you'd be surprised how many people I know.

SIGRIST: What—

EITEL: Thousands.

SIGRIST: What advice do you have—now, you're 93 years old. You're very energetic and—and—and your mind is sharp, a good memory. What advice would you give somebody who's young about how to lead a long, happy life?

EITEL: Love your neigh—neighbor is one thing. I am the captain for this street here. We have no crime. And we're only 10 minutes from Newark, if you know Newark [unclear] now. And that—that's the first thing. And I like people to see you put—put a flag out, you know. And I—I got the people together on meetings for the Watch your Neighbor, took me two years to get—to get the thing. So I love this country and so do my—this—this fellow what you just saw, he's a hero. He's got the Medal of Honor. He's got 29—I can show it to you—

SIGRIST: That's your son.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Twenty-nine—

EITEL: Medals?

SIGRIST: —medals.

EITEL: Medals.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

EITEL: And he was a—a pilot for four presidents here. Now, my grandson, he was a—a what you call it in New Hampshire first, 29 years old when he [unclear]. He had no warning. And he—he—he got voted in and he had it for three times. In fact, he had—he had to quit because he lost his job one time, the regular job. And he had to qu—he had to quit because he—he lost his job. He—he was a writer, you know. He's—he's a writer. And now he's—he—he's in Washington [unclear]. He comes every week, account of his mother. That's his mother, what's dying.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm.

EITEL: You know—

SIGRIST: We need to end now. We're all out of time. We've been talking for two hours.

EITEL: Yeah.

SIGRIST: [chuckles] So—

EITEL: How did I do?

SIGRIST: You did a great job, Mr. Eitel. I suspect that we could be here for another hour, even. [chuckles] At least.

EITEL: Yeah, it was—what were you going to do [unclear]?

SIGRIST: Well, let me—let me just sign off and I'll tell you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Emil Eitel on Tuesday, August 5, 1997 in Union, New Jersey. Thank you very much, sir.

[END OF INTERVIEW]