

**EI-954**

**ANNA RITCHER**

**BIRTHDATE: JULY 22, 1900 or 1902**

**INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 25, 1997**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 95 or 97**

**RUNNING TIME: 1:15:17**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: MANHATTAN**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**AUSTRIA, 1912 or 1914**

**AGE: 14**

**SHIP: KRONLAND [PH]**

**PORT: ANTWERP**

**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: Today is September 25, 1997. I'm here at the Manning—Mary Manning Walsh [PH] Home in Manhattan and I'm with Anna Ritcher—

RITCHER: Right.

LEVINE: —who came from Austria when she was either 10 or 12 years of age.

RITCHER: That's—that's correct.

LEVINE: Because he was born July 22<sup>nd</sup>, we're not sure if it was 19-hun—1902 or exactly what year it—it was. But we're going to find that out for sure. And so you were 10 or 12 years of age.

RITCHER: Right.

LEVINE: And you came at about 1912.

RITCHER: Yeah, right.

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LEVINE: Okay. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Okay, Anna, if you could tell me—you said you were born in a town near Gussing [PH].

RITCHER: Right. [chuckles] You're right.

LEVINE: Yeah. [chuckles]

RITCHER: When I hear it now, I know it. It's near Gussing and it—the town is Gerstof [PH]. Exact town is Gerstof. That's—

LEVINE: Ger—Ger—

RITCHER: I think it's through there.

LEVINE: Stof.

RITCHER: Gerstof.

LEVINE: Okay. And what do you remember about Gerstof when you think about it?

RITCHER: I was a young kid.

LEVINE: Well, when you were—when you think back to the—

RITCHER: I went to school a couple of years. You know, the—and when I came over I was only 12 or 14, I think.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: It's—it's that, yeah?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: So I don't really—and the [unclear]. Yes, I have a nice—a nice—brought up, you know. Young—we were, like, in a country, all woods and around and greens and everything. Not like here. So it was nice.

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

RITCHER: My mother's name?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: Cecelia [PH] Bruckner [PH]. That's her name, her maiden name.

LEVINE: Bruckner.

RITCHER: Bruckner, yeah. Cecelia Bruckner.

LEVINE: And would you say B-R-O or B-R-U?

RITCHER: B-R-U.

LEVINE: C-K-E-R?

RITCHER: Bruckner. Yeah, Bruckner. It's E-R.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Okay? [unclear].

LEVINE: Okay.

RITCHER: Sure.

LEVINE: And Cecelia. And what was your father's name?

RITCHER: John.

LEVINE: John. And his name was Banner?

RITCHER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And did you have sisters and brothers in Austria?

RITCHER: Well, not in Austria anymore. Dear, I have a brother here. That's all.

LEVINE: What—

RITCHER: That's all that's left from the family.

LEVINE: When you—when you came to this country—

RITCHER: Yeah.

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LEVINE: —did you have any sisters and brothers?

RITCHER: I think I had two brothers.

LEVINE: And did they—

RITCHER: After—after [unclear] came over here. See, they were not—they didn't stay there. They came over here with me. I was born over there.

LEVINE: Right.

RITCHER: You see.

LEVINE: And they were born over there.

RITCHER: One of them was born here.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: They—he went—went back—back and forth, you know. They—that's the way they used to go. But he's [unclear].

LEVINE: Well, now, when you—when you came to this country, did you come with your mother and father?

RITCHER: No, I came with a couple young girls.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Well, we'll get to that part.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me, so you were in school for a few years—

RITCHER: Over there.

LEVINE: Over there.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And were you still in school at the time that you came here?

RITCHER: No, no.

LEVINE: You had finished school.

RITCHER: Went to work right away.

LEVINE: What did you do for work when you were there?

RITCHER: Oh, help in a restaurant, do all small work, dish washing, stuff like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Until you've got the language better. You know, then it was okay. So that's just—that's all I know.

LEVINE: What did your father do in Austria? What did he do for work?

RITCHER: He worked over here most of the time?

LEVINE: Oh, he came first?

RITCHER: He came first. Then came my mother. And after awhile, I think we all came.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: They had a little [unclear]. Yeah. My mother came over to him again. Well, that's years ago.

LEVINE: Yes.

RITCHER: And they not living anymore.

LEVINE: No.

RITCHER: They're both dead.

LEVINE: Dead, uh-huh. Did—

RITCHER: So that's—that's gone—gone and forgotten.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: That—

LEVINE: When your father was working, do you know what he did for work?

RITCHER: He was a steelworker.

LEVINE: Here?

RITCHER: Yeah, Pennsylvania. Not here.

LEVINE: In Pennsylvania?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: They had different works after [unclear] and years after he came to New York. New York [unclear] envoy—envoy [unclear] and factory work. But that was years after. He did—most of the time he was in Pennsylvania. He worked in a steel mill, I think.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: You know, something like that. That's all I know.

