

EI-577

ARTHUR VASEL

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 28, 1910

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine from the National Park Service. I'm here today in Abington, Massachusetts, at the home of Mr. Arthur Vasel.

VASEL: Right.

LEVINE: Mr. Vasel came from Greece in 1922, when he was probably just about ready to turn twelve years old, as far as we can figure it.

VASEL: Well, yeah. I thought I was a little older, but you know, that should be more correct.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay, and Mrs. Vasel is here with us, and Mr. Vasel's daughter Anita is also here with us today.

VASEL: Yes.

LEVINE: Now, well, let's start at the beginning, Mr. Vasel. Can you remember your birth date?

VASEL: August 28, 1910.

LEVINE: Okay, and where in Greece were you born?

VASEL: Where what?

LEVINE: Where were you born in Greece?

VASEL: Oh, boy! The villages have changed names. It was the Turks that governed there, and then they left, in 1910—what is it, ten, or 1912? [Unclear] there.

LEVINE: So you were really too young to know what was going on?

VASEL: That's right. Well anyway, the villages have changed names. The Greeks put in a different name, you know, when they took over. And that was that, so I can't tell you the name.

LEVINE: I see. It was a Turkish name, and then it became—

VASEL: Huh?

LEVINE: It was a Turkish name, then it became a Greek name?

VASEL: Well, I don't know whether it was Turkish or Macedonian. You know, that was partly Greek, partly Bulgarian. See, what would that be—Slavic, or Russian?

LEVINE: I'm not sure.

VASEL: I'm not sure either.

LEVINE: Well, why don't you tell me whatever you remember about the town where you were living?

VASEL: Well, there was that, and then [several words unclear]. Well anyway, my mind's going blank.

LEVINE: Okay, well why don't we start out with your mother's name. What was your mother's name?

VASEL: Oh, my mother's name was Alexandra Pope.

LEVINE: Pope was her maiden name?

VASEL: Yes. P-O-P-E.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

VASEL: His name was Peter Vasel. So, my middle initial is P. So what else now?

LEVINE: I see. And brothers and sisters?

VASEL: None. I'm a spoiled brat!

LEVINE: Oh!

VASEL: [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs] Okay, so did you have grandparents that you remember?

VASEL: Yes. On my father's side, grandfather, very well. I learned some of the trade in woodworking. He was a cabinet maker, bricklayer, and you name it, stonecutting. So, and he also took over a sawmill that was abandoned, and he made—what is it you call it, that lets the water down, you know, to run the wheel?

LEVINE: A dam?

VASEL: It's a piece of pipe, or pieces of pipe, like barrels staves. One is put on the other. And he did all that, and he made the stones to grind the corn. And anyway, and [unclear]. Anyway, we outfitted the [unclear] mill completely. So I can remember that. And he had one young fellow help with the labor. So what else?

LEVINE: What kinds of things did you do with your grandfather?

VASEL: Well, he used to make little barrels for water. Water was transported in little kegs. I don't know whether it was [unclear] or not.

LEVINE: Well where did you get the water from?

VASEL: Springs. So, anyway, what else can I tell you?

LEVINE: Did your grandfather ever tell you stories or anything?

VASEL: Oh, I couldn't remember any of that. No, I'm afraid.

LEVINE: What kind of a person was he?

VASEL: Oh, he was good. He [unclear]. Yeah.

LEVINE: And was your grandmother alive at that time?

VASEL: Yes, for a while. She died, oh probably, eight years earlier than—[Doorbell rings].

LEVINE: We're going to pause here for the bell. [Tape off/on] Resuming now, after some anniversary flowers have arrived!

VASEL: Well, that's from my middle daughter. She lives in New Jersey.

LEVINE: I see. Okay, so we were talking about your grandfather having two horses?

