<u>EI-175</u>

JULIA ISRAEL SCHUELER

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GERMANY VIA FRANCE (BORN RUSSIA), 1940

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RESIDENCE:

- **GERMANY: BERLIN**
- **FRANCE: ?**
- **USA: New York, NY/Boulder, CO**

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, June 18, 1992. I am here in the Ellis Island studio using the

portable data equipment with Julia Schueler who was born in Moscow, lived in Berlin and in France before coming to America in 1940 when she was seventeen years old. Good morning. Can we start by you giving me your full name and your date of birth, please.

SCHUELER: Okay. I was born April 6, 1923 in Moscow, and my name is Julia Schueler.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Schueler.

SCHUELER: Yes. S-C-H-U-E-L-E-R.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay in Moscow?

SCHUELER: Until I was three months old.

SIGRIST: I see. And why were you in Moscow? Why were your parents in Moscow?

SCHUELER: They lived in Moscow, yes.

SIGRIST: So they were Russian.

SCHUELER: They were Russian, yes.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

SCHUELER: My father's name was Jiffim Israel.

SCHUELER: Can you spell that, please?

SCHUELER: Yes. Jiffim, J-I-F-F-I-M. And Israel, I-S-R-A-E-L.

SIGRIST: What did he do for a living?

SCHUELER: He was a writer. He edited a magazine, I believe. And he was a journalist, and he was really what you would call an activist now, okay. But he was on the wrong side. He was a Menshevik, which made him a Social Democrat. So when the Bolsheviks, the Communists, took over he was jailed and in '22, actually, before I was born, the Mensheviks were given the opportunity to leave and to go into exile, or to be executed, so my father left ahead of us. And then my mother was pregnant, so she waited until I was born.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Menshevik for us, please?

SCHUELER: Oh, I don't know how you transliterate it into English. I think it's M-E-N-S-H, or C-H, E-V-I-K, which means the minority party.

SIGRIST: And what was your mother's name?

SCHUELER: My mother's name was Ida.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

SCHUELER: Oh, Chaifetz, you know, like the violinist?

SCHUELER: Could you spell it, please?

SCHUELER: I don't know how you transliterate it either. So I think in English it would be C-H-A-I-F-E-T-Z.

SIGRIST: I want to talk a little bit about your parents, what they were like as people. Can you describe your father's personality for us?

SCHUELER: Well, he had a reputation of being an excellent orator, okay. A very, very good speaker. And very expressive, okay? He was a very handsome man. I think he kind of liked ladies, and ladies liked him. I don't know my father except as my father, so I don't see him, you know, on the outside very much. And my mother was born in the wrong century. She belongs now into women's lib and so on. She was one of the first women to graduate from medical school in Moscow. And she felt that women ought to have the same rights as men and so on.

SIGRIST: How did your parents meet? Do you know?

SCHUELER: Yes, I know how they met. My mother, she admired flyers. I remember Emilia Eckhardt, okay? They met because my mother went to Tiflis to high school. Tiflis, I think that's Tbilisi, okay, in Caucasia. And my uncle was in medical school in the same city. Actually, my mother had met my uncle first and then my father, who was his brother. Very young, very young. They married at eighteen. My mother was eighteen.

SIGRIST: So are there other brothers and sisters in your family?

SCHUELER: Uh, you mean my parents' brothers and sisters?

SIGRIST: No, I mean do you have brothers and sisters? Do they have other children?

SCHUELER: I have one brother. I have one brother, yes.

SIGRIST: What is his name?

SCHUELER: His name is Max.

SIGRIST: And is he older or younger?

SCHUELER: He is older.

SIGRIST: So how old was he when you left Moscow?

SCHUELER: He must have been seven.

SIGRIST: So he's substantially older than you are.

SCHUELER: Yes.

SIGRIST: So it's safe to say that your parents were forced to leave Moscow?

SCHUELER: Oh, absolutely. Yes, they had no choice.

SIGRIST: So they went from Moscow to where?

SCHUELER: To Berlin.

SIGRIST: And you grew up in Berlin?

SCHUELER: I grew up in Berlin.

SIGRIST: Well, good. Let's, because that's probably what you remember. Good. Well, let's talk about Berlin. What do you remember the most about Berlin

when you think back?

SCHUELER: As a child, to me, Berlin was a very beautiful city. Of course, we lived quite well, and I think we lived in either Charlottenburg or Wilmersdorf. We had a nice apartment. I had a maid who took care of me, and I led a very sheltered life as a little girl.

SIGRIST: Why did they choose Berlin?

SCHUELER: I think my father had a job there.

SIGRIST: And this was a job doing some sort of journalistic...

SCHUELER: Uh, yes. Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the apartment or the house that you lived in?

SCHUELER: Oh, yes, very well indeed. Of course, we moved every year, okay. Every year for ten years. (she laughs) But I remember the apartment we lived in on Wittenberger Platz [sic: Wittenbergplatz], which is near the zoo, when I was about two.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that also, please?

SCHUELER: Oh, yes. Wittenberger Platz. W-I-T-T-E-N-B-E-R-G-E-R. Platz, P-L-A-T-Z.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

SCHUELER: Okay. So this apartment was very big. And I went back to Berlin because I thought maybe just in my memory it was that big. But in '73 I was with a

teacher's seminar in Berlin and we happened to live in a pension, a boarding house, where the apartment had been changed into a boarding house and it was very similar, and so I was able to compare the size. Okay, so this sort of apartment had a very large hallway. I had a very large bedroom myself, which was so far away from the bathroom that I remember my mommy bathed me in a little tub that she put on two chairs. And I did not eat with my parents in a dining room. My food was brought, you know. I had a little table, and my maid brought the food. And my greatest joy was to visit my daddy in his library, which was also a very large room. The rooms, the dining room, the living room, I would say must have been twenty by twenty or twenty by fifteen. I mean, they were really large rooms, very, very high ceilings. And so my greatest joy was to get his little typewriter chair and to scoot around on it across the floor, the wooden floor, you see. So I know it was very large.

SIGRIST: Did your parents, because obviously you were very comfortable, did your parents acquire their wealth through family or through what they were doing professionally?

SCHUELER: Oh, they were not wealthy whatsoever, but my father was apparently paid quite well. And this was during the inflation, okay? So I'm not sure how, but he must have had a fairly good salary. My parents did not own anything at all. I mean, I don't know what kind of furniture they got, whether, I don't know. They did have their books which they were meant, which they managed to bring from Moscow. Because I remember my father had quite an extensive library, and so did my mother.

SIGRIST: You mentioned the horrendous inflation in Germany after the war. Do you have any firsthand remembrances of buying things or having to deal with currency?

SCHUELER: Well, I was too little. During the inflationary years I was too little, but I remember hearing about it. You know, people carrying satchels of money around and so on. No, I myself don't have any memories of that. But since we lived in that particular area, I remember going shopping with my mother in a big department store, and now you must understand that all of the places where we lived in Berlin no longer exist. I went back recently, last year. As a matter of fact, I was invited by the government of Berlin, and I kind of checked back, and there really isn't anything left of all of that.

SIGRIST: Why did you move so frequently?

SCHUELER: In Berlin? I think because my father's income changed, and so each time it changed they made a move, but I really don't know.

SIGRIST: Were they moving to lesser quarters each time?

SCHUELER: Uh, okay. This place where we lived when I was two was probably the most, the largest and the nicest. Then from there we moved to a place that was not quite as nice, but it was a larger apartment, okay. Always a big living room, a dining room, my father's study, my bedroom, my parents' bedroom, my brother's, and we always had a cook and a maid in that apartment. Okay.

SIGRIST: As you moved, did you always maintain domestic help?

SCHUELER: Until the last year things got pretty bad, okay. Just the year before Hitler came to power, and that had to do with my father's work. So then we moved to a just ordinary apartment and we only had a cook, I think. We didn't have a maid any more. And I was big, I didn't need a maid. Because

my mother was working. She was working in a hospital.

SIGRIST: That's right. So she...

SCHUELER: She needed, right. She needed someone to take care of me.

SIGRIST: Was that unusual for a woman to be employed as a, was she a doctor at the hospital?

SCHUELER: She was a doctor, yes.

SIGRIST: Was that unusual at that time?

SCHUELER: It was quite unusual, and she had a very hard time. Because I remember coming home and complaining about the dreadful language that the surgeons used in the operating room. (she laughs) And so it was not easy for a woman.

SIGRIST: Because she was a woman did she have a hard time getting the job in the first place?

SCHUELER: I don't know. Really, she did not talk, or at least I was not aware of it. And also you have to remember that my parents spoke Russian at home and I did not learn Russian. So most of their discussions were totally beyond me. I couldn't really follow them.

SIGRIST: So you were speaking German.

SCHUELER: I was speaking German.

SIGRIST: What do you remember of school in Berlin?

SCHUELER: Oh, I remember absolutely everything. First of all, I went to a Montessori school which was excellent. I remember everything that they taught me in that Montessori school, tying my shoelaces and buttoning my shirt and collars and so on, going for walks in the park. And mainly learning how to sit quietly and listen and just be socialized as a little child. So from two to six I went to Montessori Nursery School. Then I went to first grade, and I remember my teacher.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

SCHUELER: I don't remember her name, but she was a big young lady. We were certainly forty children in the class. And she had absolute discipline. Everyone just sat there and listened. We learned how to count with little matches. I remember how we were taught the concept of tense and units with matches. I remember I learned how to write and read. And...

SIGRIST: Did you enjoy school?

SCHUELER: I loved school because it was the only place that gave me some kind of security. That was really my world, was school.

SIGRIST: Why was that? What was so insecure about home life?

SCHUELER: Home life, you have to understand that my family were refugees and that my father received many, many journalists and guests from all over the world, literally, even in those days. And that every time people came to the house they gave the most recent news about what was happening during the purges in Soviet Russia. Even this was before the purges. But always

about Siberia, about people being executed, people being hanged, people, I mean, everything that went on. And it just was not a very happy situation, okay. And I just had the feeling that my parents' world was not very secure because we were exiles. This was not our country. I remember even as a young child my father trying to impress upon me that we had no one to protect us because we were not citizens of any country, so that if I cross the street where there was no crosswalk, which was against the law, there was no one to protect me. In other words, it might be all right for someone else to infract and to do something against the law, but not for us. He really impressed me with that. And so I remember as a child being asked, "Who are you?" and "What are you?" And I would just say, "Nothing." And people would say, "Well, what do you mean? Don't you have a country?" And I would say, "No." Well, and I literally grew up not having a country.

