

EI-1321

HEIDI WALLENFELS SHIRLEY

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 31, 1937

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 30, 2004

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW:

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

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TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: SHIRLEY'S COUSIN, MARGARET

**MONODS KELLY, ALSO PRESENT. BOTH ARE THE NIECES
OF FREDERICH (FRIED) ERNST AUHAGEN WHO WAS
FIRST INTERNED AS AN ENEMY ALIEN AGENT (FROM
1941-1946) AND THEN LATER DEPORTED.**

LEVINE: is the thirtieth of April 2004. I'm here in the Ellis Island oral history studio with Heidi Wallenfels Shirley who is the niece of the man that we're going to be speaking about who is Frederich Ernst Auhagen

SHIRLEY: Yes.

LEVINE: who was interned here at Ellis Island in and around World War two. And we also have Margaret Auhagen Monods Kelly with us who is also a niece of Frederich Ernst Auhagen. He was – he probably came to this country in about 1924 from Germany and was picked up in California in 1940 and was interned as an enemy alien. He was in other camps before coming to Ellis Island and we suspect for repatriation. And he was here from whenever he arrived until 1947. So he was here a good long time. And Heidi's mother intervened to try to get him better treatment before he arrived here in the camps that he was in. And apparently he was in solitary confinement for some reason before that. OK this is Janet Levine from the National Park Service and we're just 'gonna kind of unroll the story as it comes. OK. If you would say please for the tape – Heidi – your birth date.

SHIRLEY: My birth date is August 31, 1937.

LEVINE: And do you know the birthdate of your uncle?

SHIRLEY: I do. He was born on Christmas – December 24 – 1899.

LEVINE: And do you know about his life prior to 1940 just here in this country – what kinds of things he was involved with and

SHIRLEY: I know some things about it.

LEVINE: OK.

SHIRLEY: He – as I say – came over sometime in the early twenties – probably around 24. He had – already had a fairly extensive education in Germany – and had gone to a school of mining and gotten an advanced degree there but didn't ever intend to go into the field. When he first came here – I think his first job was tutoring children in various languages. He had had a classical education in Germany so he knew Latin and Greek. And I remember that he told me that he was supposed to tutor these children also in Spanish and he had not – he didn't know any Spanish. But in order to get the job he told the father or the parents of the children that he knew Spanish. And then he managed to stay just ahead of them by reading a chapter or two ahead before he had to give them their lessons. And – so I know that he did – at – had at least one – significant tutoring job but maybe that he had more. My father came over I think in 1926 from Germany to the United States and – met my uncle – Frederich.

LEVINE: His brother.

SHIRLEY: Right. No – no – this was

LEVINE: No – oh it's your mother

SHIRLEY: my father.

LEVINE: Oh OK.

SHIRLEY: So this – Frederich Auhagen was my mother's brother. This is how my parents met actually. At the time when my father met my uncle – Freid – we called him Uncle Freid. He was working in a bank in New York – I'm not sure which one. It was some kind of a mercantile bank. And they had a translation department because they had a lot of export import busi – they

did a lot of business with various European countries. And so he had a job there – essentially as a translator in the bank. And he translated letters from German – French various languages into English for the bank.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: And so – that's where my father met him. So I know he had that job. How long he had that job I'm not sure. He later went into the more academic work. And I don't know exactly how he did that. But – in this article that I mentioned to you that was in the New York Times – in – on March 11th, 1941 – it says – it refers to him as Auhagen a former language professor at Columbia University.

LEVINE: Oh.

SHIRLEY: So I know at some point he taught – I believe classical languages – Latin and or Greek at Columbia.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: It may have been in Columbia extension. I don't know. But that's what he did. And then during that time he became – he became – or he was probably interested in politics and international relations and was active probably in German groups in New York. And he wrote articles for the American Mercury Magazine which was – H.L. Mencken's magazine that was very popular at that time. Mencken was the – very well known writer and speaker. And he also – as I told you before he took part in – debates that were broadcast over the radio. So he became a fairly well known personage – which is why when he – his wife divorced him – it made the New York Times. (laughs)

LEVINE: And she divorced him after he had been incarcerated.

SHIRLEY: That's right. So this was March 11, 1941. Apparently she went to Las Vegas and – and got a divorce – (laughs) – on the ground of staying away from home for long periods (laughs) without explaining his activities. (Levine laughs) Well of course he was interned (laughs) so – I don't know if that's what she meant but probably. (Levine laughs) And – in this article it – it says – do you want me just to read the first

LEVINE: Sure. Go ahead.

SHIRLEY: It's from Las Vegas. The headline says divorced to Mrs. Auhagen – wife of man indicted here as Nazi agent gets decree. He wasn't a Nazi agent but that's in 1941 – that's what they thought. And the article says Mrs. Ermgard [ph] Ella [ph] Auhagen obtained a divorce today from Frederich E. Auhagen – who is under indictment in New York for failure to register as an alien agent.

LEVINE: Wow.

SHIRLEY: So – because he had been involved in a lot of public activity – speaking and writing – and I believe that his position generally – there was a lot of controversy in this country over whether we should get involved in World War two or not. There was always a significant group that was more isolationist and said, “No. That's a European affair. We should stay out of that.” And – just as there was with World War one. And so he represented the side that urged the American government not to get involved in World War two.