LEVINE: So he came—did he go back and forth much between—

RITCHER: He—he went back and forth about three times.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: You know, he—

LEVINE: Yeah. And then your mother's—came and joined you.

RITCHER: She'd been here too. She was here, I think, twice too and came back again. You know? The money always run out and we had no more money. Then they went back home again. Well, that's the way that people used to live.

LEVINE: Yes.

RITCHER: You know?

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you have a grandmother and a grandfather when you were in Austria? Do you remember that?

RITCHER: Well, I think I did but—I had a grandmother, my father's mother. But she passed away before—before I left over here. So she—

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah, she—

LEVINE: Were you close to her at all? Did you—

RITCHER: Well, kind of.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: Yeah, she was the only grandmother I know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: So—

LEVINE: What do you remember about her? Do you remember going to see her or—

RITCHER: [chuckles] I see [unclear].

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: That's all I remember. And I came over here. Don't forget, I was 14.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: So I didn't know an awful lot here.

LEVINE: Right. So—

RITCHER: It's a funny life, huh?

LEVINE: Yes, it's very different, isn't it?

RITCHER: Yeah. Not very good. You [unclear]. No, it was all right. You live through it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: I have a brother; he's here too.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: He's still alive.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: He's okay. But now, one passed away, another brother. So that's it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is your brother here in New York?

RITCHER: Yeah, he's one—the one that's left. He's here. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So—so what was so—what was hard about that life, that early life? What was—what was it that made it so hard for you?

RITCHER: Hard for me?

LEVINE: Yeah, that those [unclear]—

RITCHER: Of course, I had to go out to work. Little work I could get that time, I don't know. I don't know [several words unclear]. I think it was six, seven dollars a week that time.

LEVINE: That was here, uh-huh.

RITCHER: Here, yeah.

LEVINE: Did you ever work in Austria?

RITCHER: No.

LEVINE: No.

RITCHER: I went to school there.

LEVINE: You were going to—

RITCHER: I was too young to work.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh, yeah.

RITCHER: So—

LEVINE: So what—what do you remember with fondness? What, when—when you think of Austria and—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: —when you were—up until 14, what do you remember as being nice about it?

RITCHER: I went to school there a couple years, didn't finish it all. Yeah, it was a nice life for young people, I tell you.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: I went to school. I mean, over there we had a little home. That's all I know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. You had a little home in the country?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: My father—my mother—they had a little home, not me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—

RITCHER: And a little house like they have in the country, a little [unclear]. It's [unclear].

LEVINE: Did you grow things?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Did—did you grow—did you grow things to eat?

RITCHER: Maybe little vegetables, something like that [unclear] a garden.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: It was nice too.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: It was—I wish I could see it now.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember what the house looked like?

RITCHER: Oh, I do. Yeah, it was nearly new—newly built. In [unclear] they was building a house too. See, and when they had finished, clean up, they died. Okay, so there you are. So that's what they had in their old age.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, was the house made out of wood?

RITCHER: I think something else, wood and brick. I think it was little price too because the guys that made the brick, their own house, they made it there.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: They made it right there. It's real different than now. Now, everything is quick, quick.

LEVINE: It took them awhile to make it.

RITCHER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RITCHER: There was a worker. They made the brick and then they put the house up. So—

LEVINE: So—

RITCHER: That's all I know.

LEVINE: We—

RITCHER: At that time, I was a little girl.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: So I don't know too much about that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did—

RITCHER: It was—it's okay.

LEVINE: Was it a big house? It was a little house? How [unclear]—

RITCHER: A little half brick and wood. I don't know, something like that. Yeah.

LEVINE: And who lived in it?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Your mother? Your father?

RITCHER: Yeah, the family.

LEVINE: Your brother.

RITCHER: Yeah, yeah. Those, while they were alive, sure. And—and the kids, [unclear] I think two brothers and me. There were three of us. So—and my father, he went back and forth to make a living. They could keep it up. That's it.

LEVINE: And then your mother went?

RITCHER: She—she went with him after him too for awhile. And they went back home again. That's the way they traveled.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: You know, back and forth. They didn't have a steady life.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: But I tell you. I came here. I never went back. I am still here. [unclear]

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: I don't know. They say, "Why didn't you ever go back?" [unclear]

LEVINE: Why did you ever—never go back?

RITCHER: Well, I would like to see it once more.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: But that is about all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: You said you came with some girlfriends. You came to—

RITCHER: Three girlfriends. Three young dummies.

LEVINE: [laughs]

RITCHER: [unclear]. We came over here all—and we had some traveling to do. We were about—I think, about 21, 22—3 days on the [unclear] before you came here.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: On the ship.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah, I think that's it.