SIGRIST: What kind of an effect did that have on a little child? I mean, did you understand the implications of not having a country, or...

SCHUELER: I wasn't just not having a country, it's not having a family. Because all my little friends always spent the weekend with their grandparents in the countryside. I had no grandparents, I had no relatives. It was just a nuclear family, my mother, my father and my brother. And so, and plus I didn't even have a language. So because, you know, a child grows up with the effective language that their parents speak to them, and for some reason I refused to speak Russian because I wanted so badly to belong. And I realized that my father spoke very poor German. His accent was poor, his grammar was awful. My mother spoke German quite well, but I just wanted more than anything else to sound and look like all the other little children, which was kind of sad because I was always the very smallest everywhere I went, and it took me years before I realized that I

really didn't look German at all. I just wanted to be like everyone else. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did your brother have the same feelings, do you think?

SCHUELER: No, no. Because my brother grew up speaking Russian and he had memories of Russia. He knew his grandparents, our grandparents, his uncles and aunts and his cousins.

SIGRIST: So you have no connection, then, no communication, I should say, with whatever family is back here.

SCHUELER: That's right, exactly.

SIGRIST: Why? Why was there no communication with them?

SCHUELER: Uh, during that period I don't think that it was safe to communicate with them, okay. I remember my mother sending what you might call care packages to my cousins in Leningrad. And she would carefully take my little winter coat that she had made. And in Berlin, of course, a winter coat has not only a lining but an inner lining and a little fur collar, and she took that little coat and she altered it for the winters in Russia. She put in an extra lining or something. Anyway, she made little packages of my clothes that I outgrew. And I remember her doing that, and that's how I learned about my cousins in Leningrad.

SIGRIST: Talk about some of your parents' friends, and who they were and what they were like. And I suppose in a way for your parents they were sort of a surrogate family.

SCHUELER: Yes, they were, they definitely were. And we simply called them The Group, and that has been quite well documented. There's a very good book that someone wrote at the University of Michigan which includes the Russian immigration in Berlin during the '30s. And so I found a lot of the friends in that book. We were a very close-knit group. And, uh...

SIGRIST: As a little girl, what was it like to be around these people?

SCHUELER: Well, it was very strange, because of course they were our closest friends, and I must say that on the whole they all were extremely bright and talented people, and it's very difficult to live up to people's expectations when you are sitting next to someone that everyone admires as one of the greatest poets or one of the greatest painters or one of the greatest orators or so on, you know. And then you wonder are you ever going to grow up and do anything half as well. So it's difficult.

SIGRIST: Were they all displaced Russians?

SCHUELER: Well, all the group were the same, Menshevik. The whole group. I don't know if you're familiar with the history, but basically Kerenski had been the chief of the six months Socialist government in Russia before Lenin came to power.

SIGRIST: Can you spell his name, please?

SCHUELER: No, I don't know how to spell it in English. Uh, K-E-R-E-N-S-K-I, I suppose. I don't know his first name, but he's a well-known figure. And all the other people are quite well-known in that particular history. So these were, okay, it's growing up as if instead of looking at TV and watching Senator Gore talk, or this Senator talk, you were with these people at the

dinner table. Okay, that's really what it was like. These are people that, had Lenin not come in, would have been at the head of the Russian government, okay. And so to give you an example we'd have people at the table, I remember, but this might be later on in Paris, people who had just come from China, for example. Now, you know, in the early '30s there someone come from China and give you news of what was going on there, or people who are, for example, one of our very good friends with the editor of a journal for Esperanto. He had founded this journal for Esperanto, for example. And I remember spending time with him and having explained to us what Esperanto was all about, I mean, just to give you an example. So it was very exciting.

SIGRIST: When they came to visit, this group, was it a big kind of happy social occasion, or was it pull the shades down and we don't want anyone to...

SCHUELER: I don't know how to explain that to you.

SIGRIST: It was very low-key.

SCHUELER: No. How shall I explain? First of all, when I was very little I'm sure that there were receptions, okay, that I had no part in. But I know there were many, many people there, okay. My father had his office at home, and, of course, he received people for interviews or whatever. But on the other hand my mother being a physician also treated a lot of people, okay. So there were also contacts with them as being patients, although they were friends of my mother, okay. And then of course some of these people were private friends. We went on picnics, for example. I remember the picnics because every Sunday we'd go out to Grunewald, outside of Berlin. And the same sort of people would be there. We spent the summers on the North Baltic, okay, on the beach. And the same group of

people would be there, okay. People would always be very excited and have these lengthy discussions.

SIGRIST: How did they react to you as a little girl? Because obviously they're all very intellectually-oriented, and they all have things they have to say to one another. (Ms. Schueler laughs) How did you fit into that? Were you...

SCHUELER: I was very much aware that family life was not part of this group. As a matter of fact, I could not remember anyone there with one or two exceptions who had any kind of a normal family life. And, of course, when they saw me their first question always was, "You mean you don't speak Russian?" And then they would talk to my mother and say, "Shame on you." I mean, I understood that. "Shame on you, you don't make her speak Russian." And, of course, I was very proud of myself because this was my little hold, you know. Maybe I was angry as a little girl.

SIGRIST: It's very interesting. It's a very interesting angle.

SCHUELER: Right.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit, and you sort of alluded to going to picnics and summering on the Baltic. Can you give me some other things that you would have done for fun? As a little girl in Berlin, you mentioned the zoo before. Did you ever visit the zoo?

SCHUELER: Yes, I loved the zoo. I grew up at the zoo.

SIGRIST: What do you remember most about the zoo?

SCHUELER: Oh, I remember the zoo extremely well because that first apartment when

I was two, okay, I spent all my mornings at the zoo, because it was practically across the street, okay. And my maid used to take me to the zoo, and we always sat on a bench very close to the big chimpanzee, and that's where I learned table manners. Because this big chimpanzee gave a theatrical performance. He was trained. And he sat at a table and he had a napkin tied around his neck, and I watched him very carefully how he held his spoon. I had a hard time holding a spoon, and he held the spoon and didn't drop anything. He ate his soup or whatever. And he drank something out of a cup, and so that's how I learned how to hold my spoon and watched his table manners. I really loved that chimp. And, of course, we went and watched the tigers and the lions and played in the sandbox, but I loved that zoo.

SIGRIST: Talk about religious life, if there was one at all. What religious affiliation did you...

SCHUELER: There really wasn't any. My parents stayed away from any kind of religion. I had absolutely no religious upbringing whatsoever, except that the German schools, the public schools, at that time, did have religious instruction, okay. And I remember in sixth or seventh or eighth grade, I remember one time when all the little children went up to the teacher in front, and he said, "Now, what denomination are you?" And they all said, "Evangelisch." Which means Protestant. So when it was my turn I went up there and I said, "Protestant." And I sat in the back of the class and I listened very carefully and I had Protestant religious education, and that's about the only religious instruction that I had, just from listening.

SIGRIST: Did your parents come from a Russian Orthodox background or a Jewish background?

SCHUELER: Not at all, not at all.

SIGRIST: So even their parents were not particularly affiliated. Would you say that as a little girl you always felt different, or that you succeeded in making yourself feel like one of the Germans?

SCHUELER: No, no. My ambition was to kind of melt into the background, not be seen (she laughs), and be like everyone else. And I was very small. I mean, I'm still a small woman. My parents were very small. My mother was smaller than I am. And, of course, as a result, I was not only the smallest in class, I was about a head smaller than everyone else, and this for me was quite a struggle.

SIGRIST: Talk about the political environment in Berlin, what eventually made you leave?

SCHUELER: Well, of course, the coming to power of Hitler. And we had moved again from one, two, three, that was our third apartment which was very close to the elementary school where I went. And then they made the last move to the place that was not quite as nice, which was about half an hour walk from my school. And so I walked. I didn't take any public transportation. I walked and I walked. And I remember, this was in '32. I remember that I amused myself by counting the Nazi flags. And so week by week there were more and more Nazi flags on the windows, okay. And I remember at school the little kids were discussing, you know, what was happening at home. And little boys started to appear in their uniforms, you know, the Nazi youth groups, something. We were about eight then, eight years old. And I remember the little kids showing off their little pocket knives and what they would do with their pocket knives, and then they would show off and say, "My dad came back from a meeting, and he brought this, and he

said that." And, "My Dad beat me up." And the next boy would say, "Boy, my Dad beat me up a lot more than that." I mean, those little kids were fighting in school, and that was kind of a German tradition to have the little kids fight. And I saw, we had a, okay, that was, third grade. We had a teacher who was a, you might call her a home room teacher. That is he had most of the classes except for maybe gym and art, most of the classes. And he was a First World War veteran. Quite an important figure, he was quite tall. He always had a cane in the corner of the room, and he just had to look at that cane, and those kids behaved. He had the boys sitting on one side of the classroom and girls on the other. And sometimes he had to beat one of the little kids. He'd pull down his pants and just beat him something awful, and that kid would not dare cry because the girls were watching. Well, if any of the kids would snitch on someone else then they would beat him up in the courtyard during recess. And I saw some of the boys beat some kids up until they were bloody. I was afraid they really were going to be hurt very badly. The teacher would just stand there, the supervisor, during recess, and not budge, not move a finger. I saw, we were walking down the stairs and, of course, the stairs were wide and they were edged with an iron border, I guess. I remember one of the little kids once fell down. He knocked out his front teeth. No one budged. They said, "Well, don't cry. Don't be a sissy. Get up." And so that made a very big impression on me, a very big impression. Of course, they never touched the girls. But, as I said, he did not have to give a beating to the boys very often. It happened maybe twice, and all he had to do was just look at that cane and the kids behaved. And I must also say that he was an excellent teacher. Okay, I mean, people really listened. He taught us a lot. We all did our homework. No one dared not listen and don't do their homework, don't come prepared.

SIGRIST: Scare tactics.

SCHUELER: It worked. He also entertained us. He told us a lot of stories about the war and about all kinds of things. And we also had field trips. We had a lot of people come to class. I remember musicians from Bremen coming to entertain us. I remember sailors coming to entertain us. I remember glass blowers coming to entertain us. And very regularly we were taken on field trips which were part of the instruction. Now, mind you, this was not a private school. This was just a regular public school. And so, for example, we were taken around the block to see the firehouse, taken around the block to see the public park, to see the post office, to see the store. And then this was incorporated into the instruction, and then we had to make little models of the neighborhood and so on. It was pretty good.

