

KM-52  
SOPHIE KRAMER SCHMIDT  
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INTERVIEWER: KATE MOORE  
RECORDING ENGINEER: DR. KRISTA VARANTOLA  
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GERMANY, 1925  
AGE 19  
PASSAGE ON "THE MUNCHEN"

SCHMIDT: Now, what is your first question?

MOORE: Good afternoon. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is June 28, 1994, and I'm in Everett, Washington, at the home of Sophie Kramer Smith, uh, Schmidt, who came to the U.S. from Bavaria, Germany in February, 1925. Why don't you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth, please.

SCHMIDT: At that time, or . . .

MOORE: At that time.

SCHMIDT: Hmm.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Your name.

MOORE: Just your full name.

SCHMIDT: My name? Sophie Kramer. It's not Schmidt, it's Kramer.

MOORE: Yes, and how do you spell that?

SCHMIDT: K-R-A-M-E-R.

MOORE: And do you have a middle name?

SCHMIDT: Uh, no.

MOORE: All right. And what is your birthday?

SCHMIDT: My birthday is April 19, huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: October.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: October. October 19th.

MOORE: October 19th.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And what year were you born?

SCHMIDT: 1906.

MOORE: 1906. Okay. And where were you born?

SCHMIDT: Uh, in Germany.

MOORE: In which town were you born?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I would say Osterbuchen [ph] or Asbach.

MOORE: Asbach. How do you spell Asbach?

SCHMIDT: A-S-B-A-C-H.

MOORE: And what size town was Asbach in Germany?

SCHMIDT: OH, I would say a small farm town.

MOORE: And what did the town look like?

SCHMIDT: Oh, farmhouses, you know.

MOORE: Farmhouses. And what was the major industry then? Was it . . .

SCHMIDT: Oh, mainly farming.

MOORE: Mainly farming. Okay. And what was your father's name?

SCHMIDT: Uh, Joseph Kramer.

MOORE: Yes. And what was his occupation? What did he do?

SCHMIDT: Well, my father, he was home working for his dad. His dad was something like a burgermeister for a big territory. They had a lot of territory. Later on they had to split it up, you know. And so that's where he was working. And then later on he went to school. Yeah. And he, he was studying. He was, he learned about history from the whole world, you know. And . . .

MOORE: What did he finally do for, in order to make a living?

SCHMIDT: Uh, he . . .

MOORE: Did he do farming, your father?

SCHMIDT: No. He was studying history about different nationalities and . . .

MOORE: Okay. And what does your father look like?

SCHMIDT: Oh, he was a nice-looking man.

MOORE: Like how tall was he? Was he a very tall man.

SCHMIDT: Ah, he was tall. Not quite six foot.

MOORE: And what about his eyes and hair? Was he . . .

SCHMIDT: Oh, I would say brown.

MOORE: Brown, okay. And what about your father's personality and temperament?

SCHMIDT: Wonderful. I got along with him perfect, yeah.

MOORE: And is there a story about your father that you remember from your childhood?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Well, he had horses then, and I liked horses then. Of course, he gave me a ride and everything. And later on I was ten years old, and I was myself running a team of horses, ten years old.

MOORE: And that's very unusual, isn't it?

SCHMIDT: Yes, yes.

MOORE: And so he let you take care of the horses?

SCHMIDT: Yes, because I knew how.

MOORE: And so you were very close to your father, were you?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And what about your mother? What was your mother's name?

SCHMIDT: Anna.

MOORE: Anna.

SCHMIDT: Anna Keis.

MOORE: And how do you spell her . . .

SCHMIDT: Keis? K-E-I-S.

MOORE: Yes. And what was her occupation, your mother?

SCHMIDT: Well, my mother, she was a good housekeeper and she was

good with kids. And so she cooked for everybody in the farm and she was very good.

MOORE: And what did she look like? Could you tell us what your mother looked like?

SCHMIDT: Oh, she was a good-looking woman. And she could sing, yes.

MOORE: And how did she look? How was she good looking? Was she . . .

SCHMIDT: Well, she had blue eyes and she was six foot tall, and . . .

MOORE: What about her hair? What color hair?

SCHMIDT: Oh, it was long. Light brown.

MOORE: Light brown. And you said she could sing. What about her personality and her temperament? What was your mother like?

SCHMIDT: She could sing church songs and public songs. She would sing almost anything, yeah.

MOORE: And how would you say her personality was?

SCHMIDT: Well, she was very good, but she was tough. If you didn't mind, she would give you a licking.

MOORE: And what were her, you said she cooked for the family. Did she clean and do everything?

SCHMIDT: Yes. Somebody helped her with the dishes and everything. We had a big kitchen.

MOORE: Who helped her with the dishes?

SCHMIDT: Oh, my younger brother, George. He always liked to work in the kitchen with her, so he was on the stove, too, and helped.

MOORE: And is there a story about your mother from childhood that you remember?

SCHMIDT: My mother? Well, she was a child like everybody else, you know. And I don't remember that because I wasn't old enough to remember her doings.

MOORE: Yes. Okay. What about your brothers and sisters? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

SCHMIDT: I had, I had three, four brothers, and I had about four sisters, too.

