

EI-229

MARY NEMETH ECKELT

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PASSAGE ON "THE AQUITANIA"

US: YORKVILLE, NYC

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here today, it's October 16th, 1992 and I'm in Rego Park, New York, at the home of Mary Nemeth Eckelt. She came from Hungary in 1924 when she was nine years old. Well, I'm very happy to be here today and it's a pleasure meeting you and I hope that you can relax and just tell me what you remember.

ECKELT: Well, I'll try. It's nice meeting you, too.

LEVINE: Thank you. Okay. Let's begin by your telling me where you were born.

ECKELT: I was born in Budapest, Hungary.

LEVINE: And your birth date?

ECKELT: February 7, 1913.

LEVINE: And did you live in Budapest for your first nine years, before you came to the United States?

ECKELT: Yes. Only in Budapest, yes.

LEVINE: Where did you live? Do you remember the house you lived in?

ECKELT: Yes, I remember we lived on Komocsi Ootsa, ootsa means street, 55, and it was the outskirts of Budapest, known as Zuglo.

LEVINE: Maybe you could spell some of the words that I'll (she laughs) have trouble with --the name of the street and the name of outskirts.

ECKELT: Komocsi is K-O-M-O-C-S-I and ootsa is street; 55, five five. And the district was seventh district of Budapest and the town was known as Zuglo, Z-U-G-L-O.

LEVINE: Do you remember the house you lived in?

ECKELT: Vaguely, vaguely.

LEVINE: What do you remember about it?

ECKELT: Well, Mother used to tell me that I was weaned under a weeping willow tree (she laughs), and it was very nice. It was mostly like a garden, garden (pauses) not commercialized at all.

LEVINE: Was it a house or an apartment building?

ECKELT: No, it was a house, a private home.

LEVINE: And were your family the only ones living in it?

ECKELT: No, we had, in that house, yes, but we had immediate neighbors around us, yeah. And, incidently, two years ago, I went home for a visit and I looked up the house and the street, also the school where I went to school.

LEVINE: Was it as you remembered?

ECKELT: Yes, except there were marks of bullet holes on the, on the buildings. That was the Nazi invasion --left its mark, yeah.

LEVINE: So, who lived in your house with you? What were your family members?

ECKELT: Oh, my mom and my father, unfortunately only until I was a year old, then he was inducted in the army and he died on the Russian front in 1914.

LEVINE: So he was inducted into the Russian army?

ECKELT: No, no, the Hungarian army, but transported to Russia.

LEVINE: Aah, hah.

ECKELT: The Russian front, Hungarians and the Russians were at war at the time.

LEVINE: And so you really never knew him?

ECKELT: I really never knew him, no, no.

LEVINE: What was his name?

ECKELT: Francis Nemeth.

LEVINE: And your mother, what was her name?

ECKELT: Her maiden name was Elizabeth Halasz.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

ECKELT: H-A-L-A-S-Z

LEVINE: And, what was your mother like? How did she relate to you?

ECKELT: Oh, she was, needless to say, she was wonderful and very well educated, lovely person. And, I lost her five years ago. She died at ninety-two, but I miss her terribly and her spirit seems to be all around me. (she whispers about showing pictures)

LEVINE: We'll look at pictures after the taping. (pause) She was educated. Did she use her education professionally?

ECKELT: No, because at that time, you just got married and lived at home. But she was, she had gone to Budapest to the Dominican Sisters. They had their school in Budapest. That's where she was educated, yeah. Was only about, maybe, an hours ride from our home. That's, I remember her telling me (she laughs).

LEVINE: And what did she, what did she like to do? What were the kinds of things that you remember her being interested in or enjoying?

ECKELT: Well, she was a wonderful homemaker and she liked crocheting, travelling, plays; went to see concerts and plays. And, incidently, we, many times we'd go to Yorkville where they have the Hungarian Circle; St. Stephen's Church on East 82nd Street and we'd attend Hungarian functions there. We liked doing that very much.

