

EI-852
EBERHARD JOHANNING
BIRTHDATE: MARCH 14, 1914
INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 1997
AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 82
RUNNING TIME: 1:03:41
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.
INTERVIEW LOCATION: FL
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

GERMANY, 1921
AGE: 7

SHIP: THE MOUNT CLINTON
PORT: HAMBURG
RESIDENCES:
? GERMANY: HALBERSTADT
? US: CHICAGO, IL; NEKOOSA, WI; ELIZABETH, NJ;
HOMESTEAD, FL; NY, NY; STRUMMER: LOUIS, MO

LEVINE: Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here in the home of Eberhard Johanning, who came from Germany in 1921 when he was seven years of age. At the time of this interview, he's eighty-two and this is February 20th, 1997. Okay, if you would say your name and where in Germany-

JOHANNING: Want me to spell my name? No.

LEVINE: You can, yeah.

JOHANNING: Well, my name is Eberhard Johanning.

LEVINE: Okay.

JOHANNING: Most people call me Jay.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: Because the name Johanning is a problem.

LEVINE: Because of the pronunciation with the Y and the A.

JOHANNING: Because I call up the police department and say-they found my stolen car. I should find out where it is. "Yes, Mr. Hanning, we'll take care of it."

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: The next thing you know, they're calling me Joe. The car was stolen. The car was found but they filed it away under Hanning. I didn't want the car back, anyway but that's the way the name goes.

LEVINE: Okay. So you have trouble with your name.

JOHANNING: Yes. Oh, I have called--been called Mr. Eberhard. This is why everything I do is E.H. Johanning.

LEVINE: I see.

JOHANNING: To cut--cut out all that confusion and I spell my name and I'll spell it and they'll say, "Yes, Mr. Hanning." I mean people are today I don't think they listen, or maybe we're all weird, I don't know. But something's wrong. Well, what else would you like to know?

LEVINE: I would like to know your birth date and where in Germany--

JOHANNING: Well, I was born in Germany in a section of Germany called the Hartz Mountains. My father had purchased a plantation, a fruit plantation. This is between the town of Blankenburg [PH] and Alberstaten.

LEVINE: And that is where you lived?

JOHANNING: That was where I was living. Now, when my father came back from the war, he could not meet the payments on the property he bought, so he had to liquidate it or sell it and I understand that a man in the sausage business bought it but I never went near it. He then moved to Berlin and he went into the marzipan business and I remember as a child eating all the broken eggs with the yellow in the middle and if they weren't broken, they got broken. And I remember he also had a ice cream concession in the Tiergarten, which is the big park in Berlin. And I also remember exactly the house that we lived in. It was a--an apartment house and the unusual thing about it was (even in those days and I'm now speaking about 1920) we had heat. Hot water heat radiators in the building. So we weren't exactly on home relief.

LEVINE: You were--this was in Berlin?

JOHANNING: In Berlin, yes and I remember it was right next to the river, the Spree, the main river that goes through Berlin and as a ch--as a young boy, of course, I was always the hero. And when this little girl's ball went in the river, I went down the steps to get in the boat to go reach and, of course, mother came home and that was the end of that. And I ate off the mantel for a few days.

LEVINE: What does that mean you "ate off the mantel"?

JOHANNING: Well, he--I got my bottom spanked.

LEVINE: Ah.

JOHANNING: Right and various things like this. Always I remember these little incidents. The boys used to climb up on the top of the bridge (visualize a bridge with a-) and then they would dive off into the river and I thought that was wonderful but mother caught me going up, so I never did get to dive.

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

JOHANNING: Martha.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

JOHANNING: Boelke, B-O-E-L-K-E. My mother's mother was one of three sisters that married one of three brothers. Two of the brothers came to America before World War I. The remaining was-one was my mother's father and mother, who lived in Berlin on Schöneberger Ufer . This is along the river, in this section of Berlin called Schöneberg. And I remember on Saturday mornings I used to find my way over there somehow and have breakfast with my grandmother and grandfather.

LEVINE: What do you remember about them? Any other experiences-

JOHANNING: Well, my grandfather was a salesman for the finest clothing house in Berlin and he and two other men owned a sailboat on the Wannsee. That's the biggest of the lakes of which there are so many in Berlin. I have been back several times to Berlin and got to know the city somewhat, even went to visit where the house used to be but we removed it, so they put a new one up.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And your grandmother and grandfather, did you have any other memories of-

JOHANNING: Oh, I have great memories. As a matter of fact, when I came over, my si-my sister (who lives in Kingston, New York, is two years older than I am) and my father, we came over together on the ship -- on this Mount Clinton. And needless to say, we came over steerage or third class, or whatever you want to call it. I remember the ship well because I spent a lot of time in first class because there were so many goodies there and the thing that I've always liked (and whenever I'm anywhere, I try to buy) bitter orange marmalade, which I met on that ship. I couldn't get enough of that.

LEVINE: Well, before we talk about the passage, just about life before you left. Now-

JOHANNING: Well, as I say, my grandmother-my grandmother was, let's say, the housekeeper for a traveling man and they lived there. My grandfather worked in this clothing house and what else should there be to remember about them? I remember we'd sit on the porch on Saturday morning and the milk man would come and I would run out with the pitcher and he would put the milk into the pitcher. I mean, there were no milk bottles. I don't think there were even beer bottles. I don't. I was too young for that.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: But basically, we had now-now one of these three uncles—one of these three—

LEVINE: Brothers that married—

JOHANNING: Of my—of my—of my mother's family, right?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: They each all had a girl. Nobody had anything but girls and this one girl married a man who owned the Kedsey [PH] Theater in Chicago. So he was supposed to have money. So he made it possible for us to come to America.

