

EI-417

HARRY HOCHSTADT

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AGE 13

PASSAGE ON "THE QUEEN MARY"

PORT OF EMBARCATION: CHERBOURG

RESIDENCES: VIENNA; BRONX, NEW YORK

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here at Ellis Island in the Immigration Museum Oral History Studio. It's December 8, 1993. And I'm very happy to have Harry Hochstadt here who came through Ellis Island in 1938 from Austria when he was thirteen years of age. Welcome, and let me start by asking you your birth date.

HOCHSTADT: Thank you. I was born on September 7, 1925, in Vienna, Austria.

LEVINE: Okay. And, uh, did you live in Vienna up until you left Europe?

HOCHSTADT: Yes, yes, I did.

LEVINE: Okay. What do you remember about your early childhood in Vienna? First of all, maybe if you give your mother, her name and maiden name, and your father's name.

HOCHSTADT: My mother's maiden, well, my mother's full name was Amalie,

which is I guess Emily ( he laughs ) in our version, although it's spelled A-M-A-L-I-E, and her maiden name was Dorn, D-O-R-N. And she did, she was not born in Vienna. She was born in a city called Czernowitz. If I spell it, it's C-Z-E-R-N-O-W-I-T-Z, which was the capital of the Bukovina, B-U-K-O-V-I-N-A. The Bukovina was the Austrian part of the, excuse me, the Roumanian part that belonged to Austria when it was still part of the Austria-Hungarian empire, and Czernowitz was the capital. It was a very substantial city of about a hundred thousand. And, um, my father, whose name was Samuel Hochstadt, came from a very small village, also in the Bukovina. The village was Jakobeny, J-A-K-O-B-E-N-Y. And, um, they both came to Vienna, well, my father came to Vienna in 1914, just before the outbreak of the war. My mother came to Vienna during 19, in 1916, in the middle of World War One. They didn't know each other at the time, but somewheres my father and my uncle became friends, and my uncle introduced my father to his sister, and they got married in 1922. So, and I was born in 1925.

LEVINE: Were you the oldest child?

HOCHSTADT: I was the only child. And, um, so we lived in Vienna. I could describe some of the life in Vienna.

LEVINE: Please, absolutely, describe the life.

HOCHSTADT: Well, my father was a book, well, an accountant, really, although in Vienna there was no very sharp distinction between accountant and bookkeeper, because here we have a CPA and a bookkeeper, but there it was like a, there were high level and low level bookkeepers, so my father was an accountant, in that sense of the world. And, um, we lived in a small apartment.

We weren't terribly poor, but still the lifestyle was very different from what most people are used to in America. We had an apartment where we had no central heating, no running water.

Well, we had a cold hall water tap, excuse me, cold tap in the hallway that served the whole landing. So if we wanted water we had to go out to the hallway with a pitcher or pail or something to fetch water.

LEVINE: This was an apartment house?

HOCHSTADT: This was an apartment house, yes.

LEVINE: And how many families were there?

HOCHSTADT: Well, there were three apartments per floor, and I think it was five floors. I must admit, I don't recall. We were on the second floor.

LEVINE: And what were your living quarters like?

HOCHSTADT: Well, we had what I guess we would call a three-room apartment.

Well, there was a substantial hallway, a large kitchen, and then a living room and a bedroom, and usually I slept on the couch in the living room. If there was company, I would go to sleep in the bedroom, and then my father would carry me to the living room in the middle of the night when the company left.

LEVINE: And how about cooking? What was, how was that done in your apartment?

HOCHSTADT: Well, we had a gas range, and, you know, my mother cooked the meals there. That was pretty standard. Of course, we didn't have a refrigerator. We did not have a bathroom. We had a hall toilet that we shared with another tenant, and we, for

baths we would go to a public bathhouse.

LEVINE: Oh, could you describe that?

HOCHSTADT: Yeah. Well, the bathhouse, well, they had first class or second class. I don't recall the prices, but the, I would say, loosely speaking, probably the second class was like a nickel or so, and the first class like a quarter. And first class you had like your own little changing room and stall shower, and the second class, which we normally went to, there was a room where you changed, you know, with lockers and an attendant, and you would put your clothes into the locker and the attendant would lock it up, then you went into a big shower room with many shower heads and washed up and came out and dried off and got dressed. And, um, there was a very fancy bathhouse also, where my father used to go, called a donaubad.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

HOCHSTADT: D-O-N-A-U-B-A-D. Dona is Danube, so it was a Danube bath. That was an absolutely luxurious place and, once in a while, as a special thrill, he took me there.

LEVINE: What made it so luxurious?

HOCHSTADT: Well, they had saunas in different temperatures, and steam rooms at different temperatures, and they had a big pool where they made waves once an hour so it was like the ocean. You know, they used air pressure to make waves. They had rooms where you could sleep, and had a restaurant. And once my father took me to the restaurant and, as a special thrill, ordered an eel sandwich, which I couldn't eat. Smoked eel. I'm not sure I could eat it today, but that's. ( he laughs )

LEVINE: Were these bathhouses social occasions?

HOCHSTADT: Well, I think in the fancy one where my father went there were places to socialize, yes. The places, the place where my mother and I went frequently, uh, no. You just went in, did what you had to do, and left. Now, a little interesting aftermath, two years ago, in the summer of '91, my wife and I went to Vienna. This was my first return to Vienna. I wanted to show her the neighborhood where I used to live, and we walked around, I said, "There's a house where I lived," and then two blocks away, "Well, here's the elementary school where I lived, and let's walk this way, and here's where my uncle used to live. Now, if we go to the corner and walk up the next block, we'll see the house where my aunt lived." And suddenly we passed the bathhouse, which I had forgotten about, and it was still in operation. It wasn't open every day, it was open, I think, four days a week. So here we were, fifty-one years later, and that bathhouse was still in operation. Which means, clearly, even today there's still a need, there are people who still don't have private baths in their apartments. Anyway, so we lived, um, in that apartment. When I was born the Austrian government was a socialist government. In 1934, in February, I think, there was a revolution, and a Catholic socialist government, well, the social Catholics, as they were called, but they were really kind of a fascist government, very right-wing, very conservative. Not Nazis, but extremely conservative. And there was really a bloody revolution. I r we had to stay home. There were no electric lights, because the electric plant wasn't working. Uh, tanks rumbled through the streets, we heard machine-gun fire and cannons and so on,

and the socialist government was overthrown.

LEVINE: Did life change, uh, after that?

HOCHSTADT: Sure.

LEVINE: Well, how about if we deal with your life before that event happened, before the government was overthrown, and I'll ask you a few more questions, and then after that, because it probably was different.

HOCHSTADT: Well, the primary change that I noticed was, of course, school. Under the socialist government we, you know, we had school, and the school was, you know, you just went to school. In the classroom you had kids, boys, girls of different religions, I mean, Catholic. Austria was primarily, Austria was primarily a Catholic country, so the vast bulk of the population was Catholic. Nevertheless, there was a substantial presence of Protestants and Jews. Vienna had a total population that was, I think, about two million, and ten percent were Jewish.

LEVINE: Were you, did you get along well? Was there a bad feeling between the groups?