LEVINE: Was she a good cook?

ECKELT: Oh, excellent (she laughs).

LEVINE: What kind of Hungarian dishes did she make?

ECKELT: Well, outstandingly, toltott kaposta, which is stuffed cabbage.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

ECKELT: Toltott, yes. I happen to read and write, so I can spell it for you.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

ECKELT; T-O-L-T-O-T-T, toltott means stuffed. Kaposta is

cabbage; K-A-P-O-S-T-A. Also, chicken paprikash. And she made wonderfully delicious strudels.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family?

ECKELT: Yes, we were, Roman Catholic, yes.

LEVINE: How did you, in what way did you practice the religion?

ECKELT: Well, we were church-goers and we had all the sacraments. You know, as children were brought up we received our sacraments.

LEVINE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

ECKELT: I have one brother, yes.

LEVINE: And his name?

ECKELT: His name is Robert.

LEVINE: And is he older or younger?

ECKELT: He's younger. He's from my mother's second marriage. See when Mom and I came over she was a widow, war widow. But she

already knew my step-father from Budapest and he sent for us. And they married here and then five years later my brother was born.

LEVINE: Okay, let's see. Well, did you go to school then, in Budapest?

ECKELT: Yes, I attended fourth grade. The fourth grade I was nine. There wasn't much attendance to be had in schools because all of Budapest was starving. We had no fuel and no food. We were fortunate in the way that my grandfather was a forest ranger twenty kilometers out of Budapest, out in the country, in the mountains. And he not only received wages but he had the land, the house and livestock. So, incidently, we always had butter, milk, eggs, and such; he shared it with us.

LEVINE: Now is this your mother's father?

ECKELT: No, my father's father, Francis Nemeth, also.

LEVINE: And did you have a grandmother? Did he have a wife?

ECKELT: Yes, he did.

LEVINE: Do you remember times spent with them as a nine year old?

ECKELT: Oh, yes, until school, until I had to go to school, I would be out there at their home which, as I said, is twenty kilometers out of city. And when I had to attend school, then I came into the city and we lived with my mother's aunt, also in Budapest, in Zuglo.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember your grandmother and grandfather? Can you recall times spent with them?

ECKELT: Oh, vividly, yes. That was one of the heartbreaks, leaving my grandfather. I was very fond of him and grandmother. But we did go back visiting. I went back when I was thirteen, and then eighteen, and then...

LEVINE: How long did you stay when you went back?

ECKELT: We stayed like, few weeks.

LEVINE: I see. So you went back thirteen, eighteen and after that too?

ECKELT: And after that then I went back with Mom. And then I

lost my husband and then after that I went with my daughter.
Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, now tell me about any experience that you remember
with your grandfather.

ECKELT: Oh, (she makes a laughing sigh) he was a great guy, and
coming home from his route, which he had to make daily into the
woods and into the mountains, being a ranger, forest ranger, he
would come home with squirrels or a chipmunk. At one point he
brought home a snake (she laughs) and all these he would give to
the zoo in Budapest, donate it, yes, live, wild animals so to
speak, yeah. And lovely birds, yeah.

LEVINE: So would you ever go out with him into the woods?

ECKELT: Yes, yes, well not on his route because that was miles
and miles, but I would go up to a certain distance, yes. It was
lovely, yeah. And he used to tell me how my father --may he rest
in peace --would, he wouldn't be inter . ., he would love to go
out hunting with him, you know, and his brother, into these woods,
but, of course, he had to attend school. He was only twenty-four
when
he died in the army.

LEVINE: What about your mother's mother and father? Were they around?

ECKELT: No, no, no, I think they were d . . , yes, they had died by that time.

LEVINE: And how about aunts and uncles, did you have . . .

ECKELT: Yes, I had my grandfather's sister and then I had my mother's aunt and we spent, of course, visiting with them. I have very fond memories of that.

LEVINE: And how were you tr . . , were you the only grandchild?

