

**ANTON WULFERT**  
**BIRTHDATE: MAY 30, 1941**  
**INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 2005**  
**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 64**  
**RUNNING TIME: 48:00:00**  
**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD**  
**RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME**  
**INTERVIEW LOCATION: LEXINGTON, TENNESSEE**  
**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: IRV SILBERG**  
**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**USSR, 1954**  
**AGE: 12**

**SHIP: GRIPSHOLM**  
**PORT: BREMENHAVEN**  
**RESIDENCES:**

- **USSR: FEHLENSTAL, THE UKRAINE**
- **GERMANY: DUDERSTADT**
- **US: SCOTTS Hill, TN**

**ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: ONE OF THE CHILDREN IN THE  
WULFERT FAMILY, EI-1388 – EI 1395**

LEVINE: So it's September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005 . I'm here in Lexington, Tennessee at the home of Anna and Glen Kerk. I'm going to be speaking with Anna's brother, Anton, who came to this country with the rest of the family in April of 1954. Anton was twelve years old about to turn thirteen the following month. Again, they came through Bremerhaven on the Gripsholm. His is Janet Levine of the National Park Service. If we could start ---- would you state for the tape again, please, your birth date.

WULFERT: 5/30/'41

LEVINE: OK. And where were you born?

WULFERT: I was born in Fehlsenstal, USSR

LEVINE: And would you spell Fehlsenthal, please?

WULFER F-E,-- I don't know exactly where—F-E-H-L-E-N-S-S-T-A-L.

LEVINE: OK. Fehlstenstal. And you were there from the time you were born until what age?

WULFERT: Right around two, I believe I was two when we left Russia,

LEVINE: Oh, really?

WULFERT: Uh. Huh.

LEVINE: So you have no memories then, at all

WULFERT: Not much

LEVINE: You got any?

WULFERT: Well, when I got to.. I remember my brother kept taking me around, you know, trying to keep up with him,

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: And he was carryin', he was carryin' somethin' in his hand and I was carryin' a pee-pot

LEVINE: Ok (Both laugh).

WULFERT: I carried this, I cannot tell you – all the way from Russia to Germany. And that, that looked on them from Germany, you know, at (unclear) land by the *Rhein* river? You could see, you could see lot of ships part of it stickin' down in the water and the part was stickin' out was burnin'

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness.

WULFERT: And I remember that noise and bombin' and all that stuff

LEVINE: Well, that's quite, quite amazing, I mean for somebody two years old. So when you left USSR and went to Germany, it was 1943?

WULFERT: Um, hum. Right.

LEVINE: Ya? Okay, let's see. Is there anything else that you think about when you think about your earliest years in the USSR? Is there anything else that either you remember or you just think about related to that period?

WULFERT: No.

LEVINE: No. 'Cause that was so early for you.

WULFERT: It was too early.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Okay. And, so when you got to Germany; then where were you?

WULFERT: Well, we settled in when we got to Germany, went to Duderstadt

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

WULFERT: Yeah. Duderstadt. It was close to the Russian border. 'Cause we could see them driving a tractor in Dias(ph), kept their border line clean, kept it real clean so they knew if people went across, they would have seen their footprints.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So it was dirt?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: So, the footprints would be obvious.

WULFERT: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Ahah! Okay, would you spell the name of the town? Because people type this out and we need to know the spelling.

WULFERT: Duderstadt? It's D-U-D-E-R-S-T-A-D-H-T

(Chimes in background)

LEVINE: So, you were there up until you left?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: For this country?

WULFERT: Yes. but when my Dad, my Dad apri----, my Dad worked on the farm. I remember that

LEVINE: What do you remember about your Dad working on the farm? What do you remember about that farm?

WULFERT: Well, what that he was always busy. He was a, choppin' beets. You know, sugar beets you have to chop 'em, like you do cotton?

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: And then I remember him gather them, you have to pull 'em up and he always worked with mules and horses. He had them big Belgian horses. He worked with them on a farm.

LEVINE: And how about you as a little boy growing up. Did you help?

WULFERT: Yes. I helped a lot.

LEVINE: What did you have to do?

WULFERT: I have to pick 'em up, throw 'em in the wagon and just---- then we had to put them in a band, you know.. And in Germany, I did lot of potatoes

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: And-- they got a big old steam thing come up and they steamed the potatoes. And they put them in a pit and that's what they fed the hogs with. They put some grain with it and that's what they fed the hogs, with potatoes.

LEVINE: So, in other words, they steamed them in the pit?

WULFERT: No. They steamed them out the pit and then they put 'em for storage in the pit.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh, huh.

WULFERT: Then, and then they fed 'em out of there and they had places they could feed them out of, the – you know.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. So did they store 'em for a while or they –

WULFERT: Uh, huh.

