

**EI-1435**

**ANNA MARTINEK HENTGES**

**BIRTHDATE: SEPTEMBER 1,1937**

**INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 19,2006**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 69**

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

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: FILIP USCIOLOWICZ**

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**YUGOSLAVIA, 1949**

**AGE 12**

**SHIP: THE ATLANTIC**

**PORT: ELLIS ISLAND**

**RESIDENCES:**

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- ~~•~~ YUGOSLAVIA: KIKINDA YUGOSLAVIA: KIKINDA
- ~~•~~ WANDERED
  - **GERMANY: LENGFELD**
  - **U.S.: CHICAGO, IL, Davenport, FL**

LEVINE: Today is November the 19<sup>th</sup>, the year 2006. I'm here in Davevin-pPort, Florida with Anna Hentges. Am I saying that right?

HENTGES: Yes.

LEVINE: Hentges. Okay, and she came from Yugoslavia -when she was twelve years of age. And she came on the ship "The Atlantic" with her mother. She arrived at Ellis Island on December 6, 1949 and visited about a year ago.

HENTGES: A year. October 14, 2005.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and so she picked up a questionnaire and that's why I'm here today and I'm delighted to be here. I'm looking forward to whatever you can remember. And why don't we start, if you would say for this tape, your birth date and where you were born.

HENTGES: Okay. My birth date was September 1, 1937, born in Yugoslavia. Kikinda is the name of the town: and --

LEVINE: Can you spell the name of the town?

HENTGES: K-I-K-I-N-D-A.

LEVINE: Okay, and did you live in Kikinda? Did you live there? How long did you live there?

HENTGES: I lived in Kikinda from my -- I believe I was around six -- and the war broke out and we left.

LEVINE: Okay. Well then, why don't we start with your first six years and what you remember about Kikinda -- the town.town? What was the town like?

HENTGES: It was -- as far as I was concerned -- it was a neat, low little town. We had a big cChurch there, a Serbian Church and a Catholic Church almost next to each other. And I recall being around four years old and I would walk from our house going down through dow-- the market place and going and stopping in at the cChurch.

LEVINE: Which church?--

HENTGES: [Superposed] We ~~were~~ were going to Grandma,

HENTGES: ----To Catholic church.

LEVINE: To Catholic Church, uh-huh.

HENTGES: But the Serbian Church had some beautiful music and singing and I would listen to them. (Both laugh)

LEVINE: So was the town divided Serbian and Catholic?

HENTGES: No. We were all -- they were all in there, there was no --. There was Serbians, Hungarians, and Germans there. So we were all -- never that I could see a real big problem.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: I was free to move around.

LEVINE: How about your mother? What was her name? What is her name?

HENTGES: My mother's name is -- it was Ilonka in Yugoslavia, which is--

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

HENTGES: -- I-L-O-N-K-A. And then it got changed to "Helen" when we got to the States.

LEVINE: Okay. And her maiden name?

HENTGES: "Lisius." And the spelling is all kinds of different ways.

LEVINE: OK. Well give us one. (laughs)

HENTGES: L-I-S-U-I-S.

LEVINE: Okay. -And - and - ~~and~~ - did her family come from the area in Yugoslavia going back generations, do you know?

HENTGES: Yes, we were all from Yugoslavia as far as I know.

LEVINE: Yeah. So grandparents, great-grandparents, all the way back?

HENTGES: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay, and your father's name?

HENTGES: My father's name was Josef. J-O-S-E-F. Martinek. Same as mine. M-A-R-T-I-N-E-K. Had to think a moment! (both laugh)

LEVINE: And - and -- how about his family? Do you know --?

HENTGES: They were in Yugoslavia ==

LEVINE: OK.

HENTGES: --as far I know, all the way back.

LEVINE: Okay, and you were Catholic and were you religious -- were you a religious family?

HENTGES: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you would go to Grandma's house?

HENTGES: I would go to Grandma's house all the time. I -- If I got angry at my mother, I would leave her, and told her, "I'm go-- ~~Y~~you're not my mother, I'm going to Grandma's. She'll be my mother." (both laugh)

LEVINE: Now -- what do you remember doing with your grandmother? How do you remember your grandmother?

HENTGES: My grandmother had three children living with her. Two -- she had two sons and a daughter. And ~~T~~the daughter and I were five months apart. She was five months older than me. sSo I felt like at her house -- I was like -- I had brothers and sisters. And I just loved being over there -and- I slept over there. It was -- I was more there, I believe, than home. (laughs).

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. So was this your mother's mother?

HENTGES: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you do things with -her? What do you remember doing as a small child -- as a -- up 'til you were six, before you left there?

HENTGES: Well, I played with my aunt and my uncles. And we used to fly kites a lot. My uncle used to build the kites and if I have trouble -- I would -- they had to get it up for me. And that's -- and then I went to my grandparents' house, my Dad's side. And I don't really recall their names. All I know -it was "Grandma" and "Grandpa." I wasn't over there that often. But I enjoyed being over there and I recall with them, my grandfather was doing

popcorn. aAnd they had a fire outside and a popcorn popper was over the fire, so we didn't have the stove. Everything was wood-burning, stove for cooking and stuff like that. There was no indoor bathroom either, it's outdoor bathroom.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Electricity?

HENTGES: You know what? They might have had some, but we used a lot of oil lamps too so we did have some.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: And it was interesting. They went hunting and got rabbits and I don't even like to eat the rabbits but I recall hanging rabbits and them cooking it so and --. The reat was something that my grandmother used to make for breakfast and I hated it. It was called [momeboliga]. Don't ask me to spell it.

LEVINE: Okay.