ECKELT: I was the only grandchild. And that, too, grandfather was very hard hit. He said, "If there was some way I could keep her here, home." You know, meaning Hungary, in Budapest. But of course the only reason would have been the unfit mother, which my mother was very fit (she laughs) so, naturally, I came with her. And, incidently, mother made that stipulation to my step-father, would-be step-father at that point, that because, at that time, two years passed between his coming to America and sending for us.

And, it was, no, three years; yeah, I was about twelve and a half, thirteen when he again saw me, see. And I had sprouted up and,

my goodness, well he had misgivings about, you know, having a step-

child, so mother said, "If you want me to come to you, you have to have my child. Without my child I don't come." (she laughs)

LEVINE: Well, what, would you say you were relatively well-off?

ECKELT: Oh, yes. It wasn't a political or poverty, no. We were, we were...

LEVINE: Comfortable?

ECKELT: Comfortable, not well off --nobody was at that time -- but comfortable. It wasn't a must that we must come; it was more of an adventure on the part of my step-father. And, of course, he sent

for us and so that's how we came. But it wasn't a compulsive immigration like I imagine most, a lot of people were, yeah.

LEVINE: What was your mother's attitude about coming? Do you remember anything she ever told you?

ECKELT: She cried a lot. (she laughs) She didn't want to come. After all, you know, it was a new life and going into the world not knowing anything, not the language or anything. But, like I

said,

she wasn't a backward, peasant lady who would be afraid to , you know, but it did take a lot of prayers (she laughs) among other things.

LEVINE: So do you remember anything that your mother packed and took with her when she came?

ECKELT: Yes --funny you should say that --she had sold all her linen and stuff --she wasn't married too long --you know, when she became a widow and she was always at home. Not, she didn't have a profession or anything, so, to get back to your question, she sold her linen and personal items, jewelry and stuff and with that she bought Hungarian salami --rods and rods of salami and chocolate for the trip, which would last. Of course, we had no refrigeration at the time. So, I remember being very, very sick, sea sick; and

I think prior to, it must have been the heavy salami plus the chocolate (she laughs) but we had a rough voyage, too. We came in November and the ocean was very, very stormy. We came here, we got here for Thanksgiving.

LEVINE: I see. Did your future step-father, did he send you the ticket?

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ECKELT: Yes, yes, he sent the ticket and, of course, he had to produce a certain amount of money and all, that we wouldn't be dependent upon the state, you know, yeah.

LEVINE: Was the quota system in effect at that time?

ECKELT: It was. We were only, the quota in Hungarian, Hungary was only three hundred per year. Not like now: Now anybody can come in: No quota. Which I think is, it should be rewrote. Don't you? (she laughs)

LEVINE: Yeah, well what, did you have to wait then (pause) because...

ECKELT: Yes, mother waited two years before she got all the papers together. Oh, yes, that was a very strict law.

LEVINE: And then where did you go when you left Budapest to go to America?

ECKELT: We came to, by train we travelled to Hamburg and there we took the Cunard Line, Aquitania.

LEVINE: Did you have examinations...

ECKELT: At Ellis I, oh, yes.

LEVINE: Before...

ECKELT: Before...

LEVINE: leaving?

ECKELT: Yes, yes, thank God, we were in good health. And then, of course, we had a thorough going over at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the examination before leaving Europe?

ECKELT: No. Nothing special. Here at Ellis Island, I remember having our eyes, the lids turned inside out, the bottom, the top and, of course, listening to your lungs and all. But we had a clean bill of health. Yeah.

LEVINE: Now when you left, did you personally bring anything with you of your own, that you wanted?

ECKELT: Just our immediate needs. You know, clothes and stuff. Nothing special.

LEVINE: Do you remember if you heard, what you had heard about

America before you actually set sail?

