

EI-351

DRUSIANA LATERINI HEIL

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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SWITZERLAND, 1921

AGE 17

PASSAGE ON "THE DANTE ALIGHIERI"

PORT OF EMBARKATION: GENOA

RESIDENCES: SWITZERLAND: BRIZ

US: ORANGE, NJ

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Drusiana Heil who came to the United States from Italy where she had lived for two years. She was born in Switzerland and at fifteen years of age she moved to Italy with her family, and then two years later when she was seventeen she came to the United States through Ellis Island. And that was in February of 1921.

HEIL: Yeah.

LEVINE: When she came here. Today is July the 19th, 1993, and I am in Mrs. Heil's home in Orange, New Jersey. And Mrs. Heil is ninety at this time of the interview, and

I want to say that I know you have so much to say that I'm looking forward to hearing all of your experiences, so I'm very happy to be here.

HEIL: Can I interrupt?

LEVINE: You can say whatever you want.

HEIL: When, I don't have to use your (?) then, you know, if I interrupt you tell me no, you wait, you know?

LEVINE: No, go ahead, please.

HEIL: I'm forgetting what I wanted to say.

LEVINE: Well, I had just told when you came here and how old you were.

HEIL: Yes. Um . . . I had something on my mind, but it just passed through.

LEVINE: I was saying that you had so much, so many experiences that I was looking forward to hearing them.

HEIL: Yeah. Well, when I went in Italy then my aunt was sending, she had no children also. And she told, she wrote to the family if we wanted to come in this country. Is that . . . ( she gestures, referring to

the tape recorder )

LEVINE: It's on, yeah.

HEIL: Oh, yeah? So then my older sister, she figured, she's dead now, too, but she was in Torino. She said, uh, "Why not? They haven't got no children. Why don't you go over there?" And we were seven. Well, two died, one from the avalanche, and the little baby was only two months old, see, so we were left five. And as we grew up we were all of us separated, but my father was with us. As they grew up they went to work, and we were kind of separated until we grew up, see. And . . .

LEVINE: Well, why don't we start so that we can get, just briefly anyway, the story on the tape. First tell me your birth date and where in Switzerland you were born.

HEIL: In, uh, Brig, Canton Valais

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

HEIL: Uh, yes. Uh, Brig, well, that's, uh, when you come out of the Simplon Tunnel, see, this is a big mountain. You go in from Italy and you come out in

Switzerland, and there's a city, it's a city, Brig.  
In Italian you say "Briga," but it's stamped on the,  
on the map, Brig.

LEVINE: B-R . . .

HEIL: G, uh, B-R-I-G. So that is in, uh . . .

LEVINE: Switzerland.

HEIL: In, uh, Switzerland, yes. Now other nationality they  
might say the same thing. In Italy they would say,  
"Briga." They have another syllable, you know. Or  
you see them in books. It may say Briga also, yes.  
Well, in that particular place there's a lot of French  
talking, in that particular spot of Switzerland.  
Switzerland is a small country. I think it's more  
like Rhode Island, see. It's a small state. Rhode  
Island is the smallest state of United States.  
So . . .

LEVINE: What was Brig like? What do you remember about it?

HEIL: I don't remember much because we went around quite a  
bit. From Brig, uh, then when my mother took, she was  
very sick. Brig, it wasn't far away from where was  
that tunnel that they were building. So then my

father took us and we went more up west towards Austria, east towards Austria, but a little bit more north. San Gallen. Did you ever heard?

LEVINE: San Gallo. S-A-N-G . . .

HEIL: Uh, San Gallo. It's G-A-L-L-O.

LEVINE: San Gallo.

HEIL: Yes, it's more, I mean, Austria side, but it's in Switzerland. And there they raised a little, of Switzerland there's a little county that they have their own rules. Lichten State. Did you hear about that?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HEIL: You see, some time, you know, they had a place in Italy, in another Italy like that, too. It happens in different countries, yes. Well, we weren't far away from it. I went to school in there, San Gallen. I went in kindergarten near Brig Capensten. That's where, that's where, uh, they were building in the Simplon Tunnel, see.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. It's . . .

HEIL: But it's in the same region.

LEVINE: I see. So when you were in Brig, and then up until after you started kindergarten you were living there?

HEIL: No. I started going, kindergarten is where my brother died, Capensten. I don't know if I pronounce it right.

LEVINE: Do you know how to spell it by any chance?

HEIL: No, but I know, Capensten. And, oh, I would have to look on a map for that matter. And then from there we went, uh, San Gallen. We went over my aunt's house. We were small, and she had children, seven children. And so we stood in her home while my father, he came to see us every couple of weeks, see, because he was far away. Now, that is in San Gallen. It's more in the middle of Switzerland between south and north. And, but the Simplon Tunnel I would say was in the south of Switzerland, being that it's so small.

LEVINE: Well, why don't you say for the tape, first, the two tragedies that happened in your family when you were a little girl.

HEIL: Yeah. Well, I can't talk no more now. I mean, not

eating and talk. Now, that is what I do. I'm going to save this bread. ( there is a disturbance on the microphone )

LEVINE: I'm going to turn, I'll turn this off for you while you eat. ( break in tape ) We're resuming now. Let's see. Why don't you say for the tape what happened to your brother and then to your mother.

HEIL: Oh. Yeah. Well, that was the time when my father was working on Simplon Tunnel, and that's a history. It was one of the longest tunnels for railroad, one hour. I went through there many times. And it was a history. On top of that . . . Is that on? ( referring to the tape recorder )

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

HEIL: When they met, because they'd been working, you know, that's how they do, see. And in Swiss side they made a, on the top of the tunnel there was like, uh, how you call it, when they make a statue or something, written on my father's name and my uncle's name, because my father had a big position, you know, with the engineers. He wasn't just manual work.

LEVINE: A laborer, uh-huh.

HEIL: And in those days you didn't find too many intelligent. They didn't go to college. First of all, my father was, that's what I should have said, was an orphan.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

HEIL: Celio. It's C-E-L-I-O. That's his name.

LEVINE: And his last name?

HEIL: Lattrini. L-A-T-T-R-I-N-I. Now, we made this discover many, many years after when my sister went to the other side, but I knew that he was an orphan. He was going, his father, I think, we should have started from that. He's in Florence, Florenza.

LEVINE: We're just going to pause for a minute because there's a background noise. I want to see if we can eliminate it. ( break in tape ) We're resuming now. We've turned off the air conditioner so we eliminate the background noise. You were going to start at the beginning with your father from Florence.

HEIL: Yes. So my father, he was an orphan. And he, his

father was, he met a girl in those days. We're talking about early 1800's, see. He met the girl and in those days Florence was a very historic city. They had a lot of battles. Italy wanted to get bigger, see? And so they, they had, like, the ruler, they were not the king and queen, but they were gettin there. But they had already the king and queen. So my father, he, my father's father, he fell in love with one of the girls and the girl, she had a title, a title like in England they say, they had the same thing in Italy or in Getmany, duchess. They have, what they call, it's a common, maybe you can help me out. Sir so-and-so, like the duchess, they want to marry the prince of England. And Count, you know the difference of this. Well, he fell in love with a girl that the family had a title like that. Now, my father's father, he was a plain man. He had no title, see. In those days they went by the titles. They still do in some of those old countries. Thank goodness in the United States it makes no difference if you're the president and just a plain, it be all the same. So the girl couldn't go with him, so he was stuck. But they were going to have a child, see. So they, her family, they made her disappear, the child.

So when my father, I don't know what happened to my father's father then because we didn't know any more.

Now, my father, he was put in the orphan place.

LEVINE: In other words, this duchess or this woman with the title, she was the mother of your father? That was your father's mother?

HEIL: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And they took the baby away.

HEIL: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and put it in an orphanage.

HEIL: In an orphanage. And in the meantime my father, he grew up. It must have been, you know, because they had the money to keep the silence. You know, in those days they didn't open the door the way they do now, you know? So when he was to a certain age, I don't know what age, but I think that he was old enough to go to work then they told him, "Now you're on your own." See? But they didn't tell him who it was if they knew his father and mother. And they said, "Now you can go and see your parents if you want to see them." And my father says, "No, I would never do

that. They put me in an orphanage, I grew up here, and I don't want to know." And he must have been pretty young, too. And that's it, see. He never knew where he came from or something like that, but he was born in Florence, and I read stories about Florence. There were big battles they had, you know, in politicians, see. So, but, and my father, he was not one of them that he would talk too much. He kept everything so, that he, then . . .

