**Janet**: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It’s November 22nd 1994. I am here in Manchester, New Hampshire, with Mrs. Elizabeth Roesser who came from Germany. Leaving Germany in December of 1922 and arriving January 2nd at Ellis Island 1923.

And at that time she was 14 years old just about to turn 15years old and I want to say I am very happy to be here and I am really looking forward. You have an unusual story about why you happened to come to Ellis Island so it would be good to get that on tape.

Ok let’s start at the beginning Mrs. Roesser if you would say your birth date and where in Germany you were born?

**Roesser**: I was born in a town is Heidingsfeld but the bigger town is Wurzburg it’s a very famous city in Unterfranken I mean in- that’s where I came from.

**Janet**: What was the first place you said Heidingsfeld.

**Roesser**: Heidingsfeld that is, H-E-I-D-I-N-G-S-F-E-L-D and that is right near that larger town or city that’s 'Wurzburg' I mean it’s anyway-

**Janet**: The day and the date you were born?

**Roesser**: I was born January 24th 1907.

**Janet**: Was there ever any talk in your family about your birth, were there any stories you ever heard about the day you were born?

**Roesser**: Those days, the women usually had the babies at home and they were happy it was a little girl and all that you know but other than that-

**Janet**: They were happy to have a girl?

**Roesser**: Yeah they were happy to have a girl because they had a couple of boys in between, so that was a welcome change they said [laughter].

**Janet**: What was your mother's name?

**Roesser**: My mother’s name was Teresa.

**Janet**: And do you remember her maiden name?

**Roesser**: Yes Endres E-N-D-R-E-S.

**Janet**: And your father’s name?

**Roesser**: My father’s first name, don’t laugh now- Theobald

**Janet**: Theobald. And your brothers what were their names?

**Roesser**: My brother, you see my mother died of child birth.

**Janet**: With you?

**Roesser**: No, with my little brother. His name was Willy William but he was sickly. He was sickly almost all his life and he died when he was about 23years old and he died of tuberculosis. In those days that we still you know quite prevalent over there.

**Janet**: How many years after you were born was Willy born?

**Roesser**: Oh, that was- well, I was born- what did I say?

**Janet**: 1907

**Roesser**: 1907, and he was born in, when did my mother die oh God!

**Janet**: You remember how old you were when your mother died?

**Roesser**: I was about five years old when she died, yeah that’s right. Of course it was hard then and then we had a step mother.

**Janet**: And tell me your two older brother’s names?

**Roesser**: My older brothers they were- one was Max and the other was Emule. The two older brothers.

**Janet**: Do you remember your mother from your first five years?

**Roesser**: Vaguely, vaguely. I do, I probably do pretty good you know she was five when I died. When she died I was five.

**Janet**: What memories do you have of her?

**Roesser**: Well-

**Janet**: When you think of her what kinds of stories do you remember?

**Roesser**: Well, she was a very pleasant woman, and of course I heard a lot about that too. And she was an excellent cook and baker.

**Janet**: Do you remember anything she made?

**Roesser**: Yeah my father used to say, “Oh she could make the best cookies” and she used to hide them and then she said “Somebody was after that cookies.” but then my father said “I have to confess it was Me.” coz she blamed the children [laughter].

So I mean it was a regular nice family and my mother was very-they all were in praise of my mother and then she died and I got a step mother.

**Janet**: Do you remember when your mother died?

**Roesser**: Yes, November 1st 1900 and- I tell you my memory isn’t as good as it was when I was in Ellis Island.

**Janet**: Well, if it was about five years it somewhere around 1912. Probably

**Roesser**: Yes. That’s right.

**Janet**: So do you remember her being sick, what memories do you have?

**Roesser**: Well, all I know I was in the neighbor’s house and they didn’t want me to go near window where I could look over to our entrance and of course I was nosy and I did anyway.

And I saw that my mother was being taken by-sort of a fancy coach or something, to the hospital, but of course I didn’t know that that she was going to the hospital, you know was five years old but I didn’t think too much further.

But I remember my sister and I visited her and my sister said, she told me, she made a remark my mother, “Well I tried to be a good mother to you kids, now I hope you also get a good one.” Because she was my older sisters step mother and brother see. My mother was the second wife. So she was their step mother then I came along.