LEVINE: Now, is that the uncle you mentioned—

JOHANNING: Uncle—Uncle Heinen.

LEVINE: Okay and you said that your father lost everything and that was because he sold the fruit farm?

JOHANNING: Well, he lost the farm.

LEVINE: Oh, he lost the farm.

JOHANNING: Uh-hmm and then he tried to—he tried to make a go with this marzipan business in Chicago [sic] and with his ice cream concession in the Tiergarten. But then this uncle came along and said, "Why don't you come to America, hero, you can do much better over here." Because my father was a graduate from Heidelberg and he had taken technical engineering. So when he came over here, of course, he was going to set the world on fire and it didn't quite work that way. My father was a very unusual—very - was unusual man.

LEVINE: Maybe you could say a little bit about what kind of a man your father was.

JOHANNING: My father was—well, number one, he was not a gambler. And if you want to become successful anywhere, you've got to be a gambler. Now, I don't mean you go to go to a casino but you have to stick your neck out. You have to take chances. This my father did not do. I remember -
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LEVINE: How was he with you? What kind of a—was he a strict father or—

JOHANNING: My father and I never had a very good relationship. Never. His daughter, yes but his son, no. And to go back to it -- to continue with that vein -- in 1945, when I was in Germany with the US Forces in the counter intelligence, another boy and I—a boy from Berlin—went to Berlin to visit his mother and my father. Which my mother did not make it through World War II but my father did. And I got him a job because he could speak English. I got him a house to live in and two nurses to

look after him. So I did not feel that I neglected him any way, shape or form. But on his death bed, he wrote to his daughter. So the relationship was never great and his daughter never did a blessed thing for him. Never wrote to him. Never sent him a package. The kids did. Her kids did but that was the way it was. So I have not very good, good ra- my mother, yes. My mother and I, we got along wonderful. No problem.

LEVINE: Can you think of things about you and your mother, experiences in Germany before you left at seven years of age?

JOHANNING: Yeah, she was very strict. She was very correct. She sent me to the barber shop to get a short haircut and when the barber cut all my hair off, I thought the butch-the barber was going to get it right between the eyes. But it grew back again, apparently. No, my mother was-she always caught me at whatever I did. She had a - one ki- she would come back from the hairdressers and bang, there I'm climbing up the bridge. "What are you doing up there?" [knocks] Hello. So it went on and if she told my father, he would beat-beat me up. He was great at that. When I was eighteen years old, I finally said to him, "Now, look. This is the last time. You lay one finger on me again and I'm going to defend myself." And that was the end of that and then I moved out.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: And left there anyway.

LEVINE: Were there any attitudes that your mother or father had in raising you that-or your sister, that you perpetuated with your own children?

JOHANNING: No.

LEVINE: Or was-was there a big difference?

JOHANNING: No, no. No, no. No, no. I-I could never see- . I mean I can see turning somebody over on my lap and spanking his behind but I can't see bang-banging people around. And I think we're making a big mistake today by not allowing a parent to raise his child. There's nothing wrong with a slap on the tokhes [behind].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Was your father religious in Germany?

JOHANNING: No, never were. Neither here nor there.

LEVINE: Okay.

JOHANNING: Although when we-we'll get to that a little later, in that vein.

LEVINE: Okay and how about foods, do you-do you recall the kinds of foods that you ate as a young child in Germany?

JOHANNING: Yes, very much. If it were not for the British occupation in Berlin at the conclusion of World War I -- with their field kitchen, coming around every day around two o'clock with big sweet and sour lima beans cooked -- I don't think we would have made it.

LEVINE: Hmm.

JOHANNING: I remember the occupation. On the bridge, for instance, there was a guard on each side because at that time--and that was British. British occupation.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Anything else about the--about the World War that you--

JOHANNING: Nothing really. Nothing particular about that. I mean, remember, I went to school one year in Berlin. Of course, this is why I can speak fluid German -- because I went to school for one year in Berlin.

LEVINE: I see and your father served in the army?

JOHANNING: Pardon?

LEVINE: Your father served in World War I?

JOHANNING: Yes.

LEVINE: In the army?

JOHANNING: Yeah. Well, he -- being a Heidelberg graduate -- just like here with our OT-- ROTC, he came out automatically as a lieutenant. And he was in Flanders during World War I. And of course it was kind of hard having two children at home on a farm, which my mother had to run and my -- and my mother (as was customary in those days) she would have several girls in help in the house -- in training to become housekee-- homemakers.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: That was the--that was the--basically, my father came from a very wealthy family. My father's mother was in Danzig. And I remember as a child, now that you bring it up, being taken to the railroad station by my mother. And my sister and I would get on a train and go to Danzig and my grandmother's maid met us at the train station and we visited with her in Zoppot, which was the--the section of Danzig, the affluent section, let's call it. Where there was a casino and beautiful beaches and etcetera and etcetera and etcetera.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about those--those visits with those grandparents?

JOHANNING: No, because I don't remember my grandfather at -- at all on my mother's--on my father's side at all.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: He was, I understand, the minister in the church in Danzig. And when I went to visit Danzig (oh, maybe in the late '70s) I didn't have enough time to research anything like this -- which I might have done, had I had the time to do it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Was it--so--so it was a Lutheran church? Would that be what it was?

JOHANNING: Yeah. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh and let's see. So you went to school for one year and then when you came to this country, obviously, you went to school some more.

JOHANNING: Well, when we came to this country -- right? -- as we know, I went through Ellis Island. There's much--there's not much I can remember with Ellis Island because we had no problems.

LEVINE: Okay.

JOHANNING: We--we--no -- we didn't have lice. We didn't have any commu--communicable diseases. We were examined, you know, dah, dah, dah, dah and on you go and I don't think that--I don't even think we spent the night in Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: If we did, I don't recall that and if I had, I would recall it. And we went immediately to the train station and went by train to Chicago.

