**Janet:** This Janet Levine from the National Park Service, and I’m here today in Torrington, Connecticut. With Waldemar and Paul Hermanau, who came from Germany in 1928, Waldemar was 14 and Paul was six and a half.

Okay, today is September 21st, 1992. Well I’m very happy to be here and have the unexpected pleasure of interviewing both of you. So, let’s start by maybe start with you telling me your birthday.

**Chuck:** I was born on December 20th, 1914 during World War 1.

**Janet:** Okay, and you Paul?

**Paul:** I was born December 12th 1921, a few years after the war but in Germany.

**Janet:** And what town did you live in?

**Paul:** I lived in [inaudible 00:01:00] that’s a town not too far from Frankfurt.

**Janet:** And you really don’t remember?

**Paul:** No, I was about two years old when our family left Germany.

**Janet:** Okay, and how old were you when your family left?

**Chuck:** When I left, my age was nine, for Brazil. So, I had three years of German schooling.

**Janet:** What do you remember about the town where you lived before you left Germany, when you think about it, what are the things that you recall?

**Chuck:** I remember the inflation in the early 20s in Germany and my father had saved up money, to buy a house, and to build a house, but by the time he got a little money accumulated, it was worth nothing.

**Janet:** And do you remember, what kind of a town was it? Was it an industrial town?

**Chuck:** Industrial town, the industrial town made wallpaper and the largest at that time paper, wallpaper. That was a main industry [inaudible 00:02:29].

**Janet:** And where most people employed in that?

**Chuck:** I say a large percentage of people were employed in them, endeavor.

**Janet:** And how about your own father?

**Chuck:** My own father had his own business, he had a truck, garden, he raised vegetables and the berries. All sort of berries he had in the garden.

**Janet:** Did you have an extended family in the area?

**Chuck:** No. My father’s folks were in the same area, in the same town. But my mother’s folks were in Estelline Germany.

**Janet:** Okay, and what was your father’s name?

**Chuck:** Paul Hermanau.

**Janet:** And your mother’s name and maiden name?

**Chuck:** Her maiden name was Emily Volland, spelt V-O-L-L-A-N-D.

**Janet:** And besides the two of you, you had one brother?

**Chuck:** Another brother yes between us.

**Janet:** And he was born in Germany as well?

**Chuck:** Yes.

**Janet:** Okay, and what’s his name?

**Chuck:** His name is Herman P, for Paul, Hermanau. He now lives in…

**Paul:** Stockton.

**Chuck:** Stockton California.

**Janet:** Okay. Well how was the decision made, do either of you know how the decision was made to leave Germany? Okay, well say it. I will have it on the tape as well as the written?

**Paul:** Our father looked at the conditions in Germany at that time in the early 20s and with inflation and all the other aftermath of the war, he said, Germany is no place to raise a family, and there’s not much future in it. So, he decided to try to go to Brazil first of all because he was interested in raising Tobacco and he was going to try to start a tobacco plantation in Brazil.

**Janet:** Do you know why he was interested in that?

**Paul:** Being a professional gardener I thought, I’m not sure exactly why he choose tobacco as a crop to grow but he did smoke, maybe that has something to do with it or maybe some friends encouraged him to try this.

**Janet:** Did he have friends or anyone he knew in Brazil?

**Chuck:** He went down there cold.

**Janet:** So, did your family sell everything when you left for Brazil?

**Chuck:** Yes. But they didn’t get much for it, because of the rapid inflation at the time; my father had enough money to pay for a house but it would only buy maybe a door. That’s also the political unrest with Hitler, making waves in Munich, my dad said, “I served two years in a Germany army before the war, I served four years and got shot up. During the war, I wanted, and now Hitler is raising hell, let’s get out of here.” That was another consideration, the political, economic and social situations in Germany at that time.

**Janet:** Now, do you remember anything of the war?

**Chuck:** Sure.

**Janet:** What do you remember firsthand?

**Chuck:** Soldiers were coming to our town, they were coming on horses, and wagons and on bicycles and walking and the population was expected to furnish him food because Germany had no food, and so we had two or three soldiers in our home, eating our supper with us such as it was. And I asked my mother, “Why does that man eat so fast?” He was chewing like mad, and she said, “Well he hasn’t had anything to eat for a long time.” So we fed two or three soldiers in our home.

**Janet:** And was the attitude for having the soldiers in your home? Your parent’s attitude?

**Chuck:** Well I think our family is very generous and I think we didn’t object to feeding them. And it wasn’t their problem, I think the problem was in the politics to which, Hitler and his gang added later.

**Janet:** When you left, did you take much with you? Did your family take many things?

**Chuck:** Some trunks were taken, some school supplies were taken, some private photos were taken, but more or less, we were going to settle in a different country.

**Paul:** There was, I might interject here when my brother Chuck said some trunks were taken that’s both figuratively and literary because we missed a trunk or two after we arrived in Brazil.

**Janet:** Is there anything that your mother packed or your father that was in the family that they wanted to have any objects that you recall?

**Chuck:** Not to my knowledge.

**Paul:** I think I remember my mother saying she lost something at which she placed quite highly but I don’t remember what it was.

**Chuck:** I had something. We settled in Rio do Sul, and my wife’s favorite tool was a nice pair of nail clippers and some guy came in and he was going on a trip. And he asked my mother for the nail clippers. He said, you can use my nail clippers in our house, but you’re not going to take them and the guy didn’t come back.