HOCHSTADT: I would say for the most part we got along well. Of course, these were the early grades, you know, six to ten or so, I mean, six years of age, ten years of age. I don't think we had significant problems. Although, now that you mention it, I'll mention one incident. My family was not religious. I mean, we were Jewish, my father and mother were, let's say, they wanted to keep their Jewish heritage alive without, however, being religious. Now, in Vienna they had a Jewish community. That meant, like, you had to pay a tax to that, and out of that

money the Jewish community would take care of certain Jewish affairs. For example, there were Jewish charities, and in school, even before the revolution, the, um, you had to take religion in school. So one hour a week was devoted to religion. And for that purpose the class would be split up into Jews, Protestants, Catholics, and there was another category called konfessionslos, without confession. In other words, people who denied having any religion. And they were Jewish people who, for example, didn't want to . . .

LEVINE: Affiliate with the Jews.

HOCHSTADT: Affiliate, yeah, that's the word, I guess. So they wouldn't pay to this Jewish Community Council, as we did. So those people, they weren't all Jewish who were konfessionslos. That was, if I had to . . .

LEVINE: Spell it, yeah.

HOCHSTADT: Spell it, uh, K-O-N-F-E double S I-O-N-S-L-O-W double S. It's without confession, if, you know, just transliterated. And they were just dismissed. They weren't all Jewish. I mean, they were, others who just felt they didn't want religion. I mean, in America we don't think of it that way because people live the way they want. You know, you want to be Jewish, you're Jewish. You want to belong to a synagogue, you belong to a synagogue. If you don't want to belong . . .

LEVINE: You don't.

HOCHSTADT: You don't. Same with Catholics, or Protestants or Bahai or whatever. So, anyway, before the revolution, oh, yes, I was going to tell about one incident. So I grew up as a little kid

without being aware of religion. And we lived in a neighborhood which was a, I would say basically not a Jewish neighborhood. And the kids, you know, on the block that I hung around it were all non-Jewish. And, but we got along. I don't recall any problem with the kids. But one day one of the kids said, "Let's go to my place." They lived, actually, in our house, a couple of floors higher up. So we went upstairs and, I don't know, I was hanging back. Don't ask me why. Just dawdling, I guess. And suddenly the mother said to me, as she was standing holding the door open, and she said, "Well, are you coming in or staying out, Jew?" I didn't know what it meant, but it didn't sound good, you know. I sensed the, something there, you know, hatred or dislike or whatever. So I went home. I was still of an age where because, as I said, we had a hall toilet, I still used the potty in the apartment. And I came in, I said to my mother I want to use the potty, and I sat down, and I said to her, "What's a Jew?" And she gave me an explanation. I have no recollection what she said. That was the first time I overtly became aware of the difference. However, in school, as I recall it, there are no problems. Now, after the revolution, in 1934, when the socialist government took over, they had strong views. So suddenly we were separated into boys, I mean, boys and girls. They didn't want kids of the same sex in the same room. And furthermore, they separated us into Catholics and non-Catholics. Not Jews and non-Jews, but Catholics and non-Catholics. So, for example, so suddenly I was in the class, all boys, and all Jews and Protestants. Now, again, if you want to go back hundreds of years, when the reformation came, Austria became Protestant. And then came the counter-reformation with a vengeance. And

that still lingers. I mean, the strong Catholicism of Austria is still a heritage of the counter-reformation, and they really didn't like Protestants. I mean, they were almost in as bad a repute as the Jews. Anyway, so that was, I would say, one of the main changes that I experienced as a kid when we had that revolution. You know, the segregation in the classrooms.

LEVINE: Yeah. What did you do for enjoyment as a young child?

HOCHSTADT: Well, uh, of course, we had an intimate family life. I mean, I had an uncle and two aunts who lived in Vienna, and there was a lot of socializing, and we had also, my mother had a cousin who had a son who was my closest friend, and there was a lot of that. In other words, a lot of family life, I mean, you know. Again, Vienna had a population of two million, but it was a circular city, which means the distances really weren't very great. And you could walk almost anyplace.

LEVINE: Is that what you did? I mean, that was the means of trans . . .

HOCHSTADT: Primarily, yeah. Unless we did something major like we, sometimes on Sundays we went on outings to the Vienna woods and so, then we would take a trolley car. My mother would, you know, pack up a picnic lunch and off we'd go. But, uh, many evenings we would just stroll over to my uncle's house or my aunt's house and just visit, or they would come to our place.

LEVINE: Did your mother work at all?

HOCHSTADT: No. She had worked until I was born, and after that she just took care of the house and me.

LEVINE: Do you remember foods that she made that you liked?

HOCHSTADT: Uh, yeah. I can remember certain things. Well, of course, one favorite was wienerschnitzel. Should I spell that out? ( they laugh )

LEVINE: Yeah, go ahead.

HOCHSTADT: W-I-E-N-E-R, which is Vieneese, schnitzel, S-C-H-N-I-T-Z-E-L. And veal cutlets, you know, breaded veal cutlets. And, like, when we went to the Vienna woods, she would often make veal cutlets, wienerschnitzel, and make sandwiches, you know. So you'd have a wienerschnitzel between two slices of rye bread. She made very good soups, I remember. Like, you know, vegetable soups with barley and mushrooms and stuff like that. I loved her cakes. ( they laugh ) So, uh, that's, I don't know how much more I can say. Fruits, we didn't have that much. I mean, fruits mostly in season like, you know, oranges you had when they came in from Italy, you know, and they came fresh. Apples, I guess, in the fall. But fruits were very seasonal. You didn't get fruits all year round the way we do now here. I mean, they fly them in, I guess.

LEVINE: How about real holidays? Do you remember any big events?

HOCHSTADT: Well, Christmas was always a big holiday, and, uh, it used to scare me because there, there was, well, you know, Santa Claus, and, uh, there was sort of a devil figure who accompanied him. And people would come around, you know, dressed in costumes. And I was really afraid of them. I mean, it was just my own thing, you know. There was nothing to be afraid of. It was supposed to be in good fun. But I was petrified by these

figures, you know. I mean, Santa Claus, and then accompanied by the devil with his horns and a big pitchfork in his hand.

LEVINE: Were there gifts given at that time, or no?

HOCHSTADT: Uh, yeah. Not substantial gifts, but gifts. And, uh, I mean, and then, you know, at a certain point I enjoyed the movies. At first I was afraid of going to the movies. Again, like the, like the Santa Claus and the devil, I was afraid of movies. But, in fact, I used to say, and this can sound bad, but I don't mean it to be bad, I only liked movies with animals and Negroes. Now, what I meant by that ( he laughs ) is I loved documentaries, like we'd see, I'd go to, there was one movie house in Vienna where they showed films like, you know, expeditions to Africa, and you saw pygmies, or you saw them, uh, or like there was Frank Buck's, Bring 'Em Back Alive, where you saw how they caught animals, you know, for zoos. Now, we had no Negroes in Vienna, so to me a Negro was somebody who lived in Africa in the, you know, in the jungles, or whatever. So when I said I liked, I only liked movies with animals and Negroes, ( he laughs ) that's what I meant. There was nothing pejorative about the way it might sound to somebody today. I loved Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in the movies, later on, you know, when I sort of got a little older. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Were there any other kinds of entertainment besides movies that you recall?

HOCHSTADT: Well, when I started to read, yeah, I read a lot. We would go to a lending library. Um, also theaters were extremely cheap. They had like, you know, student tickets, and even when I was ten or eleven I used to start going to matinees. You know,

tickets were like, I don't know. Let's say, I don't remember, but we weren't well off and we could afford it, so it was like fifty cents, maybe, you know, and you went to a nice performance of different, you know, plays.