SIGRIST: Would you say that the Nazi taking-over of Berlin was a slow and gradual process, or did it happen quickly?

SCHUELER: Okay. I became aware of it in '32, all right?

SIGRIST: And how old were you then?

SCHUELER: The summer of '32 I remember very well, because the summer of '32 I was nine, I was nine, okay. And the summer of '32 my parents sent me into the countryside with a teacher, not my teacher, just a teacher's family. And I think a little friend of mine, okay. We kind of boarded there. And this was a little town in the country. And I remember that a very nice house with a garden and a big German shepherd dog. My job was to feed that dog. I loved that dog. But I also remember that we were told not to go a certain place because there were rowdies there, and not to pay any attention to the rowdies. And somehow in the conversations that I overheard, the word rowdy was connected with Nazi. So this is one

impression that I got, that people, okay, to complete the picture, I remember the little kids with their knives and their uniforms, and how proud they were of their uniforms, and how proud they were of their daddies being in uniform and getting out their medals or whatever they had from the First World War. Because most of these children had fathers who had fought in the First World War, who were veterans. And so this was then completed with these other overtones, with these rowdies that I should be careful of. And so there was a picture of tough young people who were not afraid to just beat people up for the fun of it, really, basically, because they just didn't have anything to do. That was one picture. But on the other hand there was also the picture of kids and young people who felt very proud to wear a uniform, who were very patriotic and proud to be German. And this whole talk about, well, Hitler is someone who gives us pride.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE
BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SCHUELER: So I was very confused as a little girl because remember I wanted to be German, and I wanted to be like everyone else. Okay? Very confused. Now, once during that summer we had an opportunity to ride in the cab of a moving van because these people knew someone who was moving furniture to Berlin. That was a big occasion. So I sat in the cab of this moving van, which is a great big van. It was marvelous. About an hour's drive to Berlin, and I remember going, driving down the street and there we saw these hooligans. I don't remember. But anyway, the cab driver and his friend, and he said, "Well, there they are again." And that was again in reference to these rowdies who were then Nazis, okay, and that's all really

about all I know.

SIGRIST: So it does sort of start subtly?

SCHUELER: Subtly, but this was summer of '32, okay. Now, when school started in the fall of '32 things started changing very rapidly. But there were lots of discussions. Remember most of the discussions were in Russian in my home, so it couldn't follow those. But a lot of people discussed the fact that I couldn't be taken seriously, that after all this is a civilized place, he doesn't have a chance, come on, and so on. And then things started to kind of deteriorate. So by, and as I said the flags multiplied. Okay, that's what I did. I kept count of the flags.

SIGRIST: That's a wonderful image, though, you know, from a small girl, you know.

SCHUELER: Yeah. I remember those flags, okay. I remember the uniforms and the flags, okay. So that brings us to the end of '32. And then things started moving very, very fast. Uh, I'm trying to put it into perspective from my point of view. First of all, I had then changed schools. My father made me jump a grade which, of course, was a very big mistake. I had been a very good little student, and I loved it, but I was now not in high school, because German gymnasium starts with age ten, but I was only nine. Okay, it starts like sixth grade.

SIGRIST: Why did he want you to skip a grade?

SCHUELER: Well, I was a bright little kid. I had very good grades, and he felt it might be better. But I think it was a mistake. I would have been much happier staying in my little school.

SIGRIST: Were you asked, or did it just happen?

SCHUELER: It just happened, yeah. I didn't want to go. So, at any rate, here I was going to this gymnasium, and now I was not only the youngest but the very tiniest of all the children in this big school. This was a great, big school, like a big high school, okay, just girls. And it was quite close to where we lived, but it was on one side of the big avenue, which everyone in Berlin knows, the Kurfürstendamm, okay, the Ku`damm. So I had to cross that, and it was one block on the other side, about a ten minute walk. And I'm not sure of the sequence, but I remember we had a homeroom teacher who seemed to me to be a Nazi because of the kind of comments that she made. I remember she introduced, she taught Latin, no, did I have Latin in Germany? French. She taught French and German. So we had German grammar, German composition. There was two classes a day, French, and then we had history and geography and all the other subjects, mathematics. So I had her for about three classes during the day, okay. And I remember her introducing me at one time and saying, "Now, Julia, you don't have to be afraid. You know, you are not German." And she introduced me to the class. "Well, Julia is not German. She is a refugee from Russia." And so that was her way of excusing me for wearing the swastika, because all the little girls, of course, had their swastika pins, okay. And if you didn't wear your little swastika pin, you kind of felt that maybe there was not so politic, okay. I mean, even we knew that. So that was one thing that happened. And, of course, instead of the, standing up in the morning and saying, "Guten Tag." I don't think there was such a thing as a pledge of allegiance, but the "Guten Tag" changed to, "Heil Hitler." And so the children who stood up and didn't say, "Heil Hitler," that was not a very good thing to do. There was a lot of pressure put on the children. And many of the children at class happened to be Jewish. So I became a little bit aware of that. It was uncomfortable. At the

same time, and this was within a period of two months, okay. Where it's taking about end of January, February 1933. At the same time my parents impressed me with the fact that I was not to make friends with anyone at school or to talk to anyone about anything at all. And that to me was incomprehensible. This was the hardest thing for me. And I noticed not only was I told not to talk to anyone, but I noticed everyone else, all these grownups around me, suddenly not talking to each other. That is the group, my parents' group. Of course, they were close friends. But for example there were people across the floor where we lived in this apartment house that, you know, you exchanged a friendly comment or something, and suddenly you had the feeling that people looked at each other a little bit askance. They were, there was just suddenly a lid put on everything. People no longer talked to each other. They were scared. And the word got around you just keep your mouth shut, literally. This is what I was told. You keep your mouth shut. That was very difficult. And so the thing that impressed me as a little girl is to see grownups be afraid and to see this fear all around me. To be afraid not to wear a swastika pin, to be afraid not to put a flag out the window, to be afraid to say that no, you didn't go watch the parade. For example, in school they took us to see movies, okay, propaganda movies. And many of the children in my class really would have chosen not to go, but you went anyway, okay. And this atmosphere of fear was so thick that you really felt it, okay. Well, I was certainly very confused about the politics of this, and I remember the posters for the elections of Hitler. They were great, big posters. And I remember this finger pointing at you, you know. And it just felt like "You vote for me," you know, "I'm going to protect you." And I also remember the parades. There was one parade in particular at night. It was called a torch parade with (?), you know. And everyone carried the little lamps, lanterns. And I thought it was great. It was so, I can't think of the word. Well, as a ceremony it was thrilling, really, it was absolutely thrilling. I

mean, if you can imagine hundreds and hundreds of young men in uniform marching down at night with these lit torches. And then in back of the parade all the younger kids also in uniform belonging to the youth groups. And then in back of that people just followed. And I tell you, I wanted to parade, too. I thought that was great, you know. And so of course you felt that, you felt a little bit envious of the people who could feel that this was their country and that they were going to make things right. I was very confused as a little girl, okay.

SIGRIST: Talk about how, because obviously you're bringing a whole different angle to this than your parents would be...

SCHUELER: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: And what they're thinking. What do you think is going in their mind, through their mind, at this time? You know, how did they feel about all of this?

SCHUELER: All right. At that time it was also the burning of the Reichstag, okay. Now, my parents and my father, having friends in the Reichstag.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that for me, please?

SCHUELER: You don't know how to spell Reichstag?

SIGRIST: These are transcribed by, these are sent out to be transcribed.

SCHUELER: Okay. R-E, okay. R-E-I-C-H-S-T-A-G. Okay, the German parliament. Okay, it burned, all right. And then of course the papers pretended that the Communists had burned it or the Socialists, and that was not true. And so

there were a lot of discussions about this and my family knew that this was serious, okay. And the whole group at that time decided that they could no longer stay. I think right from that moment on things got very serious. There was one more thing that happened, and I really want it to be recorded, because for me '38 was not the year when things started. It was '33. And I can't remember the exact date, but it was very close to the time that we left in March. I went to school in the morning, and as I was close to crossing the big avenue on the other side I remember, I think there was a movie house or a big coffee shop. And I saw some of these rowdies beating up on an old man, and then he lay on the sidewalk and he was full of blood. And I was walking on this side of the street toward the avenue, and there was a whole block of very elegant stores. I don't know, clothing stores, shoe stores and so on. Every single window had been smashed in, and the glass was on the sidewalk. I was afraid to hurt myself. And the walls were all smeared up in red, was the words *"Juda verrecke"* okay, which means "Jewish people perish." Okay, but it's kind of a pejorative word. So I was very shook up. I was nine, and I was really very, very shook up. And I walked to school, I got to class, and here was my homeroom teacher and I remember instead of quietly sitting down I rushed to the desk, and I said, "You know what I saw? I saw glass on the sidewalk and I saw a man who was bleeding and I don't know what's going on." And the teacher looked at me and said, "Julia, you did not see anything. Nothing happened. Now, go sit down and shut up." This was an event that simply did not happen. And I have, when I got home that afternoon my parents' reaction was, "Shut up. Don't say anything to anyone." And so that for me was the beginning of the Holocaust, okay. And that's what I saw myself. From that day on every day either in school or somewhere else, people were not just whispering, and the whispers always had to do what happened to so-and-so. And so people had started disappearing. Now, these were people who disappeared for political

reasons, I don't know. Our music teacher disappeared, our art teacher disappeared. I mean, in our school several teachers suddenly weren't there, and no one would say anything. The thing that impressed me as a child was the fear that you could see and the doubt and the whispers, okay.

SIGRIST: Frightening, frightening times.

SCHUELER: Frightening. So that was, for me, what happened, okay.

SIGRIST: I can only assume that this was the impetus for your family to get out of Berlin.

SCHUELER: Well, this was arranged, I'm sure. But I wasn't aware of it. So one morning my mother woke me up at five in the morning and she said, "Julia, we are not going to school today. We are going to take the train. So what would you like to take with you, your teddy bear or your doll?" And I said, "My teddy bear." I said, "Where are we going?" She said, "We're going to Paris." So that's how it happened. So we went to Paris, like that, one day to the next. Now, the reason was that my mother did not want me speaking at school or telling anyone, you see, and so my parents, I imagine, were careful not to let me in on it beforehand. So I took my teddy bear and I took one book in German, The Prince and the Pauper in German. (she laughs) And that's all I had room for.