VASEL: Yes, and during World War One, everybody that had horses, the government took them over to use them in the [unclear]. So, it was a man that took, and I forgot whether she was killed, or what happened. No, they took him home, and we had a foal from her, and he turned out to be a real good stallion. Finally my grandfather sold him, and from then on, what happened? Dear, I can't seem to remember.

LEVINE: Well, that's okay. Where did you grandfather live?

VASEL: The same village—

LEVINE: The same village.

VASEL: --that I lived in with my father. But I can't tell you the name.

LEVINE: Well, what was it like? Were there—

VASEL: Well, the village, [unclear]. When the Greeks came in and wanted to take over, [several words unclear]. But they either had to bow to the laws, or else. So the ones that didn't, they burned the village, you know, the houses, to oppose. So anyway, Grandfather stayed, and probably I wouldn't say more than a dozen, or no more than twenty, at the most, that lived there, and stayed. And what else?

LEVINE: Your grandfather was one of the ones who stayed?

VASEL: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VASEL: And so [pause] the schools was left without being burned, and the church. So what else can I tell you?

LEVINE: Well, did you have aunts and uncles who lived around the village, too?

VASEL: Yes, in the next village. [Unclear] there was two uncles, and grandmother, and an aunt. And I think—that's on my mother's side. But on my father's side, I can't remember the relations at all. But there were a couple of sisters.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your mother's family, your aunt and uncles?

VASEL: Well, one uncle came over here the same time my father came. And from the village I think there was at least five or six, maybe seven, that came here. You know, they had to skip out of the country to get here.

LEVINE: Why was that?

VASEL: Well, the Greeks wanted them conscripted in their army.

LEVINE: So they had to--?

VASEL: Skip out.

LEVINE: Skip out, uh-huh.

VASEL: Yeah. And this is something I'm going to say: are you a Greek?

LEVINE: No.

VASEL: Well, they condemned the Turks being so vicious and so—but the Greeks weren't far behind. And my uncle's the same. His wife saw those take him out in the courtyard and shot, because he sort of leaned for the Bulgarians.

LEVINE: Hm. Now, did you see things like that when you were a little boy?

VASEL: No, but I couldn't help it; I'd hear. So, but I did see some awful things on the way coming across.

LEVINE: Well, let's just talk a little bit more about while you were still there. When your father left with the other six or seven men, what year was that?

VASEL: Well, that must have been—I was four years old, about.

LEVINE: So they were being conscripted into the army--?

VASEL: Not over there, but they would have been if they stayed.

LEVINE: I see, okay. So you didn't remember your father?

VASEL: Oh yes I do. Not then.

LEVINE: No, I mean you didn't remember him. When you came to the United States, you probably didn't remember him from before.

VASEL: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what did your mother do when your father was gone to the United States? How did she get along?

VASEL: Over there, you mean?

LEVINE: Mm.

VASEL: Well, what little money he sent—he enlisted in the [unclear]. And after the war was over, he got his citizen's papers, and sent for us.

LEVINE: So he came to the United States, your father, and then he went into the United States Army?

VASEL: Yes. So—

LEVINE: So he really tried to avoid the army, but he got into another army?

VASEL: Well, it [laughs], it was different.

LEVINE: What was the difference? What do you think it was?

VASEL: [Several words unclear].

LEVINE: That's okay, that's okay.

VASEL: [Several words unclear]. Anyway.

LEVINE: Okay, so why don't we go on to when your father sent for you and your mother to come?

VASEL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then how did you feel about it? How did you feel about coming?

VASEL: Well, at that age, I didn't. What could I think? It was great to go to America.

LEVINE: Did your father write to you when he went?

VASEL: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that he wrote, that he said about this country?

VASEL: No. Sit down!

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving?

VASEL: Over there? Yes.

LEVINE: Tell me what that was like, when you were leaving your village.

VASEL: Well, my grandfather sold the property, and there was a mix-up. He sent for me, too, Mother and I. And there was a discrepancy as to me being born in Turkish rule, they had no records. So there was a delay, oh I'm not sure, six months or what it was we had to wait. So finally we did get onto a boat.