LEVINE: Were you speaking, what were you speaking? Did you learn another language in school, or . . .

HOCHSTADT: Well, when I was a small boy, let me explain. In Vienna the local people spoke Viennese, which is a German dialect, but it is so different that if you're not Viennese you don't understand it. It's almost like a separate language. And, in fact, if you looked at the newspapers, there were, like, say, like, there was the Neufreipresse, N-E-U-E-F-R-E-I-P-R-E double S E. The new free press. That was like the New York Times, you know, the paper of record. But then you had tabloids, too. And the tabloids, they would be half in German and half in Viennese dialect. So the news features would be in, in, uh, in, you know, German, but then you would have, you know, features, sports, stories, and they would be in Viennese dialect.

LEVINE: So what were your mother and father speaking at home?

HOCHSTADT: They spoke, uh, German, but I spoke Viennese dialect. That's what the kids spoke. That's what they spoke in the street, and with the neighbors. I didn't learn German until I started school. I mean, I understood it, you know, but my parents would talk German to me and I'd respond in Viennese dialect. But when I started school, then I had to, um, learn German. And, in fact, when I was ten, uh, this was already after the revolution, when I was ten. Well, let me explain the school system. You had four years of elementary school. That was

compulsory. Everybody did that.

LEVINE: Starting at five years old?

HOCHSTADT: Six.

LEVINE: Six.

HOCHSTADT: When you were ten, you had a major decision, which was largely based, I would say, somewhat on family economics, but largely on, uh, on family values, because at the age of ten you had to decide between two kinds of schools. One was another four-year school from which you would then either get a job or become an apprentice as a carpenter or locksmith or something like that.

The other one was called gymnasium, spelled exactly like our gymnasium, and that was an eight-year program preparatory to the university. So, essentially, at the age of ten, your family had to say, hey, is this kid going to go to the university or not? And to get into gymnasium, you had to pass an entrance exam, so it was not automatic. I mean, you could, the family could say, "Yeah, we want you to go to gymnasium," and then you take the test and you fail, which happened. So I took the test for gymnasium, and I passed.

LEVINE: Was there a lot of pressure on children at ten years old to pass that test?

HOCHSTADT: You know, I don't know. Maybe it was partly like, you know, some of our kids go to college and the family just says, "Well, you know, we expect the kid to go to college, and he grows up knowing he's expected to go, and he goes." Maybe in some families there was pressure. Maybe in some families hired tutors to make sure the kids were, are gonna make it or not.

But it was a tough program. I mean, you know, once you were in it wasn't easy. And, uh, now, just coming back to this business about Viennese dialect in German, on the entrance exam, I had to translate a story from Viennese dialect into German, that's how different the languages were. Anyway, once you got in you, and then the trouble was once you got in, if you failed one course you repeated the whole year in everything. It wasn't like here where it was well, you flunked English, you repeat English, but you go on in math and history and everything else.

LEVINE: When you got into that second, uh, whatever, educational round, uh, when, how long did you go to school? What time did you go, and did you go five days a week?

HOCHSTADT: Six.

LEVINE: Six days a week, and . . .

HOCHSTADT: Well, five-and-a-half. Usually you got out a couple of hours earlier on Saturday, but it was six days.

LEVINE: Full days?

HOCHSTADT: No. You went from like eight to one. And then there was a lot of homework. And in gymnasium, you know, I started at the age of ten, and we already started with things like, you know, Latin, at the age of ten, and, you know, mathematics. So it was a much more accelerated program than what we have in America.

LEVINE: And what was, was school strict, or . . .

HOCHSTADT: Very strict.

LEVINE: How was the school run?

HOCHSTADT: Very strict. Uh, when the teacher entered the room, you stood up. You never addressed the teacher in the first person. Like teachers were called professor, and if you wanted to ask something, here you'd say, "Do you want such-and-such?" And there you would say, "Does the professor want such-and-such." They were very strict, very strict and disciplined. I mean, there was no fooling around. And, uh, to give one example, I remember we had singing class, and there was an Austrian song which went (German), which means, "Oh, you, my Austria, Austria." And one kid, a little wise guy, sang (German), which means shitty empire instead of eastern empire. See, (German) literally means eastern empire. And the teacher heard him. This kid just got kicked out of school, period. And when you got kicked out of the school, you got kicked out of every school. There was no way you got back into a school. So discipline was very, very strict. And . . .

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you would like to say, the tape has about four more minutes on this side, that happened before the revolution?

HOCHSTADT: Uh, not really. I mean, you know, in terms of my own experience, after all, the revolution came when I was nine, so I'm sure my parents would have had much more to say. I mean, for example, I know, but this is more from reading than personal experience, that the government practically closed the libraries, or replaced all the books by Catholic religious tracts, stuff like that. So you went to a private library, not to a public library, and stuff like that. So there was a great

change in, you know, how people lived as a result of the revolution. But how it affected me was probably very minimally beyond what I explained about . . .

LEVINE: In other words, you could still get other books, but you just couldn't get them at the public library?

HOCHSTADT: Right, right. And, uh, I mean, the government was a Catholic government, and it made no pretense about it. They were conservative, and they were Catholics, and everybody else was second rate. So, and then, as I say, well, so after the revolution, of course, then a year later I started gymnasium, so that also changed my life. Now, gymnasium had no girls. At least they had such schools for girls, but they were really segregated.

LEVINE: Was the education the same pretty much, do you think?

HOCHSTADT: I imagine so. Yeah, because they, you see, there was an exam called matura, M-A-T-U-R-A, which means, you know, mature. At the end of eight years, you had to pass a comprehensive exam covering eight years. And if you didn't cover that you didn't get in, I mean, if you didn't pass, you didn't get into the university. And that was a, not just a school-wide exam, it was across the country. You know, it was a certain week, every school in the country would give the same exam.

LEVINE: And was that a lot of pressure to . . .

HOCHSTADT: That was, that was a, I didn't experience it, because I left before I became eighteen years old, but that was, people had, maybe I'm exaggerating, but, you know, like nervous breakdowns. Like Japan, what you read about Japan now, what people go

through when they have to pass the exam to enter the university.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. Why don't we pause here to turn the tape, and we'll continue with the revolution and after.

HOCHSTADT: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: Okay. We're resuming now. I'm talking with Harry Hochstadt, and we'll talk now about the revolution and after it.

HOCHSTADT: Well, as I said, the revolution came in February 1934. Now, there was another event that took place at the same time. That was the depression, which hit us all over the world, and my father lost his job. So, at that point, as I say, it's hard for me to distinguish between what had the greater impact, the loss of a job, or the revolution. But between the two, things were rough. And my father was out of work for two years. Now, as I said, in 1935, when I was ten, I started gymnasium, and I had to work hard. I was not a good student at the time, and it was a real struggle to make it. Now, every summer I would be in one or two subjects in this sort of a position where I would have to take a make-up exam at the end of the summer. It was like, I got to, I didn't pass, but I didn't fail. So then I'd have to come in in September and take an exam, and I always managed to scrape through just in the nick of time. But my father, but the financial situation at home was really very, very bad. One thing that I remember from Vienna around that time, that unfortunately now has become much more common in

America, is beggars. Suddenly you had people come and beg in the streets, ring your doorbell asking you for money for food.

LEVINE: How did your lifestyle change during that depression? Do you remember?