SIGRIST: I want to ask you just a quick question about your brother who of course is older and male. What was his reaction to all of this? Did he want to participate also, in the sense of belonging?

SCHUELER: No. I wish not to discuss my brother because he was a great deal older

and our lives were just totally separate, so I can't really tell you.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything of the trip from Berlin to Paris?

SCHUELER: Very well, indeed.

SIGRIST: Could you tell me a little bit about it?

SCHUELER: We got on this train which came straight from Warsaw and which was crowded and which was filthy dirty. You have to remember, we lived in a very elegant section of Berlin, very clean, very neat, very prosperous. I was in a total state of shock. I had never in my life been associated with poor people who wore clothes that didn't match or stockings that weren't pulled straight or packages that weren't tied properly or blouses that weren't buttoned properly. Do you see what I mean? And my mother always carried with her some Lysol and always had a handkerchief and she used to wipe off the seats, the wooden seats of the train compartment, and make sure that everything was disinfected and of course my mother taught me never, never to touch anything. As a matter of fact I always wore gloves so that I wouldn't get dirty in public places. And so we sat in this compartment very crowded, and my mother said, "Now, we're going to Paris, and I have a little dictionary here, and you're going to have to be our interpreter." I had one year of French. And I said, "Isn't anyone speaking German in Paris?" And my mother said, "Well, perhaps educated people, but you know I don't think you'd better speak German when we go to Paris. You must not speak German when we go to Paris." I must tell you that in school during French class this same teacher who I know for a fact was definitely a very strong Nazi had impressed us with the fact that French people were just awful. During the war they had done unspeakable horrors to German babies and they always wore black,

they were dirty, they ate frogs and snails, I mean, all of the stereotypes of French people in Germany, okay. And so here I sat in the train, a very proper little German-bred little girl. My father had spent some money, insisted that I had new clothes and a new wardrobe, in this absolutely filthy train where people spat on the floor. I mean, I'd never seen anything like that, going to Paris. And my world literally collapsed around me and I knew now that I would never hear German again. I just, I had a feeling I'm leaving. It wasn't my country, but it's my language, and it was my adopted language. And this, to me, was terrible. I really cried.

SIGRIST: How long of a train ride was it?

SCHUELER: Uh, I think maybe, I really don't know. I imagine twenty hours at least.

SIGRIST: A long time.

SCHUELER: Yes. It was a long time. I'm sure it was.

SIGRIST: So you had to sleep sitting?

SCHUELER: Oh, yes. I slept, oh, yes. I loved, that's the part of the train I liked. It was overnight. Of course, my place was always where the baggage rack is, and in those days they either had a net for the baggage rack. And I remember that I slept on that baggage rack. That I liked, that I liked. Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: When you were riding in the train, whom were you sitting with?

SCHUELER: With my mother.

SIGRIST: Your mother, and then your father was...

SCHUELER: I can't remember my father and my brother. I think maybe, I just can't remember any more. They might have gone before us. I can't remember any more. Maybe they had gone ahead of us.

SIGRIST: Were there people waiting for you in Paris?

SCHUELER: Yes, I'm sure. Yes, I'm sure. Maybe my father was there waiting for us.

SIGRIST: And the other question I wanted to ask you was did you take food with you onto the train that you...

SCHUELER: Oh, yes. We always took food. Of course on the train in those days you always took like picnic food. And I can't remember what it was. I imagine boiled eggs or sandwiches or something. Yes, we always did.

SIGRIST: What a culture shock, though, for you.

SCHUELER: Well, it was a terrible culture shock for me, because we arrived in Paris and the first word, even on the train, was not one word of German. And, of course, that was a terrible shock. But then having grown up with these stereotypes of what French people are like in Germany, and now being faced with the fact that I was not to speak German. From the station in Paris we were taken to a little hotel in the Latin Quarter, which I'm sure now you would find very, very charming. It was Rue Cardinal (?) in back of the Odeon. But to me it wasn't charming. It was the dirtiest, greyest, most ghastly little street going up with big paving stones. And the hotel, I mean, after the way I was raised, we had one room to share. The bathroom was on the next floor. I was scared to death to go there by myself. And my

mother sent me out to get bread in the morning, and I had to go down the street into this pastry shop, bread shop. And the counter was this high. (she gestures) I mean, I couldn't see anything. I knew how to spell bread in French, but I didn't know how to pronounce it very well. It was agony. And everyone stared at me because I was not dressed the way little French girls should be dressed. I walked like a German child. You could tell the gestures, the difference. Now we have a global village, you can't tell any more. But I walked, and my gestures were just like a little German girl, and my clothes were not French. And I must have been very straight and didn't smile and looked rather sad. And the French reaction was that if you saw a little girl who looked rather miserable you smiled at her and you immediately hugged her. In Germany you don't hug little children when you don't know them, and I was petrified. So (she laughs)...

SIGRIST: Do you think that you experienced any kind of prejudice while you were there because you were, perhaps, noticeably Germanic to the French?

SCHUELER: Well, I wasn't Germanic, but I had a terrible German accent to begin with. And so I was immediately put into the neighborhood elementary school. And they put me into a lower grade, okay, like maybe third grade instead of sixth. And the teacher tried to be very nice to me. And of course the first thing that happened was that you are put on one of these aprons, not aprons, uh...

SIGRIST: Like a pinafore?

SCHUELER: It's not a pinafore. It's a cover-up, what do you call, like a lab coat.

SIGRIST: A smock?

SCHUELER: A smock, a little smock. So all the little children had little smocks. So I had to put on this little smock. It looked awful. And so I had to sit in a large class, thirty-five, forty children, all these little children. I sat in back of the class. I didn't understand a word of what the teacher was saying. And then there was arithmetic class and I thought, "Good. I can do arithmetic." Well, the division signs are different. In Germany you had two dots to indicate the number that you divide into. In France you had two lines. And then the dividend and the divisor were exchanged. I couldn't do my division. It was terrible. And I cried. And the more I cried the teacher came and hugged me and kissed me on the cheeks and I cried again. It was awful. It was so bad I didn't want to go to school. So my mother did a very good thing. She sent me, this was already in April, okay. So when the summer came she sent me to the country to spend the summer in Orleans, or near Orleans, with a French schoolteacher and principle, okay. And I remember the train ride, not very long, and actually my mother didn't go with me. I went with someone else who accompanied me. And my last question was, "Does this lady speak any German?" And my mother said, "She's a very educated lady. I'm sure that she will speak some German." So I arrived there and I'm picked up by this lady and of course she doesn't speak a word of German. And my French at that time was still very, very deficient. So she takes me to her house and she looks me up and down, looks into my little suitcase and says, "This won't do at all." And she immediately took me shopping and bought French-style things, and a smock that was the uniform smock for her school. And so I spent the summer months there. And she proceeded to teach me how to act like a little French girl, okay. And it was very difficult. She confiscated my one and only German book, The Prince and the Pauper, okay. (she laughs) She took it away. And at dinnertime if I was not able to say, "Please, madam, would you pass me the butter?," I wouldn't get any. I had to use the correct pronunciation and the correct polite formulas. This is how I learned

French. Now, in retrospect, I admire this woman, no way. I think that she probably did this as a volunteer effort. I'm not sure how this was arranged, okay. And I was allowed to sit in the back of the classes. They had some kind of summer school. And so it was just like a two-room school, not a one-room schoolhouse but a two-room schoolhouse. It had little outhouses. There was no running water in that place. And I sat in the back and watched all these little children go through their lessons and diligently copied everything on the blackboard. And my greatest joy was after they left at four o'clock, I was given a package of colored chalks and I could draw on the blackboard. That's how I learned French. In those three months I became fairly fluent in French, and somehow I knew intuitively that it was of the utmost importance that I not have a trace of German accent. It really was important. And so that broke the ice. And of course I got over these horrible stereotypes that I had carried with me, you know.

SIGRIST: Which you were expecting to find.

SCHUELER: Which I was expecting to find, which I did find, because all these ladies wore black, they did. In those days an older woman in France wore black, black stockings, black everything. And, for example, at night, you had to be boarded into bed. In other words, you laid down, and the grown-up would come and pull the blankets real tight and put them under the mattress so you couldn't turn around. You had to sleep on your back. And there was no bathroom. You bathed in a little, not a bucket, kind of a flat basin, you know, with water in it, and took kind of a sponge out. And then this outhouse. I wasn't used to that. I was living in very modern circumstances with electricity and vacuum cleaners and, you know, electric irons and all the rest. We even had, you know, gas stoves. Uh-uh. This was the countryside in Paris.

SIGRIST: Thrown back to the 19th Century.

SCHUELER: That's right.

SIGRIST: So this was a turning point, then, for you.

SCHUELER: This was the turning point. This was the turning point.

SIGRIST: What are your parents doing in Paris?

SCHUELER: Well, my parents had a very, very tough time. First of all, my mother could not practice at all.

SIGRIST: Why was that?

SCHUELER: Because of the French laws. My father, of course, lost every opportunity to write or to do his editing work that he had done in Berlin. He tried to sell insurance. My parents literally didn't have a cent, and the only person in the family who worked was my brother who, at one time, sold rugs, and then got a job as circulation manager of the German newspaper in Paris, okay. So I'm not really sure what we lived, what money we lived from. But I know, I felt it because the entire period that we were in Paris I don't think I ever got any kind of new clothes. My mother inherited clothes that were donated to her, and then she remade them. She was a very good seamstress. She would get a suit and turn it over and dye it, make a new suit out of it or something like that. So this was a terrible come-down, because obviously in Berlin we had lived a rather upper class life among intellectuals. My father was among the intellectual class. But here in Paris, although their friends were the same because the entire group had moved to Paris, materially, of course, uh-uh, we couldn't do that. And so we

moved, from this hotel we moved to another place, and then eventually we took an apartment on the outskirts of Paris across the street from a very, very fine secondary school where I went to school for one year when I was ten to eleven. And...

SCHUELER: Can you remember any personality changes in your parents under this, under these circumstances? Did they act any differently in Paris than they had in Berlin?

