

EI-437

ROSE YUSAVITZ SCHOENER

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LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here today with Rose Schoener at her home in Lauderdale Lakes, Florida. It's February 25th, 1994. And Mrs. Schoener came from Czechoslovakia in 1924 when she was twelve years old. Okay, well, I'm very happy to be here, and anything you can remember will be wonderful to have on the tape.

SCHOENER: Not really much. Just traveling. We had to go to Prague.

LEVINE: Well, first let's talk about, where in Czechoslovakia were you born?

SCHOENER: Very small country. It was a town, little town.

LEVINE: Okay. Do you remember the name of it?

SCHOENER: Munkat--no -- not Munkatsch. Solochin.

LEVINE: S-O-L-...

SCHOENER: I don't remember how to spell that.

LEVINE: Okay. Solochin. And were you in Solochin up until the time you left when you were twelve years old? Did you live in Solochin?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, and your birth date, so we have it on the tape. Your birth date?

SCHOENER: My birth date? Well, it's 1912, the 27th of April.

LEVINE: And do you remember, when you were born did you have brothers and sisters?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

SCHOENER: Fanny.

LEVINE: Do you remember her maiden name?

SCHOENER: Honig.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

SCHOENER: Isaac.

LEVINE: And your brothers and sisters, their names?

SCHOENER: One was Joe. One -- there's Nettie, Ethel, me and my brother, Matt.

LEVINE: Okay. What do you remember? Do you remember the house you lived in?

SCHOENER: Yeah. Very small near the main highway. Were trains passing by there.

LEVINE: Trains?

SCHOENER: Again, not too far from our house. We used to wave to the trains.

LEVINE: Did people have horses and buggies, or how did people get around?

SCHOENER: They had, there weren't any horses there. They had ox-- oxen.

LEVINE: Oh.

SCHOENER: That was, pulled the, the wagons.

LEVINE: Did your family have oxen?

SCHOENER: No.

LEVINE: No.

SCHOENER: Because my father was in the United States five years before us.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. So you must have been seven when he...

SCHOENER: I don't, my mother was left pregnant.

LEVINE: Oh. Do you remember your father from Czechoslovakia...

SCHOENER: No.

LEVINE: ...do you have any memory of him...

SCHOENER: No, no, no.

LEVINE: No.

SCHOENER: I don't remember my father.

LEVINE: And your mother, what was she like when you were a little girl in Czechoslovakia.

SCHOENER: Well, she was struggling very hard. There was a war on and we didn't hear from my father for quite some time. I remember the little town.

LEVINE: Tell me about that, anything about the little town.

SCHOENER: Well, we were on the outskirts of the town. We had to go to school, to go on a very, a big mountain, like, to walk. And it was in the wintertime. It was very bad. And, well, there were not too many Jews. About thirteen Jews in that town.

LEVINE: Was there anti-Semitic feeling or did you get along...

SCHOENER: Oh, yes, but not with my mother. They had a lot of anti-Semitic, they were all, but not with my mother. They loved my mother.

LEVINE: Why was that?

SCHOENER: Well, my mother always was very kind, very good with them. In fact, one year some people from there went to a wedding, gentile people, and they came back, they were frozen. My mother took them in and helped them, revived them. So they were very appreciative. So they were very kind to my mother. Always were, because my mother was very good.

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents living around...

SCHOENER: My grandfather died very young. My father's parents die-, I was named after my grandmother. And one of my other sisters was named after -- I was named after my mother's mother. My other sister was named after my father's mother.

LEVINE: So you never knew your grandparents?

SCHOENER: No. I was about three years old, my grandfather died. All I remember him lying on the floor, because they used to put them on the floor in Europe.

LEVINE: In the house?

SCHOENER: In the house on straw, because we lived, he lived with us. And that's about all I can remember of him. He had a long beard.

LEVINE: Do you remember what your father did for work before he came to the United...

SCHOENER: He was a shoemaker before he came to the United States.

LEVINE: And your mother was really taking care of the children? She wasn't working?

SCHOENER: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: Yeah. And do you...

SCHOENER: But we had a farm, small farm.

LEVINE: What did you grow on it?

SCHOENER: Potatoes.

LEVINE: Do you remember the kinds of food you had when you lived in Czechoslovakia, what you ate?

SCHOENER: Well, we never heard of oranges. There was apples and all kinds of fruit. The usual.

LEVINE: Did your mother make anything special that you remember...

SCHOENER: She was a very good baker.

LEVINE: Oh. Did she bake her own bread?

SCHOENER: Yes. She baked her own bread. Every week she used to bake bread for the whole week.

LEVINE: Do you remember the kitchen where you lived?

SCHOENER: Yes. I remember the kitchen. (she chuckles)

LEVINE: Describe that.

SCHOENER: It was, you know, like, the stove, it wasn't stoves like they have here. It was a - with a -- stove with a porch. And in the wintertime my mother used to line us up on the, on the porch to keep warm, or she used to put us in bed with quilts, covered us, because it was very cold there. And it was a wood stove. They didn't have coal there. That's what I remember.

LEVINE: Was it made of like iron, or was it a ceramic...

SCHOENER: Iron.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SCHOENER: Iron. There was no ceramics. I never heard of ceramics till I came here.

LEVINE: So, let's see. What else? Do you remember, did you have, like, bedrooms, or did you sleep...

SCHOENER: Oh.

LEVINE: ...did you have beds that you just brought out...

SCHOENER: No, no. There's a bedroom. We had a house, because there was no place else to go. It was a house. All were houses there.

LEVINE: Separate houses...

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: ...for each family.

SCHOENER: Yes. It was bedrooms. The daughters slept in one bedroom. The boys slept in another bedroom. (she chuckles)

LEVINE: Were you closest to any particular family member?

SCHOENER: Well, I had an, a aunt living not too far from there. And that, my father's brother lived in the town with his children and his wife.

LEVINE: So would you get together with those aunts and cousins...

SCHOENER: Not too much. They lived all the way in town. They had a grocery. So we didn't get too much together.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you remember anything about the war years personally? Do you remember the First World War...

SCHOENER: Not much. All I remember, they had a lot of soldiers surrounding it. And they had, the Germans' families used to, came in and stayed with us for a while when the war was on, because that part of the country was in Germany. It was actually Hungary at the time. So they were with the Germans. And families came and, but the only thing I remember is, what my mother told me, told us that the Russians not too far from our house at the time. But somehow or other they got beaten and then they ran. A lot -- a lot of the Jews ran away. They weren't there, but my mother couldn't go any place with five children. So we stayed there, but lucky that they left.

LEVINE: Yeah. Were you a religious family?

SCHOENER: Yes. My father was very, my grandfather was a very learned man. They wanted him to become a rabbi, but he didn't want to. He

didn't want to, to, you know, they tell if it's kosher, not kosher, he didn't want --. He was a very reli --if he makes a mistake, he was a very religious man.

LEVINE: What about you as a, as a Jewish girl? How did you observe your religion?

SCHOENER: The same way. Because when we came here, and my father was religious, and my mother was very religious. The same way till I got married.

LEVINE: Then you became less...

SCHOENER: Well, when I started going with my husband, he was, he is American born. He was not brought up like us. And you get away from all the traditional things when you're a little older, especially if you go with a person that doesn't know anything about it. And just not as religious. I keep kosher as far as the meat is concerned, and I don't buy anything non-kosher. I don't bring it into the house. But I'm not, I travel on Saturdays. So it's not as observant as my parents were.

LEVINE: Well, do you know the circumstances under which your father left for America?

SCHOENER: Well, I don't know the circumstances. There was a lot of people were leaving for the United States. It's just that the war was coming on. I guess, I don't remember the circumstances.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about school?

SCHOENER: Oh, yes. I remember about school.

LEVINE: What?

SCHOENER: First it was Hungarian. Then it was Czech. They came in after the war, and we had to study Czech. I was a little girl, and I didn't learn much...

LEVINE: First you spoke Hungarian in school?

SCHOENER: I didn't speak Hungarian...

LEVINE: No?

SCHOENER: ...because actual speak -- the town we spoke a lot of Slavish and...

LEVINE: The school was not speaking Hungarian?

SCHOENER: Yes, at first. I mean, they tried to teach you. But then you had to change for Czech. So...

LEVINE: What did you speak at home?

SCHOENER: Yiddish.

LEVINE: Oh.

SCHOENER: That's what we spoke. Even when we came here. My father spoke English, but my mother -- but she understood a lot. She learned.

LEVINE: So when your father went to America...

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: And then it was the war years. So you, you were there, and he was in America...

SCHOENER: Yes, we were there. Well, he came a little before the war was started. And, yeah, we were there and he was in the United States.

LEVINE: And were you, was your mother able to communicate by letter with him?

SCHOENER: Well, as, you couldn't get as much mail as you would expect, but I guess she communicated with him. There were always people that knew how to read. Well, he wrote in Hungarian to my mother. But my mother couldn't read, read or write. But she, there was always somebody, there was a, a priest was, she was, he was my mother's age. And she knew him since they were born, and so he was very nice. He used to come, he wouldn't come into the house. But he also, always came and sat outside and used to talk to us, and he used to read the letters for my mother.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that your father wrote from America that you remember...

SCHOENER: I don't remember.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SCHOENER: I don't remember anything. I know we were supposed to be here the year before we came. But I had an older brother, my older brother, and my mother didn't -- she changed her mind, she didn't want to come. We had the passports and all, but she changed her mind. She was always worried about the religion with the, so it took a year to -- my brother convinced her, because he said if you don't go, he had another year to go before they conscript him. Otherwise he would have to go to the army. So we left.

LEVINE: And do you remember leaving? Do you remember packing up?

SCHOENER: I remember leaving. I remember they put us on, and the whole town was down to see my mother off. And they put us in the wagon, all of us with the luggage. And they took us to the, where we could have gotten a train to leave, because the train that we -- that ran by us was not a...

LEVINE: Passenger.

SCHOENER: ...passenger.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you packed, or what your mother packed?

SCHOENER: My mother tried to pack as much as she was able to. In fact, we had a, near us, certain kind of water. It was like seltzer, but it wasn't. It came from the earth. My mother took along a couple of bottles of that, too. (she chuckles) And I can remember all these things.

LEVINE: Do you remember what medical care was...

SCHOENER: There weren't, there weren't any doctors in our town. If we got sick, it was a bigger town on one side of us, that you had to go over there. But being these old medical things and, you know, the old fashioned, and people knew how to cure a lot of things.

LEVINE: Can you remember anything that they used, or that they could cure with these kind of --.

SCHOENER: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SCHOENER: We didn't, we didn't have a doctor. Once in a blue moon a doctor used to come into the town, but otherwise we didn't have that.

LEVINE: And it school, do you remember, how was the school, how was it different from the school you went to when you came here.

SCHOENER: Well, it was small. You know, it was just a, there weren't different...

LEVINE: Class...

SCHOENER: ...age groups.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

SCHOENER: It was all in one. That's what I, I think. And we had a very big bridge, covered, covered bridge. And people used to ride by there. And we used to meet on Saturdays. All the people from the town, from another town, they used to come in, and the kids, and we used to meet there on Saturdays, and we used to have a lot of fun.

LEVINE: What did you do? What, can you remember...

SCHOENER: Well, we'd talk, and played games. That's all what we did. There was nothing else to do over there.

LEVINE: Can you remember any of the games or, or music or dancing or anything like that?

SCHOENER: Well, I know how to dance.

LEVINE: Did you dance there? Did you, when you got together with your friends...

SCHOENER: No. I was young. But I know, knew how to dance Hungarian and...

LEVINE: Yeah.

SCHOENER: And we always watched, and kids learn.

LEVINE: Can you remember any festivities of the whole town, any gatherings? Do you remember market day, anything like that?

SCHOENER: No, I don't remember.

LEVINE: Okay.

SCHOENER: There was no market there.

LEVINE: Oh.

SCHOENER: There were two groceries in the town. And they used to shop over there, I guess. That's all I remember.

LEVINE: So when you left on the wagon with your brothers and sisters and your mother, and then people came out to say good-bye?

SCHOENER: They all walked for a while with us. The whole town was down the street.

LEVINE: They walked with the wagon?

SCHOENER: With the wagon. Back of the wagon. They felt very bad that my mother was leaving.

LEVINE: And your mother, I imagine, she felt badly...

SCHOENER: She felt bad to leave. You know, everything was there that she knew. And my father didn't want to come back, because he says what is he going to do there. He's, he wasn't a shoe maker here. So he didn't want to come back. So anyway that's, that's why we left.

LEVINE: So then you came, you went to a town where you got a train?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: And...

SCHOENER: It was a little bigger. It was like a little a city. They called it Solochin. And they had a train there. And we took the train, and we traveled.

LEVINE: Was this the first time that you had been out of your little town?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: So what, do you remember anything that struck you as different as you travelled further away from your town? So where did you then go?

SCHOENER: To Cherbourg's - to Cherbourg.

LEVINE: And...

SCHOENER: That's where we took the boat.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember waiting for the boat?

SCHOENER: Yes. We had to wait I think a week or two. I don't remember, but I know we had to wait.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about Cherbourg or your experience there?

SCHOENER: Well, I don't remember. I remember the, the way the windows outside were jutting out, you know, the way they made them. That's all I can remember, because my brother hit himself, he cut open his head there. He was playing with a ball.

LEVINE: Do you remember any examinations before...

SCHOENER: Yes. At Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Oh. But not before you left?

SCHOENER: No, before we left we had all the, what we needed. But when we got to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about, you, what the, what the ship was.

SCHOENER: The Cunard Line.

LEVINE: Aquitania?

SCHOENER: Aquitania.

LEVINE: And tell me anything about your experience on that ship.

SCHOENER: Well, they had that, three stacks. Three or four stacks - three or four stacks. I don't remember now. We were in the, the lower deck. We couldn't go up...

LEVINE: Steerage?

SCHOENER: Yes. We couldn't go up to the upper deck. And the rooms were very, we were in one room.

LEVINE: Oh, a cabin. In a third class cabin?

SCHOENER: It was like, below.

LEVINE: Oh, you were all in one room.

SCHOENER: All in one room.

LEVINE: Not just your family, but other people, too?

SCHOENER: No. Only the family.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SCHOENER: And it was quite tight.

LEVINE: Bunk beds?

SCHOENER: Yes. And one of my sisters got very sick. She, the whole the time we traveled she was sick.

LEVINE: How about you?

SCHOENER: Well, I was sick for a couple of days, but I got over it.

LEVINE: Do you remember the food aboard ship?

SCHOENER: Herring, potatoes. They wouldn't give us meat. My mother wouldn't eat it. We wouldn't eat it, either. So most of the times, you know, that's all I could remember is the herring. (she laughs) I don't remember anything else. But we all ate in one place. All, everybody.

LEVINE: Did you go up on deck much?

SCHOENER: We went on deck. It was cold. We came in November. It was very cold. You couldn't do much -- walk too much. Don't remember things. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Did peop-, did people sing or dance, or how did...

SCHOENER: Oh, yes. They, you know, the, there are so many people there that they, a lot of them got together, then they sang and danced. But it was rough.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the Aquitania came into the New York Harbor?

SCHOENER: Yes. We had to take a little, my father came in, because they put us in little stalls. See, we didn't have to go to Ellis Island. The children. We were citizens on my father's papers. My mother, mother wasn't. So we went with my mother. And then my father came. Then my

mother says, "I think that's your father." Because he had a beard when he left, a small beard. And, but she recognized him. She says, "I think that's your father." (she laughs)

LEVINE: Do you remember how you felt when you saw him?

SCHOENER: Shy. I felt very shy. And then they put us on a, on a little boat, a boat from Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about being at Ellis Island...

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: ...what you went through there?

SCHOENER: Yes. My, one of my sisters has a habit of dragging a leg. Even though we were citizens, but once we were there they made her walk back and forth, back and forth. And she always did it. It was nothing wrong with her. But they, that, those years if any little thing was wrong they wouldn't let you into the United States. And my mother said, turned around to us and she said, "If they send her back, we're all going back." Because my mother wouldn't let any of the children stay by themselves. But they passed her because there was nothing wrong with her actually. It was just a habit that she had.