**Janet:** Okay, well now, do you remember the voyage trip to Brazil?

**Chuck:** Both.

**Janet:** Both voyages.

**Chuck:** Both voyages.

**Janet:** Is there anything that stands out that you can?

**Chuck:** Yeah I have my first banana in [inaudible 00:09:41] and I thought that tasted awful. And another thing, in the Bay of Biscay shortly after we left Germany, we had a terrific storm in the Bay of Biscay. Awful big waves and we didn’t know whether we’re going to make it or not.

**Janet:** And what did you have to be examined and go through very much before you could?

**Chuck:** Medicals. We were examined in Germany, we were examined in Brazil, and when we left Brazil we were examined, and before we came in to the United States, we were examined and again, a thorough exam in Ellis Island.

**Janet:** Well what happened with your father in the growing of the tobacco?

**Chuck:** Well they thought it was better for him to grow corn. So they cleared the land, planted the corn, and one day we’re going out there, and as we were going out there to the farm, we had to walk about three or four miles, I would say. He was a rogue, and I saw a log across the road, and I said, “Dad, here is the log.” I was about 10 then I guess. And he said, “That isn’t a log, that’s a snake.” And then when we got to the land where the corn was growing, it had been harvested. Harvested by howling monkeys.

**Janet:** Really?

**Chuck:** Yeah. In the United States occasionally, we have raccoons get in to the corn and husk it, and they’re like this sweet corn, while howling monkeys in Brazil, they like corn too.

**Janet:** So your crop was…

**Chuck:** Ruined. But it wasn’t pulled off, it was spoilt.

**Janet:** So how long did you stay in Brazil?

**Chuck:** Four and half years.

**Janet:** So did your father ever get some good crops?

**Chuck:** No.

**Janet:** Did you go to school there?

**Chuck:** Of course. One thing I would say for the Brazilian, they have damn good schools. And very, very dedicated teachers, they and instilled in me, that math was one of their most exciting and most profitable and the most interesting subject and usually, I got my as both in Brazil and here in the US.

**Janet:** In math?

**Chuck:** Yes.

**Janet:** What was the difference between the school in Germany and the school in Brazil, or how were they similar?

**Chuck:** The differences were I believe in Germany I think we had more discipline. In Brazil they were a lot, more easy going. They had various schools in Brazil for example the catholic sisters. My other brother went to a catholic school, and I went to a public school. The school run, being run by the sisters, catholic sisters or nuns. They were a little more religious oriented than ours were because were Protestants and the most of 95% of Brazil is catholic.

**Janet:** Were you a religious family?

**Chuck:** Yeah I would say so.

**Paul:** We weren’t so much church goers but my father said grace at every meal, he believed in the almighty and so on but whether you turn that religious or not, it’s a matter of interpretation.

**Janet:** So your religion like the way your family practiced it, you practiced it pretty much the same way in Brazil as you had in Germany?

**Chuck:** Well no because, we had a different neighbors, different environment, different nationalities, and so the religion that was practice as far as we were concerned, was different from that in Germany.

**Janet:** You didn’t really encounter many Protestants in Brazil?

**Chuck:** Oh no. 95%, 98% in some places that is catholic. Well, my mother sent, Herman and you to Catholic school.

**Paul:** I never went to school in Brazil.

**Chuck:** You didn’t?

**Paul:** No.

**Chuck:** Okay. But my other brother went to a catholic school where the nuns were teachers.

**Janet:** What kind of discipline did you have in a German school?

**Chuck:** Oh, I got a good story to tell you. One of my enemies in German school, he regularly got whipped by the teachers. So, what happened this whipping stick that she whipped the kid with, my enemy, broke so, I’m going to be the hero. And I get over a good switch, I brought her night for my father, and cut one of the woods and I brought it to her. Do you know who got the first whipping? I did.

**Janet:** What would you get whipped for, for example?

**Chuck:** I had an apple. And I was ingenious. I put the back of wood stove that we had in our classroom, and I was going to bake it. Well and it got baked, then it begun to smell, then it begun to smoke. And so, the teacher found that apple and called me up and I admitted it that I have put it there. I had to initiate with which I brought for my enemy.

**Janet:** So did you have men teachers as well in grade school?

**Chuck:** Sure. In Brazil that was in Germany. We had men teachers there.

**Janet:** There would be as many men teachers let’s say in grade school, in Germany?

**Chuck:** I thought in Germany we had more men teachers, than women teachers and then in Brazil we had more nun teachers than men teachers, but I had excellent math teachers from which I thank them nowadays.

**Janet:** Okay. So then what was the basis for the decision for your father to bring the family to the United States?

**Chuck:** He wanted his kids to have a better education. He wanted them to be a little better environment. And, the main thing that my father didn’t like about doing business in Brazil, in fact most Latin American countries is you always had to grease to palm and money under the table. My father didn’t relish in.

**Janet:** What memories do you have of Brazil that, or when you think about your life there, what are the things that come to mind?

**Chuck:** Oh the good teachers. Some prizes I won from making maps, some good friends, eating tangerines, living in the tangerine tree hedges.

**Janet:** And were you treated any differently because you were German in Brazil?

**Chuck:** No. We were treated the same as the natives.

**Janet:** Did you know any- you probably didn’t know Spanish when you arrived?

**Chuck:** No I didn’t know Spanish neither did I know Portuguese. In Brazil they speak Portuguese.

**Janet:** Oh Portuguese.

**Chuck:** Yeah. So I had to learn that language.

**Janet:** Did you learn Portuguese at all?

**Paul:** No. I learned a smattering of Portuguese. I never went to school there. So most of my time I was spending at home with my mother and I didn’t have much contact with people around me, us.