LEVINE: Did you have to wait in your village, or you had to wait at the seaport where you were leaving from?

VASEL: We were on our way to the Greek seaport near Athens—it's Piraeus. And we had to wait there about twenty days in a hotel.

LEVINE: Was that the first time you had been out of your village?

VASEL: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: What was it like for you in Piraeus?

VASEL: Well, you know, it's a new thing, exciting, I guess. So, but anyway.

LEVINE: So it was just you and your mother?

VASEL: Yes. I had another uncle over there. He went as far as Piraeus, 'til we got on the boat. And then we got on that, and same cabin there was a woman with a little girl who was probably the same age as I was. And now, I'm not sure what was her mother, but ooh, they were awful seasick. But I don't remember being seasick at all.

LEVINE: What do you remember about the voyage?

VASEL: Well, it was quite exciting, you know, to go, you know, outside, and see whales, you know, bobbing up. Or they could have been shark, or porpoises—porpoises.

LEVINE: And what was the food like on the boat?

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VASEL: Oh, awful. It was an Italian ship, and it was mostly macaroni and water, and that's about it. So, well, it was probably a third class ticket; my father couldn't afford, you know, more money for it. Oh, boy. Was else?

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you can think of, as far as anything else on the voyage?

VASEL: No.

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

VASEL: Yes, but first we stopped in Naples and that was good. And then we stopped in New York.

LEVINE: And they took on cargo in Naples?

VASEL: Huh?

LEVINE: Did the ship take on cargo in Naples?

VASEL: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. They must have, either fueled up or something, because it's an Italian ship. And we came to New York, and I remember going to Ellis Island, this huge [unclear], this big hall. Gosh, it looked big to me, anyway. Boy, those colors of clothes of the whole world, people from everywhere. And we were dressed, you know, [unclear]. It was great.

LEVINE: And what was your experience there, at Ellis Island?

VASEL: Well, you know, just sort of happy to be there. Yeah.

LEVINE: And were you examined? Do you remember that part?

VASEL: Oh yeah, where ever it was I had to go, and then we were given a tag. Mine was a metal barrel, and they'd pin the tag on us, and they shipped us on a train. And our relatives from our village [unclear]. So that's the way it was.

LEVINE: Now, when you were at Ellis Island, were you separated from your mother at all?

VASEL: No, no.

LEVINE: What kind of a woman was your mother? How would you describe her?

VASEL: She learned very quick.

LEVINE: Did she discipline you a lot?

VASEL: No.

LEVINE: Or was she easy-going?

VASEL: Easy going. Being the only child, I suppose. So anyway.

LEVINE: So do you remember the train trip?

VASEL: Yeah, but not too much. Not too much.

LEVINE: Did you meet anybody, either on the ship, Ellis Island, on the train—did you meet anybody that you were able to talk with?

VASEL: Oh, yes! There was other natives there. So, see, I could speak two languages then. I went to school, oh, for about a year, and then that was that. So the woman with the little girl, they spoke Greek, and I was able to converse back and forth. I could speak a little Turkish, and the Macedonian language, [unclear].

LEVINE: Is that what you spoke with your mother, the Macedonian language?

VASEL: Yeah. So, anyway.

LEVINE: So, let's see. When you got to Middleboro, do you remember getting off the train and everything?

VASEL: Yes, yeah.

LEVINE: And what about your father? Where did you meet up with him?

VASEL: Oh, see, he was supposed to meet us at Ellis Island, and I guess he got the wrong directions or time. Anyway, we'd left for Middleboro before he found us. So that was a mix-up. So when we got to Middleboro, my Uncle Pete came over, he came down and got us. So my father had bought a farm in Middleboro, and we were there [unclear] ten, twelve years, I guess.

LEVINE: Now, what was your father doing for work when he was--?