MOORE: Do you remember their names? Could you tell me them in order?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, I remember all the names. There is Barbara.

MOORE: Was she the oldest?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. She was very smart.

MOORE: The oldest girl, huh?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. And she studied, and she could, she was teaching in kindergarten, and then she, she was as good as the teacher. She was very good. And then was Anna. Well, Anna was very good in sewing. She worked for the dressmaker, and she was very good, and she was very good-natured and very nice personality, real nice, and very good-looking, too.

MOORE: So there's Barbara and Anna, and who else?

SCHMIDT: And Barbara, she was, uh-huh, yeah. There was my sister Victoria. Yeah. She was good-natured, but she wasn't, I wouldn't say, anything to rave about, you know. She, what she was, she was good, and then there was Anna. Of course, I told you about Anna. And there was Willie, Joseph, and then George. Yeah. And then Mathilde. Oh, Mathilde, she was quite a card, I'll tell you that. She was very smart, you know, but believe me, she had a mouthpiece. Nobody, nobody argued with her, you know, see, but she was very smart. She studied, too. And my brother Tony, he was the oldest. He was the oldest. And he was doing a lot of things. He always, but he didn't want to do what my father wanted him to do. So he was the oldest and I really don't remember what his later years and what he was doing, you know.

MOORE: That's good, okay. What about your house back in Germany, in Bavaria? What do you remember about your house?

SCHMIDT: My house? We had a nine-room house, four bedrooms upstairs, real nice. And each one had their bedroom. Of course, there were three of them, sometimes four, in one bedroom, but I had a bedroom of my own.

MOORE: Why?

SCHMIDT: Because I was the first one up in the morning because I had to milk seven cows, and so I had to get my sleep, you see? And they didn't, they didn't bother me much. I didn't touch anybody, but they know when I tell them this was boss and that was boss, that's all. And I said, "They can get up later and get more sleep." But I had to be up because the milkman came and picked up the milk in the can to deliver to the creamery at a certain time, and my milk had to be outside.

MOORE: So you were given a lot of responsibility then, in the

farm.

SCHMIDT: Yes, yes. In fact, my father gave me all the responsibility from the farm.

MOORE: Now, what about the boys? Were the boys . . .

SCHMIDT: Well, they were, they were, then we had horses, and they had to haul things, you know. And they were doing odd things, you know.

MOORE: So they trusted you very young, then?

SCHMIDT: I did, I, my father trusted me mainly with the horses, because if you were careless those young horses did almost anything, you know, and you had to keep them in line. And I had to bring them in a certain time, and they had to be fed a certain time. And I always saw that they were fed and everything.

MOORE: How old were you when you began doing this work at home?

SCHMIDT: I was ten years old.

MOORE: Ten years old. And then you milked the cows, too?

SCHMIDT: Huh?

MOORE: How old were you when you milked the cows?

SCHMIDT: When I worked in the house?

MOORE: The cows?

SCHMIDT: Oh, the cows? I was, how old could I have been? I was taking care of horses. I wasn't older than maybe fifteen.

MOORE: Uh-huh. Well, okay. Back to your house, what was your house made of? What was . . .

SCHMIDT: It was a brick house.

MOORE: A brick house.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And how was it heated?

SCHMIDT: We had a, we had a furnace and that was, and then we had different heaters, you know. In the front there was a big wooden stove. I wouldn't say wooden, it was half iron or half, I mean, those combination stoves.

MOORE: And what did you burn in those stoves?

SCHMIDT: Uh, wood.

MOORE: Wood, okay. And how was it lit? What lights did you have at that time? How did you light the house?

SCHMIDT: Oh, very much. It was cozy and warm.

MOORE: And how about, what did you use for lighting?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we had electric, electricity. We had lamps here and there. ( she coughs )

MOORE: What about plumbing in your old house in Germany?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, there was a plumbing, and there was in the kitchen running cold water. And hot water was piped in the stove, and . . .

MOORE: How about the toilets?

SCHMIDT: Oh, they were flushed off. We had outside . . .

MOORE: Outside toilets?

SCHMIDT: No. There was something like, it was big, where it was running into.

MOORE: A sewer.

SCHMIDT: Like a sewer, yeah.

MOORE: Uh-huh. Now, how far was this house from town?

SCHMIDT: Oh, it was not more than ten minutes.

MOORE: By walking? Walking?

SCHMIDT: I would say a little longer with walking, fifteen minutes or more, twenty.

MOORE: And did you have a, did you have a garden?

SCHMIDT: Yes, we had a big garden.

MOORE: And what did you grow in your garden?

SCHMIDT: In the garden? My mother, she was mainly responsible for the garden. We grew everything. ( she clears her throat ) We grew lettuce, and then kohlrabi and radish and beets and beans and, oh, cabbage, I guess. Almost everything.

MOORE: And what about animals? Did you keep animals?

SCHMIDT: Yes. We had cows, and amongst the cows there were some, some male.

MOORE: Bulls?