HENTGES: And it was like maybe something maybe with corn -- like fFarina type -- and I couded le not like it one bit. I wouldn't eat that stuff. (laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now what did your father do?

HENTGES: My father was a tailor.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: And he was a soldier, he was an SS soldier.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: So he was in the service so I didn't have him around me very much at all.

LEVINE: Oh I see. So he went -- well the war started in '39, so he was gone.

HENTGES: He was in the service and all -- I didn't-- we didn't meet up with my father 'til my mother and I ended up in Germany -- that we finally found him.

LEVINE: Okay. Is there anything else about Kikinda that -- that? Well,- maybe you could describe yourself as a little 6-year-old when you left your town of Kikinda?

HENTGES: Oh. Let's see -- let's -- I was just getting ready to start school when we left. I was supposed to start school and we left the day before. And I had blonde hair, believe it or not. (laughs)

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

HENTGES: Blonde hair. On Mmy passport and even(?) blue eyes. They are sort of hazel-ey brown now. (laughs) And I did go to like a school in the afternoon, or in athe morning. And just a lot of freedom there -- walking. There was no worries about where your kid is. You were just free to move around.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: And I used to walk home and see my Mom, that's about it. We had some Jewish people living next door to us and got friends with them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: And she had to take a nap and I'm outside and she's looking out the window and they're talking. (laughs) -So it was all kinds of little things --

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: And had friends along the way wherever I was going. I was like a "free spirit," I guess. (laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, nice. Uh-huh. Yeah.

HENTGES: A very independent

HENTGES: [Superposed] --and took care of myself.

LEVINE: And you were an only child?

HENTGES: Yes, I was the only child.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

HENTGES: And my mother worked and I was able to go to the show. If I walked up to the town where the marketplace was, my mother used to work there --  
sSometimes had friends. Sshe says, "If Anna comes," that's what they used to call me, "Anna." Tthen, if she wants to go to the show, just let her go to the show. Jjust let me know when I come that she's there.  
(both laugh) -And we had my favorite spot in Kikinda, was going like little place for ice cream. And the tables were outside and you could just sit out there every night. Everybody was just walking all over like, our little downtown.



LEVINE: Yeah.

HENTGES: And I tryied to do the candles. I don't burn them, but I do have them on my tree here. So --

LEVINE: And did you get presents the way we do here?

HENTGES: Not like they do here, no. You might have got one present, like I got a doll a year with a buggy and that was more or less it. And Christmas Day, you go to your grandmother and tell her, "Very Merry Christmas" and you just go around and see your friends and family members and get together.

LEVINE: I see.

HENTGES: But no, Christmas is -- it was one little present.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

HENTGES: And that's how it was in Germany when I ended up there too. The landlady bring me a nightgown.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: She blindfolded me so I couldn't see what she was making and she made me a flannel nightgown and that was my Christmas present in Germany. Otherwise I didn't get much Christmas presents. (laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well now -- what prompted you and your mother to leave when you did?

HENTGES: Yugoslavia? Well, because I was German. My father was an SS soldier. From the way ~~that~~ I understand it from my mother, she was afraid that they were gonna take me away from her and they would put me like into a camp.

LEVINE: I see. Now you were German?

HENTGES: I was German.

LEVINE: Well now -- your families on both sides -- your mother and father --. They go back having lived in Yugoslavia?

HENTGES: Yes--.

LEVINE: But they were of German--?

HENTGES: Yes. It's German. I think the name is like, Bohemian. We had German there, Hungarian -- my mother speaks Hungarian -- and the Serbians and the German\_s. That's all I can recall.

LEVINE: So your father -- it was your father who was German?

HENTGES: Yes.

LEVINE: And your mother of Hungarian background?

HENTGES: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: So --.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HENTGES: And then we had to leave becau -- on account of the war was breaking out and whatever was. We were leaving one day. We were all packed, then my mother decided to stay. ~~s~~So I don't know how long that process was from going and leaving finally. And then my grandparents came over in the middle of the night and told my mother that we have to go. Because they were afraid for me. So we left, didn't have much on us. Just the clothes we had on our back, that's it. It was about midnight, I believe, that they took me out and my grandfather took us to where ~~atever~~ -- a ferry was -- we had to cross water and I was petrified of water. But I had to go on the ferry.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: So then, and from there on, it was just war-time wartime. I ended up in Budapest, Hungary for a while and I started school there. I think we might have been there three or four months and then things got bad there. We were in Vienna and just traveled all over the place.

LEVINE: Now -- were German children or people being taken from your town of Kikinda?

HENTGES: My mother said that if we would have stayed there, they would have taken me away because my father was an SS soldier. ~~s~~So I would have had to go wherever they were going but they were putting into a camps. So I really don't know what would have happened if I would have been there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So -- then -- did you go to Budapest? ? That was like the first place you went to?

HENTGES: No. I think we traveled quite a ways before we even got there. We -- you could call me homeless. I had no home. It was just travelling and begging for food. Go to a farmer, maybe get a piece of bread, stand in line for something to eat.

LEVINE: When you started out, did your mother have any money?

HENTGES: Not that I know of. I don't know if she had any more. There was nothing. We were just -- you know the pictures you see of World War II ~~e--f~~ people walking with their suitcases? That's the way I lived 'til we got to Germany.

LEVINE: Well, now -- how did you leave your town? Did you walk?

HENTGES: We got on a fairerry and got across the water and from there, we walked and sometimes people picked you up on a truck and we just kept moving. I haved no idea in all that.

LEVINE: And were there lots of other people that were going?

