

EI-1316

HEINRICH VOGT

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 31, 1935

INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 16, 2004

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 68

RUNNING TIME: 50:25

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: WAYNE, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

LITHUANIA VIA GERMANY, 1951

AGE: 16

SHIP: S.S. GENERAL HERSHEY

PORT: BREMERHAVEN

RESIDENCES: PATERSON, NEW JERSEY

LEVINE: Today is March the 16th, the year 2004. I'm here in Wayne, New Jersey with Heinrich V—Vogt. Close enough?

VOGT: Vogt—V-O-G-T.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Vogt.

VOGT: You got to bring in the G in there too.

LEVINE: Vogt.

VOGT: Vogt.

LEVINE: Vogt. Okay—who is Lithuanian and came from the Lithuania, having lived in Germany for a number of years prior to arriving at Ellis Island in October of 1951. He came with his brother and his mother and was 16 years of age when he came to this country. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I want to say that Mrs. Vogt

is also here on her lunch hour with us. Okay. Let's say your birth date, please, and where in Lithuania you were born.

VOGT: I was born on August 31st, 1935 in Lithuania, Shillen [unclear].

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

VOGT: Well, it's S-C-H-I-L-L-E-N.

LEVINE: And the—what was that? Was that a—a big city, a small town?

VOGT: That was like a little small town.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. Do you remember it at all?

VOGT: N—no. I was—maybe I was there but I can't remember that, anything of that. The only thing what I do remember is there, like this—we lived on a farm there. And they—the way the buildings was laid out there, I remember that and everything. But the rest of this town, sort of, whatever was—I don't remember. It's hard. If I've ever been there or not, I can't tell you about that.

LEVINE: How about the farm? Tell me what you could—can remember about—about the farm you lived on.

VOGT: Well, we had a—we had cows. We had horses. We had sheeps. And I don't know how many horses, three or four horses; and cows, about six of 'em, used to deliver the milk to the—to the—to the—the—to the dairy and everything. Had pigs. There was pigs was—for delivering to and selling the pigs and everything, and used to make money that way.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: [unclear], we used to raise wheats and oats and everything for—potatoes, just some stuff was sold and some, they just kept it for themselves and ate. But most of all, the stuff was sold.

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

VOGT: Gustav [PH].

LEVINE: Gustav. And was Gus—what did he—was he—was he primarily a farmer? Is that what you would say he was?

VOGT: Yeah, he was a—yes, he was a farmer.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And how about your mother? What was her name?

VOGT: Juliannie [PH].

LEVINE: Juliannie. And was she—wa—what was her maiden name?

VOGT: Reinekae.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

VOGT: R-E-I-N-E-K-A-E.

LEVINE: K-A-E?

VOGT: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. And—and were your grandparents around?

VOGT: I don't remember too much about them. But they mentioned that and everything but I don't remember too much of anything. Of course, maybe I didn't take—take that too serious about it and everything. Because I only remember my grandfather used to take me—he used to take me down to the river and everything, see the fish and so on. But that's—that's all I do remember and everything.

LEVINE: Huh. Now, do you think your grandparents and their parents—do you think both sides of your family had been living in that general area for, you know, generations?

VOGT: I think so. I'm not sure because—but I—I think so, that they used to. Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Okay, so your grandfather—now, was—Gustav was also your brother's name? Right?

VOGT: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Was he older than you or young—

VOGT: Yeah, he's older than me.

LEVINE: Older than you.

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. And your grandmother, you can't—

VOGT: No, I don't—

LEVINE: —remember her.

VOGT: I don't remember too much about her and everything.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: Because I guess nothing really interesting happened with her.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

VOGT: You know, so it was—the grandfather was always taking me and so and doing this, and I remember going—going fishing [unclear].

LEVINE: He would actually take you fishing?

VOGT: Yeah. Well, we just—

LEVINE: With a fishing pole and all?

VOGT: Yeah. We just—well—well, those days, was a fishing pole was just a stick and a—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: —and a string on the end of a little hook on there, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: A homemade hook on there and everything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what kind of a ma—a man was he, your grandfather? Do you remember, like, anything about him? His personality, his temperament?

VOGT: No, no. The only thing I remember, he was like an old man and everything. You know, very kind and everything, so that's all I remember.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did he take your brother with you or it was just you?

VOGT: No, they—

LEVINE: Special trip?

VOGT: They used to leave me alone and everything, all—they run away from me.

LEVINE: Why was that?

VOGT: Because I was too young for them.

LEVINE: [chuckles] I see. I see.

VOGT: So in other words, they didn't want no part of me.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Uh-huh. Okay. So let's see. Now, your mother and father were—were both around. And then why was it that you left your little town?

VOGT: Lithuania—well, because we didn't want no—Rus—Russia was coming over. There was a war going on at that time and the Russians were coming over and everything, and they wanted to take over Lithuania and everything. And, you know, we don't want to—we were—we didn't like communists and everything, so we just left everything, the farm, the cows, everything, we left there. And then we went—we were coming towards Germany and everything.