SCHMIDT: I'll tell you a little something about that. You don't have to write about it. We were feeding fresh clover, you know. And this was a little (?). And there was young cows, they were eating like crazy, you know. And then one, a couple of them, they got bloated, you know. And on the side of their stomach they got as big as a grapefruit, you know, that was full of gas, you know. And if we didn't take care of it they blew up, you see? And I was the one, had to get, I had a tube what I stuck in there and let the gas out and put a little pipe in there where the, where it can come out all the time until the animal was all right again, you know. Just like a doctor, see.

MOORE: So you were given responsibility for that, too, with the cows.

SCHMIDT: Yes, yes. Oh, yes. And if I didn't stick him, then they'd ( she makes an exploding noise ) and fall over, and then that's the end of them. And they were a good size, you know. But I was always, the person that had the guts to do something like that, you know. It's not easy to go and stick an animal, you know. And then, and the tooth comes right at you. But I did good every time, yeah.

MOORE: And what about other animals? You had cows and you had horses. What else did you have?

SCHMIDT: I had, they had to be milked. I used to milk them.

MOORE: What about, did you have any other type of animals at all?

SCHMIDT: Well, we had horses and cows and heifers, and then smaller ones, you know. One got out of the stable and run away, and it ran so much that it blew up, you know. ( she laughs ) They were, it was just, yeah. That's just an incident, yeah.

MOORE: And what about, did you have chickens?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And did you have pigs?

SCHMIDT: Yes. ( she laughs ) Oh, we had pigs. We had pigs. I remember seven of them. And she had two big stables all for herself, because she had a lot of young ones, you know. And, ah, but she was a monster, you come in, "Roooooh!" You know. Nobody would go in except me. Yeah.

MOORE: And did you keep any other animals? Goats?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. No goats. We didn't have any goats. Uh, chickens, and then, of course, dogs. And then those young heifers, they kept you busy. And we didn't have

young horses, but one horse got sick once, and I had to examine him, and it had an infection. So I took care of it, and it was all right, you know. I tell you, they didn't have to call the veterinary. I took care of all those things.

MOORE: Where did your grandparents live?

SCHMIDT: My grandparents, oh. I tell you, I can really, they lived far away. I mean, I didn't see, the farm was away. I didn't have much connection, you know. And they, when I was so young, I mean, by the time I was old enough they probably died, you know.

MOORE: And you said your mother did the cooking in the family.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes.

MOORE: Did you ever help?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, I helped, but not too much. I had a younger brother, George. He used to be Mother's helper, yeah.

MOORE: And what was the kitchen like? Could you describe your kitchen?

SCHMIDT: I had, we had a beautiful kitchen. It was all light brick, you know. And the floor, I mean, it wasn't plaster, it was . . .

MOORE: Tile?

SCHMIDT: Linoleum or something, yeah.

MOORE: Linoleum.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: And did, how big was the kitchen?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I would say nine by ten. We had a big kitchen, yeah.

MOORE: And what was meal time like? Did you eat in the kitchen, or did you eat elsewhere? Where did you eat your food?

SCHMIDT: We had the front room. The front room had a big, square table. Nine of them can sit on there, so. And then there were benches around, and so. Most of the time they eat, we had a nice stove in there. That stove was, you could open the door and cook inside, too, you know. So we had a lot of baking. And my mother baked a lot of stuff, and then . . .

MOORE: And what was your favorite food as a child? Do you remember?

SCHMIDT: My favorite food? We had to eat everything. We didn't have to pick, you know what I mean. So, of course . . .

SCHMIDT: Anything favorite at Christmas time that you had?

SCHMIDT: Oh, cookies. We liked cookies. And we, my mother made nice cookies and cakes and so.

MOORE: What, who were you the closest to in the family?

SCHMIDT: The closest to?

MOORE: Emotionally. Who, did you favor anyone?

SCHMIDT: Well, of course I was close to my mother. And my sister Annie was always nice, yeah.

MOORE: What about religious life?

SCHMIDT: Huh?

MOORE: Religion.

SCHMIDT: Religion? Oh, I went to church.

MOORE: And what religion were you? What denomination were you?

SCHMIDT: Catholic.

MOORE: Catholic. And did you go to church, your whole family go to church?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: How often did they go to church?

SCHMIDT: Oh, they go every Sunday, you know. I was at the age where they took me along, you know.

MOORE: And did you say prayers every night?

SCHMIDT: Yes, oh, yes.

MOORE: When you went to bed?

SCHMIDT: That was a must, I tell you. ( she laughs )

MOORE: Do you remember any of those prayers?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. ( she begins to recite a prayer in German )  
( she laughs )

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Is that a (?). ( she coughs )

MOORE: And what about, did you say any grace before your

meals, did you pray before?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

MOORE: And do you remember any of those?

SCHMIDT: No. We had several of them, you know. And, I mean, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." And . . .

MOORE: Yeah. What about, how far away was the church from your house?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we had a smaller church that was only about three, four blocks away from us, but we only had church once a week in there. And then we had to go to Osterbuchen [ph] Church. That's where we went to church and school, and that was every day, eight o'clock.

MOORE: School?

SCHMIDT: Huh?

