

Transcription: Grand Canyon Historical Society

Interviewee: Franz Rotter (FR) Part 1 of two part interview
Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM)
Subject: Growing up and working for Fred Harvey
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TM: Today is January 13. It's 2012.

FR: Bad Friday. Friday the 13th.

TM: Friday the 13th, that's right. This is an oral interview with Franz Rotter and we are at the Canyon Plaza Resort in Tusayan, Arizona, in Franz's office. There's a couple of dogs here walking around and they'll bark on occasion. We might hear them. My name's Tom Martin. The first thing that I wanted to do was start with asking you Franz what year were you born?

FR: I was born on May 27, 1931.

TM: And where were you born?

FR: In Schonenberg, Germany.

TM: Where's that in Germany?

FR: Schonenberg, that's in Bavaria, southern Bavaria. It was a county, more or less. It's Schwaben, Schwabenland and Beim.

TM: What did your parents do?

FR: My parents were farmers.

TM: What were their names?

FR: Their names were Antonia and Josef Rotter. We were a family of eight kids. The farm was some kind of mediocre size and was still kind of old, old-time farming with cows, and oxens, and horses.

TM: Mostly dairy farming?

FR: It was kind of mixed farming. Dairy, potatoes, wheat, and so on. The farm actually had to come up with all the food for the family. There was very little expenses besides salt, sugar, and vinegar. I think there was very little bought in the store. The farm supported the whole family with chicken, pigs, everything else. Then we eat them, the rye, and oats, and potatoes. Then, naturally, hay for the cows and so on.

TM: Was it a rural farm? The town, the nearest town that was, or were you in a town there?

FR: No, it was all farming communities all the way around us. The next nearest town would have been Kreis Günzburg, which is county seat of Günzburg. The next bigger town would have been Ulm or Augsburg, which was about maybe 30 miles south or north there of our place.

TM: How big was that town?

FR: Augsburg is probably about 3- or 4-hundred thousand. So, 2- or 3-hundred thousand.

TM: Big.

FR: Yea, that's kind of average small-town Germany.

TM: How did your mother meet your father? How did your father meet your mother?

FR: My mother was working as a young girl taking care of children at a farm in Germany. Her aunt's husband was the biggest farmer and had a guest house and restaurant in the village. She was the... Her aunt and her uncle owned it. Then my father came back from World War I in 1918. Then I guess they met in Schonenberg and got married about 1924.

TM: Nice. What do you remember about growing up on the farm?

FR: Oh, farm life. Thinking back, it was a pretty brutal life really. Very down to earth. Very little luxuries compared to nowadays. There was no heat in the rooms. Barely, barely light at that time. Then before I knew what would happen, World War II started and then everything changed. I was about 7 or 8 years old at the start of the war. By the end I was 14 years. I went to school all through the war years. 1945, I came out of school. I was finished with grade school. That was about the end of education for quite a few years in Germany.

TM: You mentioned that there was no heat in the house. Was it a two-story house?

FR: A two-story house, yea.

TM: Housed dairy cows down below?

FR: Yea, uh huh.

TM: So, Franz is now looking in his drawer.

FR: I had the dumb thing yesterday.

TM: There's a photograph. This is a picture of a actual two-story house with what looks like a fairly large attic would be a third story.

FR: It had four bedrooms. No, six bedrooms.

TM: And this...

FR: This is the living room, and this is a bedroom, and this is a bedroom, and then it goes back far. And there, around here, is a stable. The stable goes all the way down here.

TM: Living room downstairs.

FR: A living room, a living kitchen.

TM: Kitchen downstairs and then the bedrooms upstairs?

FR: Yea.

TM: And, this was a third...

FR: Attic.

TM: An attic. Was there a bedroom up there as well?

FR: No, it was a big attic. That's where we stored the grain. In wintertime.

TM: And the building attached to the barn in the back here?

FR: Yea. That was whatever. A big building without coming all the way over here. That was the pig sty and the chicken thing, whatever you want to call it.

TM: Ok, thank you. Nice shot. Again, this is the farm. The name of the farm?

FR: No. We used to have a name – Rotter. But they never called me Rotter Franz. They called me Holzwart Franz. A lot of those old-time farms had special names that went back to what the people used to do. Holzwart means 'the warden of the woods, the forests.'

TM: Was your father one of the forest wardens?

FR: Like a Schmied or Schreiner, that used to be carpenter would be carpenter. And the black would be the black layer, and the Mouter, and the Schreiner, and so on.

TM: Was there forest nearby that he would go around?

FR: Forests all the way around.

TM: And water. Where did you get your water from?

FR: We had our own well. We were the only one in the village with running water. Everybody else was pumping.

TM: And then the war came. How did the war affect you?

FR: Oh, I don't...

TM: You would have been what 10, 7, 8, 9?

FR: Yea, it started already I remember in 1938 when the Germans marched into Austria. There was what they called a mobilmaho. I didn't even know what the word mobilmaho mean. It means 'mobilization.' I knew it was something unusual. War planes flying over and people going in the army and so on. It was kind of brand new to me. I just must wonder what my parents thought about it. When the war mongering went on already. It was only 20 years from the First World War.

TM: Which your dad was in.

FR: My father was in there. He was 20 years old when the war started. He was in there for the full four years.

TM: What did he do?

FR: I have no idea. It was never discussed.

TM: Really?

FR: Just a general army. He was in a special division. It happened to be that Adolf was in the same division and only a few companies away from my father. But, they didn't know each other. They had, later on, a meeting. Kind of a get together.

TM: Did your father and mother ever speak about the Second World War?

FR: Never. They never mentioned it. I, a lot of times, I think about, my wife and myself. We still refer to World War II a lot about with all the things happening and this and this and so it always comes up. I never once heard my father talk about the First World War or what happened out there in the trenches and so on. Never, it never came up. And my mother, the same thing. Never. There was a lot with my mother in the kitchen, talk, and talk, and talk, but it never came up. I don't remember ever, ever hearing anything about them talk about World War I.

TM: Or World War II, either war?

FR: Yea.

TM: Did they talk about the Second World War?

FR: The Second World War we went all together through. It was a daily.

TM: It was there.

FR: Yea, a daily happening you know.

TM: How did that impact the farm and what you were doing there?

FR: We were the kings. We had everything. Then after the war, we were there again. We had everything because we had the food and the food was gold. I mean gold, you couldn't eat gold, you couldn't eat money. But you can eat potatoes and we were rich of that stuff. Back in 1945, when the Yanks marched in that was a prime time. April in the springtime when everything grew, everything got out moving. We had food coming out our ears. Nobody wanted our milk anymore. There was no transportation. We used to make it and feed it to the pigs and then there's that starvation in the cities. The Yankees broke down our entire transportation system. I missed getting out around that country, let's just face it. And Germany was run by one of those generals. They are just no dam... they don't know what they are doing. It was such a shame that Germany took it in their own hands and say, "This is it. This is what we are going to do." "Take it or leave it" you know. I even remember those guys over there, when they were over there.

TM: What do you remember about those guys?

FR: One of them was Patton and he changed a lot of things around. He was about the only one around. He got in trouble because how he was, talking, talking, talking. When he said he considered the Nazi Party no different than the Democrats or the Republicans, that got him a little bit in trouble. He said, "This is not the way to run a railroad." So all former party members at that time, they were out. No more jobs. How in the hell do you run a guy who run a railroad for 20, 30 years and all at once say there's no more there anymore? Because everybody, pretty much, belonged to the party. It was just a matter of go with it and you are ready, you quit.

TM: So, for a year or so, I'm thinking after the war in '45.

FR: It was a whole of a year. I mean, nothing, nothing was available. You could get anything and everything because people from the cities came out to you. You could buy anything with butter, eggs, or potatoes, or fruits, or grain, or flour. Everything had a price. One pound of butter. I got an old bike for about three pounds of butter. So, no, you couldn't get one but somebody came out and had a bike, here it is. The people, they brought silver or they brought jewelry and anything. It's a barter thing, exchanging for food because people were starving, people were hungry.

TM: So you guys had the farm and that was very helpful.

FR: Oh yea. We had all the food and all the things and so we were kind of rich. I never ate so good than right after the war. And all at once nobody wanted our pigs anymore. Before, under the Nazi time, everything was regulated. This was it. They knew exactly how many pigs you had in the stable. Don't worry. And nobody cheated because you went in the scrimper. You had six pigs? Ok, four are gonna go this way. It's automatic. Everybody followed the rules and the regulations. The same with milk. We produced milk and everything went out. Even if it was worthless, the money you got. The same with eggs. And then all at once there was no more transportation. Nobody picked up nothing. The milk was going bad, what are you going to do with milk? How much cheese can you eat? We had quite a few cows. We had a lot of milk.

TM: How many cows were you running?

FR: About 12, 14, something. Milk cows.

TM: That's a lot.

FR: Fifty years back it was a nice size farm. Maybe, 50, 20 hectares or something. We were a nice sized farm there. Oh yea.

TM: Were you wearing lederhosen?

FR: Oh yea, sure.

TM: I got a picture of Franz Rotter wearing lederhosen.