VASEL: Railroad, you know, laborer.

LEVINE: Before he came to this country?

VASEL: Oh, over there, you mean?

LEVINE: Yeah.

VASEL: Oh that I couldn't tell you. He was, oh, he must have been about twenty, I guess. There wasn't too much work. So I suppose helping Grandfather in the brickyard, or whatever Grandfather was doing. So, that was that.

LEVINE: So your father was working on the railroad when he came here?

VASEL: Yes.

LEVINE: And then he bought a farm?

VASEL: Well, he bought the farm before he sent for us, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And did your Uncle Pete live with you and your mother and father?

VASEL: Well, after my mother and I got there, Pete decided to send for his wife and daughter. And they came and lived in the farm, oh, for about three years, I guess. And she didn't like it out in the country, and they left for the town. So that's it.

LEVINE: What kind of a farm was it? What was your father farming?

VASEL: Oh, nothing special. [Unclear] vegetables, and that's all. You know, there was nothing money-making.

LEVINE: What was it like for you to be around your father for the first time, really?

VASEL: I don't know, it was probably hard for me to decide just how it was, you know. I was twelve years old, and what can you expect, you know, when you meet with a stranger? I mean, loving and affection come together very easy. You know, you got a little [unclear] to really come close. What else can I tell you?

LEVINE: Was your mother happy that she had come to this country?

VASEL: Oh, I suppose so. There's no way I could tell.

LEVINE: Well, what about your Uncle Pete? What was he like? Did you do things with him as well?

VASEL: Well, he was pretty well-educated. He could read and write three different languages. See, his family were better off than Grandfather. Well, we didn't have the school in the village. [Unclear] Pete lived, and the other brother, very much larger town, and they had schools there. And that's where I went for a year, and stayed with Grandmother. She was a nice person.

LEVINE: What do you remember about her?

VASEL: Oh, she was [laughs] [several words unclear] than anybody else, I guess.

LEVINE: I'm sorry, say that again—you think she--?

VASEL: She thought more of me.

LEVINE: She thought more of you. Was she encouraging to you?

VASEL: Oh, I suppose, but she was very good.

LEVINE: How did she show you that she thought so much of you? What did she do?

VASEL: Well, I can't remember anything of that sort. But anyway.

LEVINE: So when you first came to this country and you were living on the farm, did you go to school?

VASEL: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What was that like for you?

VASEL: Well, I made up my mind that I'm going to learn how to speak, and learn all I could. So, and I said, "The hell with the old country!" So much bloodshed, or whatever you want to call it. So that was that.

LEVINE: So, were there other children in your class in school who didn't know English either?

VASEL: Oh, all of them!

LEVINE: They didn't know it?

VASEL: Over here?

LEVINE: Yeah.

VASEL: Oh sure, all of them. How would they know? There was a very low percentage that came from over there, here.

LEVINE: So like in your class, there were other children who had come from the old country, too?

VASEL: Well, not in the same bunch that I came. So, I was the only one in the village.

LEVINE: What were your teachers like over here?

VASEL: Well, not very good.

LEVINE: How come?

VASEL: They believed in the stick across your knuckles. You would think people educated would have more common sense than to punish young kids.

LEVINE: So did the teacher help you to learn English?

VASEL: Over here, the teachers, well, they took—you mean the teachers over here? Oh, yes. I had two good teachers. They were very good.

LEVINE: Oh, I see—where the teachers hit your knuckles was--?

VASEL: Over there. No, the teachers were good here. So, what else can I tell you?

LEVINE: So what helped you to learn English? Do you know what it was that helped you to learn?

VASEL: Oh, it's a hard language to learn, very hard! There's so many words that sound the same that's spelled different. Oh, boy! I had a hell of a time to tell the difference between he and she, see. I couldn't seem to register in my mind which was which [laughs]. I can remember that. I was in the fifth grade, and I don't know—this is in school, and the principal of the school, I happened to be in his room, and some question was asked, he called on me. And he asked me, and I don't know [unclear], instead of saying, "Sir, yes sir," I said, "Yes ma'am." I can remember that as long as I live, yeah! It isn't funny!