SCHUELER: No, no. My parents were really part of this group, and they were professional exiles and refugees. They still were hoping that maybe the Communist regime would be turned around in Russia and that they could go back, okay.

SIGRIST: This was what they were always hoping for.

SCHUELER: That's always what they were hoping for, okay. So, not really, except I knew that times were very, very rough. And, of course, at that time also we received many refugees from Europe, people who had escaped from concentration camps in Austria and Germany. People from Czechoslovakia and Poland. I remember one writer who came from Siberia. He had walked all the way. I don't know how he escaped. He wrote a book about it. People from Yugoslavia, from Hungary. And every one of these people had a tale of horror to tell. So that my life and friends, adolescence, was a double life. School was my refuge, it was my home, and I was a good student. So it took me a year to really learn French. It took me two years to really be literate in French and to use French as my language, and I moved to another school, a girl's school. And so in school, which was from eight to four, I led a perfectly normal school life, except I couldn't participate in the social activities of my French schoolmates, okay.

And then I went home and I listened to all of this commotion. I mean, our dinner talk was very much like TV, you know. Who got hanged, who got executed, who got tortured, who got out, who was disappeared, who was kidnapped. And you had the Spanish War. A lot of the younger people who were older than I belonged to the generation who joined the Foreign Legion in Spain, and so we got all of the stories about what went on in Spain, and this is what I grew up with as an adolescent. So as I grew up among my friends, among the group, okay, some of whom had also, were Russian, and some were Polish and some were German, we continued to see each other. And so when we were about fourteen, fifteen, some of these young people started to talk about America. And I remember one of my friends had a short-wave radio, and we listened to American jazz, jazz, in those days, American music. And so we got news.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE
BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SCHUELER: And so we got news. And, of course, some of the people in the group had also very close connections with America, okay. And they went back and forth to the states, to London. And so we got news of what was going on, and we discussed going to America.

SIGRIST: What did America, what ideas did you have about America, other than the music?

SCHUELER: Well, of course most of our ideas about America came from reading the German author Karl May, I believe his name is, who wrote all those Indian stories. And, of course, we grew up with that. We grew up with Cooper,

who wrote all of the Indian stories. And also Jules Verne had written a book about America. And, of course, we saw the movies, okay. My favorite actor was Cooper, and when I came to the states and realized Cooper spoke American and not French I was very disappointed. (she laughs) But, so we grew up with Hollywood and all of those fancy Wild West tales. I must say that I myself did not go for that. I myself was a pretty sophisticated young lady, or thought I was. And I thought, oh, Hollywood is for the birds. That's all exaggerated. The Wild West doesn't exist any more, you know. And, let's face it, not everyone is a millionaire in America. I mean, you've got to work pretty hard. And by that time I had not only gotten over the stereotype of the French people from the German point of view, but I had really fallen in love with Paris. I was now a young Parisian lady, okay. And once you fall in love with Paris it's pretty difficult to leave Paris, you know. So I had done everything in France. I had walked in Paris from one end to the other. I'd seen all the museums on a regular basis, the theater, you know, everything, literature, and so on. And to leave and to go to America where all these things would not be appreciated would be very difficult. So I was not as optimistic as my friends were, but they were very optimistic. They thought in America, of course, they were boys, they were going to do great things and so on.

SIGRIST: How about your parents? How did they feel about America?

SCHUELER: My father felt extremely positive. My father had always wanted to go to America in the first place, okay. But at the time there was no money or no connections, I'm not sure. Anyway, he could only make it to Berlin, okay. So my father was very, very positive. To him, America was a dream.

SIGRIST: But your mother was...

SCHUELER: My mother, my mother, I had a feeling never really had wanted to leave Russia. She was always very homesick for her family, and she was never politically involved. She only left because of my father.

SIGRIST: Tell me about that process, the process of getting ready to go and what you had to go through getting your papers.

SCHUELER: As I recall, beginning when I was about fifteen, my friends who were also in the same age group started to talk about America as a fairly realistic sort of thing, you know.

SIGRIST: 1938?

SCHUELER: So '37, '38, yes. They started, and this had nothing to do with the war, because the war wasn't there yet, okay. It was just an idea. You see, the point is that you couldn't really very easily become French. And also in France, even as a foreign resident, and we had residents papers, but we had to go to the police station all the time to get them renewed. We were exiles in France. We had refugee status. And the only reason we were tolerated was that we had no other place to go. It was a very precarious situation. The French could not send us anywhere because we could not be repatriated anywhere, okay. So they had to keep us there. But we had no work permit. It was a very, very precarious situation. For example, if I wanted to exercise a profession in France, I could not do that, okay.

SIGRIST: This was the same problem your mother had.

SCHUELER: Exactly. Okay. So for that reason, I think, for an economic reason, not necessarily political reason, my young friends decided that maybe America would be the only place to go, okay. And they were kind of

looking forward. Some of them were learning English. Well, I was also learning English in school, okay. So, well, in the meantime, the war happened. I'm sorry I'm keeping you too long.

SIGRIST: Oh, no. That's quite all right. (break in tape) We are now resuming the interview with Julia Schueler. Please, continue telling me about the whole snowballing effect of getting ready to go to America.

SCHUELER: Right. So I would say it really started with imagining what it would be like to live in the United States. And so we started increasingly to listen to the radio from America, and especially to listen to people who came from America, okay, what they had to say. And to watch movies. Of course, most of the movies were American. So we watched very carefully. We watched the cars, we watched the clothes, we watched the apartments. I was very much impressed by how beautiful the waitresses were dressed, and just people who did ordinary work, like a salesgirl and so on. So that, to me, seemed to be true, that that was really quite a rich country.

SIGRIST: So you're studying these films. That's interesting.

SCHUELER: Oh, yes! (she laughs) They were watched very carefully. And, so life went on. I was really very, very busy in school. I worked very hard. And of course the situation in Europe started to deteriorate, okay. '38 was the *Anschluss* [union] with Austria. My mother had a younger sister who had left Russia in '29 and married an Austrian and lived in Vienna. And at the occasion of the *Anschluss* her husband sent her and her little boy out and they left and had to cross the Alps on foot across the border to Switzerland. And she arrived unannounced in the middle of the night in Paris. I remember my aunt and my cousin arriving. And we had a two-room apartment. This two-room apartment in Paris at one time there were

seven or eight people in it. I used to sleep on the floor a month at a time. So my aunt came, my cousin came, eventually her husband came. And it wasn't just my aunt. There were many other people who came from Austria and people from Czechoslovakia and so on. And things really started to get from bad to worse. So in '39 we had Chamberlain going to Munich, okay. I must confess that I personally was very much relieved. I thought that he had done the right thing if we were going to have peace and not war. But I was mistaken. I remember with this favorite aunt going to the movies and seeing in, either at the end of '38 or the beginning of '39, the Wells, H, was it H. G. Wells movie, what was it called. The War Between...

SIGRIST: Oh, The War Between The Worlds.

SCHUELER: The War Between The Worlds, The War Between The Worlds. And we went into the movie, and as we came out it was very eerie because, of course, the movie was full of sirens. And when we went out we realized the sirens weren't in the movies. There were sirens in Paris. That was really eerie. Because at that time they were rehearsing the alarm systems, okay, for bomb alerts. And so we were issued gas masks and we had to go through these bomb alert practice, okay. This was before the war actually happened, I believe. Well, then, in the summer of '39 we went up to the North Sea near Boulogne, north of France. And we had a little guest. I had a British guest from England, an exchange student. I had spent the previous summer in England, so this young lady stayed with us. And we were about sixteen, going on seventeen. And I remember going with her to town. We were a little bit outside of the town. And people were all assembled in front of a store listening to the radio. And on the radio was Hitler, and that's how I heard the news of the invasion of Poland. And I believe this was the first of August, '39, if I'm not mistaken. So my friend

was extremely concerned. She was very, very upset. We rushed home. I can't remember if we had to take the bus or whether we were on a bicycle, how we got home. We got back to our house and she immediately sent a telegram and she demanded that I take her to the port so that she could sail home. She packed her bags. She went home the next morning. And so we all sat and everyone just waited to see what was happening. And, of course, there was a general call to arms in France, which meant that from every corner of France every single man who was in the reserves had to pack up and go to the ports to be drawn into the army. And we immediately packed and went back to Paris. So then we didn't know what was going to happen, okay. This was, no one knew what was going to happen. At that time you felt the Germans were going to immediately start the Blitzkrieg. They were immediately going to start bombing and invade. And then, of course, nothing happened for nine months. The phony war, okay. So I, but what did happen is that instead of going back to my school in Paris, the high school, my mother told me that I was going to be evacuated and transferred to another school further south to Angier, which is on the Loire just to be on the safe side. Now, that's all she told me. I understood that they were evacuating children from Paris because of the danger of the bombardments. So my mother went with me to Angers and we found a French family where I could board, because she had to go back to Paris, and that's where I spent the last year in France during the phony war.

SIGRIST: You were there for a whole year.

SCHUELER: The whole academic year, okay.

SIGRIST: The academic year.

SCHUELER: The academic year.

SIGRIST: Did you have any communication with your parents during that time?

