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LOUIS V. ZAUNEKER
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YUGOSLAVIA, 1923
AGE 11
PASSAGE ON "THE BERENGARIA"

APPEL: This is Willa Appel and I'm speaking with Mr. Louis Zuaneker, on Thursday, February 6, 1986. We're beginning the interview at 11:00am and we're going to talk to Mr. Zauneker about his experience of emigrating from Yugoslavia in 1923. May I call you Louis?

ZAUNEKER: Oh yes, fine, please do.

APPEL: And I'm Willa.

ZAUNEKER: Willa, fine.

APPEL: You were saying a moment ago, you were describing the

circumstances under which you left Yugoslavia, could you just tell us a little bit about, tell me that again? That you were actually, your parents left when they went to Austria for a visit.

ZAUNEKER: Yes, my parents got married in Allentown, Pa. when they were very young, seventeen, eighteen years of age. And they went to Austria-Hungary to meet their prospective parents, you know, the in-laws and so forth. And in the meantime, when they were visiting them, I was born. And at that time there was a lot of rumors that there was going to be a war, and turmoil and all, so my parents decided that they would leave with my grandparents, in Austria-Hungary for the time being, and then come for me later, later in life.

APPEL: This was about 1912?

ZAUNEKER: Uh, 19-, well I was born in 1911, so it would be in 1912. And, so I stayed with my grandparents, and my folks, they went back to Allentown, Pa.

APPEL: This was Austria-Hungary?

ZAUNEKER: Yes.

APPEL: What town was it?

ZAUNEKER: This was in a town of V-A-S-M-A-G-E-Y, uh, this is the town that I lived at the time. See, at that time, Austria-Hungary, after the war, they made Poland, Yugoslavia, uh, Hungary, the Austria, all of these little countries were made out of Austria-Hungary. Before that there was no Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Poland, Yugoslavia and all that. So, at that time, when I went to school, I went to a Hungarian, I learned Hungarian, I learned German, and then when we became part of Yugoslavia, then I had to learn Slovanian too. So I could speak all three languages. So then, I stayed with my grandparents until my grandparents died, then I went next door and lived with my uncle, until he didn't want me anymore, then I went next door to his place by my godmother, and stayed for eleven years with her because there was nobody else to take care of me. My mother was in America, in Allentown, PA., and my father died when I was, before I was a year old. He died of pneumonia, he worked at Bethlehem Steel and he got sick and died very suddenly. And my mother being so young, she just couldn't afford to send anything to Europe, to like clothes or help me out at all. So in the meantime, I didn't even know I had parents at all.

APPEL: She didn't write?

ZAUNEKER: No. So, I figured that these people that I stayed with,

they were my mother and father, and the girl, their daughter, was my sister, and I went to school there, and I lived with them, very, very happy. Then in 1922, fall of 1922, when I was coming from school, uh, a well dressed lady walked down the street, 'cause we had to go from one town to another, to school. We didn't have any school in the village where I was. And this lady came up to the kids, there was about twenty of us, and she wanted to know which was me. And they all pointed to me and they says, "well that's him." So she comes to me, and crying and hugging me, and you know, "I'm your mother and I came to get you, and I'm going to take you to America," and all that. I said, "No way. I don't know you, you're not my mother, I don't want to go. I'm going to stay here." So a long story short, anyway, she tried to convince me. So she stayed there 'till the following year, which was '23, February--

APPEL: Let me just backtrack a little bit. Your mother suddenly appears?

ZAUNEKER: Appeared out of nowhere.

APPEL: Out of nowhere and you had really thought that your godparents were your--

ZAUNEKER: Real parents.

APPEL: Were your real parents. How did your godparents take to the idea?

ZAUNEKER: Very sadly, very sadly. They, uh, when my mother got remarried in America, she sent me a wedding picture of them, the first contact that we had. And she said, "Well, here's your new father, and this is your mother." and all that. I took a needle, which was terrible, and I made all kinds of holes in the eyes, and just destroyed the picture, and I actually, I threw it away, because I didn't want nothing to do with them. And they didn't thought, uh, my godparents, didn't think that was the right thing to do, but this is the way I felt. And I kept saying, I was old enough to say, "How could a mother leave a baby, as old as I was, in Europe, and go away and not have any contact with him?" I held it against my mother. And then of course, my father was dead. So, my godparents and my uncles and my grandfather, and all that, they sort of agreed with me, at that time, because they have received no help from my mother, no communication, whatsoever, until this time when she just popped up and said, "Well, here I am." Well, my mother remarried, and they had a business in

Cleveland, so she could afford it, to come and pick me up. So then, I threw all kinds of things at my mother. Saying, "Look, when I needed diapers to be changed and cleaning, and I was sick, and all that, you weren't here to take care of me. Now that I'm eleven years old, and I'm old enough, you can use me, now you come and get me, and you're going to take me." So, we really had it rough and tough, to get along, or to communicate, you know. But there was nothing I could do. My godparents says, "This is your mother and you have to go with her, and that's the only thing that we can do." So you can imagine what months I had trying to convince myself, not to go, and that I had to go. And to like this lady, that she was my mother.

