

EI-42

JOHN GEORGE PETER

BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 12, 1921

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 1, 1991

RUNNING TIME: 41:00

INTERVIEWER: PETER HOM

RECORDING ENGINEER: BRIAN FEENEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: FRANKLIN SQUARE, NY

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: PETER HOM, 7/1991

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 4/1995

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

GERMANY, 1926

RESIDENCE: SPRENDLINGEN

AGE 5

RESIDENCE IN US: BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN, NY

PASSAGE ON "THE BREMEN"

PORT: BREMERHAVEN

HOM: Good afternoon. This is Peter Hom for the National Park Service. Today is May 1, 1991. We are in Franklin Square with John Peter who came through Ellis Island in 1926. Could you tell me first of all your full name and date of birth.

PETER: Well, my full name is John G. Peter and I was born January 12, 1921.

HOM: And what does the "G" stand for? The "G", what does it stand for?

PETER: Oh, that's for George. It's my father's name.

HOM: So let's start off first by talking about your parents. Could you tell me the full names of both your parents?

PETER: Yeah, my father was George Peter and my mother was Katherine Peter.

HOM: And what did they do for a living?

PETER: My father, he was a butcher by trade. But he also worked in, as a cook. Both.

HOM: Did he own his own a shop?

PETER: In Germany before they came to this country they had a place just opposite the main railroad station in Frankfurt. That was in 1914. And then he had to go into the army in 1914. And his, both parents died the same year, so they lost that place. And then he went into, when he came out of the service, naturally the restaurant was gone. Then he married my mother, that was in 1920, thereabouts. And then he moved to a small town where I was born, to my grandfather's house. And he also managed a restaurant down, downstairs, also opposite a small railroad station. It was a very small town, that was.

HOM: And your mother? What did she do for a living?

PETER: My mother was a housewife, basically.

HOM: Do you remember helping her with any chores around the house?

PETER: Oh yeah. And especially when we were younger. We always had to help her every Saturday, cleaning the house, dusting and we had to wash the floors and wax the floors. This was a standard Saturday procedure.

HOM: Really. Were there any brothers or sisters?

PETER: No.

HOM: Its just, you were an only child.

PETER: Right.

HOM: So just describe basically, let's start by your religion. Was there any religion in the house?

PETER: Well, my father was Catholic and my mother was Protestant but they were not church going people to the extent that

they went every Sunday. But when I started school in the Bushwick section, P.S. 116 on Knickerbocker Avenue, I started kindergarten up to about the third grade. But anyway, coming home from school, there was a church across the street. And for some reason or another, I started going there, and I got interested very much in church at the time and then, I mentioned that to my, to our landlady. And then she started taking me to her church where she went every Sunday. She said if he likes going to church that much, she'll take me along. And that was nice. And since then, I've been going to the church.

HOM: Well, let's talk about your home back in Germany. You said you lived with your grandparents.

PETER: In the grandparents' house.

HOM: Yes, well can you describe the house?

PETER: It was a downstairs, a corner house, right opposite a small railroad station. It was a small town. And downstairs was the bar and a restaurant and we lived towards the back end of it, on the side. And my

grandparents lived upstairs. I think it was three stories, this building.

HOM: What was the name of the town?

PETER: Sprendlingen.

HOM: Could you spell that please?

PETER: S-P-R-E-N-D-L-I-N-G-E-N. It's just south of Frankfurt. There are three towns. There's two towns in between. There's Frankfurt, then came Offenbach, then came Neu-Isenburg and then came Sprendlingen. It's not too far from Frankfurt.

HOM: As I asked before, did you ever help your mother with the cooking? I know you were rather young, but did you help your mother cook? Was she a good cook?

PETER: Well, as far, I peeled potatoes and thing like this. I used to like the, in the kitchen to help, being my father did a lot of cooking, so I was interested in cooking. But I primarily helped her giving her a hand with different things. The only time I did more than cooking

was like during the Depression Years. When my father was out of work for that two and a half years. And then my mother took in homework, where she made collars, fancy collars with ruffles and put nice fancy buttons on them.