**Janet:** Do you have memories of Brazil, what are the things that you remember?

**Paul:** Yes. Mostly, things like having a parrot as a pet, having a monkey as a pet, and stepping on a snake which I thought again was a stick, going across the road. And drinking from a clear cool stream coming out of the jungle. And, one time I drunk, and a hornet hit me on my forehead and so I was kind of weary about, really about drinking from any more streams.

**Janet:** Do you remember the difference in the house that you lived in, In Germany versus in Brazil?

**Chuck:** In Germany we had running water. In Brazil, we had a river or a brook, from which we obtained water and I was the water boy in our family.

**Janet:** And what did that entail?

**Chuck:** Bringing the water up, two buckets at the time, from a spring fed pool that my father had dammed up. So you could get the bucket in without disturbing too much of the bottom. He didn’t want sand, in his water.

**Janet:** And what about washing clothes, what did you…

**Chuck:** My mother did that.

**Janet:** How did she do? Where did she do it?

**Chuck:** Well, she and I both went and got water for washing clothes.

**Janet:** Did your mother like being in Brazil?

**Chuck:** Not especially but she had a family, and she had a husband and she had to do her job, and she did it well.

**Paul:** She had the philosophy in her relationship with her father. “Where ever thou goes, I go.”

**Janet:** Did your mother and father learn Portuguese?

**Chuck:** Yes, but I think the best Portuguese speaker was probably Chuck Hermanau, because he was in school longer and was with younger kids and I learned it pretty fast. I had more contact with the Portuguese speaking people, in schools the four and half years when were down there, then my parents or Paul or Herman did.

**Janet:** And you say you had good friends, what kinds of things would you do, for entertainment?

**Chuck:** I even had a girlfriend down there. I thought I was in love with her. I didn’t want to leave Brazil.

**Janet:** How old were you when you left?

**Chuck:** 14.

**Janet:** 14. Do you remember what you did as kids, I mean what kinds of things did you do like for fun?

**Chuck:** Okay. We were coming home from school, and if it was hard, we go and swim in the brook and one time there was a flood, and we didn’t dare because it was way after the grassland thing. And then a couple of days later, even the water had receded, we dove in like we would ordinarily, and I didn’t even know how to swim and the bottom had come out of this swimming pool, and some guys had to rescue me. Now I remember that.

**Paul:** The part of Brazil where we lived was a tropical but it did have some cold and some cold waves that came across the area, there was ice formed on one night, on a really cold night. And I woke up in the morning and I said to my mother, “There’s some hard thing on top of the water, what is it?” That’s the first time I’d ever seen ice.

**Janet:** Now where you lived in Germany, it was cold?

**Chuck:** Skiing, and sliding and skating there but…

**Janet:** But you of course didn’t remember that?

**Paul:** No.

**Janet:** Okay. Your father again decided that it was, if he could make a better life for his family in the United States?

**Chuck:** Education wise, social wise.

**Janet:** Business wise example.

**Chuck:** Businesswise too.

**Janet:** Okay. So, then do you remember the ship you came to the US on?

**Chuck:** Of course I do.

**Janet:** What?

**Chuck:** US Western World. United States Steam Ship, Western World.

**Janet:** And what port did you leave from?

**Chuck:** We left from a Santos. Which is just south of Rio de Janeiro. Santos is really the port for the State of San Paulo.

**Janet:** Now were there a number of people immigrating to the United States from Brazil at that time?

**Chuck:** Yes. Both Germans, Spanish, there were some Argentineans there and I think some Polish people.

**Janet:** Were there many Germans in Brazil when you were there?

**Chuck:** Over there and there I have talents and schools down there, that are completely 95, 98% German.

**Janet:** Oh I see, so your parents could actually, I mean, were you in a kind of German community?

**Chuck:** No, but when we first arrived there we were.

**Janet:** So on the ship, were you in steerage, were you in the hold of the ship, or were you in a cabin?

**Chuck:** We had cabins.

**Janet:** And was there steerage on the ship? Do you recall that?

**Chuck:** No, not in the ships. Not in the 24s, not the ships that we use, we had a cabin.

**Janet:** Okay. And was the cabin just for your family? Or were there other people in as well?

**Chuck:** Yes.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything about that voyage?

**Chuck:** Yeah.

**Janet:** What?

**Chuck:** In the first one, going to Brazil we had a great storm in the Bay of Biscay and they had prayer meetings on board ships and it didn’t make any difference whether you were polish or Jewish or Catholic or Protestants, we all prayed together. My first banana in Spain and another thing, when we crossed to the Equator, I had to crawl to a wind tunnel, and then we sprayed the water to initiate you, into the left back or having crossed the equator.

**Janet:** Oh, they did that with everyone?

**Chuck:** Yeah.

**Paul:** That’s quite common even nowadays for people who cross the Equator, they go through some ritual, and then they’re called children of King Neptune or something like that.

**Janet:** And how long was the voyage, roughly?

**Chuck:** From Brazil I think maybe 21 days and probably took us, because we stopped in several places in Portugal and Brazil, I had Portugal, Spain, Madera, [inaudible 00:26:40] before we hit Brazil. So, it took about three weeks to get down to Brazil.