MOORE: School every day.

SCHMIDT: And church. And then afterwards school.

MOORE: I see. Okay. And what about, did you ever experience any religious persecution for being Catholic?

SCHMIDT: Any persecution?

MOORE: For being Catholic, at all?

SCHMIDT: Oh, what means persecution?

MOORE: Uh, did anybody, how could I explain this? Did anybody say anything bad to you about being Catholic? Was it okay to be Catholic in your region?

SCHMIDT: Uh, you know, they didn't say much to me because I was always, I could belt them one. ( Ms. Moore laughs ) They don't say too much to me.

MOORE: Were the people in your region, were they Catholic, most of them?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: All right. And what was your favorite holiday?

SCHMIDT: Oh, Christmas and Easter.

MOORE: And what happened at Christmas? What was special at Christmas?

SCHMIDT: Oh, of course, we had a nice, we had a crib with little Jesus in, and they were singing nice, "Holy Night." And we were all singing all the time. And it was nice at Christmas, really.

MOORE: Did you have any Santa Claus or anything like that?

SCHMIDT: Well, at home, but not in church, you know, yeah.

MOORE: And did you, what about meal time at Christmas? Explain, what did you eat for your Christmas dinner?

SCHMIDT: At Christmas? Oh, we usually had a big turkey, you know. And then cookies, a lot of cookies, and then it was, it was a good, uh, a good dinner, you know.

MOORE: Talk about school. You went to school in Germany, and you mentioned it just now.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: Tell me about your school. What was it like?

SCHMIDT: Oh, it was good. And we had a tough teacher, I'll tell you that.

MOORE: Do you remember the teacher's name?

SCHMIDT: Uh, oh, his name is William Landowler [ph], yeah.

MOORE: And how far was school from your house?

SCHMIDT: Oh, about fifteen, twenty minutes. Yeah.

MOORE: And how big was the school? How many students?

SCHMIDT: Seventy.

MOORE: Seventy students. And what was your favorite subject in school?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I was always interested in everything. There was two girls, myself and the other girl. We used to, we were questioned about, we were the first ones given a speech about a subject, what we were talking about.

MOORE: So you liked school?

SCHMIDT: Yes, I did.

MOORE: And how many students were in your class?

SCHMIDT: Oh, in my class I would say there were about twenty-five.

MOORE: Twenty-five.

SCHMIDT: But this school, he taught about sixty or more people in it. That was a big room. There was first, second,

third, fourth, fifth, up to seven grades, you know.

MOORE: In one room?

SCHMIDT: There was this side, whole class, and that side, you know, it was a big school. Later on they sold and they had, it was different arranged. But we were going to that school for a long time, yeah.

MOORE: And what was the name of that school? Do you remember?

SCHMIDT: ( she pauses ) I remember Osterbuchen [ph]. I remember, I don't remember the name, but they had a name for that school.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: The church was St. Michael's.

MOORE: Your church, what was the name of the church that you went to?

SCHMIDT: I think, the church, it was, it was built, I think, who built this now?

MOORE: What was the name of the church?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: St. Michael's.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: St. Michael's.

MOORE: St. Michael's?

SCHMIDT: I don't know.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: She does.

SCHMIDT: I don't think so.

MOORE: Okay. All right. Did you learn any English prior to coming to the United States?

SCHMIDT: No.

MOORE: No. Do you remember any games you played as a child? What did you do for entertainment?

SCHMIDT: Oh, we played all kinds of games. We, we had a, I had quite, there was quite a piece of property, and there was a big ditch flowing through. And we, we blocked it off and made kind of a swimming pool out of it. And then we were swimming in there, yeah.

MOORE: So you liked to swim.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: And did you play any other games, do you remember?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah. Catch, and then hide away and all kinds of games.

MOORE: Now, tell me how, you were the middle child of eleven children. Is that true? You were the middle child at home.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: And you came to the United States. How did you get here? What happened? Why did you want to come?

SCHMIDT: Well, I tell you, I worked at home until I was sixteen. I would say sixteen-and-a-half or seventeen, I don't know. But, you know I could do anything. Plow or run the horses, milk, anything what was there. I was afraid of nothing. They know, they could tell me anything. "She does it. Don't worry about her." So then I thought to myself, I was getting older, and then there was a lot of boys trying to hang around me. But I said, "I'll never marry anybody here. I'm not going to, I don't want to be a farmer's wife and put up with all that baloney here." I mean, do all the work what I had to do. Not that I didn't want to, and helped them out and all. But I was gotten to the age where there were some other ones coming up. And I said that's the only way to get away, you know, see. And I wanted to do something else. I didn't want to be a farmer, you know.

MOORE: Did anyone influence you? Did anyone tell you you could do something else?

SCHMIDT: No.

MOORE: What about your teachers at school? Did you have any teacher that helped you?

SCHMIDT: No, no. I was just thinking for myself.

MOORE: Hold on for a second.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

MOORE: Now . . .

SCHMIDT: They were in Munich. And they met people, they hired them for, to help with the children.

MOORE: Who were in Munich?

SCHMIDT: Huh?

