

KECK-136

STEPHEN J. HOUBRICK

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HUNGARY, 1912

AGE 5

PASSAGE ON "THE IVERNIA"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Stephen Houbrick on Wednesday, February 5, 1986. We're beginning this interview at 4:30, and we're about to interview Mr. Houbrick about his immigration experience from Austria-Hungary in 1912. This is the beginning of side one of Interview Number 136. Can we start back at the beginning of your story and would you tell me where and when you were born?

HOUBRICK: Well, I was born October 20, 1907 in Austria-Hungary, in a little town called Palanka in Hungary really.

DALLETT: Could you spell Palanka?

HOUBRICK: P-A-L-A-N-K-A.

DALLETT: Okay.

HOUBRICK: You got it right.

DALLETT: And what do remember about your earliest memories about your

childhood in Palanka? Could you tell me a bit about your family?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, sure, my family was, my father worked on a trawler
and my mother did all the housework, took care of the kids
and we had to go to school when I was old enough, three, four years
old we had to go to school. And, uh, just a few hours a day, and
come home and do the usual things, raise a little Cain, you know,
outside. We lived close to the Danube River and we used to go down
to the river and my mother used to get real mad at us because she
didn't want us to go down there alone and--

DALLETT: Can you tell me a bit about the house where you grew up?

HOUBRICK: The house? Well, I remember only one thing real clear, I know
it was, was a, like a stone house, not stone but real good, you know, I was saying before
how they built the place but I remember opening the cellar door to get down into the cellar
and the cellar was all full of water, I can remember that, that's the first thing I
remember and the last thing, I guess, about the house. And I remember a bedroom.

DALLETT: Had the river overflowed or--

HOUBRICK: No it was a lot of rain, you know, and the water it couldn't drain
off, it just went in that darn house. So--

DALLETT: And your father worked on a fishing trawler?

HOUBRICK: Yes, he was on a trawler, he worked most of the day, all
day long 'til nightfall, come home dead tired, you know. He
wouldn't be bothered with the kids, you know, after working twelve

hours a day, you know, you don't want to bother with a bunch of kids. But he was good to us but he was a very stern man, you know, he just as soon hit us as say, "Don't do it," you know. He'd just hit you and you'd what you didn't have to do.

DALLETT: And when was it that he, you mentioned before that he came to America?

HOUBRICK: When he came to America, that's a little bit uh, he came to America and he uh, he was on the boat one day and he had, he wanted to come to America so bad, you know, that one day he was on the boat and he decided, well, when he got home that night he was going to tell Mom, you know, that's he's going to try to see if he can get away somehow. But he had uh, a duty to perform every six months, in the army, you see. So he had to stay in the army six months and when his time was up, he told Mom that, he says, the first chance that he gets, while he was on-duty yet, if he could get away, he would see if he could run off and go to America.

DALLETT: Why was he so anxious, you said that he wanted very much to come to America, what--

HOUBRICK: Well, his father and mother had come over previously, you see, about oh, about a year before we decided to go, you see. And he wanted to get away from the Austria-Hungary I guess and he just says, "Well, first chance I get," he says, "I'm going to try to see if I can sneak away." So, uh, he was on guard duty one night and it was in the winter time and he slipped away and uh, he slipped away and came back to the house and told Mom, he says, "I'm leaving," he says, "Goodbye, good luck," and he kissed her and he went out the door and that was the end of that. He came to the docks, you know, where the

big boats were and he got on a trawler, he, you know, got a job on a trawler, he says he didn't want no pay, he, he just wants to be on the boat and so the captain took him on and took him. That's how he got to the United States. And when he got off, I think they had customs but he slipped through customs, he didn't even get caught. He just wanted to get out and get out in the street and when he got out on the street he kneeled down he says, "Thank God," and then he had his brother's address where his brother lived in New York and went over to see him, that's where he stayed.

DALLETT: Did you then get, how did your mother support the family after your father had left?

HOUBRICK: She washed clothes and she did everything and anything at all to make a living, you know, and he had to, he had to go to work, my father had to go to work when he got here and he had to send her money, a little bit at a time, maybe fifty cents or a dollar, you know, a dollar was a lot of money then. And so she finally got enough money to get all the kids together, you know, and go, I think I told you he went out, out of Trieste, but it was Fiume, F-I-U-M-E, see, Fiume.