HOCHSTADT: Well, lack of money meant that, for example, my father didn't have money to buy me clothing. So a lot of the stuff was castoffs from my uncle, and I had an aunt who was a very good seamstress and she would sit down and, you know, take a pair of pants from my uncle, who was a big man, and make pants for a ten, eleven-year-old boy which, of course, didn't fit exactly right. So, and that was, I think, and then I knew sometimes there was no money in the house, and we really, there were times when we didn't have enough money to eat. In fact, now, as I said very early in this interview, my mother and father had come from, you know, this Roumanian province, Bukovina. Now, my mother still had a sister that lived there, and my father's mother and sister and brother still lived where he was born. So in the summers of 1935 and '36, we spent the summers in Roumania and, frankly, my father said, "They'll feed you."

LEVINE: What do you remember about those summers?

HOCHSTADT: Oh, I loved them. In one sense I loved them, and in another sense they were very tense, because, for example, my father would say, "Well, you'd better not come back to Vienna because I have no money." And I'd say, "But I have to go to school," you know, so it was, there were good things about being there, but also the tensions at home made me very nervous.

LEVINE: Was this in the countryside, where you spent the summers?

HOCHSTADT: Well, mixed. My mother had come from this big town that I mentioned earlier, Czernowitz, so there we were in a, you know, substantial city. My, when I visited my father's family, we were in a little village. You know, we were, uh, you know, a big country road, and the village stretched along the road, and the mountains, Carpathian mountains shot up behind us, right behind the house, and my cousins and I would take walks in the, you know, take little hikes. And I loved being with them. They were two sisters who were, one was a couple of years older, and one about a year younger or something like that. And they now live in Israel. They were in a concentration camp during the war, but we are still very close. So I loved being there but, as I say, there was also, you know, a lot of tension involved from the home situation. Anyway, so, but, um, I always made, passed in school. Not with flying colors, but I passed. And, um, then in 1936, this is really now getting to, uh, you know, more immediate interests, my father got a job, but it was in Paris. So, but he had, you know, he said it was a job. So he went to Paris, and he would occasionally have to go to Prague on business, and he always would stop off in Vienna. So between 1936 and '37 I guess he came for periodic weekends. I don't recall how many, but it was a very tense period for me. It was really, it was very hard, you know, being without a father, and also the political situation, the, and, of course, even though he was working, we still didn't have much money, because, after all, he was living in a hotel in Paris, he had to eat out, and what he could he sent home. And then in 1937 the company assigned him to their Shanghai office. So he, and the plan originally was that he would go to

Shanghai, presumably permanently, and set up an apartment, and then my mother and I would join him and live in Shanghai. Unfortunately, while he was on the way out the war broke out between China and Japan. So he wrote home and he said, "Well, I don't know how long this is going to last, so you'd better stay in Vienna." So then came March 1938, and the Austrians were overrun by the Germans. Or the Germans were received with open arms by the Austrians, depending on ( he laughs ) your point of view. Now, my recollection is the Austrians were very happy. I mean, they like to pretend today that they, too, were the victims, but believe me, there was jubilation in the streets, and, uh, this was all orchestrated. I still remember the evening when it happened. My mother and I went to my uncle's house. He had a radio, and we heard the application speech by Schuschnigg, S-C-H-U-S-C-H-N-I-G-G. He was the chancellor, and he had to resign. So he abdicated. And, uh, then when we left my uncle's house to go home, in just, in these two hours or so that we were there, the city was transformed. Suddenly swastika flags all over, stormtroopers running through the streets, you know, and jubilation. So, I must say, this was all already planned. So now my mother and I were trapped in Vienna, and my father was in Shanghai. And now life really changed. The schools were closed immediately. Things were reorganized. Jews were not allowed to go anyplace, so that means all the things that I used to do, like maybe go to the movies once in a while, uh, go to a park, everything was closed to Jews. So we sat home. And there was a girl in the house who was my age, a little younger and, well, two girls, actually, but one is still a close friend today, and, uh, so the three of us got together every day, and then this cousin of

mine, his name was Egon, E-G-O-N, came, he lived like a few blocks away, and the four of us would just sit and play games all day, every day. And, uh, eventually the schools were reopened, but when they were reopened, now they reopened where they wanted, like, every school to be either Arian or Jewish. But the school I went to was so big they couldn't make it a hundred percent one or the other, so the ground floor was the Jewish floor, and the top floors were the Arian floors, and then a lot of Jewish kids from other schools that were closed to Jews came in. In fact, the same cousin, Egon, suddenly was in my class, whereas he had gone to a different gymnasium previously.

LEVINE: So his had become an Arian school, and they sent those children . . .

HOCHSTADT: Yeah. Right. So suddenly we had like a class of seventy students. And, um, and now things got nasty. I mean, of course, you know, the Nazis would pick up people in the street. They would, like, make them scrub the street with a toothbrush, you know, just gratuitous viciousness. One day my aunt was put on such a detail, to wash streets or windows or whatever, and it turned out that the supervisor of this crew, a Nazi, had been a classmate of her son's, my cousin, and he had gone to my cousin's house many times, and he recognized my aunt, and he sent her home. Of course, that ( he laughs ) how do you, you know, just a fluke, but that didn't help the others. And now when we left school very often there would be like a cordon where we'd have to fight our way out of school, you know, the Arian kids would line up and wouldn't let us through.

LEVINE: Would the, so the people who were, who were Nazis who were, who were organizing these kinds of details, they were local people . . .

HOCHSTADT: Sure, oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Who were just given uniforms and . . .

HOCHSTADT: Oh, yeah. Yeah. In fact, for example, in my third year gymnasium I took English. So that was my first exposure to English. And I really liked that teacher. And the first day we came back after, you know, then schools were closed and then they reopened, he comes into class in a stormtrooper uniform. And he made a very interesting opening remark. He said, "The change in the political regime will not affect us in this classroom," and he meant it. He was a decent man. Now, how do you explain his being a stormtrooper and being a decent man? Well, I'll give you an explanation. Austria really suffered during the depression. And, you see, when Austria was part of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, it was a very wealthy country. You know, I mean, you looked at the Roumanian part and the Polish part and the Yugoslavian part, Hungary. It was immensely wealthy in terms of agriculture, and it had, you know, had all kinds of minerals and, so it was a rich country. And then suddenly after the war all these countries, after World War One, I should say, became little entities, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Roumania, Yugoslavia, and what was a wealthy, big community suddenly became a lot of poor, splintered countries. This is why today I feel strongly about a united Europe. And what's going on in Bosnia and so on is absolutely crazy. But partly I respond from ( he laughs ) you know, my

Austrian background. So Austria was a very, very poor country, and so there were people in Austria, you know, perfectly decent people who had, let's say, been monarchists at first, and they became socialists, and then they became this and became that. And in desperation they turned to the Nazis. Just, well, maybe they'll be able to do something. So they were perfectly decent people who became Nazis not because they endorsed their anti-Semitic programs or anything. They just said, "Well, maybe they can do something." And I think many of these were ultimately very disappointed.

LEVINE: Even though a class of people were being treated very poorly.