MOORE: Who were in Munich?

SCHMIDT: Betty and, uh . . .

MOORE: Annie?

SCHMIDT: Annie, yeah. And, well, they liked it very well, of course. It was different living, and then they could go to a show and then shop, and everything was what they would like. But they had to take care of children a lot. They didn't have too much time to play. And they said, well, they didn't want me to be home being a farmer all my life. He says, "We'll ask her if she would want to come, you know." And I said, "Of course." I came.

MOORE: Now, let's go back a little bit. Were you good in school? Were you a good student?

SCHMIDT: Yes, I was.

MOORE: Adn did any of your teachers ever tell you, help you, say that you should do something more?

SCHMIDT: Ah, I don't know.

MOORE: Were you ever told that . . .

SCHMIDT: Well, I think I had some influence on my sisters, I mean, that they were living a different life, you know, see. And I thought, "Well, I don't want to be a farmer, you know." Not that I didn't like it, but I just liked to have a different living, you know.

MOORE: Okay. So how did you then, what happened then?

SCHMIDT: And, so I was writing to them, and I said if I couldn't come to America, and so forth. And, of course, my sister Betty, she was a very studious woman, you know, she was very smart, but she was never well in her life. She, they had a lot of time to raise her. I mean, she wasn't very well. But she was smart. And she wrote to me and encouraged me to come. And then . . .

MOORE: Now, Annie and Betty were then now in the United States?

SCHMIDT: That's right.

MOORE: And where were they in the United States?

SCHMIDT: They were in Munich.

MOORE: In Munich, and then they came to the America?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: And where were they in America? Where did you write them?

SCHMIDT: Well, I think we had relatives in Munich, which I don't know, and they were staying with them. And that's how it happened.

MOORE: Okay. So you came, so tell me what happened then. They wrote, you wrote to them, and they influenced you.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And then what happened?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. And I investigated, and I know I could get my papers together because I wasn't no dummy at that time, you know. And then I thought, "Well, I'll get things together and I'm going." Of course, everybody scared me to death, but I wasn't scared of nothing.

MOORE: What did they say to you?

SCHMIDT: Huh?

MOORE: How did they scare you?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I had to go by boat, and I tell you, it was something to be scared of, I tell you.

MOORE: What did your father think when you told him you wanted to go to the United States?

SCHMIDT: Well, my father, at that time, he was away from home. I don't know what he was doing. Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: He was in the military.

SCHMIDT: He was what?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: The military. He was in the military.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: The military.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah. He was in the United States. See, he was born in the United States, and he was . . .

MOORE: Oh, this is your husband, yeah. This is your husband, born in the United States. But your father was away, right?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: And, okay. So you said they scared you before you came.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: And they, what did your mother think about you coming here?

SCHMIDT: Well, my mother, she liked my work at home real well, and she didn't kind of like me to go to America. So, but I thought, well, my sisters, they want me to be somebody else but a farmer. And I said, especially my older sister. So I said I'd better make up my mind that I'm going. And I had to get all kinds of papers together, and I had to finish school here, and then I had to oh, well, a certain amount of clothes, and . . .

MOORE: Where did you get the money to come to the United States?

SCHMIDT: Oh, my parents. They, you know, they took money in on the farm. So later on I paid them all back.

MOORE: So where, when did you leave? How old were you when you left?

SCHMIDT: Nineteen.

MOORE: And did they give you a party before you left? Do you remember, did they give you a dinner or anything?

SCHMIDT: No. You know, I was, we were farm people, and we weren't socializing so much, you know. Too much parties, and so. So you got an ice cream or something for dessert and everything, well, but there wasn't so many kids in my class. So that's all right. We, I had a lot of friends, you know, but then . . .

MOORE: What did you pack? What did you put in your suitcase to come here?

SCHMIDT: Oh, my suitcase? My everyday clothes, underwear. I had nice clothes.

MOORE: Did you take anything special from the family with you?

SCHMIDT: No.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Your feathers.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Your feathers.

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah. Some feathers, a couple of pillows, yeah.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: The feathers were plucked. Your father made the box. Your father made the box.

SCHMIDT: Uh-huh, yeah. That wasn't really so important.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Yes, it is, say it, say it.

MOORE: So you brought feathers. What type of feathers did you

bring?

SCHMIDT: Well, we made a pillow out of it, you know.

MOORE: Where did you get the feathers?

SCHMIDT: Oh, from the chickens. We had chickens home.

MOORE: And so you plucked the feathers?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes. I can pluck the chickens and everything.

MOORE: So why did you . . .

SCHMIDT: We had some geese, too. We had thirty geese. And they were not easy to be plucked, you know. The chickens you can't pluck very good, but you can pluck, I mean, the geese. Yeah, I plucked the geese.

MOORE: And so you brought feathers with you. Why?

SCHMIDT: Well, because they didn't have any feathers in America. I was used to a feather bed, yeah.

MOORE: So you brought your own feather bed.

SCHMIDT: You bet.

MOORE: ( she laughs ) Okay. And what else? Anything else special did you bring from home? Do you have anything now from Germany?