DALLETT: Fiume.

HOUBRICK: I thought he went up to Trieste but it was south.

DALLETT: Do you have memories of that period when your father had left for the States and your mother was receiving money from him and waiting to come to America?

HOUBRICK: Yes, but I can't remember all the things we done, there were so many bad things (inaudible conversation in background) oh, well that's what I mean. Well, when, after my father left you know, the gendarmes they called them, and they had big, big,

plumed hats, you know, big ostrich plume hats on, you know, and they rode on their horses like they were gods you know, they were stiff and beautiful horses they had. And they used to come about once a month looking for my dad, you know. And they used to come into the house, you know, and kick my mother aside and look all over and under the beds (he laughs). And we were scared to death, you know, everytime, we'd slip under the bed and hide and--

DALLETT: What would she say, where would she say--

 HOUBRICK: She says, "I don't know where he is," she says, you know, she didn't know where he was at, she didn't know whether he was in the United States yet or not half the time, that was when he first left. So anyway she got, they came three or four times I guess, looking for us and they just uh, I guess they gave up. So he eventually got away safe and sound, once he was out of the country they couldn't do anything about it no more, you know. But we had to live that way, that's--

DALLETT: And then how long was it before your mother started making plans to bring the rest of you to--

 HOUBRICK: Well it wasn't, maybe about six months later, I guess, six or seven months later. Pop had started sending money home as soon as he got a job and you could see what the hospital (?) bill was, how much it would cost to come over on a boat, oh about thirty-five dollars maybe, I don't know. But with the four kids. We got on that boat.

DALLETT: Had you already started school at that point?

 HOUBRICK: In Austria, yes, just, I don't remember what grade I was in or nothing, I guess just the first time you know, just

like yo say at kindergarten or something like that.

DALLETT: Do you actually remember the day that you left home, when you were leaving with you mother and your--

HOUBRICK: Yes, we all packed up and she took us in the horse and wagon, my other grandfather, he took us in a horse and wagon, took us to the station and uh, I don't know what the train fare is but it must have been very little because she had four kids and my wife, uh, and mom, you know.

DALLETT: Had you ever been on a train before?

HOUBRICK: No, I never saw a train before--

DALLETT: The train station?

HOUBRICK: No, we never were out of there, out of the place, we were all young kids, how far can you go when your four years old? So anyway we got to Fiume and it was another hassle trying to get on the boat, you know, and everybody and his uncle was trying to get to America, you know, and they were all--

DALLETT: Did you have to say goodbye to your grandparents then and other relatives?

HOUBRICK: Oh, I don't remember that, I don't know whether I said goodbye or not, no, I know we were huddled together and got on that boat and finally got a boat. We got on and we didn't live in a cabin or not , we were down in the steerage, down in the bottom, you know. Oh, there must have been four hundred people in there I guess, it smelled something fierce!

DALLETT: People from all over?

HOUBRICK: I guess, sure, they're coming from all over, they all wanted to go to America, everybody wanted to go to America in those days, you know.

DALLETT: What was the name of the boat?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, it's on the, yeah, no on that thing (Someone speaks off-mike) Iverna (?), Iverness (?) look on the outside, on the outside. I-V-E-R-N-I-A, Ivernia.

DALLETT: Okay, Ivernia. Do you remember anything about the crossing, you say you were packed down stairs.

HOUBRICK: Well yeah, we played, us kids, you know, every morning they'd, a guy would come around out on deck with the horn, you know, and blow it, you know, and everybody came up from, from steerage, you know, and it was time to have breakfast. A man came along with a little cartwheel with a great big milk can, you know those huge milk cans, you know? Everybody got a little, little milk in a cup, you know, everybody used the sam cup I guess. We all took a little milk and that was breakfast. And about dinner, I don't remember ever knowing what we had for dinner or for, for supper, I don't, I don't recall what I ate but I know breakfast time was, oh it was terrible, it was a terrible ride too, over on the boat.

DALLETT: Why was that?

HOUBRICK: Thirty some odd days, yo know, it's just a long time.

DALLETT: Did you have bad weather, what time of the year was it?

HOUBRICK: No, it takes, it was in a, say, let's see, June, June I guess, 'cause we got there in July into Ellis Island and--

DALLETT: Can you remember what, did--

HOUBRICK: We used to horse around as kids, you know, cause our mother so much grief, I really felt sorry for her (he laughs). Not then, I didn't feel sorry for her but when I think of it now, I really, uh, that's how I got this finger. See that finger, smashed it.