LEVINE: Okay, I was just going to ask you first, the school that you went to for one year in Germany, how did it compare with the school that you later went to in Chicago?

JOHANNING: Very hard to say. Very difficult to say because I have very recoll--very little recollection of the school year in Germany. Very little. There was nothing unusual except I had a picture with my big sugar cone that everybody got. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: I don't know.

JOHANNING: Oh, yeah. That was the thing. You got a big paper cone and then everybody put candy into it. That was the thing that--and then you had your picture taken with it. But that picture I don't have.

LEVINE: This is--you did that in first--in the first year?

JOHANNING: When you graduate from kindergarten to first grade or something of that nature.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember anything else that had to do with ceremonies, either around birth or death or marriage or—in Germany?

JOHANNING: No, all I remember, one thing vividly, my mother had a miscarriage. That I remember but that's all.

LEVINE: Okay and your sister was two years older and what was her name?

JOHANNING: Brigitta.

LEVINE: Okay and do you recall any experiences with her in Germany, as children?

JOHANNING: No. No.

LEVINE: Okay, so when you decided to leave, it was the uncle in Chicago that encouraged your father to go there.

JOHANNING: Well, he probably sent him the—probably sent him the money for it or the ship tickets.

LEVINE: Okay and do you remember leaving Berlin?

JOHANNING: No, not particularly. We took the train and we went to Hamburg. I'm sure it was Hamburg and got on the ship, period.

LEVINE: Do you remember saying goodbye to the grandparents or any of that?

JOHANNING: No. No.

LEVINE: And how about things your mother packed?

JOHANNING: Well, no, the grandparents went. They came—no, that's right. We -- because my mother and her—and her parents came over the following year for my birthday. They came over in the beginning— the end of February, beginning of March, around this time. Correct. They followed. So that—so that all the relatives were out. I didn't have a single relative left—left over in Germany at all.

LEVINE: I see. So it was you, your father and your sister who—who left for America together.

JOHANNING: Yup.

LEVINE: And do you remember—did you have to stay for any period of time before you got on the ship?

JOHANNING: No.

LEVINE: Once you got to the port?

JOHANNING: No. See, the -- it was the responsibility of the shipping company to see that the people that they--

LEVINE: Transported.

JOHANNING: Transported were healthy, because if they weren't, they had to bring them back at their expense. You remember, you've written [sic] Bill Miller's book, I assume? Did you never meet Bill Miller?

LEVINE: No.

JOHANNING: I have. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, so you were examined then, before you--

JOHANNING: Everybody was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: Or you had to have a doctor's certificate, probably to the same effect that you were, you know, so and so.

LEVINE: Okay, so--

JOHANNING: Apparently we must have had nothing, otherwise we would have been detained in Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Okay. Do you remember anything about the voyage in particular?

JOHANNING: Ehh, no.

LEVINE: Well, the marmalade and spending time in first class. Maybe you could talk a little bit about that.

JOHANNING: Well, I ran all--I was a little kid. I was a good little blond kid, you know and everybody loved me and--and I--you know, "You can't go over here," and I was already there. But just all over the ship and let's say that I wasn't surprised at the quality of the first class, because this was the way it was at home in my house. My mother never set a table without a tablecloth or with everything being proper and correct. She was excellent at that but of course this all tied in together with her having these girls in the house to train them to be homemakers.

LEVINE: Was that like a--a--a job? I mean--

JOHANNING: No, it was just--it's just something you took on. Well, how would you like to have six girls come into your house to do the laundry, to do the ironing, to do the cooking, to do everything and all you did was supervise.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: And then they didn't all come at one time. They would stagger it so this one would leave and a new one would come. It was—I understand—my mother and I talked about it several times. This is only—that's why I have the recollection of it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. So do you remember when the ship came into the New York Harbor? Were you aware of the Statue of Liberty and coming into the harbor?

JOHANNING: Well, I'm -- certainly it was impressive, just as it is still to this day -- impressive. You get up early when your cruise ship came into New York to see the Statue of Liberty first, go under the Verrazano Bridge, right and then see the Statue of Liberty and the lit up skyline -- skyline from Lower Manhattan.

LEVINE: And now who met you and your mother and sister? I mean father and sister? Anyone?

JOHANNING: In New York?

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOHANNING: No.

LEVINE: No.

JOHANNING: No, we immediately took the train and went to Chicago and I have no recollection of the train ride, except I know that my aunt picked us up at the railroad station with a great big Oldsmobile touring car. I mean they were in—she had a riding horse. They lived on the Boulevard and so we moved in there. And, of course, now this was in October on Columbus Day. We arrived in New York on Columbus Day, so I have no problem remembering when I came over. And we went to this very impressive apartment on Logan Boulevard in Chicago and the kids came to my aunt and said, "Who is that dummy who can't talk English?" And I said to her, "What is the matter with these kids? They can't talk German." So I immediately went to school and in a matter of weeks, I was no more in problems. Because at that age you learn so fast and I learned. I told you, I learned German. Took me one year of school to learn German and it took me seven months to learn English.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. How was the—how was school? How were you treated in school and how—

JOHANNING: No problem. At that—remember, at that time -- although it was post World War I -- there was no liverwurst, there was liberty cabbage. Oh, no—yeah, there was no sauerkraut. It was liberty cabbage.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: And there was no liverwurst, it was liver sausage. Right. Today you still buy liverwurst. Right? It's been changed. And I don't think that there was the same—how would we—not—animosity is not the right

word. The same unusual feeling about the German, at that time as there was after World War II.

LEVINE: Right. Right. Were there many immigrant children in your school, do you recall?