FR: Yea. Every year for Christmas we got a new lederhosen. Sunday morning church, you had a new one. Everyday school, you had the old one. Every year, you changed. Sunday: new, weekdays: old. Yea, let me show you, somebody made a book...

TM: Franz is reaching for a book now.

FR: Schonenberg. If I find it.

TM: The title of the book, Franz, is?

FR: This used to be the schoolhouse.

TM: There's rows of benches here. And there's the teacher's bench in the front. Is this in a town near yours or was this your town?

FR: It's all the way around us.

TM: Ok.

FR: Oh, that's old. Where is Schonenberg? There is even my family in there. But, Yeting. Yeting is the biggest little town next to us. Schonenberg! Here is Schonenberg, see?

TM: Schonenberg was the town next to your farm?

FR: That's where I come from.

TM: Ok

FR: Yea, this is the Rotter. That's the house.

TM: This is the same house that's in this picture, here?

FR: Yea.

TM: Ok. And, who are these people?

FR: I don't know. That must be my father. This is my Großvater. He died before I...

TM: What was his name?

FR: Oh, I don't know. Rotter.

TM: Ok. Your grandfather?

FR: Grandfather.

TM: Would that be your grandmother here?

FR: And, he had other kids.

TM: This is page 241 of this book.

FR: Let me see who their kids are. I don't know who this is. Maybe, it could be me. Right up here.

TM: Small child there.

FR: He died the same year when I was there.

TM: The same year you were born?

FR: No. Let me see. Schonenberg. This is a family here out there, see? That's my father, that's my mother, that's the grandpa. There's the four. That must have been around, I was born, I was probably two years old. Because those are my four elder brothers and sisters.

TM: What kind of tool is this guy holding?

FR: That's a hoe or whatever.

TM: For the wheat, for harvesting?

FR: That's how they harvest, see? At that time, that's harvesting.

TM: All by hand. And they're piling it all up on a wagon?

FR: Yea.

TM: There's two horses drawing the wagon.

FR: Schonenberg. This is communion. This is, I don't know what the hell this is. That's the priest. I had him all my years.

TM: What's his name?

FR: Alger, I think. This is, I don't know. This is Schonenberg again. This goes up the road, goes right up here. This is our things right in here. All this lands here, all this belongs to the farm. And then it goes here and all down here. That all belongs to the farm.

TM: The farm and the house were in a small village and then the farmland was all around the village?

FR: Yea, all around the village, but spread. That was maybe one-fifth of the land we owned to the farm. There was two acres over here, two acres, one acre over there, three acres over here.

TM: Spread out?

FR: Yea. And that's Schloskligenburg. There was a little thing there. A baron there. That was the main road going through the middle of town.

TM: This is a pretty fancy house in here.

FR: That's a castle, kind of like. Von, Blue Velvet, Von... What the hell was his name? Von Bonnet.

TM: This would have been the local land baron?

FR: The baron, what they call Baron, yea. Baron von In fact Stoutenburg was from Stoutenburg And Yetingen, he came from Yetingen. And this is all of the church when you look at Schonenberg this ways.

TM: Did the church have a bell that went off every...

FR: Oh, God, yea three.

TM: 15 minutes?

FR: No, no.

TM: Would it do the time?

FR: Oh yea. But, the church tower, all the bells were removed during the war. So, we only had one. One single little bell up there.

TM: Would they ring it still every 15 minutes?

FR: No, when the church go. 15 minutes before church and 10 minutes before church and then church.

TM: They weren't running it 24 hours a day to mark the clock passage?

FR: No, no, but you couldn't hear it because all the stuff was turned in. They had old type. Had to go back to how it used to be 50 years before. It was not the same. And then, after the war, we got the church bells back, about three. We had three of them on the tower. Everybody else, all the way around, every little village had the same thing.

TM: Yes.

FR: This is where my mother was here all during the war in 19... see here? so and so, a name on there. They had a big thing down there. This, I don't know. This is Wiegenburg. That must be just a drawing. That's where Schonenberg starts. Schonenberg... On November the 6th was St. Leonhard's Day. St.

Leonhard was our thing in the church thing. Then there was the thing for all the animals and so on. It was a little church. The altar and the church entrance. They fixed it up and it looks quite different now. That must be an old, old picture. That was a nice little church. That's on November. Herr... He died in November, 1965. That guy. He wasn't my buddy. I didn't get along with him. I'm the only one who told him off.

TM: What did he do when you told him off?

FR: Nothing. He couldn't do nothing. It was wartime, remember? You better shut up. That's my grandfather, mother.

TM: What do you remember about your grandfather?

FR: I don't know very much. He died in about 1940 and he was only visiting with us. He was living somewhere else, about 150 miles away.

TM: Where?

FR: In Weilheim. He was a very well to do man and he married a very well to do woman.

TM: Your grandfather?

FR: Yea. At that time, he had a big guest house and brewery, and everything in Tillingham. The woman he married, she came from out, the big business. She brought gold marks. They were very well to do. And then at that time after the ice house was eliminated, he wanted to modernize the ice house. Which I used to use regular ice for the beer.

TM: Cut up from the rivers and lakes?

FR: Yea. And then he went to a modern cooling system. And that kind of killed him. For some odd reason, he did something wrong in our own factory. So he lost everything. I don't even know where the hell this is. I don't remember the field. This is all wooded area, wherever you look. See here.

TM: Trees up on the hilltops.

FR: All wooded area. I know what this was. This was a very small field, but we had big, big acreage right down here. I don't know what this is.

TM: You had some horses to help with the plowing?

FR: Yea.

TM: But, a lot of handwork, mostly handwork.

FR: See the window things? The old type. And, this, I don't know what this is. That's Berlin and Kaiser. Another Kaiser. That's another name, Kaiser. He was the cheesemaker. All the makers at that time went to there. He made cheese and took the cream off and sent it out to make butter. There's a neighborhood somewhere you know, and so they called him the Kaiser.

TM: Were you mostly bartering, then? You would deliver the milk and then you'd get some cheese and butter back? Would that be how?

FR: No, money. You went there and got a piece of cheese or a pound of butter and then it was taken off your bill. Now you got your milk and you put your milk every day. Then, at the end of the month, they got the money less the butter you bought during the month, less the cheese you bought during the month. Had good cheese. That's the school. On that bench, all those guys, you can all say they're all dead. All died in World War II. All. You just look at them and I can see the faces just resemble quite a few of them. By God, when I look at them, I can't believe it. They were all gone. Maybe 2, 3, 4, 5 of them came back, but the majority of them died. At that time, a small village. At that time we were only 300 people in the village. And then the evacuees from the cities which got bombarded. They came out every day, 10, 15 people, so we were just loaded with people. I remember, in school, from 60 kids, we went to 90 kids. This is Mount Kaiser.

I remember quite a few of those guys. Very few of them came back.

And, that one's a teacher, see? I think pretty much the whole school around. That was way before me. I don't even know if one of my brothers is still there.

TM: This is a picture of him?

FR: Yea, yea.

TM: A bunch of children and a school teacher.

FR: That's one of my brothers. We look quite alike at that age.

TM: What's his name?

FR: Hans. He died already. He was 16 years when he was drafted, in 1945 in February. Would you believe this? And, guess what, he came back in 1951. He got caught up with the Russians, and he came to prison camp, and came back about 1951. He was done for the rest of his life. Just finished. He was a good, good kid. This is Hans. Where's Sepp. There's Georg. There's another of my brothers. Where is Sepp? Sepp must be up a little farther.

TM: What year is this picture?

FR: That picture was 1936.

TM: You were born which year?

FR: '31. So, I wasn't there. '36, that's right, because Georg, the younger brother, he was born '29. So he was 6, 7 years old. My oldest brother, I don't see in there. I don't know where the hell he is. Probably at home working. They worked him to death, the poor guy.

Frau Han. Mr. Eiger and Frau Han. I recognize Eiger. See how many more people? That's 1948.

TM: Are you in that picture?

FR: No.

TM: Because, by that time, you would have been 17?

FR: I was gone already.

TM: When did you leave?

FR: I left in April of '45, right before the Yankees moved and came in. We had school almost to the last day. Oh, they were organized.

TM: Where did you go in April, '45?

FR: Me, I was home that summer. I worked on the farm. Farming wasn't for me. So I thought, "I'm gonna go out to get an education." So Eric told them I should go to higher education, but there was nothing available. We were about 6 miles away from the train station and the next city would have been 20, 30 miles. At that time those trains go. It would have taken me 2 hours to get to school every day. And the school wasn't even opened, everything was closed, 1946. I thought, "I'm gonna go because farm life is not me." I looked for a job and I got a job in a bakery as apprentice. I learned bakery.

TM: Where?

FR: In Gunzburg. It was the town which was our county town. You can say the county of Gunzburg.

TM: Not too far away from home?

FR: On the bike, about 15 miles. It took me about an hour because always had to go up. It's not a straight road where you can go. You go up the hill, you go down the hill. You push the bike, you book. And then you have freeze roads. Can you imagine when it rains? There was nothing available anymore. Nobody took care of roads. That was a sorry time, I tell you.