LEVINE: Was he educated? Is that how he got to be, uh . . .

HEIL: Yeah, he was educated in plain school. I mean, during those days you didn't have to go to school.

LEVINE: Right.

HEIL: That happened in this country, even after the second, after the first World War in this country, I talked with somebody, they don't believe me. It happens in, out in the country those little towns, you'd be surprised how they find out in this country, when the second World War came they're sending the form, and they didn't know, they didn't receive or something. There was a lot of trouble with that over there, too. It happens all over. So, anyhow, uh . . .

LEVINE: So do you know the family story about how your mother and father met?

HEIL: No. They met in a little town. They met in Italy. My mother comes from Italy also.

LEVINE: Oh. And what was your mother's maiden name?

HEIL: Bocchino.

LEVINE: How do you spell it?

HEIL: B-O-C-C-H-I-N-O.

LEVINE: And her first name?

HEIL: Josephine. So they met, and, in Italy. But then my father, he went for his job. In the meantime, he met my mother's sister. Now, my father had a friend and they both went to this little town in Italy and they both met. ( break in tape ) . . . got married, and in the meantime my other aunt got married with this other fellow, and they both went to Switzerland. They made a family over there.

LEVINE: I see. So, now, tell me your brothers and sisters who were born in Switzerland.

HEIL: Uh, well, they were born in, near where I was born, where is the Simplon Tunnel. I was born in Brig, and my sister was born in Brig, and my sister was born in Nachers, just like Orange or East Orange, you know, things like that. Canton Valais. Canton, in Switzerland, it means like Essex County. Canton, they call it there. Or in Italy, and in France they go by the province, just like Canada, see, province. Well . . .

LEVINE: So you had seven children in your family?

HEIL: Yes.

LEVINE: And you were going to say about what happened to your brother.

HEIL: Oh. There was a brother older than him, but this brother he, they were working and he was a messenger boy. You know, they didn't have the offices all in one place like they do now. That's a different atmosphere altogether. And while, to go to this office he had to walk in a big, the main highway. In the meantime avalanche was coming down, see. And they got caught in between. And even the home where was supposed to be the office, about twenty-five people

there got buried. And so they called my father and, you know, and they can't do nothing. So, and that's how my mother, she took very sick. And while we were so small, that's where I was going to the kindergarten. My other sister, she didn't. She was too little. The other ones, they were going to school in Switzerland. So then my father, he took us over my other aunt that they went together in Switzerland. And in her home, she had children, too. She had seven children. And we went to school there. So I went to school in Capensten. I went to school in San Gallem that it's right near that, what I told you before, it's like a little county for themselves.

LEVINE: Oh, Lichtenstein.

HEIL: Yes, yes. And it's right near San Gallen. So from there then a lot of work started, and we went up in the north over Switzerland, right near the Rhine.

LEVINE: Did you ever live with your mother again after that?

HEIL: No, no, no. My mother was taken to the hospital and instead of getting better she got worse, see. So we were left home, and that's why my father took us over my aunt. She had children, and she figured we do our

best. And, but my mother never came home again.  
So . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember your mother at all?

HEIL: A little bit, yes. I remember her, I remember her sitting in bed and we had a hand sewing machine, you know, that you, and she used to, I guess, fix things and so on, but she was in bed, see.

LEVINE: Was this after she had the nervous breakdown, or this is before that?

HEIL: No, no. That was after. Otherwise she wouldn't have been in bed.

LEVINE: I see.

HEIL: Yes. And because she lost a son, the second son, and then the baby. That had something to do, I believe the baby wasn't born yet, but that's when she took sick, this nervous breakdown. And then from there I didn't see my mother any more. And my father, he used to go and see her every couple of weeks to the hospital, and . . .

LEVINE: Tell me about your father. What was he like? Do you

remember things that you did together when you were a child?

HEIL: Yes. Well, he was not a man that he talked too much, and very much disciplined. My father, he was raised like that in the orphanage, you know. And he taught an awful lot of manners. That was everything for him. And he must have been intelligent. I believe that they must have put him in a special orphanage, you know. And, but he never talked about it, at least to me. I don't know to my older sister and my brothers, but he was not a man that he talked too much. And he was very, he would make friends with anybody if you were so ignorant, ignorant, I'm talking about. Not that you were poor or something, he won't be bothered, you know. He could tell right away. He liked to deal with people that could make a conversation and so on. And he dealed always with people that was a lot of discipline. And even when he was working they were people more intelligent than my father was. So, anyhow, and my father, if he called us when he come home, maybe fora couple of days, then he had to go back again. When he call us, we won't say, "Wait a minute," or, "What do you want?" There was no such a

thing. We used to say, "Si, Papa?" See? And we didn't dare to go contrary to him. And at the table he won't want to see nothing left on the dish. He watch everything. Even from a little one, they have to stay on the table with manners growing up. So I guess I just couldn't take it away enough from him. But for good times things like that, we don't know anything like that. But every time he went in to see my mother, we could not go and see her. I think the first two they could go and see her, see. Because they had to travel a long, many hours. And so he, let me see. Oh, when he came home he would bring us a toy, a little doll, a little ball. We were so little, and it didn't matter at what time of the night that he would arrive, he would go and see his children. He loved us. He never remarried again. And so that's that. We had very much respect for him. We were, we didn't dare to say something. Even talking, he talked the real Italian grammar, not like I talk now in English, you know. The pure Italian language comes from right near Fiorenza. It's not far away, maybe a half hour away from Fiorenza. I've forgotten the name of that town, the city. And they talk the pure Italian language. It's altogether different than

most. Most, this Italian around here from North America, they were sent there, they came from the south, most of them. And the one from the north, after the first World War, they sent him in South America, because South America, it wasn't the way it is now. Just like over here, they wanted to have the people to bring the industry and so on. And that's how they made a state, they sent a lot of people in California for farming and so on. Now, I'm talking about the farming. And that's how, and in those days, I think it's about a hundred years ago, there were about seventy-five families, Swiss families. And they left Europe to come to go straight to Wisconsin. That's a regular Swiss, I don't know if you know this, a lot of Swiss. And the first one, they got there and they, of course they knew all about it, what kind of a dirt they have, what they could raise and so on. And they find out that it was pretty close where they came from, a regular dairy place. In fact, Wisconsin is what they call the cheese state. I don't know if it still is now, but anyhow, and that's how, it just came in my mind, and that's how those Swiss people, they got together, and they were the first one of bringing the business in Wisconsin.

LEVINE: Now, were these people coming, going to Wisconsin when you were a little girl, or that was before that?

HEIL: Oh, no. Way before. That's about a hundred years. Because I go by, when I read in the geographic magazine, you see. It was then about seventy-five years. And I know this over twenty-five years. I'm pretty sure of that. So, and then you imagine, you know, what they were producing and so on. Yes. And that's how I know how the people here from the east, they were going west, you know. You've seen movies.

LEVINE: Yes.

HEIL: You could get an idea.

LEVINE: Yes.

HEIL: And that's how they went, see. And they made home, they made home in the west. Some they went to the middle west.

LEVINE: Right. Now, do you remember kindergarten at all?

HEIL: Yes, a little bit.

LEVINE: What do you remember about it?

HEIL: Well, we used to make with papers, like a little toy, maybe a little star, maybe a little design, which I was no good for designing anyhow, and things like that, you know? And I used to go, I had a little basket we bring our lunch. And with the, a little basket like this, and it would have a handle, and they had the cover, and I put the bread there or maybe a fruit or something, you know. That's all. And they made us sleep a little bit in the afternoon, yes. Swiss country, they are very strict, they are, and they keep the people strict also.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

HEIL: . . . when I left, but it still is. And a lot of people don't like that. They say they think that they are too cold, the Swiss people. It isn't so. They are that, they like to be organized, see. So . . .

LEVINE: Well, when you moved to San Gallo what, you were in school there, too?

HEIL: Then I went to, uh, yes, first class, the first one.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

HEIL: Well, there I remember every, I don't know if it was every week or every two weeks. We used, they had a big pool in a big school, and we used to go bathing in there. That was the day boys and girls, a lot of, we were mixed in. But anyhow, we have to bring a clean shirt and we took a bath, see. And then what? After, from there we went in Canton Solothurn, more up higher in Switzerland. It's near the Rhine. I have a niece, she's still there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How do you spell that? Do you know how to spell it? Canton . . .