HOCHSTADT: Well, that wasn't so obvious until later, you see. And then again, you see, again, you have to look at it from the perspective of 1938. People didn't, uh, you know, like, you take America, you know, the President X runs for president, he says, "I'm gonna do this and this and this." Then he gets into office, why, he doesn't do these things. Congress won't let him ( he laughs ) or, you know. Just, he can never really carry out the program that he said, like, you know, people thought Reagan and Bush would do all sorts of things, I mean, bring back prayer in the schools and the death penalty and, well, they didn't. So I think people just said, "That's a lot of noise," you know. In fact, that was one problem with Jews, too. I had an uncle that was, my aunt's husband, who said, "Ahh, you'll see, things are going to calm down, and after a while it will be business as usual," and so on and so on. It wasn't. But, you see, that' show a lot of people thought. Now, this uncle was lucky. He had a heart attack and died. My aunt died in a concentration camp. She never got out. So, as

I say, when you view it from today, when you see everything that happened, who would have believed it? Even if you took the most pessimistic view in 1938, you wouldn't have believed what happened later. And I think that was true. Now, mind you, I'm not saying all the Nazis in Austria were nice guys. I'm not saying that. I'm just saying some were people like this teacher who, I think, was a decent man.

LEVINE: So what led up to your leaving?

HOCHSTADT: Well, of course, we realized we would have to get out. I think, I mean, you know, people with any sense knew that, and when I was thirteen I knew it. I knew that this was, again, without anticipating what was going to happen, just, I had a sense this is, this is not where one can stay. And, of course, not that I had any choice about it. So, uh, but how to get out. Now, the idea was you just went all over the place, you applied for visas, and wherever you had to, you know, hoping that somebody's going to give you a visa. At that time the problem was not getting out. The problem was getting in someplace. I mean, the Austrians were happy to let you go because, after all, you left everything behind. You left with a suitcase, you weren't allowed to take any money with you, so you made an apartment available, you made furniture available to people, all your worldly goods. So people applied for visas all over, and at the age of thirteen or twelve or whatever I was, I became an expert on visas. I mean, I could tell you about every country and what the requirements were and so on. Just, you know, through osmosis, listening to, I mean, every, again, you couldn't go any place, which meant people gathered in homes. So every evening there were some people, friends,

relatives, whatever. And, of course, what would you talk about but what was going on.

LEVINE: Where you could go, yeah, uh-huh.

HOCHSTADT: So it was very much in the air. Now, my father was still in China. However, the company realized that this was an international export-import company. There was no way they could keep going. I mean, what was going on in the world, you know, international export-import. So he was told he would have to go to the New York office to shut down, to, you know, close out the books and the business would be over. So he was on his way to America in August of 1938, and he was back in Paris. Now, this uncle I mentioned, my mother's brother, who had been a pretty rich man, he had a daughter, incredibly beautiful woman. I mean, see, my mother's family, there was a tremendous age stretch. She was the youngest of seven children, and this uncle was the oldest. They were twenty years apart in age. So I had cousins who were more like, you know, aunts and uncles in terms of age. Now, this particular cousin had married a French diplomat. Her name was Bobby, B-O double B Y. That was a nickname. But, uh, anyway, now, the man she married was Georges Coulon, G-E-O-R-G-E-S C-O-U-L-O-N. He was a French diplomat, and they traveled all over. I mean, he was, I remember they were in Greece and they were in Egypt. Always on some French diplomatic mission. So my father, they were in Paris at that point. My father went to this man and said, "Please help me get my family out of Vienna." So, uh, he, Coulon contacted the French ambassador, whom he knew personally, and the ambassador sent us a telegram inviting us to come and see him. Now, mind you, in front of every embassy

in Vienna at that time you had lines and lines and lines of people lining up just to get an application for a visa. So my, uh, we get this telegram from the French ambassador, oh, fantastic. You're being invited by the French ambassador. We went to see him. Now, I don't recall whether we saw him or some underling, but, anyway, we saw somebody at the French embassy who said, "Have you made out an application for a visa yet?" And my mother said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, I'm sorry, I can't do anything for you. This has to be processed."

And, of course, they were set up to process three applications a week, and not hundreds a day, so this might never have gotten processed. Anyway, that evening my mother called my father, gave him the bad news, and, uh, he went back to Coulon, who had a friend by the name of Myron C. Taylor. Taylor was the wealthy American industrialist who was the American representative at the Vatican. So, anyway, Coulon called Taylor, Taylor called the American ambassador in Vienna, we got a telegram to come to the ambassador and, again, we saw a man, I still remember what he looked like. He had a, it was a, he looked a bit like Johnny Ricemuller [ph], if you remember Johnny Ricemuller [ph] from the Tarzan movies, tall, blonde, wearing a white suit and white shoes, you know. And the same question, "Have you made out an application for a visa to America yet?" And my mother had, but she said no, and we got a visa. So, uh, it was not, an immigrant's visa was what they called a visitor's visa. But they got us out, because now we still had to get a visa to go travel through Switzerland and through France, but with that American visa that was no problem. I mean, as long as they didn't think you were going to stay, you were in business. And, now getting out still

meant a lot of paperwork. You had to get a statement from the police that you have no police record, you have to get all kinds of papers. I had a little stamp collection which I still have, although I haven't looked at it in years, and that was rough, so could I take it with me. So I had to go to an appraiser to have it appraised. So I go to this appraiser, a very nice man, and he flips the pages and gives me a statement, you know. It's a kid's collection, it's worth peanuts. And I said, "How much do I owe you?" He waved me away. So he was clearly, you know, he was a nice man. So then I had to go to another office to get an official document saying that I'm entitled to take it with me. So I go to that office and, oh, a long line. And all the other people, of course, were adults. I mean, there were people with real collections, you know, not this kid's stuff. And who's in charge of the line? An old gym teacher of mine. So he pulls me and puts me in front of the line, and I got the paper. But there was a lot of stuff like that that we had to go through before we could even leave.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else that your mother took or you took with you, besides that?

HOCHSTADT: Uh, well, we took clothing, a few books.

LEVINE: Do you remember which ones?

HOCHSTADT: Uh, well, yeah. I remember one book, I still have it. It was H.G. Wells' Outline of History in German. I've read a lot, I'd read that book, so, and I still have that book. Can I think of any others? Well, I don't recall any, that's the one that sticks in my mind. But, uh, so we just had a suit, you know, a couple of suitcases. We were each only allowed to take ten

marks per person, which was like two or three dollars at the time. That's all the cash you were allowed to take with you. We had one traumatic experience at the border. We went with a friend of ours. I mean, she happened to leave at the same time, and, uh, this, this lady just died in March. She had a long life, and I kept up with her. Anyway, we got to the border, the Swiss-Austrian border, and there are all these passport controls and what, you know, in those days, you know, every border was like an iron gate, you know. It wasn't just, like today you just go from border to border, nobody cares, but it was different. And suddenly these gestapo-types came through, and they took my mother and this lady off the train. And I can't tell you how scared I was. It's indescribable. And the other people in the compartments said, "Oh, don't worry, they'll be back, etcetera, etcetera." They did come back, absolutely ashen-faced. And only years later did my mother tell me what happened. They took these two women, they had to get completely undressed, and they were given a complete body search to see whether they had any diamonds or jewels or whatever hidden on their body. Anyway, we got to Paris, met my father, great reunion. So I hadn't seen my father at that point in well over a year. We spent two months in Paris. He was working. I enjoyed Paris. I loved bouncing around Paris.

LEVINE: What about Paris struck you as different compared with what you had become accustomed to?