APPEL: How long was that period, from the time that she appeared--

ZAUNEKER: I think she got there in October, so it would be October, November, December, January, February, about five months. And she tried everything under the sun, to hug me and kiss me, and do everything possible for me. But it just didn't work. And--

APPEL: You were stubborn?

ZAUNEKER: Well, I just still felt that she didn't love me enough, T leave when I was a baby. My father died, which I never knew that I had a

father. And I kind of blamed all this on the mother. So then finally, the time came, and I'm not kidding you Willa, the time when we had a horse and buggy came, and picked up the luggage, and I had to say goodbye to the kids I went to school, to my, all the relatives, which I knew for eleven years. It was a parting that I'll never forget, and I still remember. So finally we loaded up and we left, and we crossed the border over then, this was Yugoslavia then, we crossed the border into Hungary, and then to Austria, and then we took the train, and we got into Cherburg, Germany.

APPEL: I just want to backtrack one second.

ZAUNEKER: Yes.

APPEL: You got a horse and buggy with your mother and the baggage, you said goodbye, and how far did that horse and buggy take you? Did the horse and buggy take you overland?

ZAUNEKER: No, no, it wasn't too far. It's uh, we were so close to the Hungarian border that you could walk. We could have walked to the border, but being with the luggage and all that, the horse and buggy didn't take us long. and then we got off over there, and we got on the train, and then we visited some relatives in Vienna

before we got to Germany, to where the boat was. And so we spent a little bit of time but I was still very reluctant to come to America.

APPEL: Do you have any recollections of what that trip was like?

ZAUNEKER: Oh yes. It, I remember, of course, I never was on a train, I never saw a train station. I, uh, it was amazing, and I think that a lot of this newness and excitement of that, it kind of, I got away from being with my mother, you know, I kind of forgot where I was going. Because I was so excited about everything else that kind of was thrown at me. And, we went to a restaurant to eat, which I'd never eaten in my life in a restaurant. And to be waited on, by people, and tablecloths and thing like that, you know, it was just new to me. And I enjoyed it so much, that I sort of forgot that I was going to America, I forgot that this lady sitting next to me was supposed to be my mother, and that I was going to have to live with her, and that I was going to meet a father that was not my father, and I didn't know who he was, or what he was like. So it was, going to America, it was just a strange country. And like, we used to say in Europe, that, where I come from, that, "The streets in America were paved with gold, that you could find a job with no problem whatsoever, you could get anything that you wanted, all you have to do and ask for it." Well that isn't true,

you know, but this is the way, and everybody used to say, "Oh you're going to have a wonderful time, when you get to America, everything is going to be handed to you."

APPEL: Had you know anybody, in your village, who had ever been to America?

ZAUNEKER: Ah, yes, there was a man, an elderly man that once came to, I believe he went to New York. And he visited just some relatives, and that, and he came back. And of course, he painted a wonderful picture, you know. Everybody's working, everybody's got money, everybody's got food on the table, and the pictures were painted beautifully.

APPEL: And was it in great contrast to the way people were living in your village, was there a great deal of poverty and hardship?

ZAUNEKER: Oh yes, oh yes. During the War, we were very, very poor. We had no coffee, no sugar, no, uh, food was just what we raised. If we didn't raise it, then we didn't have it. And then the soldiers would come to the town, and marching through. and then they would go from house to house and anything they found to eat, they would just take. They didn't ask. And, so if they wanted potatoes. or whatever they grew, then, they want to take it, they took it. I remember going to school, in the morning,

when we came to the room, uh, the school rooms were all full of soldiers. They were sleeping on the floors, and we couldn't have classes, we had to go home. And, those were the things we had to put up with.

APPEL: What did your family raise?

ZAUNEKER: They raised everything that, uh, so we had food on the table, potatoes, wheat, and corn, and we had pigs, we had chickens, we had cows for milk. Just everything. And we worked, you know, I did my share of work too. And everybody else did. So if we didn't raise it we just didn't have it. But the neighbors were something like the /amish people over here are, you know, they helped one another. When it came time to pick corn, all the neighbors would get together to pick corn. When it was time to pick potatoes, they would all help one another. So, you didn't have to do it by yourself. And, in my village, I don't think there was one hundred homes, if there were that many, and there was no store or anything, uh, so if we had to go shopping or do anything, we had to go outside. But we did sell milk and cheese. Somebody would come with the horse and buggy and pick up, you know, some of the

commodities, and sell potatoes and all that. And then during the War, the government put a restriction on it, say, "Hey. you have to raise one hundred pounds of potatoes, and you have to give us fifty pounds, and then you keep fifty for yourself." And this was on everything, on corn, and all the way down the line.