HEIL: Canto? Canton is, uh, is C, I think it's an O or an A. Canton. Well, maybe it is an A. Well, either one, either A or O with, let's say, Canton is C-O-N, uh, Con . . .

LEVINE: T?

HEIL: Canto. C-A-N-T-O.

LEVINE: Canto. And what was the second part that you said, Canto?

HEIL: Solothurn. Solothurn is, uh, let's say, uh, well, it's just like a province, see. And you have

different cities, different towns. Solothurn. It's not a county, no. And that is near Basel. Did you hear about Basel?

LEVINE: Yes, yes.

HEIL: Now, I have a niece there. And one of, my first brother, that's where he moved right when he was a young boy yet. He went to Basel. And on the one side is Switzerland. The other side of the river is Germany, see. And I was there, let's say now he's dead two years, oh, about four or five years ago.

LEVINE: Oh.

HEIL: Yes, after my brother died over in France, I took a trip in Switzerland.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about growing up, either things about where you lived, or things about Switzerland that were different from when you came here?

HEIL: Well, uh, all I know that I was, I mean, there was many years back, and at that time over here it wasn't the way it is now either. You know what I mean, see. Every generation there's a change. So, now, when we

were in San Gallo, even in Capensten where they were building the Simplon, we used to go and pick blueberries with little baskets. That was a good time, because nothing but mountains, you know. And we go, we went with the sled in the wintertime.

LEVINE: Oh, with the sleigh.

HEIL: A sled, yeah. Because I was too small, yeah. And, oh, that was a really good time, and ice skating, you know, all things like that. Plus when we lived in, I had, see, I'm coming back now. When we lived in Brig, I think. No, in Italy, because we moved back and forth in Italy and Switzerland. They had to finish in Italy, so that's why he came back, my father, and we lived there in a small town. We used to go an awful lot picking blueberries, and the wild strawberries. And plus we loved to go in the mountains, and we walked one time to St. Moritz it was, where I told you before there was a main place for skiing.

LEVINE: Skiing.

HEIL: Yes, of people from all over the world it used to be. Now they have a couple of more hard ones, you know, but that was one of the first ones, and in that

region. So we walked, and when you walk in those days I could see a lot of rich people, they were coming from the city and maybe different countries that they liked it where they went skiing. Well, they had always snow on the top, or icebergs in some places that never melt, you know. All year around. And, but down in the town it was different, because we had longer winters. So I remember these rich people, they had no other way. The train, the Simplon was not finished, so they could not use it. They had to go with the mules, or the donkeys, and that's how they traveled.

LEVINE: Up the mountain.

HEIL: Up the mountain. There was no planes, and there was no this and that. The planes, they came after, during the first World War.

LEVINE: So do you remember that then?

HEIL: That I remember, yes, oh, yes. I remember going to this St. Moritz. It was myself and my brother and a couple of other brothers and sisters. And we would go. That was a good time. And we picked mushrooms. We picked these blueberries, yeah, blueberries. And

an awful lot of these wild strawberries. And we would fill a pail, you know. And when we got home we sold it, too. And we made, let's say twenty cents. Twenty cents was one lire, one lire. I don't think it's worth one penny, one American penny now, no. Because their, the Italian money is very, very low. Now, and we answer what we did answer. See, that comes in my mind. When we lived in a small town we went up in a mountain, and we would go and pick wood, because there was no coal, no gas. There was a lantern, you know, for the lights. They used petroleum.

LEVINE: Kerosene lamps?

HEIL: Yes, yes. And, so . . .

LEVINE: So you would pick wood? You mean, like little pieces of wood?

HEIL: No. We'd cut down trees.

LEVINE: Oh, you cut down trees.

HEIL: That they were dry, and we were allowed from the town, see. They figure, because a lot of people, they went for that, and they could cut down, you could see when the tree is dry. So, and my brother, because I was

too small yet. We cut down the tree. You could pick.

And finally we went to pick the, you had to go pretty high in the mountains. And when we went we would see, you know, how they call it. There's an awful lot in the west, Oregon, where they go for a lot of wood. They cut a lot of trees down that it's up high and it goes down, and they go down, you know. They take the skin off all the trees, and then they go down. They go where is the river, and the river from then on it goes more in the city. I mean, I've been plenty of places like that. So we used to go and pick the wood. And my brother, he took the branches home.

LEVINE: Bark. Oh, uh-huh.

HEIL: And part of the bark, but that came out while he was going down the hills. So he made a collar. Let's say this is the tree, it's round. He made a collar all around. Let's say two, three inches away. And he put a rope. So when they came places that there was no down, he had a puller a little bit. And some time it went down I don't know how many yards. They call it a meter.

LEVINE: Meter. Uh-huh.

HEIL: Yes. So, uh, it was, it wouldn't be long, then. Maybe in a couple of hours we were home. When we were home, then my brother, he would get that wood. He have one, I got one. He always got the biggest one. And we did that quite often when we lived in a small town, not when we lived in a city. And we made a big stock like you see where they saw the wood, you know. They have it all piled up. And we had to make that for the winter, for the cooking and for the heat, see. Oh, yes. And, you know, also what they used they get it over here, too. You know, when you saw, these places that they have up north an awful lot, and that accumulate . . .

LEVINE: Sawdust.

HEIL: Yes. And we used to use that, too, to keep the fire, see. So when I see things like that, oh, boy, I remember. So I, we went through all those things. So then, when we were in the city that was a different story.

LEVINE: Did you cook when you were still over there?

HEIL: Not much. My older sister, she was only six years older than I was, see. Then there was a boy after

her, and then came my sister. Well, um . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember dishes that she made or that your aunt made?

HEIL: Well, uh, yes. But I remember well we used to go and pick chestnuts in the town. When we were, that we went for the wood in the same town. There was a lot of chestnuts. And you also could go and pick them. And there's the little one, and there's the big one, see. And we used to piled up in a big box like a sack, and we put in there and they get dry, and we used to cook them and you could cook them and make just like the, how you call it? The yellow corn, you know, when you cook it? I could talk about the yellow corn, too, my dear. We had that for breakfast in the morning, and when we went up to get wood those men, maybe there were a bunch of men, you know, doing that kind of work, and they used to cook that in a heavy pot. They put the water in and then they put the corn that is like a flour, see. And they cooked that, and they used that in place of bread. And they eat it every day, either that or potatoes, and then maybe with cheese or something like that. And in our home, when we lived, we had lived the best we could because

my father wasn't home all the time, see. And when we lived all alone, when we lived with my aunt on the other side then it was a different story. She was more in the city, and she cooked for the family, and we ate also, see. But when we were in the little town all by ourself, we ate plenty of these chestnuts. They get dry, and you could take the skin off and . . .

LEVINE: You'd boil them?

HEIL: Yes, you'd boil them, and you'd be surprised how good it was. We used to put milk also, you know. And they could make like a corn, also, fine, but we never did. But we used to, oh, we could boil them or you roast them, but most of the time it was boiling because it was easier, yes. But we did plenty of that in this particular little town. Between the wood, we had to have it for the winter, and between the berries and the chestnuts we were kept busy. Of course, we had vacation like they do, I don't know how long vacation you have when the schools are closed and, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember like, say, the few years before you came here, could you say what you were doing and what

you were like when you were in your teens and before you came here?

HEIL: Well, I couldn't talk too much about it because I didn't have a, except when I was eleven, you make friends in school, you know, and you play together. But when you're in the city it was a different story. Let's see. I don't want to make a story, I want to remember. We, what was that now? That would be near Basel, (Canton Solothurn, and I was bigger already. And over there, yes, maybe a few friends. But we had to stay in the house helping my sister to cook. We were not in my aunt's house then, also. And we, well, we had to study and . . .

LEVINE: Were you in school up until you left?

HEIL: Oh, yes, yes. No. Up to about fifteen years old. Of course, they didn't go to school, not even over here. They didn't go to school, like high school. There was no high school. You had to pay for high school. They had high school over there, too. But it cost you money, you know. But they had up to the eighth or ninth grade, something like that. So I don't know if I finish that much or not, I don't remember that.

Because I had to go back and forth in Italy and Switzerland, see.

LEVINE: Tell me what you were like. How would you describe what you were like when you were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old.