LEVINE: No, it isn't. It was embarrassing, I guess, for you.

VASEL: Well, I didn't know. At the time I didn't realize, but you know, he wasn't quite so mad.

LEVINE: So how long did you stay in school, then?

VASEL: I stayed three—I don't know, I think almost four years. Yeah, three anyway.

LEVINE: And then why did you leave?

VASEL: Well, smart aleck, I guess. I was so much bigger than the kids—you can imagine, thirteen or fourteen years old, with kids, first graders. But I didn't mind it; I was determined to learn. So, and I can't understand, kids have such opportunities, and are too stupid to think, to go to school.

LEVINE: So by the time you left school, were you able to speak English pretty well?

VASEL: Oh, yes, yeah. I went out laboring, you know, on roads.

LEVINE: What was your first job?

VASEL: Oh, pick and shovel. What else could you do? Those were hard times.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. So after you worked on the roads—how long did you stay working on the roads?

VASEL: Well, off and on. It's seasonal, you know. In the wintertime, you loafed, and worked during the good weather.

LEVINE: When you were loafing, what would you do with your time?

VASEL: Oh, just something that never worried me. I could go in the woods, roam around. I'd even fix up a boat, and then I finally made a sail boat out of two of them or three of them. So I'd always keep myself in the training of my own.

LEVINE: Now this was what you had learned from your Grandfather?

VASEL: Well, probably, you know. I would build a boat, and anyway.

LEVINE: So then after you stopped working on the roads, what did you do after that?

VASEL: Well, I finally got work inside, and I worked two or three different jobs. But I decided I'd learn as much as I could, and I'd ask for a raise, and if no answer, I'd have a job already lined up, and I'd give them my notice of two weeks, and I'd go in the next car. So one shop hired me at least three times [laughs]. I had left, and after, you know, staying away probably a month, they would always call me back, and give me a little extra, you know.

LEVINE: What kind of shops were they?

VASEL: These were woodworking shops, silver ware cases for International Silver. And after I worked in the shop, oh, six or eight months, I was able to run the floor!

LEVINE: You were able to run everything on the floor?

VASEL: Yeah, [unclear] pretend to these [unclear] operations. But anyway.

LEVINE: So did you stay working in different shops?

VASEL: Oh yeah, I'd work so long, and if no raises come along, I'd find out from the other help, you know, getting more money. And right off the bat I'd go before them and either I get more money or [unclear] I'd have to go. So that worked good all along.

LEVINE: Well, you must have been a good worker if you got the raises that you wanted.

VASEL: Well, I think most individuals, if they're willing to work, and they're capable, [unclear] worry about getting ahead. So, it's all up to them.

LEVINE: Well then, when did you meet your wife?

VASEL: Oh, when I first came here, in school.

LEVINE: You were in the same class?

VASEL: Yes, wasn't I?

MRS. VASEL: Yes it was. Within forty-eight hours, wasn't it?

LEVINE: You met your wife within forty-eight hours?

VASEL: No!

LEVINE: [Laughs] No. Well tell me, what did you like about her, when you first met your wife?

VASEL: I just fell in love with her!

LEVINE: You did? Do you remember what she was like then?

VASEL: Yup, freckle face.

LEVINE: Freckle face, uh-huh.

VASEL: I used to call her that!

LEVINE: Yeah? And do you remember things you would do together, before you were married? Do you remember the places you went?

VASEL: Well, she wasn't a very, you know, very willing to play sports, or whatever you want to call it. So, I used to like sailing, and she didn't like that at all. So that's it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

DAUGHTER ANITA: Did she tip the boat over once?

VASEL: Yes.

LEVINE: You want to tell about that time?