APPEL: Were there other people in the village, who had emigrated to America?

ZAUNEKER: Uh--

APPEL: That you were aware of?

ZAUNEKER: Not that I know of. The people did have relatives , there was somebody who was sort of a distant relative of mine, that, they had some relative also, living in Pennsylvania. And they had a daughter there that I knew, but she never made it. And as far as I know, nobody from my town has ever, came to America.

APPEL: So, your going to America was a big event, I would think, for the whole village?

ZAUNEKER: Yes, like I said, everybody turned out, and there was more crying, and a lot of them wished me well, a lot of them, you know, wished I wasn't going, and so it was both ways, you know. But after I left, uh, and like I said, after I got to Austria, and with the relatives, and then we got to Germany, and I saw the big ship, where we were going to get on. And things like that, I kind of changed my mind because of all the excitement. And so, finally, we got on the ship in--

APPEL: The ship was called the S.S.--

ZAUNEKER: The ship was called S.S. Berengaria, B-E-R-E-N-G-A-R-I-A, it was the Cunard Line, and it was one of the biggest, uh, company, or steamship company in Germany at the time. And I remember the town that we left from was Cherbourg, C-H-E-R-B-U-R-G [sic], Germany. And, I remember taking a taxicab from the hotel, which was an experience, I never was in a taxi, and we got to the ship, and we got on the ship, we were assigned to our cabin, we went second class. First class was really expensive, and then they had third class which was on a lower level. And those people practically slept on the floor, they were really bad. But we had a cabin, and but there was no bathroom facilities or anything. We had to go down the hall to use that. And, but we did go to the dining room, you know. And we could order anything we wanted. So that was a great experience for me. And the trip, I'm not sure, but it took over a week. It was close to ten days I

believe. And my mother got sick on it but I didn't. See, my mother could speak English so she could speak to other people. And then of course, I was an american citizen because I was born to them. And, uh, I made some friends on the ship because there was people from practically every country in the world, or in Europe, you know. And they spoke every language that you could think of, and I could speak German, I could speak Hungarian, and Slovanian. So I could speak to those people. So I wasn't completely lost. But I had a problem to learn how to use a shower, public toilets, uh, how to, the difference between men and women's washrooms. Which we never had at home. But after I learned it, that, I enjoyed it.

APPEL: Were there other children that you played with?

ZAUNEKER: Oh yes. There was one fellow that I met, about my age, and we got along real well. And then there were some girls that were coming from Germany, that I met, and we got along very, very nicely.

APPEL: What did you do?

ZAUNEKER: They had, well, they didn't have, actually have a playground for the kids or anything like that. But they got, well most of the children together about the same age, and there would be somebody there, or two or three people that spoke different languages. And they would tell

us what to expect when we get to New York. What we will have to go through when we get to Ellis Island. So that we wouldn't be petrified, scared. That, we heard a lot of people saying, "That when you come to Ellis Island, that if you're nor healthy, that they examine you, that they're going to check your ears, and if you can't hear, they're going to send you back. If you can't see, they're going to send you back. That if they're going to look every-place, you know, and if they find anything wrong, you're going to be sent back to where you came from." Well, they told us, "That isn't the truth, that really isn't the way they work. They do examine you, and they do all that, but they're not as bad as it sounds," you know. So--

APPEL: Do you remember that you were anxious about the idea of being examined?

ZAUNEKER: Oh yeah, oh yeah, because, uh, I, the only sickness that I ever had was chicken pox, in Europe. And the only thing they put on me, they didn't send me to a doctor, they put some goose grease on my body, the whole body, and put me in front of a potbellied stove, you know. And I stood there until I almost melted away, and then they said that that will take care of the chicken pox. And I wasn't supposed to look out in the sun, and things like that, you know, and that's the only sickness

that I ever had. And I never went to a doctor to look at my ears or anything else. So, I was concerned, you know, and I thought, "Well, mu gosh, what if something's wrong with my ears, and they're going to send me back?" Then in a way, I thought, "Oh good, I'm going to go back," you know. That's no problem. But then I would have to go back alone, you know, that was another problem. So one thing led to another. But anyway, they were real nice about it and they let us, you know, it wasn't as bad as, and--oh, also they were going to vaccinate us, you know, in our arm. And I still have, you can almost see where the vaccination was on my arm, that everybody gets vaccinated. Well, the vaccination was for diphtheria, or what any kind of sickness you might have. And so, that I went through. But like I said, uh, when we arrived at Ellis Island, well before Ellis Island, when we saw the Statue of Liberty, and the ship was pulling close to it, and everybody got excited, everybody was out on deck. And one thing I do remember, it was very embarrassing, uh, they started playing one of these songs, I don't know, it was the Star Spangled Banner, or America, or whatever, one of the patriotic songs. And I stood there like a dummy with my hat on,