LEVINE: [coughs]

VOGT: So—and it wasn't—and it wasn't easy to leave everything behind, all your—all your livestocks and everything. And—but they did it and there were—we're not the only ones; there were thousands of people. They left and everything, just get away from the Russians.

LEVINE: People were just picking up and—and—and leaving everything—

VOGT: They got the—

LEVINE: —to get away?

VOGT: —horse—horse and wagon. They're all loaded up with whatever they took and that's it. They left everything there. They let the cows loose in the fields and everything. So, you know, they were not milked or nothing and everything. So—and then the Russians came over. Sometimes, we go running away. We could hear the—the shooting going on. The bullets were flying over our heads and everything.

LEVINE: [coughs] Did you ever see the Russians? Or they—you left in enough time that you didn't—

VOGT: We—we left in a—we left in enough time that we could get away from, but we could hear the bullets flying over us.

LEVINE: Wow.

VOGT: And it was like, that on one side was the Germans; they were trying to push the Russians back. And on the side we were going into there, so I mean it was like this. And that—and some, I remember a little bit that the Germans had their trucks and everything. They had no gasoline but they were heating them with wooden steamers.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: That they had the big tanks on the side of the trucks and they used to heat—heat our hands on them and they'd keep warm on that and everything.

LEVINE: Huh.

VOGT: And that was—it's unbelievable.

LEVINE: Well, do—do you remember, like—oh, you were so young but what did people—what did people know? Or h—how—why did they—why did they do such a drastic thing as to pick up and leave? In other words, they must have had some—

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: —idea about communism and what—

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: —it was going to mean to them.

VOGT: Yeah, right. Of course, they—they knew they wouldn't have anything. They would take it away and—and that's why they didn't want no part of it and everything. So then, just for going—f—we stopped then for a while for about six months. Then we left again for another—somewhere else, going—go a little bit in deeper. Then we—pushed us back again. We were just going like the front was going. If the Germans was pushing the Russians back, we went, going slowly back towards Lithuania.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: And when the Russians was pushing the Germans back, we were going back with the Germans, almost, like. When—just back and forth.

LEVINE: And were there a number of people doing that?

VOGT: Oh, yes. There were, like, thousands of people doing—some—the—it was terrible, the only thing I could say.

LEVINE: Once you left your home, did you—did you ever return to it?

VOGT: No, never. Never. We got on our way. We had a—we got a farm. They gave us a farm and everything, because you thought, 'Well, we left a farm there in Lithuania. They're going to give us'—I believe that was in Poland they gave us a farm there, because—and then we were there for about six months and then we had to pack up and go again.

LEVINE: Well, now, who do you think gave the farm to the family? Do you have any idea?

VOGT: Well, that was—the Germans gave us the farm. They gave—

LEVINE: In Poland?

VOGT: Yes. They gave us the farm there. That was empty too and they gave us the farm so that they want to—that somebody would live there and take care of the farm and grow—grow their stuff and raise their pigs and cows and animals there and so. And that was just there about, like, six months, I guess, something like that. And then you had to go again.

LEVINE: I see. So—so when you were fleeing, you were actually friendlier to the Germans than the—

VOGT: Y—yes.

LEVINE: —than the—

VOGT: Yes.

LEVINE: —than the Russians.

VOGT: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: And—and they provided, at least—

VOGT: Yes.

LEVINE: —something, a farm.

VOGT: Yeah, they gave—they gave us, but that—that—that wasn't really free either, because they gave us the farm. And I believe they took something from somebody away.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Right.

VOGT: So that wasn't fair—

LEVINE: You mean they took the farm from somebody—

VOGT: Well, it belonged—

LEVINE: —and gave it to you.

VOGT: —to somebody. I don't know—

LEVINE: Yeah, right.

VOGT: —to whom it belonged and everything, but then, you know, that wasn't fair either. But we stayed there maybe a couple of months there [unclear] and everything [unclear]. I think we got there in late summer and everything. I mean, just like in the spring. We just kept on going then.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember that farm? Do you remember where it was?

VOGT: No, I don't remember the farm. No, not really. No.

LEVINE: And was it just—for—from your family, it was always your mother, your father and your brother.

VOGT: And my brother, yeah.

LEVINE: And you. Uh-huh.

VOGT: And my sister. Yeah, my sister too.

LEVINE: Oh, and your sister.

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how old was your sister?

VOGT: My sister, she's about—about 10 years—10 years, 11 years older than me.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: Okay.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So—so you—you were moving—okay, once you left the farm, then were you just moving? Were you, like, roaming—

VOGT: Well—yeah, well, we stopped here for a while. I mean, you know, they settled us down that we had to stop here and stay here for a while at a certain place. And then when everything starts going, the Russians were moving, we were packing up and move again. So—towards Germany—towards Germany. Well, in the meantime, we were in Poland here, roaming around here. And we were going so when the Russians moved the Germans back, we were moving back. And then—then I remember the last place very, very well, because that was a big farm and everything. And we stayed there for about six months, I guess, or something. And that was the last place we stayed there.