Well, I learned how to sew on buttons and she showed me how to make ruffles on the sewing machine. And she made belts also, cloth belts. And I turned them inside out after she sewed them together. I had a long stick to turn them inside out and I helped like that. And my father, he, well it probably wasn't, it was illegal at the time.

But he started, being he was a butcher by trade, he'd make cold cuts and we had a route of customers which I delivered on roller skates. I race, skate around the, after school, skate around the neighborhood delivering cold cuts just to keep our heads above water.

HOM: I'm sorry, is this in Germany or here?

PETER: Here. This is after we came here.

HOM: Well, I still want to...

PETER: I jumped the gun.

HOM: I still want to continue your life back in Germany. Did you start school, did you ever start school at that early age?

PETER: I was in some, a like a kindergarten type school over there.

HOM: Could you describe the school?

PETER: Not really. All I know there were sisters who were in charge of the school, but I don't know too much about it.

HOM: You don't remember what you did, what kind of...

PETER: It was mostly playing, it was mostly playing. And, with other children. Because I was at that time, I must have been about four when I started, when I went over there. I guess it was like a nursery school I could say.

HOM: Is there anything special about Christmas or holiday celebrations?

PETER: Well, that I remember because we had a tree with real live candles on it, burning candles and that was very

intriguing to see this, and I could still remember that sight. And I was still sort of afraid to go back into the room because Santa Claus might be still there. But they didn't say Santa Claus they also say "Das Christkind," is the Christ Child. And than I was sort of in awe and afraid to go into the room, sort of, till they calmed me down (he laughs).

HOM: Well, what was your reason, why did your family, who decided really to come to the United States?

PETER: Well, my father I would say and mother. We had, they had friends from the town who were over here, and I guess they corresponded with them, and things were not too good over there at the time.

HOM: How were they not too good? What do you mean by that?

PETER: Well, the inflation rate was extremely high because I think it cost millions and billions of dollars just, marks just to mail a letter.

HOM: Well, do you remember why this inflation occurred? What was the cause of this inflation?

PETER: Well, I would say it had something to do with the, from World War I, that the unemployment rate was high and everything became very costly.

HOM: How did your family adjust to the situation? Did they have to work longer hours or anything like that?

PETER: No, but that's why they decided to come to America.

HOM: To get away from that life.

PETER: To get away from that hard, you couldn't get anywhere. They had money. I remember seeing a room, it was all valueless money. It was a mountain of it there. Anyway, it looks like a mountain to me.

HOM: So it was your parents who really decided to come to America.

PETER: Yeah.

HOM: How do you remember them telling you, how were they, how did you feel when they told you were coming to America?

PETER: Well, I didn't really like to go because I still had my friends there and I had to give up a few toys and things like this, which I didn't have many of, but I couldn't take them along and things...

HOM: So you really didn't want to leave.

PETER: No, not at the time.

HOM: How about your preparations? Were there any preparations to leave? Did you pack anything special?

PETER: Well, I did pack one thing that they allowed at Ellis, a little record player I had. That's the only thing I wanted to take. But then in packing it, I broke it. And then I left (he laughs).

HOM: What port did you leave from? Do you remember that?

PETER: Well, I'm not quite sure if its Cuxhaven or was it Bremerhaven. One of those two. I know the ship was the Bremen, it was the old Bremen. It was only, it was a very small ship.

HOM: And how did you arrive at the port?

PETER: By train.

HOM: By train. How long was the train ride?

PETER: I don't remember that.

HOM: Well, do you remember if it was overnight?

PETER: No.

HOM: Well, let's get you on ship then. Is there anything special about the ship? How about the accommodation?

PETER: Well, they were very cramped and very crowded. The ship itself was small and it didn't, was not a fast ship. I think the voyage took about thirteen, fourteen days. We actually went a little longer than it was scheduled to be because of the tremendous storms.