SCHUELER: Yes, of course. And, of course, I should say that my brother had done his military service in the French army from '37 to '39 and then in '39 when he was going to be mustered out, the war started. He immediately had to join again, okay. So my brother was in the French army in the motorcycle division, and he was immediately sent to the Maginot line. Now, while he was in service in the summer of '39 I remember that my, or maybe a little earlier, I remember my mother got a telegram that he had had an accident on a motorcycle, a very serious accident, and had broken his back. And I remember my mother was in a terrible state. And she went to the hospital and he was in a cast for three months, and miraculously his spinal cord was not injured and he recovered. He recovered so well that they just gave him a furlough and he went right back into the army. So I was then in Angers and, of course, those were hard times because no one knew what was going to happen during this phony war. And (she pauses), things happened pretty fast, okay. We are getting to the period when the Germans crossed Belgium and invaded the north of France. We watched the news. Of course, we listened to the radio all the time. And within three days, and I can't remember the exact date. I really need to look it up. Was it the fifteenth of June that Paris was occupied, I'm not sure. But three days before the occupation of Paris about ten million Frenchmen hit the road from the north, from Alsace. And all these Frenchmen passed through the town of Angers, so that the town was bought dry. That means there was nothing left in the stores, there was no gas left in the pumps, in the gasoline tanks, okay, anywhere. And people just simply closed the town. That is, that they closed the shutters. I remember we couldn't go to school because they used the gym for wounded. We had then trains that

came from the front, and those were the only times that they really fought, okay, but they did have some wounded, and they used the gym for the wounded. That's the only time when I saw refugees. I mean, I saw people, like a woman carrying a dead child. People on the road. So the town was invaded by all these thousands of people who then went out again, who hit the road in trucks and buses and by train, on foot, by, on bicycle, or whatever. And after they had already left, suddenly my mother arrived on the last train from Paris that she had gotten onto, okay. It was the last chance to leave Paris at the time when the Germans now were rounding up every political suspect person and every Jewish person, and every alien. And, of course, the French had put all the German and Austrian aliens into camps, which my uncle, who was Austrian, was now in a camp. Well, of course, he brought news of everyone who was rounded up and who was now in camp. And then I realized that if we had been in Paris that would have been the end. Because, of course, we had known about the gas chambers very early on in '35. You know, it wasn't anything new. So my mother arrived in the afternoon, I guess, the third day, when everything was empty. And I said, "Mother, we are not going to stay here." No, that's not, that's the wrong sequence. The evening, before she arrived at noon of that day, there was a knock on the door in this house, which was near the railroad tracks, and the lady of the house said, "Julia, there is someone to see you." So I go to the door and there's a young man whom I knew quite well in Paris on a bicycle. And he looked very white and very pale. He said, "Julia, I have ridden my bicycle all the way from Paris, and you can't stay here. You've got to go with me. I can't leave you here, because we don't know what's going to happen, and if they catch us it's the end. So all I have to offer you is my bicycle. If you'll sit in front you can go with me and we'll just go south." And I looked at him and I said, "Well, that's very nice of you, but I'm not going with you on the bicycle." And he said, "Where are you going, Julia?" And I said, "I'm going to America." Okay,

that's why I remember that now. You see, that's the first time that I said out loud and vocalized, "I'm going to America." And I knew that was the only issue, the only exit possible. And so he left. So then my mother came that afternoon, okay. And we had dinner about six, and the sirens did not sound any more. They just didn't bother sounding the sirens. But we could hear the planes, you know, and we were very adept at counting the time between the time that we heard the engine of the plane and the time that the bombs exploded, so we knew how much time we had. So, at any rate, my mother said, "Let's go in the cellar." Because we could hear these planes, and they were bombing the railroad tracks. And, of course, we were there eating dessert. And, you know, family dinners in France are really sacrosanct. You don't leave the dinner table. My mother literally had to push the family down the stairs. So we all were pushed down the stairs into the cellar, and then it sounded like the whole house was going to blow off, but it didn't. Just the windows blew out. And so we get up again, and my room was on the second floor, and of course the stairs were full of glass, and that's when I said to my mother, "I'm not going to stay here. We're going to have to leave." And my mother said, "How are we going to leave?" I said, "We are going to get a bike. So let's go up and pack, and we're going to go out and get a bike and just bicycle up." So we did that. I got my umbrella. I took my Latin-French dictionary for some reason. I took my notes. We had our papers, of course. My mother had a little money. And I packed my little bag, and then I said, "Let's go get a bicycle." Now it was almost dark, and we crossed the square in front of the house, which was very dangerous, because it was full of holes from, there were craters of a bomb or something. And then we crossed that square and went down the street and I had no idea where we were going to get a bicycle. We were just going to take a bicycle. You know, when you are, when you have your back against the wall you just do anything. So here I was searching for a bicycle and kind of looking into hallways or, you know, carriageways.

And I can hear these voices of two ladies drifting towards me, and one voice said, "I'm sorry, we just can't go." And the other lady says, "Why can't you go?" And she says, "I just can't go. Look, he walked all the way from the front and his feet are just one bloody mess. There's no way we can go." So I walked toward these voices, and I said, "Excuse me, madam, but where is it that he can't go?" And she said, "Well, we were going to go south. At three o'clock the milk truck is going to stop here and the milkman said he would take us and cross the bridge and go south." And I said to her, "Would you mind if we take your place, my mother and I?" She said, "Help yourself. Just be here." So I said, "Mom, that's what we are going to do. We're going to go walk back, and at three they're going to be here, two-thirty or whatever, and we're going to get on that truck." And that's exactly what we did. So we walked back and we made sure we had everything, and that's how we got out of Angers.

SIGRIST: Where did you go to?

SCHUELER: So, uh, well, we didn't know where we were going. We just wanted to get out. We just wanted to get south. So we stood there, two-thirty, and this was a little pickup truck, an open pickup truck, okay. And they were already people in it. They were sitting, they're like sardines. Like there were ten people sitting like this and ten people there, and we all had our legs like that. So my mother and I just crawled up in there and sat down, too. And so we crossed the bridge, or the bridges, because the Loire has about three arms there. And as we got to the bridge there was a really scary moment because we saw some soldiers, and they were wearing some kind of grey uniforms. It didn't look like French uniforms to me. And, of course, a soldier comes on to the driver, and here we are. Because, you know, as resident aliens we needed to have kind of a visa to go from one town to another which we didn't have. So I was kind of scared, and I

had told my mother, who spoke French but not very well, to please not open her mouth, not to say a word, okay. So there I sat very tense, and I heard the soldier tell the driver, okay. We give you five minutes, something like that. We give you five minutes, something like that, to cross the bridge before we explode it. So we crossed the bridge, and as we got on the other side we could hear the watchtower on the entrance of the bridge going up into the air. It was quite a sight. And so everyone just breathed a sigh of relief and looked at each other. Some people lit up a cigarette. And we drove, and we, all night. And the roads were already deserted because all these ten million people had preceded us. But on the side of the roads there were just lots of cars that had run out of gas or had had accidents or so. So we got to Bordeaux. The next morning we got to Bordeaux. Of course, we had no idea what was going to happen. No one knew whether the Germans were going to stop, whether they were going to go all the way to Bordeaux or not. Before we left Angers the last news we had heard was from the mayor of the town announcing that he was going to hand over the keys of the city at four in the morning. So, you see, this is why it was absolutely essential that my mother and I left. Okay, we just made it before four. So we got to Bordeaux, went to the railroad station, and that is when my mother sat down next to me. We sat on the floor with our little bags, and she proceeded to tell me about the Russian trains. And what it was was exactly what happened in Dr. Zhivago. And I must say that many of my mother's experiences were very parallel to what you had in Dr. Zhivago, okay. And she didn't want to get on the train." She said, "You know those trains in Russia? They were so crowded. You know that people threw women and babies off the train? I don't want to get on that train. She didn't. Maybe she had hysterics. I don't know what happened. But I was seventeen, and here was my mother, who was such an authoritarian figure for me all my life, and suddenly the roles were reversed. I had to get on that train. I didn't care. And, of course, the

announcements over the loudspeaker came, "Please do not board the train. There are no trains going anywhere. Stay where you are." And I said, "I don't care. The next train in that direction we are getting on. I don't care how crowded it is. We are not going to stay here." And so when the next train came, which was after several hours, I just took my mother by her hand, and we just got on that train. And it was just like she had told me. That train was so crowded people were hanging out the windows, they were sitting on the roof. It was so crowded that I had to stand on one foot. There wasn't enough room to put the other foot down. But on the train it was like a release. Everyone started laughing, you know. People made jokes. It was, you know, the tension just suddenly gave way. And we were going from Bordeaux to Toulouse. Yeah, I remember that train ride very well. So we got in Toulouse. And when we got in Toulouse we went to the, we got out of the train station, and I think the central market must have been not very far from the train station, and we found out that some of the other people of the group had preceded us, so there were a lot of our acquaintances already in Toulouse, okay. So we spent three months there in Toulouse basically waiting for an American visa, this emergency visa.

SIGRIST: Where was your father during all of this?

SCHUELER: He also joined us in Toulouse.

SIGRIST: Oh, so he was there.

SCHUELER: Oh, yes. He also...

SIGRIST: And your brother, too.

SCHUELER: Now, either, okay. My brother was in the army and, okay. I should add that before we left Angers that same afternoon when my mother had gotten there, we went to the post office to check if there was anything in General Delivery. And there was a card from my brother addressed to me which said, "Hospital train south." That's all. "Hospital train south. I'm going on the hospital train south." So that's all we knew. So once we got to Toulouse, my mother systematically made the rounds of every military hospital, and she found my brother. So then he got out of the hospital and joined us. (she laughs) And then he joined us and, of course, he was the big military hero. Now, here's my brother with a French army outfit with an arm in a sling, with a cane, you know, limping. Very much the veteran. I mean, not only the veteran, but one of the few French soldiers who actually saw action on the Maginot line and had been wounded, you know. And so he went with us and we were apartment hunting. And, of course, Toulouse was run over with refugees, and Toulouse was a lovely little town with red roofs. And the people there had not had any kind of experience of the war. I mean, for them the war was something on the radio and in the papers, and it was something that they experienced because there were so many displaced people from the northern part of France, okay. So they were not necessarily very kind to these refugees that were descending on them. And as a result of the Germans exporting all the food to the north and to Germany, there was a shortage of food in the city. I mean, there really was a very severe shortage of food. So we went apartment hunting, apartment hunting, or room hunting. And finally we added, we just answered ads, and we found this little room. And in the courtyard I saw a cage with two rabbits in it. And I told my mother, I said, "Mother, I don't care what that room is like, there are two rabbits in there. If there are two rabbits, we are not going to starve." And we took that room. And it was a small room. It was about like this, smaller than that, where the doors, about like that, maybe. And it had a little lock. So all four

of us lived in that little room with the cage of rabbits. And those rabbits literally saved our lives, because we had rabbit stew about three times during three months. It's about the only meat we ate in three months. I lost weight. I could afford to lost a little weight. And my job was to stand in line for potatoes every day. So we ate tomatoes and peaches for summer, which I loved dearly, but not every day morning, noon and night. And absolutely no milk, no coffee, no tea, no fat, no bacon, no meat of any kind, no eggs, no chicken, no fish.

SIGRIST: You were lucky you had what you had.

SCHUELER: No butter, no sugar. You went to the store and instead of advertising that they were selling, they had a whole list of things that they didn't have, you see.

SIGRIST: In our last half an hour, because we have half an hour left, why don't you get yourself to America from Toulouse.