HENTGES: Oh yeah, oh yeah, yeah. We weren't alone. I mean -- there were lots of people -- lots of people going. And the bombs were coming too at that time. ~~s~~So it was like -- fend for yourself and save yourself.

LEVINE: Wow.

HENTGES: So it was quite interesting. There's a -- I recognized if they were going to drop a bomb. I would -- I was very independent, got bawled out(?) out a few times from my mother through war-time~~wartime~~. I believe we were in Vie --Vienna or something. And we had a place that we stayed for a few days that we got put up and thinking well~~that~~ everything's okay. It was on

the second or third floor, my mother was doing my hair and I heard the planes coming. And I said, "The plane's coming!" And my mother says, "No, just stand still. I gotta do your hair. We gotta leave. We gotta get this done because you were 're already to leave that place again." And I crawled under the bed from the foot end. The beds were a little high -- came out on the other side because she tried to get me -- ran down the flight of stairs. Got like -- into a cellar and got all the way down. I followed the people -- I was in there and the bomb hit and I got thrown in there and everybody else got thrown in there with me. Aand all I could hear was my mother screaming for me --, "Where am I? -- wWhere am I? -- "Anna, where are you?"

LEVINE: Wow.

HENTGES: So, with that, she found me and everybody else and the place was bombed. So we had a small suitcase upstairs and a coat. So my mother went back upstairs to try and find their suitcase that they crawled up in places because things were bricks and stuff. And she says, "Good thing I ran, I guess, because the bed was covered with bricks." We wouldn't -- we wouldn't have survived it.

LEVINE: So your mother ran after you?

HENTGES: She ran after me, uh-huh. She done that a few times, running after me. There was another place -- that was in Yugosla-- in Hungary where we were staying there. aAnd I was going to school there and it's a circle the way the homes are. And we were up the street and some people were talking by the window and my mother was talking to them and I'm out there and I'm looking at this plane and I said, "The plane's -- the plane's

going to drop a bomb!” And they looked at me and they said, “Down.” My mother’s talking. And I ran back into the circle -- there was like a pantry and ran into that pantry. And she followed me because then all of a sudden, the pane -- plane was coming down a little bit more. Well, right in the middle of that circle was the bomb. (laughs) It was --

LEVINE: – You were safe then?

HENTGES: I was safe. Yeah. My mother was safe too -- chasing me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Wow.

HENTGES: So it was interesting and then, there were bad, bad, bad, places really. The worst of – the worst of my life was, I believe in, -- people were in the street, horses from the bombing. Horses foaming by the mouth laying there. People laying in the street -- dead, half-alive, that half-a-life-- and I didn’t want to walk. And my mother says, “I can’t carry you in a suitcase.” I wouldn’t walk because it was like, flesh with animals and things like that. So finally, she had to pick me up so we could get on the other side where all this mess was. And that -- that was the worst, I think, for me through the whole war and to this day, as old as I am, I’m afraid of dead animals like mice. Anything that -- even a bird if it dies, I will not touch it.

We had one here in the house and I would not touch it when it died. And mice, dead or alive, I would run and tod -- I cannot get over the fear. I tried with a dead bird because my husband was sick. Tried to pick one up so I could work in my yard, got a big shovel, a big rake, tried to get it onto that shovel and carry it and I dropped the rake. I dropped everything as soon as I touched the bird. And I just wouldn’t do it and my poor husband had to go out there later. I told him there was a bird. -- “I’m not working on the yard over there.” He had to go out there and move that bird as sick as

he was. But I didn't know he did it and then, he finally says, "It's done." I said, "What's done?" He says, "Your yard is safe."

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

HENTGES: So –

LEVINE: Well, you were very impressionable when you saw wy that. Where was that?

HENTGES: That was, I believe, in Hungary. Someplace in Hungary that was. Like I sayid, we went through so much and there was another scene where I did. We were on a truck. We had all bunch of people and I don't know -- little small town we went through. Where we were going, I don't know. And l've seen this flame coming and I jumped off the moving truck into a ditch. So the truck had to stop and everybody else jumped off then into a ditch. And there was a cemetery -- this town on the left, and the cemetery was towards the right where people were running to. But because the town was on fire, sSo we ran through the cemetery. There was this man in my eyes, h. He was huge. It wa-- Aand it was—it was cold. And he had a big, heavy, like a fur coat on. And I followed him because I thought he would save me because he's big and he's got this big heavy coat that he would protect me. I just kept running. My mother always had to chase me -- aAlways. (laughs)

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: And I -- good thing we stopped the truck, because they dropped the bomb and fires were going through there so I don't know what would have happened there.

LEVINE: Wow.

HENTGES: I -- like I said, I was very independent and always ran. I just looked out for myself.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. Can you say anything about how people behaved under those dire circumstances?

HENTGES: I think we all behaved very good. I don't recall anybody arguing. We just all walked along and if we got near a farmer, we might ~~have~~ all sat down on the ground and we slept in the barn. The farmer gave a barn one time, I don't know how many people were there.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: And we slept there on the hay and I broke out with a rash and got sick from it and all that too. But we just kept on going. And there was a ~~n~~ old gentleman right about where that farm -- he had two eggs. He gave me two raw eggs. I took them to my mother, I—didn't know what to do with two raw eggs. And there was a man sitting on a bench there and he says, "Come over here. I'll show you what to do with the eggs." He punched a hole in the egg and made me suck out the egg -- to eat the egg that way. And I hate eggs. But I did it. (laughs)

LEVINE: Mm-hhm.

HENTGES: I did it, !

LEVINE: Well, you must have been cold and hungry.