LEVINE: Was it just your family on it?

VOGT: Yeah, it was—yeah. Well, there was there the—the owner of the farm or—and there was the owner of the farm and we are another family there. And—no, that was in Poland. I'm sure of that. In the meantime, I was a kid. I was going to school and I even picked up Polish too—

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: —with the kids and everything, going there. And so that was around—I believe around Christmas time. It was cold and the Russians were coming, so we had to pack up and leave again. So we got the—the farmer gave us horses and a wagon and packed up and everything, and that was around Christmastime. And we packed up and left. And that was—we stayed outside. We slept in the wagon, and there were thousands of people, and we slept in the wagon. And we would—somebody was supplying us with sandwiches and everything, because they never saw anything like—that people would, you know, be—be traveling. Some people got

frostbitten and everything. Some got lost and everything because the roads, they were splitting, like, turn off here and [unclear] kids were lost and got frostbit and everything. It was terrible. It was terrible.

LEVINE: Hmm.

VOGT: So we were out there till we went to Germany. And we stayed someplace there. We're waiting, acting, like, sleep in the barn. It seems like we slept in Waldorf Astoria. The wind wasn't blowing or nothing and everything. And I was so—and it was unbelievable. It w—and it was cold, was about this time of the year and they tried—after Christmas, we left there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: We went about four—about four months on the road till we hit Germany, that last place that we went to America.

LEVINE: Wow. How about in Poland? How did the people treat you?

VOGT: We didn't have no problem. They treat us well. I mean, everything was fine. We were treated well. Nobody got—you know, nothing—everything was okay.

LEVINE: Well, now, the Germans had defeated the Poles by then, right? So—

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: —they had oc—they were occupying Poland at that point?

VOGT: I think it was—I don't know too much about that because, like, I was too young and the war was going on. You didn't know who—who was in charge and everything, you know.

LEVINE: Right.

VOGT: So—

LEVINE: Right, uh-huh. So then you stayed in Germany for a period of time?

VOGT: Yes, I stayed there. We stayed in Germany at the last place there, and we stayed there for about, I think, five, six years, something like that. Five, six years, we stayed in Germany.

LEVINE: In the same place?

VOGT: In the same place, yes, by the farm where we stayed. Again, was a room there and everything, so we stayed there. And my brother was working there by the farmer. And—and we stayed—I was too young. I was going to school. My mother was helping them out too. And I was helping out too. Then my father passed away in 1948 because he came—he had problem with his kidney and everything, because after the war they couldn't get no medications, no—or nothing, and then he passed away in 1948.

LEVINE: Now, did your father ever fight in—in any of those wars? I mean, in any of the armies?

VOGT: No, he didn't fight really, because, see, he was—he was up, just—just delivering stuff there to the—to the—to—to—to this up front there. So that's all [unclear].

LEVINE: To the troops?

VOGT: Yeah, yeah. He was—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. I see. And he had a bad kidney, unrelated to—to the events of—

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: —of the—

VOGT: Yeah. I don't know really what—you know, what happened—

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: —because—and everything. So that time, after the war, nobody really knew what—there's no—hardly anything—

LEVINE: Right. So you couldn't get good medical care.

VOGT: No.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. So, now, was this farm in Germany a family that had a farm, and then your family lived on it too? Is that—

VOGT: You mean the one in Lithuania or—or in Germany?

LEVINE: In Germany.

- VOGT: Well, in Germany we just lived by the farmer there. That's all. We didn't own anything by the—by Germany.
- LEVINE: But did you live, like, in their house or how did you—
- VOGT: Yeah. Yeah, well, it was in a house. They gave us a room and everything, two rooms and everything, so we're—that's all we had there and everything. And it was—another couple was there. They were from the next—from—from Bremen there. And they were bombed out and everything, and they lived by the farmer too. They got the room there because they had to put up the people somewhere. So they—they took us there and they took down the family there. They were there too from Germany. They took them from Bremen. And they took them and they gave them a room and everything.
- LEVINE: And everybody helped out on the farm who were staying there? Is that—was that—
- VOGT: Right. That one—that one—that one from Bremen, he was—he was actually—he couldn't do any kind of work because he was paralyzed, almost half side was paralyzed and everything. And I was too young. My brother was there, was—was helping out and everything. I was too young. I was going to school and everything. But sometimes, I used to help out too a little bit, you know.
- LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what was school like for you in Germany?
- VOGT: Well—
- LEVINE: Could you speak when you went to school?
- VOGT: No, no. [chuckles] That was kind of hard. First, you have to learn the language and then—then you can start.
- LEVINE: Yeah.
- VOGT: You know? It's—it's—it isn't so easy. If—that would be somebody, would translate to you what they're talking about. It's a different story but nobody translate and you just stand there and say, "What—what is he saying?" Or, "What's going on there?" You don't know what's—you know. But since you're a kid and everything, I think you pick up—
- LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: —everything faster. You know, and then you get this—so—

LEVINE: Well, you must have learned German more or better than—than the other family members, maybe.