**Janet:** Well, okay but now coming from Brazil to the US. Do you remember?

**Chuck:** We only stopped, if I remember correctly, we only stopped in Port of Preston Trinidad.

**Janet:** So it was a shorter voyage?

**Chuck:** Yes, a short of wage, better food, more speed to the ship.

**Janet:** Do you remember Paul anything about that voyage to the US?

**Paul:** It’s strange. I don’t remember anything about the ship. The first thing, I remember coming north into US, was the Statue of Liberty looming out of the fog.

**Janet:** Did you know what that was at that time?

**Paul:** I don’t recall whether I knew what it was or not but I was quite impressed seeing a huge statue looming up out of the water.

**Janet:** Did people gather on deck?

**Paul:** Oh yes. They were all excited because they realized that we would soon be arriving in port and everybody started crowding around the rails and they bowed the ship. And then they started getting really excited when we saw the Statue and later on the skyline of New York.

**Janet:** Do you remember as a six and half year old, if you had any idea about what it meant to be coming to the United State or what you expected?

**Paul:** Yes. I was quite excited about the whole thing and from the talks that my mother and father, not my father because he was in the US waiting for us to come up there. He preceded us because he didn’t have enough money to send for the family to pay for the family’s passage up to the US.

**Janet:** Oh how long before you came to the US, did your father arrive?

**Paul:** About a year or somewhere around a year and he worked in a factory in Paterson, New Jersey and saved just about every penny he could to bring us up to have the family together once more.

**Janet:** Did either of you notice a difference in that year, when your father wasn’t with the family when you were still in Brazil?

**Paul:** There was a like a vacancy, like something is missing, it wasn’t you could feel it wasn’t a complete family. So my mother had to take on that role of parents and she did pretty considering what she had to deal with and the problems that existed at the time.

**Janet:** Did your father send money then?

**Paul:** Yes. In fact there is one really humorous aspect of that. He used to send money regularly every month. Somehow he got the idea that, the letters containing money, should be sent with greater care. So he put on the outside of the envelop, $20 inside please handle carefully. We got the envelope but we didn’t get the money when it came down to Brazil.

**Chuck:** He was a very interesting soul.

**Janet:** Well you must have been the sort of the man of family for that year.

**Chuck:** No we have an uncle with us; my mother’s brother came up with us.

**Janet:** He came from Germany to Brazil with you?

**Chuck:** Yeah, and also from Brazil to United States.

**Janet:** Oh I see. So he was there. Okay, do you remember Ellis Island?

**Chuck:** Sure I remember Ellis Island.

**Paul:** Yeah I do.

**Chuck:** There were too many people there. I didn’t like the US, because I said I hope this isn’t like this all the time. And we had a going order, to a very thorough or physical exam. From you strip down from top to bottom, they examine you. Starting with the eyes and went down to your feet.

**Janet:** You do you remember what you heard about Ellis Island, before you actually got there?

**Chuck:** No.

**Paul:** No, that wasn’t common knowledge.

**Janet:** That wasn’t.

**Paul:** The thing that impressed me most was the long line of people. And it had been well over years since we had seen our father, and I couldn’t wait and I was looking, and looking for him and waiting in line, I just couldn’t understand why we had to wait into the line for such a long time.

**Janet:** Were you processed in one day, in the same day, the day that you arrived?

**Chuck:** I think we slept more than a night there, if I remember correctly. That may not be exactly correct. Maybe from some of the information you will get here, they can look up, our visa numbers and find out whether we stayed there.

**Janet:** Well do you remember food there, or do you remember anything about accommodations there?

**Chuck:** Yeah. The food was good, we had rice, when I went [inaudible 00:32:08] we had that. But the American food has always been good to me. And I liked it from there. I like to eat anyway.

**Janet:** Do you remember seeing different kinds of people? do you remember any incidence of?

**Paul:** When we came into Ellis Island there was a black man in another area and I saw him, and I said to mum, “What’s the matter with that man, he’s all black.” And my mother said, well she says, “God gave him black skin just as he gave you a white skin.” So I accepted that.

**Janet:** Well then, tell about the reunion with your father.

**Paul:** Well, I just wouldn’t let him go. I was really thrilled to finally get back with him and that’s about all I remember as far as meeting him. I was, when that long wait finally was over, I was so relieved and so happy.

**Janet:** Did your father meet you, come to Ellis Island, is that where you had the reunion?

**Paul:** Yes he did, yeah. He was on one side of the gate, and we were on the other side.

**Chuck:** [inaudible 00:33:30] between.

**Paul:** Yeah. He was always already a bonafide resident of the US where we were not.

**Janet:** Now was he a citizen at that point or he had?

**Paul:** No he had to wait for a number of years to get a citizenship; I think its five years or something like that.

**Janet:** And then when he become, a citizen, did the rest of the family become a citizen?

**Chuck:** Automatically because we were all minors, the three of us.

**Paul:** Expect my mother. She had to get her own citizenship paper.

**Janet:** And did she learn English? How did she learn?

**Paul:** She picked it up from her children and from friends, she never went to school here but she managed to read and talk. Even though she did have heavy accent but she was able to converse fairly well. And she was able to read the newspaper.

**Janet:** Tell me about leaving Ellis Island, after you met your father, what happened then?

**Chuck:** I don’t remember the voyage from Ellis Island.

**Paul:** That wasn’t one of the highlights of the trip and it seems to have been something entirely forgotten and I can’t remember anything about it. And Chuck well you…

**Chuck:** I don’t know how we got from Ellis Island to Paterson New Jersey. But I know when we got to Paterson New Jersey. There was a nice table set and the first time that we had ice cream.