TM: When you were working for the bakery, where did you stay then?

FR: At the bakery. They fed you and housed you and gave you five marks, five mark a week. Know what that was worth? One cigarette. Five marks. So I worked 6 days a week for one cigarette at that time.

TM: How many hours a day?

FR: About 10, 12. And, I mean, work. Getting up every day at 3:30 in the morning.

TM: Were the ovens wood fired?

FR: Oh, yea, coal.

TM: Coal?

FR: Oh, yea. Oh, yea.

TM: Yep, shoveling it in.

FR: And, then it was after three years.

TM: Three years in the bakery?

FR: Yea. I said, "Never again." On December 31st, 1948, my thing came to an end and I told them also, "Adios." He couldn't believe it that I would leave. He said, "Where are you going? Where are you going?" He said, "Money." At that time, they paid me good. Then we had the good money already. In '48 they paid me good money.

TM: How much? What were they paying you by then?

FR: Oh, about, maybe, 30 bucks a week. At that time, it was a lot with free. You could buy a bike for \$60, \$70 bucks. So it wasn't bad. I was actually the master baker at that time, for about a year, because he's a master himself. He was in some kind of jail. After the war, they rounded them all up. He must have been a high thing in the party and had a lot of foreign workers in the bakery doing the work. He put up a big bakery, was a big bakery. I think he must have paid for the army or some conflict baking. So, I run the bakery with maybe 2 other apprentices for at least a year.

TM: So, you said goodbye to him. Then what?

FR: Then I went to my aunt. She had a café. What they call a café with a pastry shop. I learned a lot about pastry. We had some pastry cooks there.

TM: Where?

FR: In the bakery.

TM: Where was the pastry shop?

FR: My aunt was up in the Alps in Shreirsley, but we say Shreirsing. I visited there and she said, "Why don't you stay here and you can do the baking and so and so." And, at that time, it changed already. Everything was available, you know. Eggs, butter, you name it. No more rationing was in '49, '50 you know.

TM: This your father's or mother's sister? Your aunt?

FR: My mother's sister.

TM: What was her name?

FR: Kati. She was a very, very nice lady. Her husband never came home in World War II, so she runs the show. Had took over a cafe, organized on the bierstube. They had the special beer sold there. It was a nice little family business.

TM: In the mountains?

FR: Yes, in the mountains, in the Alps. I liked it there very much. About then, as a young guy, you have to move on. So another buddy of mine, named Hausen, he came by and said, "Oh, you know, where are you working?" I said, "In." He said, "Oh Badrietse. Ok. You want a job? They're looking for an apprentice over there or a helper in the pastry shop as a patissier." I said, "Oh, that would be good." It was about the May of 1950. About that time, I told my aunt, "I think I have to leave, I have to go." "Oh! I'm gonna miss you," and all this shit. But I went there and that guy really took a liking to me, the owner.

TM: Now where was this again?

FR: It was in Patuisier... Patuisier... It's in the Alps, too. Patuisier.

TM: Franz has gotten another photograph album.

FR: This is... And this is his cafe, right here.

TM: After going from your aunt's, you went to this cafe?

FR: No, that's my aunt's cafe.

TM: That was your aunt's. Looks like three or four story building. Right at the foothills of the Alps? I mean, the mountains are just going up right there.

FR: Yea, that's all the lakes and the mountains. It's really a beautiful, beautiful area. I had a lot of other pictures there, but I don't know what the hell...

TM: So this is 19...

FR: I went over there and there was a hotel Segarten in Patuisier. Then the thing came to end. The season there, it was a seasonal place. Then I went a short time as a pastry cook in Augsburg, just for the winter a few months. Then I went back to Patuisier two more seasons.

TM: For the summer?

FR: Yea, for the summer. And the winter, I went to northern Germany. Once to Krefeld, next to Bochum.

TM: What were you doing there?

FR: Cooking. They actually hired me as patissier, as pastry cook and then I was doing cooking.

TM: In the winter?

FR: I picked a lot of cooking up in other hotels. So it was nothing new to me. That was always interesting, cooking.

TM: So, in the winter, this was working at different hotels?

FR: Yea. Then I was in Bochum. It was a private club. They were all the riches from the..., where all the industry is in Germany. Essen, Dortmund, Bochum, and all those cities. Dusseldorf, all together, right around.

TM: In the north?

FR: In northern Germany, on the Rhine. All the richies came in. Four, five people for lunch. They made their own menu, special menu. 10 people, special menu, 15 people, special menu. Had their parties there. Had their own wine cellar there, their own wine master. The people drove up in their limousines and picked up wine for those guys and just went down. Beautiful building! I don't know how the hell it survived World War II because Bochum was bombarded. Heavy, you know, oh geez. Dortmund and Essen, oh God, there was nothing left. That's where the group factories, all the..., and all the coal, and all the steel, and things in Bavaria there. From there, I had the notion, I don't know what the hell made me do it, to go to Switzerland. I went to Switzerland. I went to Basel as a cook. I was a good cook right away, even though I never really had apprenticeship. But I picked it up enough. Wherever you go, you learn.

TM: By this time, were you not just cooking pastry, but starting to cook meals, dinners, breakfasts, lunches?

FR: Everything, yea, yea.

TM: Ok

FR: Pastry cook, patissier means a hotel pastry. You make the pastry and you made all the desserts. Everyday special desserts. You know those old hotels, a full menu today, complete, made appetizer and dessert. You had to have a special dessert everyday down the line. From Basel I went to Interlaken. The same owner who had the restaurant in Basel had a hotel in Interlaken, in the mountains there in Switzerland. Beautiful, beautiful place. That's where I met my wife, in Interlaken. I did the summer season there and then the chef went for the winter season to St. Moritz and he said, "You're gonna come with me." I said, "Oh..."

TM: What year was that? That you met Hannah?

FR: 1954.

TM: How did you guys meet?

FR: She worked across the street. I was here and she worked over there. When I looked out the window, I was back there cutting meat or something, doing whatever, I looked over there, there she was with a broom or doing something. She was traveling with a rich lady. They were in the jewelry business, international jewelry business. They had rich, rich customers coming to Lugano. That's where their main thing was, in Lugano, in Switzerland. They went to Interlochen in summer, Davos in the wintertime. Davos was a skiing resort. They had their stores there and so on in Interlochen. She traveled with the madam, with the big, you know. Then, one day we met and it was the beginning. Days off, spent together. Go out in the evening together.

From Interlochen I went to St. Moritz because I liked it. Skiing and everything. I was a skier, and that's beautiful. At that time, the foreigners had to go home, most of them in Switzerland. If there was a job

available, you go out, as long as you had a job. They had to lie about me to go to St. Moritz. Every Swiss cook wanted to work in St. Moritz, so there were no jobs available in St. Moritz. You had to cheat a little bit. They put something different down for me to go with him than what they really did. Otherwise I would go back to Germany.

TM: Where was Hannah?

FR: She went back to Lugano after the season. In between, I forgot this, in between September and December's winter season, I went to hotel management school in Lucerne. It was intensive for three months there.

TM: Did you like that?

FR: I liked it very much. It was good. Out of the kitchen, doing something different. Learning again, use your brain a little bit. That was good. I thought at first, "You're not gonna make it." But I did really, really well. I was good at learning and I was surprised at myself. I was two or third best in the thing you get out of the class. There were high flying people that did nothing all their life. They went to school, from the richies, those hotel owners. It was a very prestiged school in Switzerland. They came from all over the world, those guys.

Oh, yea. I beat them, a hundred percent. From Switzerland, from St. Moritz, we had a New Year's Eve gala. The chef invited another chef to help out, who used to be his buddy. He was in retirement already and he was staying in the same room with me at the Hotel Steffani in St. Moritz. We had a hotel paper and he read the hotel paper. He read an ad on there and he said, "Oh, look at this! The Drake Hotel in Chicago is looking for people." "Oh my," he said, "Franzi, the Drake Hotel is the best hotel in Chicago! Oh, if you could get a job at the Drake Hotel!" He used to work in the United States. But, he went in retirement and went back home to Switzerland again. So he knew all about America. At that time you always wanted to work for a hotel with a good name. Restaurants, good names which were well known because it's very good for you later on. They gave you all kinds of certificates, too. So he said, "Oh, I don't know. They're looking for everything." I said, "Let me write them a letter." I wrote the letter. I got all my papers together, put it in the envelope and send it off. And, I forgot, kind of. I said, "You're not gonna make it to America." I didn't even think about it.