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving Gerstov?

RITCHER: The what?

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving Gerstov? Do you remember leaving your town? Do you remember when you said goodbye and you—

RITCHER: Oh, that was Vien [PH]. You know, Vien is known all over the world. That's what we—Gerov [PH]. From a little town, we went to Vien by a train or whatever it is. And from there on, we then came over here.

LEVINE: Well, you went to Vienna first?

RITCHER: From Vien—Vien. You had to go to Vien first.

LEVINE: And then—and then you went to—

RITCHER: From Vien, we went to Antwerp.

LEVINE: Antwerp?

RITCHER: You know where Antwerp is?

LEVINE: Belgium.

RITCHER: And from there, okay, we came there.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: So it was a long ride.

LEVINE: Yeah. So you were traveling quite awhile before—

RITCHER: Yeah, I think I was—

LEVINE: —you got to—

RITCHER: —22 years—20—21—

LEVINE: Days?

RITCHER: —days.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: But I don't remember that now, this exact. It was something like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: They were long and they [unclear].

LEVINE: How did you get your ticket and your—how did you get all your papers and your ticket? Do you remember that?

RITCHER: They fixed that in Vien. Before you left there—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: —we had [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—and how did you pay for your passage? Do you remember how you got money for the ticket?

RITCHER: [chuckles] They made the money—Father made the money here.

LEVINE: Ah.

RITCHER: Because they did—they didn't make no money there, so they had to make the money here and had us—had us brought over one by one.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: Yeah, that's it.

LEVINE: Now, were your brothers still in Austria when you came? Did your brothers—

RITCHER: They were left over there, yeah.

LEVINE: They were left over there.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: You were the first child—

RITCHER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: —to come.

RITCHER: Well, by that—well, that was so many years ago, I really don't know it because my father was a couple of years in Pennsylvania. He—he all—all—he worked in the—in the mill—cement mill. And then my mother came and they lived there a little while and, I—I don't know. It's a long life, you know. A couple long years before they got together again, you know. Finally, we all got together.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

RITCHER: Mother, father [unclear]. In the end, they all went back home. They died back there.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Yes, so that's—that's a lonely life.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: [sentence unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: So—

LEVINE: So who were your friends that you—that you came here with? Do you remember your friends?

RITCHER: I wish I would. There was three girls, like school girls.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: I think they were all about 14 years old, all three of them. They were from one town. They came over here. No—no stay anybody with us. We just came alone, made the papers out and—in Vien, before you left.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: And that's it. They came over here, came over to Ellis Island and somebody called for you then, a friend, and took you off the—

LEVINE: Boats.

RITCHER: —after [unclear] had—they had a—I think they had a vouch before they took us—before you were left.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: It doesn't—a long, long story when you write that. Until you come here, you have to have people to vouch for you. Otherwise, you can't leave here or get here. So we finally got here too. And—

LEVINE: Who vouched for you, Anna?

RITCHER: I had an aunt here, so—an aunt of my mother. She called for us. She paid the fare so I could get here. And then I came over here and start working right away as a—dish washing. It was my first work. Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you live with that aunt?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you go to that aunt's house to live?

RITCHER: Yeah, we lived here until I got a little work after I got—I started in a restaurant work again. That's my work, see. But—and finally, I ended to be a cook.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: [chuckles] [unclear]. Yeah, that's it. That's the end.

LEVINE: Well, now when you were—oh, wait someone's coming in. We're going to [unclear].

RITCHER: That's too much for you today. [tape off/on]

LEVINE: This—this tape was a longer interview and, apparently, when that disruption occurred, after that point, the rest of the interview was not recorded. So that is all there is to this interview at this point in time. Whether I'm able to re-interview this woman again for further information remains to be seen.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: —at Mary Manning Walsh Home with Anna Richter. Anna—

RITCHER: I—

LEVINE: —came—

RITCHER: I was born Anna Pammer.

LEVINE: Anna—

RITCHER: That was my maiden name.

LEVINE: —Powell?

RITCHER: Pammer—P-M—P-A-M-M-E-R. Pammer. That's—

LEVINE: P-A-M-M-E-R.

RITCHER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: That was your maiden name and that was your name when you came to America.

RITCHER: That was my name—

LEVINE: Yes.

RITCHER: —when I came over until I got married.

LEVINE: Right.

RITCHER: Then I—I changed to Richter.

LEVINE: Right, right.

RITCHER: Right.

LEVINE: Okay. And you came from Austria.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you were 14 years old.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And we think it was 1912.

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: We think you came—do you remember what year you came here?

RITCHER: I think it was '12 or '14.

LEVINE: Okay.

RITCHER: That year.

LEVINE: Okay. And you came on the Krun—Kronland. That was the name of the ship.