SCHMIDT: It's been too long ago, you know.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Your picture.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Your picture. Your picture.

SCHMIDT: Furniture?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Picture.

SCHMIDT: Oh, the pictures, yeah. I have a lot of pictures.

MOORE: Did you bring pictures with you?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: Of whom?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Over your bed.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, okay.

MOORE: You have a picture over your bed that you brought.

SCHMIDT: Yeah, I have pictures. You know, when I moved here, I have to explain something to you. First I moved to my daughter-in-law's. Not to her, but in the back there was a house. Then I moved someplace else. And then she made up her mind I should be living out there and, you know, I mean, just to pack, I was in business and I sold out and I raised three kids. And they all, two of them went to college. And, well, Fred, the big man, he didn't, he was a very smart guy, and he said, "I don't need college," he says. And . . .

MOORE: Well, let's back up a bit. We haven't gotten you to your children yet. We're still in Germany now, you're leaving. Okay? So you're leaving Germany, and how did you get from your house to the port? What port did you leave from?

SCHMIDT: You know, they took me to a train, or to whatever I had to go to. We had a real nice coach, where I used to go and get people when they come by train, and haul them home. I was the town chauffeur, you see? And it worked fine. And so I was still the town chauffeur. So there was no problem there. And . . .

MOORE: So when you left, they took you in the same coach?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: Did you drive?

SCHMIDT: No. Somebody else drove.

MOORE: And this time you rode to the station.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. I had a trunk. It was made out of wood, you know. And, and suitcases. I had enough junk.

MOORE: ( she laughs ) Okay. So you go to the station, and the station was where? Where was the train station?

SCHMIDT: Augsburg.

MOORE: How do you spell that? Do you know?

SCHMIDT: A-U-G-S-B-U-G . . .

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: R-G, yes.

MOORE: Okay. And then, by train from Augsburg to where?

SCHMIDT: Uh, to, it was either Munich or, Munich or . . .

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Bremen.

SCHMIDT: Wherever the boats leave.

MOORE: Bremen?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, Bremen.

MOORE: And what was the name of the boat that you left from?

SCHMIDT: Mauretania.

MOORE: Was that the second time or the first time, Mauretania?

SCHMIDT: First time.

MOORE: First time. Okay. We'll look at that later on the records.

SCHMIDT: I went again on the Mauretania for a trip, the same boat. I liked that boat.

MOORE: It was the Munchen, Munchen.

SCHMIDT: Munchen?

MOORE: Munchen, sorry.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. That's the city.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: But the boat was called that, too.

MOORE: Okay. We'll look at that later. But, okay. So you got to Bremen, you said.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: Okay. And did you have to wait for the boat overnight?

SCHMIDT: Uh, it was, arrangements were made when my boat was going to leave. That's what I was going to meet, and that worked all good.

MOORE: Did you travel alone?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: You were alone.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And do you remember seeing the boat for the first time?

SCHMIDT: You bet I do.

MOORE: And what was it like?

SCHMIDT: Oh, I haven't got any boats here that I can see, yeah. It was a big boat, a very big boat, yeah.

MOORE: And what kind of accommodations? What did you have?

SCHMIDT: There were some, there were people, I would say, in the upper deck, and not all the way up, just, and then below, you know. And so, ( she pauses ) I wasn't, I had a bed of my own, and then, yeah.

MOORE: You had a bed of your own, but were there other people in your room with you?

SCHMIDT: Uh, no, but it wasn't far away, then there was, there were some engineers and some, I didn't, I wasn't far away from anybody, you know.

MOORE: Did you have your own room?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: A little room?

SCHMIDT: No, it was bigger than that.

MOORE: It was bigger than this room here, yeah. Okay. And what was the voyage like? Do you remember, was it rough or smooth?

SCHMIDT: I was praying every night because the sea was so rough, the waves were up, down, up, down. We had such a tough voyage. I couldn't explain it to you. But, you know, I was in, I was in the, I said to myself, "I don't care if it goes down, then I go bye-bye. That's all right." I didn't care what happened to me it was so bad. I tell you, it was terrible.

MOORE: Were you sick?

SCHMIDT: You bet I was sick. I couldn't eat much, and you had to watch when you walked you would fall right on the floor.

MOORE: Did you make any friends in the boat that could help you?

SCHMIDT: Not when you were in that condition, no.

MOORE: And did you ever go on deck?

SCHMIDT: I went on deck the minute the boat stopped. I went on deck, and I was on deck every day. I was walking and walking and walking. I couldn't wait to get out and get going. And . . .

MOORE: Did you eat anything during this time?

SCHMIDT: Well, while I was sick I wasn't eating. What went down came right up. And they didn't give you much. I don't remember what they all fed us.

MOORE: Did you have a dining room to eat in?

SCHMIDT: Well, we had a dining room and everything, but I never made to it. I never made it from my bedroom. If it was, you know.

MOORE: And do you remember seeing land for the first time?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. Yes.

MOORE: What did you see first?

SCHMIDT: Well, there was a lot of boats and a lot of commotions, you know, when, and a lot of boats had landed there. Oh, it was, it was something. But . . .

