

**EI-1042**

**ANDREW RESETAR**

**BIRTHDATE: JULY 17, 1913**

**INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 13, 1999**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 85**

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

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**CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1920**

**AGE: 7**

**SHIP: NEW AMSTERDAM**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: Today is March 13, 1999. I'm here in Venice, Florida with Mr. Andrew Resetar, who came from Czechoslovakia at the age of seven in 1920. [clears throat] This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and we'll start at the beginning. If you would say your birth date and where in Czechoslovakia you were born.

RESETAR: I was born July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1913 in the village called Pondelok—P-O-N-D-E-L-O-K. And the translation from Pondelok to English would be Monday. Pondelok in Slovak is Monday in English.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: And it's a little village in Slovakia.

LEVINE: Can you describe it, what you remember as a s—seven-year-old?  
[chuckles]

RESETAR: Of course, my father died when I was 11 months old. And my mother then was bringing us up. And she was the town—I guess you could call it—policeman, because she had to get up twice a night and patrol the village to see that nothing was wrong. And she also got the news of the day. In a certain time during the day right near our home she would go on this bridge and give out the news, and the whole village would be listening to her.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness! Now, would this be local news or would it be—

RESETAR: It could be anything and I really don't remember how she got the news.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: But it was her job to do that and I suppose she got some pay for it because she was r—raising three of us boys.

LEVINE: Wow. What kinds of things do—do you remember any incidents—kinds of things that she took care of in the night when she would patrol? What kinds of incidents can you—

RESETAR: It—it was a very slow moving village. Nothing ever happened. And I think that before my time, even—I remember some of it—our village had ovens that the men would make different bowls for the roofs, shingles. And they would have to, at the beginning of the year, say when they would be ready to put their stuff into these ovens. And they would fire them up and they would be finish units, whatever it was. Then they would also take these things into Hungary. We were right near the border of Hungary. And my mother would go and sell them. And she would also—everything was made from clay. And they would go into these clay caverns that were maybe three, four feet high. That's all. They'd go on their knees into these caverns, dig out the clay and pull it out and then work it into different things.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: It was really backbreaking work.

LEVINE: Mmm. Now, was Pondelok known for its clay? Was that its major—

RESETAR: I suppose it was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

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RESETAR: And we also had a—a spring that—about half a mile out of the village that was one of these springs that the water was shooting out of the ground all the time. I forget what—what it's called.

LEVINE: Is that a sulfur spring? Sulfur?

RESETAR: Well—

LEVINE: No?

RESETAR: No.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: So, anyway.

LEVINE: Anyway—

RESETAR: We would—this is where we would get our drinking water.

LEVINE: Oh.

RESETAR: And we'd go out there, fill up our jugs, bring them home for the drinking water, even though we had a creek that ran right behind our property. But this water seemed to be better.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-huh.

RESETAR: Artesian wells, I think, is the term.

LEVINE: Oh.

RESETAR: If I'm not wr—you know, not mistaken.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was your mother's name?

RESETAR: Mary.

LEVINE: And her maiden name? [telephone rings] Whoops.

RESETAR: The maiden name was—

LEVINE: Maybe we'll pause. [tape off/on] Okay. We're resuming now. And if you would say your mother's maiden name and spell it, please.

RESETAR: Well, it was Mary Vyhrach. And the spelling is V-Y-H-R-A-C-H.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, okay.

RESETAR: And I don't know whether that really—I suppose it's a Slovak pronou—name. And she married very young and, of course, had three boys in Europe. And then when we moved to United States, she had six boarders and worked in a factory eight hours a day.

LEVINE: Wow. Okay, wait. I want to p—[tape off/on] okay, we're resuming here. [clears throat] Let's see. You were telling about your mother. Let's—let's talk about life in Czechoslovakia before we go on to life in this country.

RESETAR: Well, of course, I was very young at that time and I do have a memory of some things. As an example, the first time that we ever saw a car of any kind, auto car, it was a pickup truck and it was in the wintertime. And I ran after truck barefooted for about two miles. I was so excited in seeing the car. Now, the homes there were made something like adobe in southwest of our country here. And the walls were about two feet thick and they had double windows. And between the double windows, my mother would have flowers. Now, our—our home had three rooms, a kitchen that was very big. We used that kitchen for a living room. I think us kids slept there. And then there was a middle room and a bedroom. And at first, my grandfather used to sleep in that th—third room. And of course, we had outdoor plumbing and dirt floors in the house. And it was—well, it—I am the one that found my grandfather dead. I saw water pouring out of his room. And I had gone out for something early in the morning. And I wondered what was—why was there water running out of there. So I opened the door and he had gotten up for something and—and knocked over a big pitcher. And he was on the floor, dead.

LEVINE: Hmm. Do you remember the funeral ceremony there?

RESETAR: No. My mother, though, was, again—whether she got paid for that, I'm not sure—but she played the organ in church. And we also rang the bell for the church service. And I used to like to do that because the bell was on the end of a big, long rope. And I'd pull that rope and it would pull me up a little bit and pull—let me down and—what—one—one time, our—our daughter had her junior year of college in Austria. So my wife and I picked her up after her year was up. And I told them. I says, "As long as we're here, I'll show you where I was born." So we went to Czechoslovakia and I was completely fluent when we went over the border. They were amazed that a seven-year-old kid had retained the language so well.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: Well, we came to our village and they were in the process of changing the name of the village. I don't even know what the name was anymore. And I asked the lady that was coming towards us, "Isn't this Pondelok?" And she said, "Yes, it was. But we're just changing the name." So then I told my wife and daughter, "Well, that's the house I was born in." And there's a story about that too, about the house because—

LEVINE: Go ahead.

RESETAR: —when we left, my mother sold the house to our next door neighbor—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: —who was the mayor of the village. Well, when I'm about 14 years old and I was asking my mother, "Mom, I didn't see any checks coming from Europe. What—what's wrong?" "Oh, he didn't give us any money." "You mean to tell me he just stole the house?" "Well, I guess you could say that." And then I asked her. I says, "Can't we get the house back?" I says—she says, "Yes, but it would cost us 2, \$300. We'd have to have a lawyer." I said, "Well, why don't we do that then and give it to your widow friend, who has three daughters?"

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: "And give it to her for nothing." And I thought that it was one of the daughters when I knocked on the door of the house that would answer the door. So a lady answered the door and I told her who I was. And did she mind if I would show my wife and daughter the inside of the home? She said, "Well, I'm not one of those daughters. We bought the place from them. But you may come in and see anything you want." And the big improvement in the house was a carpet over the dirt floor.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

RESETAR: So then I asked them if there were any Resetars left in the village. And she says, "Yes, right across the street." So sure enough, it was—one of the boys had grown, just like I had, and it was the older brother. And we went over and we had dinner with them. And they were the only house in the village that was finally getting indoor plumbing.

LEVINE: Hmm.