HENTGES: I was cold, it was hungry. And your feet were hurting -- shoes were a little small -- we didn't have anything. Couldn't -- shoes had little holes in them and stuff. And my feet were growing, as we kept going. So -- but -- yeah, and torn clothes at times, you know. Didn't have too much going.

LEVINE: So how long did you do that? How long did you survive that way?

HENTGES: Probably, I would say maybe, 1946 that we got to a town called Lengfeld. And that was in Bavaria, Germany.

LEVINE: So you mean -- after the war was over, is when you got there?

HENTGES: The war was sort of over when we got there. It's just that -- how long it took us to get there, I don't know. I believe we took a train. My mother tried working at farmers' and stuff like that. And that's where we met my father. He fi-- finally found us in that little town.

LEVINE: Wow.

HENTGES: So -- so probably around '45 -- something like that -- we would have ended in Lengfeld. WasWe were only living there a couple of years-years, then left in until '49 --so -- from there. So someplace in there, '45 --of '46 - - I don't know.

LEVINE: So when --when did you leave? You were six years old. So you left around 1943?

HENTGES: Something like that, yeah.

LEVINE: So it was least two years and maybe three that you were on the road?

HENTGES: Yeah. Age, I have no idea where I was because you didn't have a birthday. I mean -- it was like, you know. And in Germany, your name's day was more important than your birthday at that time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: Now the birthdays are important but you could by your name.

LEVINE: And what's your name day?

HENTGES: My name was Anna and I believe Saint Anne day was July 26<sup>th</sup>. So that was a --a celebration all the time. That would be like they do birthdays here. We did name's day.

LEVINE: So is there a St. Anna? Is that July 26<sup>th</sup>?

HENTGES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is she a Saint of some particular ---?

HENTGES: That I don't recall. That I don't recall -- I mean -- the Catholic Church has so many Saints and it's just -- you know. That's what I was told and that's Saint Anne's day, ~~and state~~. They have it here too. Lot of times have been brought to St. Anne's Church over here and they announce Saint Anne's Day, ~~day, that and state of the~~ day that the Church was. I go, "Oh OK. Where's my present?" (both laugh) So -- yeah, it took us a while. I mean -- time just went by. I did start school in Germany.

LEVINE: Oh, in Germany you did? Uh huh Okay.

HENTGES: Yeah. I started school there and I believe I was in second and third grade over there. Fourth grade. They just moved me around with school. And they tried to put me with my age. I missed a lot of school years. Never stayed long enough in a grade to finish a grade like --

LEVINE: But did you know how to speak German?

HENTGES: Yes, and I forgot it.

LEVINE: But when you were a child, you [not understood] went to all German—?

HENTGES: [Superposed That] That is all I spoke and when I was in Hungary, I started to speak Hungarian.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: So -- but I don't use the language.

LEVINE: But did you know German before you got to Germany?

HENTGES: Oh yeah. I spoke German in Yugoslavia.

I spoke German there.

LEVINE: - Oh. Uh-huh. I see.

HENTGES: I spoke German there.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh. I see.

HENTGES: And Germany he has like-- a ~~high-German~~High German and the a  
Ssouthern kind of German -- so different dialogueects. Every country has  
a dialogue [sic.] -So --I learned to speak that real highHigh German in  
Germany. My mother couldn't understand me. (laughs) -I just picked it up  
high, you know? ThenAnd later I went to Bavaria and then I spoke their  
way which is more like the Yugoslavian that we -- we spoke there.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh.

HENTGES: It was an interesting life. It was --[interposed] after all

LEVINE: Yeah, how would you describe your childhood now?

HENTGES: Well, I think I'm a better person going through all that. I learned a lot from  
it. I learned to accept things and sort of take care of myself. And always  
try and be polite and friendly because you meet so many people. They're  
all strangers so you're always nice.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: But I'm glad I was a child -- in a way --gg going through the war. bBecause  
as I got older and was thinking --- and started talking to certain people  
when they ask me questions-- -bBeing an adult must be awful hard --

LEVINE: Right.

HENTGES: -- to try and do it. And my mother had to take care of me on top of it and  
check me. And I always ran away from her #-so I'm sure I was terrible.  
(laughs)

LEVINE: Well, but you saved her life too.

HENTGES: Yeah, I did.!

LEVINE: What do you know about your father and what he was doing while you were separated?

HENTGES: I don't know much about him. What he was doing at the time. He was in the service there and whatever he had to -- he wasn't the ones that was with the killing and stuff. I -- we looked a lot for him in camps as we were travelling through places. They had camps where people were like in -- fenced in. a And we would walk and look through or see the soldiers that were hurt laying on cots. So I remember doing that -- going to look for my Dad. a And finally, we found him one time. I don't remember exactly where it was. We just seen him. And then my mother somehow made arrangements and somehow got contact and he came to Germany.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So do you think -- was he drafted into the German Army?

HENTGES: No, in Germany and stuff, when you're eighteen, you're more or less -- you have to go. Its not like you get drafted. You're eighteen -- you go into the service. I'm sure it has changed since then. B but they all have to go into the service when you get to certain age -- you gotta go. And how long they stay in the service, I don't know -- if they're staying for good or certain time like here and -- then you can get out or stay.

LEVINE: Well, and during wartime, it's probably different too.

HENTGES: Right. But they drafted, the kid -- the kids had to go. Eighteen you're going into service -- the guys.

LEVINE: Well now, how old was your father? Do you know if he was a young soldier?

HENTGES: Let's see. My father, I believe, was born in 1911 ---1909 or 1911.

LEVINE: So he would have been about --

HENTGES: So my mother was in her twenties. He probably was around thirty -- something like that.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. And like would he be like -- would he be like, guarding people in a camp, do you think?

