**Kate:** Good morning this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 28th of June, 1994. I’m in Everett, Washington at the home Gerhard G. Ruben. Who came from the Panama Canal Zone originally from Germany and Austria in 1940 at the age of …

**Gerhard:** [Inaudible 00:00:26] I was 28.

**Kate:** At the age of 28.

**Gerhard:** I’d like to make a correction at you. I did not came from Europe directly to the United States. I came originally from Colombia to Panama and from Panama to the United States.

**Kate:** Why don’t you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Gerhard:** May 6th 1912, born in Berlin. My father’s name was Paul Ruben. My mother’s name was Alma A-L-M-A.

**Kate:** What size town where you born in?

**Gerhard:** I was born in the city of Berlin in a suburb at that time called Charlottenburg.

**Kate:** How do you spell that?

**Gerhard:** C-H-A-R-L-O-T-T-E-N-B-U-R-G, which is west of central Berlin.

**Kate:** What was your full name now? You’re Gerhard, G stands for?

**Gerhard:** The G was added when I received my citizen papers. It was only Gerhard Ruben. However, I would like also to point out that later on I have assumed the name at Samter in addition to Ruben, my mother’s maiden name.

After my mother was divorced in 1926, so my name technically is Gerhard G Ruben Samter. However, the name Samter does not appear in American documentations.

**Kate:** How do you spell Samter?

**Gerhard:** S-A-M-T-E-R.

**Kate:** What did Berlin look like at the time that you lived there? The town?

**Gerhard:** I lived in Berlin till 1924, which was the post time of World War 1. High inflation, wheelbarrows full of money to buy a loaf of bread, in a political tension fights, unemployment. Occupation by the allies in those days in certain part of Germany, I remember quite well.

In by and large political right wing developments as we saw later on our lives which led to 1933 Hitler. Were already on its way in those days, I remember this quite well.

**Kate:** How did the suburb that you were in, how was it affected by the war? Was there any …?

**Gerhard:** I would not say that it is actually Suburb. It was actually a district of Berlin.

**Kate:** Was it affected by the war at all?

**Gerhard:** No, only time I remember as a little boy looking down from the porch of our apartment house. What was then called and still is called today Kaiserdamm, where German troops coming home from a lost war.

I remember uprisings in Berlin by the communists who occupied apartment houses, rooftops with rifles and so on. Our house was directly located across the police department of Charlottenburg which still stands today, by the way the building. I got pictures here to prove it.

It was very difficult, general strikes were going on. It was absolutely a mess. This was of course anticipated after World War 1 after the monarchy fell apart and later on of course the republic was proclaimed, the Weimar Republic.

In between they were, as I mentioned, in a political strife in Germany. I gave you a name of former general by the name of Ludendorff, who was running something. Then we had a man by the name of Kapp, who ran a little uprising and assassination of two communists’ leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Whose name were even in the -Used to be the East German Republic are held in high esteem.

**Kate:** If we go back a bit to your family and what was going on, the conditions there. What was your father’s occupation?

**Gerhard:** My father was a pharmacist, he was a chemist. He also was what we call in this country an expert in advertising. He wrote books and I still got one of his books here.

**Kate:** How would you describe your father’s personality and temperament?

**Gerhard:** His temperament was more or less volatile sometimes. He became a President of a [inaudible 00:05:26] or corporation. He was upped into some swindlers who make him president of a big corporation. They violated the alcohol laws in Germany, this was the reason that we later on moved to Vienna. Do you understand why the move was coming I’m telling you this right now.

What actually happened was the spirit or the alcohol is used for chemical purposes and also for drinking purposes. This particular bunch of brothers, their name was Webber, bribed the officials in the government to declare drinking alcohol as a beverage, alcohol as chemical alcohol that they didn’t have to pay taxes on it.

My father was of course more or less the target of the investigations. He lost his head, he fled Germany. Today it would be absolutely ridiculous, the tax people probably …

**Kate:** The tax people?

**Gerhard:** The tax people would probably have given him a fine that was it. He fled that he would be persecuted. He owed taxes for which he was held liable. He went to Vienna in 1924.

Ironically in 1932, when he presented himself back to the German officials. He lived then at that time already in Romania where he passed away in 1939, he was acquitted.

**Kate:** That’s a story about your father.

**Gerhard:** I can tell you a lot of stories, you haven’t heard anything yet.

**Kate:** What was your father’s full name again?

**Gerhard:** Paul Ruben. He was born in Bielefeld, Germany.

**Kate:** How do you spell Bielefeld?

**Gerhard:** B-I-E-L-E-F-E-L-D.

**Kate:** What was your mother’s full name again?

**Gerhard:** My mother’s name was Alma Samter, A-L-M-A S-A-M-T-E-R.

**Kate:** What was her occupation?

**Gerhard:** My occupation?

**Kate:** Your mother’s occupation.

**Gerhard:** My mother was a housewife.

**Kate:** What did she look like?

**Gerhard:** I have a picture here and I lost it, I cannot find I misplaced it. She was a very good looking lady. She came from a family who was living in that time, what is now Poland called Posen now it’s called Poznan.

I couldn’t figure out where the name Samter came from and I might give you a little bit of history here. I did some genealogy recently and when my daughter went to Israel, that had nothing to do with me but she went to Israel to a wedding. She became nosy.

She found out that the name Samter, I had never known this until recently, was a German name of a town northwest of Poznan. There were a lot of people living, they were non-Jewish or Jewish. When the German, the Prussian officials took over this area, they could not pronounce the name of these people. They simply designated the town where we come from as a [inaudible 00:08:57].

**Kate:** Tell me about your mother how she looks again, you said she’s nice looking woman, what do you mean? What color of hair did she have?

**Gerhard:** She had brown hair. She had blue eyes. She was about- I would say about 5’6” tall. I show you a picture of her marrying with my father a little later on, I don’t have it right here.

**Kate:** What did your father look like? You didn’t describe him.

**Gerhard:** My father was a man. In those days they didn’t wear glasses, you were over in Europe and you know a pince-nez, you hold on the nose. I got picture of him here. He was a [inaudible 00:09:41], good looking [inaudible 00:09:42]. We had two automobiles. We had a chauffeur who drove later on after he grew up in the business.

**Kate:** Do you have a story that you associate with your mother from your childhood?

**Gerhard:** I beg your pardon?

**Kate:** Do you have a story about your mother that you’d like to tell us?

**Gerhard:** My mother had not been socially very much involved of course she had to present our household for parties. Otherwise, she was a good caring mother for me.

I don’t know if her relation with her husband, as in my father, was very well. I couldn’t see this, I was too young to realize. I heard later on, many years later after she was divorced from him stories. Again, I cannot prove the story.