SCHUELER: Okay. Now I'll make the transition from this food that we didn't have. So, of course, I found all my friends, okay. All my friends, and we got together regularly, and you know what our pastime was? Our first meal in America. This became a tradition. We would meet and we would get together and we would chat, and so we would start this game, our first meal in America. And every one had his turn at describing his first meal in America. And then the boys would literally fight. I mean, I was afraid they were going to kill each other. Because one of them would say this kind of a sauce and the other one would say, "No, you can't do that. You can't put this sauce on that kind of thing." I mean, they were talking about imaginary meals, you see? So this is what we did. Every day we got together and talked about the first meal in America, what we were going to eat. And, (she

laughs) okay, that's the transition. And, of course, we waited all the time to get these visas, okay. Because one of the women of the group was kind of a delegate, and I believe she knew Mrs. Roosevelt. I'm not sure just exactly of the political ins and outs. Anyway, they passed a bill in Congress to establish this emergency visa for political refugees. And so one day she came back from America. I remember a party, because she wore a very elegant little black dress. You know the little black dress people wore then? And it had a zipper. That's the first time I saw a big zipper, a zipper in the back. And everyone had to go around. She made the rounds of the party. Everyone had to examine how the zipper zipped up and down. That was America for me, the zipper, okay. And so I just, (she laughs). So, anyway, the announcement came that the visas were in, so now we had to pack and go to Marseille to see the consul, the American consul, and pick up our visas.

SIGRIST: Did you do that en masse? Did everyone go?

SCHUELER: Uh, I think almost everyone went. I remember I went with my family. My father, my mother and my brother. We all went to Marseille. We stayed in Marseille just long enough to pick up the visa. I can't remember if it was a week or two weeks. And then, of course, the difficulty was to arrange the trip through Spain and Portugal.

SIGRIST: So you couldn't leave from Marseille?

SCHUELER: No. We had to leave through Spain and Portugal. Now, my mother, my father and myself, that was perfectly okay. We had our exit visas from France. We had immigration visas, not immigration visas, the refugee visa to America, so our papers were perfectly in order. But my brother, he was in the French army, and so he had no permission to exit France. And so

for him this was very difficult, okay. And he went with us on the train from Marseille, but he had to jump the train before we got to the border.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO
BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

SCHUELER: And they had a kind of an underground escape route through Spain for people in a similar position, okay. And so I don't think he went by himself. He went with a group of people, and there was a certain way to get across. I'm not sure how. But it took him a long time to get through Spain, okay, and it was very dangerous. Because if they were caught they would land in Franco's prison in Spain and eventually back to Germany. So that was kind of a little bit scary. But my father and my mother and I, we just took the train. And, of course, it took a long time, because the trains didn't connect, okay, all the way through Spain. Spain, to me, was as traumatic an experience as that train from Berlin to Paris because, to me, these were the worst ruins I'd ever seen in my life. Spain literally was in ruins from the Civil War. Now, from the train we stopped at stations where there was not a house standing. There was nothing but rubble. And the poverty was something indescribable to me. I'd never seen it. I saw children, you know, without legs, without arms, playing in the rubble. I saw people who were starving, literally starving. I remember in our compartment there was a pregnant woman who really was, she was a lady maybe in her eighth month. She was very ill, and there wasn't any milk anywhere, she complained. Then, yes, food. Of course, we had prepared our food in Marseille. All of our friends had gone to literally scavenger hunts to get enough eggs together or bread together or something. So we ended up with a loaf of white bread which was the first white bread I had seen in

three months, because there wasn't any in Toulouse. We had this loaf of French white bread and we had a couple of eggs. And I remember in the compartment sitting with my mother, and we were getting ready to cut a piece of that white bread, and suddenly we see all these people in the door of the compartment staring at us. And I look up, and someone translates from me from Spanish and says they want to know what this is, where you got it. And I said, "Well, this is white bread from Marseille." And someone translated and said, "You know they haven't had any white bread in years." And I literally could not eat. I mean, that was my first meeting with Franco's Spain. I couldn't eat. Because what could you do with this loaf of bread? If you divided it up there would be this much for each person. I couldn't eat. And so this was it. Then every time we stopped there was nothing but rubble. I mean, there was a sign of the name of the village and nothing there. Then we got to Barcelona, eventually. There were people lying on the street who were too weak to get up. So we were in a hotel. We'd sit down for a cup of coffee. And, you know, they would put a cube of sugar on the side. Each time that happened there were maybe twenty little street urchins who were gathering around for that one lump of sugar, so I couldn't eat. I was really in a state of shock. And some of my other young friends, they had a fun time. Because, of course, the Spanish boys were very attractive and they'd dance. You know, after dinner you went for a walk, you know, all over town. They had a great time. I couldn't. No, I don't know whether that was my personality or what, but I just couldn't.

SIGRIST: How long did you have to be in Spain?

SCHUELER: It took over a week, maybe eight days. Because, as I said, each train did not connect with the next, so we always had to stay overnight. And I don't know why we had to stay in Barcelona a few days. And I remember in

Barcelona they advertised a visit of the prisons of all things. I mean, weird. I had people approach me, and someone asked me to put a stamp and mail a letter for him to America, and I didn't understand why. And then I saw him put the Franco stamp upside down on the letter and he said, "Now you mail it. I can't."

SIGRIST: Hmm.

SCHUELER: You know, things like that.

SIGRIST: Did you go and, did you go on to Lisbon?

SCHUELER: Then we went to Lisbon. And so Lisbon was lit up bright. There was peace. I mean, there was no war. And my mother, of course, being a physician, told everyone else, "Now, look, be careful. Don't overeat. Now, you have not eaten for three months. I mean, your stomachs are very small. You just take it easy. I mean, have some bouillon, have some soup." And, of course, what did we all do? We ate. And for one week everyone was sick like a dog. We all went around, we were sick, sick, sick, but we ate. It was glorious. For three weeks we stayed in Lisbon and it was like a vacation. We stayed in a nice, lovely hotel, there were beautiful avenues, we went to the zoo. All we did was just hang around, you know, like young people do. And we talked about America and we tried to practice our English, you see.

SIGRIST: So it's in Lisbon you got the boat.

SCHUELER: In Lisbon we got the boat, and it probably was the junkiest boat. We were on the Wayford, okay. It was a boat that pre-dated World War One. I think a Greek boat. I don't know if it was flying under the British flag or not, but

we were escorted by German submarines, apparently. It was a very, very old boat. We were in third class, which meant we were way down there, you know, like six bunks. It was a crowded boat. I mean, you had to walk over people's legs on the deck, but it was a fun boat. There were all these groups from every part of Europe, from Czechoslovakia, from Hungary, from Austria, from Germany, from Poland, from, you know, all these overrun countries. And each group was trying to learn as much English as they could, and each group was dancing and playing music and talking, and it was just marvelous. And we were on that boat for a long time. The regular crossing was maybe a week. We were on that boat much longer. I can't remember how much. And I must add this story, because that's really fun. Among our group were two of our young friends who were pregnant, two young ladies. One of the young lady's husband was with her, but the other young lady's friend had been recruited in the French army and had gotten lost so she was by herself. But these two young ladies were due to deliver within the week, and it was absolutely paramount that these babies would be born American citizens. So they were not allowed to move. They were like nineteen and twenty years old. They were literally carried. They were put in chaise lounges. People carried food to them. It was like the whole ship adopted them. They were not allowed to move. I mean, those babies absolutely had to wait to be born in America, you see. I mean, this was the mood of the ship. And we also had a Christian Science lady who gave lessons in American English and what to do on arrival in New York, who showed us a nickel, and what to do with a nickel, and how the subway worked and everything in New York. It was very, very good. It was well done. So everyone was very busy taking lessons, practicing English, dancing and playing music and discussing what they were going to do.

SIGRIST: Talk about where you actually stayed in the boat. You said you were in third class. Can you just describe what that was like?

SCHUELER: Well, yeah. It was now, what would you call, the gang way, a hall like that. And our cabin was maybe this big, and it had one-two-three, one-two-three bunks in there, I guess. And then we did, there were showers, you know, but we had to go down the hall, okay. And then I discovered they had marvelous pastry in first class. Someone told me about this marvelous pastry and, of course, I liked pastry. And so I went to the kitchens once to ask for some of the pastry, and that was not a very, that was not the thing to do, I found out. But the deck, there was nothing on the deck. There were just some deck chairs. And, as I said, it was very, very crowded. People would just sit very informally on the floor, you know. And, of course, we didn't have very warm clothes. We had, my mother, in Toulouse, she had already shopped for remnants, you know, and things that she got and she had made some clothes. I had two blouses and had a blue skirt and had another skirt, and I had some sandals, and I, maybe I even had a sweater, I'm not sure. But that's really just about all. We basically all had one change of clothes.

SIGRIST: What month is it that you left?

SCHUELER: Well, Lisbon it was in October. It was maybe the first of October, and we arrived the 12th, okay. So we left when it was beautiful in Lisbon. It was warm. The weather was ideal, I mean, just like here now, okay. And then we arrived, of course, we were all very excited, and we all run up on the deck wrapped in our blankets. We really looked like refugees, wrapped in our bunk blankets, which were kind of a khaki sort of thing. And there was the Statue of Liberty that we sailed by, and there was Ellis Island. And then we got off the boat, and the first thing, there were tables there with coats.

SIGRIST: You got off the boat...

SCHUELER: Right in front there.

SIGRIST: You mean, here at Ellis?

SCHUELER: I remember Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Oh. Describe, yeah. Tell me about Ellis Island, then, then, because you ended up being here for a certain amount of time.

SCHUELER: Yeah, right. But the boat must have docked here because I kind of recognized the spaces. And before we went in there, I think they had tables with coats. Now, they had people from this organization to meet us. The same organization that had arranged for the visas and everything else.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the organization?

SCHUELER: I'm sorry, I don't. Okay. So then, and they also gave us money because otherwise we would be arrested as vagrants, okay. I think we got something like maybe each person got five dollars so they wouldn't be arrested as vagrants, and my family got maybe twenty-five dollars for the first month, or something like that. But there were the tables with coats. I remember that, because I was freezing. I mean, I was not about to go to New York wrapped in a blanket, okay. So I looked at the coats and I remember I picked a green coat, a green winter coat, so I was warm enough. Then there was this thing about the restroom, and I couldn't find a towel to dry my hands. You know, in Europe they always have these things where the towel winds down or something like that. And I looked

around, and here were these ladies in fur coats, I mean, just like in the movies, okay. And I did learn some English. I had spent two summers in England so I did, I mean, I didn't speak it as fluently as I did now, but I could communicate. So she explained to me how to push the button and dry my hands under this hot air. So that was my acquaintance with America, okay. The fur coat and the hot air dryer.