HOCHSTADT: Well, it had great museums, I remember. I love museums. See, when I was a kid in Vienna, we had some very good museums. My father often took me, like, to the art museum. There was a famous, you know, national art museum of Vienna, and a Museum

of Natural History. And I used to enjoy those things. And then when I got a little older, when I could go by myself, I used to go with a friend or two. So, I mean, as a kid we, you see, Vienna, again, well, New York, too, at that time, you know, as a kid you didn't worry about going around by yourself.

Nobody said, "Oh, this is dangerous," you know, like today you're worried if your kid goes in the subway. We just went. And I loved Vienna. I knew Vienna intimately. In fact, when we were there two years ago, my wife was amazed at how I would just, you know, navigate, even, you know, fifty years later I still had no problems. So, um, and Paris was a big city and different and enjoyable, and I went to the movies, I remember I saw, what was the movie, the one with the seven dwarfs? Cinderella? No, what's the fairy tale, the Walt Disney film with, well, whatever.

LEVINE: Isn't it called The Seven Dwarfs?

HOCHSTADT: No, no, no. It's, anyway, so, you know, I remember seeing movies.

LEVINE: I'll take this away from you. ( she laughs )

HOCHSTADT: I really enjoy Paris. Anyway, two months later we left. Uh, we came on the Queen Mary.

LEVINE: Where did you leave from?

HOCHSTADT: Um, Cherbourg, yeah. And we took the train to Cherbourg, and we embarked on the Queen Mary, which had come from Southampton to Cherbourg to pick up more passengers. Then we crossed the ocean. We, at that point we were what was called second class, but second class was quite luxurious. I guess you didn't dress

for dinner. That was the main difference. ( he laughs ) You know.

LEVINE: Did you have any examinations prior to leaving?

HOCHSTADT: No. No, I don't recall anything special, you know. So we got on the Queen Mary, and we came here. We landed on December 1, 1938, so just fifty-three years ago a week or so ago.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the voyage?

HOCHSTADT: Oh, the Queen Mary was great. I mean, you know, every evening there was entertainment. You saw movies and, uh, and, uh, I remember seeing Boys Town with Spencer Tracey, and Queen Victoria with Helen Hayes. I didn't understand much, because it was in English, but I recall seeing them. And then in the evenings they had entertainment like, you know, they had horse races. Now, how do you do a horse race on the Queen Mary? Well, they had, like, you know, sticks with horse heads, and somebody would roll dice, and the sticks would be advanced, you know, depending on the roll of the dice. And, you know, people gambled, not a big deal. I remember the food was excellent. My mother ordered a shrimp salad. She'd always heard shrimp salads were so great, and then it came and she couldn't eat it. It was something, you know, you never had in Vienna. But I remember the food was good. Originally they had a separate cabin for me, so my parents had a cabin that actually had three bunks in it, you know, one double and one single. And then they got a separate cabin for me, but I was so unhappy there that I moved in with them. And, anyway, the Queen Mary was, everything was excellent. It was a superb ship.

LEVINE: Do you remember the cost, by any chance?

HOCHSTADT: The cost? Hmm. Vaguely, I think the tickets were something like a hundred and eighty dollars. Maybe that was for the three of us. I don't, I remember the number a hundred and eighty dollars sticks in my mind. Part of the reason is we had to have round-trip tickets, because, see, as visitors, we had to be able to prove that we had the means to return. Anyway, so we got, uh, we got to New York on December 1st, but before we even landed a tender, you know, a little ship came out with customs people and so on, so we gave them, you know, initial screenings so that when you landed you weren't held up. That's where the troubles began. That's now the beginning of the Ellis Island incident.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, why don't we stop here, and we'll put on another tape, so we can have it all on the same tape.

HOCHSTADT: Okay.

LEVINE: Okay, thanks.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: This is tape two, and it's side A of tape two, and it's December 8th, and I've been speaking with Harry Hochstadt. This is Janet Levine, and we're going to continue where we left off. Uh, you were saying that you were taken by tender to Ellis Island, and that's where your trouble started.

HOCHSTADT: Well, actually, let me explain. Before we got on the tender, the immigration people examined our papers, and there was

something irregular. I don't know what. But they weren't going to let us land. So therefore they took us off the ship on another tender, and took us to Ellis Island. And, well, needless to say, I was extremely worried because I was very anxious to come to America for lots of reasons. ( he laughs )

And, let's face it, we had no place else to go at this point. And, uh, anyway, so we got to Ellis Island, and I'll tell you what I remember of it, which really is a little vague. But I remember that, of course, my terrible concern over the future, and in the evening they gave us a meal in the Great Hall that we passed through to get to this office, and they served us a fish stew, and I've never liked fish stews, and I still don't like fish stews, and I think I ate primarily bread and butter.

And then we had to go to bed. Now, up in the gallery, above the Great Hall, there were little bedrooms. I guess my parents went to one room, and I was assigned to another, and I slept on sort of a bare bunk without any, uh, linens, just, you know, on a mattress with a pillow without linens and some blankets. I never even undressed, I just lay down the way I was.

LEVINE: Were there other people in the room?

HOCHSTADT: No. I was in there by myself. Which I don't know whether it was good or bad, but, as I say, I don't think I slept much because of the terrible concern I had. Anyway, somehow, next morning, I forget, either that evening or the next morning my father had managed to contact the man who was like his, you know, official supervisor in the New York office. And he came down. In fact, he had, I think he had even come to meet us the day before, but my, but he was waiting at the dock. My father managed to reach him and he, I guess, was able to convince the

immigration authorities that this job was for real. I think, now, that may have been the problem. That, you know, so many people are trying to come to America by any means whatever, that maybe they felt that this job was not for real, it was just a gimmick to get us into the country. But . . .

LEVINE: Were there a lot of people at Ellis Island at the time you were here?

HOCHSTADT: A fair number, probably two, three hundred but, again, that's, you know, after all, it's fifty-three years ago. And, uh, so, anyway, but the next day we got ourselves straightened out, and we were, I guess taken from Ellis Island by some kind of a ferry to, to Castle Garden, or wherever we landed. And my uncle, my mother had a brother who had been in America for many years. My uncle and this, my father's supervisor, both met us, and we landed, and, um, well, we all felt very relieved.

LEVINE: Do you remember your initial impressions of this country?

HOCHSTADT: Uh, well, I was incredibly happy to be here. My father was not happy. He, uh, well, at first we stayed with my uncle. You know, even though my father had an expense account, my uncle said, "Look, you know, this is my sister, and I haven't seen her since 1922 or so, and you must stay with me." You know, old-fashioned hospitality. Of course, my uncle lived in a three-room apartment with a wife and two children.

LEVINE: Where was the apartment?

HOCHSTADT: In what is now called the south Bronx, on Hoe Avenue in the east Bronx. And, uh, we stayed there with him, and I remember we took the subway down to Times Square. That was, you know,

the place to go. And my English was so rudimentary at that point that I remember on the doors there was a sign that said please close door for passenger's comfort. You know, the door, the connecting doors between cars. And I was reading that sign trying to figure out what it meant. I knew, I read please close doors for passenger's "come for." That's how I pronounced it in my head. I didn't know the word comfort. I was trying to figure out what are passenger's "come for." ( they laugh ) And I was very impressed with Times Square and the city, and we stayed with my uncle only briefly because it was so crowded, and then we got another apartment, and then we lived in the Bronx, then we lived in Manhattan for an interval. And eventually we found an apartment on Crotona Park East, 1728 Crotona Park East in the East Bronx, not far from my father.