HENTGES: I don't know what they did with him, I really don't. He wasn't -- he wasn't guarding nobody in the camp when we were looking for him. They just had him in there and they had people fenced in and the guards watching them. So it just looks like what here he would be like a --in jail. They kkeeping you there so you're not going no place else. (laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So he was imprisoned in the camp?

HENTGES: No, it wasn't a prison, I don't believe.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

HENTGES I really don't know how that part went. What --

LEVINE: Yeah. Did he ever talk about that?

HENTGES: No, no. He never said anything. Not as -- not when I was a child. I don't know too much about that. As far as I never heard him talk about it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

HENTGES: So -- We only in Germany, we had a one-room place. Oh, maybe like the kitchen from this --

End of Side 1 Beginning of Side 2

Beginning of Side 2

HENTGES: Other families and some people -- the farmers -- gave them a room. Aand my mother worked at the farm across the street and they were real good to me. Aand my favorite food was there. — Ithey used to cook potatoes for the pigs that they put into a real big boiler and stuff. And we didn't have much food so when the potatoes came out, I would be standing there and I would say, "Are the potatoes a#re done? Are the potatoes done?"

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: And they let me pick out a few good potatoes and I would eat them right then and there and the others they smashed up to -- for the pigs and stuff. But I loved potatoes and to this day, I still do. (laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. So would you say it was like a displaced persons' camp where you were? When you were in that room?

HENTGES: [Superposed] I would say that I was a displaced -- I was a-displaced person, yeah. Because we had really no home.

LEVINE: Right.

HENTGES: And where my mother found a job, that's more or less where we stayed.

LEVINE: And she was doing farming -- farm work?

HENTGES: Farming, yes. She was doing farming. There was another farm ~~where~~ we were at, at one time, before we got to the last farm. ~~And~~ from the last farm, we came to -- to States. So yeah -- whatever she could find, wherever she -- and there was one farmer that we stayed at and they were good to me. They let me stay with them. They had a room for my Mom and me. And the lady took care of me during the day while my mother was working, so -- I was -- I was always very fortunate and lucky with people helping me out, taking care of me and to this day, day; it still stands the same way. I'm still very fortunate and lucky. (laughs) At least that's how I feel.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah, yeah. And how -- what was it like to see your father? Did you remember him?

HENTGES: Oh yeah, oh yeah. It was great -- great seeing my father. And I loved my father. I -- I-- my mother made arrangements for coming to the States. Her great -- her aunt made all the arrangements for us.

LEVINE: And she was in the States?

HENTGES: She was in the States. She was in the Chicago area. And all kinds of paperworks they had to do and stuff. It took quite a while -- I think a year or more so -- for it to really go in effect.

LEVINE: So that was -- your father was with you then?

HENTGES: My father was with me, but he couldn't come here because he was ill, so --  
\_ | In my time, if you're -- have a sickness of anything, you couldn't come.  
You had to be healthy and they checked you out and all that to make sure  
you're healthy.

LEVINE: So he stayed?

HENTGES: So he had to stay and my mother wanted to come here so he let us go. It  
was sad for me to leave him. I really didn't want to leave him but --

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

HENTGES: I had to go with my Mom so --

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

HENTGES: That's the way that was and he stayed in Germany and he died there in  
1958.

LEVINE: Oh. So he never came to the States?

HENTGES: No, never came.

LEVINE: Oh my goodness.

HENTGES: No. I believe my mother said he had tuberculosis, so --.

LEVINE: And he had that when he got out of the --?

HENTGES: Service.

LEVINE: Service.

HENTGES: Mm-hmm. So, —b But she wanted a better life and her aunt -- they send us food to Germany. And t They corresponded when my mother found them all. And they made all the arrangements for us to come to the States. They had to have a roof over our head to get us over here -- your sponsor. You had to have a job and then you had to always report to the post office every year to get a little card that you're -- 'til you became a citizen, so --

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: But that took time.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm. So did you keep up correspondence with your father or -- for a while?

HENTGES: I did for a while. Yeah. And he passed away in 1958 about two months before I got married.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: So I -- I was hoping to go back and see him but it never happened.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So he really lived about twelve years or so after -- ?

HENTGES: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: That's about it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

HENTGES: So –

LEVINE: Wow. Well -- is there anything else about your father that you think can think of that --?

HENTGES: No, ~~it's j~~Just that he was a tailor and he made a coat for me -- a winter coat -- and it was like a royal blue and I loved that coat. It was nice and warm and as he was sewing, I -- they used a basting stitch and I always loved to pull out the basting stitch so that was my job. And that's more or less what I remembered. He make -- I just adored that coat that he made for me. He made some suits for some farmer. ~~r. f -- h~~He wanted a suit so he made a couple suits for some people.

LEVINE: So did he work as a tailor after the war?

HENTGES: No, he -- Aafter the war, he did it. They found out he was a tailor and they ask him to make a suit so they came directly to him. He wasn't employed ~~in~~ no place.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: So that was his job and they wanted a suit made so he made --

LEVINE: Yeah.

HENTGES: Couple suits for them. So --

LEVINE: So did you -- bring that royal blue coat to the United States?

HENTGES: No, no, I didn't. Didn't come with much to the United States either.

LEVINE: Either. uh-uh.

HENTGES: Didn't have too much and as far as the coat, if I brought it, I don't recall.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: It was a sad moment for me to leave my Dad and then -- it got happier as the day went on and, you know ---

LEVINE: Yeah.

HENTGES: -- I didn't complain to my Mom that I --- was sad about leaving because I didn't want to make her sad so I was like -- just to myself.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you think it was difficult -- a difficult decision for your mother?