JOHANNING: I don't recall.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. The ar-

JOHANNING: We were—we certainly—if—if—if there were, we certainly were a minority.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So and in the community that you were living in were there—

JOHANNING: Well, no, it was rather a well—a well off area that we lived in.

LEVINE: And people were well established.

JOHANNING: Yeah.

LEVINE: They hadn't just come over.

JOHANNING: Yeah, yeah. They were. Well, you didn't live on Logan Boulevard and have an Oldsmobile touring car.

LEVINE: Right.

JOHANNING: And own a theater and own a riding horse and be on relief because there was no relief. I know we moved away from there and we—and I don't remember the name of the street that we moved to but it was a very short period because my uncle was a very clever man and the reason he wanted my father over here, was because at heart my father was a farmer. In training, when he went to school, mother thought he took engineering, which he did but he also took agriculture. So that when he graduated from college, let's call it—right from the university, she had bought him a—an institute in Zoppot, this town. It was a dietary institute, the Lamann's [PH] Institute. Well, he ran that thing and I saw pictures of it. Sold it and bought this farm.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: I don't think grandma was happy about it but she still left, when she died, she still left a million marks. Half to him and a fourth to each of the children. Right, except that at the end of World War I, it was worth zero. And in 1936, when my parents went back to Germany, it was worth twenty thousand.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: And this is why they went back because here they [not understood]. That's—that's another story.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Okay, so you went—you went to school. Your sister went to school and you learned English quickly.

JOHANNING: Yeah.

LEVINE: And were you at some point teaching your mother English, or how did she?

JOHANNING: Mother immediately went to night school, as—as let's say most all the German immigrants did, because they didn't come to America to be Germans. They came to America to become Americans. And let's say, to use a comparison, the Italians. I have met Italians that were in America for thirty, forty years, couldn't speak any English. Moved into an Italian neighborhood, as many Germans did, too, where you could go to the store and buy and you didn't need to have the American language because the butcher was either Italian in the Italian neighborhood. The green grocer was Italian and in the German neighborhoods -- you know Yorkville, in New York? There was a time where everything was German. Today it's a league of nations.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Now, how—how did the T get dropped from your first name? Where did that happen?

JOHANNING: On Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Oh, it did.

JOHANNING: At Ellis Island. All I know is that they wrote my name, "No, you don't need that T." I just remember the T got, just sort of got lost.

LEVINE: Okay.

JOHANNING: Remember that the men working at the Ellis Island were all political hacks. Those were all political jobs. [noise from some sort of power equipment] He won't be long.

LEVINE: Can you say any more about that? That you know?

JOHANNING: No. All I remember is that -- the manner in which things were done. And then, of course, let's say, we've seen many motion pictures in our lifetime about the happenings in Ellis Island. If you remember "The Godfather." They couldn't spell his name when he came from Corteleone, so that—that's how he got that name. There were things like this were not unusual. And we don't—and that -- there's no way I can tell him to stop that.

LEVINE: No?

JOHANNING: Not him.

LEVINE: What was your uncle's name, the one that was responsible for the family coming over?

JOHANNING: What his first name was, I don't remember. His last name was Heinen.

LEVINE: H-E-I-N-

JOHANNING: H-E-I-N-E-N, yes. Heinen. And he owned the Kedsey Theater and now in Chicago, on Saturdays I had lots of friends-

LEVINE: Now-

JOHANNING: Because every Saturday afternoon you went to the movies and you saw Pearl White hanging by her fingernails. Continuous every Saturday and then, of course, I've sat on Hoot Gibson's horse, Tom Mix's horse. They would always have vaudeville with the movie. That was-he's at the end now. I didn't arrange that.

LEVINE: I just don't want to miss what you're saying.

JOHANNING: I understand. I understand.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOHANNING: That's that. [noise is disappearing]

LEVINE: Oh, good. Okay, so what else do you recall about sort of social life or what you did for entertainment, besides going to the Kedsey Theater?

JOHANNING: Nothing particular because we did not stay in Chicago long.

LEVINE: Oh, how long?

JOHANNING: Because this uncle owned a farm in Wisconsin.

LEVINE: Ah.

JOHANNING: And this farm was standing there empty. Now, why doesn't Mr. Johanning, with his agricultural knowledge and family, move to Wisconsin and run that farm? We'll all make a lot of money and he'll be very happy on the farm and when we got to the farm, that I remember very vividly. "All you have to do," he said, "is bring your furniture there. Wash the windows, dust off the curtains and you're all set." Well, there were no windows. The only thing I remember like it was yesterday was the chassis or the body of the milk separator on the porch. Of course, the crank and everything else was all-all removed. And I remember going upstairs to the bedrooms and there was a door out of the bedroom, which was not bad fire thinking and then there was a stairway to go downstairs, except the stairway wasn't there. So if you went out that door, bye, bye. You would have taken one long step. This I remember. [noise is back] Well, what we did see at that time-why do you have come today?

LEVINE: Let me just turn-[tape off/on]

JOHANNING: He'll be for another--another five--[tape off/on] In the early '20s the fire department in the city of Chicago sold the horses which drew the fire engines, which they sold and they went motorized. So my uncle or my father, I don't know who, thought it would be a good idea to buy these horses because they were available probably quite cheap and you had to buy them in pairs. So we bought two pairs of horses and one single one. In those days, you didn't call up the storage house to come and pack up your furniture. Your furniture got schlepped down to the railroad yards and got put into a freight train on one end of the train and the horses were on the other and my grandfather in the middle. So he was the one that accompanied the horses and the furniture to Wisconsin.

LEVINE: Where in Wisconsin did you go?