LEVINE: Oh.

SHIRLEY: to stay out of it. And so that's why he was in – also considered an – in it an alien agent I guess.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: Because people felt that he was – working for the German government trying to keep the American army out of World War two.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you know anything else about his stands as far as Germany or as far as this country – any other of his politics? Are you aware of any other – besides that – which is very significant.

SHIRLEY: Well we have – actually my cousin has a copy of an article which mentions – a debate. We didn't bring that with us did we?

KELLY: No.

SHIRLEY: Mentions a debate that he took part in – with – Dorothy Thompson – who was a famous person in those days. I don't know if you

LEVINE: I don't know

SHIRLEY: are familiar with her. She was a journalist

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: and wrote – in a lot of – she – I think she was a syndicated columnist. She was part of that Algonquin -- Round Table I think.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And – she was also married to -- Sinclair Lewis I think.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh huh. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: You know – so she was a person in the thirties and forties who was extremely well known. Everybody knew who she was – read her columns and – she did lecture tours all around the country. And – this article that we unfortunately didn't bring with us – mentions a debate where Dorothy Thompson took the side of – pro entering World War two I believe. And he – took the other side.

LEVINE: I see. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: So that was – sort of mainly his position.

LEVINE: Position.

SHIRLEY: And – and – he generally I think – wanted to – oh – you might call him a sort of a PR person for – German culture – German – for – German things in this country.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And – I have not read personally these articles that I know that he did write and that were published. So – I can't tell you

LEVINE: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: in greater detail. But

LEVINE: But as far as you know he wanted to stay in this country but he was

SHIRLEY: Oh yes. Um hum.

LEVINE: But he was very fond of the cultural German aspects that he would – could

SHIRLEY: Right. Right. And he felt that Germany was misunderstood or many people were – didn't know – about it – you know. And so – but he definitely wanted to stay in this country. I mean he had come – he had been here a long time already obviously – close to twenty years by the time he was – arrested. And he – in those days people – he had intended to become a citizen. But – you know – people tended to just – they were so busy doing whatever they were doing that they didn't bother to

LEVINE: Living life right. (laughs) Yeah.

SHIRLEY: Right. They didn't bother to apply for a citizenship. And – I know that he later told me even that that was – a big mistake that he had made – ignoring this issue and not having become a citizen.

LEVINE: Right. So maybe you could say something about what you know about his incarceration prior to his coming to Ellis Island.

SHIRLEY: Alright. Well there's something in this article too – I mean which says he was arrested in Willington. And then it says – at New York – Dies committee investigators – and the Dies Committee was a – federal – I'm – I'm not sure if it was under the aegis of the justice department. It's possible -- some federal government. Or it may have been a sub- committee of Congress – a little bit like the House on American Activities Committee in the fifties or – yeah – fifties.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: The Dies – pursued and really persecuted – people who they felt were not sufficiently patriotic – in their opinion. And it says here – Dies Committee investigators said that Auhagen had been ordered to appear before the committee to answer questions concerning reported plans to organize and American Nazi movement. So that's apparently what they accused him of – but that was not in fact his intention or what he did.

LEVINE: Um hum. Um hum.

SHIRLEY: And

LEVINE: And so for this he was put into solitary and – treated badly.

SHIRLEY: Right. I'm not sure of the – you know the – chronological progression

LEVINE: Right.

SHIRLEY: of what happened to him after he was arrested. We do know now based on this letter that he did spend time in this other fort – Fort Abraham Lincoln – which I believe as I said was – is in the Dakota somewhere.

LEVINE: Dakota.

SHIRLEY: And I – I know that he did – have a trial of some kind that took place in the Washington D.C. area

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: in a federal court. And – I believe my mother even wrote a letter to Justice Frankfurter trying to inter – get him to intercede in this case because she felt

so strongly that her brother had been unjustly accused. And – that that trial had been a – what's the word – kind of a – a sham trial

LEVINE: Sham. Uh huh

SHIRLEY: of rail – where he was railroaded. And – he was not permitted to have a lawyer and – you know – maybe he was treated like Mr. Padilla has been treated now.

LEVINE: I was just thinking that. Yeah.

SHIRLEY: And – and it be combatant

LEVINE: Right. Right.

SHIRLEY: And therefore – he was not permitted any access to any papers or any evidence that would have helped him prove that he was not in fact what they claimed he was – and not given an opportunity to consult a lawyer or – or have any witnesses on his behalf. I mean it was

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: It was really – not – he was not given due process.

LEVINE: Right. Right.

SHIRLEY: That was –

LEVINE: Um hum

SHIRLEY: That's – that's what you would call it now. And – I know the – family story that I got – and I don't know whether this is really true. I'll hafta – check with his – perhaps his sons in Germany know better – was that – when he was (Levine coughs) – deported and sent back to Germany in 1947 he was tried. And I don't know if it was an adjunct of the Nuremberg trials – but that he underwent another trial. And – it may have been that it was part of the Nuremberg trials – where they tried everybody that they thought had any Nazi connections – and that he was acquitted at that time – and that the – they to – they apologized. I think they apolog – or they said, "We now see that we did not have sufficient evidence to – to

LEVINE: Inter – uh huh.