LEVINE: or they just steamed them and fed them right away.

WULFERT: Yeah. So it last for a while. You know, feed 'em over winter, till they had stuff, you know, ---to feed 'em with.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did you go to school?

WULFERT: Yes. I did.

LEVINE: What do you remember about school? Now, were you able to speak German when you came to Germany?

WULFERT: Yes. I knew German.

LEVINE: You knew German. So, what was school like for you?

WULFERT: It was hard. I failed the first year.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And then, and then after I got my stuff together, I did pretty good in school.

LEVINE: Well, in the beginning, how did the other children treat you?

WULFERT: Oh. They called us ----you know when they found out where we come from, they called us Russians and everything.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. So were the kids --, I mean, did you get into fights? Or—

WULFERT: Not that much; but that were piece of----you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. And how about the teachers, how did---

WULFERT: They treat us good.

LEVINE: They treated you good?

WULFERT: Uh, huh

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Did they give you any kind of special help because you were comin' in?

WULFERT: So—they did as a second year, they knew that I was smart in catchin' on quick enough and so they gave me some extra help.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: I did, I did real good then.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And, lets see. Now your father was working on the farm. Do you remember the farmer and the place where you were staying?

WULFERT: Yes, I do.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

WULFERT: It's---- outside Duderstadt, the name of the farm was Kogo(ph)

LEVINE: That was the man's name too?

WULFERT: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: Go-

WULFERT: kealo, something like that.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: He had a – I knew this back in my young day—he had a drinking problem.

LEVINE: Ahh.

WULFERT: Oh, he had a bad drinkin'----he'd come in drunk and-- and we aggravated him because of that. The kids were embarrassed.

LEVINE: Ohh. Was he abusive when he was drunk?

WULFERT: Yes, he was.

LEVINE: Like what? Like what?

WULFERT: He was abusive to his wife and kids to a certain extent.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And how about to you and your family?

WULFERT: No, he was pretty good to us.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. So we –did you play with his children?

WULFERT: Yes, we did.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And did they, were they accepting of you?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: I never had no problem with people that are close to you. They knew us pretty well and then we got along good.

LEVINE: Ah, hah. Now how about—your father was working hard on this farm and how about your mother?

WULFERT: She worked at a gardener, putting like a nursery, you know, garden nursery.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh, huh.

WULFERT: She worked there ----(Thinks out-loud quietly)---I forgot, I forgot.

LEVINE: That's OK. Is that, so the Gokealo family didn't own the garden. That was someplace else.

WULFERT: Some other place, some other place. They were further in town, you know.

LEVINE: I see. And was your mother happy doing that?

WULFERT: Yes. She loved that.

LEVINE: She liked working with the plants.

WULFERT: Yeah. Plants and green-garden, different things. Yeah, she liked that.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: She sure did.

LEVINE: Yep. And, let's see, when you think about being in that time in Germany, what did you do for fun? What did you do for enjoyment, that you remember?

WULFERT: Well, we played kickball, *fussball*, and we went bicycle ridin' a lot.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: We just set—and a lot of times, you know, my time—our Dad kept us workin' pretty good. We had to help him.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: We had a lot of times do another errand, cut wood for the winter, and, you know, just everyday chores you know, have to do it--- to survive.

LEVINE: And what about your living quarters? What were they like?

WULFERT: They were pretty nice.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And when Daddy put us in the bedroom for the night, he locked the door from the outside. We couldn't get out.

LEVINE: Why was that?

WULFERT: We were --- we were on the second floor. I didn't like that too well. But that's just part is---putting up with him.

LEVINE: Well, um, do you know why he did that?

WULFERT: He was going somewhere, I guess.

LEVINE: Uh yeah. Where might you have gone?

WULFERT: I don't know.

LEVINE: (laughs) Well, maybe he wanted to keep you close. He was afraid.

WULFERT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah

WULFERT: But, you know, in time of war and after war, you know, we think so.

LEVINE: Now do you have any memories of the war, of fighting, of any kind of

WULFERT: No

LEVINE: Anything

WULFERT: I don't remember. Like I said before, you know, about them ships being in the water?

LEVINE: That's about all that you really saw.

WULFERT: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how about being close to the Iron Curtain, the wall between East and West? Do you, what?

WULFERT: We didn't have no wall. See, if we had that....the dirt, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And lot of people, you know, in Germany bread was a bigger item. Lot of people sneaked across the border and bought bread over there in Russia.

LEVINE: Ohh.

WULFERT: "Cause it was so much cheaper. And me and my brother done that. We'd go down these creeks, and kept ourselves down and one of us bought bread and brought bread back home.

LEVINE: Wow.

WULFERT: We did that several times.

LEVINE: And that was, was that pretty dangerous?