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RESETAR: And so then I asked him if we could go see the church. And at that time, it was still under communistic rule.

LEVINE: What year was it when you went—visited with your daughter in—

RESETAR: Oh, I'm not—I'm not sure what year it was.

LEVINE: Your daughter was—was graduating?

RESETAR: No, she had—

LEVINE: Or was she a junior?

RESETAR: Her junior year in college.

LEVINE: In college, uh-huh.

RESETAR: Yeah. And so he says, "I don't think we'll be able to get in because the pastor has to put in his eight hours work before he does his pastoral duties. And when he does that, he always locks the church." So we went out. Sure enough, the church was locked. And the streets were still dirt roads, and as far as I could tell, almost no improvement from the time I left when I was seven years old.

LEVINE: Wow. So did—did your mother, in fact, retain a lawyer and—and get the house to the widow with the daughter?

RESETAR: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: She did—she did all that.

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: From the United States. Wow.

RESETAR: Yes, she—she hired a lawyer and it cost, I think, between 2 and \$300. And he got the house back and she gave the house to the widow. Yep.

LEVINE: Oh, wow. Now, your grandfather, was that your mother's father or for father's father?

RESETAR: My—my grand—on the Resetar side.

LEVINE: The Resetar. And can you remember him? What kind of a person was he? How do you recall him?

RESETAR: I—I don't remember him at all. All I remember about him, that he was a very old man. Now, again, a very old man in those days was 65 years old, and I'm 85 already myself. So it's hard to talk about that.

LEVINE: Right.

RESETAR: And as an example of that, my in-laws lived with us their last few years. And my father-in-law was only 75 years old. And when I think back, he was so old. And here I am, 85.

LEVINE: It's all relative isn't it? Yeah, uh-huh. Well, do you—did you know your Grandmother Resetar?

RESETAR: No.

LEVINE: No.

RESETAR: Never saw her or anything.

LEVINE: No.

RESETAR: And evidently, my mother's side of the family must have been fairly wealthy because—and this is—I'm not positive of this at all. But I think that I remember somebody saying that there was a—a duke or something in our family background.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. Now, how about your mother's mother and father? Do you recall them?

RESETAR: No, never—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: Never saw them.

LEVINE: Now, was your mother's family and your father's family from the same area—

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: —in Czechoslovakia?

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: And that went back—

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: —a ways.

RESETAR: Yes, both families—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: —went way back.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: And so your—your brothers' names.

RESETAR: Well, my oldest brother's name was John. And he was 16 years old when we came to this country and he went right into the coalmines to work immediately.

LEVINE: In Pennsylvania?

RESETAR: In Pennsylvania. We went to a town called New Kensington, which is right near Pittsburgh. It's about 18 miles north of Pittsburgh on the Allegheny River. So he went right to work in the coalmines. And of course, Paul was about three years older than me. And he and I went to school, starting in January.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, first, if we could just talk more about Czechoslovakia, had you been to school in Czechoslovakia before you came?

RESETAR: That is a funny question because I went to one grade and my oldest brother went to eighth grade—through eighth grade. And every Christmas time they would have a competition in each grade, who, I suppose, were the—were the best students. Well, it so happened that my brother, John, won the eighth grade honors and I won the first grade honors. And I still have the Bible that was my prize for being the best student in the first grade. It's, of course, in Slovak.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: I try to read it now and I can't do it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, anything else about—about the town? I mean—

RESETAR: Well, it was—the town was—I would say it was half Protestant and half Catholic. And on one end of the village was the Protestant church. On the end of the village was the Catholic church. And they lived together as one.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Never any trouble at all, as you see it as an example in Ireland.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Nothing like that ever happened. And I am very, very sorry that Czechoslovakia now is Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Because they had the best of both worlds. Slovakia is definitely all agriculture and the Czech Republic is all industry. The first university in the world happened to be in Prague, Czechoslovakia.

LEVINE: Hmm, hmm.

RESETAR: So I was—I was quite a student in the history of—especially since I taught history here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And you were a Protestant family?

RESETAR: Yes, we were Lutherans.

LEVINE: Lutherans, uh-huh. And were you—I guess you were religious. Your mother played the organ in the—

RESETAR: Oh, yes. Yes, we were always S—every Sunday in church.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And do you remember any religious occasions and how they were celebrated there?

RESETAR: Well—

LEVINE: Anything different from here?

RESETAR: As I said, it was a very poor village. There was one man. I think he was some sort of a baron, they called him. He was the richest man in

the village and he had a big residence right next to our church. And every Christmas he was have everybody in the village for a celebration in a very—I—I suppose it was a hall type thing. And he'd have everybody there and most of the children would get presents—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: —of some kind.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what would happen? Would there be food and—

RESETAR: Oh, food—

LEVINE: Music?

RESETAR: —and music and everybody together and having a good time.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Yep.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds as though you have fond memories of—of the village.

RESETAR: Ah, I suppose so. Of course, I was so young that I wasn't aware of the troubles that, as an example, that my mother had. I was always outgoing all my life. And I knew when everybody ate their dinners in that village.

LEVINE: How did you know?

RESETAR: And I knew what they ate. And nine times out of ten I'd be leaning up against the kitchen door in the village that had the best food that night. And they'd ask me, "Andy, are you—are you hungry?" "Well, yes." "Did you eat today?" "No." "Would you like to eat?" And most of the time I had my dinners here, there and everywhere throughout the village. And I would always bring a slice of bread home to my two brothers. And they'd fight over the slice of bread. So again, I had it very good.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And I had nothing to complain about.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, you made it your business to know who—who was cooking what and when?

RESETAR: Yes, I—I'd ask questions and, "What are you going to have tomorrow? What are you going to have Thursday?" or whatever day I was interested in. I was quite a character, I guess, in that village.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: And I don't know whether you would like to know about our trip to the United States or not.

LEVINE: Oh, definitely. How was it that it was decided that you would come when you did come? What—what were the circumstances around your leaving?

RESETAR: Well, that—we had two aunts here in this country. And I think that it was the writing between the sisters that had decided that it would be better for us over here than over there. And so my uncle sponsored us.

LEVINE: And where were they living? Your—

RESETAR: They were living in New Kensington.

LEVINE: Kensington, uh-huh.

RESETAR: Well, really, Arnold. New Kensington, Arnold and Parnassus were three towns of altogether about 90,000 people. And they were living there and he had a grocery store and butcher shop.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: So he sponsored us and we sold everything that we had and came here to this country. And there's quite a story about that too, about the trip itself.

LEVINE: Well, before—was it—was there any kind of departure or going away—

RESETAR: No.

LEVINE: —event? Do you remember actually leaving the town?

RESETAR: The only thing that I remember is that we had to go to the next village where there was train service. So we went to this train and got on the train.

LEVINE: How did you go from the village to the next town?