HEIL: Well, when I came in this country I liked everything from the other side. You couldn't take that away from me. Plus you come in this country, and my aunt and uncle, they came from the other side, a lot of those are all the people, they don't want to bury themselves, just to certain things. But the custom, they want to carry that over and over again. They don't do that no more, you know. So, what I wanted to say with that. So when I came I didn't like their attitude. Not towards me, they were wonderful. They couldn't be better. It was possible. He had a furniture store, my uncle. And he came from the other side, and he started working, and he made himself better, you know. So then I made some friends here, but we could not go out us girls. It was my sister and I and a cousin of mine, it's the daughter of my aunt when we were in Switzerland. That was also family. My God, they went through plenty, you know. And . . .

LEVINE: Well, before you tell me about life here, how about if you say what was it that decided you to come to this country, to leave, uh . . .

HEIL: Why? Because my older sister, when we got the letter from my aunt here, and she always wrote to my sister, and she always would say, "Well, your mother, I sent, I wanted her to be over here with me." But one time they were all packed up to come to this country and the last minute my father, he changed his mind, "No." You see, he knew what he was doing there, and he came when contact with the people that it would be okay for him. But coming in this country, and he didn't know, he knew my uncle, he met my uncle. And he didn't know if he would, if he would get along with him, because there were not, not because I want to brag about my father, because he didn't go to no college, but they were not educated in manners, in many things like my father was. He couldn't stand it when somebody they talked foolish, unnecessary, you know. He couldn't stand anything like that. So my father, he thought it over. "No," he says, "I'm not, we are not going." And that's why we didn't come in this country. We would have been born, probably. That was before I was

born, see.

LEVINE: That was before your brother died and your mother got the . . . Uh-huh.

HEIL: Yes, oh, yes. That was before. Now, I go with that because my aunt over here, she used to tell me. I didn't know when I was on the other side, because my father wasn't one of them to talk too much about it, you know. So, but that's how I find out, through my aunt over here.

LEVINE: So did she write, she wrote to your sisters.

HEIL: Oh, yeah, but . . .

LEVINE: Your sister told you.

HEIL: Yeah, sure.

LEVINE: Did your aunt say that she'd like you to come over?

HEIL: Oh, yes. She couldn't wait till. So I came here, she sent for the ticket for me.

LEVINE: I see.

HEIL: Yeah.

LEVINE: So do you remember leaving?

HEIL: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: How did you feel leaving?

HEIL: I didn't, I didn't think much of it because we were kind of used to moving, you know what I mean? One country, the other one, Switzerland and the north of Italy. For us, it was nothing. Even so, in the Switzerland, I lived in the southern part of Switzerland. I lived in the Austria side. I lived up in the north side. And I'm French, where I was born, really, they talk a lot of French, see. But the school, the language is German, Deutsche, yes. So, uh . . .

LEVINE: So you were used to moving. Were you excited by the idea . . .

HEIL: To coming over here? No. I wasn't that much excited because I had a lot of excitement on the other side. When you're a kid, oh, you're going here, you're going there, that's your good time, right, no matter how bad it is. So when I came here my aunt, she even sent me money to come to take along with me. She says, "And

don't bring no clothes. We take care of it over here." They were wonderful people.

LEVINE: So tell me when you left, did you bring anything with you?

HEIL: Just the clothes.

LEVINE: And . . .

HEIL: Clothes on. I didn't bring nothing. We had nothing in our family. We, well, my sister, she had a sweater done for me, or she made it herself, handmade, you know, of wool. And that was the signal to my uncle and my aunt that they knew me by the sweater.  
( they laugh )

LEVINE: Do you remember what the sweater looked like?

HEIL: Oh, yes, yeah. I wore it over here a long time. So, and we had to go and look for somebody to the agency, somebody that they would be responsible for me.

LEVINE: Who would travel with you?

HEIL: Oh, yeah. They had to travel with me in the same boat. Otherwise I couldn't come because I was not eighteen.

LEVINE: So do you remember examinations before you leaving?

HEIL: Oh, yeah, yeah. So, anyhow, we, so we finally found somebody and she was going to Detroit. There was a lot of automobile manufacturing industry over there. They were brothers and sisters, and they were from Torino. So the agency, the traveling agency gave us the address and we came in contact with them. So the sister, they were older than I was, and we came here together. Then once I was over here, then they would go their way. But my uncle and my aunt, they had to come and pick me up in New York, see. Otherwise I had to go back again. So when I came in this country we worked a couple of days in New York because there was too many boats. And, oh, they used to come in those, in that time, plenty, by the thousands, from all the countries. And . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the voyage itself before you got to New York?

HEIL: Well, yes. All I know, that many people there were sick. See, the pitch of the boat. It was a smaller boat, and the boat, when they're small, especially the water it's a little rough, they go this way ( she

demonstrates ) and you get a lot of seasick.

LEVINE: Was yours a smaller boat?

HEIL: Well, yes. I don't know how many people they would fit. Well, anyhow, we had to stay. Let's see. We had to go in line. I came with the third class. They had the first, second and third class, but my aunt sent for me for the third class, and I was happy with that. So then when we went to eat, only the third class did that. We had to stay in line with these aluminum dishes, you know. And they gave us the food, just like soldiers, let's say. And that was a surprise to me, you know. But yet it was a good time also. In those, at that age, you know, everything, you take for granted, everything is excitable. But I was glad when I wasn't there any more. So . . .

LEVINE: Were you in the steerage, way down in the hold of the ship?

HEIL: Well, uh, yes.

LEVINE: Like a dormitory, it was like.

HEIL: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. They had dormitory. We had no dining room. Not in third class. You had to be all

in, if it was nice you wait outside, see. But the second class and first class, they had dining room. Of course, it was nothing like they have now. So that was that. A lot of people sick. But I wasn't sick then. When we got to New York what did they do? About three mileage, what do they call it when the little boat comes in, that a boat comes from the other side. There's a little boat that goes and meet, I think three mile away from the port. What do they call that?

LEVINE: Oh, well, they had, they were like ferryboats that took . . .

HEIL: Yeah!

LEVINE: Took you, then, to Ellis Island?

HEIL: Yeah. But that wasn't it. When the boat comes in before he enters the port, there's a boat.

LEVINE: And they come aboard ship?

HEIL: Yes, yes. They do. Some of them, anyhow. They did over there. In those days you find a lot of people that they were dirty, which you find a lot of them now, too. Well, anyhow, it's different from in those

days. And I said, "You have to stay in line. I wonder why." And we were in line, and there was people, they would open up your eyes and see if you have disease, you know. And on the other side I had . . . ( she demonstrates )

LEVINE: Vaccinations?

HEIL: Oh, yes. And they looked in my eyes and so on. But not every city they do that. It depends which, from the south, anything went. From the north they are more fussy, see. And just like over here, you went in the south, anything was good enough. But where was the industry? It was a different thing altogether. After the second World War the south got fixed up, too, even in this country. I could tell the difference. So, uh, they got, a lot of people, they put tags on, and they had to be taken in a little boat and taken off, when they got on the port, not where they were stopped, before they enter, see. So they took those people. I don't know how many people, twenty-five, thirty or thirty-five, and they put them in the little boat, and they had to go be fumigated. They must have had bugs on them, see. So the one that they find, that's what they had to go. And they left

in the morning. In the evening, they took them back again. But we had to sleep on the boat. So in the meantime there was a boy younger than I was. He said, he must have been, you know where you're standing that you watch, you know, the water?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: This is Tape Two. I'm speaking with Drusiana Heil, and it's July 19, 1993. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. We're in Orange, New Jersey in Ms. Heil's home, and we were talking about the voyage, and you were just about to tell about a little boy aboard ship looking over the side.

HEIL: Yes, yes. So he said, "Your name is so-and-so Drusiana Laterini?" I says, "Yes." I says, "You come, come with me. Somebody's looking for you." So I went upstairs. I must have been down in the bunks where we were sleeping, you know. And the bunks also, they were just like the military, a big room, up and down. But not the second class and not the first class. But after a while there's no exist, they don't

exist, those bunks, any more. So my sister came on a beautiful boat with, a brand new one, two years after.

There was a big difference. My cousin came, oh!

LEVINE: Oh, you mentioned earlier before the tape was on. Tell the name of the ship.

HEIL: That I came? Dante Alighieri.

LEVINE: And that was its last voyage?

