

**EI-944**

**CATHERINE MEDER STRICKER**

**BIRTHDATE: OCTOBER 10, 1905**

**INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 1997**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 91**

**RUNNING TIME: 43:48**

**INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: WOODBRIDGE, NEW JERSEY**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JAMES COE 6/2007**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: Irv Silberg**

**HUNGARY, 1911**

**AGE: 6**

**SHIP: THE CORONA**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **HUNGARY: VERBASZ**
- **US: NEW YORK, NY; KEASBY, PERTH AMBOY, WOODBRIDGE, NJ**

**ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: The interview was interrupted several times and ultimately included an uninvited visitor.**

**SIGRIST:** Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Saturday, September 20, 1997. I'm in Woodbridge, New Jersey with Mrs. Catherine Stricker. Mrs. Stricker came from Hungary, part of --- later became Yugoslavia, is now --

**STRICKER:** Yeah

**SIGRIST:** Was --- used to be --

STRICKER: Right.

SIGRIST: But it was Hungary when you were born and lived there. She came in 1911.

STRICKER: Right;

SIGRIST: She was six years old at that time and she was detained at Ellis Island for several days. Mrs. Stricker, can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

STRICKER: October the tenth, 1905.

SIGRIST: And where were you born?

STRICKER: In Verbasz, Hungary.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Verbasz?

STRICKER: V --- see, I have it on the map there. I think it's V-E-R-B-A-Z.

SIGRIST: Ok. Well, we can look it up...

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...when we're done. I should also say for the sake of the tape that we have a fan going over us, in case that gets picked up.

STRICKER: Isn't it ? You don't want that?

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SIGRIST: Oh, no. It's nice. It feels cool, but, it's --- it'll --- a little of it'll be picked up on the tape, so that's why I just wanted to say that. May I also ask you what your name was when you were born?

STRICKER: Oh, Meder. M-E-D-E-R.

SIGRIST: M-E-D?

STRICKER: M-E-D-E-R.

SIGRIST: Uh huh. And Catherine was Catherine?

STRICKER: Yes. No, no middle name.

SIGRIST: No middle name. Were you named after somebody?

STRICKER: I guess my mother. Her name was Catherine.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about the town that you were born in; what your memories are of the town itself?

STRICKER: No. I don't. I just know that down the street there was a -- the school that I went to. And that's all I remember.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about the school?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about it?

STRICKER: No. No. I was too small, too young to remember.

SIGRIST: Did your mother or your father or some family member ever tell you a story about the day that you were born?

STRICKER: They never spoke of things like that. That's why I can't remember nothing. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: Did you have brothers and sisters in Europe before coming to the United States?

STRICKER: Yes. I had two brothers, Wilhelm and Louis, and they're both dead --- deceased.

SIGRIST: Were they older than you?

STRICKER: Oh yes.

SIGRIST: Do you know how much older they were?

STRICKER: No I don't, they were quite older than I.

SIGRIST: Ok. What was your father's name?

STRICKER: Louis.

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

STRICKER: That I don't know. Farming, I believe. (Telephone rings) Oh.

SIGRIST: Wait, the phone's ringing. We're going to pause just for a... Ok, we're now resuming. You said your father's name was Louis.

STRICKER: Louis.

SIGRIST: And you said he was a farmer in Europe.

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about his growing up and his background?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: Did he ever talk about his...

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: ...childhood?

STRICKER: Nothing whatsoever.

SIGRIST: What about his parents?

STRICKER: I don't know. I don't know nothing about it. I think they had – that they – they already had deceased when I was a little girl. The only one there was my mother's mother, my grandmother.

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

STRICKER: Oh, my p-- father, he was a wonderful per---, He was a loving, caring family person.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things about your father stick out in your mind when you think about him when you were growing up?

STRICKER: Well I --- I know he was a good provider for the family and he always worked.

SIGRIST: What work did he have here in the United States when he got here?

STRICKER: Oh, he worked with terracotta in Perth Amboy and he also was a kiln burner in Keasby in the ceramics.

SIGRIST: Oh so he was sort of in the --- I mean --- making tiles...

STRICKER: He really was boss in the factory in Keasby, in the ceramic.

SIGRIST: Keasby, is that in New Jersey?

STRICKER: Yeah, sure.

SIGRIST: I'm not familiar with that town, I've not heard that name.

STRICKER: Well it's near --- where should I --- Fords, near Fords.