There comes the envelope back and we always send out the papers looking for new job. When the envelope came back thick, you knew they sent your papers back, no job. When the envelope comes back thin, they kept the papers, so you had a job. Then I got a job from Mr. Watson in the Drake Hotel, director of so-and-so, personnel director. Said, 'You can consider this letter as a contract. Call to the next consulate, get a visa, and as soon as you're ready, any time, we offer you a job for so and so, this, this, this.' I said, "Oh my God." I was like, "Oh my God. America." The cooks and all the waiters have their own little restaurant or bar in the evening after work, so I kind of spread the word that I had an offer in America. "Chicago? Where, where, where?" There were a bunch of them already had a restaurant from the Drake Hotel in Chicago and they said "Oh, I'm gonna write them, too." We went, about 4, 5 of us from St. Moritz came to Chicago. I stayed in St. Moritz the summer season, after the winter was over. This particular hotel had a good summer season, too. I stayed the other summer season because of the papers. In September 1955, I went on a boat. And we even had an offer at the same boat that came over to America to cook there. Holland-America Line, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, New York, Rotterdam, New York. A cruise through Mediterranean. You had to, you stayed with the company, I think, its two years or something like this, or a year, I've forgotten it. I had a lot of offers at that time. All at once I could have

gone to Istanbul, I could have gone to Sao Paulo, I could have gone to Stockholm, and on the Holland-America Line at the same time. Because I got to know the chefs and they were chefs with international hotels like in Istanbul. I worked with a chef a short while in Basel and he worked for the Hilton in Istanbul and he said, "You're gonna come with me." I said, "Ok."

TM: But, you didn't.

FR: No. I choose America.

TM: So, where was Hannah at this time?

FR: She was in Interlochen. No, she was in Lugano because this was her home. They had a castle down there, big one up on the mountain there. Big castle, big property. They were rich.

TM: So you guys were still trying to visit when you could, when you had time?

FR: I went from Interlochen to Lucerne, so she visited Lucerne. Then I went from Lucerne to St. Moritz. She came to St. Moritz once. When I left, in August/September of 1955 and made my tour, I said goodbye. I went to, she was in Lugano, I said goodbye. There was nothing specific about it or serious. I had some other girlfriends besides this. I went back to Basel, said goodbye to that girlfriend there. And then I came over here. Holland-America, yep.

TM: What was the boat journey like?

FR: Boat? Oh God. When I think, when I came over, I was down there coming over. I mean, that boat went like this where I was. There were bunk beds in there. A good old time. It was kind of like the army when I went with the army across the ocean, about the same thing. Later on, when I went on trips, on those cruises, that was quite different. I was up there.

TM: Did you come through Ellis Island? Where did you come in?

FR: No, no. That was closed at that time. I think they closed it a few years before I came over. End of war, about, early '50s, they closed that island down. I came in down at the port in New York. The trip was beautiful. We went through a hurricane, it was gorgeous. Ay-ay-ay-ay-ay. Oh my God, you won't believe it. When I came in to Rotterdam and saw the ship first, I never saw a ship in my life. I look and say, "Holy Moses!" I mean, that was ten story high. You went up and by the time you got over there, oh, oh! And then, out there in the ocean, it was nothing! It was just like this. One time we were [sound effects]. The goddamned thing went out of the water! You couldn't stay down there, it'd knock you right out of bed. When the, what do you call it, ship sink and went out of water, man! [sound effects] So, I was sitting up on deck. But, it's nice to see all the storm. Then I came to the Drake Hotel. Came to New York harbor, took the train to Chicago, then it was a Sunday night in Chicago. About 6:00, 8:00 o'clock, I came to Chicago. Then somebody, "Oh! I drive right by there, I'll take you with me and I'll drop you off at the Drake!" So, I went to the Drake and I walk in. The front office, there were a lot of Europeans there and they, "Oh my God, there's a newcomer." They didn't want anything to do with this. You know, I might need help. Nobody spoke German. So, I went. They directed me in the kitchen. Nobody spoke German. And, I be goddamned. I don't know how in the hell I ended up in the YMCA. There is a YMCA around, somebody told me. I didn't know what it means, 'YMCA.' Neighborhood, and this and that. Somebody must have spoke German to me because I spoke very little English. So I ended up at YMCA. Next I go

back to hotels saying, "Mr. Watson." Then in the kitchen. Then everything went fine. I went from station, to station, to station. In a month or two months, at the highest station in the kitchen.

Then came the thing you had to sign up for. I forgot what they called that service, to go to the armed services. Yea, whatever. So, the six months are up. There was a Swiss guy with me, living with me in Chicago and he said, "Yea, I'm going there, too." I said, "Oh, yea. You speak English." He was working in England before. "I'm gonna go with you and we'll sign up." We walked in there and we did all the paperwork. Ok, fine. Then I was called in for tests or whatever the hell you call it. They said, "Ok, fine. We will notify you what's happening." I said, "Sure." Then I got out of their office and someone right away, "What's your Army status?" They wanted to know 'cause a lot of them got, they hire people and then they had to go in the Army. I said, "My Army status? I have no idea." So I went down there with the same guy again. We went down there and I'd be goddamned, the girl came up and said, "April 27." I say, "What is she talking about? April 27?" He started to laugh. I thought, "What the hell is wrong with this dumb ass." He said "That means "You're inducted in the Army." I said, "Holy Moses! What the hell am I doing in the Army?" At that time, the law was-- you either go in the army or you get your ass out of here. You can stay one year or whatever and out. And, don't ever come back. Somehow, I was kind of impressed with America and what. I don't know what did it, I don't know. I said, "Well, I better just keep it. They'll probably send me home anyway. I don't speak English and so they'd probably throw me out anyway." It was hard. First time I'd ever been here, with very little English. Oh, God. When they'd call my name, "Hoodadooda Roggarooda Ragaroo." Is that my name over there? What happened? So, I just went in there in Chicago. Dumb as I was I went all dressed up to go in the Army. They said sowe will see you at Union Station , called you here so-and-so on April 27, or whatever it was, and all the civilians would go. I'd be all dressed up and what the hell? You go. The rest of them had blue jeans on and t-shirts, and that was it. Because they all knew that when you get in the Army they throw it out. And I come on in a suit. Dumb old immigrant.

TM: What year was this?

FR: It was 1955. No, '56. I came '55, it was April. I was only here but 6, 7 months. I came in September and then April I was in the Army. Next year, you know. I did ok in the Army.

TM: Was that basic training?

FR: Basic training in Fort Ord. We were out there 8 weeks and then a second eight weeks. They kept me in the infantry. I was too dumb to go anywhere else. I didn't get in. Everybody left here after the retention. Cooking, I wasn't qualified for cooking. But the little guy next to me he said they sent him to cook school. I said, "What are you doing in cook school?" I wasn't qualified for American. You can see how those people go through the papers. That was down there. It was Fort Leonard Wood and then Missouri, Fort Ord in California for training, and then, as the training was up, after the second 8 weeks, you're shipped out, shipping out. "Fall out!" "Ok" "Ok, when I call so-and-so you go behind the yellow, and you go behind the blue, and you go behind the red. I will tell you, so-and-so, where to go. That's where you line up, ok?" Went on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on. Rotter was kind of at the end of the line anyway, alphabetically. And then the name come, "Ru, ra, ra, ra, Rotter!" I said, "God, did he call my name?" And I went, "Is that blue or red?" Whatever it was. So I went with whatever he said. I go there. And then I was standing there and waiting. And then he goes, "Ok, these guys go to Korea. These guys stay here, right over the hill," they said, "And these guys, this post goes to Europe, to Germany." I was on the thing to Germany. I'd be goddamned. I mean, I said, "Did they call me right, or what the

hell?" I was always waiting until some other crap got me out of the bunch. I was at the right thing to go back to Germany. So I went to Germany and that was nice.

Then they said, "Ok, we're going on maneuver." It was right about Thanksgiving in November. Germany's a miserable time of the year, weather-wise, foggy. It's not really cold, for me at least, it wasn't. But, the Yankees, are all like this, "Frostbite, frostbite." I never even knew what frostbite means. "Frostbite, frostbite." Stupid sergeant. There I was in Schweinfurt, Germany. Everything went on, and on, and on. All at once they say, "Rotter, I want you over at so and so." "Ok." Over at headquarters. I walk in there and I see a bunch of guys with their field jackets but had their cook's uniforms underneath. About three or four lined up there. I said, "Oh, shit." I said, "Cooking?" I said, "I don't know anything about cooking." They said, "It's either cooking or interpreter." Interpret? I can barely speak English. The Germans speak better English than I do. So, I went up in front of the office and I talked with some persons and this, and this, and so on. So, "Oh, yea. I worked in Switzerland. I worked here, I worked there." And then he said, "Ok. I got a job there. You want a job?" I said, "What is it?" "I cannot tell you." I told him, "If it's mess hall, I see all those cooks, I don't want to go." I said, "Because I know a hell of a lot more than the mess sergeant." Because I used to KP. I used to watch those guys in the kitchen. He said, "No." There is a guy sitting next to the officer and he said, "You want the job or not?" And, the guy next say...

TM: Blinking, he's blinking his eye.