**Janet:** Did your father have an apartment?

**Chuck:** Yes.

**Janet:** And that’s where you went to?

**Chuck:** Yes.

**Janet:** And, do you remember anything that struck you as…

**Chuck:** I thought it was a pretty nice place. We lived in the second floor, and yeah I thought it was wonderful to have ice cream, I’d never tasted ice cream before in my life, until I was 14 years old and it had three colors.

**Janet:** Chocolate, Vanilla and strawberry.

**Chuck:** Chocolate, Vanilla and strawberry. I was like I thought that was fantastic, with a cookie besides.

**Paul:** The thing that impressed me was candy corn. I had never seen candy corn or eaten it. And I saw that, and it looked fantastic to me and I made up for the lost time.

**Janet:** Well okay. So, then your father was working at the silk factory?

**Chuck:** Yes. We can them silk mills. They do, at that time Paterson, New Jersey was the silk capital of the United States and they dyed and printed silk. That was the main industry in Patterson, New Jersey. It has changed considerably since then.

**Janet:** And then, did you start both starts into school, soon after you arrived?

**Chuck:** Yes. I started immediately.

**Paul:** Yes I did. And I’m amazed to this day that, I can’t remember having any difficultly with the English language. For the first few weeks, I did sit aside and just absorbed everything I wasn’t called because I couldn’t speak and in no time at all I learned the language and got along, so I had always spoken that language.

**Janet:** Did your family continue to speak German at home, or did your mother and father speak English at home?

**Paul:** At the start we spoke mostly German in our home because, our mother and father weren’t that conversant in English, so we spoke in German most of the time. And gradually as we got to speak less and less German, because of our outside friends and schooling and so on, we would talk more and more English with our parents and gradually it came around to the point where our parents mostly spoke English to us.

**Janet:** Were there ways that your family, your mother and father- were there certain things they maintained that were German?

**Chuck:** Oh yeah. They maintained some of their jokes. Some of the errors, some of the mistakes they made, and they taught us those.

**Paul:** My mother’s cooking, she was from South Germany and she cooked there specialties there like sour [inaudible 00:38:14], and the dishes needed to that area. So she even up to our last few years, she would often cook German meals.

**Janet:** And what was different about that school for you, compared with the two other schools, you’ve been in up to that point?

**Chuck:** I was shocked, at the curse words the kids used to their teachers. And to each other, and their profanities, I really was shocked, and that talk, and in Brazil or in Germany and in Brazil, you didn’t do that. So that was a big difference to me.

**Janet:** And how about the teachers, were they very accepting of you coming in without the language?

**Chuck:** They helped us tremendously.

**Janet:** Was there a large number of immigrant children in your school?

**Chuck:** No, in my class I think there was two. In my class of about 30, 32 people youngsters. I think it was two immigrants, one was Walter Spoon and the other one was me. In a class of about 30 and I started the first grade again.

**Janet:** Oh so you were both in the same class?

**Chuck:** No.

**Janet:** Are you starting kindergarten?

**Paul:** Yeah I believe so.

**Chuck:** And I start first grade, although I was 14.

**Janet:** Then did you progress rapidly or sometime?

**Chuck:** Yes. And then I skipped to the third grade and I stayed a couple of months in it. Then I went to the 6th grade, and then I went to a school.

**Janet:** And did your brother start with you in the first grade, the middle brother?

**Chuck:** I don’t know. No he was not in my grades but I was started in the first grade, it might have been kindergarten I don’t know, I don’t recall exactly where it started.

**Paul:** I think they had the grades 1A, 1B, 2Bs things like that.

**Janet:** Was there a large German population in Paterson near where you were?

**Chuck:** No. They had, the church they had services in German because they had some German immigrants, come from the vicinity or Paterson such as Fair Lawn and Ridgefield and Passaic. They had sort of assembly type church and we went to a Sunday school there. And then of course we had services, the Sunday school I think was in English and the main service was in German.

**Janet:** Did you stay in Paterson for quite a while or?

**Chuck:** Yes until 31.

**Janet:** Through 28 until 31?

**Chuck:** Yes.

**Paul:** The reason for moving again out of Paterson was when the crush came and the stock market fell apart, everybody was out of work and I can remember, it was I think around Thanksgiving time we didn’t have any food or anything and we had to deep on the Salvation Army, to put food on our table.

**Janet:** So what did you do then, after, where did you go?

**Paul:** Well my father glanced had to pay for all the help wanted ads and he saw an opening that was advertised in Ridgefield, for a professional gardener to take care of flowers, and hedges, and the vegetables.

**Chuck:** Greenhouse.

**Paul:** He applied there and he was accepted, he worked for this millionaire family.

**Janet:** So, were your mother and father questioning, a decision to come to the United State during the depression?

**Paul:** No.

**Chuck:** We didn’t look back, forward yes, go forward, [inaudible 00:42:53] gone by.

**Janet:** So, you came all the way to Ridgefield, did your father write to someone?

**Paul:** I think he wrote and then they asked him to come up for an interview which he did and they were satisfied with his qualifications and they hired him there. So, at Ridgefield it was actually, the time that I grew up and went to school mostly there.

**Janet:** So, you really moved them from city to country, you could say?

**Paul:** Yeah.

**Janet:** And what differences were there for you in your age and stage?

**Paul:** Oh, we lived not too far from a brook and we went swimming there every summer and we went traipsing through the woods, where there were dear and other animals. It was fairyland where you could go out and see all types of nature.