RITCHER: Yeah, Kronland.

LEVINE: Kronland.

RITCHER: Yeah, that—I remember that.

LEVINE: Yes, okay. Well, let's start at the beginning.

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Where did you live in Austria? Where were you living?

RITCHER: In Austria with my parents, my mother and father.

LEVINE: And did you—

RITCHER: We had—we had a little house, like a little farm.

LEVINE: Do you remember that house?

RITCHER: I remember it—if I could get there. Yeah, I remember it. I don't know if it's still there.

LEVINE: What did it look like?

RITCHER: A little one-family house, all one floor.

LEVINE: What was it made—

RITCHER: We used—we used—had a couple of—a couple of horses.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: A couple of cows.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: That's all I remember. Oh, yeah, and once in a while they had a little calf. We had that. It was very nice.

LEVINE: Did you have to take care of some of the farm animals and—

RITCHER: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: —did you have—

RITCHER: We had to feed them in the morning and put them on a field—[unclear] them in a field. And that's where, you know—it was nice work.

LEVINE: It was?

RITCHER: The city—

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: City people, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you have brothers and sisters?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

RITCHER: Yes, I have one brother is still here. He's here.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: And one passed away. That's all I had, two brothers. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you ever go to school when you were in Austria?

RITCHER: Yeah, public school but they didn't—you know, up to—I don't know, [unclear]. They called it a high school. Then they went up a little bit. What you looking for, honey?

LEVINE: I'm just trying to see if—oh, yeah, I guess it's been on. Okay, we're continuing here. And so you went to school but you didn't go to school for very long.

RITCHER: No, I think—I don't know. I think I was 14 years old when we left there—years old. [unclear] a couple of years. You only start at six—when you're six years old you had to start. When I was [unclear], you know, came over here. I was 14 when I came over here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And who did you come here with?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Who came with you?

RITCHER: The—the—three friends came too, friends of mine, young girls. Three of them, they came over here. And when I came over here, it's another lady—she was a friend of my mother, ha—like a half sister.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: She waited for me.

LEVINE: Ah.

RITCHER: She—that's how I got in here.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: She waited for me while I was here about a couple of weeks. She put—put me away and so I had to work—for work.

LEVINE: Where did you work?

RITCHER: Restaurant [unclear]. [chuckles] Started there.

LEVINE: And what did you do?

RITCHER: Washed dishes to begin with, you know. And then I started to be—oh, to cook and then I was a head cook—

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: —by the time I got through.

LEVINE: Now, where was that restaurant?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Where was that restaurant?

RITCHER: Yeah, well, I—it's a long time ago. First, was a little restaurant the Second Avenue there. Then I—I went to Carnegie Hall the second time, order cook, cooking. That's how I—I stayed there until I retired.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, where did you live?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Where did you live when you came to this country?

RITCHER: Where did I live?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: At East Side.

LEVINE: On the Upper East Side?

RITCHER: Yeah, 64<sup>th</sup>—64<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue—no, First Avenue.

LEVINE: First Avenue, 64<sup>th</sup> Street.

RITCHER: Yeah, 64<sup>th</sup>. Yeah.

LEVINE: And you worked in the restaurant on Second Avenue.

RITCHER: Started the restaurant, worked there—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: —on that, you know—that—we had to go—had a place—restaurant. You had [unclear] keep you there for—for sleeping.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: You had to have a place—

LEVINE: So where did you go?

RITCHER: Yeah, I was—I went—you know, relatives.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: I—they started with them. They gave me a room—room and board.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: And I started out restaurant work.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Right away as I came over. Little by little, I got up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, how come your three—you and your two friends decided to come when you did?

RITCHER: I lost them. I wish I could find them where they are.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Three of them, all neighbors from the—from Europe. Al together, three young girls—dummy—dumb girls, you know, like you—a country girl.

LEVINE: Right.

RITCHER: Don't know nothing. Just go ahead three together, put you on the ship and bring you over here. Yeah.

LEVINE: What was the voyage like with your friends?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: What was it like, the voyage—the—on the ship with your friends?  
When you were with your friends—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: —on the ship coming over—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: —what was that like on the ship?

RITCHER: Strange to us. We were, you know, little bit afraid, you know? We—I  
don't know. The bed was upstairs and we had to go down and really  
was—I think I was, oh, about 20 days on the ship.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: At that time, you were very long—it took to come over. [unclear]—I  
went to the—it's the Red Star Line, I know. I don't know. The ship was  
Gronlands. That I know.

LEVINE: Uh, right.

RITCHER: Gronlands.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: That's it.

LEVINE: Did anything happen aboard ship that you remember?

RITCHER: No. What could happen to three dumb girls?

LEVINE: [chuckles]

RITCHER: Didn't know any better.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: Country girls [unclear]—

LEVINE: Did you have fun? I mean, was there—did people play music? Did you  
dance?