RESETAR: I think that somebody gave us a ride. I'm not aware of that, to tell you the truth.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: And we had quite a bit of luggage because we had rabbits. We had chickens and a few other things that my mother had killed everything that wasn't sold and cooked. So we had food on the way to the United States.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: And when we finally got to the boat and my mother had unwrapped the rabbit that she had roasted and cut up, there was mildew all over the meat. And she was going to throw it away. And a Hungarian fellow right near us, "You going to throw that away?" My mother said yes. "Oh, don't throw it away. I'll eat it." And he took this rabbit meat, scraped off the mildew and ate every bit of that rabbit.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: And on our way there, we had to change trains, I think, in Prague, Czechoslovakia. So I was holding onto my mother's skirt. And somebody just went between us and knocked my hand away from her skirt and I was lost. So there I was, seven years old, no—nobody around me that I knew. And so I decided to follow the crowd. And I went after the crowd, got out of the station and I couldn't see my mother or brothers. And, oh, I was really worried.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: And so then I went back into the station and it was emptied out by then and they saw me. What a relief that was.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: So then we went to—from Prague, we went to—I think it was Rotterdam to catch the boat. And we had a dinner there of fish. We never had fish before in our life. And we really didn't even know how to eat it or anything like that. So of course, we had our own food and

we ate some of that. And then when we went from the dining room to our sleeping quarters, ev—not everybody, but I would say three-quarters of the people had the fish in their hands. And they threw it in a corner. And there was a pile of fish about three, four feet high. Everybody had the same thing. They'd never ate the fish. You know, Czechoslovakians is a land-locked nation. And—

LEVINE: Now, was this in the dormitory area where they—

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: —put it all in the corner?

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And—

LEVINE: Why don't you mention the name of the ship?

RESETAR: It was New Amsterdam.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: New Amsterdam was the name of the ship. And I think—I'm not positive of this, but I think it took us about 28 days to get to the United States. Onboard the ship, I got the German measles. So I was, of course, in the hospital with my mother getting rid of the measles and my two brothers were roaming the ship alone. And we—we landed in New York harbor, Christmas Eve, 1920. And we were still in the hospital but the mea—measles were gone. And my two brothers were knocking on the window of the hospital. And my mother looked out and they were telling her that they're selling some kind of cakes for, I think, dollar or two dollars. And it was a three-layer cake. We should buy one for them. And she gave them the money and we were in heaven eating that cake. That's the first time we had anything like that.

LEVINE: Was this now on the ship or at Ellis Island?

RESETAR: On the ship.

LEVINE: On the ship. Do you remember the ship coming into the harbor? You were in the hospital so you—

RESETAR: [unclear] things that I remember, I do remember the Statue of Liberty. And of course, we heard about the Statue of Liberty, even in Czechoslovakia. And so we saw the—and it—it really represented to us freedom.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And it—it was quite a thrill to see that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And of course, then we—I don't remember just how we got off the boat and how we got to Ellis Island. But we did get to Ellis Island and it looked like for a while they were going to send us back to Czechoslovakia.

LEVINE: Because of the measles?

RESETAR: Because of the German measles, although I didn't have them anymore. And I guess that my uncle heard about it. Luckily, he came to pick us up. And how he maneuvered it that they didn't send us back, I don't know. But what a relief that was.

LEVINE: Well, did you—you—did your mother say anything to you? I mean, wh—what—the whole family was—was probably just frightened—

RESETAR: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —at that point.

RESETAR: Yeah, we were petrified in Ellis Island. And why, we were able to go to a movie. And of course, that was the first movie that I ever saw in my life.

LEVINE: Hmm.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

RESETAR: Wh—when we came out of the movie, they were giving every child a toy.

LEVINE: This was Christmas Day now?

RESETAR: Christmas Eve.

LEVINE: Christmas Eve.

RESETAR: And they were giving every child a toy. And when I came through, they gave me two stuffed—I don't remember what they were, but they were almost as big as I was. I was sure I was in heaven.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: And you know, the thing that makes me sometimes, I would say, pretty mad is when people start talking about this country, that they don't get this and they don't get that. Because, in my opinion, you could not have a better country than this one in this world. If you have what it takes in this country, I don't care who you are, you can make it and make a good living out of it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Because we did it. I could speak English, as an example, in three weeks. And some people—quite a few people, “We ought to have dual education.” Why dual? If you want to learn another language, go ahead and learn it when you're in high school or thereabouts, or when you get to college. But if you're not satisfied with this language, go where you came from, is my feeling. And I feel this with my whole heart and soul.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

RESETAR: I—I just—I just can't see it. And we—we went right to work. And as an example of “we went right to work,” I'm only going on eight. I was in business already. I started out my business with 10 cents every day. I'd buy 10 newspapers. I'd sell them for 20 cents. Then I would think, “Let's see. How many more can I sell?” If I sold the 10 real fast, then I got 20 more papers. Then I'd have 40 cents out of that. And then I think, ‘Well, three, four more papers.’ Well, then, I'd come home, give my mother all my money except 10 cents. And that was my starting salary or starting business for the next day. I also had a pile of copper, a pile of brass, a pile of aluminum. And when the pile would get big enough, I'd take it to the junkyard and get 30, 40 cents for it and give it to my mother. And all of us did that. And besides, my mother, as I said before, had the six boarders and worked eight hours a day. And she paid my uncle back every nickel that he advanced for us.

LEVINE: Wow. About the boarders, where—where were you living and what were the arrangements for the boarders?

RESETAR: Well, I—that, I would really like to have even some pictures of the places that we lived. We first lived right back of the store where my uncle and his partner had a butcher shop and a grocery store. Now, that was really a shack. In—in those towns, they had the streets and they had alleyways between the streets. Between every two street was an alleyway running the same direction. So our house was on the alleyway. And that was really a—in today's world, you'd say a shed. But it had two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. And it did have, by—for a miracle, two bathrooms, a half a bathroom downstairs and a full bathroom upstairs. And so we really lived in the kitchen. And even there, I was a businessman because most of our men that boarded were coal miners. And so every day I'd have a hot tub of water for them. And every payday, each one gave me a quarter because I did that. And of course, the quarters went to my mother.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And then, not only that, but in those days we didn't have washing machines that were run by engines. You had to run your washing machine by hand. And so on Saturdays was clothes washing day. And I remember the boys would come, "Hey, Andy! How about coming out?" And, "We need a couple more men to play baseball." "I can't. I got three more loads of wash to do." And there I'd be, washing the clothes.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, when you say by—by hand, was it the kind of washing machine with the ringer or was it—

RESETAR: With a—with a ringer and a—and a hand sticking out connected to the agitator.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: You know, and—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: It'd be doing the same thing that a machine would be doing.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

RESETAR: But it would take 15 minutes a load.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

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RESETAR: And it was my job. I—come to think of it, I don't know how my middle brother got away with it, that I don't remember him doing any—although he did start working in the store before me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: Then my mother remarried one of the boarders.