**Janet**: Oh, did you have other step sisters and brothers besides that one?

**Roesser**: Well, of course my little brother he was- and then yes I had two step sisters, Julia and Anna, and they both came to America. They had aunts here. That was there you know. So they came over and they just made it before the world war, the First World War.

**Janet**: And did they live with you in the same house with your father and mother when your mother was alive?

**Roesser**: Yes.

**Janet**: So there was Julia and Anna and your two brothers and you who really came along?

**Roesser**: That’s right.

**Janet**: Well now, when your mother did die, did you go to the funeral? Was there a funeral for her?

**Roesser**: There was a funeral and- strange thing was, I was in kindergarten at the time, they send me to kindergarten on that day too and from there, from the gate there, we could see the funeral.

But I had no idea, it went along you know there was a horse with black beard, the way they dress them up over there and a special coach-

**Janet**: Describe that, describe the coach and the way they dress it up-

**Roesser**: Well, it’s all black you know then it has like curtains down the side. Then the horses are really racing horses, they pulled so I mean, that was a strange thing. But I didn’t realize that my mother was- and I saw it pass but I didn’t realize it. Anyway so, that was bad.

**Janet**: Was it typical at that time that children were not involved in things like that like a funeral-

**Roesser**: Well, I guess when they are that age. Otherwise, once they are a little further in school I am sure they were involved.

**Janet**: And how about grandparents? Did you have grandparents in Germany?

**Roesser**: Yes I had [telephone ringing]--

**Janet**: We are going to pause here for the telephone.

Ok we are resuming after phone call [telephone ringing]-

**Roesser**: Aaaargh, come on now.

**Janet**: It’s happening again. Now we were going to attempt to resume again, you have so many friends, that’s wonderful.

**Roesser**: Yes I do.

**Janet**: Ok. So, we were talking about grandparents I think, you had some grandparents?

**Roesser**: Yes I had some grandparents. Well, they both died. My grandfather, grandfather, they were in a different village and they were farmers and they produced a lot of stuff you know and I went there every year on vacation.

**Janet**: In the summer time?

**Roesser**: In the summer time and we have about six- seven weeks’ vacation in the summer time in July. Then I used to help you know like this guys do and then you know. Whatever I could do I had to help along a little bit. I just loved to go there because my relatives were there.

My mother’s sisters was there two of them. One sister and one brother, and they were married and they had kids and one had little ones and I had to go and take care of them all the time too [Laughter].

**Janet**: And what did you like so much about being there on the farm?

**Roesser**: Oh well, in the first place I was away from home and then it was-the nice fresh air and going out and doing things and sometimes I used to bring food to my cousins you know that-my aunt would bake and then they wanted right away when it was still warm.

So I had to bring it to the field and I had wonderful time with my cousins and they were all older, except one that they were younger.

**Janet**: What kind of farm was it? What was your grandfather growing on there?

**Roesser**: Oh, just about everything. You know I mean like-

**Janet**: [unclear 00:11:58]

**Roesser**: Yes, yes, and that’s how they did it too with the size and all. Oh and potatoes, and during the war, we had vacation when the potatoes were being dug out see, and so we had five weeks and I could go there and help and I always loved it and yes I loved it very much.

**Janet**: Would you dig the potatoes? Would you actually dig up the potatoes?

**Roesser**: Well, not really no, no.

**Janet**: You would do other things?

**Roesser**: I'd gather together and stuff like that.

**Janet**: So you have fond memories of your-

**Roesser**: Very fond. Oh my, I went there-after the first grade I went every year.

**Janet**: What was your grandfather like I person?

**Roesser**: Oh, he was very nice, he was then already about and he used to come and I heard my mother always because he would say “I have to go right away again.” she says “Go ahead don’t even come upstairs go ahead go”- I remember that [laughter].

**Janet**: He was busy? He was a busy man?

**Roesser**: No not really but that the way he was but he used to help everybody especially during the war, the boys who were in the war, in world war one you know, so they had just a women to help. And I know my grandfather says there is no good with women. Not the same thing and so. But oh yes, he helped plenty.