LEVINE: Your uncle.

HOCHSTADT: I mean, my uncle. And my father still worked, he worked for a year closing out the books. His office was at 16 West 42nd Street. It was just across from the public library. I remember going there a few times. And, uh, well, I'll sketch some of this in much less detail. I started school, eventually I went to the Bronx High School of science, which was a new school at that time, and a wonderful school. It was just a great experience. In fact, I just got a news bulletin for, an alumni bulletin from my high school. They just, the fifth alumnus won a Nobel prize. That's the kind of a school it was.

LEVINE: Wow. Now, did you start there? That was the school you went to?

HOCHSTADT: No. I started in P.S. 61 in the Bronx. Then I went to P.S. 98 in, at Herman Ritter. That was a junior high school. From there I went to Science High.

LEVINE: And did you have any experiences that you can recount initially with learning English or your school?

HOCHSTADT: Well, as I said, I took a year of English in Vienna, and I had these two cousins here. Gertrude was a year or two older than I, and, uh, Harold was about two years younger. So I conversed with them. Of course, with just a few words, but gradually I caught on. I learned English very fast. Then I started school, and they were very nice to me at P.S. 61. They put me next to another girl, and they said to this girl, "All right, you have to help him." And I still remember her name, Ruth Schechter." S-C-H-E-C-H-T-E-R.

LEVINE: Now, did you know either Viennese or German, or . . .

HOCHSTADT: No, she was just a, but I learned English very quickly. And, uh, I think one advantage was that I, see, some of the refugees who came moved into certain areas that were just overflowing with refugees, like the west side in the 70s and 80s, or Washington Heights, and they tended to sort of stick together and speak German. We never did that. So I, all the people, except for my immediate family, my parents, I had to speak English. And, uh, so, for example, when I applied to, this is not about English per se, but when I applied to Science High I had missed the deadline for the application. And I went there and there was an assistant principal, Dr. Mantel, M-A-N-T-E-L, absolutely wonderful man. And my mother explained, you know,

how we had just come, etcetera, etcetera. And he sat me down at his desk and gave me a test, right then and there, an entrance exam. And, obviously, I passed. Now, about that time things got rough again, because my father's job ended about a year after we came, so 19, the end of 1939 or thereabouts, and my father had, like, a nervous breakdown. One big debate I had with my father, again, you asked whether, you know, how happy I was or how I adjusted, my father said, "After this is over, we're going to go back to Austria." And I said, "No, no. This is where we're going to stay." It was absolutely, you know, obvious to me there was no way back, even though I was only fourteen at the time, or thirteen.

LEVINE: What was your father's reasoning or feeling about going back?

HOCHSTADT: It was a combination of things. He never really learned English well, till the day he died. And he said, "Look, as a Jew, as somebody who doesn't know the American accounting system, and my now knowing English, I'll never get a job here, so the only thing to do is go back." That was his reasoning. Now, other people got jobs, maybe not the kind of jobs they were used to, but they made it. Like my father had a friend who had been a rather prominent attorney in Vienna, and he came here and he became a cashier in Ratner's Restaurant on Delancy Street. But it was a living, you know.

LEVINE: How did your mother feel about being here?

HOCHSTADT: The same as me. And eventually my father just sat home, smoked, didn't even get dressed, just total depression. So then we were on food stamps for a while, so they already had food stamps. You know, people think food stamps are something

new. They worked differently from now, I believe, that we had to buy the stamps, but we bought like six dollars worth for four dollars. And we had red and blue stamps, and the red for meat and the blue for vegetables, but the stores didn't care, you could buy whatever you wanted, as long as you had the right denomination. And eventually my mother took a job in a factory. So . . .

LEVINE: While you were in high school?

HOCHSTADT: Even before, even before. I, probably before, I don't remember exactly. And, uh, see, my father's job ended in '39. I started high school in February '41, so I suspect she was already working.

LEVINE: Do you want to say anything else about the high school that . . .

HOCHSTADT: Oh, the high school was great. I mean, it was an old building, it had only, small, it had only two thousand students, all boys. But totally science-oriented. I don't mean they neglected the other things, but you had to take more math and more physics and more chemistry than any other school in the city except maybe Stuyvesant High School. And the student body was really, I mean, you know, it was a public school, but it was a very select student body. I'd become friends with a boy before in the apartment house where we lived, and he actually, I wouldn't have known about the school except for him. He was going there, and he was my closest friend. And, anyway, I went to Science High, and it was a wonderful experience. I graduated in '43.

LEVINE: Could you say how the schools were different here than they had been in Austria?

HOCHSTADT: Oh, gosh, in every sense. There was less discipline, which didn't matter in a school like science high, but even in the earlier schools like Herman Ritter or P.S. 61, you know, you respected the teachers. But there wasn't this strict discipline. You didn't have to, you know, stand when the teacher entered the room, or address them in a very formal way. And, uh, and then the learning was less intense. I mean, let's face it, when I came at the age of thirteen, I had already had three years of Latin and physics and math and English, and they put me into 6-A where they were still doing fractions. So the system was really geared to a, you know, much slower pace. But, but the school was less structured, less formal, and more fun, and I became an excellent student, which I hadn't been in Vienna. I really, this is where I belonged. I really didn't belong in Vienna. So, anyway, so as not to, you know, go into too much detail, I graduated, but unfortunately I was already eighteen when I graduated, and that was in '43. I had to register for the draft. I started City College. That was also, at that time City College was rough to get into. You didn't just say, "Hi, I'm here, let me in." So I had to take a four-day entrance exam to the engineering school. And even to get into the engineering school, you had to have a certain high school average. I had a good friend who could not get into City College who went to Cooper Union, who is now a member of the National Academy of Engineering, but he couldn't get into City College at that time. Anyway, so I got into City College. I was drafted weeks later. So I, I took, I

remember I went for my Army physical on November 16, 1943, and I was inducted on December 7, 1943. So that was fifty years ago yesterday. Now, at that time in the army they had a program called ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program, that was intended for very, very bright guys. They needed engineers and doctors and so on, linguists. And if you got into ASTP they sent you to college. Accelerated, but it sounded great. So I got in, I took all these, you know, IQ tests and whatever. They said, "Oh, you're good ASTP material. Do you want it?" "Oh, sure." But first you must take our ASTP Basic Training at Fort Benning." So I did, and that was the beginning of '44. But by that time some genius in the Pentagon had figured out this war wasn't going to last much longer, and by the time these guys get out of college the war's going to be over. So one day there was a telegram, "Stop, stop everything." And the only people in the ASTP who continue were those who were like already in their third year of college. Well, by now I was a trained infantry soldier, so I wound up in the infantry.

LEVINE: Where did you go?

HOCHSTADT: And I was assigned to the 87th Infantry Division in Fort Jackson, South Carolina. I went overseas with this division. We fought. I was in combat.

LEVINE: Where were you?

HOCHSTADT: In Germany and France, or France and Germany, if you want to do it chronologically. I developed a condition called trench foot, which is somewhat like frozen feet. I came back to the states. I was discharged on a medical disability. And . . .

LEVINE: When was that?

HOCHSTADT: I was discharged in July of 1945. I was in combat. I got a bronze star. I got the combat infantryman's badge. And then I applied to college, and I decided to go to Cooper Union, which was known as a first-rate, you know, private but first-rate engineering school. Again, a tough entrance exam, a four-day exam, so it's similar to what I had taken earlier to get into City College. It, and, uh, by now I was really scared because, after all, I was competing against guys who were just coming out of schools like Stuyvesant and Science High, you know, top students from good schools, but I made it, and graduated near the top of my class. ( he laughs ) I wasn't too handicapped.