SHIRLEY: charge you with the things that you were charged." And , " we're sorry that you – we took – you know

LEVINE: X years of your life

SHIRLEY: seven years of your life away and – deprived you of your liberty for all of that time."

LEVINE: Now did he stay in Germany then or did he return to the U.S.

SHIRLEY: He did. No I don't think – I think at first they would not – even though they did acquit him – they did not permit him to return. And I think his – work – it took him a while to get any kind – it took him a while to get any kind of a real work permit there. When I went over there for the first time – at the age of twelve in 1950 – he was living there with my grandmother and I was there in the same house – my grandmother's house. And – he had been employed by the British – who – it was the British occupation zone where

LEVINE: Oh.

SHIRLEY: he lived – at that time in northern Germany. And – he had gotten some work for the British and possibly also with the Americans during the Berlin airlift time. And – they needed translators anyway. And so he had gotten some work – with the British – as a translator.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And – I think that's what he was doing – at that time – is that right? Would you?

KELLY: And then he taught

SHIRLEY: He later got a job teaching.

KELLY: teaching I believe English

SHIRLEY: English.

KELLY: at the Burman [ph] school – Burman Scheuller [ph] in Alfeld [ph].

SHIRLEY: It was a business school wasn't it?

KELLY: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: So he did then get this job as a – as an instructor.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And that was what he was doing when he was killed – in an auto – in a – motorcycle accident – in 1954 right?

KELLY: Yeah I think that's right.

LEVINE: OK. Well now – tell me how your connection – when you saw him when he was here. What was entailed in your visits here?

SHIRLEY: Well – I remember coming over on the ferry with my mother – a couple of times. Mainly I remember the ferry trip. And then I remember the – that – we were in it. And – one of the times we came – the time I remember best was for a Christmas party. And so – I guess all families were invited to come and visit at that time. And – there – we were in a great big room and I don't know – I haven't had a chance to see the rooms where – or the buildings where – they – the – the – my uncle and the others who were kept here detained – lived. I believe they were on the other side of the island – where.

LEVINE: He wasn't physically ill right? So he wouldn't have been in

SHIRLEY: No. No.

LEVINE: any of the hospital but

SHIRLEY: He wasn't ill.

LEVINE: He was probably in the baggage and dormitory building which I can point out to you which is

SHIRLEY: Is that in this area?

LEVINE: Yeah. It's – it's

SHIRLEY: Yeah because see this building looked very familiar to me. And – the outside of the main building and I remember a very big room where this Christmas party took place (laughs) with lots of windows. And so it's kind of like the main

LEVINE: The great hall? Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: Right.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And so it may have been in there. And I remember that there was a walkway all around it. And we went outside and

LEVINE: Oh.

SHIRLEY: you know – walked around the walked the walkway.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: I guess at that point they were – you know – they were being given the freedom of the island because they couldn't get off the island

LEVINE: Off there – yeah – right.

SHIRLEY: So. And – so I remember walking around the outskirts and talking with my uncle. And I remember coming in and – there were Christmas songs that were being sung together and – probably some kind of a meal and – lots of people. (both laugh)

LEVINE: And what year would this have been – what Christmas?

SHIRLEY: That was – I think it was 1943.

LEVINE: Uh huh. So the people who were here were mainly people – actually waiting for deportation I would think.

SHIRLEY: They were right – colleagues -- you know – people in similar circumstances to my uncle. And – in this – this letter – the man who wrote the letter who was also here with my uncle – and – who apparently then ended up in Argentina -- because he wrote this letter from Argentina. He then mentions in the letter several people. He sort of said – says – so and so – you know wrote a book. And so and so went to – Bolivia and did this and that. And – it's kind of a little discussion of some of the old – friends that they had made while they were here together.

LEVINE: Hum. Hum. Wow. Well what was your – can you remember your uncle's disposition? Was he – first of all was he treated any better here than he had been or do you know?

SHIRLEY: Oh yes. I think so. I think – it was much more pleasant for him here than – wherever he had been before. And – I remember him laughing about his books because he was – because he was an academic and an intellectual. He – when he was incarcerated before I think they took everything away from him and he was not really permitted any reading material. And – I know that once he was here – he was reading a lot and he kept asking my mother to bring him more books every time – she came to visit him or we came. And – I remember him showing us a couple of these books and laughing because – the authorities here had torn the hard covers off. I think – she bought him a – a copy of Anna Karenina. He'd asked her that. And –

they had torn the covers off the book because the hard covers could arguably be used as a weapon.

LEVINE: Weapon (laughs)

SHIRLEY: And he was – joking about that. You know – these

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: So – but he – he was a man who -- had this -- kind of [not understood] wit. I think he – had a – pretty philosophical – outlook on the whole experience. He was certainly bitter in some ways. But he didn't really -- let it show. You know -- he sort of – had – and later when I spoke to him a little bit about it in – in nine – in 1915 when I – fifty when I was twelve – he sort of looked upon it as – you know you never can tell what kind of punches life is 'gonna throw you. And – they threw me some that were pretty bad.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: But – you go on.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did you know of any ramifications of the internment that he – that he bore as a result of it?