LEVINE: Oh.

RESETAR: And she had one more boy, which—my stepbrother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: He's 10 years younger than me and he treats me like I'm his father.

LEVINE: I see.

RESETAR: And there was a very, very sad thing happened about that. My stepfather was as nice a person as you could ever meet but drunk. And so I came home one day. I guess I was about 14 years old and he's beating my mother.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: I was always big for my age. So I grabbed him by the collar and I—we lived on the second floor in—in our third house since coming to the United States. We were living in a [unclear] here. And so I grabbed him by the collar—his shirt, and I threw him down from upstairs. Then I told my mother. I says, "Where's his trunk? Get his stuff." And she got the trunk, put all his stuff down. I threw the trunk down the stairs and I called the taxi. Taxi came, picked him up and he left.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And about three weeks later, drunk again, he was hailing a streetcar and he thought the streetcar was stopping and it wasn't. And he smacked right into it and got killed.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: So I felt as though I was responsible for that. And for a long time, I—I felt very bad about that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Yep.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, of course, he could have been drunk going for a streetcar if he had still been with your mother.

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, how many boarders did you usually have when you had the boarders?

RESETAR: She had, almost always, about six boarders.

LEVINE: And did she continue to have boarders when she—when she remarried?

RESETAR: Yes. She—then she had maybe—maybe about four—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: —boarders.

LEVINE: And can you remember the boarders, the talk around the table? I mean, did she feed the boarders or was it—

RESETAR: She gave them breakfast, made lunch for them for their buckets, and then gave them dinner.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And then they paid so much for a week.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Can you remember them, what it was like? Were—were they mostly from Czechoslovakia?

RESETAR: Oh, all of them were.

LEVINE: Ah.

RESETAR: The only one I remember was on my stepfather's side, family. Very, very, very nice fellow. And he—I would say that he was more like my father figure than my stepfather was. He's a very nice fellow.

LEVINE: What kinds of fatherly things do you remember about him?

RESETAR: Well, he would always—he would always—when he'd see something wrong, you know, he'd come and, "You know, Andy, you should do

this. You should do that.” And, “Really, don’t do this,” or, “Don’t do that.” And—and he would do it in such a way that you would listen—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: —and remember.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And I’ll never forget him as long as I live.

LEVINE: Now, did he continue on as a boarder?

RESETAR: Y—yes. And then he—I don’t remember how all that finally disappeared. I think it disappeared during the Depression when I started to work. And—and my brother, also, was working and—and my oldest brother was working. So we were—we were in pretty good shape.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And my mother was working too in the aluminum company, Wearever Aluminum in New Kensington. That was the home base where Wearever Aluminum.

LEVINE: She worked in Wearever Aluminum even when she was taking care of six boarders with—

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: —with—with feeding them and—

RESETAR: She worked—she worked eight hours a day.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And I started working in the aluminum works also. And I think that I was 15 and she had to swear I was 16. And so I was working and a friend of mine kept trying to get us to quit. And so we were working different shifts. And this time, I was working the day shift and they wanted me to work the 2 to 10 shift without stopping. And he talked me into quitting and it was really a stupid thing to do, because jobs were hard to get. And we were living, again, behind the store that my uncle and his partner had. Now, though, they were living, or had its store in my uncle’s partner’s building. And so I was coming home and this gentleman happened to come out of the store. “What are you

doing home, Andy?" I says, "I just quit my job." "Oh, you did? You want to come work for us?" So, I—I wasn't out of a job a day. Next day, I was working.

LEVINE: Well, what was that job?

RESETAR: Well, it—I—again, I started to drive a truck.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: It was a Model T truck and I was delivering orders to coal mine towns. And I think the reason that he gave me that job is because I was pretty popular among the Slovak people. You know, they thought it was so wonderful, I suppose, that a lady with three boys, growing up so good. And they g—were giving us, maybe, credit where we didn't even deserve it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And so I got that job and I was working that job for about five years. And one day—this was before Christmas, about two weeks before Christmas—they bought a Model A truck and we turned the Model T in for that. And I was delivering orders to a place called Harmerville [PH] near—near Pittsburgh. And I had gone to my first customer. And all at once, I heard somebody hollering, "Butcher! Butcher!" And I knew they were hollering for me. And I ran out of customer's kitchen. And there was my truck going down towards the railroad track in a very, very—about a 25-foot, steep hill. And I couldn't stop it. I ran after the truck and it finally went down all the way to the railroad track. And there was a ditch there. And it had turned completely around and it fell over. So my brother had an—a Slovak orchestra, my oldest brother. He—I could, I think, write a book about him. It was a life wasted. That man could take any instrument, in a half hour, could play it. So I knew this man, who was in his orchestra, and a real strong man. And I knocked on the door. I said, "Paul, would you help me right the truck up?" "Oh, yeah. Sure." So we went down, put the truck back on the four wheels. And then I drove it on the railroad track to the first exit. The first exit, I had gotten out. Two minutes later, a train came on that same track. Boy, was I lucky.

LEVINE: Mmm.

RESETAR: But then I finally came home and, luckily, there wasn't that much damage but there was damage. And I told my boss. I says, "Well, look what happened to the truck." So they all went out and looked at the truck. "Oh, you really gave me a good Christmas present, Andy." I

said, "Well, I don't know whether I didn't put the brake up or whether some of the kids went in and loosened the brake and, fooling around, started the truck." And I says, "I don't know." So that was the only year I didn't get a Christmas present.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, how about [clears throat] the Depression? Could you talk a little bit about how it affected the family?

RESETAR: Well, again, I was the only one working during the Depression. I was paying our rent and my brother was—oldest brother was married already. And he had two—two boys. And I was paying his rent. And so my mother said, "Andy, I think we better buy a farm. We'll have, at least, something to eat." I said, "Well, Mom. Go ahead. You buy the farm. I—I have a job." I—I was making \$18 a week. And so she started to cry and—and I was the youngest one of the brothers, except for my stepbrother. We had him and so—and just before that, I had told my older brother. I says, "Paul, if I can talk Mr. Ripka [PH] into you taking my job, would you take the job or go back to school?" Said, "No, I don't want to go back to school," he says. So I talked to Mr. Ripka, who was our boss. And so Paul started working my job and I started school. Now, I'm about 18 years old now, 18, 19. And they had a rule in Pennsylvania where you couldn't play any sports until you had one semester in. So I was the football coach of the JV in Arnold, Pennsylvania. Then we moved, of course, to the farm. And there, they didn't know about that rule that you could—couldn't play.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And so I started school. And my mother had told me that I could buy my own car. I had about 2, \$300 saved up. And—but that 2, \$300 went for a team of horses. We moved there in November and, before we knew it, all our money was gone. And so, my \$300 went for a team of horses. And I had to walk for a ride to school. And it so happens that—that I was riding with the captain of the football team. His name was Perry Davis, a good friend of mine on the farm, about two miles away. And so, lo and behold, I took his job. I was the fullback on the team and he went back into being a halfback. In the history of the two schools—it was Korie [PH], Pennsylvania and Union City, Pennsylvania. Now, Union City was about 1/3 as big as Korie. They had never beaten Korie in the history of the schools. We beat them, I think, 23 or 24, nothing.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: And they haven't beaten them since. So I went to the coach. His name was Push. I says, "Coach Push, you know, I'm walking about