HOM: And describe, just describe the food for example. What was the food like?

PETER: Well, the food was alright. It was basic fair. But there was inside the ship at that time, they were not air conditioned. They just had these air pipes on the deck which they could turn to get in air. And we had a lot of unpleasant odors downstairs from, the ship was always maintained and painted, so you had odors of paint, you had odors of food. People got sick. All these odors combined, we spent most of the time on deck, my father and I. My mother was very ill. She seldom came out of her bunk.

HOM: Did you have any physical problems? Were there, was there seasickness on board?

PETER: A number of people, but I, myself, didn't get sick. But my mother, she was very sick.

HOM: Throughout the whole voyage?

PETER: Yeah, I don't even remember her, remember her walking on the deck.

HOM: You said that it was a very rough voyage. Do you

remember being scared or how you felt being on this ship.

PETER: No, I wasn't really frightened, but I did, I was amazed at the waves, looking off the side of the ship. Some of the waves, you almost had to look up to see, the top of the wave when the ship came down below, to the low portion of the wave you look up at the water. And that was, it was a sight I've never seen before.

HOM: How did you pass time on the ship?

PETER: Mostly walking around with my father. And then the one sailor there, he gave me a broom which I could make believe I'm riding a horse. I'm running around deck playing horse.

HOM: Do you remember his name? The sailor's name?

PETER: No. But I did a very bad thing to him. Not very, didn't show much gratitude for letting him have the stick 'cause at the end, I threatened I was going to throw it overboard and I did (he laughs). I threw his broom overboard. He was angry at me.

HOM: Oh, really. I would think so. This was towards the end of your voyage.

PETER: Well, during the voyage. Exactly day by day, I can't recall it day by day.

HOM: And you said the trip took about two weeks, fourteen days.

PETER: Yeah, fourteen days.

HOM: And when you arrived in New York, what were your first feelings of finally being in New York?

PETER: Well, first the ship came down the harbor and we passed the Statue of Liberty and my father pointed out the Statue of Liberty to me. They called it the Freedom Statue, the Statue of Freedom.

HOM: What were your feelings when you first saw it?

PETER: Well, I was impressed at the size of it. I mean as a five year old, you don't think too far outside of size and things like this. But then as we, as the ship came

down the harbor, there was an, in the distance, a tug boat pulling barges with little cars and a man was walking on the side there. And that shocked me that, what small people they have in this country (he laughs).

Of course I had never seen anything across such an open, a large open area ever before. And so in the distance, I never realized that when someone is further away, they look smaller. So I just figured that they have tiny people here (he laughs).

HOM: So describe what happened after you arrived in New York, after the ship pulled in.

PETER: We landed in Manhattan and then they put us on a boat that took us over to Ellis Island.

HOM: So you...

PETER: From Manhattan.

HOM: Did you have to wait long to get to Ellis?

PETER: This I don't remember either, exactly how long we waited. But we went from the piers onto a boat.

HOM: And the boat took you to Ellis Island?

PETER: The boat took us to Ellis Island.

HOM: And do you remember how long you actually stayed at Ellis?

PETER: Just about a day. We got out, we came the same day we left Ellis Island the same day, that we got there.

HOM: Were you relieved to finally be in America, to be on land? Since you were at sea for two weeks, I imagine you were very grateful to finally be on land.

PETER: Yeah, it was nice and it was exciting to be on land, because it all, travelling into the unknown, really. And when we got, when we arrived at the Battery, we had sponsors. You had to have a sponsor to become, to come into the country, years ago. You couldn't just step off a boat without having someone who sponsored you. They were supposed to meet us at the Battery Park and they weren't there because the boat should have come the day before. But they, somehow or another, I remember my

father walking over to a policeman and he got directions how to get to where we're going. How he did it, I don't know cause he couldn't speak one word of English. And not even knowing where he got the money for the subway. He must have changed some money in, on Ellis Island or somewhere.