and some lady came up to me, and she poked me, and she took my hat off, and handed it to me, and I thought, "What's that for?" you know. And then she told me that, you know, "Look, everybody's got their hat," and then when it was all over, then uh, they told us that we have to go back to our cabin, and wait until we were called, and then uh, we would leave the ship. And then we left the ship, we had to go into another ship, a small ship, to take us to Ellis Island. and this small ship, they usually took us by families, and so, and when we got over there, then we stood in a long line. And then I was really scared, you know, because I didn't know what was going to happen. And then I went to the doctor, and like I said, he looked in eyes, my ears, and made me cough, he checked my chest, my pulse, and asked me a lot of questions because, those guys could speak--well anyway, my mother was with me, so he spoke English. My mother, you know, translated, so it was no problem. And then the last thing that they did, they gave me a vaccination on my arm, and they told me that that's going to itch, and it's going to bleed, and a scar is going to form, and not to pull the scar off, to leave it go, that it's going to fall off automatically. And if

the scar falls off, and leaves a mark, that means it has taken, and the medicine, the medication has gone through my system. But if I pull the scar off, that will mean that I interfered with it, it won't work. So, it didn't hurt, it itched and that's it. So then we had to wait, and wait, and wait, until finally they let us off. And we had to go through as to where we're going, why we're going, but of course, I didn't have too much trouble, my mother being with me.

APPEL: This was another examination, on Ellis Island?

ZAUNEKER: Oh yeah, Ellis Island. They, in the, at that time, it was boring, and long, and all that. But now that I think of it, I could see why they would do it, because I've seen some people coming there with absolutely nothing, with nobody. There was nobody sponsoring them, they were just coming by themselves, you know. Hoping that someplace they're going to find somebody, and somebody's going to take them in. So they questioned a lot of people, which I heard and could understand. "Well, when you get to some town, who's going to meet you over there? Where are you going to go? Uh, where are you going to live?" you know. And a lot of them didn't know, nothing.

APPEL: What did they say?

ZAUNEKER: So they says, "Well, we, you have to have somebody, you have to know somebody." So they usually put them in a separate area, you know, place them to the side. And I asked my mother, I says, "Now what is, what happens to those people?" And she says, "Well, it all depends. If they find somebody or somebody's going to take them, or they have just an acquaintance they could call, anybody, that will take them in, or if they know somebody that lives in that town, that they could make a telephone call or something. But if they absolutely have nobody, and they have no place to go, they could go to Timbuktu as far as they were concerned, but they're not going to let them." And so I said, "Well, why did they leave them on the ship in the first place?" She says, "Well, as long as these people had the money, and paid for the ship, the transpiration, well, why not let them go? So they probably figure, they must have somebody." So I had no problem. We got through all right. Then I remember getting out of Ellis Island and seeing for the first time, all these American people waiting for somebody, and how nicely they were dressed and how everything looked beautiful, you know. I thought, "Gee, maybe America is paved with gold," you know. And my mother called a taxicab, and he took us to a hotel, and we stayed there for overnight.

APPEL: In New York City?

ZAUNEKER: In New York City, yeah, which was all a great experience, you know, a wonderful experience, to be able to see all these beautiful things.

APPEL: Do you remember anything that struck you, in particular, as being very different or exciting?

ZAUNEKER: Well, the buildings, the buildings, the traffic, the traffic, automobiles, of course. There was a lot of cars. And the people rushing by, you know, how well they were dressed, you know, the shoes, I looked at their shoes, you know, their clothes. And--

APPEL: How were you dressed?

ZAUNEKER: I was dressed, you know, pretty nice, you know, I mean, I really, because my, they you know, they kept me pretty, uh, in nice clothes, and then of course my mother brought clothes, American clothes. When she came for me, she brought me all kinds od suits, and shoes, and an overcoat, so I was dressed in American clothes. So I didn't look like one of those poor farmers, you know, coming over. And my mother of course, was dressed nice. And so as far as our appearance was concerned, we looked more American than anybody on the ship. But some of these other poor people that