I understood that my father had an affair with the secretary whom he married off later on. I understood that he had been playing around so to speak, or that was claimed. They had been socially, very much in appearance in Berlin in those days.

I might mention something of interest to you, which has no relation to my family. My mother had a step sister or a half-sister. She married a very famous German writer, [inaudible 00:11:09]. Who wrote many books and novels like [inaudible 00:11:14] which even today are being still read, re-printed and have even been presented on the stage.

**Kate:** What about brothers and sisters, did you have …?

**Gerhard:** I do not have any brothers and sisters.

**Kate:** Tell me about your house back in Berlin.

**Gerhard:** I was born in Berlin Charlottenburg, in a Sybel [inaudible 00:11:56] S-Y-B-E-L Street. There is an argument about the number, if it’s 35 or 36. I was born in a clinic but that’s where I grew up.

That was in 1912. My father in those days had a chemical factory, what later on became East Berlin [inaudible 00:12:20] north eastern Berlin and he made soap. I don’t know, I have not been able to find the English translation for this kind of soap they call it [inaudible 00:12:31], it was like. I don’t know how I should say it. It was not a solid piece of soap, it was not liquid.

He also had other chemicals in those days. Then he became, as I told you before, an expert in advertising, he studied for that. He was consulted by courts and gave statements in trials.

We lived in an apartment. we had about five rooms, four or five rooms in there. That’s where I grew up, that’s from where I went to a private school several blocks down the street. In 1922 or was it 21, we moved to our last apartment on Kaiserdamm number 115 which has been destroyed in 1943 by a bomb by US planes as I found out. It was an eight room apartment up in the top level of the building.

That’s where we began those that speak of the great life, the social life of my father and my mother who had to always present his position by invitations and parties. My family life as such was quite tight, I went to a private school, I did belong to a sport club.

My father had always time on Sundays to take his family out. We went in the outlying areas, which now of course are part of Berlin for coffee and cake. We went to the race track in Berlin which is still in existence today.

Family parties, there was family. This part of the family came from my mother’s side I do not know. I don’t know in what relations they were, they were cousins or nieces or nephews, that’s all I can tell you.

We had a quite an intensive social activity. I had a tutor, believe it or not for a while, students to help me to go to school until November 1924.

**Kate:** If we back up a bit, the apartments that you lived in, how were they heated?

**Gerhard:** A central heat, by steam heat. The buildings in those days, the big apartment buildings were heated by steam heat from a basement in the house and hot water radiators were all over the rooms.

**Kate:** What about lighting?

**Gerhard:** Lighting?

**Kate:** What type of lights did you have?

**Gerhard:** Electric lighting of course.

**Kate:** Were the apartments for you, were they in the center of town as such or?

**Gerhard:** The apartment house was on the big East West axis, which led to the [inaudible 00:15:32] gate. Now I guess part of it is called the Street of 17th of September or something, I just read it in a [inaudible 00:15:41] which I got a couple of days ago.

It used to be the [inaudible 00:15:45] stars in Charlottenburg [inaudible 00:15:47]. It’s the main street which goes from the [inaudible 00:15:52] at the far west, across was called, on the west end it was called [inaudible 00:16:01] Counselor Square. Nowadays the name has changed and all. You go straight through.

It used to be built by the [inaudible 00:16:09] Monarchs as a Parade Street, they wanted to match their troops through there. Then at [inaudible 00:16:19] street as such fell in the different names.

One purpose Kaiserdamm, other purpose [inaudible 00:16:26] of the Bismarck. One purpose called Charlottenburg [inaudible 00:16:30]. In the middle used to be the Victory Monument and I can show you pictures of it, I got some old pictures here. Go into the [inaudible 00:16:39] gate to the famous [inaudible 00:16:41] in Berlin.

**Kate:** Who did the cooking in your family?

**Gerhard:** We had domestics, we had a cook and we had housemaid and a lady coming in to help out. There’s also another story connected, I found her son with whom I grew up. He visited me in 1972 here in United States after a while. He died about two years ago.

**Kate:** Who’s he again?

**Gerhard:** His name was Einst Lemzing, E-I-N-S-T L-E-M-Z-I-N-G.

**Kate:** What did he do at home?

**Gerhard:** His mother came to our house twice a week. His father was a ticket taker at the subway in Berlin.

**Kate:** What was your favorite food as a child?

**Gerhard:** This is actually hard to say, I cannot remember. We ate whatever was served. I would say, it is [inaudible 00:17:48] anything what we here in America, food is different. I would say, I can only remember big dinners, [inaudible 00:17:57], pork roast perhaps, but I don’t have any preference. This could mean anything from goulash down to pork roast.

**Kate:** What was meal time like? Did you eat with your family at meals?

**Gerhard:** Yes, we ate. I went to school, I had my breakfast. I can’t even remember what I ate in those days, we didn’t have cereals [inaudible 00:18:29]. Later on we found out about it. I would say I had -I can’t remember, butter, jam.

As you know the Germans do have a specific kind of breakfast in the morning which consists of coffee and hard rolls, that’s what I was fishing for, butter, cheese and sausage. Many people even eat later on another second breakfast.

I came home after two o’clock from school and I probably had a little dish of something. Then we had dinner, about six or seven o’clock. My father was not eating at home he was out. My mother perhaps while I was in school went shopping to the downtown of Berlin in those days. Probably ate out too once in a while, I cannot tell you exactly. I cannot remember the situation too good.

**Kate:** Describe the kitchen where you had …

**Gerhard:** The kitchen was quite interesting in those days. As you know we had problems in Berlin with power supply right after World War 2. We had in our kitchen a stove which was heated by brown coal, what is brown coal? Is turf I would say, it’s brown -I can’t remember right now, I would have to look up the dictionary.

**Kate:** Peat?

**Gerhard:** Peat, [inaudible 00:20:09] yeah peat. This was used on a grate to heat up. Later on after things went back to normal we got gas but these stoves were quite interesting, they were far ahead of their times. They’re still used today I understand in part of Germany under a more improved situation.

I remember you had a drawer, a big box and there was a grate and you put the turf on it in a gloat and you pushed it back in. Then you had on top it had a plate and you had little things to keep dishes were on top of it.

**Kate:** Did you eat in the kitchen?

**Gerhard:** No, we had a big dining room with a big table in the corner, a round table by the window looking in the courtyard of the building. That’s where we usually ate, my mother, my father and I.

**Kate:** What about your grandparents, where did they live exactly on both sides?

**Gerhard:** Mother’s side or father’s side? Which you mean?

**Kate:** Father’s side first.

**Gerhard:** My father’s side. I only remember my father’s father Bernhard Ruben who lived in Düsseldorf in a grass [inaudible 00:21:24] number 92. I remember the address quite well. He was quite old I’ve seen him only once in my life.