SHIRLEY: Well – certainly I think he – he felt – that it had destroyed his career – that – you know that – he would never – that what he had built up during the years that he was in this country – was gone.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: And – you know – it destroyed his marriage. It probably wasn't the only factor in – in his – in the end of his marriage. Because he was a man who was very attractive and – had a lot of girlfriends – during his marriage as well as there after.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: But – but I think he – he did feel that his life had been totally transformed. And that – had this not happened to him he would have gone on in his academic – and his public career – as a writer and a scholar

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: which is how he saw himself.

LEVINE: I see. Was there anyone else in the family who – who was also arrested during this period that you know of?

SHIRLEY: In our family I don't – I don't believe so. I know that my parents – felt some repercussions

LEVINE: Oh how so?

SHIRLEY: of him. Well – when they arrested him and treated him as an alien agent and as a possible (Levine coughs) here – person who possibly was planning to organize a Nazi movement in this country. Of course they knew that his sister was here – or two sisters actually – my mother – and then there was a younger sister who also was living in New York – we – who is the one that he then lived with when they released him from Ellis Island. And – our family was living in Jamaica – in Queens at the time. And we also had a house out on Long Island – in Bright Waters, Long Island. And – the FBI

came to our house and searched our house in Queens. Because my mother was the sister of this supposed enemy alien agent.

LEVINE: Um hum. Um hum.

SHIRLEY: And – I kind of remember them – you know I remember somebody coming to the house and – you know causing a lot of – disruption. My mother had also neglected to become an American citizen. My father fortunately was – smarter and was a citizen. But – she was – so they came and searched our house. And they actually took – (laughs) the only things that they found – I guess they thought she might be a spy or involved somehow in this. And so – my sister can tell you more clearly. But – I think my older brother had sent away from a toy telescope that you got in a Wheaties package

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: You know you – used to be able to save the box tops and send away – and I think a decoder ring – was one of these rings and you could like send little messages in code. And – and they actually confiscated these items as things that a spy could possibly use to send secret messages. (both laugh) And this has always been a family joke. (Levine sneezes) You know that – gosh maybe we should go to the FBI and see if we can reclaim these (both laugh) items that they took. I mean my brother was – he was ten or eleven. My sister was – just a year younger at the time. But – but my parents were certainly frightened by that.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: And my mother then immediately applied for a citizenship – during the war. Because they – you know this was a traumatic experience for them. And

then she was actually denied – citizenship. And – probably partly because of

LEVINE: Because – uh huh.

SHIRLEY: her association with the – with – our uncle Fried – who was a really well known person at the time. I mean – you know – so – and the other – my aunt – his other – his younger sister – who was also in New York – she actually changed her name.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: She had – was working in an office type job. She had – jobs as a secretary. And – she changed her name from Auhagen to Anderson – legally at the time. And it was partly because of his notoriety.

LEVINE: Um hum. Did they search her house too – do you know?

SHIRLEY: I don't know about that.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: I don't think so. Although they may have questioned her – unfortunately – this is a question we never though to ask her.

LEVINE: Um hum. Um hum.

SHIRLEY: She – she didn't really talk about it. I think it was – an un – unpleasant experience – for her. And she felt that she had to – she was a little – she resented a little bit – her brother that he – you know kind of – look at that trouble that he

LEVINE: He's caused – uh huh.

SHIRLEY: that he – caused – for the family by all of this carrying on.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Were you personally aware of anti-German sentiment at around the time of the war and there after?

SHIRLEY: I wasn't particular – because I really wasn't – I mean – when did I start school? I guess I must have started school during the war. I don't remember any – but I do know that my parents – made a decision around 1940 – around the time that this happened – maybe as a result of this search – by the FBI

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: to speak English at home.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: And – they – they had always spoken German and they were both German. And my older brother and sister grew up speaking German. And I really did not grow up speaking German because – you know or else by the time I was three years old they – stopped – and only spoke English in the home. Because they didn't want – I think my older brother and sister and – they'll be able to tell you if they come to talk to you. They did experience quite a bit of anti-German sentiment in school.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And – that had made things a little tough for them.

LEVINE: Yeah. Maybe you could say a little bit about when your uncle was released from here and anything you know about that.

SHIRLEY: Alright. I don't really know too much about it – again my sister will know a lot about that. Because – I'm sure that he was released by 1946 because – I don't know exactly when – because at that time my parents moved from Jamaica to New Hampshire. And – and they took me and my little brother – I had a baby brother – up to New Hampshire with them. And – they must have left New York – oh in the spring – March April – something like that. Because they bought a little summer resort on a lake in New Hampshire. And they wanted to get up there in time – for the summer season

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: which started in – end of – you know late June. But my sister and brother were going to high school in Jamai – they were at Jamaica High. I think they were in their junior year or something like that. And so they didn't 'wanna leave – until the school year was over. So – they stayed with our aunt in Manhattan and commuted to Jamaica high every day on the subway – until school got out in June. And my sister – was at my aunt's apartment. It was during that time that our uncle Fried got out – and – because they were living there together in the apartment which was a very small apartment. It was like a one room apartment. (laughs) It was a big room but it was (Levine laughs) just one room.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: So they had a – sort of a dormitory there. And – and so my sister spent a lot of time there with our uncle.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And – so she – knows a lot about what he was doing. I – I think he was pretty restricted because he really – I think he was probably under orders. Maybe it was like a probation type thing

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: where someone – he had to report to someone every week.