HENTGES: I don't think it was too difficult. I think they -- since they were apart for so many years -- that things have changed. HSShe got older and she wanted to come over here and I think she got divorced over here from him.

LEVINE: I see.

HENTGES: So she did file when we got over here for divorce.

LEVINE: And then did she become a citizen?

HENTGES: Yes, she became a citizen before me. Because I couldn't become citizen with her -- I was too old. sSo I had to wait 'til I got to be 18 to become a citizen. And I went to school in Chicago. sSo it was very easy for me for the test that -- since I went to school. bBut I became a citizen, I believe, in May. I don't recall. As a matter of fact, I got my citizenship papers here.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: The date is on there. — I don't remember the year. — 1950 -- something like that. No. — May 15 -- had to be around '55. — I think it was '55 -- 1955, that I became a citizen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And she -- did she learn English?

HENTGES: Yes. You went to night school to learn English. You had to learn the English and she had a job in the factory that she was working. — wWe stayed with my aunt 'til we could get our own place. And she went to night school. — I went with her a few times. I got enrolled in a school came thei January of 1950. Of course, they put me to second grade to learn the language. And I should have been up a few grades. And my mother got a different job after about six months. She worked in Wilmette as a housekeeper.

LEVINE: What's Wilmette?

HENTGES: Wilmette is a suburb of Chicago. And Kenilworth -- around there -- that's where she worked. So she was a housekeeper and took care of a child, and did the cooking and stuff like that. And I went to school out there.

LEVINE: So did she live? Did you both live in the house?

HENTGES: We lived, yes. We lived there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. I see.

HENTGES: So -- they put us up there because she had to be up early for their child (a loud slam in background) -- Wow! The door slammed! (both laugh)  
Yeah, she worked at the work and I went to school and then -- I think after a year, we went back to Chicago because she got married.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: So then I went back to the school and they put me into the seventh grade. In Wilmette, they had me in sixth grade. But I skipped fifth grade -- I never really been to fifth grade in my life. aAnd that's the most important grade at that time because you learn fraction and the division and all that stuff --

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

HENTGES: --Aand percentage and that to me, that's still hard. So --

LEVINE: Yeah -- so by then, you knew English pretty well?

HENTGES: Oh yeah, I learned English pretty good. I haveand in school, I had to learn it. Nobody spoke German except for German girls that were there. And I didn't hang out with them. I guess I was a bad German. (both laugh)- I made friends with the American kids because being in second grade, the German girls that were there, they came right from Germany. --aAnd I guess they didn't go throughto the wartime-wartime-- I guess -- like I did. So they were like always in school,

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: So they didn't have too much problems. wWhere I had -- didn't have schooling. I guess my best schooling was when I got to the 'States' because then I finally stayed in school. (laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.

HENTGES: So it was interesting. I had a Sister Homalisa [ph]sit at home unless -- that made me learn English real good. And I have to say my great aunt, Aunt Susan, which was my mother's Aunt that brought us over -- she was another help for me with the language. She wouldn't let me speak German. After I was here a little bit, she says, "You speak English." So if I asked anything in German, she would not give it to me --

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: --Oor even answer me. And then I said, "But I don't know how to say it in English!" (laughs) And she told me and I had to speak English. So if I give her a lot of credit and she spoke German at home to her husband and all that. But she made me speak English.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: And I think that's the best gift I got from her.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: Because you had to do it.

LEVINE: Well now -- had she come from Yugoslavia?

HENTGES: She came from Yugoslavia too. I had -- that's how I got to Ellis Island and I looked her up.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

HENTGES: And I found her on the computer and the spelling of the names are so different -- we couldn't find my great-grandmother on the computer.

LEVINE: Your great-grandmother came to this country?

HENTGES: My great -- it was my mother's grandmother, yes.

LEVINE: Wow.

HENTGES: My great-grandmother came here and she brought my Aunt Susan over.

LEVINE: Oh, so she must have come --

HENTGES: [\(pages tuning\)](#) My Aunt Susan came -- let's see -- she came June 4th, 1921. She was eighteen at that time -- that's all I got from Ellis Island. My cousin -- nephew got it on the computer -- that's all he could get. And we found her, more or less, different spellings they had of the last name.

LEVINE: I see.

HENTGES: Let's see what else I got here --

LEVINE: So -- it says for ethnicity -- "Slovak-Croatia." So that would be on your mother's side?

HENTGES: That's Yugoslavia.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: That is Yugoslavia -- we were all there including my father.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: So -- that's what it more or less said. Ah! So my great-grandmother came over here and then she brought my Aunt over here -- my mother's Aunt, Aunt Susan. And on the computer, we couldn't locate her without any spelling. Finally, we had one spelling which was "L-I-Z-I-U-S" that we found her under.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: And Bobby was reading -- my nephew was reading that stuff. He says, "Well, we have a -- we have a -- Susan Lizius here," he goes. And her father is Bilik and she lived on Barry Avenue. I said, "Wait a minute, Bobby. Her name was -- name wasn't Bilik, that, she had a stepfather named 'Bilik'. But she didn't even know him.!" But they had to bring her over to sponsor her.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: So I said, "Wait a minute, let me see this." Go on, go. Well, that's it! That's Aunt Susan, alright! (laughs) So I found her but I couldn't find my great-grandmother. We had -- you only had fifteen minutes at the computer. And they were gonnagetting ready to close up pretty soon so I said, "Oh well -- next time we'll see if we can find her."

LEVINE: Well -- you can do that on the Internet.

