

**EI-513**

**EMMA MARGARET KISS SCHULTEIS**

**BIRTH DATE: APRIL 6, 1913**

**INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2, 1994**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1998**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: JANET LEVINE**

**HUNGARY, 1921**

**AGE 8**

**PORT: HAMBURG**

**SHIP: "THE BERENGARIA"**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **HUNGARY: MISCOLCS**
- **NY, NY; MASTIC BEACH, L.I., NY**

LEVINE: Well, I just want to first say that it's August 2, 1994.

SCHULTEIS: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: I'm here at Mastic Beach at the home of Mrs. Emma Schulteis.

SCHULTEIS: Right.

LEVINE: Who came from Hungary when she was eight years old in 1921.

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: And I want to say that I'm very happy to be here.

SCHULTEIS: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And I'm looking forward to hearing your story. And why don't we start at the very beginning. Tell me where you were born in Hungary and the date you were born.

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay.

SCHULTEIS: Okay.

LEVINE: Your birth date.

SCHULTEIS: Oh, April 6, 1913.

LEVINE: Okay. And where in Hungary?

SCHULTEIS: I was born in Miscolcs, Hungary.

LEVINE: Also, if you could spell any of those words, I might not be familiar with them.

SCHULTEIS: All right. M-I-S-C-O-L-C-S, or, or C-S. Miscolcs, Hungary. It's near Budapest but not, not too, not too close.

LEVINE: Okay. Do you, did you live in Miscolcs up until the time you left Hungary?

SCHULTEIS: Yes, we did. Yes. Uh, when I was born I was a very happy child raised

by my mother and father until one day, uh, disaster, oh, I went to school. I did start school, and I liked school very much. As I say, repeat myself now, one day we woke up and there was disaster because our streets were flooded with ammunition, artillery and soldiers. Uh, they were parked outside our street. And, uh, they were Romanian soldiers, and Romanian and Hungary were not on very friendly terms. And, uh, they wanted the men, my father worked for the railroad at that time. Uh, they wanted to conscript all the men to join with them, and they did not want to fight or join them to fight our own people. So the men, I remember, uh, a little bit, they left. Where they left, where they went, I'm not sure. Maybe in the woods, they hid in the woods not to be joining them, the Romanian soldiers. Therefore all the women and children were left unattended, and we had to go and live in a cellar. There was a nearby house that had a cellar. Otherwise it was little houses, little community, just like here in Mastic Beach. And we had to go and live there, maybe for a month or so, until the soldiers were up there shooting. We heard the machine guns, the bullets, every once in a while more gunfire than other times, and we were afraid to go out. We couldn't go out. But once in a while there was a lull in the fighting. The women would go up to see how their household, uh, animals, you know, the, uh, chickens. My mother had chickens only. And, uh, other people had some other animals, they wanted to go and see if they were fed. And when they did go up, the soldiers would, uh, grab the women, and say, "I want you to kill this chicken, and I want you to cook it for me." And, uh, which my mother did. But some other women, younger girls, were less unfortunate [fortunate, SIC,] because they were raped. It's wartime. And they were afraid to come out any more from the cellar. We were there for quite a long time.

LEVINE: Months?

SCHULTEIS: Maybe about a month or so. I don't remember now. I was about six, seven years old. And, uh, this, this ended, and we got back to our trite and normal life, living in Hungary. As I say, I went to school. I liked school. And then one day we got a visitor that came to our home. And he was my aunt and uncle from New York City. They came to visit us. And they talked my mother and father into coming to America, which was a wonderful country, and we wanted, we wanted, well, anyway, we said we would come if they would, uh, send for us. So they started to, uh, get the visas going. And, uh, I know I'm saying too much.

LEVINE: No, that's fine. Let me ask a few questions. Do you remember what your aunt and uncle told about America?

SCHULTEIS: That it was a wonderful country. It was a wonderful country. So, uh, they only came for a visit, and they wanted to go back home.

LEVINE: Was there anything specific that you remember that they talked about?

SCHULTEIS: Well, I remember afterwards what happened. Finally we left Hungary because the visa came through and we were traveling to America. And I remember that because I was eight years old. I remember traveling through Germany, and everything looked so clean and, uh, the countryside, I couldn't believe I was leaving Hungary, I didn't know any other place. And we came to Hamburg, Germany. Maybe that's too . . .