My father had several brothers, one disappeared in America, I have never been able to find him. He was in 1923 in Berlin and he disappeared afterwards, strange.

He had another brother by the name of Eugene, who lived in Düsseldorf. He was an engineer. He worked for a company who made steam loco mobiles and lots of other things. The company is still in existence today, called [Badenga 00:22:06]. He disappeared, but this is something you’re going to come back later, this go down in the future.

Mother’s side, I met my grandfather. Her second mother, her first mother died, moved to Berlin. Yes, I know her quite well. I have a lot of uncles, her brothers, which are all gone by now.

There was a fellow by the name of Dr. Henry Samter he was a chemist. He passed away in Santa Barbara, his wife passed away about several years ago too.

Then I had an architect, property manager by the name of Martin Samter who was married to a lady from Romania. She died of cancer. She was an x-ray assistant. He had a daughter [inaudible 00:23:01] they committed suicide.

Then I had another uncle, another brother of my mother, Dr. Arthur Samter, who was an attorney. He was a communist member in legislative branches. He defended even this famous guy who was accused by the Nazis of setting fire to the livestock. He was married to a lady by the name of Paula Lionheart, who passed away about eight, nine years ago.

Then a fellow by the name of Ludwig, who has completely disappeared, we never knew what happened. Now, Dr. Arthur Samter had a daughter who is living still in [inaudible 00:23:50] in Germany near Baden-Baden four miles south of it. A son, Dr. Arnold K. Samter who lives in Elkhorn, California and he’s a veterinary.

**Kate:** What about religious life in your family?

**Gerhard:** Not a veterinary, a veterinarian.

**Kate:** Veterinarian?

**Gerhard:** I beg your pardon?

**Kate:** What about religious life as a child?

**Gerhard:** There was no religious life in our family whatsoever. There may have been Jewish predecessor. I think that this is part of the problem that most of these people perished. I might mention that this time that my mother perished in Auschwitz.

[Inaudible 00:24:37] who was Jewish, went fled to Hillegom, Holland with his daughter because his wife, as in my mother’s half-sister died of cancer of the liver. They used to live in Heidelberg [inaudible 00:24:53]. That’s also where my mother’s mother is buried in Heidelberg.

He was supposed to leave for Switzerland, Nazis at that time occupied Holland and they got him and sent him to Auschwitz. His daughter is the lady who lives in Israel. My daughter is married to a very Jewish fellow who has family in Seattle and other family in Israel.

Somebody got married and so they went over to the wedding last year in Israel and visited the cousin of mine but she got to Israel for other reasons. That’s when the research on the name Samter, that’s how I found out. We have other [inaudible 00:25:43] …

**Kate:** How did you know that your mother died in Auschwitz?

**Gerhard:** Through the international Red Cross, through the Polish government and through the German officials. I got the documentations here.

I even got, I show only how thorough these Nazis were, I got from the police department in Vienna, an official notification that she was resettled in Izbiza, I-Z-B-I-Z-A which according to the Polish agencies, of which I have a letter, was a camp where they sifted for the people sent to Auschwitz. It was a death camp.

**Kate:** When was the last time you saw your mother?

**Gerhard:** I saw my mother the last time in September 1938, on my way to Hamburg, Germany.

**Kate:** You didn’t hear anything after that?

**Gerhard:** Yes I did, I have some letters here from her. They were typed in wet ribbon, which was saying, “I need out. You have to get me out here,” I couldn’t do it. People in Europe don’t have the idea how to get in foreign countries in those days. Things were all different, everything was plugged up, everything was clogged up.

The departure from Germany of people was very difficult to arrange. Ships were completely sold out and Austria, especially after it was occupied by the Germans, made it even more difficult especially when you were Jewish. I will tell you a little story about this later.

Could leave only with 10 German marks or it was a mess, you couldn’t get people out, it was controlled immigration, it wasn’t leaving right. Many fled of course as you know, many perhaps bribed people and got out. I don’t know, I only hear stories about bribing, later and I have been told stories about them.

By and large it was disaster. History proves now that the United States was withholding entrance for immigration for these people. We always though they were doing as good now it comes out that Roosevelt and his secretary of state blocked free immigration of these people from Europe.

**Kate:** You say that you were not religious at all but what about holidays, did you celebrate holidays?

**Gerhard:** Christian Holidays.

**Kate:** What was the biggest holiday for you?

**Gerhard:** I think its Christmas perhaps and all the family got together and we had a Christmas tree and a party. People came for party and bought gifts.

**Kate:** You …

**Gerhard:** You see, holidays in Europe are not celebrated on such a big scale, have never been. In fact, in smaller communities where there was more folk lore involved, like in Bavaria and Catholic, high Catholic holidays and so on.

By and large, the large cities in Germany had not observed, especially Berlin which was an international hub, had never been so deeply involved in the religious observances.

**Kate:** You said you had tutors. Did you go to a school? You mentioned school life, your education. What school did you go to?

**Gerhard:** In Berlin I went to a private school, what we would call ordinary school, till 1924. I can show you my certificates on it too. Later on I went to Vienna and I had to go to school.

What happened here was that the Austrians community German schools were not good enough and they sent me back one year. They wouldn’t have sent me to a public school so I ended up in a private school which was also a boarding school. You could stay in school and eat, you were fed, terrible by the way and then you went home.

Later on, due to family conditions with my mother, I became a full time [inaudible 00:30:37] in this particular school. I have to admit to you very frankly that I think they hold me in captivity has cost me a lot of emotional and mental problems later on in my life. That I would not accept authority that I became very independent, that I was fighting off and obstructing.

There’s nothing wrong, because they wanted to tell me when to go to bed and you want to do this. My mother wouldn’t see me. I guess she had a boyfriend from what I found out later on. Some days we were making excursions in the Vienna roads, but it was all too regulated, like jail life.

I’ll tell you a funny story, it’s absolutely ridiculous. At this time I’m involved to getting the Vienna symphony to [inaudible 00:31:40], or part of it, a return concert trip in exchange for the [inaudible 00:31:46] symphony to Vienna. The party, with whom I am in correspondence, lives right across the house where I was in a boarding school.

**Kate:** That’s a coincidence.

**Gerhard:** Isn’t it funny?

**Kate:** It’s incredible. Back to the school life though, when you said in jail, when did you move to Austria, what year?

**Gerhard:** Let me explain the story [inaudible 00:32:14]. In November 1924, I cannot exactly recall the date, it was on a Sunday. My uncle who committed suicide and my mother were together. They did a lot of packing and locked the doors and I couldn’t figure out what happened. We had a radio in those days and I listened to the radio in my father’s den.

When I came back from school at 2 o’clock in the afternoon, I was told that I was not going to go out for calisthenics or gymnastic classes, because we’re going to my uncle for dinner. When we went to my uncle for dinner I never went home again.

