

DP-52/HAAS

DP-52

JOSEPH HAAS

BIRTH DATE: FEBRUARY 6, 1908

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GERMANY, 1922

AGE 14

PASSAGE ON A HAMBURG-AMERICA LINE SHIP, EXACT NAME NOT RECALLED

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett, and I'm going to be speaking with Mr. Joseph Haas, on Saturday, November 4, 1989. And we're beginning this interview at about 2:20 in the afternoon. And we're going to talk with Mr. Haas about his immigration experience from Germany in June of 1922 at the age of fourteen. Mr. Haas, let's start back at the beginning of your story, and could you tell me where and when you were born.

HAAS: Born February 6, 1908.

DALLETT: February 6, 1908.

HAAS: 1908.

DALLETT: And where is it you were born?

HAAS: It's a little village called Spielberg.

DALLETT: Can you tell me about your childhood there?

HAAS: So then from there I went to school.

DALLETT: How many were there in your family?

HAAS: Eight. I was the oldest of eight.

DALLETT: Eight children.

HAAS: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: And you were the oldest.

HAAS: I'm the oldest.

DALLETT: Can you give me a little flavor for what your life was like there?

HAAS: Well, it was right during the First World War. My dad

had to go, but he was not, he didn't have to stay too long because he had asthma, and he couldn't breathe too good, so they sent him home. He got discharged. But then after he went along, we couldn't correspond with him. I have an uncle in Spring Green, Wisconsin.

DALLETT: Where is that?

HAAS: Spring Green? West of Madison. And when the war was over, they started corresponding back and forth, you know, and the letter came again from my Uncle George in Spring Green and they said, and I said to my dad, "I wouldn't mind going over." So he wrote to my uncle, and he said, "The sooner the better if he'd like to come." So I said, so then we had a session together with dad, mom and dad, and I said, "Sure, I go." I was the oldest out of eight, anyhow. I had to go sometime.

DALLETT: What did your father do?

HAAS: My father was a mason contractor, a builder. He was a mason.

DALLETT: Can you remember some of the work he did? Did you see the buildings that he worked on?

HAAS: Oh, yes. Yeah. He worked a lot in Waldmunchen, which was our closest big city, our county seat. And then he did local work in a

local, built stables for cows, cattle. And he built a couple of homes.

DALLETT: Did he build the home that you lived in?

HAAS: No. Yeah, he remodeled it. But he remodeled it more after I left because then the kids had their own room. He had to have some more room, see. They get bigger, I was just a little shrimp when I left.

DALLETT: So was it his brother that had come here to Wisconsin?

HAAS: His brother came already just about the turn of the century. He lived in Spring Green. He owned a butcher shop out there, a meat market. And, uh--

DALLETT: Did you know any other people? Do you remember getting letters from this uncle talking about what it was like for him when he came here, to Wisconsin?

HAAS: No. I can't remember what he said. When he came he stopped in Pittsburgh because he had a guy he went to school with, he migrated to Pittsburgh. And he stayed there a few days, and he worked, even down there. He could have had the job steady. It was mason work, building. But then he came to Spring Green, see. There's two brothers out there. He came early already.

DALLETT: So your father had two brothers that were here.

HAAS: He had two brothers here, yes.

DALLETT: Anyone from your mother's side of the family that came here?

HAAS: No. Nobody from my mother's side. My mother's maiden name was Ring, R-I-N-G. But nobody from that side came over here. Well, actually, the, my grandmother's sister and her husband, their name was Goober. They came earlier than that. They came about the time, during the Civil War. They settled in the plains, bought a farm and land out there. And I remember she was still living when I came in 1922. I used to go up to my uncle's orchard, drive up there to see her. That was his grandmother's sister. Or my grandmother's sister.

DALLETT: So your father was supporting a fairly large family?

HAAS: A large family. Eight children. Well, it was kind of tough. Especially during the war.

DALLETT: It must have been very difficult for your mother when he went off?

HAAS: It was difficult, yeah.

DALLETT: How did she get by during that period?

HAAS: Oh, she just fought bitterly. Many times we had nothing around the house to eat. And eight kids. That's why I was so undernourished in Ellis Island. You know, I only weighed eighty pounds. I had too big a stomach, and too big a feet, on the account of undernourishment. So they gave my uncle a whole script what he had to provide, and I took the examination. That was comical. "Oh, he's such a small guy." (They laugh.) "What does he know." Then they put you up on the stand to swear off your country and all that kind of stuff. One guy said, "Oh, he's too young. What does he know about that stuff? Go ahead." He was real nice.