two miles in this mud and I'm filthy when I get here. Could you get me some gasoline money?" My brother—oldest brother had bought a '20—'24 Nash, brand new, when we still lived in New Kensington. And I think he paid—he paid, I think, \$1,800 for it, brand new Nash.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Had the best car in New Kensington. So that's what we had as a car. And, well, he says, "All right. I'll see if I can get you some money." So he came back to me. He said, "No, the school board won't allow it. They won't do it." So then I said, "Well, I quit. I—I'm not walking." And I says, "I'll get a job." So of course, I didn't have a job. I started a team, softball team of farmers. As I said, I dig in right away. No matter where I go, I dig in right away. I started a softball team. We beat everybody—every team around Erie, Pennsylvania. All at once, one young fellow, "Hey, Andy. My boss would like to have you play—play ball for us." "Tell him I'll play if he gives me a job." So about two days later, I had a job. And so that's the way it was with me all my life. I was very, very lucky.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So [clears throat] your—did your mother run the farm? Who—who was running the farm?

RESETAR: My oldest brother came with us, since he didn't have a job. And of course, he had the two boys already. And again, I—I can say this a million times, that his was a life wasted. He could build you a house. He could take your car apart, put it back together again and it would run better than it ever ran before. And he'd play an instrument in a half hour. So he really was the father. And I remember we had a very, very good spring on this farm. We put in running water into the barn, into the kitchen and into the chicken coop at about 1,500 feet from the spring down to the house. I did the whole job. And at one part, I think I was about nine feet deep to keep the level of the pipe coming down. And we also made the chicken coop. The chicken coop was, oh, I would say about 16 by 24, 16 by 30. And I mixed all the cement for that floor on the chicken coop by hand.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: We also made a two-car garage and, of course, mixed everything by hand there. We made a pig shanty, no nails at all. Now, at that time, we didn't have any money for nails or anything, so we just split wood and just had the corner poles and just slid the wood right down. And we were getting 50 cents for a 10-gallon can of milk at that time. So I told my mother. I said, "Mom, it really doesn't even pay to milk this. Let's just take the milk and"—what is the term they use to get the

cream off of milk? Oh, that's what we did. And we sold the cream and then we raised a lot of pigs instead. Yeah, we—we made our own sausage. We made our own bacon. We made our own ribs. You name it; we did all the work.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And of course, we did—we had a—about 25 milking cows. And we were in good shape.

LEVINE: Did—

RESETAR: But then, of course, the war broke out.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Did you know about farming and about pigs and—from—from—

RESETAR: No, we just learned from—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: We had a very good friend who was also in my older brother's—

LEVINE: Orchestra?

RESETAR: In—in the mu—into the mu—in his band.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And so they had moved out to this place. And it was because of them that we moved there. And they were—there were two—well, really, four brothers. And two brothers were real good friends of ours. And the two other brothers had already been there. And of course, they were the first two and then the two brothers that we knew moved out. And we went out, took a look at it. We liked it and then we moved out.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: So they helped us.

LEVINE: Was this a Czechoslovakian community? Were most of the people—

RESETAR: Yes. And there was a—there was a Baptist church that we—I went to the Baptist church there. Because I was—you know, I had to walk to everything. And so—

LEVINE: Then tell about when the Second World War broke out, how it affected you and your family.

RESETAR: Well, I was working in town by then. And of course, we had the draft and my boss was the head of the draft board. So he came to me. He says, "Andy, you know, you don't have to go. You're a key man in the shop." And I says, "I know I don't, Harry." I said, "Because we have enough points on the farm to keep four people out of the service." But I said—I says, "If anybody in my family should go, it's me."

LEVINE: Why was that?

RESETAR: Because I could take care of myself. And so I said, "If I'm called, I'm going." I—so sure enough, the second wave, I'm in the service. And my older brothers were supposed to take me to Union City to pick up the bus that took me to Pittsburgh where I was inducted, and couldn't find hide or hair of my brother when he was supposed to take me. And he was a tough guy. So then, my stepbrother, "Okay, Andy. I guess I'll take you." Well, we started out. We were on a crossroad. Before we got to the main road, my brother was crying his eyes out. I says, "Frank, move over. I'll drive myself." So I drove myself. I was, I guess, 28 years old or so. And I was inducted in Pittsburgh and then went to Fort Meade from there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And when Pearl Harbor happened, we were sleeping in a cornfield in Virginia. There were four of us. And I think I was a sergeant by then. And we were listening to the command car radio and all at once they stopped the radio and announced, "Pearl Harbor is being bombed." So I says to the three other boys—I says, "Well, boys. I guess we better work. We're not getting out of here soon." And so I applied for OCS and I came out a captain. Quite a story about that too.

LEVINE: Yeah. I—I see. There's a lot [chuckles] of stories here.

RESETAR: And that's where I met her.

LEVINE: Oh, how did that happen?

RESETAR: Well, I first went in in the field artillery. And from there, we were the honor battery of—of the 76 Field Artillery Battalion, I think. And they made a [unclear] destroyer outfit out of our battery. And so we were the first [unclear] destroyer outfit in the U.S. Army. And so I went to [unclear] destroyer OCS in Camp Hood, Texas. When I was—I graduated and became a second lieutenant, they sent me back to a

demolition school. And each of us had to do a project. And my project was to chop down a tree with ammunition. And the lieutenant who was in charge—"Well, what do you think, Lieutenant?" I says, "Give me one stick of dynamite. I'll knock it off with one stick of dynamite." [laughs] "One stick o—come on. Are you kidding?" I said, "No. How much you bet?" So we bet \$5. So I put permacord [PH] around the dynamite, put a piece of lumber behind my dynamite, lit the fuse. Boom! Cut it off just like if it was cut off with a saw. So I won the \$5. Next thing I know, I'm going to be an instructor in demolition.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

RESETAR: And I didn't want to be an instructor. I wanted to get overseas.

LEVINE: Okay. Let's pause here. I want to change the tape. We're right at the end.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: —with tape two. I'm talking with Andrew Resetar. And you were—you were saying that you wanted to go overseas. You didn't want to be an instructor.

RESETAR: Yes. So they wanted me to teach demolition, since I beat the teacher for \$5. [chuckles] And I—I wanted to go overseas. I didn't want to be a teacher at all. So this was on a Friday. And I had gone through all the steps with a friend. And I told him about it, that—what they wanted to do. And I told him. I says, "Jack, I want to go into paratroops because there, six weeks training and then you go overseas. So I want to go there. I want to get overseas." Next thing I know, I got back to our barracks and there's orders for me to go to censorship school six weeks for duty overseas. So—

LEVINE: What's censorship? What—

RESETAR: Censorship.