HOM: Well, can you describe what happened at Ellis Island?

PETER: Ellis Island, well, I know its a large mass of people, that I know. The room was just filled with people. Then we had to have a physical examination.

HOM: Can you describe the physical examinations?

PETER: Yeah, well first of all it was determined that I'm only five years old, that I, my mother takes me along with the women and in their area for the examination. So, at, let's see. And in their area like I say. The picture is still clear in my mind today, as I got into all these ladies, and they were stripped down to the waist. And this makes me ask many questions to my mother, how come all women are stripped down to the waist and looked like that. I've never seen a woman strip before.

HOM: So I imagine you were very surprised.

PETER: Yeah. And we did get vaccinations, I don't know, three or four vaccinations. I think in the arm before we left Ellis Island.

HOM: So this was the medical exam. Do you remember anything else about the medical exam?

PETER: No, just the amount of people and the doctors and the examination.

HOM: After the medical exam, the legal examination, what happened during the, do you remember being asked questions by inspectors?

PETER: No.

HOM: No. How about your parents? Do they...

PETER: I'm sure my parents were asked questions but what and what they answered I don't know.

HOM: You spent a day at Ellis?

PETER: Yeah.

HOM: Did you have any food at Ellis?

PETER: I don't, not to my knowledge.

HOM: You stayed there about a day. What happened after Ellis?

PETER: We got on a boat and went to Battery Park. And there we were supposed to meet the sponsors. And they weren't there.

HOM: So what did you do?

PETER: My father spoke to a policeman. He had the address on a piece of paper and he got directions how to go to Brooklyn with the subway, which way to go. And some reason or another he got there. Of course he had to take a subway and then he had to take a train, an elevated train and get off at Knickerbocker Avenue and the walk over to the house on Wilson Avenue.

HOM: What were your impressions about the subways? How did you feel about the subways?

PETER: Well, it was an exciting thing because I had never been on a subway before, underground, never on a train underground. I was on a train above ground, but never underground. And that was sort of a funny feeling, to be riding under the ground.

HOM: So when you arrived at where you were, what happened? Did you, how did you find your apartment?

PETER: Well, we got to the house and there was a store. I think it was a tinsmith shop and there was a lady and a man there. I don't know if they were the landlord and the landlady of the building but they let us wait there because our friends weren't there. They were at, they did go to the Battery and waited for us over there. And we were at their house. And so this lady took us in the kitchen, gave us coffee and milk and cake and then she talked to us. She could speak a little bit of German. I think she was Jewish and a lot of Jewish is the same, Yiddish is the same as German. So she was explaining to me it isn't so hard to learn English. She tells me a few

words that are, they're the same like "finger" is the same in English, it's the same in German, it's "finger."

"House" is "house" in both languages. And she used various things like that to tell me it's not too bad, it would be easy to learn.

HOM: How long did you have to wait for your sponsors?

PETER: Oh, about I'd say two, three hours. And then they came.

HOM: Can you describe the apartment? What was the apartment like?

PETER: Well, it wasn't a very nice apartment. It was, it must have been about a four, five story building. And we had a bedroom and kitchen and living room. But we didn't stay there too long because that building wasn't too clean. It had bed bugs. So the, that I remember, too. Then we had to take the, all the springs, the bedsprings out and wash them all down, wash it all off. We moved around the corner then. But before we moved, we made sure everything was clean before we moved. So the next house, we stayed there maybe three, four, five months in that building.

HOM: In the first apartment or the second apartment?

PETER: First apartment.

HOM: Then where did you go after that?

PETER: To Greene Avenue, 1263 Greene Avenue.

HOM: And what was that apartment like?

PETER: That was a railroad flat type. It was a six family house but a wooden structure and there were two families on each floor. And we were downstairs on the left side and we had a parlor and bedroom and kitchen and bathroom in the hall. No bathtub. We had washtubs in the kitchen. That's where I got my baths, they had these washtubs.