VOGT: Yeah. Well, yes. Yes, I guess I did because, like I said, I went to school, then read and write and everything, you know. And so I still do speak Lithuanian too and everything but no—no reading and no writing of Lithuanian and everything. So—but I do s—I do speak Lithuanian and everything. So my brother-in-law, married to my sister (they both live in Florida), and I said, when I call them up and talk Lithuanian and everything, all this stuff, so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: So—

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. So was this farm in Germany near Bremen? Do you know?

VOGT: Yeah, that was around Bremen. That—

LEVINE: [coughs]

VOGT: That—about—about—yes, not far from Bremen and everything. But Delmenhorst—Delmenhorst was this closest town. Delmenhorst could have been almost about the town like, oh, the size of Paterson or a Passaic, something like that. So—

LEVINE: Could you spell the name of that town?

VOGT: What, Delmenhorst? Let me write it for you.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Okay.

VOGT: [chuckles] I'll—

LEVINE: Some point, we type of these interviews [chuckles], and it's good to have a little clue. [chuckles] [coughs] Excuse me. [clears throat]

VOGT: Oh, can [unclear] Delmenhorst.

LEVINE: Okay. D-E-L—

VOGT: M—

LEVINE: M-E-N—

VOGT: Right.

LEVINE: K-O—

VOGT: No, H. H.

LEVINE: Oh, H-O—

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: I-S-T?

VOGT: Horst. Like—

LEVINE: Oh, H-O-R-S-T.

VOGT: Right.

LEVINE: Okay. Got ya. Okay, great. So [clears throat] then were you trying to get to America right along or—

VOGT: Yeah, well, this—my sister, she got married there in Germany and she was living further—she wasn't living with us. She was living somewhere else. So she got married and her husband had a uncle—well, has a—had an uncle (he passed away)—had an uncle here in Paterson. And he got in—he got in contact with him and everything. So he made—his uncle made the papers for them. And then when they came over here—my sister and her husband came over, and they made the—the papers for us. So there was about two years waiting time before we could come. You know, by the time we—all those tests. We had to take tests and everything else so—and—and everything. And then we got everything done and everything, so then we came—came to the United States and everything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So your sister was here a few years before the rest of you.

VOGT: Yeah, about—about two years so—something about it. I can't tell you exact date and everything.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: But [unclear] two years. So then I says, "Well"—because they had—could buy everything here and everything. And over there, that time

after the war, that wasn't too much and everything. But then they started—Germany started picking up on things too. You could start getting—buying and everything because they had the reichmark [PH] then. And that reichmark, when you changed to—to damark [PH], the Deutsche mark and everything, everything—changed everything, because you could buy more. But nobody had any money so—and—and it was starting, getting better. So when we left, we don't know, because I never went back. I never went back and anything to Germany and I don't know what's—what's what and everything there.

LEVINE: Is it—did you not go back because you didn't want to or you just didn't happen to?

VOGT: Ah, I had an uncle there. But it's like really—I don't know—nothing really that I want to go back there anymore.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: You know, it seems like I had here—I met friends here and so on and everything, all this stuff. And that's—I liked it and everything. It's everything okay and everything, so I—I—I got things here that I would probably never got there in Germany at that time. So why should I go back? And everything, you know, so I figure, "Well, I'm doing all right here. So why should I go back?" And I don't want to just advertise, "Oh, I can buy this. I can—this"—and I just, you know—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: —fine and everything. I'm happy what I got and that's it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. [clears throat] Were you ever hungry during those years when you were—were—

VOGT: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: —going one way and then back and forth?

VOGT: Yes, yes. We were hungry and everything. We didn't know where we were going to get the next meal from. You know, and everything and then we got some sandwich, or somebody got some soup and everything. And then a lot of people were joking around and everything, because there were—were—a horse and wagon were waiting. And somebody heard a shot there and everything. They killed the horse because the horse was sick. So I said, "Well, maybe in a couple days we're going to have horse stew. Who knows?"

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: And sure enough, we had horse—horse stew.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: So I didn't die from it. I'm still around so it must have been good.

LEVINE: It must have been all right, yeah.

VOGT: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: So—

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, you—can you say anything about what people were like in such a situation like that? I mean, it's so extreme where, you know, you're—you're dodging bullets from one direction and from the other. And there are lots of people involved. Did—did the people act a certain way? Or is there anything you could say—

VOGT: Well, they like—

LEVINE: —about human nature in such a situation?

VOGT: Yes, yes. I guess so. But then, you know, because had to worry about—where we're going with a horse and wagon, traveling, we had to worry about our horses, that nobody would take those horses, or to take our—the food for our horses away and everything, because there were people, a lot, thousands of people—

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: —that they had the same kind of problem, because they had horses and wagon. You had to feed the horses too. And then you had to watch them and nobody would take your horse—you know, horses or your food for a horse or your k—your food or w—used to get sandwiches and soup. And I don't remember getting hungry. I mean, maybe sometimes, probably, we did get hungry and everything, you know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

VOGT: So, sometimes you don't remember those—those—those bad things too, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: And sometimes you went—I'm pretty sure that we went hungry to bed sometimes too, you know, and the sleeping outside on the wagon, the covered wagon. That used to be like the hillbillies; they used to do this.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: You know?