FR: Then I said, "Ok, I give it a chance. I take it. Ok, I take it." "Ok, good. So you go back to the company. Somebody will come back to pick you up." Said, "You're gonna be in charge of the officer's group." I said, "Oh, that's very nice!" Now I go up in my room and the thing in the barracks. I look out there, a big field out there, a park place with all the machines lined up. There was a whole regiment. They're all ready to go to Grafenberg. Grafenberg is about 100 miles or 200 miles down south, somewhere in nowhere in Bavaria. It was November so it got kind of cold and nasty. They all left and I looked out the window and I said, "Oh, the poor sacks of guys sitting in those trucks back there and I'm in the fine, warm thing." Those were beautiful, not like in America, those were good barracks. So I'm up there and thought, "Oh, they're leaving now." I go down in the orderly room and said, "What am I supposed to do?" The guy said, "You're gonna stay here and watch the telephone and we are gonna go to the cafeteria." I say, "I can't answer the telephone, I don't speak English." I said, "You stupid asshole." They wanted me to. Oh, guess what? One of the sergeant comes back from the units going to Grafenberg. He looked at me, "What in the hell are you doing here?" I said, "I'm staying here. I'm waiting to be picked up. They transferred me to headquarters" That's another company. Headquarter and headquarter, where all the flunkies are. The musicians, the bus driver, the teachers, and like me. We were all transferred to headquarters, what they call headquarters and headquarters. I didn't know what it means but another company. He said, "What the hell are you talking about? You're going out to Grafenberg, too." I said, "What? What do you mean I'm going to go to Grafenberg? They told me to stay here. I'm going to be picked up to the office." He goes, "No, no, no, no, no! Get your damn thing on. You go out to Grafenberg." Now, oh my God, he was scared to death that I'm gonna get frostbite because I didn't have my winter uniform. Then the people were sitting on top of me, "Keep him warm." We stopped for the break and so, "Rotter, chop chop chop chop." We went in the barracks out there in Grafenberg. I mean it was nasty out there. Oooh, God! Mud, mud with all the trucks, the tanks, the shit going on out there. There must have been thousands and thousands of soldiers and shit all over. It was a big, big place you know. We went to the barracks, ice cold. Now that was army life, let me tell you. We were in offices before in California. Oh, man. That was army. Now army life really started. Mud up to here. Holy Christ! Then they come in and the fire was going. "You stay right next to the fire." He gave me a blanket, right next to the belly thing there. And, guess what? They were looking for me in Schweinfurt. Then they finally found out he's German. They

thought I took off. I just say, "Goodbye." They found out, they took me out, then the Sargent came to me. "We made a mistake with you, made a mistake. You have to go back. They're looking for you in Schweinfurt. Oh, sorry about this. I didn't know so-and-so. Alright." I was told, "Now, just stay here in the bathhouses and keep the fires going until the guy comes and picks you up." So I was in there just putting in, to keep the stoves going. Then, "Rotter, Rotter, Ruder, Rotter." Guess what? They sent the personal car out there, all the way out to Grafenberg and got me home to Schweinfurt. I sit there for another two or three days in the same old barrack that they found me. "No, he is not back." "No, no, he..." Finally, "What the hell have you been with Sergeant so and so" So, there I was running the officer's group. I got a good pay from them. It was a good job. I was the head honcho in the kitchen there and I had the officers on my finger. I made the prices. If they didn't treat me nice, the prices went up. All would say, "Who the hell got Rotter mad again?"

TM: We've been at this now about two hours. No, maybe it's one hour...

FR: See, those are my brothers.

TM: Are you doing ok with this? Do you want to keep going? 'Cause I want to keep going if you want to keep going. Bring that picture back. Franz, I just want to ask you, do you want to take an intermission now or are you happy keeping going?

FR: That's an old, old...

TM: There's four guys in here. Who are these guys?

FR: All my brothers and me.

TM: Name them. Who are they?

FR: The oldest one is Sepp.

TM: Where's he? Is he the guy in the back, the tall guy?

FR: Yea, yea, that's Sepp, the oldest one.

TM: Who's in the lower left.

FR: That's me.

TM: That's you?

FR: Uh huh.

TM: That's you there?

FR: Yea.

TM: Ok. And, who, who...

FR: That's Georg.

TM: That's Georg, so he's...

FR: The other one is Hans. He was in prison camp.

TM: Third from left and Hans is on the right. What year is this?

FR: I have no idea. It must have been about 1930. I went to school in 1937, so it must have been about 1937, '38.

TM: Ok.

FR: There was my passport to go to America.

TM: Nice photo.

FR: Those are all the papers you need, you used to have. Those are all my Army papers in there. Those are all recommendations from other people, from different hotels. Here is the Hotel Zaigot, see? How good I was at so-and-so.

TM: These are letters of reference?

FR: Yea. I had one from the officer's group in Schweinfurt. What the hell did I do with it? That's the only one in English.

TM: This looks like your discharge papers?

FR: I don't know.

TM: "Armed Forces of the United States. Report of Transfer or Discharge." Franz, this is from headquarters, "2nd Battalion, Group 7th Infantry, 18th of January, 1958. To whom it may concern, Gentleman Francis Rotter has been employed by the Southwest Officer's Club as Chief Cook for a period of 18 months while serving with the Armed Forces in Europe, receiving \$150 per month in addition to his Army pay. Mr. Rotter was responsible..."

FR: That was a lot of money at that time.

TM: "...for all buffets and banquets, parties, and preparation of all menus. He has received many verbal commendations and words of praise from high ranking officers of Europe who frequent our dining room. Under Mr. Rotter's direct supervision, our kitchen and dining rooms changed from an ordinary Officer's Club to a fine restaurant and club where the food was a gourmet's delight. Mr. Rotter introduced our members to many new, delicious, and beautifully prepared dishes. As Chief Cook, Mr. Rotter efficiently supervised the twenty persons working under him. In all his dealings with the subordinates and superiors, I have found him to be straightforward, honest, and just. Mr. Rotter proved to be a very capable manager and he was held responsible for producing a set percentage of profit. During the entire period that Mr. Rotter was Chief Cook, the percentage of profit was always higher than the required

amount. It is my sincere opinion that Mr. Rotter would be a direct asset to any fine hotel or restaurant where he employed as Chief Cook. Sincerely yours, Louis..."

FR: Kirkendall.

TM: "...Kirkendall, First Lieutenant Infantry, Club Custodian."

FR: He was my buddy. He was my buddy. He wasn't even an officer. We would talk with each other, like... This is the big paper here.

TM: Certificate of Naturalization. It says here, you were married.

FR: Sure, I was married.

TM: This is July 5th, 1962.

FR: Yea, I got married in '57. We missed this.

TM: Now we have to go back and you have to tell me about getting married. Where did you get married?

FR: In Schweinfurt.

TM: This was before you came over?

FR: No, this was after. But, I went back again.

TM: Ok.

FR: Yea. When I was in Chicago, that's when I made up my mind. You're by yourself, alone and not much to do, and do a lot of thinking of the future and so on for some odd reason. I had a lot of people I knew, the girls and so on I liked very much and it was very easy. But, for some reason or another it was Hannah. I felt that the... Then our correspondence got a little more, and more, and more, a little hotter and hotter. Then, I just told her. I said I cannot do anything with her right now. We have to wait until all ready with the Army. I wasn't quite sure on my Army status. And, then I was in the Army. I said, "Ok. I don't know where we are gonna go or what's happening." When I found out I'm going to Germany, I just tell her, "Ok. I will be, in a month or so, in Germany and soon we are gonna get married."

TM: Did you propose to her in a letter?

FR: Oh yea. At that time, it wasn't so easy going on telephones and everything. Now a days, you carry it around with you. "Hello." We go 50, 60 years back. We got married in '52, 3, 4, 5, I don't know. You see what the lieutenant wrote about me and the other things I got from the other hotels are just about the same.

TM: When you got the job as the cook in the Officer's Club, were you married then?

FR: No, no, no. They wouldn't let me get married. They had some laws because a lot of Americans went over to Germany and after 4 weeks they meet some dumb blonde and got married. They said, "No, no,

no, no. You're gonna wait a while, now." The Catholic priest, because I'm Catholic, he was in charge there, "Oh, I don't know." I said, "It's nothing like so-and-so. It is because we met already in Switzerland and everything and so, and so, and so, and so. Nothing new." Then another one, she is Evangelist, so we went to the other guy. He said, "Ok. You just get married." I got to know an Officer real well and the provost marshal, whatever they call those guys, and he said, "I'm gonna help you along." So he helped me along. I always came back to her home, cheating the Army. I wasn't supposed to go more than 50 miles radius, but I came. I could stay outside because I got married and so I went to her home. That was about two or three hundred. As long as nothing happened, it was ok. But the MP was all over the place. You went down the autobahn and there was the fucking MP. And he could pull you over because we had different license plates. I didn't tell you I had a car, my first car, in Germany. I spent my last penny on that stupid old car. But it got me around.

TM: What kind of car?

FR: A French Vedette. French Ford Vedette. A nice little car. A really good little car.

TM: What was cooking for the Officer's Club like?