What happened was two friends of my father, so-called friends, from Vienna were there to guide us out of Berlin. Because my father was involved, as I mentioned previously, in this incident that he was wanted by the authorities.

We went from Berlin, on a train to, what is then still German, [inaudible 00:33:28] it’s called now, down, and went to the mountains by sledge into Czechoslovakia. From Czechoslovakia and from Prague, we were picked up in a car and went into Austria. That’s how I got into Austria. That was, I think on the 14th of November 1924. We fled technically.

**Kate:** In your schooling, did you learn English before you ever got to the United States?

**Gerhard:** In Berlin no. In Vienna I begun to learn French and I had French, [inaudible 00:34:20] would come to think of it Berlin I remember this now. English was secondary in those days. I took up English in evening class and a little bit at the time.

**Kate:** In?

**Gerhard:** In Vienna.

**Kate:** What was your favorite subject in school?

**Gerhard:** I had no favorite subject in school whatsoever, I got bored. Because of the regimentation of teaching, you learn this and you learn it, there was no individualism. We’re fighting right now in this country, the same situation.

**Kate:** About coming to America, how did you get here finally?

**Gerhard:** That’s what I want to tell you, this is a story by itself. In our house which we lived in our apartment, in the 19th District in Vienna was a gentleman. Who was, I don’t know if he was or wanted to be a military pilot. He must have been. He was a captain. He may have been in the World War apparently in the Austrian, so-called, air force.

Germany and Austria were not permitted to have airplanes, [inaudible 00:35:34] airplanes so they went into gliders. They needed people to help to pull those gliders to get people up in the air.

I became acquainted with this man, his name was [Pitsini 00:35:53]. There was a dinner held in the Automobile Club, the Austrian Automobile Club. There were people who were talking to me, asking me what I was doing. This is something you have not asked me, I’m going to go later into that.

He mentioned to me that they have an airline in Columbia operated by Germans. They couldn’t get mechanics from Germany, “We don’t care who we get as long they’re good mechanics and know the business. The Columbians are not too well and we have a couple of Americans in there but he flew German planes and a few American planes.” He wanted me to come to Colombia.

**Kate:** Because you were a mechanic?

**Gerhard:** Yeah, see you have not asked me that story.

**Kate:** We haven’t gotten to that yet.

**Gerhard:** No, we haven’t gotten to that yet. I said, “Okay,” because I knew it was going to happen, the annexation was absolutely visible and I know what was going to happen.

I met him again later on when I was officially in a motorcycle race in Austria. He kept going and wanted me to come over there, that was in 1937. I said, “I have to talk it over with my mother and how we’re going to get out?”

There’s something called military duty which incidentally is causing a lot of problem in Europe right now with the New European Unity, ECU. What we’re going to do? I knew I wouldn’t be able to get out.

**Kate:** To make a long story short, what did you say?

**Gerhard:** To make a long story short, how do we get out of Austria? Austrian pass or German pass? I went to the German Consulate which was still in existence, and they gave me a pass based on my documentation of Germany. Here’s the pass.

What that man did in the consulate, he underlined my name, which was a non-alien. That doesn’t mean Jewish this could be anything else. Which means the city put the name Israeli down [inaudible 00:38:45], to make get me out of the country. I emigrated as a refugee, as a Jewish refugee, he helped me because he knew exactly what- he didn’t like the whole idea so I left.

Although I need the help of the Columbians which were swamped with immigrants who wanted to go. That’s where I learned Spanish [inaudible 00:39:15] and in the Consulate was a fellow and I got my visa and I went to Columbia.

My pass expired in Columbia. The German Consulate in Barranquilla put a J in there and put the name Israel to make it definitely more official. He never went back to Germany by the way, they all stayed over there. They [inaudible 00:39:41] I found out later.

I left finally Germany, Austria and Germany in 1938 in September, aboard a German ship, because I had to take a German boat. The company financially supported my trip. The ship, this is going to knock you over, became famous. Was the location at [inaudible 00:40:21] in Field Marshall Montgomery [inaudible 00:40:22] in Flensburg the Caribbean later on, working officially as an immigrant- unofficially already being hired to go to work.

I found out immediately this was a Nazi nest. They were Nazis and they were all over the place and I figured this was not going to be good. Because it was, [inaudible 00:40:52] it was wrong. I left and I went to work in the interior of Columbia in Pato which is near Medellin

**Kate:** Could you spell those places please.

**Gerhard:** Pato?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Gerhard:** P-A-T-O. Medellin is for this person [inaudible 00:41:14]. I worked there.

**Kate:** Did they know that you left? Did you leave on good terms?

**Gerhard:** With them?

**Kate:** Yes.

**Gerhard:** In the [inaudible 00:41:27]?

**Kate:** Yes.

**Gerhard:** No, we didn’t leave on good terms.

**Kate:** Did they know where you’re going?

**Gerhard:** No.

**Kate:** You actually secretly left?

**Gerhard:** I left the airline on bad terms with an accusation that I was supposed to have ruined a machine, because they knew exactly that I wasn’t going to play their game.

I had to look for a job and I was hired in Barranquilla. I did not hire, they went out on my own on a boat up to River Magdalena to Mag’ang’ué, from Mag’ang’ué on a boat to Zaragoza, from Zaragoza to Pato. We came there and we worked there for two pesos a day or something.

I [inaudible 00:42:12], there was Czechs. There was a Czech fellow and an Austrian fellow. The electrician happened to be, and you won’t believe this in Vienna he was Jewish the name was [inaudible 00:42:22]. He used to be a butcher where my wife used to go and buy meat from in Vienna, we found out later.

I did work and I worked [inaudible 00:42:33] a lot of work. We worked in an auto shop with an Austrian by the name of Rowley. Later on they decided to let me go, I don’t know why, I figured I wasn’t doing the job right. I want back to Barranquilla.

In the meantime, my uncle who passed away in Santa Barbara landed in the United States. He worked for a Swiss firm which you know Ciba C-I-B-A Chemical. He helped financially to some degree, but I wanted out.

I wound through Mexico to come to the United States. What I did not know was the border was closed. Roosevelt closed the border because he knew that too many people came in this way, as have now these people coming in.

I got stuck in Panama. I had a very hard time to live. The police in Panama took notice of us, strangers. You have to realize that in those days when you came aboard you came to the Canal Zone. The Panama Canal was an American territory.

Behind it, on the North side, was the city of Colón, Panama which was Panamanian. In which I witnessed one of the biggest fires in history, three days after arriving on the 12th or 14th of April 1940, 85% of the town was destroyed by fire.

There I met refugees from Europe. I worked wherever I could find a job. Then now I decide to go to Panama, but you know how it is, you [inaudible 00:44:38] people together who are from your own country speak your own language, who live there permanently and those who are refugees when there is no way of doing.