DALLETT: How did you smash your finger, yeah?

HOUBRICK: We were playing down in the steerage, you know, and one of the doors where you go down was open and I grabbed the door, you know, whether to hold on, and my brother came along and slammed the door shut, you know. My big toe and this (he points to his finger and laughs).

DALLETT: So you got your finger and your toe caught in the door?

HOUBRICK: (He laughs.) This here was swollen so bad I guess the guard never saw that when he checked me out, but my, I couldn't, you know, I could hide my hand, you know, but I couldn't hide my foot. So uh, but we used to horse around and play around down there and uh, what else was there to do? Thirty days is a long time. I don't ever remember getting sick though, you know, seasick.

DALLETT: Did the other passengers?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, oh I guess.

DALLETT: Your mother?

HOUBRICK: No, I don't even remember that. I know we had to go up every morning for breakfast, it used to be good to get up in the fresh air, you know.

DALLETT: How about when you came into the Harbor, do you remember when you landed in New York, coming by the Statue of Liberty?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, we came, we saw the Statue of Liberty and uh, like I said, we were all, everybody came up on deck with all our belongings and oh we were going to get off pretty soon and everybody was waiting to get, shoving and pushing to get first in line or to get out. I don't know how many people were on there, maybe two or three hundred people I guess. And everybody had a lot of, you know, suitcases, just had a, you know, coats, wrap stuff up in your coat and tied it with a rope or something, that's all and uh--

DALLETT: Do you remember your mother bringing anything from home, packing up anything from home to bring or--

HOUBRICK: No, I don't remember nothing that she, what she packed, if she packed anything at all, I don't think so because there was nothing, except probably her own personal belongings, you know, but other than that, no, nothing else. I didn't even think you were allowed anything. When you got on a boat, you had steerage, you had a big bag and that's it, whatever was in that bag was yours, probably some underclothing for us and for her, you know, and--that must have been tough--

DALLETT: She had to leave everything, her house and everything in it?

HOUBRICK: Oh well, she didn't care, she just wanted to get home with Johnny or Steven, with my father. She didn't care, It's nothing when you want to get back to where you, you know, so, uh--

DALLETT: Tell me what happened at Ellis Island?

HOUBRICK: Well, when we got there, you know, like I read this passage before, we were, I think every body wore black clothes, black shawls and the men had the fedoras on. All dark clothes, I don't know why they wore dark clothes in Europe like that but that's what we come over with. It was the cheapest maybe. Any way we got there, off the boat and onto the ferry, into the Ellis Island. We had to walk a gangplank, you know, over to the, from the dock to the, I mean from where the boat was into the, well from about here over to there and uh, everybody got in one big room, three hundred people probably, you know, all the same color, same look and same anxious look, you know. Want to know what they're going to do to you, you know, you didn't know what they were going to do, just hoping and praying that Pop would be there for us, you know. And Mom says, "You have to put your shoes on, Steve, I can't, I can't carry you like that if you," you know, she says, "We got an inspection," she says, "I don't know what they're going to do to us, maybe they'll send us back." I says, "Alright, I'll try to put it on." But I put it on and I hollered like crazy, you know, I had a blood blister about that big, you know. So she took it off, and she wrapped my foot up a little bit and she carried me and the other three kids behind. When she came, when it was her turn to go up for inspection, there were rows of us, standing like prisoners, you know, like this, and a guy would walk up and down like that, look at each person and looked at the kids, look at the kids, "What's this kid doing here on your, what are you carrying the baby for?" "Oh he's just tired," she says.

DALLETT: What language was he speaking, do you remember at all, how did they communicate?

HOUBRICK: We spoke Hungarian, I guess he spoke Hungarian because they knew what the ship was and they had a different kind of people for different places, you know. They didn't ask many questions, they just said, "What's he doing, you're carrying him?" And she had to tell them that he hurt his big toe and he;s got a blood blister, you know, and he looked at it, (he indicates making a mark on his shoulder) and white chalk.

DALLETT: He put a white chalk on the shoulder?

HOUBRICK: On Mom's shoulder.

DALLETT: Oh!