I seen, they looked like they just came off a farm, you know, with the clothes they wore, you know, for years and years. But, so, it impressed me. Like a taxicab. I just couldn't get over that you called, and get a taxicab, and he comes with the car, he opens up the door, helps you in, and those were all, you know, new things for me. And he took us to the hotel, opened up the door, helped us out, took the luggage in. We went into the room, the room was just beautiful, everything was just out of this world. My mother made a telephone call to her sister, to Allentown right away, that we were there, and that next day we were going to leave. So, we got on a bus, in New York, and it only takes a few hours to get to Allentown..And we stayed in Allentown for about a week. And they took me around up there. We went o a market, and different places, and all my mother's relatives, they all live in Allentown, so I had quite an experience up there. But there was one experience that I did have. My mother, my aunt and I were going to the market, like a farmer's market, and as we were walking down the sidewalk, a man comes up, and he grabbed me by the arm, and he stopped me. And I thought, "Oh my gosh, he's going to arrest me, and send me back to Europe," you know, "What did I do?" you know. And it turned out to be that he was the truant officer from the school, and he wanted to know how come I was out on the street, that I wasn't in school. And when they explained why, and all that, and I couldn't speak English, and of course he let me go. And that was another thing, I says, "My gosh, in Europe I could stay home a week, nobody cared. Over here, they see me walking down the street, right

away they wanted to know, how come i"m not in school," you know. So, uh, that was an experience, and uh--

APPEL: Did you begin to feel differently about your mother, when you met all these relatives?

ZAUNEKER: Uh, oh yeah, yeah. I felt different, and then the relatives told me different stories, you know. My mother's sister, my aunt, and she had a brother living over there, and they would give me to the side, and they would tell me different things. Hardship my mother had, how young she got married, and she didn't know too much about, and coming back, my father dying, and you know, things like that. So I kind of felt sorry for her, her and myself, and everybody else. And I think I forgave her at that time. Until, we got to Cleveland, and like I said, they had a store, and they--

APPEL: Do we have to stop this side? Okay, you tell me when to do it and I'll do it. That's the end of side one with the interview with Louis Zauneker.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

APPEL: This is the beginning of the second side of the tape of the interview with Mr. Louis Zauneker. You were saying you began to leave Allentown and go to Cleveland.

ZAUNEKER: Yes, after staying in Allentown, and visiting all my real relatives, who are still mostly all in allentown, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Uh, we got on the train in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and took the train to Cleveland, Ohio. And them when I arrived in Cleveland, of course, that was a much, much bigger city than Allentown, and the train station amazed me, the people, and then of course, meeting my stepfather, who was a total stranger to me. But he seemed to be very, very friendly, very nice, and I had no problem there, and he had an old Hupmobile, I remember that. With no sides, you know, just the curtains like, and he picked us up and took us to--

APPEL: Sorry, you have to tell me what a Hupmobile is.

ZAUNEKER: A Hupmobile is a, one of the first cars that they built, you know, automobile. I forgot who made it but, uh, it was an auto, and it must have been a 1910 or something like that. It was real old, and like I said, it didn't have side windows, it had just curtains. So

anyway, he picked us up in Cleveland Railroad Station, and drove us down to their place. They had a little business, it was sort of a pop and mom store, they called it a candy store, but they sold tobacco, milk, and everything. And they lived upstairs, uh, from the store. And I had my own bedroom, and everything turned out okay. There was an awful lot of children there, it was like a League of Nations. I think every family was something else. They were Irish, and English, and German, and Jewish, and Italian, and they all spoke English. So, I'll tell you, it didn't take me long. Either I learned English or else I was lost. So my father took me to, my stepfather took me to my first day in school, and I was in fifth grade in Europe, and they put me in the fifth grade over here, in the George Washington School in Cleveland. And I couldn't speak a word of English. And the teacher, I remember the first thing she asked me what my name was. And I didn't know what she said, so my father says, well then, my name was different at the time. Naturally my name, in German was Ludwig Vukan, in Hungarian it was Lajos Vukan, and in Slovanian it was Laici Vukan, and then when I came to America, they asked me what my name was, and I told

them. And then they asked my stepfather what his name was, and his name was Zauneker. So then the principal wanted to know why the difference in name. So he explained it, and then she explained it to him, she said, "Well, in order that you can put him in school, you will have to adopt him, and you will have to change his name to Zauneker." So, right then and there, the next five minutes, my name was changed from Wookan to Zauneker, I didn't know how to spell it, I didn't know how to pronounce it, it was just something that you won't believe it, but this is the way it was. So right away, right then and there I had a new father, a new country, new name, and I was more confused than ever. If the kids would ask me what my name was, I couldn't pronounce Louis, I couldn't pronounce Zauneker. So, that time I was really getting frustrated and kind of confused. But, with all the children that played with me in the backyard. Like I said, there was stores in the front and in the back there was apartments, and then upstairs. And those were where six families lived n the back of one store, and there were so many of them, like I said, they were from every nationality that you could think of. And in the evening when you, they were

cooking, you could smell everything from sauerkraut to whatever, you know. But, I learned fast, to live in a crowded place instead of a small village, where you had big farm and your neighbors were not on top of you. And so we got along pretty well, I got along in school, no problem.