You see there was not that much gap between refugees and established people from their own country living there already. People always thought this was the case, this was not the case, they helped whatever they could. I was illegally in Panama and the police found out and used me as an interpreter for them.

In May 1940, this is where the story begins, I was arrested. The day France fell, the [inaudible 00:45:31] marched into Paris. Sent to the quarantine station in the Canal Zone, where many of these refugees were living and illegally. But we were …

**Kate:** You came [inaudible 00:45:44]?

**Gerhard:** I was [inaudible 00:45:46] friends of hers. I was arrested officially by the Panamanians and sent in the quarantine station because I came from the zone on the Panamanian territory. There we were. We were very well taken care of. We were even allowed to go in the Panamanian territory. I was used also for translating purposes etcetera.

About in July, August, we were told that we could not leave the quarantine station anymore, because there will be an interrogation going on. Military people came, soldiers, having questionnaires. I told we were born, I said…

Then after the applications were filled out for immigration to the United States, a gentleman by the name of W-W-E-Y-S-T-R in the office of the guy who ran the quarantine station interviewed you and looked you up and said, “You will hear from us.”

One day, we were told that an officer of the American Consulate will appear in the quarantine station office and you will get your immigration visa to the United States.

**Kate:** Did you ever mention to them that you wanted to go to the United States?

**Gerhard:** This was a question yes. You see my uncle was living already in New York in those days. The INS insisted in those days an affidavit of support. He found a neighbor who wrote a formal affidavit of support. We were processed as legal immigrants.

Then one day we were told, after five o’clock dinner, that we have to be ready in the morning because we will be taken to Christoval which was the -Wait a minute to the Atlantic [inaudible 00:48:22] and we were taken to the United States.

When we arrived on the pier, there was a ship that belonged to the government, US army transport ship, the American region. What really surprised us was Panamanian police with rifles stood there. We got Panamanian papers and they were kept by copy. According to the Panamanians, we were spies, Nazis, for Hitler. We were taken out and taken away by the Americans.

**Kate:** You weren’t going for immigration, they were taking you into [inaudible 00:49:18] …

**Gerhard:** We were taken, according to the Panamanians, arrested as spies. Now if this was intelligence work or what it was, we do not know.

We took our trip to New York and arrived in Brooklyn Army Terminal, which was later on the port of immigration, on this ship. My uncle and my aunt were waiting there, but we couldn’t get off the boat.

We were taken on a smaller size boat to Ellis Island. The personnel on Ellis Island was very nice, we had no problem whatsoever with them. They told us where we were sleeping. They had even heated sleeping areas for us up there because we came from the tropics.

We had good dinner, we were at our beds. We had chosen our beds to sleep, we had double bunks and told to get up in the morning, about six o’clock or something, to get ready and there would be breakfast served. There was never any trouble whatsoever.

We got later on then moved into this famous big hall you see in the pictures and waited for the things to come. There were telephones and I talked to my uncle. Then they began at nine o’clock to call the names of people.

I understood later that several of them could not enter the United States. I might add to you something else, during the elimination process in the quarantines, we had several Germans. They were not admitted to the United States, they had something against them.

We found out they went to Argentina and you know what happened in Argentina in history with the Germans. We were right, we suspected them all along, they were Nazi.

They [inaudible 00:51:22] at 25 minutes to four and I was guided with my little suitcase which I carried, big luggage I know you know what it was at that time. Went down the hall in a room, there were three or four people.

They wanted to know my name. They wanted to know what I was doing, whether I intend to do it. They said, “You have a relative in the United States, in the Eastern Parkway in New York.” He said, “Yes this is all correct, everything is checked out.”

“Mr. Chairman we will admit Mr. Ruben to the United States. It’s 10 minutes to four you miss the ferry boat, let’s get out of here.” We went on a boat. I had directions how to get there and that’s how I got to the United States.

**Kate:** Did you have a medical examination at Ellis Island?

**Gerhard:** I had no medical examination whatsoever in Ellis Island.

**Kate:** Was it crowded during …?

**Gerhard:** Yes, it was quite crowded.

**Kate:** What about the dining hall? Can you describe it, where you ate?

**Gerhard:** The dining area was simple. We had tables, long benches. Food was- I can’t remember if we helped ourselves like Amish style or if it was served to us, I cannot remember right now.

The food was good, we had no complains, everybody was happy about it. There were some Jewish people they wanted to eat kosher I understand. I believe that they may even had a kosher department. I cannot assure you about that.

**Kate:** Was it clean?

**Gerhard:** Yes absolutely. We had no complain whatsoever, bathrooms were clean, sleeping areas were clean. The big lobbies or the big hall you cannot avoid, there was smoking and a lot of people walking around. It’s like, let’s say, a waiting area in a railroad station.

**Kate:** Were you frightened that you would be not admitted?

**Gerhard:** I was a little bit leery, of course everybody was leery. I was surprised when he said, “Let’s go to the ferry, we’ll miss the ferry boat.” I knew we were all [inaudible 00:53:49], good luck he said.

**Kate:** How long exactly where you at Ellis Island all together?

**Gerhard:** I was in Ellis Island, I would say about 26 hours.

**Kate:** When you said your big luggage, what were you carrying with you exactly? You said a small suitcase and …

**Gerhard:** I had my small suitcase, let me tell you something when we got to this. I had a small suitcase and a big trunk. The trunk had my cloths and souvenirs and a lot of other things. My other held my [inaudible 00:54:23] articles. I can’t remember and camera [inaudible 00:54:27] whatsoever. I had a smaller suitcase.

I had moved in a room in Panama, and the Panamanian people were supposed to pay rent. I was never able to pay rent. [Inaudible 00:54:40] probably knew about it, but then I was arrested so to speak of. I probably forgot the suitcase or I couldn’t find it.

**Kate:** Suitcase or trunk?

**Gerhard:** It was a small suitcase, it just disappeared, I can’t even remember what happened to it. This was how I got to the United States. However, I had aid from some refugee organizations.

There was the National Catholic Organization, there was Jewish organization. They didn’t care if the people were Jewish or not, they all worked together anyway. I knew immediately I wasn’t going to stay in New York. New York is not America and America is not New York, they told us. They’re right, I have to admit it.

My uncle was trying to push me to find a job. I was sitting in the subway a day afterward or two days afterwards, he took me downtown to show me [inaudible 00:55:47]. There was a paper laying, I remember this incident very well. You know how these people [inaudible 00:55:54] paper in the subway.

I looked to it. He said to me, “If I were you I would have looked immediately in the advertisements to find the job.” He was one of those -I said, “Wait a minute give me a couple of days here, I got to orient myself who I am.” He was one of those guys constantly looking for [inaudible 00:56:17]. I did work in New York for a while but then …

**Kate:** As what?

**Gerhard:** As a mechanic, now we’re coming to this but you have never asked me. I worked for a German mechanics, an old German fellow. Who built, developed the machines for films, this company was developing films for [inaudible 00:56:36] in those days.