LEVINE: Um hum. Um hum.

SHIRLEY: Because he was not permitted to leave

LEVINE: Leave.

SHIRLEY: our aunt's apartment. I'm sure he would have preferred going someplace else. And – because he had friends who lived in New York. And – that probably would have been preferable for him to living in the same place with his niece, nephew, and sister – (Levine laughs) – all in the same room. So

LEVINE: So he stayed there for a period and then I guess he was free to go at some point?

SHIRLEY: Well he deported.

LEVINE: Oh he was deported from there.

SHIRLEY: He – he was – yeah. He was sent back to Germany and – yesterday when Margaret talked to his son – his son said that he came back in 1947. Right?

KELLY: Yeah. Um hum.

SHIRLEY: Yeah. So he must have stayed in New York for a period of months. I – it sounds like it must have been quite a while.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: Eight to ten months. And I know he came back though in the winter. Because – I remember his telling me that he arrived in – Homburg – I think – I think it was in Homburg. And – the woman who then – whom he then married – he had already known her in this country – before he was arrested. And she picked him up at the ship and then took him to her place. And he – it was a very very harsh winter. And nobody had anything at – in Germany.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: You know – nobody had any coal. Nobody had food. It was – the conditions were particularly bad still. So – I remember his telling me about that.

LEVINE: Hum. Did he go back to the place in Germany that he had lived before he came to this country – do you know?

SHIRLEY: Well he went – at some point he married this woman. And – and then they moved into my grandmother's house as I told you which was in Thale – which is a small city near Hannover – in Northern Germany.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And – housing was extremely scarce because so many people had lost their houses in the bombing of all the cities. And – and also there were something like fifteen million refugees that came from the eastern areas

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: that were then controlled by the Russians and came into west Germany at that same time so the – it was ex – and my grandmother had a big house – our grandmother – in Thale. And – she had always rented out her bottom floor and the family had lived in the top two floors of this house. But then at that time when he got there – the German government had taken over – they had – or maybe it was the occupation authorities still at the time – and had – housed a lot of refugees in the house. (Levine sneezes) So the owners of the house were permitted a very limited number of rooms. I think it was one room per person.

LEVINE: Oh.

SHIRLEY: So my grandmother could have one room and her younger son had one room. And then uncle Fried – this uncle and his wife – and she had a child – small child by another earlier husband. They all lived in one room in this house. So – it was a house where he had lived as a young man. Because he went to secondary school – in that town – I believe.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: He went to – yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: He and my other uncle – Margaret's father – went to the *gymnasium* it was called – which was the classical boys' high school in the town.

LEVINE: OK. Yeah.

SHIRLEY: So he did – in a sense

LEVINE: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: end up

LEVINE: Where he had started. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: where had had come from. Um hum.

LEVINE: Well is there anything else you can think of that might be relevant to your uncle's experience or that you yourself witnessed or experienced when you visited – that we maybe haven't covered – you can think of anything?

SHIRLEY: Offhand – I – I can't think of anything because as I – my memories of being here are pretty limited.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Well you were young and – yeah but it's very interesting about your uncle to have this on record I think.

SHIRLEY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

SHIRLEY: And I think we can probably find out a lot more – now that were – kind of

LEVINE: started to

SHIRLEY: getting going with this.

LEVINE: Right.

SHIRLEY: And apparently his – our cousin – his son – has shown quite a bit of interest in this. So

LEVINE: Oh good. Now his son is here or his son is there?

SHIRLEY: No his son is in Germany.

LEVINE: Germany. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: Both of his sons lived in Germany.

LEVINE: Germany. I see. I see. Well maybe we'll talk – I'll talk with Margaret.

SHIRLEY: Yes.

LEVINE: And then we'll continue that way. OK. This is Margaret Auhagen Monods Kelly

KELLY: Um hum.

LEVINE: who is also a niece of – uncle Fried – (laughs) – is that – is that the way you

SHIRLEY: Does Margaret have one of these – does she need it?

LEVINE: No. In fact maybe I'll switch the mic – to Margaret.

SHIRLEY: You could just switch. Alright. (rustling)

LEVINE: Just put this on here. (rustling) OK great. OK – why don't you just start Margaret by saying your birth date and where you were born.

KELLY: Um hum. My birth date is the fourth of September, 1936. And I was born in a small village – Minelxen [ph] – not far from Thela. And – after – usually in Germany you go to high school in grades – after grade – four. But I came to Thela – after grade six. And that's when I then also met uncle Fried I think. But maybe I visited my grandmother when I saw him for the first time.

LEVINE: Uh huh. And when you think about him how do you remember him as a personality?