FR: Oh, a normal restaurant. We put buffets on. You wouldn't believe it, Sunday night buffets. The division headquarter was in Wurzburg, about 20 to 25 miles away. They came over on Sunday night for buffet dinner in the Officer's Club in Schweinfurt. When they were out there on maneuver all over the place, they all came eating lunch in the Officer's Club in Schweinfurt. So, yea, they knew that good old German. Those guys came in and, "Oh, man." That you get dirty, those officers, dirty. We always said, "Look at them. Oh my God!" Brings all the dirt in the dining room. That stuff dried up on him while he was eating. You had to shovel out that shit. Those sheep, those weeds, you could barely turn around anymore. They went out in those fields. They didn't give a shit what they... I mean, there's all acreage out there and with the snow melt, and wet. So I went that deep in there. Oh God, those tanks looked like, oh my God. You barely made it out. That was Army life, let me tell you. They were pretty rough. Oh yea. They were a lot more disciplined than in America I found out. I had nothing to do with them anymore. The only thing I had at the company was my stinking rifle I never gave up. It was stored away in the basement somewhere. But you're still responsible that it's cleaned. I paid some guy to clean the rifles one day. The son of a bitch didn't clean it. One day the officer called me in, said, "Your new rifle stinks down there. It doesn't matter what you paid, you are responsible for the damn rifles and not who you pay." Because he knew that a lot of guys did this. Give some guy the money and he takes care of the rifle, nothing else to do. The guy could clean the, you didn't shoot the goddamned thing. All I did was go down the barrel a few times and wipe it off and your rifle was clean again. He took the money but he didn't clean the rifle, the bastard. But, they made me orderly. I was a good soldier.

TM: Here's a photograph. This is...

FR: McCormick, he was the Regimental Commander. Fort Ord, California. I was the best soldier of the day or of the month, I don't know.

TM: "Headquarters, 11th Infantry, Officer of the Regimental 2, Private Rotter, 23 August, 1956. Congratulations on your selection as my orderly for 9 August, 1956. A.E. McCormick, Colonel, Infantry, Commanding."

FR: Oh yea.

TM: That's you?

FR: Yea.

TM: That's wonderful.

FR: Yep. Here I am cooking in the Drake Hotel.

TM: There's a picture of three men there. They're wearing cook's hats. Who are those people, Franz?

FR: They came with me to Chicago. They were.. later on... Carl, he died already.

TM: On the left?

FR: Last year, yea.

TM: What's his last name?

FR: Carl Schausberger. And, that's me and the other one...

TM: In the middle?

FR: Was Walter Leslie. We all worked together and later on, after the Army and so on.

TM: This is in the Drake Hotel?

FR: Mm hm.

TM: 1958?

FR: No, '56. Or '55, I don't know. It was '55, probably. '56 in the springtime. Oh, that's Carl. This is Walter. He is Swiss.

TM: How long did you work in the Officer's Club?

FR: My entire time in Schweinfurt. That must have been November of '56 to April, '58. April, '58, we returned to the United States. From there, I went back to the Drake Hotel. Then I said, "Ok."

TM: Discharged from the service?

FR: Yea.

TM: That's when you got your nationalization?

FR: No, no, no, no, no.

TM: No? That was later?

FR: Oh, yea. You had to wait like anybody else. I went to Drake. Then some of the old guys, the sous chefs, were still there, 'Oh! Hi Rotter! Oh, yea, yea, yea,' and all the baloney. "I got a telephone number for you. Your buddy Carl called." He knew that I'd come back and call him. He was manager at that time already. He left his telephone number because he knew his two years are up, he must be coming back. So I called and there he was. He says, "Oh, yea, yea, yea. Just stay there. I'll be right there and pick you up." He came all dressed up. A Ford Thunderbird or Mustang, or whatever it was. It had little "Ford" there. Oh, boy. I said, 'Oh! Cars already and everything.' It's what you get when you don't go in the Army. He didn't go in the Army, he cheat. He never registered and then they called him about it years later. The FBI got him kind of out. But, nothing, just forget it. He lied, "I didn't know what it means." He knew exactly what it meant. What is it that took it, that he had never got to... But that didn't hurt me none, the Army. That was a good experience. I said, "As long as you're in the Army, you may as well be a good soldier." So, I was a good soldier. I was right away the guy in charge of the thing of 10, 12 men. And I couldn't even speak English. I told the sergeant, "I cannot be the guy. I cannot talk to." "Oh, you do alright, you do alright." Everybody said, "You do alright." I did alright making KP and all this shit. Every morning, picking up cigarette butts. What else? Where were we?

TM: What else can you tell me about the officer's quarters when you were working there? It seems like, maybe, almost two years.

FR: Yea, when I came out of the Army. He was managing at the shopping center, a restaurant for Carson Pirie Scott. At that time, Carson Pirie Scott was a major retailer in Chicago on Stage Street. A major store, department store, Carson Pirie Scott.

TM: Carl was working for them?

FR: Carl was, yea. He was managing that place 'cause he got to know some Swiss guys over the years, while I was gone, and they promoted him as the manager. It was not a big restaurant, but it was a nice little place where you could get good business. And then I started there as a chef.

TM: Why was that more attractive than the Drake?

FR: Because of paying and everything else. The pay was a hell of a lot better. Drake was union wages. You make next to nothing. And, then my buddy, buddy, you know. In the Drake, you have 40 cooks. You're one of 40 cooks. I mean, holy Moses! The kitchen was oooh, oh man. But, it was a good place and I liked the Drake. So, I was there and then I kind of got in conflict with Carl.

TM: Why?

FR: Because he was a lazy bum and he wanted me to do all the work. Another thing I didn't tell you. When I came over here and I brought my wife over, we were living in Glenview, Illinois. We had one room. Carl got me that room. It was \$65 dollars. And my wife came, it was \$130 dollars. Then she said, "Oh, I forgot the kit(chen). The kit is half price." So, I would have paid for one room, sharing a kitchen or living room in between two/three other people and for \$160 bucks a month. Oh, yea, \$160. You could have had, in Chicago, a four-bedroom house for that in 1950. But, she was very nice. Then, I found an apartment in Evanston, which is a suburb of Chicago. Very nice, right down Sheridan Road and Dempster, these old, big homes. Old, big trees. I had an apartment I had to work for, so I got the apartment free. I worked for it. I cut the grass, trimmed the bushes, did the painting, washing cars, shoveling snow.

TM: While you were working for Carl?

FR: Sure. I worked at the shift from 7:00 to 3:30-4:00 so I had all evening to go do some work. What the hell? No problem. Then he said, "Oh, I changed your shift around" because he wanted to go home in the evenings. So I was supposed to close down the place. He said, "I'm gonna put you in the afternoon shift." I said, "The afternoon? I got work to do in the afternoon. I cannot do it." I said, "What the hell, keep the goddamned thing. I'm out of here. I'm quitting." So I quit. It got him in hot water because the Swiss guy who was in charge of all the restaurant... Carl said he took a liking to me because when I took over the restaurant as chef, their business went up, you wouldn't believe it. I'm a resident cook. He didn't like it at all when I told him why I quit. He knew that the guy is kind of lazy. Buddy-buddy. Then I quit. Then I said, "Ok, if he can be a manager, I can be a manager. So, why in the hell would I be a cook?" I thought to myself, I had the boy already, Frank. If people ask him, "What's your dad doing?" he has to tell them that he's a chef. Every drunk in the United States calls himself a chef. I had nothing to do with chef. In Europe, a chef is a chef. If you go to the Las Vegas, if you want to be a chef, you be a chef. But in Chicago, every drunk was a chef.

So then I went around and I went to Reunion Station. Of all places, there was Hans Meyer, a chef. Why I saw him? I don't know who recommended me to see him or what. Hans Meyer was a good Munich guy, Bavarian. We talked and talked, and he was nice. He said, "I can put you on as a so-and-so. I can use you." I said, "I'm not really here for cooking. I'm really here looking for a management job." "Oh," he said, "you are in the wrong place, then." He said, "I got nothing to do with that. You have to go to the headquarter." Like on Michigan Avenue. He explained it to me and I said, "Ok. I'll go over there." So I went over to Harvey headquarter. Mr. Martin sitting there. At that time they opened all the toll road restaurants and they kind of got a little bit in trouble. They could not handle the business. Everything was new. The road was new, people using the road, and the restaurants were new. They all hired those high-priced management which had no idea about food business, basic food business.

TM: What year was this?

FR: It was 1959. So, I went to Martin. He said, "Yea, we have jobs we could..." But he always came back on the chef's jobs, the food supervisor, the food. Always with food because of my experience, when he saw where I worked. Food was a thing in the third world, but not food management. I asked for too much money. At that time, they gave system management about \$450 bucks a month, \$500 bucks a month. Managers only made about \$600 bucks a month and I asked for \$600 bucks. I said, "I'm not going backwards." I said, "If I want to be chef, I can make \$1000." There were a lot of German restaurants looking for us. He said, "Oh..." He went back and forth and, "Due to your food experience, we can, commitments I've to so and so." I told him, I said, "Mr. Martin, if I cannot do the job, I quit. You don't have to fire me. If I cannot do it, I'll be out in no time." I said, "But, I will want..." And I told him the circumstances about my buddy and I just want to give it a try. So he says, "Ok, you can." So they put me on as night manager.

TM: Where?

FR: In the Lake Forest Oasis in Lake Forest, Illinois. So I was night manager.

TM: This was Fred Harvey Corporation?