WULFERT: Yeah, if they'd catch you, it would have been,

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: We tried not to get caught.

LEVINE: Did you ever know of anybody who did get caught?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: What happened to them?

WULFERT: Never heard of it; but, you know, you know how rumors go. They say anything.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

WULFERT: They scared you enough, enough to scare you.

LEVINE: Yeah. So now, you didn't---your father didn't work for the Gokealo family up until the time you left, did he?

WULFERT: Yes

LEVINE: Oh, he did.

WULFERT: Uh, huh.

LEVINE: Oh, oh. Okay. Okay. But you, did you move to another place, or were you always living in the same place?

WULFERT: We was, we was always in the same place.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: Till we got ready to leave for Germany.

LEVINE: I see. Now did, did you....you probably arrived with nothing

WULFERT: We didn't have much.

LEVINE: And then, did your fortunes improve?

WULFERT: Oh yeah. That did feel good.

LEVINE: What.. hap.., can you talk about that a little bit? How your family got kind of moved up a little?

WULFERT: When we first come to the United States, they put us on a farm

LEVINE: Well, wait a minute. First; before we leave Germany, did your fortunes improve there from the time you first arrived until you left for the United States?

WULFERT: Not much.

LEVINE: Not much?

WULFERT: It was pretty much the same. You know, post war, you know, and it's pretty much the same.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Were there other people that you knew of who had.

WULFERT: Yes, I had a—my Dad had a sister livin', I guess, about six or seven miles from where we lived.

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: We visit.. they visit us a lot. We had lot of dinners together, and stuff like that.

LEVINE: And had they also been in the Ukraine?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So you had a lot in common. You'd been in similar experiences. Uh, huh. I see.

WULFERT: And they live here in the United States now too.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah?

WULFERT: They live in Scotts Hill.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh, huh. Did they come here after you did?

WULFERT: They came before us.

LEVINE: Oh, they're the ones that were here before. Uh, huh. I see

WULFERT: They're Edwards and Olga Pelz.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

WULFERT: And, that's my, its my baby sister and, you know...

LEVINE: How do you spell their last name?

WULFERT: P-E-L-Z.

LEVINE: And, did you, do you recall when they were deciding to leave, to come?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: And can you say anything about them?

WULFERT: They...they left two years ahead of us.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: And when they did, they said; after they get there, they going to tell us, you know, what's it like.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: And we got letters from them. And, boy, they loved it over there.

LEVINE: Can you remember what they said in any of their letters?

WULFERT: Yeah. They said that the farm had everything, you know, doing pretty good.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And some of it was pretty authentic, but some of 'em was a little bit stretched imagination there.

LEVINE: (Laughs). You mean, they made it sound better than it really was.

WULFERT: Made it sound a lot better.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: I heard later on, once we come to the United States,----- I later on heard about people saying what they had a hard time. The man that brought them over really wa—didn't treat them good. So, another man took over and took care of them.

LEVINE: I see.

WULFERT: But—by name of D. McCollum.

LEVINE: Do you have any ideas as to why they would have painted a better picture to you then—?

WULFERT: I guess they wanted us to come over, too.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

WULFERT: And, then about two years after they come over, we finally--- Daddy filled in the papers and worked on it and worked on it and we finally got the notice.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Did you know of anybody else besides that aunt and uncle---?

WULFERT: No.

LEVINE: who had come here?

WULFERT: No, I don't

LEVINE: No. Uh, huh. How about the preparation----no, wait a minute. I wanted to ask you. Were your mother and father, why did they decide, do you know why they decided to come?

WULFERT: To come over here?

LEVINE: Yeah

WULFERT: From the way my aunt talked about it; it sounded so good, you know.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And they said they would help us get-----to come over here you got to have a sponsor, someone that pays your trip in full. But you have to pay him back, which we did, and--- and they helped get us one by name of Lawrence Kelly. They said they would sponsor us and brought us over here.

LEVINE: I see. So were your mother and father both excited about coming.

WULFERT: Oh, we all were excited.

LEVINE: You were all excited.

WULFERT: We was, and we was tellin' that at school as free fixin' ---- goin' to the United, goin' t---goin' to the United States. They sort of got careless there.

LEVINE: Ahah. Ah.

WULFERT: They wouldn't treat us good.

LEVINE: Was there anything about Germany that you were sorry to leave?

WULFERT: Oh, Germany is a pretty country, but at that time, no.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. You were just more excited about coming rather than sad about leaving.

WULFERT: Well, the way my aunt described the picture, everything sounded good.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

WULFERT: And my brother thought he----when he come over here, he's gonna be a cowboy. Nick, my oldest brother.

LEVINE: And did you have any dreams about what you would want to do when you got here?