VASEL: Well, her brother and I were in this sailboat I had, and she was sitting forward near the mast, and she had her back against the boom. So a breeze come up, and she kept leaning on the boom, and I thought it was the wind that was doing it. So I kept pulling on the rope, and the next thing I know, Oh! Over we went! So—excuse me—lucky thing the lake was shallow, and so her brother and I got out and righted the boat up. And so I don't know how scared she got, but she certainly got scared.

LEVINE: So then did you ever—when did you go into making, carpentry work? Did you do that for actual work here?

VASEL: Well, yeah, yeah. Not carpenter, mostly cabinet making.

LEVINE: Cabinet making.

VASEL: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, one shop I worked, we even sent furniture to Russia, to the American Embassy over there. So, yeah. All in all, I had—if I wasn't the leading man in the shop, I was pretty close. So, in other words, they came to me first for answers [laughs] than they did to one of the foremen. But, [unclear] would help, that they'd be helpful. But if you want to be a stinker, it doesn't pay.

LEVINE: So did you work in a shop until the time you retired?

VASEL: Yes and no. I moved to New Hampshire, and I bought this, well, that's the house there. That's a granite stone house, the whole thing. And that needed fixing something awful! I spent ten months fixing it, and the man, the real estate man that sold us the place, he saw what I was doing. He says, "How'd you like to do some work on my houses?" So I said, "Okay." So I went to work with him, and then he went with another man that was, oh, well-to-do, I guess. At least his wife was well-to-do. She was the daughter of the President of Dupont. And anyway, so I was with them, and they started building new houses, and I finished them off. And anyway, I enjoyed it, and they liked me. So, anyway, they were two Irishmen, and you couldn't meet anybody better!

LEVINE: So you worked for them?

VASEL: Oh, I worked for them, oh, probably ten years. All I had to do is go in and do my work, and they'd never show up. They just told me what they wanted done, and that was it.

ANITA: Did they make you a partner in the company?

VASEL: Well, yes, in a way.

LEVINE: So you were a partner, before you retired, in this company?

VASEL: Well, you could call it that. And then they decided to split up, and each one of them went their way. And that was that.

LEVINE: Tell me, do you think the fact that you came here as a boy, really, around twelve years old, and lived most of your life in this country—do you think the fact that you came here, immigrated here, made a difference in the kind of person that you were, the fact that you came from someplace else and started over again, more or less?

VASEL: I don't know, I never thought about it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you think the fact that you were an immigrant—do you think that sort of changed the way you saw things in any way?

VASEL: No, the way I looked at it, it's the greatest country in the world! And people should realize it, but the stupid idiots don't realize that!

LEVINE: What do you feel most proud of, that you've done in your life?

VASEL: Well, I don't know.

LEVINE: Or maybe I should say what do you feel most grateful for?

VASEL: [Unclear], that I'm here.

LEVINE: Did you take a lot of pride in your work?

VASEL: Yeah, yeah. I had some of my work go to New York, some to Philadelphia.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Can you think of any ideas or attitudes that you tried to get across to your children?

VASEL: No, the girls wouldn't be interested in my, in my woodworking [laughs], except that one.

LEVINE: Oh, you were a hunter?

VASEL: Yeah, I hunted. That was my recreation.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VASEL: I had, in the last—

LEVINE: I unplugged that. I unplugged it.

VASEL: --ten or fifteen years, I had some of the best bird dogs, best-trained, anyway.

LEVINE: I see, so you raised hunting—English setters?

VASEL: Yeah, I had four different kinds of breeds. I like them the best. They're so showy, for [unclear]! [Laughs]

ANITA: But the Springers were nice, too.

VASEL: Oh, yeah. Springers are good for young people. You get old, you know, it's too much to keep up with them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well it sounds like you were very fit.

VASEL: Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah, yeah, until twelve—almost two years now, I was able to walk, oh, for three or four hours, anyway, yeah.