HOM: How did you adjust to being in America? Was it easy for you or difficult?

PETER: No, it wasn't too difficult for me. I guess my parents had a harder time of it, they had to, he had to find a job. My father had to find a job and so to pay the rent.

HOM: What did your father do?

PETER: Well, he originally worked as a butcher where he made cold cuts, he could make cold cuts and cut meat.

HOM: And mother?

PETER: My mother stayed home. But she also found herself some kind of homework where she was designing for some sweater manufacturer. She designed pictures which they could knit into the sweaters. Like a cat or rabbit or different animal. She'd make up the design for the knitting company.

HOM: Did you start school right away?

PETER: I went into the kindergarten. Yeah, P.S. 116 on Knickerbocker Avenue.

HOM: And what was that like?

PETER: Well, the kindergarten was mainly playing with them and pasting little things and the white glue. Looked like a

glue made from flour. And it had a sweet smell to it. And it had all different color pieces of paper and made pictures out of it like that.

HOM: And were you learning English during this...

PETER: Well, just speaking, just by speaking to the other children.

HOM: How about your parents? How did they learn English?

PETER: My parents, they enrolled in night school. They went to school evenings to learn to speak and read and write English. They did this a number of years.

HOM: Where did they go to school? What was the name of the school?

PETER: The name of the school I don't know.

HOM: How was...

PETER: Of course I never did go along to that school.

HOM: So how was, was it easy, your adjustment was pretty easy, but how about later on as you were growing up?

PETER: I never had any problems. I think children can pick up English very quickly. Especially if your associating with other children. And playing with them and I think it comes about relatively easy for them. It's more difficult for a grownup who, maybe twenty-five, thirty years old to learn a new language. I think that's more difficult than a child.

HOM: Well did you have any, do you remember anything in particular, anything special about school? About your school?

PETER: No, I enjoyed going there. I went, the particular school, I went for the first three terms. And then we moved to Queens.

HOM: Where, what section of Queens?

PETER: Ridgewood, Queens.

HOM: And you started school there also?

PETER: Yeah, I started in P.S. 93

HOM: Was that adjustment difficult from Brooklyn?

PETER: Well again, I already had, I always made friends. And that's the most difficult thing for a child, to leave your friends. But otherwise, we had a much nicer apartment there than we did.

HOM: What was that apartment like?

PETER: Well, it was cleaner, it was a cleaner neighborhood. And also we each had our own bedroom. We had a kitchen and a dining room.

HOM: And was it, how many families lived in this building?  
Was it a large building?

PETER: No, it was a three family house, three families.

HOM: And your father continued working as a butcher.

PETER: At that time, yeah.

HOM: Did he do anything else later on?

PETER: Well, sometime he went into cooking. He was a chef in restaurants.

HOM: What type of restaurant was this?

PETER: Well, neighborhood restaurants.

HOM: So how about later on? How did you adjust later on as you were growing into adulthood, after high school, for example?

PETER: Well, after high school, I started working in Manhattan, in a machine shop. And...

HOM: What did you do in this shop?

PETER: Well, in that shop, I was the low man on the totem pole there. I had to do everything, I had to be the first one in the morning. It was on the fifth floor, but they still had iron shutters on every window. I had to be in there, open up all the shutters on every morning. And

then whatever errands they had to run to and then, when they had no errands, they put me on some machinery there, taught me how to do this. This machine shop, various things or when they need to purchase something, they sent me down to Greenwich to carry the steel off. They needed the die, they made, a tool and die shop. Then I had to buy the die shoes and carry those, or whatever they needed, they sent me out to do. Physically carry it.

HOM: Well after you came, did you have any problems with, because you were German, it was right after the war, did you have any problems with anti-German feelings?

PETER: I personally didn't, somewhat, people, they called you ethnic names. Some people did. This was when we first came to the country.

HOM: And your adult life. Can you talk about your adult life a little.