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: And cuddle up and everything. Like I said, you sleep in the barn and everything. It's, like, unbelievable. You crawl into the straw, straw somewhere, [chuckles] or hay—

LEVINE: I think that's really—

VOGT: —or what and everything. You know, it's—you keep warm instead of freezing out there. The temperature is really—it's—it's cold out there and everything.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: So it's cold, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. So can you remember leaving the farm and—and going to the port t—to get—to get the ship to America?

VOGT: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, I remember that. That was—I was then about 15. I was 15, 16 years old. I remember that more than anything. Yeah, I took the—the farmer took us to the—yeah, to the train station. And—and then we went off with the train to the—to Bremerhaven [PH] and we got all settled and everything, all these boats and everything while we were there and everything. And it's—that we went on the boat there and then, oh, and I don't know how many days exactly but, believe me, I thought I never gonna make it here alive.

LEVINE: Huh.

VOGT: I was sick. I was seasick and everything. I didn't like—terrible.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of people on the General Hershey?

VOGT: There were about—about 1,800, I believe, something like that, because we had to be—the—the womans were separated from the men and everything and all this stuff doing this. And we had to work our way for the whole tour, because taking out garbage and cleaning all this stuff. And most of the time, we spend sta—we spend time laying on the floor there and being sick and everything, seasick.

LEVINE: But everybody had to pitch in and do—

VOGT: Yes.

LEVINE: —some of the work—

VOGT: Yes.

LEVINE: —on the ship?

VOGT: Yeah, that's why we got a free ride.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: Yes, that was an Army transport.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: [unclear]. General Hershey. So you were working there. I had to work there and everything, taking the garbage out and everything. Barely anybody could do anything because most of them were all sick.

LEVINE: Mmm.

VOGT: Seasick.

LEVINE: Now, did you correspond with your sister, who—and brother-in-law who were here when they got—when they were here for those two years and you were still in Germany?

VOGT: Yes, we did.

LEVINE: Did—did y—did they tell you anything? In other words, what—what were you expecting when you first were arriving in this country? Did you have any ideas about what you were coming to?

VOGT: Yes, for a job, better chance of d—getting this somewhere then. I mean, you know, that you would get a job. You can do things, buy things or whatever, where there we didn't have no job or whatever thing. This and everything because I was ready to go to the coalmines in Germany and everything. So my mother talked me out of it and everything. That's the only job you could get, coalminer or working by the farmer [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: So then—then we—well, we got here so we had all kind of chances here and finding a job here, that was no problem at all. You just go out to something, "Hey, boy, you want a job. Come here." You know. No speak English, you work more. "Come on." [chuckles]

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh.

VOGT: So—

LEVINE: Okay. So when the ship came into the New York harbor, you remember that part?

VOGT: Yes, very well.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

VOGT: Oh, well, we all kind of—everybody was happy and everything, all this stuff and happy and everything too. And we're hoping that our sponsor is going to come and pick him up and—and we're happy. That was the happiest—everybody was happy, you know. We made it through this—through the—through the whole—whole, the sea—or through—through the—through the whole—being on the water there for 11 or—I think it was about 11 days or 12 days and everything. And everything, you know, sickness was all gone and everything, and it was like a happy sight and everything.

LEVINE: Mmm.

VOGT: We went there and then the sponsor picked us up, like I said. Well, it took it a little while before—before he got there, but everything [unclear] and everything was okay.

LEVINE: Well, now, was your sister and her husband your sponsor?

VOGT: Well, there were, like, a co—the sponsor was his—my brother-in-law's uncle.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: He was the sponsor because he had to put some money up there and everything, you know. So he was the sponsor but he was like all this—involved in that and everything was—you know, he was the—we would write to my sister so that he would—they went there and sponsored and everything. So that we went through all this and—

LEVINE: Well, why don't you tell about when the—when the ship landed? About that you couldn't really dock or get your luggage.

VOGT: Because there was—I believe there was a strike. There was a dock—dockworkers' strike. They couldn't unload the ship or something because it'd take—we could get off the ship but we couldn't unload all the—had to wait couple of days or whatever it was before they could take our luggage out of there. So the only thing what we could take off the boat was whatever day we had on [unclear]—bag or something in there. And that was it and everything. So that was not a luxury liner, believe me. It had about 800 people sleep—no, not 800—about 200 sleeping in one—one—one—one room there and everything. And that's all.

LEVINE: Hmm.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: —the ship. Then you were taken to wait for your sponsor, and you're not sure if it was Ellis Island but—

VOGT: Well, my sponsor—

LEVINE: —it's a good bet.