ECKELT: Not really, no. No, so it was quite a big shock; surprising. Surprised to know that we're going that far, you know. (she laughs) And, like I said, I was surrounded with loving relatives and all and it wasn't that we had to come; it was just more or less adventure. And, of course, mother's new life, getting married again and all, yeah.

LEVINE: So was there anything else, were you in steerage on the ship? Were you in the hold of the ship or did you have a cabin?

ECKELT: We had a cabin. I think, if I remember, I know I was on the upper deck and mother on the other, and I think there may have been two others, you know, facing us.

LEVINE: Bunk beds.

ECKELT: Bunk beds, yes, yes, with a little sink in the middle, and it was quite an effort when you're sea sick to come down from there and, if you don't have time, try to make that bowl (she is laughing).

LEVINE: Now did you go to a dining room for you meals on the

ship?

ECKELT: Yes, yes, we had very nice accommodations, as far as that goes. It was called tourist, tourist class.

LEVINE: I see. And, do you remember the ship coming into the New York Harbor?

ECKELT: Yes, that I remember (a clock chimes) and we were all up on deck, just as the pictures show, and we were oh, and such wonder and relief and happiness to see, here we are; this is it; this is, now we're here, you know, seeing the Statue of Liberty, yeah.

LEVINE: And tell me all your impressions and experience at Ellis Island.

ECKELT: Well, at Ellis Island the impression wasn't good because, as I say it was very run down at that time, in '24. And we were, we were more or less herded in like cattle. And, no, no, they were very impatient. The people didn't know our language and we didn't know English and this, of course, was a great barrier right there. And, for us, personally, we had a little set-back because the person who was interviewing Mother saw, of course, her

marriage name, Nemeth, which I retained. I never changed my name to my step-father's name. And he came on board to claim us and his name was entirely different. And then, "Who are you?" and "Who are you?" and "Who are you?" Now I can, you know, visualize what it was but therefore I had to stay overnight. They didn't release us that very day. Not because of health conditions but because of the name. And, then he came again for us next day and...

LEVINE: Do you remember meeting him?

ECKELT: Yes, yes, I remember. (she laughs)

LEVINE: What was that like? Do you remember what you thought or felt?

ECKELT: Oh, yes, I was excited, " So this is he!" and because he seemed to have changed too because from a nine year old to a twelve, thirteen year old there is a change.

LEVINE: Well, now wait, you were nine when you came but you knew him earlier...

ECKELT: Wait a minute...

LEVINE: In Budapest.

ECKELT: Yah, I knew him in Budapest, yes, I knew him in Budapest, yes, I knew him, I knew him. That's why the change was so big when I saw him again, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember what the difference was? What you, what struck you as different in him?

ECKELT: Not so much. It was more like a, "Well, now, how's this going to be?" You know, "You're not my father, you're not my real father." You know how children are. And Mother tried to prepare me for it but I think he needed more preparation than I. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So he came to claim you but because of the difference in name he couldn't take you with him that first day.

ECKELT: Not right away, which, which, it was agreed that that's how it's going to be. We come right off the boat, you know, and go with him. We lived in Yorkville at the time. He had an apartment. But they didn't allow us, we had to stay overnight.

LEVINE: Do you remember what it was like staying at Ellis Island?

ECKELT: Oh, it was terrible. For instance, there were no mattresses on the beds: It was just the wire; you know...

LEVINE: Springs?

ECKELT: The spring, just the spring. The place wasn't very clean (she laughs), and the sanitary conditions and all; it wasn't very good. So we were happy to get on terra firma and to Yorkville, to the apartment.

LEVINE: Then when, and what was your step-father's name?

ECKELT: Klein, K-L-E-I-N.

LEVINE: And so he came the next day and then you went into Manhattan. And can you tell me the first few hours or days of your life in New York?

ECKELT: Well, I remember we lived in an apartment in Yorkville. I think it was 78th Street, something like that, going upstairs to our room and I remember he had (she laughs) milk and a Wart's cake (she laughs) and Mother thought that's, you know, that's what we get, you know (still laughing).