DALLETT: So when you were back in Germany and you got this letter from your uncle suggesting that you could come over--

HAAS: My uncle said the sooner, the younger the better. It's easy because on account of the language. You learn it much quicker, which is true. So that little neighbor lady came over. "Oh, my God", she said. "I wouldn't let that boy go that small, that young." She said, "You'll never see him again." Yeah. And my ma said, "Oh, if he wants to go, let him go." (He laughs.)

DALLETT: What do you think, what kind of work would you have done, do you think, if you had stayed there?

HAAS: Well, I don't, you mean, if I stayed in Germany?

DALLETT; Yeah.

HAAS: I wouldn't even know. Because the war would have come along, like my other brothers, they were drafted, and they got killed in Russia. Three of them, three bothers, and two brother-in-laws are lain behind the Iron Curtain. I would have been too, because I would have been of age. I had to sweat like heck to stay after here, in this country. I had a 1-A.

DALLETT: So the opportunity was only there for you as the oldest son.

HAAS: That's right.

DALLETT: That you couldn't bring your younger brothers with you.

HAAS: No. I couldn't bring nobody. The affidavit wouldn't have covered that, see? It was okay for me. But then I tried to get my brother, and I was sending him an affidavit, but then he couldn't come in because they have, the United States government has a law that they have to

be a farmer, see. But if he had a farm, he has some cattle, and what it said on there, on his birth certificate it said, "Mauerersohn," which means mason's son. When he got to the American consulate he just took the whole, tore it up and threw it in the wastebasket and they couldn't recover it. So he, the first one I heard got killed, brother George.

DALLETT: So you were the only one that had that opportunity.

HAAS: I was the only one that had the opportunity.

DALLETT: Because of how old you were?

HAAS: Yeah. Well, then after that, my brother John had a notion to come, but then he, then he couldn't leave Germany on account that he had to attend military service in Germany, see. They wouldn't give him a permit to go. It was quite an experience. (Break in tape.)

DALLETT: Go ahead. Could you, I'm sorry, could you just say that again, because we paused there. You were saying that you were the first--

HAAS: I was one of the first ones left, after the First World War. From my community, my home, from my territory. Which I have a lot of relatives, out near Plain, Wisconsin. Pretty near the whole village of Plain is from my home area, where I come from. They settled down near

Plain, Wisconsin, or Spring Green.

DALLETT: And it's called Plain, Wisconsin?

HAAS: Plain, Wisconsin. Yeah. That's a village north of Spring Green.

DALLETT: Tell me more about the arrangements you had to make with your uncle and with the authorities.

HAAS: Well, then my, then my dad wrote to my uncle, you know, to ask that i'd go. Then he wrote right back. He said, "Then you have to get the affidavit to support him."

DALLETT: An affidavit of support.

HAAS: So I had, my uncle had to make out that affidavit. In fact, the steamboat company then sent all the papers, see. And my dad went there with that to the district, to the, what do you call it, a notary public, made out that, we made it out. And dad, he put down, there was one line there where it says where you go to work, where you put the party to work or go to school, see. And that he didn't fill in. And then when I landed in Ellis Island, they mailed that back to Spring Green again, see, to get that filled out.

DALLETT: It was a line that you either said you were going to school or to work?

HAAS: Yeah, yeah. He didn't have that filled in. Somehow they skipped it, see, and then while they mailed that to Spring Green and back, at that time I was still in the (?), so I was sitting in Ellis Island.

DALLETT: So that's why you were detained there all that time.

HAAS: That's probably why I was there that long, I guess.  
Yeah.

DALLETT: Do you remember when you actually left home?

HAAS: Oh, yes. I can remember that real well.

DALLETT: Tell me about that.

HAAS: Well, they, when I left home there was, very few people believed that I would really go, you know? But then the neighbor boys all came out, all the neighbors, oh, no, goodbye. They said goodbye. And I jumped in that bus, I went to my little village, which is way out in the country, to Waldmunchen, which was there the train station is. I just jumped on and away I went. My dad went with me too as far as the next town,

and he bought a ticket to Hamburg.

DALLETT: Had you ever been outside of your village before that?

HAAS: Oh, I've been outside, yeah. Waldmunchen, I've been to Waldmunchen several times. Because I had an uncle living there. He was the mayor of the city. And he, I used to, I worked there. I used to carry the soup after him. My mom made some kind of, something to eat, and I'd have to take it in a bucket and take it after him. And then he'd always say go up to the aunt. They owned a bakery, and I used to get a Semmel, which was a bakery bread. You know, really good.

DALLETT: What was it called?

HAAS: Semmel.

DALLETT: Semmel.

HAAS: Uh-huh. Yeah that, and sometimes he'd wait for me and we'd walk home together at night, evening.

DALLETT: Were your grandparents also living there?