MOORE: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And what was that like?

SCHMIDT: Eh.

MOORE: And how about Ellis Island?

SCHMIDT: Yeah. But I only see Ellis Island, I only see in, people like me walking around, you know, and getting on their feet. But when you were on the boat and you tried to land, you don't see much. I mean, you only go through personalities, but in the (?) take your history and everything. And then I saw my relatives and all. They were trying to help me.

MOORE: Did you have any medical examination?

SCHMIDT: Not that I know of. I wasn't, I wasn't in shape to be, well, I wasn't feeling well, but I wasn't sick that much.

MOORE: Did you have a medical examination in Germany before you left, by a doctor?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

MOORE: And what did they do in the examination?

SCHMIDT: Oh, not much. I mean, they said I was okay.

MOORE: And you had all the papers . . .

SCHMIDT: Oh, yes.

MOORE: . . . with you. And when you went to Ellis Island, what do you remember about Ellis Island? What it looked like, the buildings? Do you remember?

SCHMIDT: Well, of course, you only went from the boat to the

deck, you know. And then you walked, and they were feeding you something, you know. And then we never ate anything practically for, I was ten days on the boat.

MOORE: And the trip from . . .

SCHMIDT: Yes, yes. And you were so hungry, and you ate whatever came along. But then . . .

MOORE: Was Ellis Island clean or dirty, or what do you remember?

SCHMIDT: But, you know, when you come from the boat on the pier, you know, you don't look around whatever looks like, it's okay with you. You don't care.

MOORE: How about food? Do you remember any food there?

SCHMIDT: Oh, they fed you just cereal and things, what they know it wasn't going to come right back up, you know, yeah.

MOORE: And did they, did they speak German to you or English?

SCHMIDT: Oh, they could speak both languages, you know, yeah.

MOORE: And what did they ask you?

SCHMIDT: Oh, well. ( she laughs ) How are you, and everything like that, but I didn't have much to say because I was in too much distress. ( break in tape )

MOORE: Hold on. ( referring to the microphone )

SCHMIDT: Am I causing a lot of trouble here?

MOORE: No, not at all. It's just the microphone has fallen. Okay. So who came to see, who came to . . .

SCHMIDT: My two sisters.

MOORE: Came to get you.

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: And did you stay on Ellis Island overnight?

SCHMIDT: No. I didn't stay. They took me that day, and then my sister Annie took me home.

MOORE: And where was home?

SCHMIDT: Well, she was working for people.

MOORE: In New York?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, in, close to Ellis Island. And they were really helping her, too, because they were, they came from

Munich and they, they knew what it was like. So they were nice. They were nice to them later on. So, anyway. ( she pauses ) I went home, my sister Annie. She's always the person, you don't have to worry. She puts you on the, and then I had a, I had a good bed to sleep in, she made me breakfast. She was a good cook. And, oh, she made me all kinds of things. And then I stayed with her a couple of days, and I was feeling pretty good and walking and everything. I helped her, you know. And then, and then, well, my sister Betty, she was always anxious to get me working, you know. So I didn't care what was going to happen. And then . . .

MOORE: Do you remember the address of this apartment? Do you remember what this place was, where Annie was? Where was it?

SCHMIDT: Well, it was close to New York. I mean, you know, you go from New York to Ellis Island by subway or by, you know. And so . . .

MOORE: How big was the place she was staying at? How big, was it a house or a flat, or what was it?

SCHMIDT: I mean, what was big?

MOORE: Where was, this place that Annie worked at, the family from Munich.

SCHMIDT: That was New York.

MOORE: Was it that apartment building?

SCHMIDT: There is one apartment building next to the other one, all big. Yes.

MOORE: Okay. And you stayed there some days, and then what happened?

SCHMIDT: Then I, this person, they had this business on Fifth Avenue where they're, they were changing, converting clothes to what they were wearing. And they put all embroidery on everything. And they knew I was good on doing embroidery. And then I was making some samples, you know. And the boss said, "Well, if she can, she can make anything." So I was doing good work, and then it wasn't very long I was the head lady from all of them working there.

MOORE: In embroidering.

SCHMIDT: Uh-huh.

MOORE: And so how long did you stay there?

SCHMIDT: Oh, quite a while. And I, until I was recovered and until, I stayed for quite a while.

MOORE: What's quite a while?

SCHMIDT: Because I had my sisters still, and I knew those people. So . . .

MOORE: You stayed with them, you stayed with Annie. You lived there.

SCHMIDT: Get acquainted. And then later on they moved to Long Island and I changed. I don't know. That I don't remember.

MOORE: They moved to where in Long Island? Where?

SCHMIDT: Oh, Hempstead, Long Island. And then they had a place in Long Island where they go every summer, you know. And so I don't remember where they went later on. I met them people, later in my life I was acquainted with them for a long time.

MOORE: How did you learn English? You came, and you didn't know any English. When did you learn English?

SCHMIDT: I went right away to night school.

MOORE: In New York?

SCHMIDT: Yes.

MOORE: To learn English.

SCHMIDT: And I was very good in school at home. And I, it didn't take me long.