LEVINE: What is a Wart's cake?

ECKELT: (extraneous noise) Like a pound cake. They no longer have it. They don't have that company.

LEVINE: Oh, that's the, Wart's is the name of the company?

ECKELT: Yes, yes, yes. That's about all I do remember and then the next thing I remember, I had to go to school.

LEVINE: Can you tell me about that experience?

ECKELT: Well that was rough on me because --oh, she's home; that's her car (referring to he daughter) --yeah, 'Til I learned the language, you know, it was, it was hard. But they discovered --oh, they put me into 1-A because I couldn't speak. So they didn't know to what extent my education, although they knew I had attended from my age. You know, you could tell that she had been to school. So as soon as we got to the blackboard, that saved me because the formulas were almost the same --the division, the multiplication, you know, and, uh. Also, a funny incident stands out in my mind. We came around Thanksgiving and all I could hear was turkey, turkey, turkey, you know. And then we'd line up and they'd say -- now I know what they said --they said "Stop Talking", not to me

but to the class as we marched into the classroom. I don't know what

reason, but I remember I was so ashamed and so humiliated because I said, where I should have said "talking", I said "turkey" and of course the children roared, you know, they thought that was so funny. So from then on, for six months, I wouldn't speak, I wouldn't talk.

LEVINE: Okay, we're going to pause here for a moment. I think Mrs. Eckelt...(interview paused) Okay, we're resuming now. So you said "Stop turkey,"... (they laugh)

ECKELT: And for a, because I was I was so, you know, ashamed and felt humiliated, I didn't speak, I wouldn't, I hardly spoke for the next, but after six months I opened my mouth and I spoke English fluently.

LEVINE: Wow. Were there a number of immigrant children in your class?

ECKELT: No, I don't remember any.

LEVINE: And how do you think that process worked? I mean that you didn't speak for such a period and then you could say

anything?

ECKELT: And at home we always spoke Hungarian. So, I just didn't, I didn't make friends for about six months or so, and then I did, there was another Hungarian little girl. I remember her name, Margaret Kollar. Yeah, we became good friends.

LEVINE: K-O...

ECKELT: K-O-L-L-A-R, yeah.

LEVINE: And so you then became friends with her?

ECKELT: Yes. And then, of course, by that time I spoke English, and so it went.

LEVINE: And how about your mother. Did she learn English? Did she...

ECKELT: Oh, she was great. We were, we, what helped her a great deal was the movies (pause), you know, because they would react, act, then of course we had silent films then. And she learned. She was great. She learned English very fast and, matter of fact, I don't think we were here even six months when she picked up the American-Hungarian Peoples' Voice, which I still subscribe to,

weekly paper, and she found herself a position, yeah. She went to work in Manhattan. She spoke fluent German, also. So between the German and she picked up the English and Hungarian. So, yeah, she got along fine.

LEVINE: Now what did she do for work?

ECKELT: Well, I think her first job was, the only thing she could do, the sisters taught them to cook and to sew. And she knew how

to operate the Singer Sewing Machine. So she went to this agency, a Hungarian agency and she got a job as a, on the Singer Sewing Machine, they were sewing laces on ladies' chemise. At that time they wore chemise. You know, panties and stuff like that, yeah. That was her job.

LEVINE: And so she went to a factory in Manhattan?

ECKELT: Yes, in Manhattan, yeah.

LEVINE: And, how about your step-father? What was it like for you coming and then living with...

ECKELT: Everything was all right, yeah, I would say, yeah. I was busy getting acclimated and learning the language and going to

school, and he was, he had odd jobs, because he was very well educated in Budapest, but he didn't know the language. And so he started, he washed dishes. He went into a factory where they dyed silk, silk-dying factory. And then, various jobs but he, they saved and eventually he opened his own business, dry cleaning; but by that time we were in Brooklyn, we moved to Brooklyn.

LEVINE: So, did you stay in, what grade were you in when you left New York City, when you left Manhattan?