LEVINE: When did you meet your wife?

HOCHSTADT: The day I graduated from cooper union. ( Dr. Levine laughs ) Her brother was a classmate of mine, and he brought her to graduation. He claims he wanted her to meet me. ( he laughs ) I have no way of proving it beyond his word. But, uh, I met her the evening we graduated, and there was a party. Do you know anything about Cooper Union? It's both art and engineering, and many of the artists had, like, studios nearby, you know, they had apartments, lofts. So I went to one of the parties, and my brother-in-law, Henry, was there with his sister, Pearl. And their family name was Schwartzberg, S-C-H-W-A-R-T-Z-B-E-R-G. So I met Pearl at that point. She had just completed her freshman year at Cornell. So we started to date, and we had a long and somewhat rough courtship, but eventually we got married in 1953. I graduated in 1949. But while I was at Cooper Union I was enrolled in chemical engineering. I went

to school not under the GI bill but under a different law, Public Law 16, which was for disabled veterans. I believe the law is still on the books. Excellent law, because the benefits were much better than the GI bill. But there were also wrinkles. The GI bill was like a privilege you had earned. You wanted to study whatever, you studied whatever. Public Law 16 was disabled veterans rehabilitation. In order to qualify, they had to be convinced that what you wanted to study would make you self-supporting. You had to prove to them that you were taking something for which you were qualified. So, again, a zillion, you know, tests like, you know, mechanical aptitude, IQ, psychological testing, but obviously I got it. And, uh, but while I was at Cooper Union, you know, when I started to study math I discovered that's what I loved. And I finished because it would have been very hard to switch to another thing, because the VA was extremely sticky. I mean, they felt if you tried to switch you're trying to, you know, cheat them out of something. You were looking for more education than you were entitled to. So I completed my four years of chemical engineering, got my bachelor's degree, but got a fellowship at NYU to study, to go into a doctoral program in mathematics. So I spent two years at NYU. I got my Master's after one year. After a second year I passed, I completed all my course requirements, and passed my orals, and then I took a job in industry. Because by now I was twenty-six, and I had yet to earn a real living. I'd had a few jobs, you know, when I was in high school I had summer jobs in factories and stuff like that, but these were not, you know, professional. So I worked for this engineering company, W.R. Maxson Corporation, M-A-X-S-O-N, until 1957, from '51 to '57. And I, you know, I enjoyed

my job, but I always felt I'd really love to teach mathematics.

So as I said, I'd completed all my requirements for a PhD in '51, except that big hurdle of a dissertation. So I started to work on the dissertation but, well, between, um, working forty-eight hours a week and courting my wife and getting married and so on, things took longer than they should have. And I got my PhD officially on February 27, 1956, which happens to be the day my daughter was born.

LEVINE: Your first daughter? Was that your first baby?

HOCHSTADT: Well, my only daughter. I also have one son. And her name is Julia Phyllis.

LEVINE: And is she married? Does she have another last name?

HOCHSTADT: Yes. Julie just got married two years ago at the age of thirty-five, and just had a baby in June this year. He's now five months old. And, so we're very happy. She married a wonderful guy, and has a beautiful baby.

LEVINE: What is her last name?

HOCHSTADT: You mean her married name?

LEVINE: Yeah.

HOCHSTADT: Sweet. S-W-W-E-T [sic].

LEVINE: And your son's name?

HOCHSTADT: My son's name is Jesse Frederick. He was born on December 11, 1958, so he's gonna have his birthday in three days. He'll be thirty-five. He is not married. He is an editor in a technical magazine called Physics Today. Unfortunately, his

job is ending because they moved to Maryland and he didn't, he could have gone, but for personal reasons wants to stay in New York. So, anyway, so, but in the meantime in, after I got my PhD I seriously considered college teaching as a career, and in 1957 I got a job as assistant professor at Polytechnic Institute in Brooklyn, and, so, and that's where I worked until 1991. I . . . Yes?

LEVINE: How about this period of your life, since you are retired?

HOCHSTADT: Well, maybe I'll just say a few words about my professional life. I was, as I say, from '57 to '91 I became a full professor in a few years. I did some, what I think is very fine research. I published several professional books on mathematics. But then, but in, I decided in, well, actually in '90, to retire. There were reasons. The school was having problems. It was just not the same happy scene I'd had earlier, and I felt, you know, there comes a time in your life when it's time to retire, and I have enjoyed my retirement. I've, uh, it's given me, you know, an opportunity to do things that I, you know, like to spend more time reading the things I enjoy reading. I still read a good bit of mathematics, but I also read a lot of history. It's given us a bit more opportunity to travel, although we have traveled. But to, as one example of something I'd meant to do for years and never had a chance, uh, I've always wanted to read the original Euclid on geometry, which is a marvelous book. And finally, after I retired, I had the time to. Because it's not a book you can pick up and put down. It's very, you have to sort of stay with it. Three volumes, and it, I worked my way through it. It was an incredible experience, reading Euclid. I wish I

could read it in the original Greek. I can't. I had to read it in the English translation.

LEVINE: Could you say something about having started your life in Austria and coming here at thirteen, how that affected the rest of your life.

HOCHSTADT: Well, the, in many ways I feel so Americanized that often I don't even, you know, think about having come from Austria. Nevertheless, of course, there is something in me that was formed there, and I would say the Hitler period was a really, you know, seminal event, which will always be with me in a very powerful way. I mean, there is no way I can forget the, well, the relatives I lost, and my own experiences, and the fact of my being Jewish in a situation in which, you know, Jews were systematically killed. That's, I mean, as I say, in many ways I forget about my Austrian life, even though I remember it when I want to remember it. But the, the Hitler years, I think, I mean, I don't think any Jew can really ignore that, that historical event. But to me it has greater significance because of my having been even in a small way part of that experience. I didn't see the worst of it by far but, of course, I know people who have. I mean, early in the interview I mentioned my friend Egon from Vienna. Now, his parents died in the concentration camp, and his mother and my mother were extremely close. They were cousins. And he got out because there were youth movements to bring him out. We lost track of each other, and then two years ago I was in France and I really made an effort to find him, and I found him. We hadn't seen each other since 1938, hadn't been in touch since 1938. And we talked about it, and he's lived in France since 1939, he

married a French woman, and, like me, he feels he's French or American, but how can you forget these things? It's there, always.

LEVINE: Is there anything else, we have about three minutes left. Is there anything else that you can think of that you'd like to say before we close?

HOCHSTADT: Well, I guess I can only reiterate what is really very important in my case. You know, I don't, you've heard me speak, and I think very, very rarely is there somebody who says, "You know, there's something the way you speak that's not quite American." But most people take me, take my speech to be, you know, native American. So I've really, you know, this is my home, and this is where I belong, and I could never, ever consider going back to Vienna, and some people have. There are people who have returned. That would be utterly impossible for me. Not only because I have family here, if I want to go back, but it's been, being in America is great.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay, I think that's a nice place to end. I want to thank you very, very much for a really interesting interview. I've been talking with Harry Hochstadt. It's December 8, 1993. We're here at the Ellis Island Oral History Studio, and this is Janet Levine signing off. Thank you very much.