LEVINE: What k—what did that involve?

RESETAR: Huh? I'll explain—

LEVINE: Okay.

RESETAR: —what it is. So I told—Jack Dowd [PH] was his name—I says, “Jack, I’m going to go see if my request is still in headquarters. If it is, I’m going to rip it up and I’m going here. Because this is much easier.”

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And so he said, “Okay. I’ll—I’ll come with you.” We went and our requests were still there. So we ripped them up and I went to Fort Washington to censorship school. Now, I was supposed to go overseas. Instead of overseas, we were just going to invade North Africa at that time. And all the mail from all those men went into a building 11 stories high in Manhattan. So instead of going overseas, they sent us to this building to get rid of all this mail and packages and so forth. And so we went there. There were four of us. And we had civilian help and we directed everything. And we finally emptied the building. And I thought, ‘Well, now, I’m going overseas.’ Instead of going overseas, they shipped me over to the Army base in Brooklyn and the—the three other fellows that were with me. And that’s where I met my wife. When we came into the place where we were going to—now, we were going to teach censorship to officers. And we came to the building and the big hall where we were going to work. And my wife was sitting at a typewriter with her back towards us. And I told the fellows, “Fellows, that’s mine. No—hands off of that.” And up till that time, I felt I was going to stay in the service and never get married, because after all, eighth grade, that’s all the education I had at that time. And so I thought I was doing pretty good being a first lieutenant already. And so we were there and, instead of overseas, I’m teaching officers censorship now. So one day I blew my stack at lunchtime. And 15 minutes after I blew my stack, the commanding officer calls me in, “Andy, I hear you blew your stack out there today.” And I was flabbergasted, because it was those three men that we were together for a long time, and my future wife. So I thought it was my wife that told him because she was his secretary.

LEVINE: Oh.

RESETAR: So I—somebody told and I blew my stack again. He says, “Boy, you really want to go overseas.” I said, “Yes, I do.” He says, “All right. I’ll make a deal with you. The first orders that come through, I’ll see you go overseas. You know, I had you slated to be the commanding officer of a [unclear] detachment that’s supposed to take over this job here.” I said, “Give it to somebody else.” “All right. First orders, your name’s going to be on them.” First orders that came through, Puerto Rico. And that was considered overseas at that time because of the submarine warfare and, you know, things like that. So that’s the overseas I went to.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, how did you—how did you know that was going to be your wife by seeing her back? H—you said you came into the room and she had her back to you.

RESETAR: I don't know. She just struck me as absolutely beautiful, you know.

LEVINE: Huh, wow.

RESETAR: And so, well, we were there for quite a while. In a few months, I—we were always joking, "When we going out?" You know. "Oh, anytime you say." And it never happened. So the Intelligence Department had a softball team of enlisted men. And I started a softball team of the officers we were training. And we played them, beer for the winners, and the losers have to pay for the beer. Well, she—you know, that's the office she came from. And so she was the only one rooting for us, and all the other girls were rooting for the enlisted men. And we beat 'em. We beat 'em 3-2 and I had hit two homeruns. And so I says, "Would you like to come with me to have some beer?" That was our first date. And of course, from there we walked to her home because she lived on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 71<sup>st</sup> Street. And then I think we had maybe—maybe about three or four more dates when the orders came through for me to go overseas.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: And I was waiting for the boat in New Orleans and I called her up. I says, "Would you marry me if I can get a 10-day delay en route?" She said yes.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: So I got the 10-day delay en route, called her up Thursday night, "I'm on my way." And I just caught the train leaving New Orleans station. I got the caboose. I grabbed onto it and I slept on the floor all the way to New York. So when we got to Alabama, I thought I better write her a telegram, make—so she's sure I'm coming. So, just a little shed there in Mobile, Alabama. And I went in and I sent the telegram. And I was going to pay for it. [clears throat] And the only thing I had was a \$20 bill. So I told the lady. I said, "I only have a \$20 bill." "Don't worry. I'll—I'll send it for you." So we finally got to Atlanta and I thought, "Ah, I better send it." Sure enough, Western Union boy came through and I sent the same message back. This one, I paid for. Well, when I got to New York, no Anna. She's supposed to be waiting for me. No Anna. Oh, oh. 'Change her mind?' I'm thinking to myself. [unclear], well, no Anna. So I called—I think I called her mother. "Oh, Andy, she's there."

So then I went to the train master in Penn Station. And I asked him. I says, "Sir, would you send this message over the public address system?" And I told him the story of meeting my wife—future wife there. "Oh, sure. What do you want to say?" Just say, "Anna, this is Andy. Meet me at the information desk." And so, sure enough, he made the announcement over the public address system. She hadn't heard it but I went down to the information desk and there she was. And I tapped her on the shoulder. I would have given a million dollars to—if I could have that picture of her face. And there she was. So then we went to Brooklyn and got our license. And we were married there by a judge. And then we were married in church and they had a reception in Hotel Gregory. And when the reception was over, we went out to go to her home for her to change. And no taxi was coming. Finally, one civilian stopped. He says, "You having trouble?" I says, "Yeah, we're trying to get a cab and we haven't been able to." "I'll take you. Where are you going?" So he gave us a ride to her home. And we changed. And then the subway was right near and we went into town and had, I think, about three- or four- or five-day honeymoon there. Then she came down with me to New Orleans. And when we were supposed to get the ship the next—of course, we were in a hotel in New Orleans. And so we came back to the barracks and the MP wouldn't let us in. "You can't come in here." I says, "Come on. Go in the shed and let us go through." There was another young fellow with me from Maine. And, "Sorry, sir. You can't come in here." I says, "We—we're going overseas this morning. We've got to be in"—"Sorry, sir. You can't come in." So I told a—the fellow with me was also an officer. I says, "Looks like we'll have to jump the fence." And there was a 10-foot fence with barbed wire on top. I says, "Now, you watch how I do it and then you do the same thing." So I climbed the fence and I was a gymnast in my young days in a Czechoslovak gymnastic club. So I climbed the fence and I jumped over the barbed wire and landed. And I rolled when I landed and nothing happened to me. I says, "Now, did you see how I did it?" So he says, "Yes." So he climbed the fence and as he jumped over, his thumb caught one of the barbs of the barbed wire. And it just slit it open like somebody cut it with a knife. So I says, "Well, you fell down and a piece of glass did it. Come on. Let's go to the medics." And we went to the medics and he had it sewn up. And of course, that day we left—

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: —for Puerto Rico.

LEVINE: Wow. Just to fill in some—some immigration things, did you—were you a member of the Czechoslovakian Club, a social club early on?

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: Could you talk about that a little?