HEIL: That was the last, that's what I heard on the boat. It was the last voyage that it was doing, because it was quite old. Well, the way I'm talking it must have been old. Just like the military, you know. And, so where were we? Oh, so he took me by the hand, this boy, and he brought me upstairs. And he says, "Look, look what they . . ." There was this rowboat, you know. So my uncle and my aunt, they hired one of them which, when a boat, in those days, used to come, they used to, they'd pay so much, and they'd go and they'd meet the boat. And they would talk to you. "Hey, I'm your aunt." And this and that, see. So I heard, "Drusiana Laterini?" So I says, "Yes?" I looked at my uncle. "Gee," I says, "I wonder if he's my uncle. He's too good-looking and too young." And I was,

from my older sister she told me, "You've got to watch out." You know, and things like that. So anyhow, so he says, "Look." And he was there the day before. He couldn't get there. That's when they were passing examinations about the disease in your eyes and if you were good enough. So they heard that they took some people out, and he said, he must have inquired, you know. And, oh, she must have been one of them, but I wasn't. So, he told me that after a while, you know.

So, okay. And then he said to me, "All right. I'm going to send you some, uh, how do you call them? The French pastry or Italian pastry. Pastry, in the box.

They must have stopped at a bakery, you know. And he says, "I put some money in that box." So, you know, those rowboats, they were all fixed for those reasons, you know, because they made money, see? And he, and he put one of his cards from his business in the box also. So, and I got the box. When I looked, you know. I never knew my uncle. My aunt never seen him before. I only knew him by the mail. I never see any pictures. So he says, "We'll be tomorrow to pick you up." "Okay." Well, anyhow, he couldn't come. I think there was too many. They must have told him, "You come on the Sunday." So I slept two nights, and

they took us to the island . . .

LEVINE: Ellis Island.

HEIL: Ellis Island. I have a hard time to pronounce that word. They took us over there, and as we enter, you know, that gave me a memory when I went in New York to see that. It brought me back. When I was entering that door that's not fixed yet. That's the only thing that it's old yet. It's not all fixed, you know. Just before you put, right from the little boat, they bring you to the Ellis Island. And there is two doctors, whatever they were, inspectors. Before you put your foot in, in the building, they lift up your, the eyelashes, and they could tell right away if you have disease. They never had enough examination. Well, anyhow. "Oh," I said to myself, "you know, I was scared. And I thought it was funny. Boy, they're rough. You know, I never came across to anything like that. So, but it went so fast, and we all went in and they took us in a big, big room, and there was a lot of tables with benches, clean as a whistle that place was. It was nothing. When I went to see it now, compared when I got there. But I didn't see many rooms. So you had a tag here, and you had to stay

with that group with the tag on it. They could tell right away where you belonged, for what reason you're still there. See? I had a reason that somebody had to pick me up, otherwise they would have sent me back again. So I, I went to the island on a, oh, that was a jail for me. I was so sad, I was so sad. They had, uh, beds made of, um, you know this, that chicken wire, but the strong one, good one, the best one, you know, shiny? And they have all the separated, so many in one room, you know, big rooms. And they had a mattress on it, just like the kid, you know. So I had to sleep there. I said, "Oh, my God! When are my days finished over here?" And that brought me the melancholy, you know. And I was afraid, I says, "I bet I have to go and do that trip again, going back again." See? Because we were two days in a fog stopped. And the boat was going all the time, "Ooh, ooh." You know, it wasn't like it is now. So everything, those things, they gave me terrible the blues. So the next morning, oh, so when we went there they put us on the table, and we had sandwiches, and they put, they had butter, you know. And I says, "What is this? This isn't a butter. This is margarine." I didn't know that they had, in the other

side I only came across sweet butter, see. But here they had the salty butter, too. I didn't know any better. And I says, "Oh, my God." Well, anyhow, I ate that, and what was in that, it was a sandwich, and something to drink, and so on. Then it was time to go to bed in the evening. And I couldn't wait till I wake up in the morning, and see where I am. And then finally you have to get up, and we had the tickets with us, and we went in a big, big room. And in that room, boy, you came across all kind of people, all nationalities. I seen plenty, but I never seen like there, like that one, you know.

LEVINE: How did it strike you, all those people?

HEIL: Funny. From the east a lot of Arab, Jewish. I know that there were a lot of Jewish, because they had Jewish in Switzerland, in Germany, in France, all over, but I wasn't too familiar, you know. We didn't know any difference, if they were Jewish or whatever you was. We don't carry anything like that. "Oh, they're Polish. Oh, they're Italian, or they're German." I think they call it "squareheads." They don't, we didn't carry that. We were all the same. So I says, "Oh, my goodness. All these people." I

says, "Now I know why we all have those tickets they could tell. There was like an office, and there was a man, he'd get the paper, they got just so many at the time. And I guess my aunt and my uncle, they had to be there. It's just like a court, when you come to small court, see. Now they had to call my aunt and uncle, and then they'd call me. So the man came in the room. He says, ""Drusiana Laterini?" So I went like this. ( she demonstrates ) Well, I saw before other people that they were going, just so many, and that's it. It came my turn, and they brought me right near. They had like a case, and it was like a gate around. You couldn't go near them. So I, they started asking me questions. "Can you tell me," they asked me the name, and this and that, everything, see if it matches what they got, you know. So he says, "Can you tell me where is your aunt and uncle?" Well, I didn't know what to do that minute. I says, "What am I going to do now?" So I said, I had to lie. It's a good thing it came in my mind, because I was young.

I never was that your mind travels too much for you, you know. I was quite innocent. And I, when they asked me I says, "Well, I was too little. I don't remember them no more." I was afraid that they would

say, "Oh, you don't know, then you go back again."  
See? Everything was coming in my mind. So then, my  
uncle and my aunt, they were standing right near me, I  
didn't even know. And, well, anyhow, my aunt, she  
started to cry. She tried not to. So, and I was  
right away, uh, in their hands, see. And at that time  
my uncle had no car. We traveled with like one  
station. We went to the train, and we came in Orange.  
I had just a little, like a weekend. I didn't have  
much in there. A weekend suitcase. And I didn't  
bring no food or anything like that. First of all, in  
our places they didn't think of doing things like  
that. So anyhow, I came in this country. I didn't  
know I had so many cousins. Ooh, la-la! I'm telling  
you, I was so disappointed, so disappointed. But I  
made up my mind, I says, "Well, we see." Then . . .

LEVINE: Do you know why you were so disappointed?

HEIL: Because I wasn't prepared. I didn't know I had  
cousins over here. If I knew, see, I probably, well,  
maybe they're young like I am. Maybe I, you know, no.  
My uncle and my aunt were about forty-two, and that's  
in middle age. You're in the prime of your life. And  
I, when you are young and you're talking about people,

you already imagine that they are old. When I was really young, I figure forty, forty-two, forty-four, they're old already. Isn't that right, see? So anyhow, I . . .

LEVINE: So you were disappointed that they were old and you didn't, you weren't sort of ready to . . .

HEIL: No, no. Not for them. I wasn't disappointed on them, my uncle and my aunt. I was disappointed because when they took me to their home they had, my uncle had another sister, and they had a lot of kids, you know. They were cooking, they were going to have a dinner because I was coming from the other side. I had no reason to be blue, you know. My (?) I passed, and that was new to me, all those cousins. They couldn't talk no language with me. And they talked in Italian, but they talked with the southern part of Italian and I couldn't understand. They couldn't understand, because I could talk Italian. And I talked in German, and I talked in (?). Now I don't, I don't know one right. Well, anyhow, you get all, well, anyhow, I said, "What's the matter with these people?" And I thought maybe that they could talk different languages. No, the only thing was English, which you

couldn't blame them. After many years I was thinking. I says, "Gee." My mind was too far ahead. It wasn't their fault they couldn't talk any other languages. Because in the house they talked in English, see. Then a lot of things that I saw, between sisters they were talking something, and they didn't want, although I couldn't understand them, they were whispering. And I thought that was very rude, see. That's no manners. See, I was thinking of all those things. So that's that. But I got used to, I got used to it the hard way.

LEVINE: Tell me what struck you as different about when you came here, whatever you saw around you or . . .