SIGRIST: Oh, which isn't too far from here, actually.

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: I see. When you were a little girl here in America, what kinds of things did you enjoy doing with your father?

STRICKER: (Laughs) That I don't re-- remember. No, I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Ok. What kinds of things did your father enjoy doing for his own pleasure?

STRICKER: Well, he had no hobbies. That I know. I really don't know. He was a family man.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

STRICKER: Catherine.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

STRICKER: Berg-- Bergmann.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

STRICKER: B-E-R-G-R-A-M-N-N

SIGRIST: And what do you know about her background?

STRICKER: Well, I know she had to support her mother and look after her. And when we came to America, she couldn't bring her mother with her because she wasn't a well person. And she was very good to her mother. I know she was always ---. When we were in America, she was always sending her - her mother -- things from here. You know. Wearing apparel and one -- food, and one thing another.

SIGRIST: Do you have any memories of your grandmother in Europe?

STRICKER: Not too much. No, no.

SIGRIST: Did she live with you?

STRICKER: Well she must have, because she was alone.

SIGRIST: Do you know why your mother had to support her?

STRICKER: Well she didn't have the means to --- being she was alone, she had no means for money or anything, you know?

SIGRIST: So your grandfather --- you never knew your grandfather?

STRICKER: No, I never knew him. He was long deceased.

SIGRIST: In Europe, did your mother have a job?

STRICKER: Not that I know of.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit of your mother's personality?

STRICKER: Oh, my mother was a good mother. Good to her family, the children, you know. We always have plenty of good food to eat and she was a wonderful baker and, you know, so it was nice.

SIGRIST: You're smiling when you're talking about your mother baking.

STRICKER: Oh, it was...

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little more about that? Why is that such a pleasant memory for you of your mother?

STRICKER: Well because she bakes us good things, you know?

SIGRIST: What was your favorite?

STRICKER: Well I had no favorites because they all were good. She used to make a lot of 'eastos. You know, coffee cake and like that and doughnuts from the 'easto, like that.

SIGRIST: You're saying "easto"?

STRICKER: 'east, from 'east, yeah. That's --

SIGRIST: Oh, yeast, I see.

STRICKER: 'East, yeah.

SIGRIST: I see.

STRICKER: It makes a rised dough, which you make bread --- in bread and like that. And she always made her own bread, always.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about what that process was? How she did that?

STRICKER: Well I make bread myself.

SIGRIST: Well tell us how you make bread.

STRICKER: Well, you put your flour and your salt and your milk. You get your milk lukewarm (don't get it hot, lukewarm) and put your yeast in that. And when you think that yeast is ready to put in your dough, you put it in your dough. And you just keep kneading it until it comes clean from your

hands, the dough, you know. Then it's ready for your --- in the pan. And when you put it in the pans you have to let it rise again before you put it in the oven to bake.

SIGRIST: And what kind of bread do you like to make the most?

STRICKER: Oh, I make white bread the most.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about the food that your family had in Europe? What kinds of things they ate?

STRICKER: Well, there's stuffed cabbage (laughs). And my mother made her own noodles all the time. And used to make good chicken soup and other soups, potato soup and like that. We always had soup every day --- of some kind --- a different soup. And, let's see, what else. I really don't --- stuffed peppers --- well anything she had that you could make something out of it --- goulash, paprikash, those are all Hungarian...

SIGRIST: What is paprikash?

STRICKER: That's from chicken.

SIGRIST: With paprika in it? Is that where...

STRICKER: Yeah, paprika in it. Yeah, your onions -- you sauté your onions first and then you put in your paprika and your salt and then you put in your chicken and you put enough water in just -- just to cover it a bit. You know. And then you -- you cook that until the chicken is tender and then you thicken the gravy and put sour cream in it.

SIGRIST: Sounds great. (laughs)

STRICKER: It is, it's very --- I make it occasionally.

SIGRIST: Let me, you're playing with the cord.

STRICKER: Oh.

SIGRIST: That's okay.

STRICKER: I didn't realize that. I didn't mean...

SIGRIST: There you go. Do you have any recollections of the house that you lived in, in Europe? Can you see any part of that house in your mind?

STRICKER: Yes, it was a long house and it went onto the street. They didn't have sidewalks like we do here. The house was right up to the street, you know. And I know my mother had a big oven in the yard where she used to bake her bread. Well, that's about all I remember about the house.