**Janet**: And he owned his own land?

**Roesser**: Not any more, he retired.

**Janet**: No, but I mean at that time when you were a little girl?

**Roesser**: No, he was already- they were, my grandmother and my grandfather they were way over 80 when I was a little one

**Janet**: I see so they were running this farm, did they hire other people?

**Roesser**: No, no they had plenty- my uncle really inherited that one and he had plenty children to help, they were all starting to grow up and so, yeah. And every time I went out to Germany I always spend there, fond memories.

**Janet**: Where was that farm?

**Roesser**: That was-the city is right near us- or was a town? Well you had a ride about- we could take like a bus and we could, we had to go, I went a couple of times.

So yeah I also went on Christmas to there because I liked it very much and stayed the Christmas vacation and that was always very nice and they always had such good foods. They weren’t affected so much by the war. They had butter and all the goodies and so, they could bake what we couldn’t do in the city see.

**Janet**: And did they have animals also in the farm?

**Roesser**: Yes, yeah, they had cows, couple of oxen and for the fields. Oh and they had pigs, they slaughter a pig now and then. It was good.

**Janet**: What would Christmas dinner be like?

**Roesser**: Oh, Christmas dinner that was always very festive. [Unclear 00:15:46] we'd have lots of cookies you know. Cookies, that’s- then we had a Christmas tree, a real one. We do a candle of course we didn’t use any electric so, it was always very nice. I always also went to the farm

**Janet**: Could you describe the Christmas tree in detail?

**Roesser**: Well yes, we had the usual glass things, and then we'd have candles, no electric lights.

**Janet**: How would you put the candles on?

**Roesser**: Well you lit them with match and you had to be very careful and then we would sing a Christmas song or two and then we turned them off again. Because you know, it was during the war, the candles were hard to get.

**Janet**: And did everyone blow them out? How did it? Would did you do?

**Roesser**: Well, usually we took turns. My little brother couldn’t do much of that so.

**Janet**: Was it a big Christmas tree? Was it on the floor or was it on the table?

**Roesser**: No, it was on the table, it was always a table tree and then I know my father used to-I remember he made the kitchen ones like furniture for kitchen and he told me it was for-we call it the 'Christi kindle -that means the Christ child, we don’t say Santa clause see. So he says he had to do it for the Christi kindle say so.

**Janet**: He made like a little cradle and a little-[unclear 00:17:35].

**Roesser**: Yeah, like- well, he did all sorts like furniture you know-

**Janet**: You mean like doll house size?

**Roesser**: Yeah, nice, it was very nice. My big sister had that already and was over to me and I was the youngest and the others all went away when the stepmother come to the house. I mean the second wife was already a stepmother but that didn’t-

**Janet**: The other one was different. Well just to finish talking about Christmas, you didn’t celebrate Santa clause, but you celebrated the Christ child?

**Roesser**: Yeah, but on sometime in December-then so called Santa clause-but he wasn’t dressed like that, he was dressed real. And he had a stick, a big stick if you were naughty then you got a couple acts, if not then you got an apple or some nuts or something [Laughter].

**Janet**: And what he came to visit?

**Roesser**: Yeah, he used to come and then we were scared.

**Janet**: What was he dressed like?

**Roesser**: He had some kind of a cap, you know I mean like a Santa clause-

**Janet**: So he had a red suit on?

**Roesser**: No, no, not a red one. That was war time you didn’t get anything new. But we knew when he came from far away already he would call out and where is a good girl or a boy and so forth and so on. Then my little brother was terribly scared. Terrible sad, but I knew who it was so [laughter].

**Janet**: So did some children get hit?

**Roesser**: Pardon?

**Janet**: Did some children get hit? On St Nicholas day?

**Roesser**: To get what?

**Janet**: Did he hit some of them? With a stick?

**Roesser**: Sick?

**Janet**: Stick!

**Roesser**: Oh stick. No, no. He always said I will, but no. He was a very friendly.

**Janet**: So you went to the farm as much as you could it sounds like?

**Roesser**: Oh yes.

**Janet**: And you enjoyed it?

**Roesser**: Oh yes. Very much. I was at home there. My Godmother lived in that same town and she used to come home on vacation. She was a music teacher and she would be in larger cities and she also would come home on vacation and that was very nice. So yes it was nice and I had some friends there too play with. It was nice

**Janet**: What contact did you have with the Godmother, what did the Godmother mean?

**Roesser**: Well, a Godmother is as well- like when you are christened, she is there and she also has some- like she stands up for you so to speak almost. You know what I mean, she is your Godmother.