APPEL: Do you remember whether you were homesick for the old country and for your relatives?

ZAUNEKER: Yeah, yes. I wrote letters constantly. And they wrote me letters, wanted to know how I was getting along, you know. Of course, every time I read their letters and saw how much they missed me, and my godmother would say, "I go to bed every night crying and praying that you're okay, and your hope," and all that. So then the first problem that I got with my real mother, in Cleveland, when I wrote a letter to my mother in Europe, I always said, "Dear Mom." And I never showed the letters to my mother, my real mother, what I wrote. So one day, she got hold of my letter, and she noticed I started out the letter with the salutation, "Dear mother," or "Mom," or whatever it was. So she came to me, and she says, "Now look," she says, "I am your mother, your real mother. She is not your mother, and she never was your mother, and she never will be your mother." And the way she said it, and the way she knocked, how should I say,

belittled her, or something like that, it bothered me, it hurt my feelings. So we got into a big hassle over it. And I says, "I don't care what you say, she was my mother when I needed a mother," I says, "When I was six months old and I needed, you know, attention and feeding and diapering, and all that, you left me." And I say, "She took care of me. She took care of me when I was sick, she took care of me, clothed me. bought clothes when there was nothing to buy, and all that, and now you tell me that I can't call her mother if I want to," you know. So we get into a big argument over that. So the next time, when I wrote a letter to my godmother, and I told her, just exactly what happened. So she wrote back, and she says, "Son, if you have any problem like that, don't do it, because I don't want you to be unhappy, and all that. What difference, I know how you feel, and how you love me, and I love you. So let's forget it at that point." So from then on I just said, "Dear Godmother," and that made my mother feel better. But I still didn't like the way she put it, you know, that I resented it. So many, many times after that, things have come up, something in school,or in business I said (?) I threw it up to her, that she would have loved me, she would have never left me there. And if she doesn't like the way I'm living, I have caused her no problem. I don't smoke, I never drink, I went to school, I graduated from high school in the upper third class of John Adams High School in Cleveland. And I worked after school at May Company, Cleveland, and I got a job as soon as I graduated, and so I was no problem. And, for fact there's a lot of things that I, today I, uh resent. My

mother wouldn't let me go to my Senior Prom because she said she couldn't afford it. And that hurt my feeling even up 'till today, because everybody went. I even had a girlfriend, a date that I was going to go. And I was going to buy a corsage, and all that kind of stuff, and we were even have to take a streetcar to go down there, and all that. But she wouldn't let me go. On my graduation, we took a streetcar down to the, and the only person that came to my graduation was my mother and her lady friend. Nobody else came.

APPEL: Did she have other children with your stepfather?

ZAUNEKER: No. No. This was, there was no other children. I have no other brothers or sisters. And so it made it very hard.

APPEL: But he didn't come to your graduation?

ZAUNEKER: No.

APPEL: So he didn't really become a father?

ZAUNEKER: No.

APPEL: He was nice but--

ZAUNEKER: He was nice but that's, that's it. There's uh, a lot of resentment after that, I found out, between my mother and my father. I don't know why, but they didn't really have, what you call, a good life together either. But he, uh, I remember one time I said to my mother, I says, "Mom," i says, "Why do you have to put with it? I'm old enough--," I was in high school, "I could get a job, and you could get a job, and let's the two of us live alone." She says, "No," you know in those years, getting a divorce or leaving somebody or anything like was a disgrace. Today it's nothing, but at that time it really was. Everybody in the family or neighbors, would look down on you, that you did something like that, you know. So--

APPEL: I'm wondering, I think about something you said about the boat, and I'm struck by the fact that there were people there, adults, who really tried to prepare the children for what to expect in America, that was unusual. And I wonder whether what they told you, about what to expect, turned out to be what you saw or whether what you expected, turned out to be different from what you actually experienced?

ZAUNEKER: Well, in certain ways. It all depends on where you are going. Now, you know, most of those people, they were from New York City, you know, or from a big city. And as far as California is concerned or anything like that, I don't even know it existed, you know. Or movie stars or anything like, or little small towns. So that what they were talking about, big cities, New York. "When you come to New York, and you're going to go down the street, and you're going to see people, people are going to be rude to you, or they're not going to talk to you, or somebody's going to ask you something you don't understand them, they're going to slight you, or something like that," forget it, you know, because New York was considered as a melting pot of the world as far as that goes, and I remember going down to the East Side of New York, where they had those pushcarts, and all that. My God, I thought, those people were all starving, poor people they were. They were begging, you know, they were beggars and all. We didn't have that in Europe. Everybody had enough food, you know, and they tried to warn us that we wouldn't get discouraged. And it isn't like that all over the world, you know, there's other parts, nicer parts and all that. And the same way with the schools. You know, you go to school and some of the kids are going to maybe make fun of you, because you can't speak English or you don't understand them or they're going to ask you something and they going to say something and that. "Be careful," you know, "Don't start a fight," or "Don't start talking back" or "Don't say anything because you don't know