SIGRIST: Are your memories strong enough that you can actually sort of walk me into the front door and just tell me...

STRICKER: There was no front door, it was a side door, because the house was long. And we had lot of fruit trees on the side of it. And I remember one --. I used to be a great one to climb trees and I was climbing a tree. And in Europe they used to have what they call the chimney cleaner --- he'd come and clean the chimneys --- and he was coming in and I was up in the tree and I was afraid of the chimney cleaner. I got down quick from the tree and I fell (laughs) and I ran into the house.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what kind of trees they were?

STRICKER: Cherry.

SIGRIST: Cherry. Cherry trees? Do you have any memories about the cherries?

STRICKER: No. Uh uh.

SIGRIST: Like how did you eat the cherries?

STRICKER: Well my mother used to can them and she used to make strudel and put them in strudel, you know? She didn't make pies because pies weren't familiar in Europe.

SIGRIST: Do you remember her making strudel?

STRICKER: Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: It's quite a process.

STRICKER: She, yeah. We had a big kitchen table, a long, square kitchen table, and she used to put a sheet or a table cloth on there and put the dough --- and she'd pull the dough. And I know she used to go like this to pull the dough. She would never let me touch it because she was afraid I would pull, put holes in it, you know? So, and then when she had it all pulled all the whole length of the table and width of the table, then she'd put her fruit on the end, you know? Then she'd take the end and roll it and then cut it in pieces that the, in, to fit in the pan that she was using.

SIGRIST: It's too bad we're not doing video tape because you're sort of acting the whole process out for me while you're describing it. (Both laugh) Was strudel something that you ate on a daily basis?

STRICKER: Oh no, no, no. That was special.

SIGRIST: What occasion, what types of occasions would you...

STRICKER: No. There wasn't, it wasn't for any occasions. It was just when she felt like baking it because it's a lot of work to it.

SIGRIST: You described that in the kitchen there was a big table.

STRICKER: Yeah, a big, square, long table.

SIGRIST: What else was in the kitchen that you remember?

STRICKER: Well the chairs and the stove was...

SIGRIST: What kind of stove did you have?

STRICKER: A wood stove.

SIGRIST: Where did the wood come from?

STRICKER: That I don't know (both laugh).

SIGRIST: How did you light the inside of the house?

STRICKER: Kerosene lamps.

SIGRIST: Do you have a story about the lamps that sticks out in your mind?

STRICKER: No, no. Uh uh.

SIGRIST: How did you heat the inside of the house?

STRICKER: Well I imagine with wood. I don't know. They didn't have coal.

SIGRIST: Were there fireplaces in the house?

STRICKER: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: The stove?

STRICKER: It was very plain, everything.

SIGRIST: Is there a piece of furniture in the house that sticks out in your mind for some reason?

STRICKER: No, uh uh. No.

SIGRIST: Ok. What about water? What --- how --- was there water in the house?

STRICKER: Well. Only had a well.

SIGRIST: And where was the well?

STRICKER: In the yard.

SIGRIST: Whose job was it to get the water?

STRICKER: Whoever needed it. (both laugh)

SIGRIST: Was there a bathroom in the house?

STRICKER: No. They didn't know what bathrooms were.

SIGRIST: What kind of facilities...

STRICKER: We didn't have a bathroom when we came to America. We were lucky to have a toilet. (laughs)

SIGRIST: Well what --- do you remember, for instance, in Europe how often you took a bath and how you did that? How did you clean yourself?

STRICKER: Oh. I don't know. I know how we took a bath here in the States, you know. We had no bath, no bath.

SIGRIST: How did you...

STRICKER: We had one of them big galvanized tubs, you know, filled with water and that's how we --- and I remember my mother used to put, fill it with water and put it outside so the sun will heat the water.

SIGRIST: And how often would you bathe?

STRICKER: Oh, once a week. Saturdays. (both laugh)

SIGRIST: Bath day.

STRICKER: Yeah, Saturdays was bath day.

SIGRIST: In Europe, was your house all on one floor?

STRICKER: Yes. Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: All on one floor.

STRICKER: It was a long house.

SIGRIST: And you mentioned that there was a bake oven in the yard ---

STRICKER: Yes.

SIGRIST: ...and cherry trees.

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What else sticks out in your mind about the yard itself?

STRICKER: That's about all.

SIGRIST: Did you have a garden of some sort that you remember?

STRICKER: Well they must have had a garden because we (Door chimes). Oh.