JOHANNING: And then we went--Nekoosa, Wisconsin, which makes some of the finest writing papers in the world. I just met someone recently from Nekoosa. Of course, it, like everything, has grown by leaps and bounds and we went to school four miles from where we lived to a--a one -- one-room school building with the plumbing fifty feet behind it. And the young teacher, she was smaller than the eighth grade kids. And in the wintertime, forty degrees below zero was not unusual but we went to school every day. And twice I remember that one winter when we were up there, we couldn't leave the school because the snow was so tremendous that we had to stay in school overnight. But they had that all arranged.

END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: So did you stay in Wisconsin then for--

JOHANNING: We did not stay in Wisconsin for a great length of time because financially my uncle wasn't coming across. He was supposed to finance this until it was self-supporting but he didn't come across. He took off with the blond cashier from the--from the theater and my aunt divorced him, or they got divorced. And I remember that she - she married another man.

LEVINE: Okay.

JOHANNING: And then we left--we left Wisconsin and went back to Chicago. And we moved to Chicago to Muffet Street. That I remember and my father got a job with the Western Electric for twenty-two dollars a week as an engineer. When you think of these things, right?

LEVINE: Yeah. So now what year exactly was that? You came in 1921

JOHANNING: Well, that was--this was then now 1924. See 1921, 1922, '23 or '24 right in there.

LEVINE: Okay.

JOHANNING: And my father worked for the Western Electric until 1932 when I graduated from - from high school, industrial high school.

LEVINE: And for you as a child, going from the city to the country, to the city, how was that for you? Did you have a preference or you—

JOHANNING: Delightful. It sure in hell—it sure in hell wasn't—wasn't boring.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: I mean it was—you take those things in your stride. Remember I mentioned to you casually, I went to nine different schools.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOHANNING: I mean it was always a transfer of school and when we came back to Chicago, we lived on Muffet Street and we moved to S—San Francisco street and three blocks, two blocks away from there was a German Lutheran School and Church and that's where I went to further my German whatever.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So you—

JOHANNING: And we lived there for a couple of years and then moved somewhere else, because you know, my father would get a little raise and after all, mother wanted to get back up into what she was once used to.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: Because when she came over here, right, you could believe it, for a woman in her status to have to go clean dentist's office and things like that, that wasn't exactly easy.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. Was there a time when you or your mother wanted to go back?

JOHANNING: No. No. There was no going back because, remember, there was nothing to go back for. There wasn't a home. There wasn't a property. There wasn't a relative because she brought her mother and father along. Her mother and father stuck with us. In other words, the family stayed together until 1927 and my grandmother and grandfather went back to Germany because my grandfather could never capture the English language. He was past that and he had—he had broken his leg and it was never properly taken care of up there in Wisconsin and he was a night watchman, you know. And now in Germany, he had a pension because he had had a very good job. So he went back and he got his—remember, there were—there were -- call it social security. In German they call it rente. Right? When you retire, right? So that's what they went back to and they—they did all right.

And then in 1932, when I graduated from school, my mother and father took a trip to Germany to visit her mother and father and things in Germany at that time were greater and greater and greater. I mean things were blooming over there. No ifs, buts, whats or about it. And as I said, that his half a million dollars—his million dollar inheritance from his mother was now worth twenty thousand. Now, if you had twenty thousand

there and no job here because he was laid off from the Western Electric and he tried this and he tried that and he tried the other thing. In 1934, I took him to Florida because another one of these agricultural things came up and we went to a ten acre grove and homestead but the owner of it was in Germany and he couldn't get any money out to finance fertilizer, etcetera. And so my father had to give that up and either go on relief, which at that time it was called WPA or PWA. This he was too proud to do and he had enough money left to go to Germany, or he had twenty thousand and that's what he did. Which you couldn't hate him for. Of course, things happened, which we - we all know about but what are you going to do? That's part of-part of-they call it progress. I don't.

LEVINE: So you graduated from high school, industrial high school-

JOHANNING: In New York City.

LEVINE: [unclear]

JOHANNING: In New York City.

LEVINE: In New York City.

JOHANNING: Yeah, Murray Hill Industrial High School down on 38th Street, where-where the school was then torn down and the Queens Midtown Tunnel took that-needed that-needed that area.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: As a matter of fact, the school was a very old school. It was an industrial school for plumbing, electric, woodworking and automobile and printing, all these things. I took electrical.

LEVINE: Now, did you purposely go to New York to go to that school or how was it-

JOHANNING: No. No, no, no. We-when we-when we-we left Chicago in 1928 because the Western Electric transferred fifteen hundred engineers from the Hawthorne Plant in Chicago to the Kearney Plant in New Jersey. That's how we came to come east again and we moved to Elizabeth and we lived in Elizabeth for about two years. Yeah, 1930 and my father belonged to the Anthroposophical Society. Maybe you've never-never heard of them.

LEVINE: Anthroposophical?

JOHANNING: Anthroposophy. It was-their home base is in Dornach in Switzerland and this-well, they had certain-their beliefs were based on Goethe and vegetarian and various and reincarnation. I just remember these things and this group that my father wanted to attach-that he attached himself to was the Threefold Group in Chicago, in New York on 56th Street. But they owned a farm in Spring Valley. So here's that farmer again. Always that farm inclination that my father had. Grow. Grow, grow and I remember as a kid, living in Elizabeth riding my bicycle from Elizabeth, New Jersey to Spring Valley, New York for the weekend.

LEVINE: What kind of a farm was that, that he-

JOHANNING: Oh, I don't know how big it was but they-it was a resort type of a farm.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: Mother has probably heard of Spring Valley. Spring Valley was a resort town, you know, where there was-well, how was it? First we had-first from Newark first we had West Orange. From West Orange it went out to-hmm, near Dover. Then from Dover a lot of it went to Spring Valley and then from Spring Valley all of a sudden everything went up to Ellenville - the Borscht Circuit up there -- and that's what it was. Well, it was communi - it was communications and travel. [noise in background again] You know, the automobile. I - I would say this in 1938. If you went to Macy's, you could park your car on 34th Street, walk into your store, buy and come out, get in your car and don't worry about a ticket. So there was no great amount of automobiles and it's the automobile that moves everything further and further.