HOUBRICK: And he took the baby and says, "We'll have to send him to the infirmary," he says, "And we'll have to cut that open in a couple of days." So she didn't know what to do, what is she going to do, poor lady, she was dumbfounded, you know. So anyway, uh, she decided to go ahead and leave the kid there, she could have taken him and probably went back home but she wouldn't dare do that so--

DALLETT: They didn't make her stay there?

HOUBRICK: Huh?

DALLETT: They didn't make her stay there?

HOUBRICK: No, no, and then they took uh, a nurse came over, it was a male nurse I think it was, he came and took me off my mother's

arms, you know, and put a cross on her and all the kids and he says, "Go ahead, you can go through," and he took me and he carried me out, I don't know whether you ever, I guess you've seen Ellis Island inside, haven't you? It's like a huge auditorium, right? And had like a balcony on one end around the tops, you know. And he took me upstairs and he got me upstairs and he went outside, down like the steps, you know, came to a wooden ramp, it was a ramp about oh, about six feet, maybe, you know, oh two by twelve's, you know what a two by twelve is? And they were all tied together with rope, you know, like this, on each end, you know, like, like a shade, you know, and he walked on that, you know, (he laughs). We were going like this, you know. Not sure whether you were going to fall in or not and I was afraid when he took me across there, I started hollering like crazy.

DALLETT: This was across the water?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, well it was a little, from one, from, to the hospital, you know. And then, uh, I thought he was going to throw me overboard, I says, "Don't throw me," I was crying like crazy and he says, "Nah, shut up." Anyway he finally took me upstairs into the infirmary and he put me on a bed and there was a lot of people in there, there's, everybody was in a bed, everybody was sick, those who were sick couldn't go. So anyway they pacified me, you know, told me, "Don't worry about it, you're going to see your mother pretty soon and we have to take care of that toe, we got to cut it open." I didn't know from nothing. I just hollered that's all. So the next day they, they, cut it open. Where my mother went or what's happened to her, I don't remember nothing because I didn't see her no more and then, uh, they gave me a few things to play with, you know, a few toys and stuff like that. I just laid around, laid around, my toe kept getting worse and worse and uh, they kept squeezing it, you know, "til finally they got it to a point where it

started to heal, you know, so after about a week it looked fairly decent but they didn't tell me nothing.

DALLETT: Were there nurses taking care of you?

HOUBRICK: Oh yes, somebody came around and changed the bandage on it, you know, to see if it was still bleeding or puss was in it or something, they'd have to squeeze it out. You, when you get a toe caught in a door and it's closed on it, geez (he laughs) it's wonder it didn't bust a bone.

DALLETT: That must have been frightening. How old were you at this time?

HOUBRICK: I was five years old and it was, well, I know my daughter, my niece is five years old and I know she, she realizes everything that's happening so I can remember just as much. Anyway when they finally, they, they came every morning to squeeze that toe out and every morning the nurse would say, "It's getting better, it's getting better." And I kept saying, "Where's my father, where's my mother?" "Don't worry," she says, "When the time comes," she says, "We'll have them here for you." So--

DALLETT: Was your finger also a problem?

HOUBRICK: No that was, they never noticed that because uh, it was squeezed together, it was black and blue, just this nail, you know, but I guess no flesh, it's still not very, it's grown that way all these years, seventy-eight years (he laughs), seventy-three years. Anyway they finally told my, got in touch with my father somehow, I don't know how, I guess my mother had to leave an address where she was going. Anyway, so he had to come over to get me. But I think if he could kill me, he would have killed me that day, it cost hi ten dollars, a week's wages.

DALLETT: To come over from Trenton, was that, that he had to come from?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, he had to come from Trenton, he took the train over to Ellis Island or New York and then from New York, the subway over to Brooklyn, I think, and Brooklyn over the water to the Island. And he was a very, he was a very uh, bitter man I think. Because I guess he felt that way because he couldn't afford anything good enough for his family, you know, he was bitter because he had to work so hard and made only ten dollars a week. That hurt him, that's like taking a week's food out your mouth, you know, and--. But he came anyway and he didn't say nothing much to me, he never talked much anyway, he was a very stern man too, you know, very quiet, stern, real skinny like me, tall. You saw his picture there. And uh, I don't remember my father too well even after that because he used to go to work in the morning. After he took, after he took me home, he came home and Mom cried because Stevie was home again and everything turned out for the best, you know, so.