LEVINE: It would be good if we could talk all about your life in Miscolcs, Miscolcs?

SCHULTEIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, first, before we talk about the trip here.

SCHULTEIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, uh, tell me about, like, the house you lived in. What did that look like?

SCHULTEIS: Oh, we lived in a little, uh, it was like cottages. We had a very nice little house. My mother cried, like, so hard, that she didn't want to leave her furniture; she didn't want to leave her house. And, uh, my father felt kind of bad, uh, because that was his home, and we were going to someplace, we were not able to realize what it was all about. And, uh, it was sad, it was sad.

LEVINE: What do you remember about the house? It was a little house, and, like, when you walked into the front door, what did you see? Remember?

SCHULTEIS: That I don't remember too well. Uh, no, I don't remember that too well.

LEVINE: Um, so, when, when you were, what did people do in this town? I mean, what was the, was there any kind of an industry, or, were they farmers, or . . .

SCHULTEIS: Oh, well, they were farmers, yes, they were farmers. And, uh, I keep saying and. Uh, as my father worked for the railroad, but mostly farmers, and they helped one another at harvest time. Uh, I remember, I remember very vividly I had two grandparents. I had my mother's mother, she was alive, and my father's mother, she was alive. And I would go and visit them each summer, each time. My mother's mother was a very kind woman. She would give me anything I wanted. And they would take me to, uh, to, uh, to the fields. We would gather different vegetables, and bring them home.

LEVINE: Did they live on a farm, your grandmother?

SCHULTEIS: No, on the outskirts. But they had, you know, they had farms all around them. And I remember my grandmother making butter, churned butter, and they used to put it into grape leaves, put it between grape leaves, and they would put it down in some cold storage place.

LEVINE: Would the storage place be dug into the ground?

SCHULTEIS: Yes, something, yes. It would be, uh, some, it wasn't a basement, you know, it wasn't a basement. It was maybe like a dugout place. And they had a well. Oh, uh, my grandmother on my father's side was blind. When she was a child, she fell in the well. Uh, you know, where, where they lived. Due to that fall, she became blind. When we, well, maybe she was partly blind, because she was very cunning, she saw everything, she said, you know. Uh, for instance, they would take me, uh, to the fields to pick cherries, and when I went to pick cherries I ate more cherries than I picked. And I became very, very ill. They had to put me on the wagon and that's where I was laying coming home from the trip. Uh, then I was staying with my, as I say, with my grandmother for quite some time, and, uh, my cousin came over who was my age. His name was Nicholas, Nicholas. Nicholas and I, we would do bad things like, we would go and pick and shake all the trees that all the fruit came down. My grandmother was very, very angry, and told Nicholas not to come over any more, and for me, uh, not to do that any more because she saw, I thought she's blind, she don't see what we're doing, and she says, "I know everything that you're doing, and if you don't behave, you can't come over any more." She says, "This is our livelihood." You know. So these things that I do remember as a child, going to my grandparents, and going to school. One day my uncle, uh,

made me a pair of shoes and gave it to me for Christmas. And Christmas time, well, uh, there was a lot of mud and rain sometimes, and my mother would carry me on her back to school so I don't get the shoes muddy. That I remember. And my mother used to make dolls for me, and it would be from just put two sticks together for a body and an arm, and then wrap, uh, cloth around it, and fix it up as a doll. That's the only doll that I had when I was a child, until much later I got my first doll, my . . .

LEVINE: Did you play any games, or do you remember any other things that you did as a child for play?

SCHULTEIS: I probably did, but I don't remember, maybe tag. That's about all. We didn't have any, have any particular, uh, one thing, one thing I do remember is going through the, uh, high corn, and hide there, you know, between my cousin and I, Nicholas. We would hide, hide in the high corn, and that's about all that I remember, so it could have been hide and seek in the high corn that he couldn't find me.

LEVINE: How about, um, you mentioned Christmas. Do you remember how you celebrated Christmas in Hungary?

SCHULTEIS: Oh, yes. I remember one particular Christmas time, uh, there was, uh, we had Saint Nicholas in Hungary, Saint Nicholas, not Santa Claus. And he would come dressed up in his regalia's outfit with the high hat, and the, uh, the, uh . . .