WULFERT: Well, I wanted --- no, not really, I just wanted to come over and see what it's like to be here.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Yeah. So, let's see, do you remember anything that your ----- any member of your family, you or anyone else, brought with them to the new country?

WULFERT: What you talkin' about? Items?

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: Oh, my Mama brought her sewing machine. And we brought a few items for --that we could bring.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

WULFERT: You know, like a ---we sold our stuff. We had extra money in banks and we brought what we could bring, what they let us.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. They let you bring a certain amount.

WULFERT: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. How about you, personally? Was there anything you wanted to have with you?

WULFERT: No.

LEVINE: No.

WULFERT: I just wanted to come over see what it's like.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. And, so let's see. When you got ready to leave, do you remember packing up and what do you remember?

WULFERT: Yeah, we had to put them, you know, they had package it wood. They went to put---my Dad put everything in wood crates. And, you know, you had to really address it good. ---

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: make sure it got to wherever it was goin'. We didn't have no problem with luggage and stuff.

LEVINE: Yeah

WULFERT: You know. Stuff we crated up, it wasn't no problem getting' it over here.

LEVINE: I see. And so when you got all, everything crated up and everything, do you remember the family actually leaving? Where did you go---- how did you go, and where did you go?

WULFERT: We went on a train to Bremerhaven.

LEVINE: Was that a long trip?

WULFERT: Pretty long trip.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember anything about that journey, that train trip?

WULFERT: Well, that train trippin', we always tickled to death just to get to go, we never been on a ship before. But we looked forward to goin'.

LEVINE: Yeah. And how about when you got (Chimes in background) to Bremerhaven, what do you?

WULFERT: There were lot of other people there was goin' over here.

LEVINE: Now, were you---you were considered what? Displaced persons? Or you—is that what you were considered? Or, do you know anything about that? Who was on that ship with you?

WULFERT: No. We were what they called *Volks Deutsche*. You know, that's—been to another country and move to Germany

LEVINE: Oh. Uh, huh. Okay. So, when you got on the ship; were there a lot of other people like your family?

WULFERT: Yes. Oh, yes. The ship was full of.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And they were all people who were Germans who had been elsewhere and come back?

WULFERT: Yes. Some of them were just Germans, you know.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. But they were all emigrating; they were all coming here to stay?

WULFERT: What they once wanted— see there's four of us kids. How would they—you know, most time though they had a limit, just two kids.

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: And we someway know to get by that and there was four of us kids come over here.

LEVINE: I see. So, maybe it was a little more difficult for you to get your papers because you were-----

WULFERT: Dad worked and worked on it. He had some help. And finally come through.

LEVINE: Do you know how he got help, who helped him----?

WULFERT: No, I don't.

LEVINE: or anything like that? Or, I'll talk with him about that. Yeah, so okay. So, you were all, all you Wulferts are on board the Gripsholm, right? And what was the passage like for you?

WULFERT: Oh, it was fine. Point was a beautiful ship, they fed us good, they had---

LEVINE: Tell me about the ship. What was the ship like?

WULFERT: The ship was beautiful inside.

LEVINE: What did---what was it like?

WULFERT: Well, it --- just like a big hotel. I mean everything was nice. They waited on you hand and foot. You didn't have to stand in line and wait for nothin', do you know, like the food.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: When you come to the dining room – ‘s a big, open dining room. The food was ordered, we had assigned tables and, boy the food was great. Till we got seasick; then nothin’ tasted good.

LEVINE: Right. So did you have any time when you weren’t seasick?

WULFERT: Yes. Me and my brother, we found a way to go down to the bottom of the ship, and get all the way to the front and see where the ship was cuttin’ the water. And we stayed there and watched it long time. Remind me a lot, you know, when I was watched that movie—

LEVINE: Titanic.

WULFERT: Titanic.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: Except we didn’t want to jump off (Laughs).

LEVINE: (Laughs). And did you see ice floes and everything?

WULFERT: Yes. We seen ‘em when we got past England. England, up in that we seen some iceberg. But there wasn’t no danger.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh, huh. Yeah, well I guess it was April. I guess maybe the worst was over. Yeah. So, you and your brother kind of ran around the ship and looked at everything.

WULFERT: Yeah. They had a lot of parties planned for us

LEVINE: Oh really. On the ship?

WULFERT: On the ship. They did.

LEVINE: And did you like see the Captain and

WULFERT: Yeah. We see, yea.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Wow. Well for a little boy that must have been some quite exciting.

WULFERT: It was exciting, it was exciting.

LEVINE: So, do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

WULFERT: The first thing we seen when we come to New York Harbor ----- it was real foggy that morning but you could see the Statue of Liberty.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And I called for my parents and they seen it too. Boy, Mama stayed seasick the whole trip just about. I just stayed seasick three, four days. And, boy, we was tickled to death just to see that.