DALLETT: Do you remember making that trip that day, when you left Ellis Island, do you have any memories about you're seeing Trenton for the first time?

HOUBRICK: Oh yes, sure, and riding on a subway, you know.

DALLETT: Do you remember that?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, we went over to Uncle George's house on Staten Island, uh, to my Uncle George, it was his, his brother and uh, I got a little charge out of that. We stayed there over night, I think, or one night or two nights and then we went on home. He called Mom

and said he was coming home, we'd be home the next morning so pack up and come home. And we stayed with Grandpa. The two families lived together 'cause my father didn't have enough money, you know, to, then he said one day to Grandpop, he says, "If I get enough money together, I'd like to move and get my own house." So, I think he had to have one hundred dollars. That took him darn near a whole year to save that and then he finally found a little house at 693 Washington Street in Trenton, New Jersey. I remember that, a big old frame house, trolley car used to ride by everyday and he used to go to work. And we had to go to school. Mother enrolled us in school, in the public schools and she decided that she didn't want us in public school anymore she wanted us to go to parochial school, so we went to a Catholic school in Trenton. We had to buy our own papers and own pencil, you know, you had a penny, we had to go out and pick rags and bones off the people's garbage and down at the garbage dump we used to scrape and get bottles, milk bottles, used to get a penny for the bottle and you know, it was tough. Just to make enough money so I wouldn't have to stay after school and wash the floors and wash the blackboards off and clap the erasers out the window. That's what you had to do, and they didn't give you papers, you had to buy a sheet of paper, you know, she gave you one sheet of paper and you did all your homework on that, not only all your homework but all your schoolwork on that one piece of paper. That piece of paper, I think, she, for a week it cost us four cents for a week, four sheets of paper that was all,, the rest was blackboard stuff, you know.

DALLETT: How long did it take you to start picking up the English language?

HOUBRICK: That I don't remember. I think I must have, well there were a lot of people lived around us there, they were all on the same boat that I was, you know, same boat I was in, you know. And most of them were German, German-Hungarians like we were and all of them had kids and kids get together, kids talk their own language when they start to learn how to talk and so if you didn't learn how to talk quick enough you, you were just out of it, you couldn't play no games, you couldn't do nothing, you see? So we learned quick, we didn't have to go to no school to learn how to talk English, you talked English or else you didn't get nothing, that's all. So it was very, so much, so different, the Catholic schools were tough. The Sister used to black me in the eye, slap me around, she was a real tough Sister but other than that I think the training was good for me. I went through eighth grade and I went to art school and to get off the subject, here's some of my works here, I do now.

DALLETT: Oh, painting?

HOUBRICK: Woodcarvings.

DALLETT: Oh, they're woodcarvings.

HOUBRICK: Didn't you see them in the other room, the whole wall's full.

DALLETT: I'll have to look, from here they look like paintings.

HOUBRICK: Here's a couple of those, what do they call them, horses.
What are they?

DALLETT: Can't say.

HOUBRICK: No, but anyway, I went to art school and I had to all my own, when I graduated from eighth grade, the Sister asked me, "Are you going to high school?" I says, "No, I can't afford to go to high school. I got to work." And I worked in the A & P (he laughs) delivering groceries, you know, and cleaning up the sawdust, you know, in the morning, put new sawdust down. Just a job, you know, just to make a couple of pennies or five or six cents a day, enough to pay my way, everybody got to do the same thing. Mom went out every day, she went out everyday like a clock, eight o'clock, came home at 4:30 and she washed clothes since she was, every place she went, you know, the, not rich people but people better off than we were, probably wanted someone to wash their clothes, you know, so. Labor was cheap then, I don't know how much Mommy made but she didn't make much. But it was enough, she made about four dollars a week, you know, everyday washing clothes and hanging clothes and ironing clothes, mending clothes, everyday a different place, you know, she had a job.

DALLETT: And your father, was he working?

HOUBRICK: My father, he was working in the pottery then, he worked in the pottery, pulling the kiln down, you know what a kiln is?

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

HOUBRICK: Well, it's red-hot, you know, where they bake the plates and everything, when they open it up and he had to go in there and with leather things on his

hands and pull the ware out so that it cools off, he made ten dollars a week and he thought he was doing good and he paid ten dollars a month rent which was normal like if you make one thousand dollars a week, you pay one thousand dollars a month rent like today right? Same thing, in proportion.