VOGT: Right. The sponsor came with his car and my brother-in-law. I knew my brother-in-law but I never seen the sponsor, you know, so—and then he come in and he picked us up and everything. And—and then, so we wind up in Paterson, and Paterson, we stayed there for a—by my sister. She—she had a—rooms there and everything so we stayed there for a while.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you remember anything about Ellis Island or—or where—the place you were taken before the—your sponsor?

VOGT: Yeah. Well, I remember very little of this because, I said, I'm not sure I was there. I mean, I—I was somewhere and everything, but we didn't—weren't there long, maybe about a couple of hours.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: That's the least, you know. So we all—a whole bunch of people just standing around and—and then say, Oh, yeah, yeah. I got—my sponsor picked me up and everything." "Oh, good," and they—you know, I was so—hoping that we are going to be picked up too and everything. And then so, before I know it, somebody tapped me on the shoulder and everything, and I looked, that's my—my brother-in-law and everything, you see. Then he waved his—"Yeah, I got him," and everything, because the sponsor, he never saw us, really. You know, just from pictures or what. No, he never saw. He says, "Okay." You know, so he says, "Where's everybody?" He says, "Everybody's here." You know, "Okay." And so I had to get through there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So how about your mother? How did she fare through all this?

VOGT: Well, she took it good because she had—that was really her—her idea to bring in us to this country, that we could make ourselves something—we can make something. We can get—get somewhere, have something, like a car, a house or what—you know, it's like over there, we didn't have anything. And the way it looked to us, we couldn't get anywhere. There was no—no—nothing in sight for us. So we have—over here, we seen and everything, but then finding a job, and that was no problem. Even if we had to work for a dollar an hour, that was easier to figure out; so many hours, so many dollars.

LEVINE: Mmm, uh-hmm.

VOGT: And—and then everybody wind up with a—good jobs and everything and there was no problem, really.

LEVINE: Well, so you wound up in Paterson at first. Can you describe anything about Paterson at that time?

VOGT: Well, Paterson was a nice city that time, in the '50s.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: Was—everything was nice and everything. I can't complain about it. They had the five and ten stores and something new for us there.

And they had the movie houses there, which we didn't understand the language there yet and everything, but we got through that. And I can't complain. People were friendly and everything so—so everything was nice. You know.

LEVINE: Was it different from Germany? Can you compare it in any ways?

VOGT: Yeah, well, Germany, that time was not really—because that part I come there, from Delmenhorst, that area there—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: That was very bombed. That was quite a bit, you know, destroyed during the war and everything. That was—oh, everything was a mess there. It was so—and—and, yeah, it was different, different and everything. It's like a—I don't really know how to put it now but it was different. First of all, the language, you couldn't talk in anything, you know, so it is a little confusing here and everything. So the only thing what you could talk is your own kind of people. You couldn't go out there, and you don't know the area either and anything, so it's kind of confused too. But—so in other words, I can't really say anything about Paterson. As far as I know, it was it was everything fine and everything and enjoyed it. Everything was nice.

LEVINE: Were—were—were there a lot of different groups from different countries that had come to Paterson? Did you—were you aware—

VOGT: Yes.

LEVINE: —of that?

VOGT: Yes, yes. There were a lot of different groups near Pater—Paterson. There were some Lithuanian groups. There were German groups there and Italian groups. So we didn't have any problem with them, with them, with—with any kind of groups there. We had to mind our own business and everything was fine and everything, like—

LEVINE: Hmm.

VOGT: So—

LEVINE: Were th—you didn't—did you mix? Were you friendly or—

VOGT: Yes, yes. We were friendly.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

- VOGT: Yes, we had [unclear]. We had this night—next—not far away, we had some German groups there and everything—[unclear] and everything. Was very good and then had some Italian people there and everything, were very friendly. No problem at all.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So now, were you finished with school then by the time you got to this country? Or did you go to school here at all?
- VOGT: Well, I went here to night school to learn some English but it was kind of hard to learn English. If—if they don't have—if that person doesn't translate what he's talking about, that's almost impossible to learn anything, you know. So I mean, but—but finally, he was start—getting through and everything.
- LEVINE: What do you think helped you in learning the language here?
- VOGT: I think by working. I don't really—I can't tell you, say, by working. The only thing, by—if you work, you—you know only one—one language or what—sometimes, most like a sign language. You use that and everything, you know, because it's, like, noisy or what and—
- LEVINE: Uh-huh.
- VOGT: Then when I worked the first place there, I was working with a lot of Lithuanian guys there in the corrugator. There's a lot of Lithuanian guys, so whatever the problem is or what, the boss want to say something, he called over the foreman, the Lithuanian guy, the super—it's not supervisor, but group leader and, you know, he tells him. And then he told us what's [unclear]. And at first, it was kind of hard for me, because I was in Germany, had the centimeters. Now, I got involved in changing over to—to inches here and everything, and now it's a different measurements and everything. And I was there for about three years in the corrugator, working with that and everything. I caught that on very fast so I didn't have no problem at all with that.
- LEVINE: Uh-huh.
- VOGT: So it's like, I guess when you're younger you pick up everything faster.
- LEVINE: Yes, y—yeah. Well, now, did—how long was it from the time you got here till you started actually working?
- VOGT: Well, I was too young to work here yet, because—

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: —see, you got to be 18. We—we can start with about—working papers, all that and everything. And then—then I got this—I was doing a little bit here and there and everything, working there and everything, but seems all this stuff was, like, they went out of business. When I got laid off, they didn't want me anymore or what and anything. And then, I think it's the longest time I worked. In one place, I worked there for about a couple of months there and they lay me off there. And then I try it again and I was almost 18 and I—my brother star—took me to the corrugator, and I wasn't 18 yet. But I was, like—I'm not—I mean, the working papers, so I couldn't operate any machinery, so just helping out. Then when I got 18, I was running machineries and everything and [several words unclear].