**Janet:** So, was the whole family happier in Ridgefield?

**Chuck:** I think so, yes.

**Paul:** We had very, in the midst of the depression, my father started out with $88 a month, and then in the midst of the depression the millionaire people felt that they couldn’t afford all that money, so they cut them down to $80 a month. But we somehow we managed, and my mother was very resourceful, she would have a variety of ways of cooking potatoes and a variety of ways of stretching out this dish and that dish, and we managed pretty well.

**Janet:** And how long Chuck, did you stay in school then?

**Chuck:** I had gotten out of school.

**Janet:** In that time?

**Chuck:** By the time we left Paterson, and I didn’t go to a high school in Paterson, because my dad didn’t have enough money to buy me a pair of shoes and the high school you’re required to be dressed up a little bit more than you did in grammar school. So I never attended high school, one day not formally, but I got my two year college equivalency text in Staten California, the College of the Pacific. So, not having an education is no excuse for not getting that...

**Janet:** Did you work in Paterson?

**Chuck:** Yeah.

**Janet:** What did you do?

**Chuck:** For $20 a month. The son of the man who hired my father, he hired me to help him take care of 100s of pheasants, he sold them to the state for hunters.

**Paul:** He’ll do that, that’s a new affectionate bite.

**Chuck:** I was making $20 a month, and every other weekend, I had to feed into the water, the 100s of pheasants he had say and then the following year I got $25 a month, and I already quit on that for one year, and then he called me back and says, I will give you $30 a month and 10 cents for each pheasant that we sell through the State of Connecticut. So, I had an incentive system and then I joined the navy.

**Janet:** Now the pheasants, were they in Paterson or Connecticut?

**Chuck:** They were in Connecticut.

**Janet:** Connecticut?

**Chuck:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Did you work in Paterson?

**Chuck:** No. I had a little jobs I was like paperboy, so, sold the evening posts and [inaudible 00:46:56].

**Janet:** So then you went in the service after the pheasant job?

**Chuck:** Right. Because at least I had $21 a month, and I had my food and my clothes, I always wanted to get in to the navy, ever since I was four or five years old and I liked the sea how it is, I have been going down to Brazil and coming after the United States.

**Janet:** I see so then where were you sent when you joined the navy?

**Chuck:** To electrical school in San Diego.

**Janet:** Now old were you then?

**Chuck:** 20.

**Janet:** And did you have in mind to make it a career?

**Chuck:** Well, yes and no. I wanted to get far ahead as far as I could, and I did. I did join the war. During the war, I graduated number one, in the recruit company, and I graduated number two out of the electrical school we had about 60. My mother always said, “Do a little bit more than it’s required you will get ahead and study,” that’s my philosophy.

**Janet:** How about you Paul, do you remember anything your mother told you, that you have taken on as a philosophy for living?

**Paul:** I think you find in their paper there that, she gave me a most unusual punishment, one time when I misbehaved. I don’t remember even…

**Chuck:** The cause?

**Paul:** What caused the punishment, but I do remember the punishment more, very vividly and I don’t remember misbehaving. One time when I was misbehaving, she said come here, she sat me down at the table. She brought a fresh blueberry pie still warm from the oven. Heaped it high with whipping, he says, “Here, this is your punishment.” I looked at her and said, “What gives?” she says, “I want you to remember this.” She said, “The Bible says, return evil for good.” And that was the punishment I had never forgotten.

**Janet:** That’s great. So, how about you, when you came to Ridgefield, did you, you went into school?

**Paul:** Yeah. I went through grammar school and through high school and after that I worked in a factory for a while to save up enough money to go to college.

**Janet:** What kind of factory?

**Paul:** It was called the [inaudible 00:49:53] manufacturing company, the made mostly Atrium pillars for air conditioners, for fans of all types, for the cooling equipment. And I went there to safe enough money to go to college in the meantime war broke out before I managed to save very much. So, rather than going, being inducted into the service, the army or navy, I thought I go in the coast guard because my philosophy was, I’d rather be shot at than shoot other people.

And then, I had also applied to The Merchant Marine and I was just about to be inducted into the coast guard when The Merchant Marine, later arrived accepting me for a radio school, on a merchant ship. So, I put in a few months in Boston Harbor at a place called Gallops Island. Where they had a radio, a Maritime Radio Training school, and I went through that and got my radio operative’s license. And served out the war, as a radio operant in the Merchant Marine.

**Janet:** And how about you, did you see active duty in the war?

**Chuck:** Did I see active duty? I saw the first three bombs in the air at Pearl Harbor, I was there. My wife was in her room and I had a duty that day. So that was the first action, right? And a humorous thing happened, the kid says, I hid them under dock, we didn’t have any water onboard. We just came in four or five days earlier, he’s going to hook up the hose to get on distilled water for the batteries.

Batteries in submarines require a lot of water, and he says, “Look Chuck, there’s an airplane up there, he dropped something.” I say, “Get that water hose hooked up.” This is, the second plane dropped out, “Get that water hose hooked up, we haven’t got all day.” And the third one, so the first one hit between, the submarine base where we were docked and the shipyard. A big old [inaudible 00:52:32] water was about, when the bomb exploded.

The second plane hit in the ship yard and the third, across the harbor on Ford Island where immediately when the bomb exploded or when the hunger was blown, every window in that hanger was blown up. Followed by fire and smoke, those were the first five minutes of Pearl Harbor.

And then I go around the submarine, I go down and along the hall, here comes a Japanese plane, just over the palm trees. And I saw the, to me the one that [inaudible 00:53:18], I knew it was Japanese. So, I go down below, and tell the duty officer, I rung them [unclear 00:53:26]. And he says, what’s going on, what’s going on? I said, well we’ve just been attacked by the Japanese. He says, “Oh no.” And I said, “Oh yes.” And since I was a machine gun crew member on the USS Dolphin, I asked him for the key, to get the ignition and the guns out.