LEVINE: Well, did you know what the Statue of Liberty meant when you first came?

WULFERT: Not really. But, you know they told us what it was.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. So, were people up on deck then?

WULFERT: Um, hum. Oh, yeah, a lot of people watching there.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. What was the reaction. Do you remember that?

WULFERT: They was--- they was glad to see it, glad to come to the United States.

LEVINE: Yeah. So then, I guess, you got off the big ship in New York City and were taken by ferry to Ellis Island.

WULFERT: Right.

LEVINE: Do you remember----tell me anything you remember about Ellis Island and that whole experience. What did it look like and what did you see there and?

WULFERT: What—it was just a big building and lot of people there. I don't know, I got too excited, I guess. I didn't—don't remember too much of it.

LEVINE: Was there a lot of people, I guess?

WULFERT: Yeah, oh yeah, what a lot of people.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And

WULFERT: I m---I remember us gettin' on a train, you know, underneath the ground.

LEVINE: Oh, subway.

WULFERT: Yeah. And we stayed on it and stayed on it for a long time. And then it finally got daylight when we got out of that tunnel. We got on ---We had to change over to another train. And I seen my first black man.

LEVINE: What was that like for you?

WULFERT: I said, I told Daddy he looked like somebody in the sun too long. And he said "No, *das sind schwarze.*" In German, is black *Schwarz.*

LEVINE: Blacks, right.

WULFERT: And I said "No, that's a bunch of black people workin' there. They was workin' on the railroad. Workin' on track and stuff like that.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Well, as far as Ellis Island was concerned, did you have to stay there any length of time?

WULFERT: No. Not that long.

LEVINE: And you, --do you remember anything about your examinations before you actually got on the Gripsholm? While you were still in Germany?

WULFERT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Went through examinations and everything?

WULFERT: Uh, huh. We had to have shots and stuff, you know, a lot.

LEVINE: Yeah. And then at Ellis Island, do you remember any examinations there?

WULFERT: No. I don't.

LEVINE: It was probably so much confusion

WULFERT: Yeah

LEVINE: and you really didn't know what was going on, I guess.

WULFERT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, let's see. So, as far as you know, you didn't have food at Ellis Island or stay at Ellis Island?

WULFERT: Seem like we did. Yeah, they fed us a lot; they did feed us there.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Remember what that was like.

WULFERT: No. But you know how things are when you're excited.

LEVINE: Yeah. So, you must have gone on the subway, then. And then, was there anything else that struck you? I mean, you didn't stay very long in New York City but anything when you first arrived besides seeing the black men that you remember?

WULFERT: No.

LEVINE: So then you got on the train and then-----

WULFERT: I 'mem-----before we got on the train, I remember we walkin' outside and when we walked outside the train depot, we could see the Empire State Building. Boy, it was right down the middle of the street. Boy. It was so big. And I got to see it again last year.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And so did your ---see, did somebody tell you what that was? Did you know or you just saw a big building?

WULFERT: No someone must have told us, they had to.

LEVINE: Great. Wow, and, let's see. So then you got on the train

WULFERT: Um, hum.

LEVINE: What do you remember about the train ride?

WULFERT: It was a long,---- we did a lot of sleepin' there. just a long ride then. We remember we went all the way to --- we had to change few trains and then we went to Malem(ph), Tennessee. And my aunt, my aunt and uncle was there to greet us. And D. McCollum and his wife was--- oh, we was so glad to see 'em. Good to see somebody you knew.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Because before that ----

WULFERT: Then we be – going all the way to my aunt's house. We spent a few nights there. And then, they took us to the farm where we goin', where we goin' be there for a while.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Now this was whose farm?

WULFERT: The farm was Louis Kelly.

LEVINE: Louis? Kelly

WULFERT: Yeah. Louis Kelly, the one sponsored us over here,

LEVINE: Right. Well, do you remember that first night when you were reunited with your aunt and uncle?

WULFERT: Yeah. It was quite, oh, we just talked and talked. I don't remember what we talked about. We must have talked about somethin'. Kelly, the one sponsored us over here,

LEVINE: Right. Well, do you remember that first night when you were reunited with your aunt and uncle?

WULFERT: Yeah. It was quite, oh, we just talked and talked. I don't remember what we talked about. We must have talked about somethin'. Yeah, she was glad to see us. But she was glad to get rid of us, too. We, first, better go on that farm. (Laughs)

LEVINE: (Laughs) Well, did they have children?

WULFERT: No.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: No. You see 'em on her.

LEVINE: And did they cook food and everything?

WULFERT: Oh yeah, they had everything prepared for.

LEVINE: Was it German food or was it a new kind of food for you?

WULFERT: Probably new kind.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh, huh. Let' see. Okay, so then do you remember when you first got on the farm, on Mr Kelly's farm, did you – do you remember how that struck you?