RITCHER: Oh, they have that. It was really for—real fun. And I think it was more than 20 years on the—20—

LEVINE: Twenty days.

RITCHER: Twenty days.

LEVINE: Days, right.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Right. And so when you were kind of a little bit scared because you—

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: You didn't really know what to expect.

RITCHER: No. You're too dumb. You go on a ship like that. Well, I had the other girls there too. Yeah, but you get over here. But I got here. The hard thing was I was landed in Ellis Island [unclear].

LEVINE: And what happened there?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Tell me about Ellis Island. What was that—

RITCHER: I was three days there.

LEVINE: Oh, you were three days at Ellis Island?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: How come?

RITCHER: Because my—they were friends of my brother—my mother. I was—I went to them. They kept me there until I got work.

LEVINE: I see.

RITCHER: See.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: But I got—I got [unclear], of course.

LEVINE: Well, how come you had to stay three days?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: How come you had to stay at Ellis Island for three days?

RITCHER: I don't know. There was something mixed up about it all. I just had to stay there.

LEVINE: Until they met you. Until your—

RITCHER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: —relatives came.

RITCHER: Until somebody got me out of there and you—you know, that—somebody has to be right there before you get off.

LEVINE: Right.

RITCHER: You know, not like now. You know.

LEVINE: And what about your friends? What happened to them once you got to Ellis Island?

RITCHER: Well, they went a different way so I never seen them since, believe me.

LEVINE: You never saw them since?

RITCHER: No. I don't know where they went. So that's it.

LEVINE: Did you say goodbye to them? Did you say goodbye to them before they [unclear]?

RITCHER: Oh, yeah. We could say that but we—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: But I think I was three days on Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: They were friends of my mother. I—I came to them because my mother [unclear]. She was not here.

LEVINE: Right.

RITCHER: So—

LEVINE: And what were they like? What were the friends of your mother like? Did they treat you nicely?

RITCHER: Yeah. I came to them. How long was I with them? A couple days. They put me—they looked for work for me. Right away, I went to work. Right away, I went to the restaurant. I worked in the kitchen, a dishwasher. I was—[chuckles] that was the first thing—

LEVINE: Did you—did you make friends?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you make any friends when you got to this country?

RITCHER: Oh, yeah. They have a lot of people [unclear]. You know, country people that I know from Europe.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: They were here.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: See, we—we came to them. But it was a lady—she took me off the boat [unclear]. So I went to them until I got work. When I got work, all right.

LEVINE: After you got work, did you find another place to live?

RITCHER: I stayed there where I worked. You could stay there.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Sleep there.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Yeah. It was like a bakery, you know. That's [unclear].

LEVINE: And you could sleep upstairs?

RITCHER: Yeah, there's—I had slept up there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: And the bakery's in the bottom.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And what did you do on your days off? What did you do on your days off when you were working and living at the bakery?

RITCHER: Oh, I don't know. There was a lot of young people there, you know. Young people that I know. We stayed by them, go to them for a visit and, you know, stayed there. And [unclear] we grow up and—grow up. All of a sudden, I got married.

LEVINE: Oh. How did you meet your husband?

RITCHER: The first thing, I meet him in—at my mother's house. He came through.

LEVINE: Well, was your mother here? Did your mother—

RITCHER: She was here, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, she came after you?

RITCHER: Oh, when I came in, she was here. She came in after me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: She was here once before. That's—

LEVINE: She went back?

RITCHER: She went back. They had a little—oh, a little—little country place there, you know, like have a couple cows or something like that.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: You know, she—and then she stayed there. My father was here too.

LEVINE: So you met your husband at your mother's house?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: How—how come he was there? Why was he at your mother's?

RITCHER: Well, there was like a—an apartment house. There's three rooms in each—each one. And there was—they was there. They came from the same country that my people came for. And they had a couple of boarders.

LEVINE: And he was a boarder.

RITCHER: That's where they took my husband there. And I was with my mother and father. They—there were [unclear]. Yeah, that's how—the way it happened.

LEVINE: So he was being a boarder in—in your mother's neighbor's house.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was he doing for work here?

RITCHER: Me?

LEVINE: Did—did—no, your husband to be? Did he have a job?

RITCHER: Who, me?

LEVINE: No, your husband, when you first met him.

RITCHER: Oh, he had to work in a—in a factory. Cheap work. Didn't make much either. You know? Oh, first thing, I think he worked—do you know the Heide [PH] Factory [unclear]? Heide? Heide.

LEVINE: Heide?

RITCHER: Was very famous candy factory.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: That's where he—

LEVINE: In Manhattan?