SIGRIST: Were there lots of people at Ellis Island?

SCHUELER: Yes. There were crowds and crowds, but it was pretty well-organized, okay. Whoever met us must have taken care of the formalities because we didn't spend very much time here, okay.

SIGRIST: About how long were you here for?

SCHUELER: Maybe two hours all together, or three hours. It wasn't really very long.

SIGRIST: I wanted to ask you a question earlier. What do you think is going through your father's mind through this whole immigration process? You know, what do...

SCHUELER: Oh, my father was absolutely enthralled. He was the happiest person alive to come to America. Because for my father that had always been a dream, okay. Now, for him the American dream was very real. And I must tell you that for me the American dream was very real, too. And I can think of so many examples where people have realized the American dream, okay. And it meant freedom to do what you want. It really meant freedom. And I must say that our family really has found it, oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me, you were just at Ellis Island for a little while.

SCHUELER: Just, right. And then immediately, we were immediately taken to this hotel room that someone had the same outfit had reserved for us, and I thought it was like a palace. It was one of these old apartment houses along Riverside, about 103rd Street or something like that. I can't remember. And, of course, it had been converted. It was a big apartment that had been converted into, basically, a boarding house sort of thing. And I remember we had one room about like this, like a small room. That was just, my mother and I and my brother and I. My dad apparently had another one. And I remember how impressed I was. It had maple furniture and the curtains and the bedspreads matched. Everything matched. And then the kitchen was a big kitchen, and there were maybe eight different families in that one apartment. But in the kitchen each family had half a cupboard to themselves. And with our twenty-five dollars we went out and we bought matching dishes at the five and ten. I know which dishes because now they're antiques. People pay a lot of money for that, and they came in different colors. I thought this was absolutely fantastic. And so we shopped for food and we stocked our little cupboard. Of course, we had to share our bath. And immediately everyone started looking for work.

SIGRIST: Talk about something that was really hard to get used to about being in America for that first month or two months, whatever. Was there something that you had a hard time with, or perhaps your mother or father, something that you just...

SCHUELER: Compared to their life in Paris and the war in Europe, I can't think of anything that was hard. Now, of course, you know, American democracy works wonderfully for people who come from the lower end of the scale, okay. Now, for people who come from the upper end of the scale and who have been raised to think that they're a little bit special, it's very difficult,

okay. So they would be considered snobs here, okay. But let's say that someone has been raised, and they have a, you know, two PhD's, they have written books, they're well-known people abroad, they're famous writers or actors or whatever, and they come here and they speak English badly, they don't really have a profession that they can use or apply, and they're being treated just like everyone else. Some of these people reacted badly. They couldn't really take that very well. You see, I would say that is maybe the only thing that some people, not necessarily my parents, had trouble with.

SIGRIST: But perhaps some of their friends.

SCHUELER: Right, uh-huh. Or my mother, for example, who spent most of her life being a physician, took jobs as an orderly, basically. Not even, she couldn't even get a job as a nurse because she did not have the papers for that, okay. But she had to work. She got a job doing an orderly's work, which was very difficult. The difference is that my dad, who had never worked with his hands in his life. My father was someone who literally didn't know how to boil an egg or fix a cup of tea, he got a job in a chemistry laboratory. I mean, just unreal. And he felt very proud, because he earned money, honest money, and it was almost enough to eat, you know.

SIGRIST: But your mother, of course...

SCHUELER: My mother suffered. Because here she had to take orders from people that she considered very ignorant, okay. And she considered a lot that she saw in the hospitals was really pretty awful. She worked in the emergency room at Harlem Hospital. She worked in the emergency room down here, downtown in New York. And the things that she saw are terrible. You

know, we talk a lot now about what's happening in the underclass and so on. My mother saw that in the forties. I remember her coming home and saying it was just terrible. I see twelve-year-old little girls who have been violated by their father and they're forced to have the baby. I mean, I remember, you know, we have drunks. We have all these people that are cut up. Those are all the cases. All the gunshot wounds. In Harlem Hospital they had the police station right next door. But this is later on when she could already, she basically got a job the equivalent of a residency, okay. But she suffered a great deal with that, and having to take orders from people who made a lot mistakes and treated people the way they shouldn't and things like that. She was very impressionable. So she had a hard time.

SIGRIST: In our last few minutes talk about you, and talk about you and talk about...

SCHUELER: Me?

SIGRIST: Yeah. And talk about how you adjusted to America. You obviously seemed to be glad to be here.

SCHUELER: Well, yes. But I didn't like New York. Remember I was very homesick for Paris, and New York is not Paris. So my only thought when I got here was not only, remember I told my boyfriend I was going to America. And when I got to New York I immediately realized this was not America. That if I stayed in New York I would always be with my own friends. I would not speak English. I would continue speaking German and French. I would be caught up in this society of exiles and immigrants. So my only way out was to go west, and this was exactly what I proceeded to do.

SIGRIST: How long did it take you to do that?

SCHUELER: It took me two years because I went, I tried to go to college here, but I was not a resident. Remember, we didn't come in on an immigration visa. We did not have resident status, so I was not eligible to go to a state university, okay. And, besides, we didn't have any money. So I walked at, I worked at all kinds of odd jobs.

SIGRIST: What was the first job you got?

SCHUELER: Oh, wait a minute. I had so many. I ushered in the theater once, then I zipped zippers. I zipped zippers. I had to go all the way to Brooklyn on the subway from the Bronx every day to, oh, maybe no. I'm mixing that up with another job. I zipped zippers, but I did have to take the subway. Until all my ten fingers were raw. I had all my ten fingers bandaged, because I had to pull them through a little zipper machine. Because you know they use the old zippers to make new zippers out of them because of the scarcity of metal during the war, okay.

SIGRIST: The zippers really did mean America to you from the time...

SCHUELER: Oh, yes! Zipper, right, zipper. And I had to carry these big bags of zippers on the subway, okay. I was paid by the piece. I forgot. I earned like maybe eighteen cents an hour, I don't know. Then I made leaves. I worked for a Polish artist who made very fancy little trees with birds sitting on them, ceramic. And my job was to make little leaves out of clay, trays of leaves, I mean, little leaves. I made sixty leaves a minute, I think. Sixty leaves, I counted the leaves. And I figured that there as no future in making leaves. And the lady was very kind to me and said, "Julia, I don't think you're going to make a career out of making leaves. Why don't you try to go to college or get another job?" I was not very business-minded. So I quit

making leaves, and I got another job as a volunteer at the American Jewish Congress being a file clerk. That was very interesting. I had to learn how to type. I typed all the addresses, filed all the correspondence. It was very interesting. And I saw a lot of interesting people there. I worked there about six months, and I learned something about office procedures. I went up with the secretaries and so on. And at that time I really spent all my time basically making applications to go to colleges. I sent out I don't know how many applications, and I got three in the mail. And I was accepted at the University of Oberlin, I think in Ohio, and the University of Montana, I forgot which one, and the University of Boulder in Colorado. And I looked at them, and I said, "Ohio is too close to the east coast. That's not the real America. Montana is west. I don't have enough money to go all the way there. So I guess it's going to be Boulder, Colorado." So that's what I did. I went to Boulder, Colorado.

SIGRIST: When you were in America the first couple of years, and you can actually extend this into when you were in college, did you ever find any prejudice against you because you were an immigrant.

SCHUELER: In America?

SIGRIST: In America.

SCHUELER: No. That's what's the, yes, I guess I did. I shouldn't say no. In New York, no. But I must say I was used to prejudice because in Germany, as I grew older, little, you know, people would remark that I was not German. In France the first few years if I ever mentioned Berlin, little children would think I was German, would literally spit at me. So I had to be very careful about keeping German and Germany under the lid. In America, yes. Because when we were in Boulder and later in Iowa I had trouble getting

an apartment because I'd never lost my German accent. In Boulder I looked kind of like I might be South American and people kind of looked at me a little bit askance sometimes.

SIGRIST: I imagine you were probably quite exotic for people in Boulder.

SCHUELER: Yes. Very exotic, and I acted. So I did have trouble in that way. But this is one reason that I settled in New Orleans eventually. I liked New Orleans very much.

SIGRIST: Which is a very sort of international setting.

SCHUELER: That's right, yes, uh-huh. Yeah.

SIGRIST: I have one final question for you. Now, we've been talking for two hours now.

SCHUELER: I know, I know. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: It's been splendid, and I have one final question for you.

SCHUELER: Okay.

SIGRIST: And that is, it's a two-part question. The first part is how do you think your life would have been different had you not come here?

SCHUELER: I don't think that's a question that's applicable. The only question applicable would have been how would my life have been different if my parents had not left Russia, because there wasn't any choice after that, okay. The question isn't' applicable because if I hadn't gotten out at the

time I did I would be dead. Everyone else who didn't go out would have been dead, okay, and I was very much aware of that. I mean, I am basically a survivor.

SIGRIST: That's the answer to the question. Are you glad that you came here?

SCHUELER: Of course! (she laughs) Yes, of course.

SIGRIST: I had to ask.

SCHUELER: Of course! I mean, I can't imagine any other choice. Of course, in ways, I did. I did find my America, and I married the most American guy imaginable with a German name, and raised an American family.

SIGRIST: So when you look back on your life.

SCHUELER: Yeah, right.

SIGRIST: It was the right thing to do.

SCHUELER: Oh, yes, of course.

SIGRIST: Good. I have to ask that question. (they laugh) Well, I want to thank you very much. I'm glad that, George was the name of the interpretation ranger that brought you up here. I'm very pleased that he brought you up here.

SCHUELER: All right. Well, I hope it helps. I hope I haven't, um, is this the end of the tape?

SIGRIST: Yeah. We're going to be signing off in a second. We're not...

SCHUELER: You mean, this is still on the tape?

SIGRIST: We're still recording, yes. Anyway, this is Paul Sigrist signing off with Julia Schueler on June 18th, 1992.

SCHUELER: Okay.

END OF THE INTERVIEW