LEVINE: His sack?

SCHULTEIS: No, no. What they pull the sheep. The shepherders use this . . .

LEVINE: Like a rod?

SCHULTEIS: Rod and staff, whatever. And he would come with this rod and staff, and we were so frightened of him, because he always was a tall man, and all dressed up, a strange man.

LEVINE: What was his hat like?

SCHULTEIS: Well, like a bishop. Like a bishop, you know? And he had this, uh, staff and rod. I don't know the name of it. And he had that. And he would, you know, bounce it on the table, and I remember that. He used to come around from house to house. Uh, and, uh, Christmas time, as I say, my uncle gave me a pair of shoes for Christmas, and I remember, uh, like Santa Claus, whatever, came, and gave me pad and pencils in a, in a holder, and, uh, to me that was so much. It was a big Christmas.

LEVINE: What did Saint Nicholas do? Like when he came around from house to house, what was, um, what was he doing when he was going to each house?

SCHULTEIS: Well, I guess they were singing hymns that I don't, you know, I don't remember what the hymns were, but they were coming around and singing hymns and talking to the people. But I guess that was the, uh . . .

LEVINE: Um, were you a religious family? So-so?

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: What religion was your family?

SCHULTEIS: That's another story.

LEVINE: Good. (She laughs)

SCHULTEIS: My mother came from another town. She was a young woman, my mother. Her name was Margaret. And . . .

LEVINE: What was her maiden name?

SCHULTEIS: Her maiden name was Andreschik. Margaret Andreschik.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

SCHULTEIS: A-N-D-R-E, uh, S-C-H-I-K, or something like that. She was raised in the Catholic family, and in the town she worked for the priests, you know, cleaning house and taking care of different things. But that's what the young girls used to do, help in the church, whatever they can. Then she got a little older, and she had to leave, look for a job. She went into the city of Miscolcs, and there she met my father, who was a Protestant. When she brought my father back home to introduce him to the family, she said she wanted to marry him. They wanted to get married, and she went to the, to the church, spoke to the priest, and he said no, we cannot marry you and your boyfriend, whatever, because he is not a Catholic. My mother got very angry about that, knowing that she was raised in that town and, with the church, so she went back to the city with my father to work, and they got married over there. But when my mother and father got married, uh, she, they had to vow that the children will be brought up as, as Protestants, like my father was. Therefore I was a Protestant until I came to this country and I met my husband, who was Episcopalian. Now I'm an Episcopalian.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. So, uh, did you ever hear the story about how your mother and father met?

SCHULTEIS: No, no.

LEVINE: What was . . .

SCHULTEIS: They worked in the city. That I know, they worked together.

LEVINE: How about your father's name?

SCHULTEIS: My father's name, in Hungarian is Ferenc. It's a Hungarian name. Ferenc is Frank in this country.

LEVINE: How do you spell Ferenc?

SCHULTEIS: F-E-R-E-N-C. Ferenc. That's Frank.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you have brothers and sisters in Hungary?

SCHULTEIS: No, no. I was the only child, I was the only.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember any food that your mother or your grandmothers prepared that you liked when you were a little girl before you left Hungary?

SCHULTEIS: Well, we had traditional Hungarian food, which was very, is still very common. Uh, we didn't have too much food. We did have a lot of noodles with everything. We had noodles with cottage cheese, a little onion on it, fried onion. And we had noodles and cabbage, noodle soup, I mean, cabbage soup. Uh, we had stuffed cabbage, and we

had, uh, well, like goulash, beef goulash, and we had a lot of chicken. And I particularly liked rice pudding, and at every wedding there was a lot of rice pudding. And I, uh, urged my mother that I wanted to go to the wedding so I could have rice pudding (laughs).

LEVINE: Do, um, do you remember any occasions like weddings, funerals, anything that was like a ceremony that you remember from Hungary?

SCHULTEIS: Well, just talking about rice pudding, we went to a nearby wedding. The girl got married, and, uh, they served rice pudding there, and that's the only wedding that I remember. And they, also we had a wedding of my, of my aunt in Hungary, when I was a little girl. It was time for her to get out of the house and get married, and she married this older man I wasn't very happy about. You know, he wasn't a young, a younger person like she was. I don't know how that worked out, but that, those two weddings that I remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember any ceremonies, like, uh, were they different from here, do you remember at all? Weddings, or funerals, or . . .