He couldn’t find his key. I said, “Don’t worry I have one.” He says, “You have a key?” I said, “Yes.” I went back in the engine room, got me a crowbar, and he says, “What are you going to do?”, “Open the magazine, this is my key.” He says, “You can’t break into the magazine, that’s a court martial offence.” I said, “I’m not going to get a court martial if I do my duty, but maybe you will get one for not letting me do it.”

And he never got a court martial and either did I. So we fought the Japanese from the top with our 50 caliber machine guns, which where every third bullet has a tracer and you’re going to see exactly where it goes. And then I couldn’t get out before the war started, now I know I can’t get out, so I reenlisted, got my own citizenship paper dated the 11th of December, 1991 in Honolulu. And then at the end of the war, I had 10 years of service and I had a commission, sorry, I stayed in another 11 years. So, I retired from the navy. Not bad for an immigrant.

**Janet:** Do you have anything to say about having been an immigrant and then living as an American for the better part of your lives?

**Paul:** To my of thinking, I think more importantly than anything else was the upbringing we had and the values instilled in us. Rather than, realizing that we might be different from anyone else, this to me seems much more important and…

**Chuck:** Whether you’re rich or poor. And we’ve been poor, but I think the most important thing is the ethical and standards of living, and doing the right thing, giving of yourself, doing a job well and that was recognized in his case, it was recognized in my case, it was recognized in my brother’s Herman’s case.

**Paul:** Well we didn’t actually feel that we were immigrants. We were in the locality, earning a living and doing the best we could. And so, being an immigrant was never actually in our minds.

**Janet:** Yeah. You were a family and regardless of where you were, that was your…

**Chuck:** We adapted the good things in American life, and we rejected some bit of poor things on American life.

**Janet:** What were some of the good things that…

**Chuck:** That we adapted?

**Janet:** Yeah.

**Chuck:** Education, love, ethics, studying, giving the best you got.

**Paul:** And living a relatively good life, because even as we were growing up, we realized that there were other countries were people never had enough to eat and our table was always filled with food, when it came meal time.

**Janet:** What are you proudest of that you’ve done?

**Paul:** I think raising three children. We have two girls and a boy.

**Janet:** What is your wife’s name?

**Paul:** Elsie.

**Janet:** And her maiden name?

**Paul:** Westerdale, I met her in England, and I also married her in England.

**Janet:** Oh when was that?

**Paul:** Back in 1944 and this was, a few well it was in December of 44, and I got married and the skipper, we were anchored in Southampton at that time. And so I went up to the hole, where my wife lived to get married, but the skipper said, "Leave your telephone number if there is an emergency, we want to call you, we will know how to get a hold of you."

And two hours after we got married, the telephone rung, come back here, we’re going to leave, we were supplying the invasion forces in the Normandie. It wasn’t at the same time as the invasion but a few months later, they still needed ships to supply our troops. So after two hours of marriage, I left my wife and I went back and board ship, I didn’t see her again for a few months.

**Janet:** Was your wife English?

**Paul:** Yes.

**Janet:** So you met her when you were in the service?

**Paul:** When I shipped out, on our first trip, my first trip, our ship docked at hole, that’s see coast town, on the eastern coast of England, and I met her there. Corresponded with her and their friendship deepened into the point where we both made the commitment.

**Janet:** And how about your children, what are their names?

**Paul:** My eldest child is Dale she is in her middle 40s or maybe 43, 44. Second child is Vicky she is about a year and half younger and the third child is Jimmy, James. And he’s I think two or three years younger than the middle child.

**Janet:** And what happened after you got out of the service, what did you do then?

**Paul:** Well I got married and I had to support my family and I still had in the back of my mind, they’re going to college but I never quite made it because, demands of a growing family, required that I provide enough money to support them. So, I wound up working in the factory in this town. And I retired from the factory as an assistant foreman.

**Janet:** And how about you Chuck, how did you meet your wife?

**Chuck:** In church.

**Janet:** In Ridgefield?

**Chuck:** Ridgefield yes and she’s back now, although in ashes. [Inaudible 01:01:10] on Friday.

**Paul:** So we’re kind of giving each other mutual support, my wife had two weeks earlier where she left us, then my brother’s wife left two weeks later.

**Janet:** It’s nice for both of you to have each other in time that.

**Paul:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Chuck do you have children?

**Chuck:** Yes.

**Janet:** And what are their names?

**Chuck:** There’s, my oldest is Walt, same name as I have, they call him Walter was taken from me. And the second one is George, he also retired from the navy and the youngest one is Edward, he works for big insurance company in Boston.

**Janet:** Prudential?

**Chuck:** I don’t know.

**Paul:** John Hancock.

**Chuck:** No, it’s right on the tip of my tongue [inaudible 01:02:26]. But anyway he’s been working for them. He’s underwriter in the casualty insurance.

**Janet:** And grandchildren do you have?

**Chuck:** Yeah. Let’s see, Walt has three, George has two, and Ed has two. So I have three, three and two

**Janet:** Eight grandchildren?

**Chuck:** Eight grandchildren and then three great-grandchildren.

**Janet:** And what would you say, your [inaudible 01:03:13] having done, looking back?

**Chuck:** Well I’m very thankful to the many teachers out there, for the good contacts I have made, and I feel that my efforts have been more than rewarded from the people that I have worked for, I think. They encouraged me and I was proud of having accomplished it. Now, I’m one of their few officers in the navy that never went to high school and I got a commission, and I retired from the navy with the commission officers pay and that isn’t bad.