LEVINE: Is th—was that in—in—

VOGT: In Paterson.

LEVINE: —Paterson?

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Corrugated—

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Th—they make boxes, is that what they do?

VOGT: Yeah, corrugated boxes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: So they moved out of Paterson, oh, about—they moved out of Paterson there. But—and then I worked there about three years. I—I couldn't take it anymore because there were too much work. There are too many hours I spent in there, between 60 and 70 hours a week.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: They even gave—they were so nice to me that they gave me the key to the plant to come in the morning to open up or close it at night. I was the only one in there.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

VOGT: You know, so I said, “I—I’m only 20 years old. I mean, what—I’m going to do somewhere.” You know. So I—I said, “I can’t take it anymore.” So I—I—I—I quit there.

LEVINE: And then what? What did you do next?

VOGT: Then came Continental Can.

LEVINE: Oh.

VOGT: Paterson. Came to be, I stayed there 33 years.

LEVINE: Oh, wow. So are you pleased that you did that?

VOGT: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: Yes, I—I worked there 33 years. I started in 19—1956, April 2nd, 1956, and I worked till October—October—was it '89? Yes. October, '89.

LEVINE: Wow. That—

VOGT: And I didn’t have many jobs there, you know. I’m [chuckles]—

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: So I had all kind of shifts. I had the first. I had the second. I had the second and the third shift. I went half of second and the whole third shift. I had that the last 10 years [unclear].

LEVINE: Did you see a lot of changes in Continental Can?

VOGT: And when they closed, they went out of business.

LEVINE: Oh, did they?

VOGT: Yeah. They went—in '89, yeah, they went out of business.

- LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was happening? What—what had changed i—in—
in—in the place itself?
- VOGT: I think that the—that killed them then, the aluminum cans. They were
making steel solder cans. And that was against the law, had the
solder cans or what and everything, because there was lead there
and everything. And so the—
- LEVINE: Oh.
- VOGT: —aluminum cans, and they couldn't get onto it. They were too much
involved to—in something else there in the solder cans. And so
they—they went there.
- LEVINE: Hmm.
- VOGT: And then I got transferred. There was a can company; Continental
Can was making aluminum cans in Wayne plant there. I worked
there the last 10 years; I worked there. And I had this—I worked
there 12 hours a day, shift or more—from seven o'clock in the
evening till seven o'clock in the morning.
- LEVINE: Wow. Hmm. Well, what do you feel proudest of? What makes you
feel satisfied that you've done?
- VOGT: Well, at least I could do things I want to do, buy things I want to buy
and everything, you know, and so I'm—I'm happy with it. I'm pleased
with that and everything.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.
- VOGT: Got married in the meantime and everything, and a wife and two kids
and everything, and I was so—they were growing up and everything.
So one lives here. Another one is in Texas, goes—still goes for his
master. So—
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm.
- VOGT: I think I'm—I'm pleased.
- LEVINE: Yeah.
- VOGT: You know, what I did and everything. So—
- LEVINE: Why don't you mention your wife's name and your children's names?

VOGT: Theresa, and oldest is my son, Ryan, and the youngest is Matthew.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And Theresa's maiden name?

VOGT: Szwed.

LEVINE: Say it again?

VOGT: Szwed?

LEVINE: S-W—

VOGT: C-I-E-D.

LEVINE: Szwed—E-D.

MRS. VOGT: S-Z-W-E-D.

LEVINE: S-Z-W-E-D. Oh, uh-huh. Okay. Let's see. What do you think the—do you think all the time that you—that you spent in your early years, uprooting from your farm and—and—and being on the—sort of on the run, and then at different farms in Germany, what impact do you think that had on you, in—on your personality, on your temperament, on the way you look at life or—what do you think—what difference do you think those experiences had on you as a person?

VOGT: Well, I think—what I think right now, because I think I was too young to remember those parts, what really happened. I think because—I don't know how to put it really, but I think it was—for me, it's kind of like more, not fun, but it's kind of—it was interesting, you know, something different all the time, because I was too young to get—take, you know, everything serious.

LEVINE: You didn't have to feel responsible about anything.

VOGT: Right.

LEVINE: You were—yeah, uh-huh.