PETER: Well, when World War II started, then people who knew you were German, they started calling you a "Nazi." And I didn't stand for that because I wasn't one. So I was working for Remington Rand at the time, so I went right

to the personnel department and told them about it. And they spoke to this person and he never done that again.

HOM: Did you serve in the war?

PETER: Yes, I served a little over three years.

HOM: And where were you stationed?

PETER: Well, first at Fort Hood, Texas, I was in the tank destroyers. And then we went to Camp Mccoy, Wisconsin, and then to Fort Meade, Maryland. Then to Hampton Roads, Virginia. That's where I got on a boat to go overseas. And the boat went to Algeria. We landed in Iran, North Africa. There we stayed there for a short spell. Then I was put on, I was in the special unit which is supposed to go to China. And I was supposed to be an instructor in the Chinese army. So from Iran, we went to Egypt, through the Mediterranean. And then they put us on a British boat and that went through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. We landed in Bombay. Then from Bombay they put us on a train and we went to Calcutta. They were in Calcutta maybe two, three weeks, when Merrill Morrado had started to push into Burma. And

they had taken an airstrip a few hundred miles from the north into Burma but they needed backup troops. Then they called everyone in Calcutta and put us on a plane and flew us up to Assam, and from Assam they flew us down into where this airstrip was taken. Then I got into combat in Burma and that's where I stayed.

HOM: Throughout the War, what was your rank in the army? Were you in the army?

PETER: Yeah.

HOM: What was your rank?

PETER: PFC (Private First Class). That's not much (he laughs). Well, it's my own fault actually because at the very beginning, during basic training, I had asked my company commander to go to officer school. And he said he wouldn't release me until I had a year in the service, so that kind of made me angry because I couldn't see why I had to wait a year. Then later on when I was in Burma after we came out of the combat, we were still in Burma area there. We were repairing bridge. I was in an engineer battalion then when into Burma. Combat

engineer. When they, officer approached me if I wanted to be an officer, he send me back to the United States. But then, I didn't want to (he laughs). And I feel it was a stupid move right now. I could've gotten out of the jungle and went to officers school at the same time, which I wanted to do three years before. This was almost towards the end of the other war in Europe. The European was just about over at that time. But then I didn't want to make the move when I had the opportunity so I wound up a PFC.

HOM: How did you feel about the war, during the war? Did you have any problems because you were of German decent?

PETER: No.

HOM: But how did you feel about fighting, because war was mostly against the German people, did you have any bad feelings about that?

PETER: No, not really. But they, when they first have you in the army, they ask you about that and if you are German or Italian you could have a preference if you would go to Germany or elsewhere. Well, if I had a choice, I'd go

elsewhere, actually.

HOM: And what did you do after, when you were discharged from the army?

PETER: When I was discharged, after, I went back to work at Remington Rand till approximately 1948. Then Remington Rand moved to Connecticut. And I could have went along. Of course I served apprenticeship with Remington Rand. I had my apprenticeship paper as a tool and die maker and they only offered twelve people the opportunity to go to Connecticut but we decided not to go.

HOM: And when did you meet your wife?

PETER: Well, that's a two part story (he laughs). The first time I met her we were living in Ridgewood and we were looking for another apartment and my wife's parents had a two family house. So we went over there to look at the apartment which we saw an ad for. And my mother and her mother were speaking and showing each other, her mother was showing my mother the apartment and they wanted to write something down. So her mother called my wife Erica for a pencil, to bring a pencil and paper to write

something down. Then I saw her, I thought, "Wow" (he laughs). Then when we left, I said to my mother if you take the apartment, I want to pay the rent every month.

HOM: And what year was this?