HAAS: They were living there, yes. It is the custom in Germany to, that the oldest son usually gets the home

place, see. Actually, my uncle George had been older, but he came to this country. He never got back, just like me. So my dad was younger, and so he took the home place. And my grandpa and grandma, they lived in what you'd call a stubel. They had a little room extra, built for them, in the back where they lived.

DALLETT: So when you left you were having to say goodbye to a much larger family.

HAAS: Yeah. I went down to see my aunt. My dad had a sister living in the little village. I went down to see them. There was four kids there. Two boys, three boys and three girls.

DALLETT: Can you imagine, can you remember at all what it was like at that point, where you imagined you were going to?

HAAS: Yeah. I didn't know where I was going to. It took a lot of nerve. No, I didn't know should I go or should I not go. But we had a very good teacher. His name was Herman Konig. During the war we had about sixteen teachers a year, different teachers. They were all being drafted, see. And finally when the war was over we got this one good Herman Konig, his name, and he was real good man. He wouldn't give you no licking. He would

take you out, put his arms around you and help you. It was quite a difference in the teachers. So he was out in the garden. I walked by and he said, I said, "Mr. Herman Konig, I have something to ask you." He put down his robe, and he come and puts his arms around me and says what have I got to ask you. I says, "I could have a chance to got to the States." "You have?", he said. "I'll come down and talk to your dad tonight." So I went home, I told them that he was coming, and he, I listened upstairs. My ma chased us to bed. We slept under the roof, with no windows or nothing. And I could hear him coming down, tick, tick, tick, tick. And he came in our house. When they went down I got, in my nightshirt, I went downstairs and listened through the keyhole. (He laughs.)

DALLETT: What did he say?

HAAS: Okay. He said, "Let him go." (He laughs and cries.) So he sent the papers to the States, see, to my uncle and he, you know, asked if it was okay. He sent me filed with the immigration department, and I got number, 31. And they wrote me a letter, they wrote my dad a letter, that said after so many days they called me, when my number comes up, see. Wasn't too long, he called. They

wrote a letter like that. If I'm still interested, I should come to Munich, to the consul. So I went to Munich. That trip I took alone. That was pretty nervy. And I had an aunt living in Munich. My mother had a sister there, and her husband. So I went to them, see, and they took me the next day to the consul. And the first thing this guy asked me, "have you got ten bucks?" I says, "Yes." Okay. Got to give him the papers and all that. And he says, "Sit down there." And he wasn't gone for ten minutes he come back with the passport and the visa stamped in there. There was no questions asked. It wasn't like with my younger brother, you know, when they found out he was a mason's son instead of a farmer's son, they, they just tore it up and threw it in the wastebasket. Never got to come. So he was, one of the first ones. He was the next to me, George. It was quite an experience. But when I went to Waldmunchen, I mean, all the people, all in my home town, they all went out looking. They never expected that I would take off, you know, but I took off. All on myself. Then it was such a terrible time till we got to Bremen, uh, Hamburg. At that time the Allies took all the locomotives and trains away from Germany, war reparations. And they took, the train couldn't, they were hanging on, they were sitting on the roofs, on the outside. Then the engine couldn't

pull us. So they had to stop so often it took a long time until we got to Hamburg. When we got to Hamburg, the guy come out, I had a tag, it said Hamburg-American Lines. You know, that was the company, how that was. And they said I had to put it on my hat or someplace to show it, and some, the representative would pick me up. And sure enough, the guy had me by the neck and says, "Come on here." He says, "Are you the--" You know, he had the record on there and everything. He says, "You have to stay, the boat is under construction, under repair. It will be two days, three days delay." They had to put a new propeller on. So he says, "You can stay here in a hotel or go out to a home." So I stayed here, in the city. Then next day, he said whenever the boat's ready we'll come and get you. He came, and he took us off. There was another, a train ride from Hamburg, out from Hamburg to Cuxhaven. And then he took us out there. He took, there was another, by that time he had two more fellows. They were on the same boat. Then I got out to the boat and they got aboard and, well, it wasn't very long that I was about the only one. I, we had cabins with three, and I had to crawl up. I was on top. And I was the youngest. Yeah, the bunk on top. (He laughs.) The same as Ellis Island. They had those bunks, and you climbed up there. And they, then they went out and they

gave you a blanket, and then you had to crawl up on top. I was the youngest one, the smallest one, so that's where I spent the eleven days, up on top there. It was interesting.

DALLETT: Tell me about the boat on the way over.