ECKELT: Budapest? Fourth. I was going into the fourth.

LEVINE: When you left Budapest? And when you left Manhattan for Brooklyn?

ECKELT: Ah, let's see, I was (pause) where was I? I was, I think maybe the seventh or eighth grade, yeah. But up, in Yorkville, I went to Catholic school. We moved down to East 56th Street; Saint John the Baptist; it's still there. And when we moved to Brooklyn, then my step-father and mother put me in a public school (pause), which I missed, I missed the nuns, you know, I was used to them.

LEVINE: Was there a large Hungarian community in Yorkville at that time?

ECKELT: There was and I was wishing we would stay in Yorkville because in Brooklyn there wasn't any, you know. It was starting again; a whole new life, a whole new background. But I guess my step-father wanted to be near his brother, who was there.

Incidentally, that's how my step-father came to the States; his brother sent for him. And it was just adventure on his part. He'd say, "Why don't you come on out? Come on! Come on over here!"

And, he said, "I have everything here!" He had a good position in Budapest and he knew my mother. You know, he was happy there, but he said "Come on." So wanderlust got ahold of him and he came; and, eventually, we came along. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So, was it your mother's attitude and also your's, to hold on to certain Hungarian (pause) qualities?

ECKELT: Oh, that was implanted by my mother but it wasn't hard to do because, somehow or other, I loved my birth country. I loved

Budapest and I . . . And, incidentally, I was visiting two years ago with my girlfriend and it, it's lovely. It's known as "the gem of the Danube." I have a booklet there, "Amazing Hungarians in the United States." I was reading up on that.

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LEVINE: Well, we'll look at that after the interview.

End of Side A

Beginning of Side B

LEVINE: What kinds of things do you think or ways did your mother hold on to that were Hungarian?

ECKELT: Strictly Hungarian, you mean?

LEVINE: Well I guess I'm thinking about, I suppose her cooking would be one, maybe obvious one.

ECKELT: Yeah, well, it's important, but that's a minor...

LEVINE: Were there certain, maybe, attitudes that she held to, that she tried to teach you to live by, let's say?

ECKELT: I can't think of anything outstanding, aside from the fact that, yes, her background, she would speak of, and our relatives, and Hungarian saints, Saint Elizabeth, which is the name of my other granddaughter --she'll be home soon. I don't

know how to answer that question because she was, she was a staunch Hungarian, and I am too, aside from the fact that I'm American of course. But our customs, she held on to the memory of that, and it's really, I don't know how to tell you. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Was she happy that she had come here or was she, did she...

ECKELT: Well, there were times when she, oh, matter of fact they did go back with the intention of staying.

LEVINE: Oh, when was that?

ECKELT: After some, oh I can't remember exactly how many years, but I know my step-father already had the business here and all and they thought maybe they would reestablish themselves there but it was no-go.

LEVINE: What decided them to come back again?

ECKELT: Oh, finances, yeah, yeah. There was just no way of making a living there, and that bothered them, that hurt them, you know, because they went home with the idea that "we're back home again." But they couldn't do it. It was impossible.

LEVINE: And that was after your step-father had the business here.

ECKELT: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And then he thought he would go back.

ECKELT: Yeah, they worked together and saved and, with the idea that they'll go back and, you know, find a, make a home for themselves again; buy a house and business and -- he started, he wanted, he started something in Budapest, a bakery business, but the money was just taken, stolen and then they saw, well this, this can't go on, we have to have something. So back they came, we did, three of us. (she laughs)

LEVINE: You went with them?

ECKELT: Oh, yes, yes.

LEVINE: So that was when you were about what? Thirteen?

ECKELT: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: What, what were there things when you went back then to Budapest that struck you as different, comparing your life in

America...