HENTGES: Yeah, they told me that. I don't have a computer and my ne -- nephew was going to do it. And we never did go up with our code in there or nothing yet, because I haven't been in Chicago too much time with him there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well now -- where in Chicago did you settle?

HENTGES: We settled right in Chicago at 1245 Barry Avenue.

LEVINE: So is that like -- "south-side," "north-side"?

HENTGES: That was -- that was maybe in the north side. And it was like -- they had areas like Lincoln -- it was in the Lincoln, Belmont, and Ashland area. It's like that and we were like -- twelve blocks away from Lake Michigan. Because the lake was down that way and so we were a little further. It starts at "1" and we were "1245" so --

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So where there were lots of different ethnic groups near where you settled?

HENTGES: It was mostly Germans over there in that area at that time.

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: There were a few others, and probably some Polish too. But not too much. They haved a Polish section.

LEVINE: Yes.

HENTGES: At that time, she called it the "Polish section," the "German section," you know, difference like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: That's where I settled in.

LEVINE: I see. Would you consider your family Croatian or -- ?

HENTGES: No.

LEVINE: Just because I noticed on the --

HENTGES: Yeah, maybe that they -- I never heard of the Croatian name. I was just told German all the time.

LEVINE: German. OK. So we're gonna do that.

HENTGES: But see -- that's what Yugoslavia was. Croatian and Yugoslavian -- so I think we were more the Yugoslavian.

LEVINE: OK, so -- alright. Let's see. So you -- you settled in Chicago then and you got a new father -- a stepfather?

HENTGES: Yes, I did.

LEVINE: How was that?

HENTGES: He was wonderful. He was really great. I called him "Dad."---

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: He was a ~~na~~ excellent person -- a good person. My mother was in Daytona because she did ~~house-keeping~~housekeeping. They took her along because they do their spring break and they come here -- you know. And I got sick and he came and got me. And took me to my aunt's house so I could stay with my aunts, ~~my~~ Great-aunt Susan. And 'til my mother came back, ~~a~~And there was another time because ~~my~~ -- I don't know how long -- my Mom was ~~gone~~gone; -- they boarded me out so I could go to school.

LEVINE: Oh. So you lived with a family then?

HENTGES: ~~With~~But the one she worked with. I stayed with them and they boarded me to somebody else for about three weeks --

LEVINE: Mm-hmm.

HENTGES: ~~--~~And stayed with them. So I have no idea how they worked it out. All ~~they~~ I know I'm going over there 'til they come back. (laughs) And I got sick -- he came and got me and took me to lunch. And --

LEVINE: You mean he was in Chicago? He didn't go with your mother?

HENTGES: No, they weren't married at that time yet. So that was when she did ~~house-keeping~~housekeeping still. So he was a wonderful ~~step-~~fatherstepfather. After they got married, he was very good to me. And though she's been married a couple of times,

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: And she's got -- she's married now to a guy. His name is Kurt and he is as good as my ~~step-father~~stepfather that I considered my first ~~step-father~~stepfather.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh, wonderful.

HENTGES: And he almost looks like him! Virtually same thing really when I looked at him! "My Gosh, he looks like Rudy!" (laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HENTGES: So -- but yeah, he was wonderful. He was good.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you think your mother bears any -- what do I want to say -- scars or just --? Do you think that whole trial of going from place to place and not having food and shelter -- do you think it's left a mark on her?

HENTGES: No, I think -- I don't think it left a mark on her. I think she just wentanted for better for herself and she had a good life when we got to the States. And she got married and got ha-- was happy here. And you know -- she always worked, which was good. There, for a while, she didn't work -- with my ~~step-father~~stepfather -- but she would keep her-- herself busy. She never complained that it was -- it was tough, -- let's put it that way. She always said it was tough. And it's hard when you have a kid to go along with all of that. But I think she's got a good attitude on it.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did she ever have other children?

HENTGES: No, no. I was the only child.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay, so -- what would you say has given you a great deal of satisfaction in your life?

HENTGES: When I got to the States here, things seemed good for me. Schooling was good, I had friends. I had food, I had clothes. I had shoes! It -- that all meant quite a bit. I had a roof over my head. I didn't sleep in a barn on hay. I didn't sleep maybe under a truck or in a ditch. It's -- it's all good, I did the schooling, I had a good job when I got out of school. I met my husband, he was in the service at that time. He went overseas while I was here and then when he came back, we met up again and I got married. We got started in February of '58 dating and we got married in October. And I had a good life with him. We had seven children and I never had to work.

LEVINE: So what was your husband's name?

HENTGES: My husband's name was "Ronald Hentges." And he had two sisters and I was friends with the oldest sister. I worked with her and that's how I met her brother. And I thought, 'Hm.'get, -OK, he picked us up at the bowling alley and I really didn't care for him at that moment. (laughs) Went to work in the morning and the, first thing she says to me, she says, "How'd you like my brother?" I said, "Ah, I think he's cute. I'll marry him." that was only to make her upset or something, didn't mean nothing by it. And as it turned out, when he came home from service two years later, and was called his sister who talked to her and he answered the phone. And I said, "Who's this?" He says, "This is Ron." I said, "What are you doing home?" "Well, I just -- I got home." I said, "Oh, you did? When'd you get home?" He says, "Couple ~~of~~ weeks ago."

We wrote for a year and then we stopped writing, right? So he -- I didn't hear from him. I said, "Oh, OK. Well, is your sister home? I want to talk

to Ruth." And that was the end of the conversation. ~~H~~he called me about a week later and asked if I would like to go out with him to a wedding, he's got a wedding to go to. And I said, "OK." Well, I found out as far as I was concerned, I was "second fiddle." Because ~~one, when~~ he was going with a nurse and she cancelled out on him! (laughs) But from that day on, him and I were always together. When I got back, when we were at the wedding, and that night, he says, "You ~~migh-- you~~ think you and I could be dating?" I said, "Sure." And we did, so we got married in October and I had a wonderful life with him.