RESETAR: Yes. Well, it—the—this club was similar to the German—it was called a German Bund. And the Polish people also had a gymnastic club. That was called Polish Falcons. And we were called the Slovak Falcons. That was the name of us. And you were—you belonged to the junior part of it until you were 16 years old. And then, after 16 years old, you also were part of a insurance policy, besides being a member of the club.

LEVINE: Oh.

RESETAR: And my oldest brother was the—he ran that club. And again, the reason he got that job, because he—he could do so many things.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: When I was 13 years old, we went to Chicago and we demonstrated in Soldier's Field with baseball bats. And they were—they were, I would say, 12, 1,500 of us at one time doing a callisthenic with baseball bats in unison.

LEVINE: This is—these were people from all different clubs?

RESETAR: From all—

LEVINE: Or the Slovakian ones?

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: From—from Texas, from New York, from Pennsylvania, from all over. There was a big—big—I—I—gymkhana, I guess you would call it. And—

LEVINE: And what would you do? Like, when you were young and you'd go into the club? Wh—what would—

RESETAR: We'd have gymnastics.

LEVINE: Would you have an instructor?

RESETAR: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: We had a—we had a Czech, came from Europe. Very, very good instructor. And we did tricks on the parallel bars and on the—on the—well, let's see, on the rings, on the parallel bars and a few other things that you have in the gymnasium.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And we could do—we could do tricks that the men couldn't do. That's how good we were.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: We used to [clears throat] high jump off a—off of a springboard and land on our neck on a—on a mattress.

LEVINE: Mat, uh-huh.

RESETAR: And we'd sometime go over eight feet high.

LEVINE: Oh, my word!

RESETAR: We used to drive the gym teacher in school, public school, crazy, what we would do.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were there other Slovak activities, social groups, any other kinds of things that w—pertained to—

RESETAR: Well, there was a church there. We had—again, we had plays. As an example, I was a priest in one play, and the play was so good that my pastor came over to our house and tried to talk my mother into getting me to be a pastor. And he didn't know that I was listening to the whole thing. I'd come home for lunch. And my mother says, "Well, I can't make that decision. Andy'll have to do it." And so I went in and I says, "I heard everything you said." "And what do you—what do you think, Andy?" I said, "Well, Pastor, as far as I'm concerned, I would like to very much but I don't think I'm good enough. I think a pastor ought to be a perfect person. And I like fun too much to be perfect. And so, I—don't think I better." And I think I made a mistake.

LEVINE: Really?

RESETAR: I think I would have done a lot of good because I—I proved it to myself when I started to teach. I think I was as well-liked teacher as anybody in the school.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: The first times that I went back to visit, the assistant principal, “Andy, why don’t you come back? They don’t make ‘em like you anymore.”

LEVINE: Why don’t you say a little bit about how it was you came to teach, when you did that and—

RESETAR: Well, it’s—it’s a roundabout thing there too. As I told you, I was working in a store, butcher shop and—and the grocery store together. So when I got out of the service, I bought a tugboat with my father-in-law and my brother-in-law, three of us. And my father-in-law says to me, “Andy, you can run the office in about two, three years.” And he was so far wrong it wasn’t even funny because everybody wanted everything today. They were sick and tired of waiting for it. And water transportation, you don’t get it today. You have to get it tomorrow.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And so I stayed with the tugboat about two, three years. And I saw that maybe it was never going to happen. And so I told my father-in-law—I said, “Pop, I’m going to quit. I’m going to see if I can get another job.” So I saw a job in the paper for a poultry market. And of course, with the butcher part of my job before, we killed a lot of chicken. And so I went to this place and I got the job right away. When I left the boss, a colored boy told me, “Hey—hey, Mister, did you get the job?” I said, “Yes, I did.” He says, “You know, we’re open only during the holidays.” “Oh, he didn’t tell me that.” So I turned right around and went right back to the office. I says, “Mr. Zorn, I don’t want the job because I want a full time job and I understand you’re open only during the holidays.” So he says to me, “Well, you make it pay, we’ll stay open all the time.” I made it pay. It’s one of the biggest poultry markets around New York City.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: We were selling for Thanksgiving, neighborhood of 3,000 turkeys, Christmas, 3, 4,000 turkeys. And so I ran that for a long, long time. And then I started thinking of my future. And then I says, “I—I better go to school.” And that time was when the—the community colleges were beginning in our—in our country here. And so I had to quit that job, poultry market. And again, as I said, I always dig right in. I was quite a

politician. And so I call up a friend of mine, if he could get me a job in the county or a town, town of Hempstead or Nassau County on Long Island. "Well, sure, Andy. I'll get—I don't—I'm not—you're not going to be a boss yet but you're going to g—I'll get you a job." So I got the job and I'm on snow duty. And this fellow came to me. He says, "Hey, Andy. Why don't you go to community college?" I says, "What do you mean?" He says, "You know, they're starting a community college in—in Minneola." Minneola's the county seat of Nassau County there in New York. And I said, "Oh, where is it?" Said, "Minneola." So I went, got my two-year degree. From there, I went to place called Mitchell College. It's part of Long Island University.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: So they were going to close Mitchell College and we were paying \$20 a credit. So I talked quite a few people into forming a committee. And we formed a committee and we talked to Long Island University. And they agreed to let us go to C.W. Post, which had just started—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: —to complete our B.A. degree. And so I went there, night school. And of course, I got my degree from C.W. Post. Then I got my master's from Adelphi and while I was running the poultry market, a young fellow came. He had just graduated Hofstra University. And he came to work for us, couldn't get a job. So I taught him everything he knew about poultry market. Lo and behold, he and his brother started a poultry market. Now, when I'm looking for a job, teaching job, he's teaching in [unclear]. So I called him up. I says, "Dan, could you help me maybe get a job in [unclear]?" He says, "Well, wait a while, Andy. I'll see what's going on." So about two days later, he called me up. He says, "There's an opening in the junior high. I'll get you an interview." So I went, got the interview. I got the job.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how old were you when you started community college?

RESETAR: Well, I got—I got my B.A. when I was 53.

LEVINE: Hmm, wow.

RESETAR: So—

LEVINE: Yeah.

RESETAR: And of course, I got my GED diploma while I was in the service.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: I would never have been able to do this without my wife. You know, I had arithmetic; that's all. And as an example, I had to take two tests in—in math for—for the GED diploma. Then in college, I had to take two college credit math. I got—I got A's in all of them.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And when I would—well, when I was service, getting my GED diploma, I got a—a Army math book. And I went through the whole book. When I got stuck, my letter to her would be the question. Her letter to me would be the answer and additional information.

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: And when I finally was finished with the whole book, I says, "All right, Sergeant. I'm ready to take the math test." I took the test. He says, "You can get into any college in the United States"—

LEVINE: Wow.