FR: Yea. I was up there in Lake Forest. I cleaned up and so-and-so. Right away I fired half the people. I said, "What are we doing with all these people?" The manager came in after about a week and said, "What are we gonna do with four porters a night?" I said, "Just get rid of three of them. One of them is enough. I'll be with them." And the kitchens, I said, "I don't need those two people in the kitchen overnight. We got the front line, they're doing nothing. After 1 o'clock, there's absolutely nothing going on. They can go in the kitchen. We don't need those two people." So the manager says, "He looks good. His payroll came down." Then I went in those ice boxes. I cleaned up those walk-in coolers, I mean there were half-empty boxes with shit in there and wrapped meats, and shit. We got in trouble with the head honcho in the headquarter when I complained about the lousy meat they were buying and so on.

And, he, "Oh!" and all kinds of shit. Then the manager came out and said... Another thing I did was always start the cooking for the chef. So when the chef came in the soup was cooking already, this was cooking already, and that. So, he walked in and nice clean kitchen and everything was going already. The manager came to me and said, "You are wasting the night. You come on days." The other guy, which was first assistant on day, they put him on night because he didn't know shit. He didn't like it at all so he didn't do nothing. He complained right away he doesn't have enough people because he didn't want to do nothing. I was working with the people. I was mopping floors with the guy at night. That was a big restaurant, let me tell you. All the way across it, the autobahn there. So, that was with the people.

TM: This was one of the roadside rest deals that has the restaurant across the top of the highway?

FR: Bridge-type, yea.

TM: This was part of the new Eisenhower driven interstate highway system?

FR: No, that was a private toll road. The toll road system. Illinois had their own Illinois toll road.

TM: Ok.

FR: Yea. They opened up 5 restaurants and the 6th one a couple of year later. When 55, coming from St. Louis up to Chicago, connected with the Indiana toll road. They connected the Illinois toll road, Indiana toll road, and 55 comes up and connected right south of interstate there.

Then I worked on day shift. One morning I come in, and who walks out? The chef. He said, "Too many chiefs and no Indians!" I said, "What's wrong with you?" He was so used to us. I spoiled the son of a bitch by always cooking half the stuff for him. So now nothing was done for him and so on. So he walked out. Guess what the manager said? "Oh, that's the best news I've heard all day. I've got you." I said, "I didn't come here to be your goddamned chef." I said, "If I want to be chef, I go down the road." He knew that I could make a hell of a lot more money down the road as a chef. I said, "Ok, I do one thing: I train somebody." So I train some good old Polish girl from Waukegan. She was a good girl. I did a lot of work for her. I said, "No, no, you don't have to cook soup. I cook the soups. I do this, don't worry." She was the hardest working girl you ever... And, she said you can do it. So, there she was.

Then Mr. Wilturf, a Danish guy comes to me, he was the regional manager in charge of all the Oasis, said, "Franz, you are a good food manager and you know everything. Why don't you start a little buffet?" I say, "I just quit a job because I hated buffets." I said, "I hate buffets." "Just simple buffets, simple." I know what it means, simple buffet, but it still has to look good and everything else. It's a lot of work. There's

nobody trained for buffet here. That's another thing. We have to retrain them. Like when we started out here with the buffet. Nobody was trained on the buffet.

So, I started it. So, we started it simple. I put two banquet tables there. We had a lazy-susan already, a big lazy-susan with the salads. Then two banquet tables, we put table cloths on and buy two steam tables. At the end we have a whole round beef in there or ham to carve, and all kind of chickens, and spaghetti, and whatever else. Then I made about 6, 8 bowls, and then I made a bunch of desserts like cream puffs and cheesecake. The people ate those cream puffs by the thousands. Everybody in the Oasis knew how to make cream puffs. One of them would just stand back, "I'm only making cream puffs." And cheesecake. That buffet went over unbelievable.

Then they started all over the place with buffets, but nobody came close to us. On a Sunday, we served a thousand buffets because a lot of local people came. From Libertyville, Waukegan, and all the surrounding area, Half day drive, and they came there for the buffet. Was I think \$2.25 or \$2.45, you have a spread like this. Oh, we had deviled eggs, relish tray, fruit tray, cheese tray, ham tray. I started with head cheese. I even had people come in just for the damn head cheese. And liver pate and fish thing. I bought halibut chunks cheap. They cost only about 20 cents a pound. Steam it. Get all the meat out, mix a little tuna in there. You had a nice loaf there.

Nice decorated, nice. Then Mr. Wilturf came back, "Oh my God. I said a little simple buffet." I said, "That's an easier thing. It's easy to train people on that stuff." Like a relish tray, anybody can clean carrots and shit. I had a couple of Puerto Rican boys, scrub boys, and I trained them. They made all the salads in a short while. I still was in the kitchen all the time with them. You had to be with them. It went really good. It wasn't long. The other guy, the manager that was with Fred Harvey 25, 30 years already, they promoted him as Assistant Regional Manager. Made me manager. In '61 was made manager. Then I got \$833 a month, \$10,000 a year. They couldn't make it \$850. They had to make it \$800. Oh, God, I tell you.

TM: So now you're manager of just that facility?

FR: Just the facility. Where I started as a night manager. All at once, the night porter, more or less, then I was the manager. Man I worked my ass off. I mean, oh God. Then Assistant Regional Manager's job came up. I kind of thought, "I've been for two or three years as manager. You can keep it. I don't even want it." So another guy from another... got the Assistant Regional Manager's job. And, me, I was down there and then they transferred me in another Oasis for some odd reason. Then a big job came up in the Union Station in Chicago.

The other guy said, "He cannot run the Union Station. He's a hamburger cook." The Regional Manager said, "I heard about you. How much do you know about?" I said to the other guy "Did you ever work in Switzerland, you dumbass? Did you ever make buffets in the private clubs and so on? Huh? And I'm a hamburger cook? I did well as a hamburger cook, didn't I, huh?" 'Cause my Oasis made the most money. Everybody else had to go with me. I had the lowest payroll, lowest food cost all the way through. When they told the other guys, "If he runs a 22 payroll, you can run a 24, but that's it."

TM: Interesting.

FR: Yea. Guys came in and took pictures of my schedule, see how the hell can he run a payroll like this. I could run a payroll because I was there. Those guys went home at 5:00 in the afternoon. I was there until

8:00-9:00 o'clock. So I could do with less people because I was there working with them. If you were in with them, you get a hell of a lot more out of people.

Union Station didn't make money in years. They said Union Station used to be big during the war. They had big kitchens because they fed millions of American soldiers coming through Chicago Union Station. That is really why they had all this bullshit going, kitchen going. Which they didn't need. So I come in there and after about 2 weeks, the manager who left there, he said, "How did that place ever operate before you came here?" I said, "You just waste another couple of months and you won't recognize the place." He was a former Army officer. He just came in, "Good morning." Sat down in the Gold Lion for lunch with his compadres, all this kind of shit.

There was a chef there. The chef had a secretary. He was sitting down in the basement and had a big office. I never saw him for lunch when I was there. I looked around. I said, "Where's the chef?" There's no chef. He's sitting down there in the office with the secretary. I said, "What the hell he need a secretary? What are you doing in the office?" I had more grease spots on my suit than he had on his cook's uniform because I was behind the goddamned line.

After three month, a whole damn thing goes. I said, "What the fuck is going on?" I came in at 9:00 in the morning. Accountants running around and checking inventories. I got madder than hell. I said, "What the hell are you goddamn people doing around here? Before you come in here, you report to me. There's the front door." "Don't worry, don't worry," they said. They were real nice to me and kind of quiet me down. They closed the door. The statement came out because we made money and nobody could believe it, or we broke even, or whatever, after three month. The year before, they lost money, \$25,000. It was a \$25,000 difference and they couldn't figure out. It must be a mistake. There must be a mistake somewhere. It couldn't be. But, I told everything.

They had the Gold Lion restaurant. We served champagne dinners every night there. Because people went to the theater and they all came for champagne dinner. They had a good business men's luncheon going on. The Gold Lion was a fine restaurant. White table cloths. They had the coffee shop and all that shit over there. You had the assistant managers, they come to me. I'm about the only one with the keys. They said, "We need some champagne glasses." I said, "Every week, every Saturday when we're gone, you come to me for champagne glasses. How can we use so many?" They said, "The belt, we have to do something with the belt." They had all those big trays passing and the champagne glasses were there. They tipped over and broke. "I want something up here," I told the maintenance guy, "Need a champagne glass rack. When you bus, champagne glasses go in that rack."

Then, it was all gone. Then, we said, "Every weekend, there's no silverware. Every weekend, Irish linen napkins, and so on." I said, "Somewhere, where is the silverware going?" Every day, something. I went with them. We had a colored guy who just threw the shit in the garbage. I told him and they said I can't fire him because he's union. I said, "You'd be surprised how fast I throw these guys out. Just get me another guy. I get another guy and you get the fuck out of here." Union guy came and said, "Ok, ok, ok." I said, "Are we checking this shit?" One Sunday morning I went down in the Union Station. Nobody was around, just a little old coffee shop open. I turned all the garbage over and had a rake. You will not believe how much silverware, and shit, and napkins I pulled out of the garbage can. Then I asked the guy, "Did you check?" "Oh, yea." I said, "Don't give me shit. Assistant Manager will out your ass right out of there."