LEVINE: So you graduated in electrical-

JOHANNING: Yeah, 1932.

LEVINE: '32 and then what did you do?

JOHANNING: Well, again, every time was a transfer schools.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, right.

JOHANNING: Yeah.

LEVINE: So what did you do then, after you graduated?

JOHANNING: Well, I wanted to get into the electrical field but that wasn't easy at that time, 1932. So as I mentioned to you before, I mean I worked for a while here and I worked for a while here but there was nothing-nothing steady. And in 1934 my father had this brilliant idea of going to Florida to become a grove producer in this ten acres and homestead and the next thing I know in 1934, I drove him to Florida. Because wheels you had to have, otherwise you were going nowhere. I drove him to Florida and had an accident in Miami Beach and it was either take the money that I had for carfare back north, right? Or however you want to word it and -- or get the car fixed. So I got the car fixed and left it with my father, who needed transportation at Homestead. And then when that blew up, then he brought the car back to New York. So I finally got my car back.

LEVINE: Hmm and then were you able to find any positions during-

JOHANNING: There was no work anywhere.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: Nowhere. As a matter of fact, you remember the CCC camps? Mother does.

LEVINE: CCC? No, say what they are.

JOHANNING: Civilian Conservation Corps.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: Where—where a family could send their son—son to this camp where he would be fed and clothed and trained and do, let's say it was mostly forest work. Fixing the forests and doing this and that and they would send twenty-five dollars a month home to mother. So she and father could eat, maybe the little kids or the girls, right? And the boys would be in this camp and they would get five dollars a month. It was a dollar a day, thirty dollars a month. They got five dollars for spending money and this other twenty-five was sent home and we kept a lot of kids out of trouble. Boy, could we use that today.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, how old were you?

JOHANNING: And I remember, the reason I bring it up is because my best friend in Homestead was one of the boys from the CC camp in Homestead and he always—of course, I had a car and I was—we went around. And I met a girl on the beach in Miami Beach who worked in New York for Horn and Hardart's. And at that time our friend Roosevelt had a brilliant idea called the NRA, the National Reconstruction Act, where everybody should give somebody a job. And the automats in New York were working seven days a week, twelve hours a day. So that they—what they did was they cut down to six days a week and cut down from twelve hours to nine hours. So there was room for me. That's how I come to get a job there.

LEVINE: Wait a minute, why was there room if they were cutting back? I think I missed something.

JOHANNING: They cut back on the hours.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Uh-hmm. I see.

JOHANNING: So they had room for one more here, one more here, one more and a lot of businesses did that and I made a lot of money. I got paid eleven dollars and fifty-nine cents a week for six days a week, nine hours.

LEVINE: Hmm.

JOHANNING: But, of those eleven dollars and ninety-five cents, I put two dollars a week in the bank beside paying off some clothes I bought at Bonds at that time. Remember Bonds? Two pair of pants. They were very uncomfortable to wear them both at one time but—and I paid two dollars a week room rent and the rest of it and of course, the eating in New York was no problem. But life went on.

LEVINE: Were these—were you living like in a rooming house?

JOHANNING: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: Matter of fact, I lived with a family who also worked in the automat. In other words, through working there— . They -- matter of fact, they were from—he was from Venezuela and she was from Peru.

LEVINE: Was this an automat in Manhattan?

JOHANNING: In 81st Street [sic] and St. Nicholas Avenue. I—I watched the building of the George Washington Bridge. Matter of fact, I swam across the Hudson there once. Idiot.

LEVINE: [Laughs] Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: And then--

LEVINE: So—

JOHANNING: And then, after about a year and half there—I think it was close to a year and a half, they were—they were stricter than the military. You got, let's say as an example, you got your pay envelope and it was the week before or the week after or the week of their annual dance at the Hotel Astor. You had to buy a ticket because automatically there was a dollar less in your—but you weren't allowed to go because you had to work. And it was on my night off, so I says, "Well, I got the ticket. I bought the ticket. It's my night off. I'm going." They want to fire me. I says, "Go ahead, fire me. I don't care. I'll get a job somewhere else." By this time I was a little cocky and I just did that. I got myself fired and I went—I went to—I went to Bickfords. "You worked for the automat for a year and a half? You're hired." Two dollars a week more.

So I learned. So I got myself—then they wanted to make me manager. I said, "No." So I left and I went to work somewhere else for two dollars a week more. That was the only way you could do it, work your way up. What did I say before? You had to be a gambler. I don't mean you had to roll dice but you had to take chances, if you wanted to get anywhere. And I worked in the restaurant game, oh, until 1937. Got married in the meantime, which let's not go into that. (laughs) And had a daughter. I have a daughter. As a matter of fact, she'll be here. They're here now, down Florida for a visit. And when I found myself getting to management, I said, "Time to get out." Because if you found yourself as a manager in a store and the daughter got married and their son needed a job, you were out of a job. And now you had to start somewhere else again. So I left that and went to sales and sold cooking equipment for thirty-five years. Waterless cooking equipment. I'll bet mother remembers. Did you ever have a Guardian Service dinner party?

LEVINE: I have some.

JOHANNING: Then you know what I'm talking about. Spent thirty-five years, excluding the time that I was in the service for two years, a little over two years, of which-

LEVINE: Do you-

JOHANNING: Go ahead.

LEVINE: Want to talk about that?

JOHANNING: Well-

LEVINE: What -- were you, in the army?