PETER: This was 1946. No, '45. Oh, no this is the first part. This was about 1930 or no, '40 (he pauses). '41, or '40 or '41, yeah, '40. But we didn't take that apartment. And then I didn't see her again till after I came out of the service in 1940. I came out at the end of 1945. In 1946, my mother was in a bakery in Hollis and there she met my wife's mother in the bakery. And they look at each other and each say, "What are you doing here?" Well, they lived nearby then they moved to Saint Albins and my folks had moved to Hollis. So they decided, well, it might be a good idea to get us acquainted again (he laughs). So they arranged that we would go over to their house for coffee and cake and we went over there we took here out. Then we get there, then the first thing, "Erica, we don't have any milk. So would you go to the store to get some milk." Then, "Johnny could go with you. He could walk with you." It was evening, you know. So away we went, the two of us. I think it was planned

(he laughs). Then on the way to the store, I asked her out, but for Friday. Then we went to the movies in Jamaica. I think it was the Valencia, one of the nice movies in Jamaica. We had dinner and went to the movies and then from there we started dating regularly.

HOM: How long after did you marry?

PETER: We married in November. About six months since we started dating, but it was worth it. It was a good move.

HOM: Let's get back a little. I wanted to ask you about your parents. Did they ever become citizens?

PETER: Oh, yes, they became citizens in 19, I think it was 1935, or '34. They had to go to the courthouse in Brooklyn to become citizens and they had to appear before a judge who asked them questions about how our government operates and different things and they had to read from a book, and tell him what they had read. And then they also had to speak to show him they could speak English. And then they got their citizen papers and I got a derivative citizenship because I was a minor at the time.

HOM: Let me ask you finally, how did you, did your, were your parents glad they came to America?

PETER: Oh, yeah. My father never went back. We went back to visit once, my mother and I, in 1939. We were there when the war started. We were visiting my grandmother and we were visiting my father's sister and husband and his brother and his wife and two cousins, three cousins I had then. Then my mother still had one brother to go to in Berlin. But then the war started and that put a crimp in everything. Then we had to get out, we had to leave the country but then the boats weren't going anymore and it was another friend of my mother who lived in Newark, New Jersey. They had a son over there who was serving an apprenticeship over there in the factory, also to be a tool maker. He was living with his grandmother. He was supposed to be over there for four years and then come back to the United States after he learned his trade. But when the war started, the grandmother didn't want to let the boy go, so we hung around longer than we should've trying to get her son to come along with us. He was a young fellow, he was actually a year or two younger than I. But that delayed the whole process, so it was getting more difficult to get out. We went up to

Hamburg and then the only exit we had was going to Denmark, then Sweden and then Norway. But we had to get visas, so it took another two weeks in Hamburg. We went to all the consulates and then we had to get approval from Berlin that we had permission to leave the country.

So then we got on the train, there we never had the boy along and he got killed, too, over there. This boy in Russia. They inducted him into the into the army. And I don't think they really had a right to do that. His parents were citizens, American citizens, you know, they, but they wouldn't let us take him along. So we went by train to Denmark. Copenhagen and then we went on a ferry, the whole railroad car went right on the boat, went over to Sweden and then we went up the coast of Sweden up to Oslo. Then we had to wait about two weeks there to get on a boat. We stayed two weeks in Oslo, then we came on a Norwegian ship back to New York.

HOM: Do you have any last thoughts before we end this interview?

PETER: Well, I'm sure happy my folks made the move to come to this country and I think it's the greatest place in the world, actually to live. It came always, if you put your

mind to it, if you go to schooling opportunities that are here and you really can make something of yourself if you want to, if you have the will to do it. The opportunities are there.

HOM: So, is that it, really?

PETER: Pardon me.

HOM: Is that really it?

PETER: Well...

HOM: Do you have any final, any other thought you would like to include?

PETER: Well, I think a lot of immigrants did a great thing for the country. They contributed largely to the building of this nation and that was good, all the people coming from different parts of the world, all working together to build up a nation and I think that was a good thing.

HOM: Well, I guess I'd like to thank you for this interview, for having us in your home today.

PETER: You're welcome.

HOM: And I'd like to sign off on the tape. This is Peter Hom  
for the National Park Service, Today is May 1, 1991. I'm  
signing off now.