Then with the christening, she's there and when the priest ask this baby what would you want, you know she says she wants it to be christened and become a Christian and stuff like that see, it was very nice.

**Janet**: So did children usually have much contact with their God mother?

**Roesser**: Well yes, let’s say I go to so and so that’s my Godmother. Yes that’s right.

**Janet**: How about what you played, do you remember the kinds of things you played when you were a little girl?

**Roesser**: We played all sorts of games, you know, like what we called [unclear 00:21:56] we go in a circle and we sang all this things you know like I am sure they do that maybe not so much here but anyway.

**Janet**: Can you remember all those rhymes, that you recited when you were going around and around in a circle?

**Roesser**: I should but I- not off head. It was lots of fun you know.

**Janet**: And then what else did you play?

**Roesser**: And then we also played families you know. One was the father, the mother and the other one was the children and so forth. I guess they played that all over.

**Janet**: How about stories? Do you remember any stories that you were told or that you read when you were first starting to read that stuck with you that you remember?

**Roesser**: Well, boy I tell you I read an awful lot in my time. Oh like for instance Hyde and I practically knew that in German so all I had to do is you know that was the first book I read here, Hyde. Because it came very easily so I remember that, and I read an awful lot. At night, oh gosh yes.

**Janet**: Do you remember you remember what it was about Hyde that you liked it so much?

**Roesser**: Like when she came to her grandfather you know and all that story-it was very nice. All about her and how she came to this other girl that was the rich and then she came you know and then Hyde took her the mountains.

And she got well because she always had to be carried around but then when she got to the mountains and she met the grandfather and he says none of that, and she got well, she was fine she hopped around then her father came from the big city.

Oh boy I tell you, she really could do things she never would have dreamt of because she always had to be carried around. And her grandfather says ah ah [laughter] he was a real mountaineer in the Alps.

**Janet**: What was your father like as a personality?

**Roesser**: He worked very hard.

**Janet**: What was he doing for work?

**Roesser**: He was like make-what do we say, what do we say like when they had like in the commentary the grave stones? He used to curve in the names and he used to be specialist in that and then they get filled with Gold or whatever you know different.

Yes on the stones, what do you call them? Grave stones? Yeah. They were all different kinds and he used to make like tablet and that was set on then. So that yes.

I remember I can hear him get home, and he used to have to a very good hand on doing that because he couldn’t hit too hard, you know, I hear him in my memories lots of times.

**Janet**: We going to pause here for one second.

**Roesser**: Sure, why not [laughter].

**Janet**: Ok so now we are with a non-squeaking chair we going to continue. You were saying you could remember you father hammering, now did he have his own business or was he working-

**Roesser**: No. he was working for a firm in the next town Pittsburg and he was there for many years. He was you know like a fixture there and he used to do all that and lot of the fancy stuff. You know I mean, not the- the ones that they just do with the stones that a different thing but when the fine work comes that very important.

**Janet**: So he would be hammering out sayings-

**Roesser**: And the names and all and he also was very good at the Hebrew. You know the way they write. So he used to do a lot for them too.

**Janet**: Where there many Jewish people in your area where you lived?

**Roesser**: Well, in our town, right among us. You know. We played and everything together and yes only we used to kid them, because they had to go to school what they call it on Sunday-

**Janet**: On Saturday

**Roesser**: On Saturday and so we had Saturday off [Laughter] kids are kids. But we always oh we played together and everything we also do it was just like anybody else.

**Janet**: And how religious was your family?

**Roesser**: Fairly, I mean normal you know I mean, we go church on Sundays and all that and always.

**Janet**: Was Easter a big observance-

**Roesser**: Pardon?

**Janet** You observed Easter?

**Roesser**: Oh yes Easter and Christmas of course, that’s always nice and all the other whatever holidays there are. You know. We always did that. Yes.

**Janet**: You were catholic?-

**Roesser**: Yeah

**Janet**: Were there any other holidays, religious holidays in Germany that you celebrated that we don’t have here?

**Roesser**: No, I can’t think of any.

**Janet**: Ok let’s see. So you started school when you were?

**Roesser**: I was in kindergarten from the time I was two years old. Went in the morning and all day and I loved it, that we had three types, we had big girls room, big boys room and a little kids room that the girls and boys and they were small yet and so.