DALLETT: Do you think he, uh, you mentioned in the beginning that he was very, very anxious to come to this country and he thought he could have a better life and get off the trawler. Was he pleased with the life?

HOUBRICK: He had a better life, he had a better life here than he had over there I'll tell you because the army was very strict, he had to go every six months, you know, for six months he had to be away from the family. And he, and that's what made it so tough on Mom. She had it tough. Mom used to go out, she used to wash clothes, but she washed clothes on, uh, on a raft at the Danube River, you know, the raft was tied on to a tree, she'd go out on the raft and she'd take the clothes, you know, and she'd wash it and she'd beat it with a big stick, you know, you know?

DALLETT: That's the end of side one of Interview Number 136 with Stephen Houbrick.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 136 with Stephen Houbrick.

HOUBRICK: That's how she used to wash her clothes. She used to get out on

that raft, you know, at the deeper end, you know, she used to soap the stuff down, she used to make her own soap, you know, like everybody else did, my mother made soap for years after we were in America too. All the fat she used to accumulate and everything, she never threw nothing away. She boiled it all up and it comes out soap, you know. Put something in it, I forgot what it was but anyway she was out washing clothes one day and the three kids it was anyway she washing clothes one day and the three kids, four kids, we were horsing around on that raft, you know, and my big brother, Jake, he fooled around, fooled around, and so we were on the shore and jumping on and off, on and off, and he got a hold of the rope, you know, that was tied on a tree and he untied the rope. And we all jumped off the raft and poor Mom, she was out in the middle of the Danube before she realized it. She looked up and she says, "My God!" And my brother Jake says, "Quick, run to Grandpop's house and tell Grandpop that raft broke loose or something." (They Laugh.) I was just an infant at the time.

DALLETT: So life must have been really different here?

HOUBRICK: Uh?

DALLETT: Life must have been so different?

HOUBRICK: Oh yes, it was altogether different, you see a trolley car, you know, and uh, going by your house, Liberty Street trolley car used to run from Trenton, let's see, clean up to the end of, to Jersey City. One trolley car. And it used to go up and back and down to Bordentown where the Bordentown Military used to, I don't know if I remember that or not, but that's a good military school for young boys.

DALLETT: What other kinds of things do you remember being so new when you were in Trenton, so different from life in Austria?

HOUBRICK: Well, I guess we were, there's not much I can remember about that because I was there and I had to live there and whatever was there I had to take and accumulate my schooling was two grades in public school and the rest of my time was Catholic school, you know, and we were like all other kids, raised a little Cain and Abel with the Sisters. One time a Sister went out, out of the room, she said, "Now I want you all to remember," she said, "I'm going to be back in five minutes, I want to see you in exactly the same place when I come in." Well, when she left that, closed that door, everybody went wild. We just took all the erasers off the blackboards and threw them up on her blackboards, and we opened the back windows, we were up on the fourth floor, we threw all the erasers out and all, Oh my God, when she came and saw this, she like to died (he laughs). I felt so sorry for that Little sister, she was a very little bit of a thing, about four foot six, but she was a jolly person, but she sure gave us, she had a cur stick, each boy had to come up, hold your hand out and she smacked you four times on the hand like this (he demonstrates).

DALLETT: Ouch.

HOUBRICK: Each kid, then you had to turn around and she smacked you across here.

DALLETT: The back of your legs.

HOUBRICK: The boys and girls, everybody got the same treatment. Well I don't think we touched another eraser for a long time. But she did, she was a very strict, very good teacher. And I feel sorry for people now when I think of it, how we used to tease them. I guess all kids do that, don't they?

DALLETT: Teachers are used to it I think, yeah. Um, did you ever uh, go back for a visit to Austria?

HOUBRICK: No, that's what I said to Mom, I says, "We ought to go back, sometime before we're too old." I says, "I'm seventy-eight now," I says, "We ought to take a trip back, I want to see my old home." She says, "What do you want to go, what do you want to go back there for?" she says, "I don't want to go back." She was born here anyway.

DALLETT: How about your kids, are they interested in that kind of thing?

HOUBRICK: I think my older son, he travels a lot, he gets around to, I think he went as far as Budapest, that's about as close as he got to where I was born. But I always thought that I would like to go back in, I suppose its all different and built up more than it was but still it would be old country to me, you know.