JOHANNING: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOHANNING: How do we start this now? I was living-I moved to St. Louis, Missouri because there was a shortage of aluminum in 1942. Guardian Service went to glass covers to extend the use of the metal and then there was no more metal to be had. So the company wanted to go into selling health foods but that was of no good. And we had gasoline rationing and all I had was an A stamp, which meant very little gas. So I decided the thing to do is to move. So I bought a truck, put all my furniture into it and moved to Missouri. Because in Missouri, if you lived there for a year, you could get a divorce. In New York City, in the state of New York, the divorce was strictly-what was the word for it?

LEVINE: Adultery.

JOHANNING: Adultery. Was strictly adultery. I don't know-I think it's changed now, right? Whereas, in Missouri if you agreed to disagree. So went out there and the next thing you know, I'm invited to go into the service. Do you want this part of the story, too? It ain't good.

LEVINE: Yeah, I would like to have that part.

JOHANNING: My father-I took my father in my car in 1932 to get his citizenship papers. Remember, you had to live so many years in the state, so many years in the county, in order to qualify for them. And all this moving around, finally in 1932 he was in New York state and city long enough to get those papers. And my being under the age of twenty-one, I automatically became a citizen.

LEVINE: You became a citizen.

JOHANNING: So that was that. So when the war started and all this alien business and registration -- everything I signed, I was a citizen. But I never had proof of papers. And the man I worked together-under with in this cookware equipment-cookware business, said to me, "You know, we don't know what's going to happen. One of these days we're going to find ourselves as a defense plant and being born German, you may be asked to show some citizenship papers. Why don't you get down and get yourself

some to be in your hand." So I went over there and a real nasty female, all she wanted was ten dollars and that was it. She wouldn't tell me a thing. Well, I got teed off. I had the ten dollars. That wasn't the problem and I says, "The hell with it." So Eddy Richter, my boss, said-- [loud noise again] Now he's blowing the stuff away. Turn it off for a minute. [tape off/on]

As I stated, I took my father down to get his papers and I wanted now to get proof of citizenship under his papers and I now go down there and the next thing you know, "Well, sit down there and wait." And I sat there and I waited and I waited and I waited and finally I said, "What the hell are am I waiting for?" She said, "Well, we're doing some investigating." Well, the next thing you know, I'm taken into a room, "You know what? You are an alien. You didn't register as an alien." I said, "How the hell am I an alien when I'm a citizen?" "Well, your father went back to a foreign--to a alien country within five years of the time he got his papers."

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: So they automatically took--they took them away from him. And automatically they took mine away, which I thought was very, very unfair. I mean, I never had this much thought to ever go to Germany - right? -- or to do anything other than be a normal citizen in America. Well, I got really up-- and then they gave me a book to fill out. All this--all this business, right and the last question was, "I will or I will not fight for the United States of America." I said, "My friend, as long as I'm not a citizen, I will never dream of fighting for this country against any other country, be it who it may." But now by this time we were-- Adolph was busy. Adolph was crawling all over Europe, right and so forth and so on. So I said, "Well, at least they're not going to get me in the army, so I might as well go to Missouri." And in order to--and what every--and when you were on this, if you wanted to go anywhere, you had to ask permission. You had to go down and get permission to travel outside of your community.

Well, I got news for you, I had more fun with those people because I was always going somewhere. And when I got to Missouri, I went to work for Roach Fowler, selling World Book Encyclopedia and not just in St. Louis, where we moved to. I was over in the state of Iowa and finally he said, "Look, here's a bunch of postcards with my address on them. Every few days, just write me a postcard, 'I am here,' so I'll know where you're at." Then I would go to Chicago to go to a dance at the Aragon Ballroom where Lawrence Welk was playing or Howard, Eddie Howard was playing and I wouldn't even--I wouldn't even write him a card.

One day the FBI comes to the house. "What were you doing in Chicago?" You know, I had those guys there for breakfast, lunch and dinner and they finally said, "Look, we understand personally your situation, right but eventually it's going to be trouble, so why don't you get yourself into that damn army and get it over with." I said, "I will only go under one condition. That before I take one weapon in my hand, I'm a citizen." So moved back to New York and went into the army through Camp Upton. That was out in Long Island and I decided, "Now, what do I want to do? Get

killed or do I want to live?" So I said, "You've got to be a gambler. You've got to put your—stick your nose out, your neck out." And having been in the cooking equipment business, I said, "Well, I'm a cooking instructor," because all the salesmen were in light outfits. Able, Baker, Charlie. I saw that right away. And the next thing you saw, I find myself in Camp Landing, Florida. Stark, Stark, Florida, you know where it is up there?

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOHANNING: State prison is up there now. And going to Cooks and Bakers School. The next thing you know, I find myself in California and the next thing you know, we're being trained for the Pacific. But when Roosevelt decided that they're going to finish Europe first, before we send that million men on the attack to Japan, right? We went to Europe. And on the way over to Europe, it was decided that there was going to be a regimental military police force formed because of the tremendous motions in the fighting in Europe. And we went to Cologne and we went here and there and there and the next thing you know, I find myself being called to Bad Tölz to go into counter intelligence.

LEVINE: Hmm.

JOHANNING: And I stayed in that and traveled all over Europe.

LEVINE: How did you feel being in counter intelligence? I mean, with Germans on the other side?

JOHANNING: Well, let's say this. I was the only American that talked German that could think German, right? And everybody wanted to—we had thirty-five men on our team in a small town, small city outside of Munich. Freising. We had a big hotel, right? And I was in charge of everything we needed because I knew my—I could find my way around, being able to read the language. I mean, if we needed wine, I went and got wine. If we needed coal, I went and saw to it that we got everything we needed.

LEVINE: Did you—

JOHANNING: And I had a chair in my office with a sign on top "Reserved for Nazis." Nobody ever sat in that chair.