And we got lunch and that was by the city. We had great big pots full of soup and we had- oh yes it was very good.

**Janet**: So you went early in the morning and you stayed all day?

**Roesser**: Yeah.

**Janet**: From the time you were two years old?

**Roesser**: Yeah, yeah. It was nice. I learned to knit there. I was good knitter and we knit socks for the soldiers.

**Janet**: When did you go with the big girls in the big girl’s room?

**Roesser**: Well I did already because the little ones were under two, and I only went up there when I was two years old. From the time I was two years old. Until I went to school, from there we went right to school.

**Janet**: And what do you remember about school in Germany?

**Roesser**: Oh I loved it and I had good friends and always, if I do say so myself, I had very good marks. Except sometimes in hand craft, but that time there was war we didn’t have the material that we should have had. So that alright, nobody asked anymore [laughter].

**Janet**: What were the teachers like? Do you remember any particular teachers?

**Roesser**: Oh yes they were Notre dame nuns and they were excellent. Absolutely excellent and my sister the one that was younger- my older sister got married and the other one two years younger didn’t know for, she became a nun. In Baltimore and she was Notre dame.

I used to go there about three times a year I used to love it. And especially when she didn’t feel good anymore. She died when she was 93 but she always she was very with heart and soul she was a nun. Oh but full of fun like on St. Patrick’s Day she would dress in green, if you can picture that[laughter] yeah. She had lot of fun.

So it wasn’t all just you know sad and serious, they have a lot of fun. They play cards, they even played pinnacle maybe I shouldn’t say it [Laughter] they were a nice bunch. I used to be at home with them, I used to go a couple times a year.

Even the last years when she still lived I used to go there about at least two or three times a year then I would stay five- six days and live right there. I always had fun too.

**Janet**: Well, tell me now when your mother died, was there a time lapse between when your mother died and when you father re-married?

**Roesser**: He married about a year later. My sister took care of us. She was still home then-gosh what’s the matter with me?

**Janet**: Do you want a drink?

**Roesser**: Mmh?

**Janet**: Do you want something to drink?

**Roesser**: I don’t know what this is-

**Janet**: Ok wait. We’ll pause here for a second. We are resuming now-

**Roesser**: Pardon?

**Janet**: We are resuming the tape now after you have had a drink of water. Let’s see so where were we? You were talking about?-

**Roesser**: My sisters.

**Janet**: Your sister took care of you after your mother died and before you father remarried.

**Roesser**: That’s right. Yeah and well my aunts still took care of the little boy he was sickly, he had rickets and what not and that time they didn’t have so many good things you know. But anyway he was with my aunt who had a couple of little ones herself too.

**Janet**: She was on the farm with your grandfather?-

**Roesser**: No, no her husband was telemaster and that’s where the baby was. And my father would come and look at him and the one sister-the one that became a nun here -she used to take him out in a carriage for walk and things like that.

But then of course after wards it was-and always- he really wasn’t supposed to live, he was supposed to die. And I guess my stepmother was a little disappointed that he didn’t die sometimes.

But it was tough. That part was tough but why do you think I came over here? Because my sister was here already. So she says you come on over and get away.

**Janet**: So in other words you sister was the first one in the family to come to America?

**Roesser**: Yeah my older sister, Julia, she came over with her aunt you know he mother's sister. Her mother’s sister was the first wife of my father and mine was the second one.

But then she died too, so well it was tough for the men you know you had to work and he couldn’t-they worked many hours those days and he couldn’t take care of the children that for sure. So did the best we could.

**Janet**: So you had a hard time from the time you were about 12 until the two years later when you left.

**Roesser**: I mean it was well, then I knew better. I did as best as I could you know. I found lots of friends and had my relatives on vacations and I had- it was ok.

**Janet**: You think your father was aware of the fact that your step mother wasn’t treating you-

**Roesser**: Yes, because I tell you, when my sister, she came over for a visit-what year was it? Some years later anyway but then she already knew she was going to the convent but she didn’t want to say anything because it would make it too hard.

The decision made it very hard for her because she knew it and then she couldn’t go over anymore but later on I tell you they went over to just to save her all the time that the nuns here you know they became little more modern. So she was so sure but then my father wasn’t alive anymore. You know.

So but then it was- you know-it was tough all around. That’s why she went over because she wouldn’t stay there. She sad-

**Janet**: She was strict? Was she very strict?

**Roesser**: No, not strict in a way, little tricky let’s put it that way [laughter] I don’t know. Well, I left home when I was that young, so that’s was fine. It was good because my sister was all for it. Bring her over, bring her over.

**Janet**: Now were you in school up until the time you left Germany? Were you still in school?

**Roesser**: Oh yes oh yes and the sister over there we had the same sisters, she wanted me to stay and finish my school over there see because-but I was just as anxious to go.

**Janet**: Had you been corresponding with Julia who was in America when you were still in Germany?

**Roesser**: With Julia and Anna, yeah they were they were in Germany but in those days all you could do is send a letter not even email or anything like that. It took a long time.

**Janet**: Do you remember what you had heard about America before you came here? What did you expect?

**Roesser**: Oh yeah, I mean pretty well, you know pretty much. Because my sister came over and then she told me why don’t you come over too, and how it was and you don’t have to be beholding anymore too[laughter] and you are on your own man so to speak and of course, I liked it right away, I went and came over here.

**Janet**: Ok, well tell me about, leaving? Do you remember saying goodbye to your-

**Roesser**: Yes, that was hard. That was hard because in those days you figured you go just about for good you know. I remember I wouldn’t let my father come to the train station where I took off and I said nothing to him because it hurts too much for you and for me and what’s the good of it?

So I just came to the one that-in our town train station and then when I came to the bigger town my big brother went with me to-he came with me to Bremen where I had to do stuff, all kinds of things I even had my hair washed and stuff like that. When you came over they made sure [laughter] and I thick hair I guess they figured it might not you know.

**Janet**: And did they examine you medically as well?

**Roesser**: No, no, but they wanted to make sure that that’s done I guess but otherwise by the time I came to the town where the boat left then I was practically finished. And then my friend-I met my friend who is 10years older than I am, and she is still my friend only she is sick now, and all these years, all these years we are friends.

**Janet**: Now did she also go to America on the same boat?

**Roesser**: Yes, yes and all through the first time but of course she was that much older already she must have been about-

**Janet**: 24.

**Roesser**: Yeah, yeah.

**Janet**: Now what’s her name?

**Roesser**: Emma,

**Janet**: Emma. So you traveled, what was the name of the ship?

**Roesser**: Oh don tell me- I know it as well as my name- the Hannover, the Hannover. I landed on January 1st and that’s why we didn’t get-I should have been dismissed on the boat but they couldn’t because-well then they said I wasn’t 16 yet and I had to go to school until I was 16 and I have to go to Ellis island.

So I thought ok, I spend another evening on the boat and had a good time.

**Janet**: Well, what happened with Emma?

**Roesser**: Well, she is- she got married-

**Janet**: But I mean when you first landed?

**Roesser**: Well, her sister came.

**Janet**: And did your sisters come also?

**Roesser**: They come too. My both sisters came and my aunt but they couldn’t do anything about it. They said I had to stay and go to Ellis Island. And then we the tender we went to over to Ellis island the next morning.

**Janet**: Now were you traveling first or second class?

**Roesser**: Yes, I traveled. I mean I was in the right class. There was no first class in the little Hannover and the hang was tossed like. Oh it was and I don’t know. I seemed to enjoy the storm-If you can believe. One men he was an elderly man and I- we were the only ones at the table for about a week. Nobody would come because it was so bad and then we had to play with our plates so they would go along with it. It was very stormy. It took 16 days.

**Janet**: Do you remember anything else about the voyage?

**Roesser**: Oh yes, we had the voyage and it was great, I mean it was very nice and we enjoyed it.

**Janet**: Do you remember coming into that New York harbor?

**Roesser**: Oh yeah, and then the Statue of Liberty of course you know we had to see and all that. Yes it was quite exciting to say the least. And my aunt and my sister came to fetch me off the boat.

So they had to go home empty handed because they didn’t let me go and it was a Sunday and what not, all kinds of excuses they had I had to come. So that’s how I came to Ellis Island because I really had no idea.

**Janet**: What was your impression of Ellis Island?

**Roesser**: Oh it’s so much more beautiful and oh my God. What a difference, what a difference. That was when I was back. When I came off on the January 2nd 1923, I had been back in 70years. So I mean I was really surprised there was another floor higher and all that, oh yes I was amazed. I was surprised.

**Janet**: Do you remember what you thought that day in January 2nd in 1923 when you were in there, can you remember the impression of it at that time?

**Roesser**: Well, yes because this Emma and her sister we meet them too because she didn’t want to wait away like I did for a second class passage. So she says” I want to go now,” so she was third class and therefore she had to go to Ellis Island.

I couldn’t eat a thing. All that that stuff that was thrown on the table for the people to eat, it was noisy, there were lot of people, it was crowded dinner we had sandwiches so well anyway it was an experience. In those days.

**Janet**: So you and Emma were together on Ellis Island? Emma was on Ellis Island with you?

**Roesser**: No you see. We were not together. She was in her whatever category she was and we didn’t have to stay any night at all. You know. No, no they came to fetch us same day.

**Janet**: So what was the reunion like with your sisters and your aunt when they came for you?

**Roesser**: Oh well that was good. I had never seen my aunt before, but it was good and she lived on 133rd street on 8th Avenue. And the elevator pass ride oh boy! After that nice quiet home town, right by the window.

**Janet**: So that’s where you went? You went right to 133rd street on 8th?

**Roesser**: I went right there and then I went to school for about- well I guess I went till about I was 16 or something and then I went over to New Jersey. That’s where my sister was.

As a matter of fact she went to the convent and I took her place then. I went to this family and it was nice they had a couple of children but they were very nice.

**Janet**: Tell me what it was like for you learning English?

**Roesser**: Maybe you think it’s funny but I don’t really remember. I mean, it didn’t come naturally of course but I mean it was no big effort.

**Janet**: Do you remember what school was like those few years when you were living at your aunt’s place?

**Roesser**: Oh, it was just a few weeks. That’s all I was in school. I should have been till I was 16. But anyway and then I went over to New Jersey. I had a place there, my sister left and I took over.

**Janet**: So I see so you were only a few weeks in 133rd street?

**Roesser**: Yeah.

**Janet**: I see, and then you went and you were like a governess or something you were taking care of children-

**Roesser**: Later on yes, I did that. Then I landed on Park Avenue.

**Janet**: What we’re doing then?

**Roesser**: Like governess, not really more like-well what do they do?

**Janet**: What were your duties? What did you have to do?

**Roesser**: Well, I took care of a little boy and I went to friends with them, he was only two years old then and he was very, oh he was smart he was a cute child. Then later on they had a little girl, so I took her over. So that’s what I was then. You know I was children's nurse.

**Janet**: And how long did you keep doing that?

**Roesser**: Oh well until I got married.

**Janet**: And how did you meet your husband?

**Roesser**: Oh well he was German too and he came to a family that was related to me and he used to call me every once in a while and that’s where I met him. You know how things go.

**Janet**: Did you like him? Right away when you first met him?

**Roesser**: Oh yes, oh God yes. He died. Yeah.

**Janet**: What was your husband’s name?

**Roesser**: Carl C-A-R-L and he came over after I did. Later.

**Janet**: I don’t think we mentioned your maiden name before, what was your maiden name?

**Roesser**: Kampf K-A-M-P-F and it had- yeah kampf. Because there are lots of them with kampf with E. I always protested when somebody accused me of that.

**Janet**: So then you were married and where did you live?

**Roesser**: We lived in Astoria. You know Astoria Lehigh and I remember my husband went and got- got married in September. Because the place too because where I worked the people wanted to go to Europe and they didn’t want to have a new person with the babies so I stayed. And my husband stayed there too went to work from there and they liked him very much. My husband was a tailor, a very good tailor. He used to make some very nice garments.

**Janet**: And how many children did you have?

**Roesser**: Just two girls

**Janet**: And their names?

**Roesser**: The older one is Ellen, she was with me in Ellis Island, and the other one is Margret.

**Janet**: When you think about coming to this country, and sort of starting over again, what difference do you think it made to you in your life that you had immigrated to another place?

**Roesser**: Big difference, oh yes.

**Janet**: In what ways? In what ways?

**Roesser**: Well, everything is bigger here and better and especially shortly after the war and then the inflation and everything. Oh when I went away it was bad over there. And oh big difference.

**Janet**: Would you describe anything about the First World War that had an effect on you?

**Roesser**: Well, except that the food was not so good you know and then every once in a while a neighbor would fall in war and stuff like that and a certain church bell rang. It was tough. It was tough.

And lot of them were gone you know, the people. And we had prisoners of war. We had French, French prisoners of war in our town, they helped our neighbors, some of them were farmers and they saw a little girl they used to take him on their laps you know, because after all they were fathers too.

Sometimes when they were sick I don’t know just how sick they were, but then the farmer that had them, you know, they used to mostly go to the farmers and help in the field and so I used to bring up food to where they were, you know they were in some sort of camp or whatever.

So they sent wonderful food up there and oh they liked it and they like us, and we were little girls you know, yeah.

**Janet**: How was it that you happen to bring the food to the prisoners of war?

**Roesser**: Because I was a neighbor of the farmer, so I was chosen to bring it up [Laughter].

**Janet**: I see. Uhuh.

**Roesser**: At first we were little timid. I always used to picture an enemy entirely different than what they were. They loved the little girls and oh I have one home, and then they started to talk German and we started talking a little French and they were right among the neighbors.

It was all very friendly until when the end was declared and they matched through town. Well, we all were glad when it’s finished. Yeah, it was long one.

**Janet**: Do you think there any customs that you still carry out? Customs that are German even though you have been in this country now over 70years?

**Roesser**: Oh yeah, I still cook German food [laughter] and every once in a while then we have real German feast. Lately, something happened to me-I don’t know, but, getting old I guess.

**Janet**: Let’s see you’re 87 you are going to be 88 in January?

**Roesser**: I will be 88 in January, so I mean that’s not young anymore. But I could, I've walked. I just was a worker. Everybody knew me as a walker now I can hardly work I have to be careful that I don’t fall. I am not very steady in my feet anymore and I don’t know what to do with it.

**Janet**: What do you feel most grateful for in your life?

**Roesser**: Jeez, I don’t know.

**Janet**: How about proud? What makes you feel proud that you have done in your life?

**Roesser**: Well, I always put myself through whatever you know mean. I started young and I learned an awful lot. It was very good. Gosh, off head I don’t know.

**Janet**: Is there anything that you would say about this country having lived most of your life in it?

**Roesser**: Well I love it. It was good to me. I achieved I must say and so it was very good that’s all I can say.

**Janet**: Ok, is there anything else you would like to say before we close?

**Roesser**: Well, I [inaudible 00:56:52].

**Janet**: And you must have seen a lot of changes in your life time?

**Roesser**: Oh yes, then you know and moving around, because first I was in Jersey, then was in New York then I was you know. But then I liked it in New York.

I had a very good position where I was where I was working and very well respected, then I went to France that time with the family and I was in Paris with the go card and when they saw us at least they opened go card [laughter].

That’s the funny thing though. I remember there is a very wide avenue if you know that, so anyway so one time I stood there and I thought how, why didn’t I cross by the [unclear 00:57:52] why didn’t I cross I can’t cross you know there was the cars and hoot, hoot, do they still do?

Well anyway, all of sudden the cop comes over throws her officers cap you know and made room they all had to stop[laughter] I felt very important. It was really funny. So I mean I got around.

**Janet**: Well, I want to thank you very much, it been most interesting, thank you so much for all your stories. And this tape will now be part of the Ellis Island Oral History collection. So everyone can hear it.

**Roesser**: Oh yeah and probably cut a little bit.

**Janet**: Well no we will put it in just like it is. And it will be just fine and whoever is researching whatever they are researching, they could take the parts they want.

**Roesser**: Oh yeah.

**Janet**: Okay, this is Janet Levine for the national park service. I have been speaking with Elizabeth Kampf Roesser. Who came from Germany 1920- well arrived 1923 at the age of 14.

We are here in Manchester New Hampshire, where Mrs. Roesser lives at this time and this is November 22nd 1994. Mrs. Roesser is 87 going on 88 in January and this is Janet Levine signing off. Thank you.

**Roesser**: Ok thank you very much.