HEIL: You mean, no, nothing. Nothing. I saw beautiful things in the other side, and over here, as I said, I was in the wrong atmosphere. Although they had nice buildings in New York. Well, they were the first, but they could not beat the European country. They could not beat them. And over here they building them today, maybe they are in Europe, too. That was down in something else again, you know, more modern. But in the other side they don't do that. I don't know now, but I don't think that they carried that. I

think they have antique. So all those things. I sent for my sister then. No, my cousin came first, yeah, before my sister. My cousin came about a year-and-a-half. She came from Switzerland also. Now, my cousin, my aunt was sending her the tickets too to come in this country. And when she got, no, I got mixed up now. With her, her own sister. When she got in Naples, because she have a leave from Naples. I left Italy from Genoa, you know. There's a port, see. And then another port is Naples. So her sister was there when my cousin was on her way to come in this country, and she stopped in Naples. No, she went straight over to her sister's house, and from Naples she would go on the boat to come this country. Now, she had money, Swiss money. And her sister, she figure, "Boy, these are a lot of money." You know. Well, uh, her sister said, "Oh, why don't you stay here?" This and that and that. So my cousin, you know, she said, "Oh, I can't! I have to get the boat." "No, no, no, you don't." Well, anyhow, she asked for her money, because she wanted to get all the money that she had. She figured, "I'm older, and it's more, I'm more safer." She was safer. So she give her the money, and the Swiss money, you know, is the

highest. It's higher than the American money, the Swiss money. You know this?

LEVINE: Yeah.

HEIL: Well, you don't mind if I ask you sometimes.

LEVINE: No.

HEIL: So, because I was surprised myself in the agency. I says, "How come?" Like a dumbbell, you know. They says, "Well, yes, Swiss money. It's higher." So, anyhow, there I made a fool out of myself, and that, my brother was there from, with me, the one from France. Well, anyhow, we just looked one another, and I said, "Well, I made a big boo-boo this time." Because I knew all the, how much the Swiss money, the German, the French, the Italian money. I was quite, how shall I say . . .

LEVINE: Sophisticated, it sounds like.

HEIL: I knew all those things, and I keep it up, too. The same thing with the history, different countries. I like to keep it up. I could talk about it, see.

LEVINE: So when your cousin went to stay with her sister . . .

HEIL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Her sister got her Swiss money from her.

HEIL: Yes! So my cousin, then she had to go and work.

LEVINE: Still, she was still in Italy?

HEIL: Yes! So she was still in Italy. She ask her, um, she ask her, uh, sister to give her the money, see. So she says, "Oh, I had to use them up. I don't have it any more." All right, that's besides the point. And she had to go to work, housework, in order to make some money. She figured, "I can't go home. I can't tell my mother what happened over there." And . . .  
( she attempts to reach something )

LEVINE: Do you want me to take . . .

HEIL: Oh, no, it's right here. So, uh . . .

LEVINE: So were you expecting your cousin when she didn't, when she didn't come?

HEIL: Well, my aunt, then, she received a letter. Excuse me for doing this, but I kind of broke it and it just bothers me. ( there is a scraping noise on the tape )  
So, anyhow, she made money, no, no. What happened

then, she told my aunt over here, she says, "You know, I came with the money, and she told it, too, what her sister did." So my aunt, what did she do, she makes a ticket from the United States and she send for the voyage to come in this country, see. So she got here.

In other words, my aunt sent her the ticket, too. And you don't find many aunt like that, you know. They were wonderful people.

LEVINE: So it was two years after you . . .

HEIL: Yes.

LEVINE: That your own sister came then.

HEIL: She came, this cousin of mine came a year-and-a-half after, and my sister came about two years and a few months after.

LEVINE: And were you still living with your aunt when your cousin came and your sister came?

HEIL: Oh, yes, yes. They wanted us to be with them. And my aunt, she was always sick, and my uncle, he managed a business, and we helped her out all the time. You know, my aunt never had to do no dishes or no cleaning. We did everything. We, even better, see.

LEVINE: Did you work at a job, too?

HEIL: After, about a year after I came in this country I went to work. I says, "Well, I want to help." My people on the other side, well, we were brothers and sisters, my father was working. But he left, I left. He was not in Torino. He stayed in, near the Simplon over there, see. My sister then got married and then she was in Torino. Her husband was there. His father and mother was there. So that's where I went. And, yes. Because she was in Italy before I went, my sister. She was a nurse during the first World War, and she's been around. And being that that's the war, you know, then she met the fellow and he was from Torino. And they got married and they put up a home. They didn't put up a home, they lived with the father, his father and mother. Well, now . . .

LEVINE: Is this the same sister that then came here later, or no? It's a different sister?

HEIL: No, that's a different sister. She was six years older than I am.

LEVINE: And she did like a mother to us. You know, my mother

wasn't there, and she did a lot of cooking, the best she could, anyhow. She was like a mother. We took orders from her. Well, anyhow, so that's that. So then my cousin came here. I felt a little better. But she felt the same way, the way, we were raised that different, the way I felt, that's the way she felt. When my sister came, "Oh, I'm not going to stay here. I'm not going to stay here." See, you were with the different people, different atmosphere, you'd be surprised, that's enough. It's just like when you go with a bunch of no-good kids, see. You don't, you don't come up nice, see. And a lot of crimes, although they were not in crimes, my goodness, but, I mean, that's how it is. I wasn't used to, and I used to say, "My God, these people, they've got no manners." And this and that. Everything went by, and the way they talked to my uncle and my aunt, we didn't dare to talk to my father like that either. So everything was piling up, and we said to my sister, "Genevieve," her name was Genevieve, "you know, we're going to make some money, at least two or three years." We didn't pay no board. They didn't want board, because we did everything in the house. And we make a little money, and we go to the other side, and

we, maybe we buy or sell a home or something, see. Because our family was getting more separated anyhow.

So then what happened? I'm still here, thank goodness. Thank goodness for that. ( Dr. Levine laughs ) The fascists was coming up in Italy before the nazis. They were there already when I came in this country, but I didn't know. I didn't know much of politicians, things like that. That didn't interest me. So when my sister came and I seen a newspaper, the fascists, they were coming up very much all over in Italy, you know. So then, and my sister then, when she came in she told us a lot of stories, and she liked it, because they were full of fun. That's where these leaders, dictators. They go to the young people, because they can turn them just the way they want them, see. And they give them a good time. That's what Hitler did. That's what Mussolini did, and that's what they do. If they had trouble over here, they go to the young generation or to the student, because you could bend them the way they want them, see. They can't bend me or you, especially me.

LEVINE: ( she laughs ) Well, tell me, like what would they do? Did your sister say? In other words, they would

go in, and the young men would, would be, uh . . .

HEIL: It's a military, see. They was, they took away the military. They made them as a fascists, like the Nazi, but they weren't like that. I mean, they were different rules. So, not that I seen, but my sister, the most she stayed there, the more she seen it, see. So my brother, the one, my second brother, not the second, the one, he died. My, the one before me, he was in St. Moritz at that particular time. They were working on water. There's a lot of water coming from mountain, and then they, they test it, they filter. And that water goes down in a town for power, you know, all things like that, see. And he was a mechanic and machinist, and in things like that. So, and sometimes when he wanted to come down to the town, he went through, you know this, you know where I seen them over here in New Hampshire and Vermont, and you have a seat, just like when they go skiing, see. Boy, there was plenty of that.

LEVINE: A lift.

HEIL: Yes, yes. Yes, they had all kinds. And, I mean, different stories, but where I come from there was

plenty of that. And that was the only transportation, you know. And to go quick, otherwise you had to go all around. So . . .

LEVINE: Your brother was working in St. Moritz . . .

HEIL: Yes, yes. So they find out that, because they're little towns, and they know, everybody knows the other one. And, well, what is he doing here? He's a young fellow. And when that was, that during the age to go present yourself, you know, how you call, like over here.

LEVINE: To be drafted?