DALLETT: Have you kept up the language, can you still speak Hungarian?

HOUBRICK: Oh no, no.

DALLETT: No, not at all.

HOUBRICK: That little bit I used to understand a little bit Ishtwan, Stephen was my name in Hungarian, Ishtwan, Jannis was John, was my middle name, Stephen John Houbrick. Ishtwan Jannis Houbrick for Esteban in Hungarian.

DALLETT; Houbrick.

HOUBRICK: Ishtwan Jannis Houbrick.

DALLETT: How did it go from Howbrich to Houbrick?

HOUBRICK: H-O-U-B-R-C-H-T-. Well, I told you before--

DALLETT: When did you make the change?

HOUBRICK: I made it here. When I got my citizenship papers.

DALLETT: And when was it you got your citizenship papers? I know
you have a copy. Okay. Do you remember that event, we'll
check the date later, do you remember?

HOUBRICK: Oh yeah, I had to go to school, I'm trying to figure what the date
was then I could realize, let me have that, 1917 was it? The long paper and I never, no
that's not it, let's see, yeah, and--

DALLETT: 1931.

HOUBRICK: 1931. See my name was Ishtwan Jannis Houbricht and it was changed
by order of the court from Ishtwan Jannis Houbricht to Stephen John, that's American Right?
George C. Kramer, clerk.

DALLETT: And your last name also was changed, right?

HOUBRICK: Yeah, well because when I went to school the teacher she
asked you what name, I said Houbricht and she wrote Houbrick,
H-O-U-B-R-I-C-K-, and that was it. And I never, I didn't know the
difference, just wrote it that way and, until I went to get my
papers, you know, and he says, "You're," and I showed him my

passport and everything and he says, "Your name is not spelled correctly the way you are." I says, "Well when I went to school that's what happened."

DALLETT: Right. Also, could you also tell about some of the papers you have here, some of these original papers, could you just explain what they are?

HOUBRICK: Well these are inspection cards, port of departure from Fiume, Hungary, date of departure is July 27, 1912.

DALLETT: And you have one for each person in the family that came that day?

HOUBRICK: Yes, date of departure, our last residence was Palanka and this is for Jacob Houbrecht, my oldest brother and this is, uh, same one for, this is the only thing I remember from Fiume, the name of the ship, Jacob, Ishtwan--

DALLETT: So one for each of the children that came and one for--

HOUBRICK: Yeah, four of us--

DALLETT: And how about your passport?

HOUBRICK: That's not the passport, yeah, well this is in Hungarian, I don't know, I can't read it.

DALLETT: Can't read it now but it was--

HOUBRICK: I see Zimmerman--

DALLETT: It was 19--

HOUBRICK: Catherine Houbrecht, see, H-A-U-B-R-I-C-H-T.

DALLETT: Right. 1912 it was issued.

HOUBRICK: 1912, yes.

DALLETT: Is there a photo in there?

HOUBRICK: Yeah. And this I don't know what, it's Hungarian, don't know. Palanka, that's the little town I lived in and uh, I don't know, see that's all Hungarian.

DALLETT: Right. Okay and this document here is--

HOUBRICK: That's my Baptismal; papers.

DALLETT: Baptismal papers, and that's dated--

HOUBRICK: 1907, October 20, Stephanis Haubrich, H-A-U-B-R-I-C-H,
it was spelled there--

DALLETT: I'm just asking you about this because the National Park Service wants to know of documents you have. I think I've asked you everything I need to unless there's anything at all you want to add.

HOUBRICK: No I just, whatever you think, I can go on and on if you like (they laugh) but, uh--

DALLETT: Any other thoughts about how your life might have been different had you not come or--

HOUBRICK: Oh God, I never thought about that. I was too young then. I had to do what I was told, you know, and I just didn't begin to say, what would, I probably would have wound up in the army too, like my father and who knows what, I don't know.

DALLETT: Sounds like you got adjusted fairly easy since you were young--

HOUBRICK: Well we were young, when you're young like that you go where your mother and father go and that it, you know, and if it was better here, it was much better here than over there. We used to have good times in school and I was never very smart, you know, I just barely got, got along all the time, I didn't consider myself like my brother Jake, now he was the smart, he was a smart guy. He worked for, uh, he worked for some big company here in the United States when he got married, he was the smart one of the bunch and Josephine, she was a nice girl but I never really got know her very well, only when I see her picture, I remember her but not very well. My brother George I remember. And he lost a leg before he was, he got it cut off here, he was riding on an ice-truck and another car come behind and hit him and chopped it off, you know, and he had a wooden leg and then I guess he got tuberculosis. They all, everybody had TB in my family, even me. I was lucky, I had it twice (he laughs) right?