I helped them work on these machines. He gave me tips about New York. Then I was told by, one of the organizations I don’t know who it was, that I should go to Chicago, they would send me to Chicago and they pay my bus fare. That’s how I got to Chicago.

**Kate:** When you were at Ellis Island did they speak English or German to you?

**Gerhard:** Who?

**Kate:** The officials.

**Gerhard:** On immigration?

**Kate:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Gerhard:** They talked German, one fellow was German [inaudible 00:57:16] I spoke English.

**Kate:** You went to work for a German in New York first? You spoke German with the German?

**Gerhard:** With the translator?

**Kate:** No, when you got to New York and you got a job as a mechanic …?

**Gerhard:** Yeah, I talked with him English German mix.

**Kate:** You were learning English at this time?

**Gerhard:** I was improving my English to New York style.

**Kate:** Was it difficult for you to adjust to the American English?

**Gerhard:** No.

**Kate:** Where were you living when you got that first job?

**Gerhard:** In my uncle’s home in Eastern Parkway in New York in Brooklyn. Later on in 915 Washington Avenue which was down the street. I had to cross the zoo, have you ever been on Brooklyn, you know where the zoo is?

**Kate:** Right.

**Gerhard:** You know Eastern Parkway, the subway?

**Kate:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Gerhard:** The big tall apartment, he had a penthouse up there.

**Kate:** How big was that apartment?

**Gerhard:** The penthouse apartment, I can’t remember, about three or four rooms. On 915 Washington Avenue which is actually around the corner if you remember, a kitchen, about two bedrooms, three bedrooms, it was small.

**Kate:** He was doing what in New York at that time?

**Gerhard:** He was working for the Ciba, for the Swiss firm. He worked out of Summit, New Jersey, that’s where the company has an office. He visited doctors with their products and although enticed him to write scientific reports in newspapers.

**Kate:** Was your uncle religious?

**Gerhard:** Nobody in my family was religious.

**Kate:** It didn’t change?

**Gerhard:** Wait, I take that back. The communist was religious, later on afterwards [inaudible 00:59:12].

**Kate:** Wait.

**Gerhard:** Now, I remember something, the Samter family was Jewish. He was every day in a synagogue in [inaudible 00:59:30].

**Kate:** Who?

**Gerhard:** The doctor.

**Kate:** He being who?

**Gerhard:** The Dr. Arthur Samter whose son is the veterinarian in California. This is going to be interesting. You’re going to hear more about this in a minute. He joined communist and went completely the opposite way.

His son married a Catholic woman, is 150% Catholics. All his children went to Catholic school. He’s married for the second time. They went to church about every five minutes.

**Kate:** You then were at the point where you’re working for the German mechanic and you were still in New York?

**Gerhard:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Tell me a little bit about your life from then on what happened?

**Gerhard:** I went to Chicago. When I got to Chicago I was told by the office that there was not much work to be done. Here, there is no job. They figured I should get my feet on the ground and he sent me to Council Bluffs, Iowa. This was an even bigger mistake.

In Council Bluffs, Iowa I was supposed to get a job and I had talked with several people from the committee there and even [inaudible 01:00:50] to a junk yard out of [inaudible 01:00:53], where I worked for 30 cents an hour.

I didn’t like it because I met another fellow from Germany in Council Bluffs who said I should go to Omaha. I went to Omaha looking for work. I couldn’t find work in Omaha either.

There was a scrap and junk dealer, who incidentally is still in existence today as I understood, but they moved me from this location where they were. I worked there pushing junk metal in a process where it was compressed.

I didn’t like that either and he didn’t [inaudible 01:01:33] too happy with me and I didn’t feel like freezing to death in Nebraska in the winter time.

I got a job with Union Pacific. I worked in the Union Pacific on the roads with these people who slept in a -I did sleep in a hotel after, [inaudible 01:01:51] when I was sent to [inaudible 01:01:52]. I worked on a rail road working on rails.

Then later on they offered me a job as a security agent to carry money so I was travelling. The war had broken out. You have to realize that while I was in the [inaudible 01:02:15] camp in Pato in 1939 the war broke out.

**Kate:** When you were in this country being German, did you experience any prejudice or anything for being German?

**Gerhard:** No, I would not say too much, yes there were people. I have been told later on, that during World War 1, the anti-Semitism, the movement against German was much stronger than it was during World War 2. Because it seems to me, I may be wrong on this interpretation that they were not against the Germans, which was incidentally …

**Kate:** You went through most of the questions that we have in terms of …

**Gerhard:** No, we’re going to go further because I have some other questions, which it may be interesting for your research. I don’t found that there was too much antagonism against the Germans. I think, yes Hitler was definitely the target, Hitler we know that. I had a feeling that because these victims of the Jewish people. I’ll be very frank with you, I feel that in the middle west of Chicago, I’m not talking about the south yet, there was a little bit anti-Semitism.

**Kate:** Were you regarded as a Jew?

**Gerhard:** No. I mean this is my opinion, I may be wrong. Remember I speak about the 30s and 40s here. I’m not talking about the 90s. That may be, however when I got in the army, I served in the military, US army.

**Kate:** When did you go to the US army?

**Gerhard:** In 1943. I was one of the airborne engineers for the air force. We didn’t get along and I ran into trouble with the airborne engineers because I was quite old in those days.

**Kate:** How old were you?

**Gerhard:** I was born in 1912, 1943 makes me …

**Kate:** 31.

**Gerhard:** 31. There was a Jewish officer by the name of Brooks from Brooklyn, by the way, whose aunt stopped me in the subway while I was in New York and so the patch. “Oh, you were there, my nephew is a lieutenant. The name is Lieutenant Brooks.” I said, “Yes, he is my lieutenant.” In the subway, I said, “You can tell him to go to hell.”

He wanted me to give a pep speech to the soldiers about the nasty Germans. I said, “I won’t speak.” He wanted me to tell them what he wanted. I wasn't going to do it. Consequently I told him that you have to consider that the Germans were made subservient to the Nazis who are behind with a rifle to shoot them in the back if they don’t do their duty. He didn’t like that so we had trouble.

I suddenly was transferred out and I was sent to a service command unit in Indiantown Gap Pennsylvania. Now comes the bomb. Germans, Italians, Japanese, in a unit in an abandoned CCC camp in Indiantown Gap, no arms, no nothing.

English speaking non-commission officer who couldn’t understand a foreign word that we were talking about on purpose. We had a German supply sergeant. The officers didn’t speak German, Italian or Japanese.