MOORE: Do you ever remember anyone making fun of you for being German or having a German accent?

SCHMIDT: Oh, no. I mean, those things are, you know. They don't, I mean, you learn all kinds of things. They, you just take it when it comes, that's all.

MOORE: And so you went, then you were doing embroidery. What did you do after that? What happened after that?

SCHMIDT: Ah, I worked someplace where they were putting embroiders on clothes and I helped there. I worked several places like that, because I knew how. And then . . .

MOORE: How long did you live in New York then, altogether?

SCHMIDT: I lived in New York . . .

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Until 1940's.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Until 1940's.

SCHMIDT: Well, when did I take the store over?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Early 1940.

SCHMIDT: Because then I was on my own, see?

MOORE: In the 1940's you had a store? Now, where did you meet your husband? And when?

SCHMIDT: I met him when I had the store.

MOORE: You had a store.

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: In?

SCHMIDT: In Hempstead, Long Island. That was in a small town, close to Everett.

MOORE: No, Everett's here in Washington. Okay. All right. So your husband, was your husband German, too?

SCHMIDT: Well, he was actually German, but then he was born here and he, he knows three languages, you know. So . . .

MOORE: Do you speak German to your husband?

SCHMIDT: Oh, yeah, anything, yeah.

MOORE: And then you had children?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: How many children did you have?

SCHMIDT: Three.

MOORE: Three. And what are their names?

SCHMIDT: Anna.

MOORE: The oldest?

SCHMIDT: This is the girl.

MOORE: Ah, okay.

SCHMIDT: And then came Joseph, that's the boy, Joseph. And then . . .

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Fred.

SCHMIDT: The last one was Bill. He's still with me today, Bill.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Fred.

SCHMIDT: Oh, Freddie. Well, the first one was, was what?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Annie.

MOORE: Annie?

SCHMIDT: Annie. And then . . .

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Fred.

SCHMIDT: Joseph.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Fred.

SCHMIDT: Fred. Yeah, that's right. Anne and Fred. This is a pair I should never forget, because he was only, he was only ten or twelve pounds when he was born, yeah.  
( she laughs ) How should anybody forget.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Bill.

SCHMIDT: Huh?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Bill. The third one was Bill.

SCHMIDT: Bill was the last one. And then, yeah.

MOORE: So what did you do, what did your husband do for a profession? What was his occupation?

SCHMIDT: Well, he was working for a steamship company. He was working for the Cunard Line, see. He was booking the people to go to Europe because he worked in the consulate, so he knows three languages, and he could read and write and do all the book work and everything.

MOORE: And where was that located? Was that in Long Island?

SCHMIDT: That was in New York, you know. Yeah. And . . .

MOORE: So did you raise your children in New York?

SCHMIDT: In Long Island, you know. On the island. That's not far away, you know. They went to school there and then, well, my daughter, she went to first in public school, and then she went to college, and then Fred, he was a genius mechanic, you know. And he says, he didn't want to go to school and sit around. He says he wanted to keep going, so. But he was good on all these things. So he didn't want to go to college. But then when Bill came, he was the last one. I says, he didn't mind to go to college. He was smart. And, well, Fred was smart, too. In fact, he was smarter than a lot of things than a lot of them. He was. And he was a mechanic, I tell you.

MOORE: So how did you get out to Everett, Washington?

SCHMIDT: How to Everett, Washington? Well, from New York I was working in, I was working in, it's not far away from, in, let's see.

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Mineola?

SCHMIDT: Mineola, yeah, yeah. See, in Mineola, that's close to the city.

MOORE: I know Mineola.

SCHMIDT: Yeah. I worked in America.

MOORE: And so how did you get out here? How did you come to Washington? When did you do that?

SCHMIDT: Well, let's see.

MOORE: Did you come to Washington when the war broke out?

SCHMIDT: I think so. I think so. I don't know where my husband was stationed at that time because ( a telephone rings ), they changed him around, you know. Let me see, what time is it?

MOORE: We'll be just a second. ( break in tape ) Did you speak German to your children?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: Do your children know German?

SCHMIDT: Yeah.

MOORE: Do your, do you have grandchildren?

SCHMIDT: Yeah, but they grew up, then, when it was spoken English. They can speak German now a little, but not too much. But I talk to them.

MOORE: When you look back on your life now, you've lived a long life, you've lived in Germany, you've lived in different parts here.

SCHMIDT: Yes, I was in Italy, too.

MOORE: And what do you think about your original decision to come to the United States? What do you think about that decision as a young woman?

SCHMIDT: Well, I wanted to get away from the farm, and I want to see something, and I want to meet people, and I want to know what it's all about. I mean, I just, I didn't want to stay in a small farm town.

MOORE: Was it a good decision?

SCHMIDT: Huh?

MOORE: Do you think it was a good decision now?

SCHMIDT: I think so, yeah.

MOORE: Did you ever want to go back to Germany to live?

SCHMIDT: Oh, not too bad. I mean, it's, what you know, I thought, I was thinking many times, here I had this store I don't know how many years. How long did I have my store? Do you know?

FEMALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Fifteen years. ( tape ends )