WULFERT: It was real nice to ----the way he had garden planted for us. Had tomatoes and different—and cucumbers settin' in the bowl inside the house.. The house was a small farmhouse but it was nice.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. . And so, what was wor—how did that farm work compared with the work you did in Germany on the farm?

WULFERT: It was (long pause) oh. I guess—they did more-- would of it—farmin' was appear more modern, you know. They had lot more tractors and stuff like that, but we had—when we farmed – my Dad, when he farmed, he didn't give him no tractor For us they had a set of mules.

LEVINE: Here?

WULFERT: Yeah.

LEVINE: A set of mules?

WULFERT: United States, they had a set of mules. And I remember him workin', workin' the fields; and people just linin' up on the fence. They knew it was people from Germany. They line up on the fence just to watch us workin' them mules. And Daddy couldn't make them mules go, and someone told him “ those mules don't understand German. You got to talk to 'em in English”. (Laughs).

LEVINE: (Laughs). Yeah, so. Did other people have mules, too?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. .

WULFERT: But mo—a lot of 'em had tractor stuff.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. So, what were you farming then?

WULFERT: We had cotton, we had corn. That's about it.

LEVINE: Yeah. And—

**END OF SIDE A. BEGIN SIDE B**

WULFERT: I chopped cotton, picked cotton – hoed corn, clean—kept the weed out of corn. Uh, yeah, we did lot of that. Back then, and here in, you know in here, up here in Tennessee, they let you out for vacation for choppin' cotton and then later on that fall, they let you out for pickin' cotton, they let you –just for that.

LEVINE: I see. So how long do they let you out for when you—when the ---

WULFERT: About a month.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: Boy, we stayed in the cotton field day in, day out.

LEVINE: Was it hard work?

WULFERT: Yes. Cotton's hard work. It's hard to pick that stuff.

LEVINE: Yeah. So all you children were ---were working those months on the cotton fields?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: So, when ---so did you start school then soon after you got here?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: And, --and you, you didn't know English?

WULFERT: No. They talked to us and I shrugged my shoulders. And I didn't understand 'em. You know, it took a while, it took about four, five months before we could, you know come around. When we did, we did pretty well.

LEVINE: So -- so were the kids nice to you or—?

WULFERT: Well, they called us damn German. This one guy keep callin' me a damn German, damn German. And I had a friend of mine from the Kelly Farm, Jefferson, I said, "he calls me that again", I said, " I'm fixin' to knock the fart out of him. And wh---and he—we was at a Physical Ed program down in the gymnasium. He called me that again, and I jumped on him and I – oh, I tore him up. Then, from then on, I didn't have no problem.

LEVINE: So, you beat him up.

WULFERT: Yeah. And then, I didn't have no problem. Every time he seen me, he'd walk a big circle around me.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Did you run into any other kind of prejudice because you were German?

WULFERT: Some. Some. You do, you know, onc'—when they find out you a foreigner; boy, they, they give it to you. You know, the United States and Germany been in war.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: They had a lot of mis-feelings about it, but they got over it.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And so did we.

LEVINE: Yeah. So were there any other foreign kids besides your own family that you were aware of?

WULFERT: No. No, they all went different places. Lot of them went up North. But I talked some of them where they was goin' and they told us. But it didn't register to me and, you know. so---- I wasn't that familiar with the United States.

LEVINE: Did anybody, like your mother and father, or anybody else keep up any contact with people that you—?

WULFERT: Yes. They had got—yeah. They had some brothers and sisters they kept up with.

LEVINE: And---, but, I mean' like people you met on the boat, that --- on the ship, rather—

WULFERT: No.

LEVINE: that, you know were coming here.

WULFERT: No. No. They didn't know 'em.

LEVINE: Yeah. So, you started school right away and then you didn't know really what was being said. How did the teachers treat you?

WULFERT: Good.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: One teacher, after I got to knowin' English a little bit, she wanted me help her with it, you know, get them kids to learn some German [bells ringing in the background]. You know, in English class, and stuff like that, and then, I really liked that.

LEVINE: So you actually taught them some German?

WULFERT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, that must have made you feel good.

WULFERT: Yeah. That was fun.

LEVINE: Okay, so ----lets see. Then, you stayed in school and, I guess, you got out all the times for the cotton crops.

WULFERT: Yes

LEVINE: Right?

WULFERT: Uh, huh.

LEVINE: And then how long did you stay in school?

WULFERT: I stayed—well I, I ---I graduated

LEVINE: From High School?

WULFERT: Right.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And--I graduate from High School, I graduate third highest in my class.

LEVINE: Wow.

WULFERT: Out of forty-three. I was a Beta Club member.