what they said." And, which I thought was very nice, you know, that they warned us of those things. And, uh, we had those classes and, uh, to get togethers and they showed us movies, black and white movies, they were terrible. But I never saw a movie in my life, so I didn't know, but they showed some of that stuff to New York City where the people go shopping, and their markets, and how the ships come in, the Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, and they explained to us what that was, where it came from, and why it was there. And why we have to go through all this. And it was very educational. I think that if they didn't give us that information when I would arrive in Ellis Island, or any of those places, we would be petrified. We would be like going, like some people say, it was like cattle, you know, standing in line, and not knowing where you're going, you know. What to expect when you get over there. And there was nurses, there was doctors, there was just ordinary people that you talked to and like I said, I didn't really have any problem because my mother could speak English, so I went right through. But I still had to stand in line and wait my turn, and, uh, but, as far as the ship was concerned, it was a palace, as far as I was concerned. The food was great, the people were great, uh, we had no problem with anybody, it's just--after I had to learn to use the facilities, and knew which hall to take to get me to the men's washroom or take a shower, and how to turn the water on and turn the water off. And as to the bunk beds, you know, how to turn them down, and things like that. But it was a great experience, I'll tell you, it's an experience that a person just

doesn't forget. And I went to the Queen Mary that's at Long Beach. Have you been on that? The Queen Mary in Long Beach, and I went on there a couple of times, and I looked to see how different, you know, it was, and they, this Queen Mary, was used--for fact a very good friend of mine, was in World War Two, and he was on it, you know, that they shipped him from, uh, Ohio, well, New York, well anyway, they got to New York, and they took him to Europe, you know. And this ship was similar to the one I went on, it wasn't much different. And I still remember, I went into one of those little cabins, and all that, and I looked at it, and I thought, "My gosh," of course now they have washrooms, and basins and that, it's a little bit different, but they're more beautiful than the one that I came on, but the whole thing to me was just something out of this world. And then when I got to the school, the kids were very, very cooperative with me. There was no problem, no kids ever made fun of me. The only problem I had with pronunciation with some of the words, and if I pronounced a word way, way out, well the kids would laugh, you know. And the teacher, I had a, I still remember, she was a Jewish teacher, which to me was very unusual to have somebody of Jewish race to be my teacher. But she was the cutest little thing, and smart as a whip, and she was so nice to me that I just, I'll remember forever, you know. And whenever the kids would laugh, or make a snicker, or anything like that, she would correct them. And sometimes she even made them apologize, but as you know, when you come, the words, them and they, and those. "I saw dem, dere, over," you know, they would all

laugh, you know. But sooner or later, I knew that there was -th- and -d-, and it was pronounced different. The teacher just made me say it over, and over, and over again. I was, so, I lived through it.

APPEL: I wonder also, because your story is really very unusual, because of what happened with your family, the fact that you didn't want to go, that you felt that your real family was in Yugoslavia. I wonder what you think about the very fact that you came, and what the experience did for you. Would you have done it differently?

ZAUNEKER: You mean from the leaving, or? Well, I had no choice as far as leaving was concerned, you know, that was up to my mother. And as far as my relatives over there, they had no choice not to release me. So, if my mother wouldn't have come for me and all that, I know I would have stayed there. There would be no way that I would do it on my own. Because I loved those people over there, I loved the country, I mean, at that time , of course, I could have changed, who knows, you know, what would have happened. But after a while. being over here, I don't think I would go back. I wouldn't go back. And later on, I received letters from my relatives, my godmother, and my uncles, and my

grandfather, and all that, how lucky. That I should thank the stars and everything, that I left. That what I would have to go through to make a living over there. And some of the people that I went to school with, over there, and they graduated from school, and they left this little town, moved to the bigger town, and they wrote me letters, and saying what a hard time they had getting jobs or getting to go anywhere, you know, to do anything. And they would say to me, "Oh how lucky you are." So with this type of a feeling, and getting from them, feedback, I knew that I made the right move, you know, that I don't regret being here. And I forgave my mother, and we got along very, very nicely after that, except if something come up, and that, and I says, "Well, you're the one who left me there, or you're the one that brought me here." But otherwise we got along fine. We got along with my stepfather. He was no problem. I wish that I did have a brother or sister, somebody that I could grow up with. But them having a business, they were strictly in the store and I was alone. So I had, I had to depend on the people outside, to playmates and that, nobody in the family. Christmas wasn't like other people have, you know, when they have