LEVINE: Why don't you say the names of your children, for the tape? The names of your children?

VASEL: Okay, Anita, Elizabeth, Patricia, Alexandra, and Irma, Mary.

LEVINE: So you had all girls?

VASEL: Yes, but they were good kids, good kids.

LEVINE: Do you have grandchildren as well?

VASEL: Yes, she has a boy and a girl. Pat has four all together, three and one adopted. And Irma's still single.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VASEL: So, what's that you've got, Anita?

ANITA: He said how they remodeled houses—this is one. They bought this Victorian house when I was going into the fourth grade. It had about eighteen rooms, and this big barn, and eighty acres of land. And when we moved to that

place in Middleboro, I didn't know a person around, but it was the best place ever! It had woods and fields and pastures and swamps, and brooks and rivers. And it was in sad repair when they got it, and he had to do a lot of work. I remember he had to tie ladders together to get up on the slate roof to repair it.

LEVINE: Oh, it's beautiful. So this was something you did, you repaired houses, and lived in them, and then sold them and went into another one?

VASEL: Yeah. Well, if there was work somewhere else, I was always looking for shop work, like during the winters, you know. And if I found a place—and also learned more about cabinet making, because there are not two shops that are alike. Well, they are, but you know, the men are altogether different. Some are really knowledgeable, and some, they don't know nothing, and they do things like their great grandfather did. You know, they don't progress at all. So, there was a family—oh, three brothers in [unclear], and the oldest one was a, oh, one of those guys that's not paying any attention, the oldest one. So the old man disowned him and let the youngest one, I believe, take over the shop. But boy, [unclear]. They were Englishmen. Oh, boy! To work, there's nobody that works but an Englishman!

LEVINE: [Laughs] Why is that?

VASEL: Well, they're so greedy and selfish. I found Jews are better than they are. You know, people complain about Jews. You give a Jew his money's worth, believe me, he takes care of you. But with the English—and that was another company I worked for. That was during the war, I worked for about four years [several words unclear], but what the hell happened to the help? Sure.

LEVINE: Were there any events that happened in this country during your lifetime that particularly affected you? Any particular Presidents, or any labor union activities, or anything like that?

VASEL: No, I belonged to the union two or three times, and I found them very disagreeable. In other words, if it's a small shop, [unclear] given the same wages as were [unclear], you know, they don't want to enforce the law. And I didn't approve of that at all. So first chance I got, I would always get out of it, and work in an open shop, you call it. Because I could [unclear] without paying dues. So if you're any good, you know, owners will give you their money, [unclear], so you can produce.

LEVINE: Did you have any heroes in your lifetime, people you looked up to, whether you actually knew them, or they were just people that you heard or read about?

VASEL: No, no.

ANITA: Musicians?

VASEL: Huh?

ANITA: Musicians?

VASEL: Oh, musicians, yes. Mozart, Beethoven. That's why I have that turned on.

LEVINE: You've enjoyed a lot of music in your lifetime?

VASEL: I do, classical. I don't care for rock, or whatever you want to call it.

LEVINE: Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you've enjoyed a lot?

VASEL: Well, I don't know what.

LEVINE: Okay, well we're getting close to the end of the tape. Is there anything you can think of that you'd like to say before we close?

VASEL: Oh, I don't know; I can't think. [Unclear] to say that much.

LEVINE: Well, I want to say it's really been a pleasure talking to you, because you've told some very interesting things.

VASEL: Thank you.

LEVINE: And I want to thank you.

VASEL: I want to thank you, too.

LEVINE: You're welcome. Okay, this is Janet Levine, and I'm here with Mr. Arthur Vasel, and we're in Abington, Massachusetts. It's December 5th, 1994. And you would be eighty-four at the time of—today?

VASEL: Yeah.

LEVINE: You're eighty-four years old? Okay, I'll be signing off now. Thank you.

[End of Interview]