HAAS: Well, the boat was an old boat. See, Germany, they took all the boats away from them too, that time. It was, it took sixteen days. A real slow one. Half of the time I was sick, seasick. Really was seasick. Boy, believe you me. I thought we were never going to get across. Then finally one guy came at dinnertime. Most people, at dinnertime, I hardly ever went to dinner because I couldn't. I had to throw up right away. Then finally one day a guy come and says, "There's land out there." So, of course, that's when everybody went upstairs and took a look, see. They come down along the coast, along New England, see, the boat, you could see land. Then the guy came up, he says, "Take another ten hours before you get to New York." Finally we got to New York, we stopped out in the harbor. Then I, they brought a guy up, a medic, a medicine man. We had to show our vaccination papers, see. Then they went down, then they took us in the boat. All American citizens could go off, but the aliens had to stay. So they stayed overnight in the harbor that night. Then the next morning--

DALLETT; You stayed overnight on the boat in the harbor?

HAAS: Overnight on the boat in the harbor, yeah. Uh-huh. Then the next morning they got us and a boat came up on the side of the ship, and they had a stair we go down, down. We went down there and then they went out, then they took off. They went out to Ellis Island. All of a sudden, we got to Ellis Island. Somebody opened the door, and we all walked in, and then each one had, I had a card. And I had a yellow card. I was wondering why. See, that doctor, when he came on board, he did the exam on me, and he must have somehow, whatever he put on there, most guys had a white card, I had a yellow one. Then we walked down on the end. Looked just like a church. On the end there was a guy sitting, and we went down there. "Next, next, next." And he came on your papers and he motioned you through.

DALLETT: How do you mean it looked like a church?

HAAS: Well, it was just the way it was pews, you know, like pews. And you just slid down on the pews till you got to the end. It was interesting. And I think back now, the man looked at my papers and gave me, that was in my hand, and he says, "You carry that in your hand, you know." So I carried it in my hand. Some guys got off sooner. And I thought, well, they'll take us someplace that I'm supposed to go through. First we went downstairs. Then you have to have, show ten dollars. You have to have ten

dollars cash before they would let you out on land, see.

DALLETT: You had to have money.

HAAS: You had to have a little money, see. My uncle sent me that. And I bought a box of--

DALLETT: This was on the boat? Sorry? That you were asked about the money, or on Ellis Island?

HAAS: On Ellis Island before they put me on the, when I had my examination, then. They asked me right away. Then I showed them my ten bucks, and he said, "You won't have nothing to eat now for, from New York to Chicago." So we, they had boxes there that you could buy for two dollars. There was a banana in there, an apple. So I bought one.

DALLETT: Now, why was it, sorry, why did you have a yellow card and everybody else had a white card?

HAAS: I don't know. It must have been, that's why when I got, when I, when they walked down that ramp, most guys had a white card went to different direction, see. And I got to the gate. All of a sudden the guy grabbed the yellow card and the officer grabbed me by the shoulder, opened the door, and pushed me in the Ellis, into that chamber.

DALLETT: And they didn't explain why?

HAAS: Nobody said a word. Nobody could talk English, German. See, I asked something in German and they wouldn't answer you. They didn't know the language, see. They pretended they didn't know.

DALLETT: There was no translator there to help you.

HAAS: No, no questions asked. It was kind of a sad place. There was different people. They come in at night. People were really somewhat disorganized. Most of them running around naked and everything else. It was something to see. So it was interesting. I wasn't a bit scared. When I finally--

DALLETT: So, but before you said that the reason you were detained was because on these two lines, whether you were going to go to school or work, they weren't filled out. So at what point at Ellis Island did you find out that was the reason you were being detained?

HAAS: Not, no. They never told me.

DALLETT: You didn't know why you were detained.

HAAS: They never told me. They never, I didn't find that until

I got back to Spring Green. My uncle told me that those papers came and he sent them right back.

DALLETT: No one ever explained why they kept you there?

HAAS: They just kept you there. That was really-- Didn't even talk to nobody, because everybody had a different language, you know. There was only about two of us Germans in there. The rest of them were from different countries.

DALLETT: What did you do there for the eleven days?

HAAS: Nothing. Just sit on the bench. They had all the windows boarded shut so you couldn't even see out in the harbor. That was something I didn't like.

DALLETT: The windows were--

HAAS: All boarded shut. Like pasteboard, you know. You couldn't see out in the harbor at all. Not from the hall we were in. It was--

DALLETT: And you couldn't go outside?

HAAS: No. I suppose they wouldn't let you go because they's figured you'd run away, see. Closed. Everything was locked, tight.

DALLETT: Now, there's one room they called the Great Hall. Were you in a very large room?

HAAS: Yeah. It was quite large.

DALLETT: And those windows were--

HAAS: They were boarded shut. They were closed shut.

DALLETT: And no one could ever explain to you?

HAAS: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: Did you know that it wasn't a medical reason, or whether--

HAAS: Yeah. No, I just guesses it myself. I think I was that bad off. I felt all right and everything. But it was a slow time. I just had to wait. Every day a guy come in and hand out some papers, letters, and something like that, whatever. Because some of the people, when the guy come in, everybody rushed for the door, naturally.

DALLETT: Waiting to see what--

HAAS: Waiting to see what's up, yeah.

DALLETT: Where did you sleep?

HAAS: Oh, they had the, something like chicken crates, you know, bunks. And at night when you went into the schlafen-- You see, that they announced in the different languages.

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

HAAS: Sleep, schlafen. They give you a blanket and, threw a blanket at you. Then you went in the room, see. And right next to it was a toilet and washer room next to it. And there were all kinds of people in there. The first time I seen colored people. I had never seen any colored people before, because in Germany we don't have any. We didn't have any. We have some now, but we didn't have any then. I learned in school they had people who were black, you know, but I never, never seen any. Then a lady come in, she must have had ten kids. And one blacker than the other one. And they were just, like, shh. Just like that. Boy, very interesting. I looked.

DALLETT: So all day you would just sit in this room, and at night you'd go into a smaller room.

HAAS: Into a smaller room where you slept, yeah.

DALLETT: There was nothing to do.

HAAS: Nothing to do. You tried to look out, but there only, which was closed, but you couldn't look out either.

DALLETT: Were you afraid that you would be sent back?

HAAS: At first I was kind of wondering whether I would be sent back or what's going on. But then I knew there was nothing wrong with my papers except, they were okay. They gave me the visa to enter, so. My passport, I can't find that thing any more. I don't know what I did with that passport, what happened to it.

DALLETT: I'm just going to flip the tape over, okay. That's the end of side one of Interview Number 426, [SIC, DP-52], with Mr. Joseph Haas.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two, "B", of Interview Number 426, [SIC, DP-52], with Mr. Joseph Haas. We're all curious here,

now, bout what happened, more on Ellis Island. What did you eat there?

HAAS: Well, I would eat, the thing was just in the morning, and you'd get up. They came in with a little iron rod, they just poked you with those things, and you had to get up. They rang the bell.

DALLETT: They poked you with an iron rod to get you up?

HAAS: Uh-huh. Boy, you got up, that's for sure. And then we marched into a dining hall, a long table in the middle and they fed us fairly well. I mean, I'd say satisfactory. They had breakfast, they had cereal, which I wasn't used to, which we never had in Germany. We never had anything like that. They don't have that. Then they--

DALLETT: Was it hot cereal or a cold cereal?

HAAS: No, it was. oh, they had milk and all. You know, they had pitchers of milk and everything. And then you just watched the next guy did, because I never seen anything like this before. Then he blew the whistle, and then you were supposed to end, but that was it, you know. The guy in the table. Then everybody had to get up and walk out. It was just like in the army. Then I got out, you know, because we sat in the hall there all day. And a couple of times a guy would come in. You know, so I thought, well, I'd go and ask him. I'd go over and over and ask him why

(German). And--

DALLETT: What's that?

HAAS: "Why am I here?" You know, I was going to ask. And he just pretended he couldn't, didn't understand me. So I just kept going. Then one day, it was a Saturday, he, a guy came in. He called, "Joseph Haas?" "Gee," I said. That sounded like my name. So I walked over, I looked at this card, and I see my name on there. So I tapped him on the shoulder. He looked down, he says, "Is that you?" I says, "Yeah." It's a little guy. Then he talked good German. He says, "Come on." Mach schnell." Hurry up. He says we want to get out of here, it's Saturday. So he took me down and then down to be, to have my political examination, all that kind of stuff, you know, "Why did you leave Germany?" All this. And you have to throw off your country, you know, and all that.

DALLETT: Tell me. Tell me about that. What did they ask you?

HAAS: Oh, they asked me why did I leave. And, well, I told them that I was one of eight children, I'm the oldest, and eats were scarce, and I had to go someplace, so I had the chance, and I took off. And then from there on they took me down to another room.

DALLETT: Tell me more about that, because you said you had to swear off your old country.

HAAS: Yeah.

DALLETT: I mean, you weren't becoming a citizen now, you were just coming to this country. But they were asking you (?). What did they ask you?

HAAS: Yeah. Well, at that time, you see, there was quite a hatred against Germany after the First World War, and they just asked you whether, what I thought of, whether I was against the United States too, you know. But I, I had said no, I didn't. My folks didn't either. But they asked a few questions like that, you know.

DALLETT: Now, was this in German?

HAAS: That was in German, yeah. That was in German. And one guy come up over the side, he said to this guy, they questioned him, he says, "Oh, er ist noch jung." What does he know, he's too young." And they let me go, they took me off.

DALLETT: Now, this was another official at Ellis Island?

HAAS: Uh-huh.

DALLETT: That said, "What does he know, he's too young?"

HAAS: Yeah. It was a different guy. The guy that was there, you know.

DALLETT: As though you'd be too young to be involved in politics.

HAAS: To be involved in anything like that, yeah.

DALLETT: And then they just said--

HAAS: And then they just, you know, then I took off. Then I went downstairs, and he says, "You wait, you wait here now." Then they came up with a boat on the side of the harbor, you now. And we walked down to that boat, went down. I'll never forget that. And then they started up the Hudson River. And they'd stop at all the railroad stations. All of a sudden I seen New York, New York Central. That I could read, because it was almost like in German, New York Central. New York Central. Then he stopped there. And then I got off, he told me to get off. And we got on there on trains. And then I went to Chicago. And there was, the whole car was all immigrants, that one car.

DALLETT: From all over?

HAAS: All over, from different countries. It was just on, two of us Germans there, another guy. He got off in

Chicago. So when I got to Chicago and I got off, you know, the conductor says, "Get off." You know, a black guy grabbed my suitcase. I never seen anything like that, you know, black, never. And he was nice and took off, and I after him. And they had, they threw us in the back of an old truck. And from New York Central to Chicago, Milwaukee St. Paul Railroad. See, they took us over to a different depot. They opened the door, pushed me in, closed the door and locked it.

DALLETT: This was like a porter who did this?

HAAS: Yeah, a porter, yeah. Must have been a porter. And--

DALLETT: He was helping you, but you didn't know what--

HAAS: Yeah. He couldn't talk to me, see? It was really something. Then I was in there for several hours, you know. Then finally I heard some key, he opened up the door, he grabbed my, the same bag, and like grabbed my suitcase and took off. And then he went to Chicago-Milwaukee-St. Paul Railroad, see. On the train in Chicago, through to Spring Green. To Madison.

DALLETT: To go where?

HAAS: To Madison first, then to Spring Green. Because my aunt, my uncle had paid the ticket from, from New York to Madison. So I had to pay a dollar and eighty cents on top from Madison to Spring Green. You see, that's about another sixty miles. So I got the tickets and the conductor, and the guy come up talking German to me, told me I had to pay another so much on top. Then they put the ticket in the train, you know, on the side. Then from Chicago to Milwaukee I slept. I didn't know when I got to Milwaukee. That's about the only sleep I had then till I got to Spring Green, after Madison, you know. The guy says, "Oh, Spring Green is next." So I, the guy, the conductor took the thing off and told me to get off. And my uncle didn't know, my uncle didn't know anywhere, where I was. So there was a guy standing there, and he looked like a foreigner. He came up to me. He says, "Are you looking for George Haas?" I says, "Yeah. Are you George Haas?" Okay. Then he took me over to my uncle. He was--

DALLETT: Your uncle had sent this man over?

HAAS: No he just happened to be at the depot.

DALLETT: He just happened to be there and knew that.

HAAS: I walked up to him. He was Andrew Bikaufner.

DALLETT; Who was that man?

HAAS: Andrew Bikaufner was his name. Then he took me to my uncle, see. Then my uncle went to, his sister for dinnertime, see. But the train got to Spring Green at eleven o'clock. And then he went out and he started his car. That was about the first car ride I had. Then we went home to his house, and we had dinner. And we had lemon pie. He had two boys. They couldn't talk any German. One of them is still living. He lives in Florida. The other one died of a brain tumor during the war. So, then I started associating with the boys. They helped me in English, you know. They couldn't speak any German, so I just had to pick it up. And then, of course, school time came, and I went to school and it was less than six months, nobody knew I came from Europe.

DALLETT: You didn't speak German with your uncle?

HAAS: Oh, yes. That's about the only German I spoke. So it was quite an experience.

DALLETT: Want to pause a bit?

HAAS: Yeah. (Break in tape.) But, uh, but there was nobody

else I could talk German with, because the boys didn't know any German at all.

DALLETT: How old were the boys, your father's, your uncle's--

HAAS: Well, they were about a year and a half younger than me.

DALLETT: And you were fourteen at this time.

HAAS: I was fourteen. They would have been about twelve, you know. And all the kids was about twelve. They went to school with me.

DALLETT: What was it like when you first went into the school?

HAAS: That was funny. Everybody looked at me, naturally. And I can remember they gave me a book to, you know, and I couldn't read it. And they had a spelling class. That was the first thing, everybody went to the blackboard, see. So I didn't want to go. And the teacher finally came over and I, she said, "Go ahead." Well, I went up over there, too. Then we were given words, spelling, you know. And the kids, I looked at the next door, see what they wrote down, I kind of copied. Naturally, I got one of them wrong one time, I got S-H-I-T on there. (He laughs.) And I remember the girl said, she started giggling real loud, and of course I went and erased it right away. I knew there was something wrong. But that's the way it goes. But I enjoyed it. It wasn't very long. I met here at

Thanksgiving time. The teacher asked everybody to write an essay of their, of Thanksgiving. So I, of course, I didn't. I said, "We don't have Thanksgiving in Germany." So, I says, "I can't write anything." "You write something." So I wrote an essay, and the professor, the professor kept it. I'll bet it's still at Spring Green High School. I told them, you know, everybody was writing how big a turkey they have and all this and that, you know. And I said we had nothing. I explained that. And the teacher read that in the school. Those were hard days to forget. The boys that come home, with my uncle, you know, talked to me in German during mealtime. But I had to, I can remember, just about everything that went on. But we had a priest in there. His name was Bushelman. He was a German priest, and he would help me, so I, I spent so many afternoons over there. Once in a while he'd explain me the translation, because none of the teachers could talk German. So they couldn't translate anything for me. That's kind of tough.

DALLETT: So it wasn't, your uncle hadn't settled in a German community at all.

HAAS: No. It was all English. There was only about three Germans in the whole village.

DALLETT: Do you know why it was he came to that particular place?

HAAS: Well, on account of his business. He had to have, he got the, uh, my uncle got the, distribution for the

Miller Brewing Company.

DALLETT: He got what, sorry?

HAAS: He had the beer distributions.

DALLETT: Oh, he was a distributor.

HAAS: Distributor for the Miller Brewing Company and that, in Sauk County, Richland County, and Iowa County. And that was, Spring Green was the center location. That's why he settled there.

DALLETT: Could you write back and forth to your family?

HAAS: Oh, yes. I wrote. When I left home, my mother came out.

I left my handkerchief lay on the table. She brought it out. She said, "You've got to write me every, you've got to write me all the time." And I promised I'd write every week. And every week I'd write a letter. So I kept my promise. And my dada, too. Oh, I was, it was pretty hard. But at that time I didn't know whether I was going to get back any more or not, you know. I was going out in the world all by myself. Didn't know a soul in this country. I'd never seen my uncle, but he was a good one. He was a good fellow. He was just like my

dad. Yeah, he was good. And his brother, the other uncle, he was just the opposite. He was very wealthy, he got wealthy, and he grew up in the country, and he drank it all away. And he had, he had nine children. Some of them are still living. First cousins of mine, see.

DALLETT: How long did it take, how many years or whatever, till you began to feel comfortable?

HAAS: Oh, it took about, it took, I felt at home un my uncle's places though, right away. Because I knew anything like that I could go to him.

DALLETT: But there was so much new to get used to and--

HAAS: Everything was new.

DALLETT: It was frightening.

HAAS: Yeah. No matter what you take, it was always different, you know. At school was funny. They would always have, they'd go out and have, like, arithmetic, you know. She'd give the arithmetic and I'd have it finished before she got through. Because I used the metric system, see. They didn't. They used fractions. In Germany we didn't have any fractions. We had the metric system, much better. So I wrote my examinations like the

rest of them did, and I always figured everything in metrics, yeah.

DALLETT: Can you remember some of the other things that were unusual or hard to get used to as a kid? I can imagine everything must have been--

HAAS: Everything was different. Even they put on, to hold onto a shovel. I did a lot of work, you know, around the house, you know. I mean, I split all the wood that time for, at that time my uncle burned wood, you know. And they'd buy the wood from the farmer, and we'd cut it up, and I did all that. But what you took hold of and even the ax, everything's different. Different handles, you know.

DALLETT: The feel of the tools, you mean?

HAAS: No, I mean the handles. Everything was different, hung different than the European. No matter what you called it was different. Of course, like, we never had plates. We ate on one dish. Everybody, eight kids. There wasn't such a thing. In Germany we had one dish, in the middle. Ma put the stuff in the middle, and that was it. Potatoes were on the outside. It was tough. Usually, we ate a lot of sauerkraut, you know, and stuff like that. Turnip kraut. It was our main, one of our main meals.

DALLETT: What was it?

HAAS: Turnip kraut. I mean, turnip, it was just like sauerkraut. Meat we hardly ever seen. I never seen any meat. We just didn't have it. Got along without.

DALLETT: So you were very, were you very thin and frail when you first came?

HAAS: Yeah. I was always undernourished. Many times we didn't have a thing in the house. Eight kids. And we couldn't get anything, either. You couldn't even see anything, the other guy didn't have anything either.