SIGRIST: Oh, let me pause. These are the men with the furniture. Hang on a second. Ok. We're now going to resume, they've taken the furniture out of the dining room and about half an hour has gone by. Mrs. Stricker, we were talking about Europe, what you remembered about Europe. I'm trying to remember what we were talking about. We were talking about the strudel I remember we talked about.

STRICKER: Yeah, strudel, yeah. And I don't know how to make it.

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Do you remember a toy that you had in Europe?

STRICKER: No, the only thing is I had a beautiful doll and I always had it settin' in the window facing the street, a window facing the street. And everybody used to admire that doll because it came from America.

SIGRIST: How did you get it from America?

STRICKER: Now that's a good question. I don't know. I really can't remember.

SIGRIST: Was there a family member --- did you have family members in America?

STRICKER: No. I had an aunt and uncle, that's about it.

SIGRIST: Where were they?

STRICKER: They lived in New York.

SIGRIST: Had they been in America for a while?

STRICKER: Well, they were back and forth...

SIGRIST: Do you...

STRICKER: ... and so were my parents. And how I got the doll, I think maybe my --- they had been here and then went back again.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about that, about your parents going back and forth and what you felt about that?

STRICKER: Well, my father made --- it was money, you know, because he'd get a job and he'd make more money --- a better living than in Europe. That's what it was, a better living.

SIGRIST: And they were married when they were going back and forth?

STRICKER: Oh yes, oh yes.

SIGRIST: When they came to America, where would they stay and how long would they stay for?

STRICKER: Well, when we landed, we lived in New York for a while. Then we moved to Perth Amboy.

SIGRIST: Before you came, though, when your parents were going back and forth...

STRICKER: Oh, that I don't know. I don't know where they were staying. As I say, they never talked about things like that. And I was too young to ask.

SIGRIST: You mentioned going to school --- you went to school when you were still in Europe, right?

STRICKER: Yeah, but not very long.

SIGRIST: And you mentioned you remembered the building where it was.

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Does anything else stick out in you mind about going to school?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read and write?

STRICKER: No. Only German.

SIGRIST: But she could read and write in German?

STRICKER: Yes.

SIGRIST: And what about your father?

STRICKER: The same with him.

SIGRIST: I see. What were the attitudes about education that your parents had?  
How did they think about the education of their children?

STRICKER: Well, we all left young, school. They took me out of school when I -- from the sixth grade. I was only thirteen years old. They took me out of school and I went to work. In fact, I ma-- you had to be fourteen years old to get your working papers at that time and they made me a year older to get my working papers so I can go to work. And my first job was in Keasby in the ceramics because my father worked there.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Keasby?

STRICKER: K-E-A-S-B-Y.

SIGRIST: Uh huh. And that was where the ceramic factory was?

STRICKER: That's where the factory was.

SIGRIST: So then might I assume that maybe education was not a priority.

STRICKER: No, no.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about religious life in Europe before coming here?

STRICKER: Oh, I don't remember 'bout religion from Europe.

SIGRIST: What was your religion at that time?

STRICKER: Protestant, we're Protestant.

SIGRIST: Lutherans?

STRICKER: Yeah, Lutherans.

SIGRIST: Do you remember celebrating a religious holiday of some sort in Europe? Christmas?

STRICKER: No. Oh well like Easter, Christmas and like that.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that in Europe? Like Christmas. What do you remember about Christmas?

STRICKER: Well I remember we always had a tree and my mother did a lot of baking for the holidays. So that's about all. We didn't get gifts. Not in Europe. Toys or anything like that, we didn't get nothing like that, not in Europe.

SIGRIST: What about Easter? Do you remember celebrating Easter in Europe and how that might've been different?

STRICKER: No. It's just that my mother did a lot of baking, that's all (both laugh), that we had plenty to eat.

SIGRIST: Those food memories.

STRICKER: Yeah, food memories, right.

SIGRIST: Did you keep any animals in Europe?

STRICKER: No. Oh yeah, they --- my parents had a cow.

SIGRIST: Do you have any specific recollections about the cow?

STRICKER: Oh, I know whenever my mother was out there milking the cow, I had a certain little cup that was mine. I'd always run there and -- to fill it with milk.

SIGRIST: (Laughs) All right, well let's get you to America. What do you remember about the process of getting ready to leave to go to America?

STRICKER: Well, that I don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you thought about America before you got there?