We rarely raised havoc with them because we did not understand them and we spoke our own language among each other on purpose. The Germans …

**Kate:** Were you sent there for insubordination?

**Gerhard:** No, we do not know what this unit was composed of, either it was an intelligence unit to study us or it was a unit to clear us. I think it was a unit of clearance to see if we were reliable.

I was not reliable apparently but I could care less and neither the Germans who were all having a good life in New York, in Bronxville. A maître D [inaudible 01:07:36] a man who owned a bakery and a butcher.

All the personnel, or Germans speaking kitchen [inaudible 01:07:43] were all professionals. Of course we knew how to cook and we knew how to do everything else. In the meantime investigations did went on, I found out later on.

Many of them ended up like me, we were at the unit disbandment and we went to different places but never in combat positions. One of them was a cook, ended up a chef in an American hospital in Paris. You know it. Probably remember when you were in Paris. It’s still there today that was military then.

Some ended up in Florida in jobs, I guess one of them in the [inaudible 01:08:22] I never fired a shot, although it was quite interesting.

Then from there, I was sent to Fort [inaudible 01:08:34], I was also what they called a service command unit which is actually garrison troops. I worked in the ordinance department with interpreted German captured weapons. I had German prisoners working under me, cleaning rifles which were supposed to be sent to Yugoslavia.

It was quite an interesting stay in Fort [inaudible 01:08:57] until I ended up by mistake in Fort Louis, Washington. I was supposed to go to Port Washington to the military government unit. At that time they got ready for invasion of Japan. I collected medics here for the invasion and I was send to the medics.

That didn’t last long because the commissioner face to face, I had a whole conversation face to face. I ended up then on a post, in a message center. I had a jeep and handed out bulletins.

Ended up, at his request, now I’ll comes the American history for me, in Lexington Virginia, Washington and Lee University. We had a school for personal services there. I was enrolled in the information education school by [inaudible 01:10:04]. Athletic and recreation and special services for three months.

I had the best time in my life. I learned a lot about America, because the people, who were in these units, were all mostly professionals from Broadway entertainers, athletes and black people, Asians. We were supposed to entertain troops in the staging areas in France.

I also learned a lot about the Confederacy because General Lee is buried in Lexington Virginia. I talked with people there and I saw the discrimination of black people in Virginia. I began my whole [inaudible 01:10:55] about America, it wasn’t in New York, it wasn’t in Chicago, it wasn’t in Council Bluffs or Fort Louis.

I remember some incidents when a little white guy was trying to tell us we he had black troops in there. They came from Alaska by the way, for special service. [Inaudible 01:11:16] to niggas [inaudible 01:11:18]. He was told that’s his federal transportation federal uniforms, if you would like to join us we can arrange draft [inaudible 01:11:29].

Then we got on a train and we had trouble with the conductor. They had these old coaches with the stiff backs that we see in history in the museum. They had that local modern coaches, which of course today are outdated.

The major who was in [inaudible 01:11:53] was [inaudible 01:11:54] to commander, said, “[Inaudible 01:11:57] the train is empty go into [inaudible 01:11:58].” You can’t do that. The commander [inaudible 01:12:03] for the public but there was nobody on the train anyhow.

They got on a train in the afternoon and went to Cincinnati and nobody stopped, nobody entered the train anywhere in the night. He got into [inaudible 01:12:19] finally and stopped in Charleston, West Virginia.

[Inaudible 01:12:25] I went to the station must have demanded that the guy be kicked off the train. We had to [inaudible 01:12:30] till he got another conductor on the train, I assure in those days.

This was the first time I saw the discrimination but I did see segregation in Lexington. The black quarters which are new to the campus in Washington and Lee.

I didn’t express myself I saw things. I learned about the Civil War, I was invited to private homes. I had a friend, she met a Presbyterian Minister who was very nice and [inaudible 01:13:01]. He who spoke to us and we came as a new class and then the Baptist minister showed up. The [inaudible 01:13:11] was a very nice man. He told me about the Civil War and why it happened, he was interested, I learned a lot about America in those days.

Then I was sent to Fort Louis by mistake as I told you. I came to Fort Louis and I was [inaudible 01:13:34] I went to Virginia. I went on a troop transport ship, to entertain troops, which was I never came off because there wasn’t enough time to save to entertain.

I got sick from over eating. The ship was ran by the merchant marine and operated by the United Food Company. We ate like pigs, ourselves the crew on it. I got sick, ended up in Virginia and came [inaudible 01:13:58] and later on in Norfolk where I had to show movies to soldiers because there was nothing else to do. [Inaudible 01:14:05] driving a jeep.

I had a very interesting officer, you ever heard Billy Wilder, the movie director? His brother was my commanding officer. He and I got into a hospital one day, he sent me over to the Admiral in the navy base.

I took his jeep and drove over there and I parked in the Admiral’s stall. Someone, navy guys came up to me, [inaudible 01:14:33] I have no problem.” They called up the Colonel Wilder and Colonel Wilder said, “He can park wherever he wants to, I sent him over there.” [Inaudible 01:14:43] concerned.

From there I went to Fort Louis and got discharged and then ended up here in city of Washington. Now you want to know why, I’ll explain to you this too. My wife is from Wisconsin, she had relatives who came out here in 1923.

My father in law, wasn’t her real father, her father died in 1955, wanted to come out, here he was a barber. He would have made 50 cents or 40 cents for a haircut in the ‘25 in Wisconsin. He always wanted to come out.

When I came back from Norfolk, how was it? No, I came from Virginia, that’s what I was saying, from Virginia I went -I had a [inaudible 01:15:37] route and stopped at home on the way back to Fort Louis. He said, “Yes you’re going to have company coming here, your wife is going with you and your children.”

**Kate:** What year did you get married?

**Gerhard:** I got married in 1942.

**Kate:** You had children immediately?

**Gerhard:** Yes, we had our oldest one who is 50 years old now. He was born in October the 1st 1942, seven months out in Chicago. We have another one who got married and born in 1944 in [inaudible 01:16:15] Wisconsin.

**Kate:** A girl?

**Gerhard:** A boy, another boy. Then in 1947 we got a girl. Then in 1963 we had another one, who’s now 31.

**Kate:** Another girl?

**Gerhard:** A boy.

**Kate:** A boy?

**Gerhard:** Yes.

**Kate:** You had two boys and one …?

**Gerhard:** Three boys.

**Kate:** Three boys all together, two boys, a girl and a boy.

**Gerhard:** Three boys and one girl, I got four children.

**Kate:** What are their names? Oldest son?

**Gerhard:** Yes the oldest son is Arthur George. The second one is Gerhard Fredrick. My daughter’s name is Penny Joe. My youngest one is Richard Paul.

**Kate:** You settled here in Washington?

**Gerhard:** Yeah. The reason we settled in Washington was, he wanted to come out because of more money, the people were living here. I was on my way to Washington, back to Fort Louis.