KELLY: Well – my mother had four children and very little time to talk to her children because she had to see – she had to see that there was food on the table. And – since there was a large garden in this house – in this small town – that's where we were – working – she or we. And – it was just astounding to me that there was a – a man – an uncle – that – very new to me – who would ask me to sit down on his sofa or it was the sofa bed in this small room – which was very nicely put together – lots of books – who asked me to sit down and – talk with me. Nobody had ever done this in my life before. But I was handed a – a magazine. I don't know if I ever had a magazine in my hand before. It may have been Life Magazine. It – may have been. And – yeah – tried to tell me something about the United States and show me pictures in this magazine. And I remember this picture with many beautiful young girls on it. I assume it was the – the most beautiful women – what is the contest?

LEVINE: Oh -- the beauty contest?

KELLY: Beauty contest.

SHIRLEY: Miss America.

LEVINE: Miss America.

KELLY: Miss America. (all laugh)

LEVINE: Yeah.

KELLY: So – that is what I remember vividly – and I suddenly – was just very surprised that he wanted to talk to me.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

KELLY: And – as you will notice my cousin asked him questions – though she is a year younger but I was not used to asking questions. So – she has told me that that was very surprising for her – when she came a year later. So I guess he just talked to me and I did not ask any questions. (both laugh) So – it – it was a more adult type of conversation that I had not experienced so far.

LEVINE: And did you continue speaking with him and having a relationship over a period of years?

KELLY: I cannot say that because I was not living in that same house and Heidi lived there for a while right?

SHIRLEY: Yeah.

KELLY: Yeah. And I lived – I had to live with another family. Because in order to go to school – to a high school – I had to live with another family.

LEVINE: Um hum.

KELLY: And – I may have visited him then again. I remember his marriage to Tanta Yohana [ph] – his wife. Because they were married at my father's church in Minelxen [ph]. So I just remember them walking in the snow. But –

LEVINE: Uh huh.

KELLY: I did not have a conversation with him at the time. I then talked more to his wife.

LEVINE: I see.

KELLY: when I visited.

LEVINE: Now was he a religious man at all or what religion was the family? (both laugh and Levine coughs)

KELLY: Well my father's religion is Lutheran like most people at that – at that time or in that area are – when they are Protestants. And I don't remember my uncle being a church going member. He may have been Lutheran by birth but – but I guess my father asked then that they should be married in church and so he saw to that. (both laugh) That's why they came around Christmas time – to be married in this small village.

LEVINE: I see. How about – I know you were taking some notes while we were talking. Are there any things that we talked about that maybe you have some additional information that would be helpful in our take.

KELLY: Well – my father was younger – I know maybe five years younger or more?
He was born in seven so you said he was born in ninety eight?

LEVINE: Ninety

SHIRLEY: Which was 1899.

KELLY: Ninety nine. OK so my father is about seven and a half year younger and he had to suffer from his – older brother who was much more outgoing and my father was more – withdrawn I guess as a kid. And they played tricks on him. There was another older brother Hunt [ph]. So those two ganged up against my brother. But I don't know if you want to talk about that. (both laugh) So -- he also was a smart-alecky. I think you say that in this country in his school life. I – he – had a problem with – surprising his teachers.

LEVINE: Being a smart-aleck – this is your uncle

SHIRLEY: Fried.

LEVINE: Fried. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: That's his – yeah.

KELLY: (not understood)

LEVINE: Uh huh. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: Yeah. I can tell you more about his personality too if [not understood]

KELLY: If we want that (laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah. Well – I mean he sounds like an interesting – and I think if he was outspoken that way – that would make it more likely that he would have been picked up – and arrested.

SHIRLEY: (not understood) He was very outspoken. And – he was also very well spoken.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: He was extremely articulate. And – he was a truly charismatic man.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: You know – people just adored him. And children too – as Margaret said. You know – he was – he could relate to children. And – you were immediately drawn to him. And he could joke with you and tell you stories and act – and treat you as if you were really an interesting

LEVINE: Person?

SHIRLEY: you know – valuable person – and who he cared about. And – but and he did that – this with all people.

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: He was extremely bright – and precocious – and – for that reason had a lot of trouble in the more authoritarian household that he grew up in – and – and in the education system that was very authoritarian. But – he had and he had many people in this country who were – not disciples of his but were – very strong – backers and admirers. And –

LEVINE: Hum.

SHIRLEY: He was just – he really had a charismatic personality and – terrific sense of humor. And – he was – as I say – he was also very egotistical and – and – you know – he felt the world revolved around him basically – which is the way people who are like that often behave. So – (Kelly laughs) – I don't want to

KELLY: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: but

LEVINE: OK.

KELLY: Well one thing I – I sort of thought was smart – if you can think and figure out things fast – for him when he was sent into World War one – he knew what to do in order to protect himself. This is a story I believe related through my father – but I – this I do not know exactly. But it certainly appear to me – that when these young students who at sixteen or seventeen – they were told by – I think their gym teacher or some teacher who was so patriotic to send the whole class going to the western front – which (laughs) you know from – from some literature and – and also from history without being prepared to fight. And – the only thing he knew is when he heard this shooting going on – fall down – you – (not understood) just throw yourself to the floor and he was fast enough not to be hit. And – he was the only one from this class that returned back to – alive.

LEVINE: Um hum. Um hum.

KELLY: So he then – after the war – did his – after World War one did his *abitur*. I mean this is the final exam once you leave these gymnasiums – or – classical education school – you'd call them.

SHIRLEY: Uh huh.