STRICKER: No. I had no thoughts about it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if at that time, the doll that you had -- did you know at that time that that was an American doll.

STRICKER: Oh yes. And I remember the friend that gave it to me.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

STRICKER: Well she was a neighbor when we lived in Perth Amboy and she gave me the doll. It was a beautiful, big doll like that.

SIGRIST: Is this a different doll than the one you were just talking about?

STRICKER: No, no I only had that one doll.

SIGRIST: And you said you put it in the window?

STRICKER: Yeah, in Europe.

SIGRIST: In Europe. But you just said that a friend of yours in Perth Amboy gave you the toy.

STRICKER: Well, we must have went back to Europe and then back to America again.

SIGRIST: Oh, oh I didn't realize that. Did you remember going back and forth?

STRICKER: No I don't.

SIGRIST: But you think maybe that's what happened?

STRICKER: Yeah, it must've happened that way, because how could I get the doll to Europe? (laughs)

SIGRIST: Ok. Do you remember what your family packed to take to America in 1911?

STRICKER: I know my mother packed a --- she had a big wicker basket and in there she had food to have on the ship. And bread, she baked bread.--She had a --- she used to make these big, round loaves, you know? She had a big loaf of bread and she had canned fruit and they slaughtered their own pigs. They had some bologna and some --- well it was bacon, but they ate it raw, so sliced thin, you know? It's --- well I can't explain about the bacon.

SIGRIST: Did that have a name?

STRICKER: Specken. In German, they call that Speck.

SIGRIST: Hmm, that's interesting. You mention they slaughtered a pig. Do you have any recollections, in Europe, of that process?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: Where it came from or...

STRICKER: No I don't. No.

SIGRIST: But your mother put all this food in a big wicker basket?

STRICKER: Bigger, wicker basket, to have on the ship.

SIGRIST: And do you remember anything else that your family took?

STRICKER: No. The only thing they could take was some clothes. But that's all.  
They had to start --- get everything new when they came to this country.

SIGRIST: Now who's traveling? You, your mom...

STRICKER: Mom.

SIGRIST: ...your dad...

STRICKER: And two brothers.

SIGRIST: Both of your brothers...

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ... were coming also?

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How much older are your brothers than you?

STRICKER: Oh. They were quite a few years older. I don't remember the exact age.

SIGRIST: Now your grandmother, your mother's mother, is still living with you...

STRICKER: Yeah, they left her home...

SIGRIST: Right.

STRICKER: ..because she wasn't permitted to come to this country. She had poor eyesight and other illness. So she was not permitted.

SIGRIST: But.

STRICKER: They would not accept her.

SIGRIST: But was --- did they want her to come with them, initially?

STRICKER: Oh, they would have, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being examined, medically, before you left Europe?

STRICKER: Oh yes. Sure. And you had to be in good health when you left the -- left the ship, too.

SIGRIST: Right. Well, we'll get to that once we get you on the ship. Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandmother?

STRICKER: No. I don't remember that.

SIGRIST: Where did your family have to go to get on the ship?

STRICKER: That I don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you traveled to get to wherever it was?

STRICKER: No. No.

SIGRIST: What's your next memory in the process of --- do you remember seeing the ship for the first time?

STRICKER: No. I just remember being on the ship. That's all I remember.

SIGRIST: Ok. Do you remember the name of the ship?

STRICKER: Corona.

SIGRIST: Came on the Corona. And what are your memories of being on the ship?

STRICKER: Well I was always afraid the ship's going to sink. (laughs) I'm still afraid of ships and boats to this day. And the food was terrible, that's when my mother's f-- food that she had along came in handy. And let's see, what else?

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me where you slept on the ship?

STRICKER: In bunks. And we were down in the --- oh, what do they call that?--We were way on the bottom of the ship.

SIGRIST: The steerage of the ship?

STRICKER: Steerage. We came steerage. Right.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what it (door chimes) Oh.

STRICKER: Oh my God.

SIGRIST: Don't worry. We're going to pause again. We're resuming again, one of Mrs. Stricker's friends is going to listen in for a little bit. We were talking about being on the ship, on The Corona.

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And you remembered being in steerage in bunks.

STRICKER: That's what I...

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me a little bit about what the room looked like?

STRICKER: Well it was small, it had two bunks in it and I slept right where there was a, what would you call it?