HEIL: Yes. And so he didn't have to, he got a card. But because in St. Moritz belonged to Italy there, see. So he said, "Well, I go, but I don't think I need this." So when he present himself, "No, you're a Swiss citizen. You're not an Italian citizen. You don't have to go in the army." Okay. So the fascists, they find out, and they say, "Well, what's the matter? Can't you join the fascists?" He says, "Well, no. It isn't that I don't like them, but I just don't want to. I have my work and so on." And they said, "You better change your mind." Because

then it was getting worse all the time.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

HEIL: And they went after him two, three times, beat him up. And this particular time he was up in the mountain, and they could find out where you are and this and that. They investigate, you know, they have all those secret service. So they got a hold of him up in the mountains, and they find him on a gutter up in the mountains. You know, they have small, uh, walk, you know. Like you, the small path to walk. And God knows, if I would go there now, and you see then, you see the ravine down there, oh, boy. I can't go. That happened to me when I went back to the other side. I says, "Oh, my goodness." When you're young you don't see the danger. Well, anyhow, they find him in, uh, alongside of it, so some tourists, I guess, that they pass by with a donkey or mules, you know, because there was no other transportation. They find him, and they took him to the hospital. And they left him there as he was dead, but he find himself in the hospital, and then he said what happened to me. He

says, "Well, they're after me. And they cannot touch me, because I'm not Italian citizen. I'm a Swiss, see." So he had to volunteer, and they told him, "Why don't you volunteer?" He says, "No. Why should I volunteer? I have my job. I don't have nothing against it." Well, anyhow, my dear, this last time he figured, "I better go away from here." And he went in France. He went in France because otherwise they would have, they would find out that he got better. And he went in France, and over there, then, he met my sister-in-law in the center of France. That's where he met her. And he went there, and he was a mechanic and machinist. He knew quite a bit about that kind of work. And what does he do? He, he wanted to put his own business. Now, when he was in France, he says, "You cannot put your own business. You have to be a French citizen, see. And he says, "How come?" Well, every country they have their own ruling, so he had to go for one year in the army in France, and then when he come out he could put his own business up. And he was, it was legal, then, see? And he didn't want to do, he didn't want to have nothing to do with the fascists. He says, "What is this? They're terrible, coming up, and so on." And, well, anyhow, and he did

the best thing, and he went in France, and he met, he had a good head, he was quite intelligent. Not he just went plain school, no, but he knew his work. And he made very good. He brought up a family, and they went from Center of France he moved near Paris, about a half hour away, see. Did you ever hear of Saint Germain, you know? Around there. And, anyhow . . .

LEVINE: So he stayed in France, then?

HEIL: He stayed in France. He died two years ago. Yes, two or three years ago, I think. Yeah. He was ninety. He was, he died in November, in December, the next December of the next month, he would have been ninety, was his birthday on Christmas day he died. Well, anyhow, I'm past ninety now. ( she laughs ) But, you know, you have to be prepared, who knows.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about what kind of work did you do once you started working here?

HEIL: Oh, I did quite a few jobs. I went to work in a box factory where they're making the box corrugations, like, see? I don't know for what. I was quite green. I had no girlfriends. And my aunt, she had friends, being that they had business I says, well, "I want

your daughter to see if she could get a job where she's working, so they did." They got, I couldn't talk English or anything. So, okay. And they took me right away. No, no. Before that job, when I came, the first job it was, I take the thread off from basting where they made men's shirts. It was on Main Street. And all I did is taking the basting off, and I was getting six dollars a week of forty-eight hours.

At that time we all worked forty-eight hours at that time. It's not like your days. So that was how much, about six dollars a week or something like that, see.

So, well, I figure at least I could have something in my hand. She always bought me one thing or the other one. You know, and so on. So after, I think they were closing up. There wasn't much work. And I went to work with this box factory, corrugation. You had to glue them together, put something in, you know, so on. And there I didn't like the girls. You know, after the first World War a lot of people, younger people, for instance, like your generation after me. Is that right? And they used to make fun of people that they came from the other side. That didn't happen at the second World War. It was different altogether. But when I came, "Ah, this greenhorn!"

They didn't care. That's why I couldn't stay here. How they talked like that! We see all kind of people in the other side from all over the world, we never thought of anything like that. And, you know, I couldn't stand that. I couldn't stand that. So then, you know, and I was too sensitive besides, see. You take everything the hard way. So I didn't like the girls, especially they talking, you know, they're whispering. And I thought, no. Then I got to, I didn't stay there long. I went to work. I used to love to travel. But I went to work in Clark;s, down in Newark. You know, they had, there was something like in Paterson all threads, material. They had, you know, Paterson, it was the headquarters where they made all the thread and material, Paterson. No more now. And Clark, they had two factories down in Clark, right on the other side of the river. And that was most for threads. So I went to work there. And I liked it, to get the train and to go there and, you know, you're young. And so, but I didn't like the girls either. I didn't like the people at all. And I didn't know any other people. So my uncle and my aunt, my uncle was always at the store, and my aunt, sometimes she went to the store. And she used to say,

"What do you care about the people?" And, "Don't take their ways." She says, "You do, keep on doing the way you're doing." Because she knew, you know. I don't want to brag, I mean, manners. It was altogether different, according to my cousin. So anyhow, and then from there where did I went to work? I went to work, I got the train. They make, like the radios, for radio, the machines inside. I got the tube down in Newark, and then the first station, that's where I got off. And I went to work there. It was a big place. Now, over there they had to work in groups, see. I didn't know. I never went to work in a factory on the other side. I was too young. I didn't know any better. And so I said, "Oh, no. I like to work." Yes, because I get the train, it was something different for me. And then I find a job in General Electric. And in General Electric I worked there eight years and I couldn't talk English, and I had to take an interpreter with me, one of my cousins, see. And the people, they were so wonderful, in the office. I could understand, but I could not talk. And besides, I kept back from talking. That's what's wrong with the people. They're afraid to talk, and they don't say it right, but that's the only way it

could help you out. Me, I was much better years ago than what I am now. You see, then I deal with a lot of Germans that they came from the other side, and they were worse than I was, so you could just imagine.

But you should always try to better for yourself, and I believe in that. So, anyhow, I got in General Electric and I worked eight years. Now, in General Electric, then one day my boss, he must have come right after the first World War, too, from Germany. And I saw him coming, and he had a young fellow, and he, the bench, the benches, they were this big, but long ones. He was right in back of me, this fellow, and he learned what to do and so on. I mean, I could hear them that they were talking German, see. Oh, I said. And I felt sorry. As soon as, it didn't matter to me what country he came, but I used to feel sorry for the people because I went through plenty.

Although I had the best to eat, the best in dressing and the best of home, but I wasn't happy. I wasn't happy. So when the boss went away we got kind of friendly a little at the time, and I knew he couldn't talk English either. He was a very good designer. He was a, a silverer, an engraver on silver. They used to, you see that thing there? ( she tries to move )

Ow, oh, my legs! That big one?

LEVINE: Yes.

HEIL: Well, that's made Henry, but he did with tools. He worked. You know those tea sets and coffee sets with the tray, with the cream thing and so on, and the coffee pot. They used to be all in one, and they used to do it by hand. And that's what my husband did. He learned the trade from Frankfurt. That's where he came from, see? And before the war they had, before the second World War, though, they did all that kind of work. And he went to school there for that. Then he came in this country, he had the paper, he was already nineteen. He had the papers that you graduate from that, and that there was any places where they make that. And people, these big businesspeople, they figure why put up a factory? They used to send orders to Germany, although every country made, but in Germany it was the biggest, and they figured it pays for us to have it sent already made. And then after so many, so when he came there was no such a thing, but they were talking about putting up factories, see. It was, you know, right in the cream of the crop when all the people was coming in. And people, they were

not all like me. There were a lot of intelligent people and people for business that they came in this country. The country was pretty young yet. So he couldn't find new jobs. This is one. And he couldn't get along with my, with his cousins and his uncle and aunt. They were a different type also, see. And I used to say, I went (?) and says, "I don't care what country." Because we don't care what country they come here as long as he was white, see, white race. But we married any kind which, that's what we did in our family. And he, what I wanted to bring out, well, anyhow, I met them, and we started to go out. And I used to say, "Well, I don't care." I liked it because he came from the other side. I didn't like him, a certain way that he had, you know, but that you learn. And I didn't want him anyhow, and, well, just destiny had to be like that. But he was a good man, and that's what I wanted to bring up. When we talked between us, then my German was coming back again. And I still remember, when you don't talk another language, you forget, you forget completely. You may remember something you're talking, you know, but, if you hear the certain words, but the talking, it's not there no more, and that's what happened to me. And

that's what was happening to my husband, too, although he only talked German, and the American. But the American language he talked better than I did. Yes, he did. So . . .

LEVINE: So your . . .

HEIL: We got along very well. And when there was something that he couldn't tell me, he made a design right away, and I knew right away, see. Maybe we talked about a certain kind of flower. He made a design of that kind of flower, and that was it. We were keeping company already.

LEVINE: What was his name?

HEIL: Leo. Leo, or Heil, that was his last name. Very short, short name. In fact, in the beginning I said, "Maybe it's Leonard?" "No, my name is not Leonard. It's Leo, L-E-O." Leonard is a name. I thought maybe it was shortened, you know. And so that's that. But I always said, "You give me a man from Europe." There's no such a thing as you go alone. That's different altogether. It comes in your mind. You find good and bad in all nationalities and in all, all races.