ECKELT: Well, unfortunately by that time most of my loved ones had died. My grandfather died, my grandmother was gone, my favorite uncle, and well, then it was, it was hard on me as a child, it was a mixed emotions because I found myself here, you know, and I was happy, more or less, but, of course, there was always that idea of " Oh, let's go home to beautiful Hungary." And there is such difference, you know, that you can't help feeling that way. But we came back and for awhile we were in Staten Island 'til my folks got another apt, you know, home and all. And then -- where did we live then --we lived in Brooklyn at the time, from Staten Island back to Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Did you go to school when you went back to Hungary when you were thirteen?

ECKELT: No, because (pause) what, oh, I think the time that they, we went back the three of us with the idea, I was already, I was working. I was employed in the telephone company, which I was thirty-seven years; I'm a Pioneer (slight laugh) Telephone Company. And I got a leave of absence --six months --and at the end of six months was this way, that way; it was still indefinite.

So then I asked for another three months, which they gave me.
And
when I, when we all came back my position, my job was waiting for
me.

LEVINE: Oh.

ECKELT: They took me back. Matter of fact, they bridged my
years of service too, yeah. It's a wonderful company to work for
(she
laughs).

LEVINE: So you were really there for about nine months?

ECKELT: Yes, yes, yes because I didn't think I would get the
extension, the six months, you know, that three more months but
mother didn't want to come back in the winter again so. So we
came back like in April, May, the additional three months.

LEVINE: Were you looking forward to coming back?

ECKELT: Yes, yes, I was because it was wonderful to visit but
like I said, a lot of my loved ones were gone. And I loved
America, I loved the way things were going for us and I was happy
to come back.

LEVINE: And how about your mother?

ECKELT: She too, oh yes, yes, it was a haven (she laughs). It was a haven to come back to. It was different than when the first time, of course. This time we didn't have to go to Ellis Island either. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Do you think the fact that you did immigrate to this country as a child, do you think that that has somehow had an effect on you, in the kind of person that you are? I mean, do you think that that experience . . .?

ECKELT: Oh, I think so, I think it, I had an advantage in being that way because (pause) it teaches you tolerance too, knowing many more languages and travelling. I love travelling to this day. Oh, yes, yes, I think it was for our betterment, all of us.

LEVINE: Now, how did you meet your husband?

ECKELT: Oh, I met him in the romantic Catskills in a Hungarian resort and the name of the resort --get this! -- it was Budapest. Budapest Rest. It's still in existence. It's up in, past Fleischman's, let's see, Big Indian is the name of it, Big Indian,

yeah. I met him at a resort. It was the first year that I had three weeks vacation, paid vacation, and he happened to be there.

And he used to go there yearly but we never met until that particular year, yeah, '44.

LEVINE: And what was your husband's name?

ECKELT: Charles Eckelt.

LEVINE: You had, how many children did you have?

ECKELT: Two.

LEVINE: Two, and what are their names?

ECKELT: I have Barbara, my daughter Barbara and I have a son, Charles. He's Charles II and he has a son Charles III. And my son lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma with his family, yeah.

LEVINE: And how many grandchildren do you have?

ECKELT: I have four, yeah; two from my son and two from my daughter.

LEVINE: Well, let's see, is there anything else that you can

think of, either little anecdotal stories that you remember pertaining to Budapest, the voyage, the immigration experience in getting settled here or being here, that you'd like to mention before we close?

ECKELT: You mean about my visits there?

LEVINE: No, I was thinking more about your actual, what we've really been talking about. I just thought if there was something that maybe jogged into (she laughs) memory that...

ECKELT: Well, going back into my childhood way of seeing things I think it's a great opportunity for, especially, even today, there's no war going on right now but war-ridden countries and the children there, if, by good fortune, they can come to America, that is beautiful. That is great. That's how I feel about it.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think maybe that's a good place to end and I want to thank you so much for talking with me.

ECKELT: (she laughs) I thank you.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine and I'm talking with Mary Eckelt, who came from Budapest, Hungary in 1924. And today is October 15th, 1992 and I'm signing off.

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THE END