SIGRIST: Porthole, your [not understood] )

STRICKER: Porthole! And I remember one time it opened and I was lying on the bunk and the water came all over me (laughs). Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how long the ship took to get to America in 1911?

STRICKER: No, I don't remember how many days. It was slow. It was slow.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what month you were traveling?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: Actually, on your...

STRICKER: Well, we...

SIGRIST: On your form you said December of 1911.

STRICKER: Well we landed Christmas Eve into Ellis Island.\

SIGRIST: Do you remember being on the deck of the ship?

STRICKER: Yeah. We used to walk it sometimes.

SIGRIST: What could you see from the deck of the ship?

STRICKER: Water. The ocean (laughs).

SIGRIST: And do you remember any of the other passengers on the ship?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: Other children...

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: ...that stick out in your mind?

STRICKER: No. I didn't get acquainted with no children.

SIGRIST: Were you able to see people who were traveling in first or second class on the ship?

STRICKER: That I don't remember. No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when the ship came into New York Harbor?

STRICKER: Oh yes.

SIGRIST: Did you know what that was?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: (laughs) Well tell me about Ellis Island. What happened after the ship came into New York Harbor, what happened?

STRICKER: Well it was a very depressing place. The food was terrible. And the lodging was terrible. And we were so glad when we were able to get out -- get away from there.

SIGRIST: You said earlier that you were detained for several days.

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Why?

STRICKER: Well, my brother, he got sick on the ship. He had a cold. And when we got to Ellis Island, that's why we were detained. Because they would not release us. And they put him in the hospital in Ellis Island. They have a hospital there. And they operated on him and they discovered he had a mastoid, that's what they operated on. But he died.

SIGRIST: He died at Ellis Island?

STRICKER: Yeah. At, in the hospital.

SIGRIST: The mastoid --- you're pointing to your ear. Is that something --- what is a mastoid is what I'm asking.

STRICKER: It's like a puss running out of the ear.

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SIGRIST: Oh. I didn't realize he had died at Ellis Island. So you were probably there for quite a long time.

STRICKER: Well, not all the while he was in the hospital. We finally, a -- a minister came and released us. But I don't know the minister's name.

END SIDE A            BEGIN SIDE B

SIGRIST: Did your brother have to stay at Ellis Island?

STRICKER: Oh yeah. Well he died in the hospital.

SIGRIST: Right. But the rest of you were released before?

STRICKER: Yeah. We were released, yeah, and we got settled in New York on the East Side.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the time that you spent on Ellis Island? You said the food was bad and the accommodations were bad, but what do you remember specifically about being there?

STRICKER: Well it was overcrowded, noisy. So...

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing things that you had never seen before...

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: ...that stick out in your mind...

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: ...somehow?

STRICKER: Uh uh.

SIGRIST: Did --- were you able to visit your brother?

STRICKER: After we got --- lived in New York, yes. We vi-- visited him in the hospital.

SIGRIST: How long -- before your brother died, how long was he at Ellis Island?

STRICKER: Well they didn't release him at all, he went right to the hospital.

SIGRIST: That's --- well I know, that's what I'm saying. How long was he actually there before he died? You were released, but I'm wondering how long he actually was there after you were, left.

STRICKER: You mean in the hospital?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

STRICKER: I really don't remember how long he was there.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about visiting him?

STRICKER: Well one time we visited him and he was sitting by the radiator and he was shivering. He was so cold. And I think he caught a cold and that's why he died.

SIGRIST: Which brother was this? Was this Wilhelm?

STRICKER: Yeah, Wilhelm.

SIGRIST: It was Wilhelm. Did your mother in her later years ever talk about how she felt during this whole experience?

STRICKER: No. No.

SIGRIST: When you were at Ellis Island before they released you, did you have to undergo any kind of medical examinations?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: What about on the ship?

STRICKER: Oh yes. On the ship they examined me, yeah, but I was ok.

SIGRIST: Does anything else about Ellis Island stick out in your mind at all...

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: ...while you were there?

STRICKER: The only thing I know is we were glad to get out of there (laughs).

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about the death of your brother?

STRICKER: Well, it was a very sad occasion. So, I don't know --- was difficult for my parents --- just coming over here and then having a death to take care of.

SIGRIST: How old was he?

STRICKER: I -- I don't know.

SIGRIST: Older than you?

STRICKER: Oh yes.

SIGRIST: Do you know --- what did they do with his body? Do you know?

STRICKER: Well he's buried in Brooklyn in a cemetery.