LEVINE: Well, let me ask you this. We're getting, we've got not too much time left, but the fact that you started out in Europe and you lived in Switzerland and you lived in Italy, how do you think that affected you as a person then, because you lived most of your life here.

HEIL: Yes.

LEVINE: But what difference do you think that made?

HEIL: There was no difference, because we were used to. You know, and in Europe the people, they coming all together. Although there's a lot of them of those old-fashioned people, "Oh, he's Polish." You know, they have that, they're coming more from, not intelligent, anyhow, more the lower class people. They're coming up, they grow older, and they take their great parents way of doing things, but the world doesn't work like that. You have to go to work. I believe, working, going with the world, although I'm old-fashioned in certain ways. But these things, I know that it's better, the newer generation. So maybe some generations, maybe they do some things that I don't like, but after all, who am I? Maybe someday I

do the same thing, which is right. And I give the young generation a lot of, uh . . .

LEVINE: Leeway to do what they want . . .

HEIL: Yes, they are open, they are open. This younger generation, you come next to me, your generation, you told me this morning you are about, how much did you say you are?

LEVINE: Fifty-four.

HEIL: No! ( Dr. Levine laughs ) You don't look fifty-four. My God! Well, you're keeping up very well, yes. I mean, in face, in everything, you know. Some that have fifty-four, well, either they're all dolled up that they spoil their looks or, uh, but you're doing very well. I look like the Dickens now. I never looked like this. I'm disgusted to myself, anyhow. And I have a little pain here, a little pain there. But what's that? That's nothing.

LEVINE: What is your life like now, this phase of your life?

HEIL: Well, my life now, I think, well, I wonder how much more can I live? I think, I was, when I was younger I was afraid talking about that. I was afraid all the

time of death. I don't want to know where I'm going to go. And, but it's altogether different. I had to make up my mind, no. There's no use. And when I talked something to my cousin, my niece over there, I says, "Well, Marie, I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that." Or something in the family, you know. "Oh," she says, "aunt." I says, "I don't know when it's going to happen." See, it hurts me. She say, "Don't talk like that." She says, "The way you are you're doing good." She gives me, although I fight it. I got so that I can't fight it no more. I can't fight it no more. I know, how long can I go. Another two or three years maybe, or maybe not. Who knows?

LEVINE: You can go past a hundred. People are doing that more and more, you know.

HEIL: Yes. Oh, yes. The last seventy-five years people are living every bit of twenty-five years longer, yes. Well, there was my brother, he died, the one in France he was ninety, let's say, the next month was ninety. My brother, the one in Switzerland, he was the first one, and I think he was either ninety-four or ninety-six. Now, my sister, though, when she died over here,

the one in Italy, she saw too much of the first World War, and she saw too much about the fascists when the Nazis came in Italy. She had to go for an interpreter, you know. When they hit one of the Nazis, they would put the line all around, and they knew where my sister was, and she was, they couldn't find somebody else, so she would interpreter, you see.

She knew the three languages fluently, better than I did. So anyhow, and she saw too much, and she took sick after the war, after the war. And her heart, she was full of (?), you know, things like that. She died, she was only fifty-two in 1950, yes. But that was the war, I'm saying.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds as though the genes in your family are to live to old age.

HEIL: Yes. Yeah.

LEVINE: All things being equal, yeah.

HEIL: Now, like me, I had cancer. Nobody in my family had that. That comes in the genes, too. Soon as they heard, you know, there's no use saying, "Oh, no, that can't be." But you could get it just the same in another way, see. It's just like sugar. I remember

in the beginning of the second World War, doctors, they used to fight. One believed it was inheriting, and some other doctors they didn't. They were in newspapers. Fellow, find out, see. And, well, that, you could get it just the same, sugar. But it's inherited. And you inherit everything. Today they could see. ( she coughs ) Excuse me. On babies. I just, that's not the first one, but the other ones, I came in contact. Now, like there's my niece's daughter, she got a baby, and they had to take him to the hospital last week. And they couldn't find out, they do wonderful things today, even though they test by the blood. And so this doctor said, "Well, I think there's something with, ay, ay, ay. It's a small thing. It's green, liver. I think it's the liver. And they could tell where it came from, you know. So, and they ask, I mean, I don't want you to repeat this, but my niece told me, see. And she said, "Well, you know, they had to find out, and they said it comes from the family. It must be the father's family." They investigated. That helps the doctors, which is no more than right. Years ago they would keep silence. See, that's wrong. And, so, she said it, my niece said it, "Yes, we find out. They want to ask

and find out if that's from the father of the, the father of the baby, he had that now, and he had to have something taken out or something. I don't know.

I didn't quite understand her. But, then they know that baby have something. But I came in contact with another grand niece of mine with a baby. They were born only about two, three months in a different, two, three months difference. And that baby also took sick. They had, she was only about two months old, they had to make an operation, and they wanted to find out what it was, and it came from his family, too, see. When they did go history back, and sure enough, and they find out that that's what he had, see. And that's, now, what I wanted to say, I had cancer. Nobody in my family had that. Rheumatics, yes. And I, I always watch on television, you know, that say a woman is supposed to watch herself. So one night I feel myself on my breast. And I'm not one of them I'm looking for things, so I let it pass two, three nights. And then I said, "Well, let me feel again. Maybe I find something." A little, like a little marble. And then I let it go for a couple of days, it was nothing happening. "It's my imagination," I said to myself, "and I let it go." But then I felt myself

again. I says, "No, I think I better go to the doctor." So before I went to the doctor I called my niece up down there, Marie. And I said to her, "Marie, well, I want to go to the doctor, but I'm going to stay here." She told me, "You're going to stay a couple of days down here." I always go, and then I have one in Graham Park, too. So, anyhow, I went in there, I says, "Marie, when I go in bed tonight I want you to look at me, my breast." And I wanted to have peace in my mind, because that was kind of worrying me. So, no pain, nothing. See? So you say it must be your imagination. So, anyhow, I went upstairs, and there she come, and I pull up my nightgown, and she just looked at me, she says, "Yes, you have something." I says, "How do you know what do I have?" "I could see." I never thought of it. I took showers. This breast was going sucked in. Maybe you, I came in conversation with other people and they never knew that. I never knew either. I never looked, you know. It started to withdraw in. And that's the first thing she noticed. So she didn't say me nothing yet. I says, "Now I'm going to feel you." She felt. "Yes," she says, "you have something." "Well, you told me before you knew right away." So

she says, "Yes, I tell you what I saw." And she told me what it was. I says, "I saw the nipple went, was going inside, but it just started, see." So I says, "Marie, Monday I'm going home and I'm going to the doctor." "Okay." I went to the doctor and she came with me, and the doctor see me and he says, "Yes." I says, "There." Without him touching it, "Yes, you have something." So, and then he feel me up and so on. I says, he says, "Yes, Mrs. Heil." In fact, he doesn't call me Mrs. Heil. He calls me by the name. He says, "I can't get over that name. It's such a beautiful name." I hope you don't think that I'm bragging. So, because I don't go by that name. All my papers are Drusiana, but otherwise they call me something else, Gemma, see? I heard somebody on the boat when I was coming in this country, and I loved that name, Gemma. It comes from a gem, you know what's a gem. And, so, but my name in any paper is Drusiana. Well, okay. Then I'm going to tell you the story of Drusiana. So, anyhow . . .

LEVINE: Let me just say something, because we just have about thirty seconds more on the tape.

HEIL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, I just want to say, in case it runs out, that it's really been a pleasure. This is a wonderful tape, and your stories are just wonderful.

HEIL: And that's finish? ( referring to the tape recorder )

LEVINE: Yeah.

HEIL: Oh! Yeah. Well, most of it's all gone. Well, anyhow, my dear . . .

LEVINE: Whatever you'd like to say, then we'll close.

HEIL: You could always edit up for that matter in your book. Isn't that right?

LEVINE: Well, is there anything you'd like to say before we close?

HEIL: Well, I don't know. I could say, I tell you what I could say. You know, my mind was always of Europe, always of Europe. And I didn't go back. Well, there was a war, and I had no money. After twenty-eight years my husband and I, we both wanted to see our family, so we went in France to the headquarters to meet the wives and the children. Then we went in Italy, and then we went in Germany for one month to

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see. We had the whole family. And then we went in  
Switzerland, because I had people all over.

( tape ends )