All he did was head back there and walk up and down the kitchen. He had no idea what the hell is going on. Those were those people they had around there. I said, "I am here anyway. I don't need you." So, out they go. In the morning, I had a top notch head hostess and there was another guy, flunky, running around. I said, "You can do the restaurant. You'd earn a little bit more money. Just walk through the kitchen every once in a while. I'll be here at 9:00 or 8:30, whenever, so..." She was the morning hostess, beautiful elderly lady. She was there for I don't know how many years. She knew the place inside-out. She finally came to me at one time and said, "Mr. Rotter, we must be making money now." She said, "We must be making money." I said, "Yea, we do." Then there was a thing. Now, guess what? I closed this and I closed that. I fired about 10 bakers at the bake shop. Closed this down and this down, all the losers, I closed down. That solved the loss. I said, "That's stupid."

Then it went on, and they got dropped. Then the tollway commission changed to politics. The Democrats got into office and kicked the Republican out, so there was a Democrat. Toll road was all jobs for compadres, all buddy-buddy. Now Mr. Daley has not only Chicago, he got the Illinois toll road to fill up in his palms. Everything changed out there in the Illinois toll road. All the management, the director, and so and so. The old regional manager was out there for about 2 or 3 years, as long as I was managing, Mr. Davis. He said, "I cannot take that shit. I don't need that." He went to Harvey and said, "Get me out of there." He couldn't get along with those people. An old-timer, single guy, apparently. He had it anyway, the whole thing.

Then they asked me, said, "Frank, would you go out there and help him?" I said, "You know, I just got off the toll road 7, 8 month ago. I kind of like that Union Station. I got a lot more things to do." They said, "You're just helping out." "Ok, I'll help him out." That was the end of me and the Union Station. I never got back to the Union Station. Then I was at the table. He told me, "You know, I came out. I don't like to come out here." I said, "Don't worry about it. I don't want to." "I don't care. You can have my job tomorrow," he said, "Because I am going. I am leaving. And, I don't care. May as well be you that take's the job." I said, "That's a different story." I would never take his job because I kind of like the guy.

Fred Harvey came to me and said, "How would you like to take a tour?" I said, "I don't know. I run it for so many years." It was a hard job. Let me tell you. We had six Oasis's and then we had The Old Spinning Wheel restaurant, where we had a lot of parties and shit going on. And we had Beloit Harvey House up in Wisconsin. A round-trip, 360 miles, on the toll road from one Oasis to the other. You drive 360 miles and you spend an hour in each Oasis. That's a long day. Then you come back to Des Plaines, that was my headquarter, and then somebody calls, "Oh, Mr. Rotter so-and-so. Mr. Rotter, so-and-so called to have so-and-so. I need this and that." And, I just come from there. So I went back 50 miles to Belvidere. Just one thing, I had a ticket to speed on the toll road. I could go as fast as I want. They never stopped me. "Oh, it's you again." Sometimes, they just blew their horn at me and shake the hell out of me. Then I took Regional Manager's job. It was 1964.

TM: You were driving how far every day?

FR: Every week, maybe 1500 miles. I put about 6,000-7,000 miles a month. Mostly weekends. I made the entire tour. During the week, maybe up Belvidere, Beloit or down O'Hare interstate. Then another thing, they gave me the Skyway. They opened a little, old, stupid snack shop on the Chicago Skyway. How to get to the Skyway in a rush-hour, in Chicago? If I didn't leave at 5 o'clock in the morning I didn't get there until 8. I told them I don't want their shit. Give it to somebody else. I had a good guy who was in charge, said, "Oh, that's just stupid. Give it back to them." He didn't want it either. It was an easy decision. Said, "Give it to somebody else."

TM: Did they give you a car?

FR: Oh, yea. I had 4 or 5. I always had a stand-by. They had a personnel matter, out. They had a thing, out. I didn't have anybody. I run the show myself. I did really good on the toll road. I got along just fine with the toll road commission. Mr. Bogey, Jewish guy, of all places, he took a liking to me and he told Fred Harvey, "I would like to see that guy running a road" you know. He couldn't get along with the other guy, Davis. So, Harvey said "Oh, just take it." "Ok, I'll do it for the company," I said. Then, 1969, it came up.

TM: You ran that for five years, then?

FR: Yea.

TM: As toll road manager?

FR: Oh my God, shit. I fell asleep on the road. You are so used to the road, "Oh, there's a long stretch, I can take a nap." Then came the big bridge over the river. I said, "You better watch it." Because it went down like this. And, then, again, it went like this. I got out of the car and nothing. I go in the car and fell asleep. It went on and I told them something is gonna happen with me. One day, I said, "I have to get off this road. That's not fair to my family." Then the Vice President, Mr. Shivley said he's gonna retire. I said, "That's a good place for me to get off the road, too." He said, "Ok, yea, tell them..."

So I went off the road and then Fred Harvey came and said, "We got good jobs for you if you want it." I said, "Yea, what is it?" "We have the job in California, southern California," and so and so, "Or the Grand Canyon." "Grand Canyon sounds ok, but Grand Canyon?" I said, "Oh, God, you're squeezed in there." I never lived with employees. There you're with all of the employees and all your next door neighbors. I said, "In California, travel again." I said, "No." I would have to travel hundreds and hundreds of miles. From Bakersfield down to the airport in Palm Springs and in-plant feeding with those big airplane manufacturers down there in California. I forgot which the companies were. Music center in LA and a dumb motel somewhere else. I mean, spread all over the place. I said, "Where the hell would I stay? I have no idea about southern California." Where you gonna headquarter and all this crap? Because those people who were out there at headquarters, I didn't get along anyways. I said, "I don't want to be with those people."

TM: By this time, Ann's born as well. You've got Hannah and Frank and Ann?

FR: Ann was born in '61. I was just was made manager that year. I was made manager in Lake Forest. I was living in Libertyville. Was only about 3 miles away. I came in through the back road and out the back road.

TM: You were trying to figure out, 'Where would the kids stay? Where the family, where would we stay?'

FR: Yea, we had a nice rental duplex, nice little home there. Libertyville's a nice town. It's a beauty, at that time. It was small and friendly people. Those old roads, old trees all along. Just nice. It was a nice place and the people who owned the place were really nice. An elderly lady, she had a duplex, a ranch-style home next door. The people next door in the duplex were really nice people. They took care, they

were home with our kids when they were small. They could run. Frank just would run, run. About 4, 5 years old. It was nice. Then it came up with the thing. I said, "Ok." I said, "I think I try the Grand Canyon."

TM: This was the Vice President of Fred Harvey and you are talking with him?

FR: Yea, he was. He was at the western division. And so I said, "Yea, I think I try the Grand Canyon." Ok.

TM: What year was this?

FR: That was in 1969. Spring of 1969. Then the holy hell breaks loose. I was still in Chicago when they said they merged with Amfac. I said, "What the fuck do we need Amfac for?" I said, "We are a nice little company, we can do it on our own. What do you need another guy?" "Oh, you know..." The thing was, the richies stayed. They got tax free ruling on the stock when they sold out the company. That's the Harvey boys, they made a lot of money off this. They were tired of the company you know 'cause the company was tired. They didn't have any good leadership on top. They even were looking at me, maybe make me the leader. If it wouldn't have been with Amfac, they probably would have kept me as the President. I couldn't believe it when Harvey Jr. told me. Said, "Oh, yea. You were under consideration." Then I came out here.

TM: It's quarter to noon. This might be a good place to stop because we're about ready to get to Grand Canyon.

FR: We're coming to the Grand Canyon, yea.

TM: We can pick this up again, maybe in a week or so?

FR: Yea. No problem.

TM: Come back with the machine. Thank you so very, very much for this. This has been really great. The thing I'm gonna suggest, these papers that you have here, your Army papers, these photographs, this kind of stuff. Do you have copies of this stuff stored someplace else? This is called 'save the data.' Ok?

FR: That's about it, because, after me, they're gonna throw it out anyway.

TM: No, no, no, no, no. I'll talk to Ann. We don't want to throw this stuff out. This will be good.

FR: Why do you think, with all the junk we own, oh Jesus. Did you ever look at our old apartment?

TM: This is incredible stuff.

FR: That's a museum.

TM: What is this? It's got this big spot.

FR: Oh, who knows. I don't know if it's the picture, if it's under glass.

TM: There's not a lot of pictures of you as a kid, Franz.

FR: There is another one, but I don't know where it is.

TM: That's what I'm saying, there's not a lot of them.

FR: It's a better one.

TM: These are few and far between.

FR: I think my wife has a whole box full of that junk.

TM: Does she? Ok, well, I'll have to do an interview with Hannah, too, and we can go through the photographs.

FR: She is in Flagstaff today. Our kid has to see the doctor.

TM: Ok, well, we'll go through it. Anyway, thank you very, very much. I'm gonna...

FR: Thank you.

TM: ...turn this off.

FR: Yea, that was a long time ago.

END of Franz Rotter interview Part 1