LEVINE: When you say you could think German, could you say anything more about what that means?

JOHANNING: If you speak to someone in another language, you're hearing the words but you're not feeling the person.

LEVINE: Hmm.

JOHANNING: Whereas, if you're speaking to someone in the same language, you can read between the lines, for a better way of putting it. You could see their thinking and if you—you got to realize that the German thinks different than the American does.

LEVINE: Could you say what-what the difference is? Is there-

JOHANNING: Well, how could you say that? First of all, they're much more exact about everything that they do and let me tell you a little difference between the German and the American and I'll make another comparison. If there's a sign that says "No Parking," that's where the American parks. It would never dawn on a German to park somewhere where it says "No Parking," because he knows that the cop is going to come up and say-. Whereas here he takes the ticket and tears it up and throws it away. I've done it. I don't know if you have but I've done it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: Their thinking runs differently. Ehh, tell you-I'll tell you a little s- little joke that will explain the situation. A Polack, a German and a Jew arrived at the gates of St. Peter at the same time. They were all in the contracting business and St. Peter said to them, "Look, fellows, I've been wanting to rebuild the gates up here. I have all the sketches, what I want. Give me a price." So the Polack glanced- looked at it-looked at the paper, "Nine hundred and ninety-five dollars." The German looked at the papers, got out his slide rule, got out his measurements and an hour and a half later, said to her, "Nineteen hundred and ninety-five dollars." Now, hold tight-I know the name is Levine. Don't worry about that, because I have no thoughts in any direction. So that Peter says, "Well, how about you, Abie?" He says, "Well, I'll tell you vat, let's make it two thousand nine hundred and ninety-five dollars." "How do you figure that?" He says, "We'll let the Pollock do the work, you'll take a thousand, I'll take a thousand and then we'll all be happy." Am I wrong or right? I mean, that's basically what it is and I say it this way: if there's an opportunity, right?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: The German will sit and figure out-I don't-let's not hold it to just Germans but particularly and he'll figure out where, what, how, why and when. In the meantime, the Jew's doing it. That's why they get somewhere and he doesn't. There's nothing wrong with that. It's the nature of the beast, right? It's just like, let's say that a Jewish race person can far-far easier understand the thinking in Israel than an Italian because it's-it's there. It's-it's-don't call it an undercurrent but it's just there and these are big differences that you have.

LEVINE: Yeah, [unclear].

JOHANNING: I mean, I would-I could never live in Germany.

LEVINE: Because?

JOHANNING: Because it's so strict. Everything is this and this. Margaret and I, we go into it every once in awhile.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: Know what I mean?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: It just—once you've lived in America, you can't live there anymore because we have an entirely different style of life, thinking of life than you have over there. It's—it's—I think mom can understand it probably much easier than you can. Where were you born? Where?

LEVINE:: Jersey City. New Jersey.

JOHANNING: Where?

LEVINE Jersey City.

JOHANNING: Joisey City.

LEVINE: Okay, so you were in counter intelligence for World War II.

JOHANNING: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And is there anything else about that—I mean how do—

JOHANNING: Well, let me say that—

LEVINE: I—I—I—is there anything—did you have—how did you feel about fighting against Germans?

JOHANNING: Well, let me say this. I was very fortunate. I got over there in the beginning of 1945.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOHANNING: When the show was winding over.

LEVINE: I see.

JOHANNING: And I say it egotistically. I went over there to wind that damn thing up, get it settled and that's what I did. We went here and there and there and there and then when it was over with, well, I wound up in the hospital. I mean, that's a story all of its own and when it was all done, somebody came to my bed and says, "Well, look, we're going back to the States. [coughs] You'll catch up with us," and I said, "No way do I ever want to catch up with you guys." because of the ninety men in our company that went over there, thank God I got away from, thirty-five came back. So I'm glad I got away from that bunch.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: [coughs] They went to Texas and they revitalized—revitalized, reorganized the regiments, the division. Put them on three ships and sent them to Mamila-- Manila Bay and they floated around in Manila Bay for ninety days and when I—when I was discharged in Jersey—what the heck was the name of that?

LEVINE: Fort Dix?

JOHANNING: Huh?

LEVINE: Fort Dix?

JOHANNING: Fort Dix? My God, you could be about right. [Both laugh]
Just time to think, Fort Dix, down South Jersey, yes. Yeah, when I was discharged—

LEVINE: Well, that was a big area [unclear].

JOHANNING: Yeah, when I was discharged there, a man comes up to me and says, "Johanning, I thought you were dead." I said, "Do I look it?" He said, well, they had me down for missing in action. They had me this. They had me this. They had me everything.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: Right? And that's when he told me about what happened with the division, right?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: It took them that long to get out, while I was having a wonderful time in Germany. I lived very well. I did a lot of work and we got a lot accomplished.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, when you think about coming to this country as a seven year old and making this your-your country, what-do you think having immigrated made a difference to you as far as who you are?

JOHANNING: Yes.

LEVINE: In what ways?

JOHANNING: Well, let me say this. Let's say that I was the same age in Germany as I was here, I'd have probably been a very dead-very dead German soldier, wouldn't I?

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: Just like when we were in Illinois before we moved east, I wanted to become—I wanted to go into aviation. This was before—I mean I was still going to junior high school and there was a school in Missouri called Casey Jones Aeronautical, where at the age of fifteen you could join that school. And you graduated, you were a pilot, or whatever you—engineer, whatever you were striking for. My father didn't think I should do that. Now, if I had done that, who knows. Oh, I was maybe in it early, young enough to have become an instructor, which would have been good.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

JOHANNING: But I also might have been a major in a-

[END OF INTERVIEW]

EI-852/JOHANNING