RITCHER: New York. Sure, Manhattan.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: And that's where he started the first time, a candy factory. It took a lot of people in to work. When he grow, you know, a little older he had another job. He [unclear] a little bit higher. So we got all right.

LEVINE: So did you continue to work after you got married?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: When you got married, did you keep working?

RITCHER: Yeah, for awhile. Yeah, you have to. You know, you start a little home.

LEVINE: Yes.

RITCHER: You need money.

LEVINE: Where did you start your little home? Where?

RITCHER: On the East Side. [chuckles]

LEVINE: On the East Side.

RITCHER: And I'm still there. [chuckles]

LEVINE: You never left the East Side.

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: You're still on the East Side.

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: You stayed on the East Side.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

RITCHER: Right.

LEVINE: Right, right. Now, wh—what did you like about your husband?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: What did you like about your husband?

RITCHER: He was the nicest man you could find.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Honest, good, very kind. I still [unclear].

LEVINE: You still—you—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: You miss him but it's—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: —it's nice that you—

RITCHER: You know, he was from Europe too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: But not from the same—where I come from. From a different place.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: We met here. We only met here by my—my mother's house. So—

LEVINE: And how did he treat you? How did he treat—

RITCHER: Oh, very nice.

LEVINE: He treated you nice.

RITCHER: He was a [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Very nice. And we got along wonderful. No problem. The only thing, we had no children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: So otherwise, it would be all right.

LEVINE: And so you settled in Yorkville [PH]? Were you in Yorkville? Is that where you settled?

RITCHER: Yorkville, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: I tell you, 64<sup>th</sup> floor—no, 64<sup>th</sup> Street.

LEVINE: Sixty-fourth Street.

RITCHER: First Avenue.

LEVINE: That's where you went at first.

RITCHER: That's where we first started.

LEVINE: But then when you started your little home with your husband, you moved uptown a little bit?

RITCHER: Oh, we started with three room—rented.

LEVINE: Where was that?

RITCHER: We went to work, both. He went to work. I went to work and [unclear]—I get along fine. We had no problem. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. So did you have a lot of contact with your mother and father at—

RITCHER: Yeah, they were there too.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: In the neighborhood. You know, there was a—a kind of apartment in the neighborhood. We had a three-room apartment to begin with.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me as much as you can remember about the neighborhood. What was the neighborhood like in Yorkville when you were there when you were first married?

RITCHER: Well, the neighborhood was very nice. There were a lot of European people there. And Sunday morning they had, like, a picnic on the sidewalk.

LEVINE: Really?

RITCHER: Yeah. [chuckles] It was very nice. And one know the other. You know, there was a whole lot together that know one another. That's—this is 64<sup>th</sup> or 65<sup>th</sup>, First Avenue.

LEVINE: And did everybody mix with everybody else?

RITCHER: Yeah. You know, each if they [unclear] apartment. That's—that's how you got along.

LEVINE: Were they mostly from Hungary—ah—

RITCHER: Mostly—mostly European people, where you come from.

LEVINE: Did you have Italian people in your neighborhood?

RITCHER: At that time, there wasn't so many but now there's [unclear].

LEVINE: Yeah, but you had Germans, Austrians—

RITCHER: German, Austria [chuckles]—

LEVINE: Hungarian.

RITCHER: On a Sunday morning, the whole [unclear] out on the sidewalk would have a meeting down there, you know [unclear]. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And what would they do? Would they bring food down?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Would they bring food down to the—down to the sidewalk?

RITCHER: No, no. In the morning, went to church and then you had a meeting out on the sidewalk. Then they went home. The women did all the cooking. They went home and had something to eat.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RITCHER: That's it.

LEVINE: Did you go to church?

RITCHER: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: Which church?

RITCHER: I think it's St. Joseph. It's still there.

LEVINE: Oh. It's a Catholic church, right?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Catholic church.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, St. Joseph.

RITCHER: Yeah. I went to school down there too.

LEVINE: Oh, you went to St. Joseph's School when you first came?

RITCHER: St. Joseph's Church, I went.

LEVINE: St. Joseph's Church.

RITCHER: Yeah. And school, I think, I had to go to work right away.

LEVINE: You didn't go to school in this country?

RITCHER: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

RITCHER: No.

LEVINE: Right.

RITCHER: That's was my big problem. I didn't go.

LEVINE: Well—

RITCHER: I was 14 years old; I had to go to work.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: Because they needed the money.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: So I had to go to work.

LEVINE: How did you learn English?

RITCHER: By [unclear], meeting people.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: You know.

LEVINE: Was it—was it hard for you to learn?

RITCHER: Well, no. I was young. I—I—I didn't mind. You—You—you learn it gradually; you don't think nothing of it. Yeah. And there was mostly all—you have the people on one block that [unclear] one another. So it was—it was nice too, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

RITCHER: Oh.

LEVINE: So you liked it?

RITCHER: You wouldn't know anything like that.

LEVINE: Well, I lived in Yorkville but much later. I used to live in Yorkville but it was much later from the time when you were there.

RITCHER: Oh, Yorkville. Where about?

LEVINE: Eighty-third off Second.

RITCHER: Eighty-third?

LEVINE: Off Second.

RITCHER: Oh, I know that 83rd. We—

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: Yeah. That was—

LEVINE: An old building. Old—

RITCHER: That was a little better already up there.

LEVINE: A little tenement building, yeah.

RITCHER: Yeah, right. So—

LEVINE: So when—when you think of your life, do you think the fact that you came here when you were 14 years old—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: —and you were an immigrant to a new country, do you think that made a difference in the way you were, in your personality? Do you think it made a difference in the kind of person you were? That you—that you came to a strange country when you were 14—

RITCHER: No, when you're young you don't think so.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: We were—a lot of young people on the—on the same block. Oh, there I always had a good time going out together, you know.

LEVINE: What did you do for fun? What did you do for fun?

RITCHER: Go to a—like, they used to have a stubers [PH], they call it. A stube [PH] in the [unclear]. There's [unclear] and you go dancing there.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: That's it. That's where you get here.

LEVINE: So did you go dancing?

RITCHER: Yeah. You had to go. [chuckles] You went with boys [unclear]. So it was the same thing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: So when you got married, did you still go dancing?

RITCHER: Once in awhile, but not—

LEVINE: Not as much.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah. We got married in '16, 1916.

LEVINE: You were married in 1916?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: You were married—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: —in 1916?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you—okay. So how—so that was a few years after you came.

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: How old were you when you got married? Do you remember?

RITCHER: Yeah, I was about—I was here, came here about—was 14. I was about 20 years old, 21, 22. I don't remember now.

LEVINE: Okay. So did you do many—did you—were you very connected with St. Joseph's Church? Did you do activities around the church?

RITCHER: Yeah, we always went there, St. Joseph, first on the East Side where we live on 64<sup>th</sup>—64<sup>th</sup>, First Avenue. That was—

LEVINE: Right. Right.

RITCHER: Who's that?

LEVINE: We're going to pause here.

RITCHER: Who's that? I'll tell you plenty stories, huh?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: [chuckles]

LEVINE: What else do you remember, Anna? What else do you remember of—

RITCHER: Oh, I remember—

LEVINE: —of when you—when—do you remember anything else about Austria? What—

RITCHER: Austria?

LEVINE: —life was like for you?

RITCHER: I don't know very much but that was very nice. I tell you, we had a house there too. My mother and father did, had a little house. Got— [several words unclear] had the [unclear] there. Nothing but, you know, [unclear] to the where the next—the next town. You had to go through—through the [unclear]. It's like in a—

LEVINE: Like a farm?

RITCHER: Like you in the mountain.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: You know? That's right.

LEVINE: You were in the mountains?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Country.

LEVINE: Was it beautiful?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Was it beautiful? Was it beautiful to look at?

RITCHER: Yeah. Oh, beautiful, yeah. Beautiful living in the country, I tell you.

LEVINE: So you had a happy childhood? Would you say that your childhood in Austria was a happy childhood?

RITCHER: Oh, yeah. You had a lot of girlfriends. You—well, we had nothing like they have here. You had—you had to go to Sunday school. You go to school weekdays. That's all they could do.

LEVINE: And why did you want to come to America?

RITCHER: Why?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: Because they needed money.

LEVINE: Ah. So you were supposed to send them money back after you got here?

RITCHER: No, what could I send back? I didn't make any.

LEVINE: Make—

RITCHER: I had to make something first.

LEVINE: How much did you make when you first started working? Do you remember what—

RITCHER: Six dollars.

LEVINE: Six dollars for a week?

RITCHER: A week. Six dollars. You can imagine—

LEVINE: Hmm.

RITCHER: You know, when I start in a—in a restaurant, dish washing. That was my work to start with. I couldn't get nothing else, you know, [unclear].

LEVINE: Did you like to cook, Anna?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you like to cook?

RITCHER: Y—I like it, yeah. First, you know, I was a dishwasher and then I was a second cook. You know, short order cook, they call it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: And then I was a cook after. See.

LEVINE: Did you have any favorite dishes?

RITCHER: Any what?

LEVINE: Did you have any favorite dishes that you made? Any kind of food that you cooked that you—

RITCHER: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: —were good at that you liked?

RITCHER: [unclear] okay. Saved food [unclear]. You know. First started working, how to—how to make a fried egg or a scrambled egg, you did that. You can't be a cook right away. And I keep on being a cook. I learned the others cooking too. Nothing but work I had.

LEVINE: You worked hard?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: I worked—

LEVINE: You worked hard and your husband worked hard.