DALLETT: But that wasn't the case when you came here, and with your--

HAAS: No. That was completely different. They had everything, you know. I can remember when I went to Waldmunchen to have my vaccination, to the doctor. And he says, he vaccinated me, and he said, "Where are you going?" I said, "To the United States." He said, "I wouldn't want to go over there." He said, "You can't even get a glass of beer." They had Prohibition at that time, see? He said, "A glass of beer is better for you

than anything else." I often think of that. Then Prohibition came up. It was worse than, there was more drunks here. You wouldn't see hardly anybody drunk over there, but here they were. Everybody was operating, you go in, you go there and, you're supposed to support the Constitution, you know, the 16th Amendment, and then they'd go home and see ma and pa operate the brewery. It just didn't make sense.

DALLETT: Did you ever go back to Germany?

HAAS: Yeah. I went back in '32. I got married. On a wedding trip. I went back and I didn't tell my folks I was coming. I walked in on them.

DALLETT: What was that like?

HAAS: It was different. My ma was sitting at home. I tapped her on the shoulder and she says, "Who are you?" She says, "Is that Joe?" She couldn't believe it. My dad, too. He was playing cards and I was just going to put my coat on and go down and sit beside him. And he comes in the door, he says, "It's the same little devil like he used to be." (He laughs and cries.) He couldn't believe it. But I made it. You know, my ma was just surprised. When I got off the bus, I walked by into the station there. I saw my sisters Rose and Anne walked by me shoulder to shoulder. I didn't,

I knew them, but they didn't know me. That's because they were all younger. You see, I was the oldest. I'd grown up since then. So that's the last time we were together. Then my dad got killed a couple of years later, going to church Sunday morning, with a motorcycle.

DALLETT: He was hit by a motorcycle?

HAAS: No. He, they had gravel on the road, and he slipped and hit a telephone pole, killed himself. So my mother went through the Second World War all be herself. She had all the boys in the army, the rest of them. There's one brother left living yet. And he's all wounded, see. He was really wounded. A shell hit the whole, killed all the rest, the five guys. And he lost all his cheeks, in the back. He's still living. Then they took him back to Germany and healed him up. Then they put him against the Americans in Italy, with his wounds. That's when he came home. He walked home. There was no trains or nothing. When I had a 1-A, I was registered in Sauk County, which was all farmers, see. So I had no 1-A right away. I was of military age, see. So when I--

DALLETT: You got 1-A because you were a farmer?

HAAS: No, because I was, I lived in the village of Spring Green which is, the rest of the people, they couldn't find nobody else. So if they was able they got a 1-A. So I went to work at Badger Ordinance plant during the

height of the beginning of the Second World War. And then I was going to work in the plant and they wouldn't hire me because I was of German birth. So I told them to keep his job. I came to Milwaukee. That's the reason I'm in Milwaukee. And I worked in a Supercharger plant here in Milwaukee, which was a, they made carburetors for aircraft. So I got to lead men down there, lots of questions asked.

DALLETT: Were you a citizen by then?

HAAS: Yes. Oh, sure.

DALLETT: And they were questioning you?

HAAS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yes.

DALLETT: Was there a lot of that here during the Second World War?

HAAS: Oh, there was quite a bit.

DALLETT: Discrimination against Germans.

HAAS: Uh-huh. Oh, yeah. Like I was working up on the roof, and I looked down, there was a guy, a couple of guys standing down there,

some kind of officers of some kind. And they got a hold of my boss and they wanted me, they wanted him to fire me because I was of German birth. And he says, "What the heck? You want me to fire the best man I got?" I had no problem in the Supercharger plant, though. No problem. I mean, I went in there and I was lead man right away, too.

DALLETT: Tell me about your family. We have some of your family here.

MRS. HAAS: We're extended family here. We're not really part of it.

HAAS: Well, I got married, and my wife passed away. We had four children. They are all occupied now, pretty well. One of them is a priest, a Catholic priest, and the other one is an executive for the State of Wisconsin and the other one is an artist, a world famous artist. And the daughter works for Ellen Bradley.

DALLETT: She's living in El Paso.

HAAS: She's in El Paso.

DALLETT: And works for Ellen Bradley.

HAAS: She was sent to Europe for four years for the company,

international department. So they are scattered all over, you know. They're okay. They're all placed all over with their positions.

DALLETT: And you settled here in Milwaukee.

HAAS: I settled in Milwaukee in 19, that was in 1943. So I've been here ever since. Then I left Supercharger, and they closed after that after the war because there was no more war material. Then I went Harnischfeger Corporation. And I worked there for seventeen years. And there, too, I was lead man. I did machine repair work, fixed the big machines. That's something that I really liked, machinery.

DALLETT: Okay. We're just about to run out of tape here. I think I've asked you what I need to, unless anybody wants to add anything else? No? Thank you very much, Mr. Haas. And that 's the end of side two of Interview Number 426, [SIC, DP-52], with Mr. Joseph Haas. And the time is, it's 3:25.