a family get-together and all that. My folks, they were open seven days a week, and it was nothing like I had, what I was used to having, holidays and so forth. But no, I don't regret it, I don't regret it at all. I, uh, got a nice job and my schooling was good and then after I graduated from John Adams High School, I went to Spencerian Business School, and I took up journalism, and bookkeeping, and I became editor of May Company Newspaper that was published in Cleveland. And then I got a, I don't think they have it anymore, where you work six weeks, and go to school six weeks. And you get credit for while you're going to school, it's a business college. And then when I came out to California, I did the same thing. I became an editor of a chain of supermarkets. I put out the banners. So, I enjoyed it, I had great, I married a wonderful wife, I have two wonderful children, and three grandchildren. And I'm lonely here, I'm all alone. I have a nice home, but that's it, that's my life.

APPEL: Well, it's been a very, very interesting interview and I thank you very much for telling us.

ZAUNEKER: Well, I'm glad that I'm able to tell it to somebody because, I guess it is a little bit different from most people that come from Europe, or the experience that they have. Oh, I didn't mention, but one of the reasons, you know, while, when I was Cleveland, and I had a job. I worked on this streetcar line. I was driving street, uh, as a motorman on a, in Cleveland during the War. And that's what kept me going into Service, because I had a defense job, or whatever. So, seems to me that my mother and I had a little disagreement as to me working on the streetcar line, and a few other little things and that, and so, to get away from all this hassle and bustle in Cleveland, I picked up and came to California. And my mother was very, very much against it, and she said she was never going to see me alive, and that I'm going to die on the way to California, and things like that. But I said, "I don't care. I want to go to California, and this is it." So, I had already the two children, and I gave up my job, and I came out here, and I had no problem getting a job. And I worked for the same company, thirty years. And enjoyed it very much, So, I'm retired now, and I'm getting the retail clerk's pension and also Social Security. I'm doing all right.

APPEL: Well, thank you very much again.

ZAUNEKER: And then, my, like I said, my wife wanted to go back to Europe so bad, to see where I rally grew up, and where I spent my eleven

years. So finally, in 1978, we scraped enough money together and we went back there, and we really, we really had a good time. Everybody took me around, and showed me everything. And there's another thing, if you want to hear what happened? When my father, my grandfather died, he had some property, and he left it to my mother, and then when my mother died, my mother left it to me. Which I didn't know anything about. And it was land and a house, property, and all kinds, it was worth quite a bit of money. So finally, the government or somebody wanted to buy this land, and they wanted to know who owned it. So my relatives says that I owned it but I was in America. Well, you have to get hold of him, he has to come here and sign the papers. If he doesn't sign the papers, we will take the property as no ownership. So, my relatives says, "Now look, we'll pay your way, we'll do everything on it, and we'll make out all the papers, and everything, you just come down here, sign the papers, and so that the government won't take it." I says, "Oh that will be great." So I thought, if I go over there, I'm going to sell the property, get the money and come back to America. Well, it was wrong. I went over there, and I showed them my passport, who I was, and all that. They had all the papers made out, I signed the papers, I didn't even know how much money it was. But I couldn't get one penny out of the country. So the money all went to my relatives over there, so it's in a bank over there, and they're using it. And I can't take a penny out of it.

APPEL: Maybe you should go back and have a holiday.

ZAUNEKER: (He laughs.) That's what they tell me, well go back, come back there and spend, blow it. But in the meantime, the man who did al this and that, he passed away, and the boys, they were twins, that were born to this man, they wrote to me, asked me if I would give them enough money, and let them use the land where, the land where I was born on. The house was torn down, if they could build a house for themselves, with my money. And I says, "Yes." I says, "Look, you raised me over there for eleven years, my mother never gave me anything for it, and this is the one way for me to repay you for the use, for raising me for those eleven years. So take the money, what you need, build yourself a house, and live in it." So they send me a picture of the house that they built, on my grandfather's land, and it's a beautiful home, really a nice home, and he's married, and they got a kid, and they're living in it. And it makes me feel that I have repaid my eleven years with them. Don't you think that's all right?

APPEL: I think that's lovely. That's very nice.

ZAUNEKER: What would you do with the money over there?

APPEL: You should go for a holiday.

ZAUNEKER: But I, well they want me to.

APPEL: You should do that.

ZAUNEKER: They want me to go back, and I might, because I have a place to stay there, and they says it won't cost me a penny. They will pay my way wherever I want to go. But I'll tell you one thing, I hate to do it without my wife. I really do. And so, maybe one of these days I'll get enough nerve to do it.

APPEL: This is the end of side two with the interview with Louis Zauneker.