SCHULTEIS: Well, ceremony, I'll tell you one thing. I don't know whether they had it in this country many years later, whatever, is Easter time. We had Easter eggs, and we had, uh, early in the morning the young fellows would come to the house, knock at the door of a girl, and they would sprinkle them with perfume.

LEVINE: The fellow would sprinkle the girl with perfume?

SCHULTEIS: Yes, yes. And it was like an honor that somebody came courting, or calling on you. That I remember. That was a custom around Easter time. Besides all the good food and, uh, outside of that, I don't

remember too much about, uh, we did go to church. My father would always take me to church. My mother . . .

LEVINE: Well, you were going to the Protestant church then?

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: The Episcopal.

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: Oh, no, you became Episcopal here.

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: Here, right, uh-huh.

SCHULTEIS: Much later.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. Okay. Is there anything else you can think of, customs of, of, uh, Hungary, that you experienced as a little girl. Um . . .

SCHULTEIS: I don't think so. I think I told you everything about, uh, going to my grandparents' house, and, uh, going to school. Uh . . .

LEVINE: What was school like?

SCHULTEIS: And the war. I liked the school. I liked the teacher.

LEVINE: How did it compare with the school after you got here?

SCHULTEIS: Well, I liked it better there.

LEVINE: Why?

SCHULTEIS: Well, I'll tell you later on.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

SCHULTEIS: On, you know, I don't want to jump the story.

LEVINE: Okay, fine.

SCHULTEIS: But, uh, it's a big, big change for me.

LEVINE: Okay. We'll talk about school after you get here.

SCHULTEIS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Um, let's see. Is there anything, uh, anything else, um, can you think of any attitudes or any values that your mother or father or grandmothers tried to instill in you, any, um, ideas about how you should be, or how you should live, or what was important?

SCHULTEIS: Well, they were very simple, plain people, uh, hardworking people. Uh, that's all I know, that they were hardworking people, and honest people. Uh, we didn't, uh, there's no one in trouble. That's . . .

LEVINE: What kind of a little girl were you? How would you describe yourself?

SCHULTEIS: Shut that off.

LEVINE: We're stopping now for a minute. (Break in tape)

SCHULTEIS: Will you have tape? Because it's a long story.

LEVINE: Tell me how you would describe yourself as a little girl of eight years old when you were coming to this country? What did you look like, what did you act like? What kind of a temperament did you have?

SCHULTEIS: Well, as I was the only child, uh, I was a cute little girl, eight years old. And, uh, that's all I could remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember what kind of a personality you had?

SCHULTEIS: Mild, shy. My friends still laugh about me, because I say I'm a shy person, and, knowing me, it's the opposite. (they laugh) Now.

LEVINE: Well, tell me anything else you remember about the First World War, any other firsthand experience that is connected with . . .

SCHULTEIS: Only that the soldiers invaded our town, and we had artillery soldiers, uh, all around us for a long time, and we were frightened of them.

LEVINE: Did you yourself see any violence or any kind of fighting?

SCHULTEIS: No, just heard the shooting. I don't think there was any, uh, physical fighting that I know of. Maybe, uh, the territory was obtained by fireworks, you know, fire.

LEVINE: But just the raping of the women, the soldiers coming into town, that sort of thing.

SCHULTEIS: Yeah. Well, that's the only thing I heard, that they came back, and they were crying and, uh, that the soldiers hurt them. And gave them a nice scarf for it.

LEVINE: The soldiers gave the girls a scarf?

SCHULTEIS: Yes. That's all I would remember. But that is war. And I guess it's all over, the same way. But that's what I remember. And, uh, being a little girl, I was an innocent little kid.

LEVINE: Okay. So your aunt and uncle came from America and they told your mother and father that this was the country to come to.

SCHULTEIS: Right.

LEVINE: Then they arranged for your papers and . . .

SCHULTEIS: Yes, the visa to come to this country.

LEVINE: And then what happened? Do you remember packing up to leave?