They had made contact, I don’t know, my wife and my two children in those days. They [inaudible 01:17:17] me on the train, they had made all the arrangements and they came with me out here.

We ended up in Everett because the people were living in Everett. We were living then in a housing project which has been torn down in Everett here, there are some new ones though [inaudible 01:17:31]. We came to Everett.

**Kate:** In Everett what did you work as these last years?

**Gerhard:** When I went to Everett, I couldn’t find a job. I was in a GI Bill and I got a job partly as an auto parts and for a dealer here. That didn’t last very long. We moved out of Everett, we had to go [inaudible 01:18:25] and go in welfare.

We moved, I got a job at [Boeings 01:18:31]. We moved to [inaudible 01:18:35] Highlands. I got in 1948, involved in the biggest strike Boeing ever had which is now history. I was finally let go.

That caused a nervous breakdown which the medical professional considered was what we call now post-war stress. I was put on 50% service-connected disability, which I still am in today.

In addition, in 1951, I was put on social security for disability. I went in the meantime for rehabilitation in Everett to the now defunct Everett Business College in accounting and book keeping which I never pursued. Because there was too much competition and the pay wasn’t good and I didn’t feel like doing the work.

My wife went in 1955 to a stock paper company to work for over 25 years there. She technically supported the income of the family including with my social security and my pension. She is now legally blind. You didn’t notice that she has macular degeneration. She is retired since 1980.

**Kate:** When you look back on your life, you’ve gone through so much, you’ve lived in different places, you survived. How do you feel about the move to United States?

**Gerhard:** I tell you, this is a very tricky question. Yes and no, there are things that are bad and there are things that are good. Then you would say, “Oh I’d like to go back home.” Then you hear from your friends who came after you to the United States. I got German and Austrian friends, and everyone over there would never live there if you gave it to us. There was the split of East and West Germany in Austria.

You wouldn’t like it. It’s too crowded, too closed to things that are changing. I had visitors from Austria and I’m in touch still with Austrians and Germans, from my time believe it or not and even later times. I don’t think that I could live there any more over there.

**Kate:** Is it because you’ve been away so long you think?

**Gerhard:** No, look there’s no one you left in Germany. My cousin is still living, the sister of my cousin who’s the veterinary is the only one left in Germany.

The widow of my friend I grew up with is living in Berlin. No, wait a minute. I’m saying this badly, I’m sorry. The widow of my friend I grew up with lives in Bielefeld in Germany, she has cancer of the throat. The widow of my friend’s sister, her husband died, she [inaudible 01:21:34] widowed several years ago are the only ones I have left in Germany.

I have a connection with the former counsel of Germany, Dr. Ernst. I just got a letter from him yesterday he’s retired. Then I met a fellow in Germany through my German connection who was a pilot in the German [inaudible 01:21:56] during World War 2. He was among the first one to fly the German jets. He all quite old.

They all tell me, “Well we’ll like to come over here, you wouldn’t like it over there, unless you have enough money to retire in a small town.” What good does it do in a small town? I don’t know.

Austria, I have certain pull to like to go back and see it, you know what I mean. Here I again, I talk to Austrians. I’m a member of the German club and the Austria club. Incidentally we’re going on the 10th of July to Vancouver to visit the Austrian club in Vancouver, a big party. This is not the point here.

They tell me, you wouldn’t recognize it. Austria has changed. Too many foreigners here. The life you used to know, it’s still all gone, everything is -We even don’t recognize it anymore.

I would say I’m happy where I am. I’m 82 years old today. I cannot say that I would like to go for a visit, I’m preparing right now a visit for the symphony as I mentioned before.

I’m doing things for the Austrians, I have been active for the Austria right after the war was over, we had the Austrian [inaudible 01:23:09] in here. I have been working with them. Right now we have an Austrian student coming as I told you and I had to help.

I have also worked for the Germans here. We had a Germans club which fell apart. People go their own way, they’re getting old or they move away. The German community is falling apart too.

You have to realize immigration from these countries almost is at nil, because there’s no need anymore. They’re living over there, they have their things going. The ones who are here don’t want to go back. I talk to a lot of Germans in Canada and all the ones and they say they never go. They go for visits, spend some money.

We are outside, we are strangers, the generations don’t even recognize us anymore. I think that’s where I would probably fall into if ever we go back to Austria. I don’t have anybody left in Austria.

I have the widow of a friend, I used to play ice hockey and field hockey, she’s over there. I have an old girlfriend, I haven’t talked to her for years, I guess she died of asthma I understand. I [inaudible 01:24:25], I was in touch with [inaudible 01:24:28] there was nothing going on.

This is about it. Then, oh yeah, there’s something you have not asked me and I might as well mention it. Do you want to know what my profession was? You’ve never asked me about my [inaudible 01:24:43] my job.

**Kate:** I did ask you that.

**Gerhard:** No, you didn’t.

**Kate:** I asked you what you worked as.

**Gerhard:** Yeah, but you didn’t ask me how I got there.

**Kate:** Then tell me.

**Gerhard:** I left school, after what you call middle school, in 1927. I went into an apprenticeship, trade apprenticeship, not what they call apprenticeship here, in an automobile factory in Vienna. After three years and I can show it to you, I have it over my bed, no that’s the other one, I became a journeyman as a mechanic.

Then after that I went to work as a mechanic for Mercedes as a [inaudible 01:25:34] Benz in Vienna as a mechanic. Wait a minute I take it back, I went to two years to a school in Vienna, a technical school, what they called a work master school, [inaudible 01:25:46] school which a medium technical [inaudible 01:25:53] education.

I went to a special automobile engineering class and evening classes which were not given by that school. Then later on, I took my master examination before the Guild. Journeyman examination and the masters had to be taken by the Guild of machinists in [inaudible 01:26:15]. That gave me the right to be an engineer. I didn’t go through the academic thread.

**Kate:** You went through the other round?

**Gerhard:** I went way up to the [inaudible 01:26:26]. All the bosses in the auto factory, is still my best friend [inaudible 01:26:31]. In fact we talk about once every month in a phone call. I’m still in touch with him and some of the people that down there. A friend of mine from sports who is now a retired doctor, I am in touch with too.

**Kate:** Do you feel if you are an American or German and Austrian, which do you feel?

**Gerhard:** I feel be more European with an American passport.

**Kate:** I’d like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for helping us. We’ll send you a copy also of this for your family and children.

**Gerhard:** I’m going to show you some pictures. We’re going to have our coffee I’m going to show you something.

**Kate:** This is Kate Moore …

**Gerhard:** Kate, is there anything else?

**Kate:** No. This is really good. This is Kate Moore signing off on June 28th 1994 in Everett, Washington for the Ellis Island Oral History project.