VOGT: Right, because was everything different, I think. Twice, we were in Germany and everything there and anything. And then the farmer says, "Come on inside and everything." So the British were coming across the field. Then I heard bullets hitting the house there. There was, well, maybe four or five [unclear] hitting the house there. They were brick—brick—brick house and everything and, probably, those bullets—holes are still there.

- LEVINE: Hmm.
- VOGT: And everything. So I went in because I didn't really care because I was too young. You know, I—it's kind of fun and everything. You know, this is—
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm.
- VOGT: —what's going on.
- LEVINE: Mmm, uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Can you remember any of the things that struck you once you got here in this country that you had never seen before or that were new to you or different or caught your attention?
- VOGT: Well, right now, I can't think of anything. I mean, you know, like cars and everything. Everything is cheap. It's cheap and everything now, that you can buy something for a dollar and everything. You know, it's like—
- LEVINE: You mean things were cheap here once you got—when you got here, you mean?
- VOGT: Yeah.
- LEVINE: Mmm, yeah. Yeah. And of course, you were coming from a farm into a city, really. So that must have been a big difference.
- VOGT: Yes, yes. It sure is. At least, I could walk with the shoes on the—on the sidewalk and not on the dirt, you know. [chuckles] On the concrete.
- LEVINE: Yeah, right. Right, right. How about when September 11th happened? Can you remember your reaction or your response to that?
- VOGT: Yes, it was very, very, very—it got me right here. I don't know how to say it and everything, but it's like, "Oh, boy. What happened? What's—what's—what happened now? I hope it's—I hope it's nothing serious, you know. That wouldn't be," I says, "worst thing in the world. I went through one of those things, wars and going on. I hope it's not—not another thing like that, you know."
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm.
- VOGT: Sure.

LEVINE: Do you feel a little bit more relieved about it now or—

VOGT: Yes. Yes, I do. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah.

VOGT: Well, because even—even now, I mean, sometimes even now, what happened really to me in those years, you know, back—I—even sometimes at night, I even, like, kind of yell or what and everything. You know, so my—I have bad dreams about it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: And it seems like, that somebody, the bad guys, whatever, is—they chasing me or whatever it is, you know, it's like from the—from all this—what happened, all this trips and everything there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: Going back and forth and everything. I don't know. Probably—might do it tonight because we talk about it, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, I hope not.

VOGT: [chuckles] It stirs everything up again, you know—

LEVINE: [chuckles] Yeah.

VOGT: —that you live again, a dream.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VOGT: So—

LEVINE: Yeah. But it sounds as though you were able to get past it and—and have a—have a—a normal life.

VOGT: Yes. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: And—yeah.

VOGT: Yeah. Well, like I said, I was [unclear] about this, like going back and forth and making this—that was like “Dr Z—Zhivago” movie. That's about the same, like we went—we went through there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: That's about the same. They were running in the wintertime. We were running in the wintertime and all this stuff. That was all very close yet.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

VOGT: But we didn't have the nice music that goes with the movie.
[laughter]

LEVINE: So now, do you think your—it took a—a big toll on your mother, those years?

VOGT: I think at first—I think it did—it did, yes. I think so. But then after, I think she kind of seen and everything because, that we were happy. And it made her happy too and everything, because I guess that's what she wanted to do. She wanted to see that we would get ahead in our lives and everything, you know, that we got a house. We got the car or—or g—you know, get married or see something. We'd do something for ourself or for our kids and everything, you know. So that's why—I'm pretty sure that's—that she was happy about that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VOGT: So we did all right. We did everything—everybody did all right so it's no problem.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So when you visit Ellis Island, do you feel like, you know, you have a special connection to—to that place?

VOGT: Every time I go there, I always remember my—my brother-in-law because he was there in Ellis Island. I don't know how many days he was there. I think he was there, about like 20 days. And he was there because I think—

LEVINE: You mean he was waiting?

VOGT: Yes. Well, waiting—he had the sponsor but he had to go—at that time, I think, in 1949, there was the—that they had to come there and to stay in Ellis Island there for a while.

LEVINE: Oh.

- VOGT: Yeah. And they—all this tests, they're going through again and everything, yeah. So that reminds me, every time I go there and I think of him and everything [unclear].
- LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Well, is there anything else you can think of, relevant to coming here and having your life here and—anything that we haven't really talked about or—
- VOGT: Well, I'm—I'm ha—I'm happy here and everything is fine with me and everything, is the only thing I can say and I'm—I'm glad I came here, you know, thanks to my mother that she decided on bringing all—everybody over here and everything, all this stuff. So that's—that's all. I'm very pleased. No complaints in anything.
- LEVINE: Okay. Well, I want to thank you for a very nice interview.
- VOGT: Okay.
- LEVINE: And I've been speaking with H—Henrich—Heinrich?
- VOGT: Heinrich.
- LEVINE: Heinrich Vogt—
- VOGT: Vogt. [chuckles]
- LEVINE: Vogt. Vogt—V-O-G-T, Vogt—
- VOGT: Yeah.
- LEVINE: —who came originally from Lithuania but spent many years in Germany prior to coming through Ellis Island in 1920—I mean, 1951. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]