SCHULTEIS: Yes. Yes, I told you that my mother was crying, my father felt bad, and I, I felt bad, but, uh, I didn't realize what was happening as much as my parents did, and we, as I say, I remember a lot about the trip.

LEVINE: Okay. Why don't you tell about the trip, from the time you left Miscolcs, to getting to the ship.

SCHULTEIS: Well, we traveled on train to, through different countries, maybe Austria. And, uh, all I remember is traveling through Germany. Uh, everything looked so neat and clean, like the houses, the back of the houses,

everybody had a yard and, uh, flowers. That I remember a little bit about. Germany, not, this is from the train, from the train. We got to Hamburg, Germany, where we had to stay overnight to be checked out. Uh, the men went into one section, the women went to another section, and there they told us to go into this big hall. They told us to take our clothes off and put them on a pile. And we were standing there naked, and they would give us a, some soap in our hands, liquid soap, like, in our hands, and they told us to go in the shower, and it would be like fifteen, twenty minutes. Everybody went to get washed, and then they shut the water off, whether we were washed or not. But we had to take a bath.

END OF SIDE ONE BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: There was a shower with lots of different people.

SCHULTEIS: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh, in at the same time.

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: With different showers.

SCHULTEIS: Oh, yeah. Different, yeah, different stalls.

LEVINE: Yeah.

SCHULTEIS: And then when we came back, our clothes were fumigated, and we got

out clothes back. Then they examined us, and my mother was always afraid of me because I had long kind of reddish brown hair, and it was very long and she was afraid that they would say, Well, she's got lice in her hair. And then if they did find lice, we would have to stay over and our, maybe my husband, my father would be sent ahead to America without us. So my mother was always afraid that, but when I got the examination they would say, in German, "Schon, schon." You know, that was "okay." So that's . . .

LEVINE: So then you passed the examinations, and you went onto the ship?

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: And what was the name of the ship?

SCHULTEIS: Uh, the ship was the Cunard Line. Cunard Line. Berengaria, I think so. Berengaria, 1921.

LEVINE: Okay.

SCHULTEIS: All right. (voice off mike) Did you see an inspector?

LEVINE: Okay. So you, um, you came on the Berengaria. What do you remember about the ship ride, being on the ship?

SCHULTEIS: Well, I think it took us one week to get here, and I was very, very seasick, very seasick. Oh, I forgot to tell one more thing. We, about my trip coming here, I think that's important.

LEVINE: Good.

SCHULTEIS: And that is, leaving Hamburg, we came to Cherbourg, France, where the canal is now, all right? Then from Cherbourg, France we, uh, went to, we crossed the English Channel, and we went to Liverpool, where in Liverpool we were met by a horse and wagon, and we all sat side by side in an open wagon. And we were escorted into the hotel where we were going to stay overnight. Well, the people in Liverpool, they seemed to know who we were, and they would throw everything at us, just like making fun of the greenhorns. I thought, "My, these are real nasty people. I don't know what country this is, but they are nasty." Because that's the first thing that affected me, violence, when we were traveling, to the hotel. We were there maybe overnight in, uh, Liverpool, and then we started to, we got onto the ship there, and, as I say, we were coming to this country, and we're, I was very, very seasick, the whole while. We were all laying there like, uh, well, laying on the, the hull, whatever.

LEVINE: The deck? Or, were you in steerage?

SCHULTEIS: Steerage, yes. Where they had, like, a top to this, wherever. And we were all laying there, seasick. But I remember a few things on the ship. For instance, uh, one of the men that was with, traveling with us, was a little Jewish man. He was bringing his two grandchildren to America, and he was the one that was hit with a corncob or something, a rock, and, in his mouth, and he lost his tooth. This, this I remember.

LEVINE: You mean on the ship?

SCHULTEIS: No, no. From, when we were in Liverpool, when we were traveling in that wagon. This little Jewish man was, they hit him in the mouth.

LEVINE: You mean, people were throwing things at you in the wagon?

SCHULTEIS: Yes, yes. Uh, I guess it was like a joke for them, it was fun. But, uh, to me I was frightened. Uh, so this Jewish little man, he got sick on the ship. He got so sick that he passed away, and I remember going up on the deck where they had buried him at sea.