RESETAR: —with these scores.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, how about your mother? Did she—did she retain any her ways from Czechoslovakia? Would you say that she held on to some of the—

RESETAR: She couldn't even speak English.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: And she died from—from a—a stomach—stomach—

WOMAN: Cancer.

RESETAR: —cancer. Yeah.

LEVINE: Hmm.

RESETAR: I took her to the Cleveland Clinic from the farm. And she's been suffering with this cancer for a long, long time. So I took her to the Cleveland Clinic. It was supposed to be one of the best clinics in the United States at that time.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And they examined her right and left, up and down. And the doctor came to me, "Sorry, Son. We can't—we can't find anything wrong." And my mother would say, "But it's hurting me." I says, "Doctor, you—you should. She keeps complaining it's hurting her. Now, 15 years already." Well, make a long story short, she died from it and I insisted on a—for them to—

LEVINE: Autopsy?

RESETAR: Autopsy. And they found out that she had cancer of the stomach. So I—that was one thing that I was always sorry for. We had gotten married when I got out of the service. You couldn't get a apartment and we—we stayed with her folks for two, three months. And then, finally, we got—we got a house. And by then, they had left the farm and they were staying with my oldest brother. And then she died right away before I could get her to come to us.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. Well, how—when you look back on the whole—your life and—and coming here as a seven-year-old, do you think that made a difference in the kind of person that you became? Do you think there was a—a particular impact of—of the immigration?

RESETAR: No, I—I don't think so. I think that it's born in you what you're going to be. And I think that, well, as an example of that, when I worked in the store, I'm sweeping the floor. And I found a \$5 bill right by the register. Now, you know, a 15-year-old boy, \$5 bill during Depression, that's a lot of money. So I went—luckily, we're living right back of the store, as I told you. "Mom, I found this \$5 bill." "Is it yours?" "No, it isn't and I found it." "Well, give it back to Mr. Ripka." So I went back to the store, finished the sweeping. "Mr. Ripka, I found this \$5 bill on the floor." "Oh, Andy, I'm glad you're giving it to me. I'm the one that put it there. You can have anything you want in the store but don't take anything out." So with guidance like that, I—I think that she made me fair and square all my life as a result.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: You never know when you're going to get caught being crooked. And I don't want to be caught.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. How about your family? Could—is there anything—do you think you—your family had a kind of typical Czechoslovakian immigrant experience coming here? Is there anything you could say about that?

RESETAR: Well, I think so, because at that time, every nationality stuck together. And so everybody was going through the same thing we were going through.

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B]

RESETAR: I could—I could almost speak Italian by working in that store for five years. I could count Italian right now. We used to play More [PH] is the name of the game. And you throw out fingers. I could beat any Italian with playing More. And I had one—one incident in the store that, I think, could be interesting. This little kid used to come every lunchtime for a nickel's worth of bologna and a nickel's worth of crackers. So this particular time, the cracker box was almost empty. And I knew that there was a little bit more than a nickel's worth. But I—I—thinking to myself, 'What am I going to do with these three, four crackers?' And I was the only one in the store. And so I threw in the two or three crackers and nickel's worth of bologna. You—I could almost guess it to the penny all the time. But this particular time I didn't guess it. I think I had maybe seven cents worth of bologna. Now, we had—this was a—a credit type store. And when people didn't bring their book in, we would mark down whatever they took on a sheet of paper. So this boy had his book with him and I looked on his sheet and I gave him the crackers and the bologna. And I wrote down what was on the sheet of paper. So she thought that I cheated them. And she brought the crackers back and the bologna. And, "What is this that he wrote?" So I came home from lunch—I mean, back to work. M—Mr. Ripka, immediately—I see the crackers and, "What's this, Andy?" I says, "And I told him, "Mr. Ripka, what would you do? I knew that there was a little bit more. And this—this kid is—is so little and so thin. So I—yes, I—I know how much. Seven cents. I know." And, "Well, you know, Andy, if you do this, I'll go broke eventually." And I said, "Oh, okay. I"—so, to make a long story short again, she found out what she did. "Oh, Andy. I'm so sorry I did that." And so from then on her boy got nickel's worth of the bologna and a nickel's worth of crackers. That—that was her fault. I almost lost my job.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: Let's see. Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to say about coming here, your family coming here, your life here before we—

RESETAR: Sign off?

LEVINE: —close. Yeah.

RESETAR: Well, the—of course, seven-year-old, I guess that there isn't really anything earthshaking that I could say. All I can say is that we, as a family, were really thinking, 'We're coming to heaven.' And after experience you get for four, five years, we weren't in heaven [coughs] but, by golly, we were in a place where you could be anything that you made up your mind to be.

LEVINE: Do you think you realized that early on after coming here, that—that you could do whatever you wanted?

RESETAR: Yes. Yes, I always had confidence in my—myself. I never went into anything with a negative attitude.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: As I said, I—you know, I pitched in right away.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Well, as an example, I'm president of Little League. I was—I could have—our town leader came to me one time. "Andy, any job you want in the state, let me know. I'll get it for you." And so, evidently the impression that I gave out—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: —was also that I can do it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: Going into the service, I didn't have to go.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

RESETAR: But I felt, 'I can do it.'

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: And as luck would have it, [chuckles] no matter how I tried, I never did get into the fighting.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

RESETAR: Yep.

LEVINE: Yeah. And how about your life now? Now that you're retired and—

RESETAR: Well, now, as an example, we lived right across the golf course in Phase One.

LEVINE: Oh.

RESETAR: I was president of Phase One. We moved over here. I was President of Phase Two. Then I was the chairman of the Variance Committee. In church, I'm the chairman of the Building Committee. To give you an idea—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

RESETAR: —of how I dig right in and make myself, well, to share, really, the load.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How about your visit to Ellis Island? H—h—did that—how did that affect you or what did it mean to you?

RESETAR: Well, my d—daughter lives in Pennsylvania. And we went to visit her. And she says immediately, "Dad, let's go see if your name is on that board." So as we're walking through Ellis Island, I was—I was explaining to them what had happened and—

LEVINE: Just about finished.

RESETAR: —while we slept in that building that's not finished, they were supposed to be working. One of the guards came back of me. He says, "Hey, Mister. How would you like to lead the group here?"

WOMAN: [unclear].

RESETAR: And I says, "Well, I—I live in Florida now. I—if this had happened while we lived on Long Island, I would have loved to do it." And ev— evidently, he was listening as I was explaining to my wife and—and daughter.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WOMAN: [unclear].

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. What—

RESETAR: The only thing that I would like to clo—close with is the—time and time again, that I've heard and seen people doing things and wanting things in this country that they really should not even get. And the main thing that I would like to say that this is one country you can do and get anything you want if you've got what it takes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Okay. Well, I think we'll end on that note. I want to thank you so much—

RESETAR: Yeah.

LEVINE: —for a wonderful interview. I've been speaking with Andrew Resetar, who came from Czechoslovakia in 1920 at the age of seven. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]