And then my wife never worked, but she took care of our family and the children and took care of me and I can contribute to my advancements to doing more than was required, maybe doing something extra sometimes that wasn’t required. And they wanted me to do, and I did it, I think I did extremely well. And they recognize it soon and I got promoted and not many, non high school graduate have retired with my rank.

They ask me, “Where did you go to school one time?” I was in midway, and it says I graduated from grammar school. And, “Where did you go to high school?” “I didn’t go to high school.” “Where did you go to college?” “I didn’t go to high school,” “You didn’t?” And he saw what I was doing and he like it and he got me another promotion.

So, we’re going to do a little bit more than you have to and I think the other thing that helped me considerably, is try to be a good human being, don’t be cruel, don’t be overbearing, be reasonable, expect a great deal and you will great deal.

And some of the officers were like that from me. So I tried to emulate their foresight, their interest in my promotions, they’re helping me. One quick story in 1945, I got reassigned to a submarine, to a new one and we went out in Philippines, and the man that I used to work for, in 1938 or ‘39, happened to be an admiral. And I had just taken the exam to qualify for my gold dolphins which means qualified in submarines, just like a pilot when he gets his wings, okay the same thing for a submarine.

We’re in the Philippines and he comes down to line, he’s now a real admiral and I’m a young, well almost middle aged hence, at the end of the war. And he says, “Chuck, he says that, it’s been a long time since we’ve seen you.” I used to run messages for him, when he rode our submarine. He was the head of about four or five submarines and when the weather changed, when we got the message, when we met our ship.

Well, I had to wake him up and give him this massage and he always encouraged me, and then now in the Philippines in July of 45, he’s an admiral and he’s coming down the line. I had just taken the exam by various different officers, to qualify as an officer on submarines and he came down to the end of the line where I was standing and he says, Mr. Hermanau, he says, “I have something for you.”

But he says, I’m going to pin it on you, so [inaudible 01:08:06] with me. So he takes a submarine and pins it on me, and he says, “I’m going to kiss you. I’m going to let Ruth do that to you when you, she gets back to you.” And I knew him when I was a lower rated enlisted man, and now I’m an officer and, [Inaudible 01:08:32] you must remark.

**Janet:** Yeah. Well that’s really something to be proud off and how about you Paul, do you have grandchildren?

**Paul:** Yes. Seven.

**Janet:** And great? Any great?

**Paul:** No.

**Janet:** Not yet.

**Paul:** No yet. Although, my oldest grandchild, she’s quite enthralled with her boyfriend, so it may not be too long before that event occurs.

**Janet:** Well is there anything else that you can think off, that you want to say, either about your life now, or looking back?

**Paul:** Well, I think one is, much more aware of life and my surroundings in my mortality, is when my wife passed away. I was holding her hand, she died and it’s quite under experience, watching someone dying and going into the next world. I think it affects anyone who hasn’t dear one close of them dying, especially if he sees the dying taking place and it makes you aware of your mortality and I think it makes you a little bit more understand and a little bit more, worth a little bit more humility.

But that’s an experience, well everyone goes through soon or later but not everyone is there when someone you love dies and you’re right there at the same time. It’s a tremendous experience and it gives you a different outlook on life I think and now I can look back and hope that my wife and his wife are having a ball wherever they are.

**Janet:** Do you think about death, I mean actually what happens or?

**Paul:** I think about death as being another process in life. It’s all intermixed one with the other, you can’t get away from it and it’s just private life. And I don’t think so much as a death as it is another aspect of having lived.

**Chuck:** Quickly ask your question.

**Janet:** Yes. Okay, we’re resuming now again, what were you saying about…?

**Paul:** I think the people who have immigrated into the US, have different set of values that are goals, and they’re in the country of their origin. Just the fact that they want to go to America means that they’re more ambitious, they’re not satisfied with the status quo.

And I think most of the immigrants have that drive impact to them, they want to improve themselves and they’re a lot. They don’t want to stay back in their country and just to vegetate or just not at the, have any hopes for greatly improved future. So I think largely they’re more ambitious than the people that are still in the country of origin.

**Janet:** Okay, well I think that’s maybe very good note to close on and I want to thank you both very much, it’s my pleasure and…

**Paul:** It’s been our pleasure to talk to you about it, and I think you’ve done, going on, have you ever considered going on TV like Barbara Walters?

**Janet:** Well, who knows maybe. Okay, thank you very much.

**Chuck:** Another question. What speed is the tape? 33?

**Janet:** It’s a good question.

**Chuck:** Do you have a regular cassette in there?

**Janet:** No I have a DAT, digital.

**Chuck:** Is there an opportunity for us to get a copy of that tape?

**Janet:** Definitely, I will send you one, as soon as I get back to Ellis Island, a regular cassette that you can play in regular cassette way.

**Chuck:** Cassette player.

**Janet:** Yeah.

**Chuck:** Well you would like to have one won’t you?

**Paul:** Well if you’re going to send two, you can send them both to me and I can send him his.

**Janet:** Fine.

**Paul:** Well. Terrific.

**Janet:** Okay, well thank you very much.

**Chuck:** You’re welcomed.

**Janet:** And this is Janet Lavin and I have been talking with Chuck and Paul Hermanau, in Connecticut, in Torrington Connecticut on September 21st.