LEVINE: You were a what member?

WULFERT: Beta Club member.

LEVINE: Oh, Beta. Uh, huh.

WULFERT: Matter of fact; Glenn, my brother-in-law. helped us get -- kept ---Beta Club started in Scott's Hill.

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: Him and a bunch of people from Lexington come over there and they got us started in the Beta Club. He was president of Lexington chapter.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. I see.

WULFERT: You know what Beta Club is – honor society

LEVINE: Yeah. Right. That's wonderful. Okay, so then when you graduated, did you know what you wanted to do?

WULFERT: Well, you know. Like everybody else, you know, you want to get away from the farm and I went to work at Brand Shoe Company, here in Lexington. And then, I worked about a year and a half after I graduated. Had my own ---I had my own car. My Dad bought my car for me. And then the Service car---I got the letter from the ---Greetings from the President of the United States. Had to go be examined --me and thirty-four other people had to go up that ---to Memphis to be examined----

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: for the service-ment. Me and another guy passed. The rest of them didn't-----didn't make it.

LEVINE: The whole thirty-two didn't pass?

WULFERT: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wh—Why? Physically?

WULFERT: I guess they were just screening them pretty close. Some of 'em had medical problems. You know, just one --- just one thing after another.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. So, so then, did you go in the Army?

WULFERT: I went right on. I went to Service there. I went---boy, we had to be sworn in and all that stuff.

LEVINE: How did you feel about it, going in the Service?

WULFERT: Well, I had a --- I had a real good job at Warin' Sheet Company. I thought I was makin' a lot of --- pretty good money. I wasn't really hard up for seein' for it, but I went on anyway. And I went---went had Basic at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

LEVINE: Now, what year would that have been? What year did you graduate? Do you remember?

WULFERT: '61.

LEVINE: You graduated in '61?

WULFERT: Um, hum.

LEVINE: So. This must have been what, about '63?

WULFERT: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: So. After you had your Basic Training, then where were you sent?

WULFERT: I was sent to Fort Sill, Okla. I worked in heavy artillery. I was part of the Cavalry. And then, I stayed--stayed my two years in Fort Sill Oklahoma.

LEVINE: Hm. When you look back on that army experience now, how do you think about it?

LEVINE: I think it's fine. Years later after I got home----- a few year-----after I was married -----after I met my wife and we got married-----we went to---- I joined the National Guard. And I stayed in it. I retired from the Guard, thirty years with it, with the Guard.

LEVINE: Oh. My goodness. Uh, huh.

WULFERT: I was in it---first, I was in the infantry. I didn't like it too well, so I went to Medical School, became an LPN and that's how it worked.

LEVINE: I see. So. so what--- you had to go like once a month, is that what, how you did it?

WULFERT: One weekend a month. And then you had to go two, three weeks a year.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: I got to go back to Germany, back in 2001.

LEVINE: With the National Guard?

WULFERT: Right.

LEVINE: Oh. So, what happened? How come?

WULFERT: For the ---they-----I went with this maintenance battalion. They was goin' over there, work on trucks, and humvees -----all the mai---you know, equipment

LEVINE: And you had done that 'cause you --that was what you did at Fort Sill. Right?

WULFERT: I worked in artillery, knowed it-----I worked in the heavy artillery. But when I joined the National Guard, a year later, I went to the--

LEVINE: The Medical—

WULFERT: became an LP, and I went to Medical School, became an LPN and they sent me as medical back-up to Germany

LEVINE: I see.

WULFERT: They picked three people out of Tennessee, they picked two women out of --- one out of East, one out of Middle, and I was picked from West Tennessee.

LEVINE: I see. So how long were you in Germany, then

WULFERT: Twenty-three days.

LEVINE: (short laugh). And did you have a chance to travel around at all?

WULFERT: Yes. I went to Paris, went to the Eiffel Tower, had pizza and pepzi on the Eiffel Tower. Oh, it's amazin'. (Chuckle)

LEVINE: (laughs)

WULFERT: They got a radio station on top the Eiffel Tower.

LEVINE: Hm, I didn't know that.

WULFERT: Um, hm. And then we went to Austria, We spent a night in Austria, went to Switzerland, went to a big cuckoo- clock factory. And I ordered a clock, sent it home to my wife.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. How did it feel for you to be back in Germany?

WULFERT: It was great.

LEVINE: Yeah?

WULFERT: And I asked him, you know, ----I ordered a lot of the food for the guys that were with me since I'm still the only one speak German. And I asked ----I asked some of them waitresses "How do you like my German?" Said "Your German is fine, but we never heard it with a Southern accent".  
(Laughs)

LEVINE: (laughs)

WULFERT: I just---- everybody just laughed.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh, huh. So you didn't feel any qualms about having left Germany?