SIGRIST: I was just wondering if you knew if they released his body to your parents or if they took care of it themselves.

STRICKER: Oh no, they didn't. My parents did the burial. See, we had an aunt and uncle and through them we got help, you know, to take care of that.

SIGRIST: That's very interesting. Tell me where you went to live when you first got to America.

STRICKER: We lived in New York for a while where my aunt and uncle lived.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where that was?

STRICKER: On the East Side. That's all I know is the East Side.

SIGRIST: Lower? Upper?

STRICKER: The lower. The poorer section, you know?

SIGRIST: And what can you tell me about the first apartment that you lived in?

STRICKER: Well, we only had two rooms, the kitchen and the one bedroom. And I know my parents had their bed – be—bed in the kitchen, because it was a large kitchen.

SIGRIST: And were you registered for school?

STRICKER: Yeah. I went to school for a short time, not very long.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about starting school in America.

STRICKER: I don't remember about starting. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Do you remember learning English?

STRICKER: Oh yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

STRICKER: Not very much. I don't know. Seems to me I knew a little English before I started school. How, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Well, could your parents speak any English?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: None?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: Even though they had been back and forth?

STRICKER: Yeah. A little. It didn't amount to very much.

SIGRIST: When you were living in New York, what job did your father have?

STRICKER: I really don't know because we were there such a short time.

SIGRIST: How long were you in New York?

STRICKER: Not very long. See, we --- from there we moved to Keasby.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing things in New York that you had never seen before?

STRICKER: No. We didn't go nowheres.

SIGRIST: What did you do for fun in those days?

STRICKER: Well I don't know, guess I didn't have much fun (laughs).

SIGRIST: Probably not (laughs). Did your --- so there's one brother who's still living --- one brother who was living at that time, right?

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did he get a job?

STRICKER: No, he was too young.

SIGRIST: Was he older than you?

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Both brothers were older than you?

STRICKER: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Was he put in school?

STRICKER: No. No he didn't go to school.

SIGRIST: Did your mother get a job?

STRICKER: Well when we moved to Keasby, yeah. She did housework.

SIGRIST: When you moved to New Jersey...

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ... which was --- didn't stay in New York very long...

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: ... and you moved to Keasby

STRICKER: Keasby.

SIGRIST: ...was that when your father got the job?

STRICKER: And we didn't stay long there because he -he got a job in a factory there. Now I don't know whether it was the ceramics, but the factory burned down. So from there we moved to Perth Amboy.

SIGRIST: And is that when your father went to work for the terra cotta company?

STRICKER: To the terra cotta, yeah.

SIGRIST: When your mother got the job doing housework...

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...do you remember anything about that --- of her experience doing that?  
How she felt about having to do that sort of thing?

STRICKER: Well she didn't mind because she got good pay for it, you know?

SIGRIST: You mentioned earlier the --- that you were taken out of school...

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...and you got the job in the factory, I guess you were still in Keasby at  
that point?

STRICKER: No, no no.

SIGRIST: You were in Perth Amboy?

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your job, specifically?

STRICKER: Oh, I worked in the ceramics...

SIGRIST: Doing what?

STRICKER: ...that was my first job. Well they called --- they made nozzles for electric lights, they called them nozzles.

SIGRIST: And what did you have to do?

STRICKER: Well you see, they're made out of clay and they have a rough edge, you know? And you had to, with a small knife, clean off the edges.

SIGRIST: And do you remember how much you got paid for that?

STRICKER: No (laughs).

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you did with what you got paid?

STRICKER: Gave it to my parents.

SIGRIST: All of it?

STRICKER: Oh sure.

SIGRIST: Do you ever remember buying anything for yourself with the money that you...

STRICKER: No. I didn't have the money. No, my parents, they bought my clothes and everything. I never bought myself.

SIGRIST: Did your parents ever go back to Europe?

STRICKER: Not the --- that last time, no.

SIGRIST: When?

STRICKER: After my brother died, no. No, they never went back.

SIGRIST: So after that trip, they stayed here?

STRICKER: Yeah. That's right.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that your mother continued corresponding with her mother...

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ... and you said she sent...

STRICKER: Well my mother always sent her clothes and money.

SIGRIST: Did your grandmother live for a long time after your parents where here?

STRICKER: Well quite a while, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your parents ever express a desire to go back to...

STRICKER: Oh no.

SIGRIST: Even to visit?