DALLETT: But you're in good health now, it seems.

HOUBRICK: Hmm?

DALLETT: You're in good health now?

HOUBRICK: Oh yes, yeah, that was thirty-five, thirty-eight years ago, thirty-five years.

DALLETT: And you retired to Florida how long ago?

HOUBRICK: Well, thirty-five, but the first time I had TB was in Trenton but that was an on-going sickness in those days. That was one of the well, better known sicknesses in them days because people were poor, they didn't have proper food I guess, and my father had it and I guess my mother had it and one transmitted it to the other, we all lived in the same house, everybody's coughing, you know, you just, just one of those things you, we didn't know we were going to die, what did we know? Kids, you don't know nothing. Our mother died, I'll never forget that.

DALLETT: How old were you then?

HOUBRICK: At fourteen I guess, yeah, she had an awful hemorrhage, she died in bed, it was terrible and uh--you think of all those things that went, you could go on and on, you know, talk and talk but.

DALLETT: You mentioned you son has a very interesting job at the moment, could you explain a bit about that?

HOUBRICK: With the Smithsonian, you mean?

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

HOUBRICK: Well, first he was a priest see, he got out of high school, last year of high school, he comes home he says, "Mom," just like out of the blue sky, he says, "I'm going to study to be a priest," right? So I said, "What are you going to do?" Alright, so we packed him up and then we sent him up to where it was, Little Rock, Arkansas, where the seminary was and he stayed there four years and then he decided he didn't want to be a secular priest, he wanted to be a, uh, Benedictine Monk, so then he came back to Florida and then he went to Saint Leo's, you know, Saint Leo's, Florida, that's about in the middle of the State, right, not too far from Tampa, that's the seminary where the Benedictine Monks had there. That was what, about fourteen boys I guess were studying to be a priest and had a school there for, grade school up to high school, prep school, yeah, and he studied, he studied eight more years there, it was twelve years, he was ordained up there, had a beautiful time up there, it was really something. I don't know if you've been to an ordination or not but it's, and uh, when the last, what about nine years, ten, its ten years, he used to preach in out church down here, down in Miami and--

DALLETT: And then he made a switch and now he's--

HOUBRICK: Now he's, came home one day and says, "I think I'm going to leave the priesthood." So what did we say, nothing, he made up his own mind, he made his mind up to be a priest and ten years later that's that. But he made a lot of good friends and--

DALLETT: And now he works for the Smithsonian as--

HOUBRICK: Yeah. Well he had to go to school, he went to Tampa University where he graduated from there, was it Tampa? Yeah. The University of South Florida, I forgot what it was, he got his degree and when he left there he had, I think his instructor up there at school up in Tampa, he helped him a lot too. Then he got the job at the

Smithsonian, he worked over in the shell place, what was it called, on the docks somewhere, kind of a mediocre job he got but he enjoyed it. He stuck it out for three years and he finally, they transferred him over to the Smithsonian and you know, now he's been there how many years, fourteen, fifteen years, he's forty-nine, never married, nice looking boy.

DALLETT: Have you ever gone back to Ellis Island to visit?

HOUBRICK: No, no, when we was up in New York, we never made it to Ellis Island. I think it was closed the last time we were over there, it's been closed for quite a while.

DALLETT: It has been closed, yeah.

HOUBRICK: Been closed for a long time hasn't it?

DALLETT: Yeah, hopefully when it re-opens, you'll go back and--

HOUBRICK: Well, if we're still here when it re-opens, I don't know when they're going to re-open it, you know.

DALLETT: Well you'll be part of it so, I don't know exactly the date, in the next few years.

HOUBRICK: I got to count the months and the days now not the years (he laughs).

DALLETT: Ah, it doesn't look that way. Okay, I think that about does it. Thank you very much for telling me your story.

HOUBRICK: I could go on more (he laughs).

DALLETT: (Someone speaks off-mike) Yeah, on another subject. That's the end of side two and the end of Interview Number 136 with Stephen Houbrick, the time is 5:23.