WULFERT: No. This just this choice.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Okay. Well, what was your wife's maiden name?

WULFERT: My wife name 's Judy Smith.

LEVINE: And how did you meet?

WULFERT: Well, after I got out of service, I worked at a garment factory. And she was production secretary, and that's how we met. I thought she was pretty, redheaded woman, real pretty.

LEVINE: In other words, you came back to Lexington, after you got out of the Army?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: And the garment factory was here.

WULFERT: No. The garment factory was in Decaturville

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: It's nineteen miles, you know, other side of Scotts Hill

LEVINE: And what's its name?

WULFERT: Decaturville Sportswear.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. I see. So then did you keep working there or did you --?

WULFERT: I worked there for a while and then I went to work for --- for State Penitentiary.

LEVINE: Oh.

WULFERT: And—

LEVINE: Where's that?

WULFERT: In Overly(ph), Tennessee in Hickman County. And I didn't ---wasn't satisfied and I heard ----I had a chance to get on with TVA – Tennessee Valley Authority ---, you know, the ones that make the electrical power for around here. I went to work with them – construction.

LEVINE: Were you a guard at the penitentiary?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: Security guard.

LEVINE: How long did you do that?

WULFERT: Five years.

LEVINE: Oh. Wow. What, what was it about it that you—that you didn't like?

WULFERT: Well, everybody's not guilty. That keeps you depressed. You know, listen to stuff I didn't want to listen to. Plus the money wasn't that hot.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

WULFERT: And that TVA money was a whole lot better.

LEVINE: I see. So then, you worked construction. How did you know construction?

WULFERT: Well, you know, on the farm, you do the lots and ends, you know, you pick it up. You had to go to (unclear phrase).

LEVINE: Oh. So then, is that where you stayed?

WULFERT: Um, hm. Pretty much till they closed down construction. Then I went to work at a chain factor here in Lexington. It's a --- and I stayed there with 'em till I got ready to retire.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. OK. So, and you have children?

WULFERT: I got two sons.

LEVINE: And their names?

WULFERT: One of 'em is Philip and the youngest one 's Richard.

LEVINE: And you have a grandson, right?

WULFERT: Yes.

LEVINE: And his name?

WULFERT: His name is (unclear).

LEVINE: Uh, huh. OK. Well, do you think of yourself ---how do you think about – how do you think about yourself as far as being German and being American?

WULFERT: I think it's lucky being American because ---French and German, you know, you know, is --- pretty democratic----it's hard to get a good job and, you know, get yourself ahead. You know, in the United States, if you willin' to work, you get yourself ahead. We done pretty well.

LEVINE: And how do you think about your German side?

WULFERT: It's good to know that you know it. But as far as back over there ---

LEVINE: You went back. So you know that it's not where you wanted to be.

WULFERT: No. I love it over here. It's hard to beat the States.

LEVINE: And how do you --- what do you feel very satisfied about having done in your life?

WULFERT: I'm glad my parents brought me over here.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WULFERT: They got a beautiful home. They done good.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Let's see. How about your personality as far as ---- do you think the fact that you came here, that you immigrated here when you were just about thirteen years old and you started over again in a new place ----do you think that made a difference in the way that you look at things, or the way that you feel about things or see the world ----or---

WULFERT: It make you appreciate it more. It sure does. It really makes you appreciate – it makes you glad. It makes you glad you're over here. People don't know how good they got it until they been somewhere else. And seein' how they lived and then moved over here and see how much better it is over here. You know, the United States like that –if you willing to work, don't mind it, you get ahead. But over there, it's pretty well stay in the same wood, you know. I'm proud bein' American.

LEVINE: And what are you looking forward to now? Now, you're retired, are you?

WULFERT: Um, hm.

LEVINE: And what –

WULFERT: Her ---- my wife fixin' to retire another three or four years. She's a little bit younger than me. And, we fixin', we fixin' to do a lot of traveling. She said she wants to see every part of the United States

LEVINE: \_Uh, huh. Now is -- your wife was born here?

WULFERT: Yes. She was born in --- origin' in Michigan and then they moved here to Tennessee 'cause her --some of mo ----her mother's people lived here in Tennessee. That's where they originally from. Her Daddy went over there, you know, at the time when he was growing up. It was hard to get good jobs around here, like it was over in up north.

LEVINE: Right.

WULFERT: He worked in the car industry

LEVINE: So, in a way, they migrated, too. Right?

WULFERT: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think I've covered everything. Is there anything you can think of connected with your family coming here and your getting resettled and living out your life here, really?

WULFERT: No. Nothing. That's about it.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Okay. Well, gee, thank you very much. Interesting interview. I'm speaking with Anton Wulfert who came here as practically thirteen years of age in 1954; which, of course, is the last year that Ellis Island was open. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.

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