STRICKER: No, they didn't want to go back.

SIGRIST: Did you ever go?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: No? Did you ever want to go?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: Tell me about becoming a citizen. How...

STRICKER: I – I – I was a citizen thr--- my father got his citizen papers and through his papers, the children were a citizen automatically.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when your father became a citizen?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: No, I don't mean the date, but I mean when he was studying to become a citizen or anything like that?

STRICKER: Well he wasn't in the country --- States very long when he did. No, we lived in Woodbridge then. From Perth Amboy, we moved to Woodbridge. They built a home in Woodbridge, my parents, and that's when he became a citizen.

SIGRIST: Did he continue working at the terra cotta company in Perth Amboy when they moved to Woodbridge?

STRICKER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did he have an automobile?

STRICKER: No, no.

SIGRIST: How did he get back and forth?

STRICKER: Never, never had a car. Never.

SIGRIST: How did he go back and forth from work?

STRICKER: Well trolley cars were running, then. And he went by trolley car.

SIGRIST: That's a bit of a distance, isn't it, from Perth Amboy to Woodbridge?

STRICKER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Little bit? Long trolley ride?

STRICKER: Well I worked in Keasby and I – I – I had to go --. That's how I traveled to work when we -- even after we lived in Woodbridge I worked in Keasby. And I had to take a trolley from Woodbridge to Perth Amboy, Perth Amboy change and to Keasby. And I remember one time we got a terrible snowstorm and the boss says, "Everybody go home." And when I got – got to the --- to get the trolley ca—the trolley car, it wasn't running. So I had to walk to Amboy. When I came to Amboy, no trolley cars were running to Woodbridge. So I had to walk home to Woodbridge in the snow. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me, what was the, was there something that was very difficult for you to get adjusted to here in the United States?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: What about your parents? What was the hardest thing for them to get adjusted to?

STRICKER: I really don't know. They didn't complain.

SIGRIST: We'll just, I'll just ask you a couple last questions. What year did you get married?

STRICKER: When did I get married?

SIGRIST: Yes. What year?

STRICKER: 1925. I was married seventy years when my husband died.

SIGRIST: Wow. He died fairly recently.

STRICKER: Three years ago.

SIGRIST: Tell me the name of the man that you married.

STRICKER: Raymond Stricker.

SIGRIST: And just give me a little bit about his background.

STRICKER: Well he always was a salesman, he lo-- loved selling. That was his profession. And he was a very good husband. We had a good life.

SIGRIST: You mentioned he was Danish.

STRICKER: Yes.

SIGRIST: He was born in the United States.

STRICKER: Yes. He was – he was born in Woodbridge.

SIGRIST: Were his parents from Denmark?

STRICKER: Yes.

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about his parents and their European background?

STRICKER: Well I can't tell you very much. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: What language did they speak?

STRICKER: Well they – they could speak English very good, his parents.

SIGRIST: And could Mr. Stricker speak Danish?

STRICKER: Yes. He spoke it fluently.

SIGRIST: Did you ever attempt to learn any Danish?

STRICKER: No, no.

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Well I guess --- did you have any children?

STRICKER: No.

SIGRIST: I guess my final question for you would be, "Are you glad you came to the United States?"

STRICKER: Oh yes, definitely.

SIGRIST: How do you think your life would have been different if you stayed in Europe?

STRICKER: Well I wouldn't know. (both laugh) It was very --- we've went to Europe a couple of times and visited in Denmark and living in Denmark is very nice.

SIGRIST: Did you ever go back to the area where you were born in?

STRICKER: No. One time we were in Europe and we wanted to go back to the where I was born and --- I don't know what happened, but we just couldn't. --- I think it was too expensive to get there so we never did.

SIGRIST: And you said earlier you really had no...

STRICKER: No desire, no, no, because I...

SIGRIST: How come? How come no interest in seeing where you...

STRICKER: Well I didn't, I had no relatives, anybody there, you know? And I remembered the house we lived in, you know? And the street, so that was enough for me.

SIGRIST: Remembering was...

STRICKER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...was enough.

STRICKER: That's right.

SIGRIST: Well, look, Mrs. Stricker, thank you very much for letting me come out on this very (both laugh) chaotic morning here in Woodbridge. I appreciate you letting me ask you these questions. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Catherine Stricker on Saturday, September 20, 1997 and with her friend, who joined us recently here in Woodbridge, New Jersey.

END OF TAPE