LEVINE: What did you see there?

SCHULTEIS: Well, he was wrapped up in a sack, or whatever, tarpaulin, or whatever it was. He was wrapped up, all I know. And they slid him right into the sea. That I remember.

LEVINE: And what became of his grandchildren? Were they . . .

SCHULTEIS: Well, they probably came here, uh, the rest of the trip, on their own, and their relatives probably met them, it was sad. But I felt so bad. But I couldn't, as a child, I couldn't, I couldn't believe that I would, after this trip, that I would, anybody would want to go back, you know, experience the same thing, because it was a, to us it was, we were sick the whole entire time.

LEVINE: Anything else about the ship, the voyage?

SCHULTEIS: Well, uh, one day as we were getting closer to America, there's a lot of excitement on the ship. Everybody was excited. And everybody was running up to the top. And was, like the Star Spangled Banner says, on the dawn's early light. It was dawning, it was early in the morning, and everybody was running up to the ship, and my parents were there, too, and I didn't know what it was all about, they said, "Oh, we came up to see the light, the light of freedom, and that's what we came here for." They were all excited. And we came closer, because we were pretty

close, we did see the lady with her arms up, and we did see the light, but it was still dark, but we saw the light, and everybody was crying and happy and cheering, and it was a wonderful time that I remember. That's why, today, I feel very close to the Statue of Liberty. And, uh, to me, as I say, I'm here, I came here as a little girl, but today I'm eighty years old, and I love this country, and I try to be a good citizen, and to do my best.

LEVINE: Do you, what do you remember about Ellis Island?

SCHULTEIS: Well, when we got to Ellis, we got off the ship and we went to Ellis Island, and we were, uh, briefed over there. I don't remember too much about it, but it was paperwork to get, you know, uh, to see where we were going, and we, we already traveled all this time, so there wasn't too much to do, just to see, to brief us, and I remember getting back on, getting on the ferry, and crossing from Ellis Island into South Ferry, New York City. I remember that. My relatives were there waiting for us, and we got onto the elevator. They had elevators in South Ferry. And the elevator [elevated train, sic] took us from South Ferry to East 18th Street, Manhattan. That's where my aunt and uncle lived.

LEVINE: This is the same aunt and uncle that came to Hungary for the visit?

SCHULTEIS: Yes, that took, brought us here.

LEVINE: Do you remember things that struck you in these first hours, days, weeks of being in Manhattan?

SCHULTEIS: Yes. Yes, I'll tell you all about it. It wasn't very pleasant from there on. We came to this country to live with my aunt and uncle on East 18th Street. My aunt and uncle were janitors of this thirty-building house.

They were caretakers of this house. And right away they got my mother and my father cleaning for them. I remember, I was a stranger. I did have a, they did have two children, my aunt and uncle, my age. And, uh, I was strange with them. We, we lived together, but I don't know. Somehow I was lost. I didn't have anybody. Uh, I remember all these people on the street. I don't know, I wasn't used to all the people on the street. This is lower Manhattan, east side. There was a lot of people. They all lived on, they were all on the street. That I remember. Where did all these people come from, where I was used to a little town, quiet. (She clears her throat) My aunt and uncle got my mother and father a job. They got my mother a job in a rabbi's house to go and clean for the rabbi and his wife. Uh, my father, they got him a different job, some other job. But at the end of the week, they would take the pay envelope from them and say, "You owe so much for the visa, you owe us so much for the food, and the rest is yours." And my father protested quite a lot. He said to his, to my mother, that, "Margaret, let's go back. I don't like it here. This is not for me." And, uh, we endured this here for quite a while. (She clears her throat) I went to, uh, I went to, they enrolled me into a German Catholic school. I did not know how to speak German. I was not a Catholic. And they were drumming this religion into my head I did not know anything about. The nuns were kind of mean and strict, because I did not understand them, and if they told me something, I did not know what they were telling me. That she would take me out in the hall and put your hand out and they'd hit me with the ruler. And I would go home and cry and cry to my mother that I don't like this country, I don't like this school, I don't like my cousins. Uh, I didn't like anything about it. We were very, very unhappy. Um, one day the rabbi's wife said to my mother, "Margaret, your daughter does not belong in that school. Get her out of there, and put her in a public school," which my mother did. And soon after I went to the public school, I picked up a little bit on the English, and I wasn't taught that