LEVINE: So did you have to stay overnight at all?

SCHOENER: In Ellis Island? I don't remember. I think we did, but I'm not sure. I think we did.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember the Statue of Liberty, seeing that...

SCHOENER: Yes, we passed. Yes.

LEVINE: How did you feel. Did you know it was at that time?

SCHOENER: Yes, we knew about it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SCHOENER: Because a priest was in the United States once. And he used to, he came and told us all kinds of stories, not to be afraid to travel in a tunnel, or travel on a boat. All kinds of stories he told us -- we should not be afraid.

LEVINE: So then you took the ferry, and you went, I guess, to Battery Park?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: Now, did your father come...

SCHOENER: Yes...

LEVINE: ...and met...

SCHOENER: ...my father came and took us off.

LEVINE: ...took you from the ferry?

SCHOENER: Right.

LEVINE: Where did you go from there?

SCHOENER: Downtown Manhattan.

LEVINE: Lower East Side?

SCHOENER: Lower East Side. We lived there for a couple of years. My father lived there.

LEVINE: Do you remember the place you lived?

SCHOENER: Small apartment on Lewis Street.

LEVINE: And how was it different from where you lived in Czechoslovakia?

SCHOENER: Well, we had a house there. It was different because it was a high, not high-rise. It was I think four or five stories. And I don't remember whether there was heat or not. I remember there were gas, gas things on the wall...

LEVINE: A meter?

SCHOENER: ...the meters. But we moved from there after a while.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you start school right away?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: And how was that? What kind of experience...

SCHOENER: It was rough, because they didn't teach you your language. They taught you American, English, right off and couldn't understand anything. But they, they don't, now they teach the language you, you, that you know. I never heard of such a thing. That's what they waste all the money.

LEVINE: So tell me how, was there anything that was very helpful to you in learning English?

SCHOENER: No. I don't remember. I guess kids learn. Of course, I had an accent. I still, I think it's remaining a little bit.

LEVINE: Not so much.

SCHOENER: But, but children. You play with children. You learn. It was quite rough.

LEVINE: How about your mother and father? Do you have any sense of how it was for them having been separated for so long to be back together?

SCHOENER: My father loved my mother.

LEVINE: Yeah. Was your mother happy she had come to America?

SCHOENER: Well, she was happy that she came. But it was rough. My father at first didn't make a living for years. And she struggled. But we managed.

LEVINE: What did your father do finally...

SCHOENER: Well, he had a grocery store. Someplace in, where the German section.

LEVINE: The upper east side maybe?

SCHOENER: The upper east side, I guess. I don't remember. But he barely made a living. Then he was in a very bad accident, and he was laid up for a long time.

LEVINE: Did your mother ever work outside the home?

SCHOENER: She worked. They became supers. And my mother worked cleaning the -- my mother kept, she used to scrub the stairs on her knees.

LEVINE: Were you living in the Lower East Side then?

SCHOENER: Yes. I moved from the Lower East Side, I was a grown, I was going with my husband already.

LEVINE: How did you meet him?

SCHOENER: Through my former sister-in-law, she should rest in peace. She knew him, and they made a, somebody made a surprise party for her sixteen birthday. And, in the same building where I lived. And we were there. That's how I met him.

LEVINE: What was his name?

SCHOENER: Harry.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Did you have social clubs of people from Europe that you...

SCHOENER: No. I had friends. I mean, we got friends. My mother and father had a lot of cousins here. My mother had. Not my father. And

they were close with my mother. That's how we, we never socialized outside. It was always with relatives.

LEVINE: I see. So how long did you stay in school?

SCHOENER: Till I was fourteen.

LEVINE: And then what, what...

SCHOENER: Then went to work. Then they had a continuation school once a week.

LEVINE: Did...

SCHOENER: Now they haven't got that, either.

LEVINE: But you did that?

SCHOENER: Yes, I had to go.

LEVINE: You went to work and you went to continuation?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: So, what was your first job?

SCHOENER: Tell you the truth, I don't remember. I guess a floor girl in a factory.

LEVINE: And did you work up until you got married, or did you work after you...

SCHOENER: Oh, I worked more. I worked way before any, three years before I retired.

LEVINE: Did you have then some kind of line of work that you did mostly?

SCHOENER: Yes, I was a sample maker.

LEVINE: Oh.

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: What kinds of samples?

SCHOENER: Lingerie.

LEVINE: Oh. So you worked in a factory?

SCHOENER: In a factory.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how about your husband? He, was he American born?

SCHOENER: Yes. Came from very poor family. He graduated high school and he started college. Then he got very sick. He got typhoid. And he was in the hospital for quite some time, he lost out on his semester. So he gave it up. So he went to work in a factory as a, he was learning to be a cutter. And he stayed with that for quite some time. Then when we got married, a few years later he went into business for himself.

LEVINE: What was he learning to cut? What kind of...

SCHOENER: Loungewear. Like, like the stuff that I worked at.

LEVINE: Oh. Lingerie and...

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: So, and then, his own business, what was that?

SCHOENER: Also the same thing.

LEVINE: Oh.

SCHOENER: Yes. And I was with him.

LEVINE: Oh.

SCHOENER: For a lot of years.

LEVINE: So did you have children?

SCHOENER: Yes, I have two, two daughters.

LEVINE: And their names?

SCHOENER: Judith and Penny.

LEVINE: And do you have grandchildren as well?

SCHOENER: I got a married granddaughter.

LEVINE: Oh. Good. So you may have great grandchildren before too long.

SCHOENER: I don't know. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Well, tell me what you feel very satisfied about in your life, that you feel good about, or, or proud of.

SCHOENER: Well, I'm proud of what we did. We struggled through Depression.

LEVINE: Tell me about the Depression. How did, how was it for you during those years?

SCHOENER: Bad. But my mother always made sure that we have food and that we dressed the right -- we never were in want for anything. It was hard. I worked, I went to work, you know. I don't remember when I went to work, but I know I was fourteen years old. My sisters worked. My sisters are older than I am. My brother worked. Of course, you didn't get much, and they needed for themselves. But they helped. We all tried.

LEVINE: When you got married, where did you live then?

SCHOENER: In the Bronx. Not for too long, because my mother-in-law got very sick, and she needed help. They were four boys. There was no, no girls in the family. And we were the first, he was very young when we got married. And I went to -- I worked, but I took care of the family.

LEVINE: Oh.

SCHOENER: For a while.

LEVINE: Did you try to retain any of your European ways, or were you trying to become Americanized, or...

SCHOENER: There was no different, European ways are, you know, some people think there's a difference in European ways. Of course you don't see the things that you see here. But we didn't retain the European ways. I mean, in the house we retained the religion. That's all. There was no, I don't think it was any different that, that I remember. Some people are very, they don't change at all.

LEVINE: Do your...

SCHOENER: We were kids when we came, so you, we changed.

LEVINE: Do you think you would have changed anyway...

SCHOENER: I suppose so.

LEVINE: ...even if you stayed where you were?

SCHOENER: Yes. Not, no. That was a little town, and you really couldn't learn much there. Because we didn't go any place. We socialized with the people from the town. And we socialized, that we met in between people from the other town. Otherwise we learned from each other.

LEVINE: So here you were in big city, it's quite different.

SCHOENER: Well, yeah, it's a big city, but we got used to it very fast. To me it didn't make any difference. Tall buildings or not tall buildings. (she chuckles) Get used to it.

LEVINE: Yeah. Were there any particular things that you enjoyed in this, in, being in New York City that...

SCHOENER: When we were kids?

LEVINE: Yeah, or, or after, when you were married?

SCHOENER: Well, after I got married I was very busy. Worked. And I had my daughter at, at, four years later. I stayed home for a while, then went back to work. Then we moved to the Island. But I had the second one already when we moved to the Island. Five years later. (she laughs)

LEVINE: And then did you work...

SCHOENER: They're five years apart.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SCHOENER: And after a while went back to work.

LEVINE: Were you working in the city or you were working out on Long Island?

SCHOENER: In the city. But we moved back afterwards. We moved back to Long -- Flushing. And from there it was easier.

LEVINE: Can you say what was the high point of your life? What was a really good time...

SCHOENER: Children. Having the children.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SCHOENER: And being happy. My husband's a very good man.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SCHOENER: That was the high point.

LEVINE: How about this time in your life. How is this for you?

SCHOENER: It's nice. Of course, I miss them, one of my grandchildren are in New York. One of my daughters is in New York. The other one lives not too far from here. She was married, she lived in San Francisco, she got divorced and came back here. And she lives not too far from here. She lived with us for a while.

LEVINE: So, now, did you visit Ellis Island, or did someone else visit...

SCHOENER: My nephew. He lives in Long Island. And when they re-done Ellis Island he went over there to see it. Came to see where his mother came in.

LEVINE: Do you have any sisters and brothers still alive...

SCHOENER: All of them. We're all alive.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, is there anything else that you can think of, either about Czechoslovakia or, can you describe yourself as you were when you came to this country?

SCHOENER: I was wild. (she laughs)

LEVINE: You were wild?

SCHOENER: Not wild like they say now, but I wanted to play. I didn't want to do anything in the house. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Did you, did you have chores around the house?

SCHOENER: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What were your jobs?

SCHOENER: Well, wash dishes, do other things like everybody else.

LEVINE: And did you get used to being around your father finally, or did you...

SCHOENER: Yes, but it was a little, you know...

LEVINE: There was a distance maybe?

SCHOENER: Oh, you, you're not brought up together. And it - and it -- not that there was, he -- I, I can't explain it. It was a, I can't explain now. We loved him. We loved my mother very much. And the thing was there was a little bit of a distance. My father, should rest in peace, my brother was a big boy when he came here, the older one. And he was a little bit jealous of my brother.

LEVINE: Oh, because your mother was...

SCHOENER: Well, he was a big, she used, you know, he was jealous. If she, if she, like, protected him or something, he didn't like it. And believe me, she didn't make any distinction between him or my brother, because they -- they were -- it was a love marriage. The brother lived there, he got married and he lived in the town, and he brought my, he wanted to introduce him to my mother. The brother, his brother. That's why, how she met my father.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh. So it wasn't something arranged. They really chose each other.

SCHOENER: No, no, no, no. It wasn't arranged. Years ago they used to arrange marriages . No, my mother and father was not arranged marriage.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SCHOENER: Was the -- his wife was like a far cousin, like a second, third cousin of my mother's. And he liked my mother very much, and he figured his brother, he was the youngest. He was an orphan at eight. And they were nine brothers. No sisters. And struggled when he was a little boy. In Europe they're not as kind to the family as over here. I mean, those years. They, probably it's changed now, too.

LEVINE: So he was an orphan?

SCHOENER: Yes.

LEVINE: Over in Czechoslovakia?

SCHOENER: Yeah. Well, he lived in...

LEVINE: In Hungary. It was Hungary then.

SCHOENER: Yes. Where he, I don't remember the town they came from. I mean, the city. He came from a city. But he was an orphan at eight. Those things happen.

LEVINE: Well, that might explain...

SCHOENER: And he was the youngest.

LEVINE: I see. It might explain why he wasn't maybe so demonstrative to you...

SCHOENER: He was.

LEVINE: Oh, he was.

SCHOENER: Towards my mother, yes, but not towards the children. He was a little bit on the, he also felt a little distance at first. You know, how, you don't see your children, you've not brought up, you didn't stay with them when they were little. Trying his best. He was a very handsome looking man.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else you can think of?

SCHOENER: I can't think of anything else.

LEVINE: Well, that's wonderful. Well, I want to thank you very much...

SCHOENER: You're welcome.

LEVINE: ...for a very interesting story.

SCHOENER: I hope it comes out all right.

LEVINE: Yeah, I'm sure it will. And I'm going to send you a copy of it.

SCHOENER: Okay. Fine. Thank you.

LEVINE: Okay, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm speaking with Rose Schoener in Lauderdale Lakes, Florida on February 25th, 1994, and I'm signing off.

EI-437/SCHOENER