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: And your husband worked hard too?

RITCHER: He worked hard too. We didn't make enough money—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: —at that time. We had to live with what [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Anna, do you remember the—the man who came around to the buildings with coal? Do you remember the man who delivered coal to the buildings? Did you need to have coal delivered for heat?

RITCHER: Oh, yeah. That's right. You mean for heating?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: Oh, for Europe. Not here.

LEVINE: Not here you didn't have it? You didn't—

RITCHER: I think—

LEVINE: —have coal?

RITCHER: Wait a minute. I think we had it here too.

LEVINE: I think so.

RITCHER: There was a—a man came to the house. He delivered the—the coal once a week or once a month. And I—it's so long ago. I don't even know. You had to—I had a cellar where they put the stuff in there. The oven was there and the coal was there. Little by little, yeah.

LEVINE: You burned it up.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what about the iceman? Do you remember an iceman?

RITCHER: Iceman, uh. I don't know how they did with the—with the ice. I think it—I remember the—you have an icebox. You put the ice on top.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: You bought a piece of ice about that big.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, about a foot by a foot. Right?

RITCHER: Once or twice a week.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: That's where you keep your food. You know?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And can you remember the other kinds of things that were delivered, like bakery or milk or—or fruits and vegetables? Did a man come around?

RITCHER: I tell you. When [unclear] came in there was a bakery and a [unclear]. And where I got the—our bread, a cake and everything there. The milk you got in the grocery. But it's the same as you do it now.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

RITCHER: Oh, we had—today you have more—you get more money. You work—people make a lot of money now, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: That we didn't do. We lucky where you had—they had \$20. That was a lot of money. Oh, God.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were you happy you came to this country?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you feel happy that you came to this country?

RITCHER: Oh, sure. When you're young—had a lot of young people all around there, all from our country too. So you all had a good time.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: On a Saturday or Sunday they might go to a—they had a cellar down—a cellar—they had music down there.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: [chuckles] Dancing down there and that was our entertainment.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: [sentence unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RITCHER: And then you work—go to work. Go to work, go home. So, yeah, was very—but then the last—my mother came. She came over here. She was over here too. She was already here twice. Then she done all the cooking for us. You know, my brother, me. We stayed home. That was our home, yeah.

LEVINE: You must have been happy when your mother came here.

RITCHER: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: They—they rented a larger room. We all had room. Sometime they even had a boarder there.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: You had room there. It was a happy life. A lot of young people together, you know, all from Eur—Europe, you know. They needed the room to stay. They'd rather stay with a—a countryman. Right?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Well—

LEVINE: Why did your mother go back to Europe? When your mother came first—

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then she went back.

RITCHER: They went back.

LEVINE: Why did she go back?

RITCHER: That's what people done at that time. First, my father came. He was here a couple years. I don't know if he went home once. Then my mother followed him. They stay here a couple of years, four or five years. They had a little—a little farm outside in—in Europe. You know, like [unclear], stuff like that. That was always in their head. They want to go home. They want to die home. So they went back. And when they went back again for good, my father passed away. My mother was alone. She had to keep on with the farm. My brother was there. He didn't want to stay home either. You know, he was born here, you

know, when she was here that time, Pennsylvania. So that's the way—  
you know—

LEVINE: So then, did your brother come back?

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RITCHER: He went back too. He came back here to—so it's a hard life. [unclear]  
happy.

LEVINE: Your brother didn't want to be on a farm after being in—

RITCHER: He didn't like it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, your brother's alive?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Your brother is still alive?

RITCHER: He's alive, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: My brother's alive, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you see him?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you see him? Does he come and visit?

RITCHER: Yeah. Well, he's in New York.

LEVINE: Ah.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

RITCHER: Yeah.

LEVINE: So let's see. Is there anything else? When you think—

RITCHER: You want to know more? [chuckles]

LEVINE: Yeah. [chuckles] You—I just want to know, what do you consider the high points of your life?

RITCHER: Huh?

LEVINE: What gave you a lot of satisfaction in your lifetime? What do you think of that gave you a lot of satisfaction?

RITCHER: The first thing, I think, is when I got married.

LEVINE: Oh.

RITCHER: Yeah, I think. He was a nice man. I liked him—was all right.

LEVINE: How long were you married? How many years were you married?

RITCHER: Till he died.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

RITCHER: You know. I—I—I don't know what date he passed away.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RITCHER: He was a good man too.

LEVINE: So you had a nice long marriage?

RITCHER: I did.

LEVINE: A good marriage and a long marriage?

RITCHER: Right.

LEVINE: Well, that's wonderful.

RITCHER: A hard life.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

EI-954/RITCHER

RITCHER: I worked hard. I worked hard all my life. All my life.

[END OF INTERVIEW]