religion, because we had to go, before school started we had to go into church to pray and study, you know, talk about religion. We had to do that before school started in the Catholic school. But over here in public school everybody was freer and much better, and I started to pick up English. In the meantime, somebody was moving out of an apartment on East 16th Street. They lived, we lived on 18th Street, and on East 16th Street, somebody was giving up their apartment, and my mother and father had the opportunity to get this apartment, furniture and all. So we moved into this apartment, and we started our life in America by the three of us, my mother, my father and I. I went to school. I had a lot of friends. It happened to be across the street from a playground where there were a lot of kids coming to the playground, and a Boy's Club was right there. So I had a lot of friends on East 16th Street. Uh, one of the friends that I got, that I had, was the Schulteis family. They had four children, and the two girls, and two boys. The two girls, uh, were my friends. We'd go to school together, and we would be friends. And the two boys I didn't know too well but later on I got to like the little fellow, and, his name is Allie, and that is my husband today. (They laugh)

LEVINE: So you met him in grade school?

SCHULTEIS: Yes. Yes, we were in grade school. Well, we, I was maybe about twelve, thirteen, eleven, twelve, thirteen, that we, we knew each other. But the boys, I didn't bother with at all too much. Uh, they were working, they were doing little odd jobs in the neighborhood, and I didn't bother with them until much later on. We'd go to school together, and we'd go to, uh, different, like a boat ride. He would be there. Uh, going to school I would see him, but we didn't go to the same school. He went, he went into a boy's school, and I went into a girl's school. And in our plays and in our encounter each day I would see him, and he liked me. I liked other boys, but he, he was the one. And, so we are

together, I think from thirteen years, we were thirteen years old. Of course, I didn't think I was going to marry him. He was only a kid. We didn't have any intentions of that, but we were friends. We were friends until, uh, seven years later, that I, we got married. And we have been married for sixty years.

LEVINE: Congratulations.

SCHULTEIS: And we still are, I'm still on our honeymoon. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Wow, that's something.

SCHULTEIS: No, I mean, we have love, and friendship, and understanding, and that's, that's the main thing. And we have our health, and we're very, uh, occupied in different things, which I think God is good to us and gives us our health.

LEVINE: Just a point of clarification. Why was it that you went to a German Catholic school in the beginning?

SCHULTEIS: Oh, the thing is this here, that my cousins, the two cousins that we lived with, that's where they went.

LEVINE: But they weren't German either. Or were they?

SCHULTEIS: No, but it was a German Catholic school. It wasn't so much, this is in New York City now. But they did teach, it was like a German taught, you know, German Catholic school. And they went to this school. And, of course, they, uh, they thought, well, they'll put me in the same school.

LEVINE: I see. Well, that part of the family was Catholic, is that right?

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. Um, let's see. So, uh, so when you got into the public school,

SCHULTEIS: Yes.

LEVINE: how did that compare with your school in Hungary? Was that similar in some ways, or different, or . . .

SCHULTEIS: Well, I had to learn a lot in this country, the language, the homework, where in Hungary it was the basic of school, the basic of school, uh, learning the arithmetic, there's a lot of things, because six, seven years of age, or seven, uh, it was just the beginning of school for me. But this here was a beginning also, because I was in an ungraded class first, ungraded. All different ages, different people. And then they put you into right class.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of other immigrant children in your school here?

SCHULTEIS: There might have been, yes. There might have been a few, yes. Because I think that's where the ungraded came from. It wasn't that they were, uh, something wrong with their mind that they were retarded. It was just ungraded for a while until they saw where we belonged. And, uh, I was, it was hard for me, but I picked up, and I was, as I say, I was a good student. So I picked up, and I was pretty good in school.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences learning English when it became, uh, when it clicked in for you?

SCHULTEIS: It came on gradually. It came on gradually. Uh, the English language. And I'm glad I haven't got the accent left. As you can . . .

LEVINE: No, you don't have an accent.

SCHULTEIS: I have . . .

LEVINE: Tell me about your mother and father and you. It started out you were very unhappy in this country. Did that turn around at some point?