KELLY: OK.

SHIRLEY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh huh. And then he came here shortly after that – or no?

KELLY: No. No he first

LEVINE: He stayed

KELLY: had – after that – there was a problem what was he to do. He first had an agricultural stint and with some practicum at a farmer. His father put him there. I don't think he wanted to do that. And he didn't last very long in this – environment. And then I guess started to study at the mining school in Clausthal-Zellerfeld.

SHIRLEY: Right.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: So he – his – his – our grandparents then though that – first our grandmother though he should become a minister because traditionally in her family the oldest son became a minister. But it was clear (Levine laughs) from relatively early on that this guy was not going to be cut out to be a man of the cloth. So – they gave that up. And then they tried to think

of things – you know for to do – in – after the war – after he finished his high school diploma. And so I guess our grandfather thought that – that – he – a mining engineer would be a good way to keep him busy.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: So – but he always had a difficult relationship with his parents. They couldn't handle him. And – so I'm sure that that was one of the reasons why decided to try his luck in this country.

LEVINE: Do you think it was solely his decision and do you know what his vases were for coming to this country when he did?

SHIRLEY: I don't know. I – I'm pretty sure it was solely his decision. I think his parents probably would have been against that. I know that when my mother came – my – my grand – our grandmother was very much – tried to prevent her in all sorts of extreme ways from leaving.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And –

LEVINE: Of course on the other hand (laughs) they may have welcomed that he – you know – he had a mission here. (laughs)

SHIRLEY: Well they had a different attitude toward him. That's true. So they may have said, "Uh. Thank god he's finally gone out of our hair." (Levine laughs) And you said you thought that he had worked his way over as a –

KELLY: As a shipping coal – I remember

SHIRLEY: shoveling

KELLY: shoveling coal – shoveling coal – yeah. He – in order to do something my father helped him to give a speech in this small town when I'm – which I mentioned before. And the same talk he also gave in other towns. And I believe seeing it once advertised in the town where I went to school – which was in translation – “from coal shoveling to being a professor at Columbia University”

LEVINE: Uh huh.

KELLY: That was the title of the talk – or of this speech (not understood).

SHIRLEY: Yeah – speech.

KELLY: Speech.

LEVINE: And this was before he came?

SHIRLEY: No no. This was after he was back in Germany.

KELLY: Oh we are now in nineteen – we are now in 1949.

LEVINE: Ah. I see. Uh huh.

KELLY: That is when he made these talks – these speeches – gave these speeches.

SHIRLEY: See he was always interested in – public

KELLY: And he was very very appealing in this small town.

SHIRLEY: Um hum.

KELLY: There were just that my father could have such an interesting brother – my mother was told afterwards – yes.

LEVINE: Oh – your poor father (all laugh) oh gosh.

KELLY: I mean he was giving a sermon every Sunday -- you know but – (laughs) – so.

SHIRLEY: Her father was

LEVINE: Your father became the minister.

KELLY: My father could –

SHIRLEY: He was the minister.

LEVINE: Did he?

KELLY: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: Yeah he did.

LEVINE: Uh huh. (Levine and Kelly laugh)

SHIRLEY: He was the – the weekend so

KELLY: Oh it must have been in 1950 because only came back in forty nine.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

KELLY: So it must have been 1950.

SHIRLEY: Your father came back.

KELLY: My father came back from – Russian from Russia in 1950 or shortly before 1950. So it must have been – this talk must have been given in 1950 or 1951.

LEVINE: Yeah. I see. Now did anyone else in the family immigrate – first of all – well – his sister.

SHIRLEY: My – my mother – and then his other sister.

LEVINE: Your mother his younger sister.

SHIRLEY: Right. And she remained in this country.

LEVINE: And was he instrumental in bringing – he came first? Is that the way it went?

SHIRLEY: Yes. He came – I know that he was instrumental in getting my mother here. He – my mother was the next child. So – she was

KELLY: Uncle Hunt [ph].

SHIRLEY: Oh. That's right. There's Hunt. I'm sorry. She was the first girl that – so – she was closer to him in age than the younger sister obviously. And – my mother was – also did not get along with her own mother too well. And – my grandmother – our grandmother – had forced my mother to drop out of

school after the tenth grade and – become her assistant at home – help take care of the children and the household.

LEVINE: She was the oldest girl – your mother?

SHIRLEY: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And my mother was extremely unhappy with this set up. And then – actually our grandfather had – was – had gone to Palestine. He was an agricultural economist and was an expert in – farming – in the technology of farming and agronomy I guess you'd call it. And he had been involved -- he had a lot of friends who were Zionists. And – and after World War one, the European Zionists started going to – Palestine.

LEVINE: Palestine – uh.

SHIRLEY: And – probably beginning kibutas [ph] over there. So – we think probably that's what our grandfather was doing there because he went over there and he lived there for several years. And – and so – my mother then – after her mother forced her to drop out of school – had complained to her father and had been – he had – had her come over to Palestine. So my mother had spent two years in Palestine with her father. And then he had gone back to Germany for a visit and died – of -- had a heart attack at the age of fifty seven in Thela.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: And so suddenly died. And my mother came back from Palestine. And so then she was with her mother. And at that point our uncle Fried who was in

New York wrote to her and said, "Look. You can't stay in the hole anymore with this impossible mother of our." And she – he sent her a ca – a ticket. And said, "Get on the next boat and come on over here." And – so he definitely had a direct impact on my mother's coming.

LEVINE: Um hum. Um hum. And then it was your mother who wrote the letters about his mistreatment

SHIRLEY: That's right. Yeah.

LEVINE: in the camp.

SHIRLEY: Um hum. Yeah. She was – pretty close to him.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: And they had – so they had also – from the time she came which was about 1926 – un – all the way through she had seen him all the time. I mean – they were – they did a lot of things together.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: They had many friends in common.

LEVINE: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: When my parents had this little place on Long Island our uncle would come out every weekend and play tennis and stay with him. So they had a very close relationship.

LEVINE: Did he treat you the way he did Margaret?

SHIRLEY: Oh yes.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: Oh very much so. And he – when I went – when I was in Germany when – when I was twelve – I was kind of lonely because my little brother was with her family in the country. And I was with his grandmother who spoke no English. I'd never been in this place. Life was pretty strange. And the – Uncle Fried really took me under his wing. And – I had always been a great reader – from the time I was four years old. And all of the sudden I was over there and I didn't have any books that I could read because I could only read English. And he had English books so he gave me – he gave me *Gone With the Wind* (Levine laughs) – so I read that. And – some books by Aldous Huxley.

LEVINE: Oh wow. (laughs)

SHIRLEY: *Gone With the Wind* was the only one (Levine coughs) of two novels because his books were more philosophy – psychology – political theory kind of books – which I wasn't really that interested in. But – he had *Gone With the Wind* and he had – a book by Aldous Huxley called *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* – I don't know

LEVINE: Oh I've heard of it. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: if you know that. It's a – pretty strange book but (Levine laughs) – so he gave me these books and

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: we used to have a lot of conversations. I mean – he – he knew that I was unhappy and – so he really took the time to spend some time. And I think he was interested in me because I was also interested in books and – you know – more looked like I might become an intellectual at some point. (both laugh)

KELLY: Well you asked questions.

SHIRLEY: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: Yeah. (laughs) Poor Margaret never learned to ask questions because it wasn't allowed right? (all laugh)

SHIRLEY: Well they – it's true.

LEVINE: Yeah. Right.

SHIRLEY: I can remember one of the first – time – well when I had just gotten over there in 1950 we were having dinner around our grandmother's table and – your father was there.

KELLY: [not understood]

SHIRLEY: Yes. Yes.

KELLY: OK.

SHIRLEY: He was there. He had come for some – whatever reason and

KELLY: Um hum.

SHIRLEY: Uncle Hoover [ph] and I don't know who else. And they were talking about politics – and what was going on. And I remember I said – “Well I think that Adenauer should do thus and so.” (Levine laughs) – and that – and they all turned around and looked at me and – like – what did I miss? (both laugh) So – children should be seen and not heard. That was definitely my grandmother's – our grandmother's – attitude and probably your father's too to some extent.

KELLY: It changed when I was fourteen. I didn't participate – (laughs) – at not at that time – yeah.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Uh huh.

SHIRLEY: And also – her father as she said had been – he was a prisoner of war in Russia for about five years so – he had been – out of it.

KELLY: Yeah. At least five years – from forty four to early fifties.

SHIRLEY: Yeah. Maybe more?

LEVINE: Um hum.

KELLY: My mother's conversation – turned around – nothing intellectual – though she was a well educated woman – just too many – too many worries (sighs)

LEVINE: Pressure – uh huh.

KELLY: how to get these – to bring up these children to be polite and that is what the conversation was about – how you – how the ta – they were about table manners. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Uh huh. OK well we're right near the end of the tape. Is there anything else that we haven't covered? Do you think your uncle made his peace with being back in Germany – I mean did he – I guess he – he had some

SHIRLEY: I think he did. I think that --

LEVINE: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: you know – when he finally got this teaching job which was not – it was relatively close to the time that he died – actually. I think he hadn't had it very long. I think he – finally kind of felt that he had turned the corner and that perhaps things were looking up in his life. I know that he harbored a deep sense of disappointment and – kind of – what if. Because – you know – it was just a cataclysmic event. But I think I do – I do think that he – felt that he was on the way to – making a meaningful new life instead of kind of just going around doing little translating – a speech here – a speech there – and – you know thinking, "What have I don't with my life?" Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SHIRLEY: so

LEVINE: OK. Is there anything Margaret you want to say in the end of the tape –

KELLY: (laughs)

LEVINE: about your uncle or your relation to him?

KELLY: Well – I – I hope that – my cousin Heidi and together with his son – Henlick [ph] – that they will write something and – something together about him and his time

LEVINE: OK.

KELLY: in this country – and – Germany.

LEVINE: OK.

KELLY: I am very glad if I can be helpful. (laughs)

LEVINE: Well I thank you both

SHIRLEY: Thank you!

LEVINE: for a very interesting interview and maybe this will be the beginning of more

SHIRLEY: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: that can be part of our collection here in the oral history archive. OK – I've been speaking with Heidi Shirley and Margaret Monods Kelly – who

END OF INTERVIEW