LEVINE: Oh, good. What kind of a name is "Hentges?"

HENTGES: It's a German name.

LEVINE: So he was also...?

HENTGES: He's not, no. He was born ~~in~~ Toledo, Ohio. And his grandparents were from Germany someplace ~~but, but~~ I don't know where. I have no idea where they ~~w~~ere from.

LEVINE: Well, we actually skipped the part about coming here. (both laugh)

HENTGES: That's true. You ~~We~~ did!, didn't we?

LEVINE: Let's go back and ~~---~~

HENTGES: Well, coming here was great. I was on a boat, which was "The Atlantic." Huge boat. I mean, bigger than my eyes. And the boat ride ~~ght~~? We had a room, I believe, ~~there~~ it might have been six or eight of us in there. ~~;~~ ~~They~~ ~~re~~ were like bunk-beds. And we stayed in there and you'd had ~~ve~~ the free run of the deck and lots of food. And I was in my glory because I

could go and get some tea, or dessert in the afternoon. So which was wonderful for me. And just ran around the boat completely. I got lost on the boat. Figure it out, how to get lost on the boat! Couldn't figure it out how I got lost.

But I ended up in first class. How I got there, I do not know. Nor do they know how I got up there! (laughs) And when I got up there and I just walked around and as soon as you got there, were some stairs, carpeted. And was like a gift shop there and they had a beautiful doll sitting in there and I kept looking at this doll because I always wanted a doll-doll. and my doll was kept in left in Yugoslavia when we had to leave so abruptly. And they asked me where I'm from, They had to -- where I'm staying, and I told them my name. And told them where I was. They wanted to know how I got there. I said, "I don't know. I couldn't find my way back." So I got a good tour, they found somebody to take me back. (laughs)- And that was very interesting, it was beautiful up there. Absolutely gorgeous. My mother -- Then, they called my mother after they got me back to where I'm was supposed to be and she says, "How did you get up there?"- (laughs)- I say, "I don't know.!" So I had to stay close around the boat. I couldn't go too far no more, I guess.-

LEVINE: Uh huh.

HENTGES: And we had a storm one day. Not one day, I think it was about three days or so lasting. People got sick, hanging over the banister. And I thought, "I'm not sick. I'm not sick." Some couldn't even get out of bed. Right? I guess about the third day or fourth day, I got sick. And it was terrible but people were sick all over the place there. And that storm was so long-lasting long lasting. And the interesting --, the cafeteria where we went to eat they had like table, and they had like everything like closed d-up so nothing could move. Everything will --- Hhow they did it, I

don't know. Everything had to stay in its place. Because the boat was just rocking back and forth. It was like really going bad. And finally, thate day I got sick. I was so proud of not getting sick. (laughs)

And then we got -- counted the days for g--l --. I believe it took us almost eleven days to come here. And because the with the storm, it was slow-goingslow going. And it was morning and I got up on the deck and I see the Statue of Liberty. I recognize that it was pretty far-far all I could see. I could see it. And there were quite a few kids on the boat too. There was a girl that I don't remember her name that I got friends with. And sShe was staying in New York -- White Plains, New York she went to. And her and I were there. And she says, "There's Statue of Liberty." And we were just looking at it, and looking at it-un'til we got closer. aAnd then all of a sudden, didn'twhen you see it. Weyou had to go into Ellis Island like.

And the buildings and everything was big and huge. Jjust Sstate of New York, it's something. And all I remember being in line constantly at Ellis Island --, going from a room to a room to a room, just getting checked out. Aand are in for checking out if we got all our shots and everything is in order, if we're all healthy and things like that. And that took forever. And after that, we left Ellis Island and we had to get a cab. Language was a problem, of course. But we got help and my mother finally got a cab and they took us to the train station. This cab we were in, to New York City --. It's bumper-to-bumper cars.

The cab driver looked around trying to talk to my mother and hit another car. With that, we both thfrew off the seat, hit our head. A, and he says, "You OK? You OK?" Well yeah, we were. I'm bleeding to death. We didn't know anything. We were hurting very bad. Sso he took us to the train station, never got checked out if we're bruised up or nothing. Got to the train station, got to Chicago. And my mother's hurting, I'm hurting.

Knot on the head, knot on the forehead, my mother's got knots all over here too. Black and blue. Our Great-aunt Susan, she was so upset because we were in an accident and hurting so bad. You We couldn't even hardly comb your hair for a month. That's how bad theyour head hurt.

LEVINE: Oh.

HENTGES: So with that, they wanted me to get into thea car. My cousin picked us up. he says, "We're going to drive." "I'm walking! I'm not getting in this car." I spoke in German to the --. And -- They said, "You can't walk. It's far. You can't walk to the house." "I'm walking. Just tell me where it's at. I'm walking." They wouldn't let me walk and I didn't want to get in the car. So finally they convinced me to sit on the floor in the backseat onf the car so I couldn't see anything. So that's what I did. I was petrified.

LEVINE: Oh, wow.

HENTGES: But we finally made it there to the house and everything was okay. So I really didn't see the Chicago or anything because I sat on the floor. (both laugh)

LEVINE: Well, we're at the end of this tape so let me stop it here. Anyway, I'm speaking with Anna Hentges and this is Janet Levine foref the National Park Service. (~~ends abruptly~~)

END OF INTERVIEW~~SIDE 2~~