SCHULTEIS: Yes, it did. Okay. I'll go back to my mother and father. We lived on 16th Street, and I was the only child. Then I went to school, as I say, I was happy. This was maybe about eleven, twelve years of age. Uh, one day another relative came to us from New Jersey to visit us. They talked, my mother and father, of going to live in New Jersey. It was like a country, you know, where you lived in a tenement, in the east side of New York City, and they said it was wonderful living, and so forth and so on. Don't you think that my father took him up? And we gathered all our possessions, and we moved to New Jersey. We moved there around the end of school, like, school time. And this is like the summer months that we lived in New Jersey, maybe for two months. My father did not speak, so maybe did not understand, or at least spoke English, but he would take me early in the morning to look for jobs in New Jersey that I would understand more than he would. And we'd go looking for work every day, every day. He came home very despondent and very upset. The money, we, oh. We moved into a, almost a new building. We lived on the top floor. It was maybe about three floors.

LEVINE: This is New Jersey?

SCHULTEIS: New Jersey. Oh, uh . . .

LEVINE: Where?

SCHULTEIS: Garfield. Garfield, New Jersey. We moved into this barely new house, and I went to, I had, I had made friends very hard because it was summertime, but I had made some friends. But looking, my father looking for a job. First of all, Garfield, New Jersey is a fabric, what do you call that?

LEVINE: Textile?

SCHULTEIS: Textile, textile, uh . . .

LEVINE: Mill?

SCHULTEIS: Mill, they had mills and textile mills all over. Well, it was summertime, and it was, also they were striking. There was no jobs to be had at all. The textile mills were shut down. There was no work. Although we lived in a nice neighborhood, a nice house, there was no money coming in, they had no money. Then my mother found out that she was pregnant. We had to move back, and we moved from one house to another until we moved back to 16th Street. And there my sister was born, March 14, 1960 . . . 1926, I think. '26 she was born. We are thirteen years apart in age. She's thirteen years younger than I am. Uh, my mother was taking care of this big house where we took over, where we lived, because the, uh, the caretaker of this house passed away. The agent was Chase Manhattan Bank, asked my mother and father to take care of this house because there was no one that they can trust. In the meantime, my sister was born, and I was pushing the baby carriages all over taking care of my sister. I was the big sister, so I took care of her. And, uh, my mother took care of this house until my

father passed away. Then my mother said, "Please," to me and my husband, to take over taking care of this building, and we did.

LEVINE: You were married by then?

SCHULTEIS: Well, I'm skipping about my marriage.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

SCHULTEIS: Okay. Uh, what happened was that we, after we moved back from New Jersey growing up, I was about thirteen years old. Uh, I met my, my girlfriends, my friends again, and renewed my friendship and, uh, my boyfriend at that time, I had many boys, but this one I liked better because we can fight and punch and, I can hit him and, as I say, he liked me, and I liked him. Uh, well, we kept company, we knew each other almost seven years, and then we got married. It was this quiet wedding, just me, us, him and I, and our family. We went to church, we went to, uh, (pause) Episcopalian Church. I'm trying to think about it now. We got married there. And about a year later I had a boy, a little boy.

LEVINE: What's his name?

SCHULTEIS: Alvin. He is, Alvin is the sixth. We have the seventh generation of Alvins.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. So, did you have other children after that? We're just about out, so I want you to quickly just say, do you have other children?

SCHULTEIS: Yes. And, uh, when my, uh, son was eighteen years old, seventeen, eighteen years old, I became pregnant with Alice. I have also a

grandson Alvin the Seventh, and I have, um, a brand new baby, Alice. After thirteen, after eighteen years. So I have, uh, I became a mother and a grandmother at the same time. But we are very happy, uh, I'm very happy with my husband. I'm very happy to be in this country. I have many good memories, more good memories than sad ones, but that is life.

LEVINE: Well, that's a wonderful place to end. I want to thank you very much for a most interesting interview.

SCHULTEIS: I hope . . .

LEVINE: It was wonderful.

SCHULTEIS: I hope it was.

LEVINE: It was. And this is Janet Levine. I've been speaking with Emma Schulteis here in Mr. and Mrs. Schulteis' home in Mastic Beach, Long Island, New York. It's August 2, 1994, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW