**Paul:** Good morning this is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Monday July 26th 1993. I am using the portable DAT machine here at the Ellis Island recording studio and I am with Franz Vidor.

Mr. Vidor came from Austria in 1940 when he was 21 years old. It’s nice to have you here, we finally connected. Let’s begin Mr. Vidor with you telling me what your birth date is please.

**Franz:** I was born on January 2nd 1919.

**Paul:** Where were you born?

**Franz:** I was born in Vienna, Austria.

**Paul:** Do you know of any stories that your parents told you surrounding your birth?

**Franz:** No, not really. No I don’t remember anything about my very early years.

**Paul:** Did you actually live in Vienna or were you just born in Vienna?

**Franz:** I lived in Vienna practically the whole time, until I emigrated. We had an apartment in the ninth district, if that means anything to you, which is not the inner city but the middle ring of the city. That’s where I suppose I was born near there in the hospital somewhere. As far as I know that’s where I lived all my life there.

**Paul:** Can you describe that apartment for me

**Franz:** Yeah. It was, what they call, the first floor but it was really the third floor by our definition here. They used to have a ground level, street level and then they had a mezzanine and the third level they called first floor.

We had a big bedroom for my parents then a living room and a smaller room where I lived, the bathroom, a large hallway, a kitchen and a maid’s room. That’s about the size of it.

**Paul:** Did you have domestic help?

**Franz:** Yes we had a maid, a live-in maid. At least for the early years, I don’t think we had them later on, but I still remember her.

**Paul:** Do you remember the neighborhood a little bit where the apartment was in [inaudible 00:02:16]?

**Franz:** Yes I do because I’ve been back a couple of times, most recently a month or two ago, to show one of my daughters.

**Paul:** What was the neighborhood like when you were a kid?

**Franz:** Just a residential neighborhood, all big buildings. Right near the Danube Canal. For instance, at the time, there was a tobacco shop on one corner, a tavern down the next corner and grocery store nearby.

**Paul:** When you were a kid what was your favorite thing to do in the city? Is there something you enjoyed doing in the city?

**Franz:** When I was a kid, what age are you referring to?

**Paul:** When you were pretty young, say 10 or under.

**Franz:** I don’t remember much about that period of time.

**Paul:** Was there some place that you enjoyed going?

**Franz:** I remember, not so much in Vienna, but every summer we used to go on vacation. For many years we spend up in the mountains, spend a month maybe two weeks I don’t remember. In the mountains, we took trips from there, day trips.

**Paul:** Did you have a place in the mountains?

**Franz:** We didn’t have a place, no, we stayed in some hotel but for the many years we stayed in the same place in the mountains, had a little pond and you can go hiking. I enjoyed hiking I guess.

**Paul:** Liked being in the out of doors?

**Franz:** Out of doors yes.

**Paul:** What was your dad’s name?

**Franz:** His name was Ernst, E-R-N-S-T.

**Paul:** What did he do for a living?

**Franz:** He was a director of a business called Holz Handels AG. It was some kind of a lumber business.

**Paul:** Can you spell that please?

**Franz:** H-O-L-Z, which means timber. Handels is trade H-A-N-D-E-L-S. Then AG, that’s like incorporated. He was a director in this company.

Exactly what he did, I can’t tell you, I don’t know. All I remember is one time he took me with him up in the mountains somewhere in the woods, he was looking at timber there. That’s about all I can remember about his business.

**Paul:** Can you describe your father’s personality for me.

**Franz:** He was very stern, but he was fair and that’s about it. I don’t think he had a short temper, I think he was reasonably even tempered, but very firm I remember that. People tell me I look like him and I act like him in that sense at least, in that respect.

**Paul:** When you say he was stern …

**Franz:** Strict.

**Paul:** Can you remember somewhere in your childhood or youth of doing something that upset him and being punished by him?

**Franz:** No I don’t remember anything about my father being upset about anything. I remember my mother being upset about something that I did, I don’t know what is but I remember she chased me around the dining room table and she had a cloth hanger in her hand.

Somehow or rather, my hand got caught in that coat hanger. I had a scar there for years where the hook of the coat hanger caught up with me. That’s about the only thing I remember about being punished for anything, but I’m sure I was.

**Paul:** What was your mother’s name?

**Franz:** Her name was Elizabeth but call Lisl.

**Paul:** Let’s see, that would be L-I-E-S-E-L?

**Franz:** L-I-S-L.

**Paul:** What was her maiden name?

**Franz:** Her maiden name was Brasser, B-R-A-S-S-E-R.

**Paul:** What do you know about your mother’s background?

**Franz:** Very little. She came from a town called Pola, P-O-L-A, which was near Trieste. I don’t know when she moved to Vienna. My father was born in Hungary and I don’t know when he came to Vienna either. They were married in 1910, that I know.

**Paul:** Do you know how they met?

**Franz:** No I don’t, I wish I knew. I was the only child, and we didn’t discuss personal things and I wasn’t particularly interested either to ask questions, now I wish I had. I know very little about my background beyond their names.

Because my mother, you ask about my mother, I think both her parents were dead since I can remember. On my father’s side, I’m not too sure, I remember my grandmother his mother. I have a vague recollection about once, way back when I was little, meeting his father. He seemed real old to me, both of them at the time. That’s all I remember about my parents and my grandparents.

**Paul:** You said you do remember your grandmother though on your father’s side?

**Franz:** Vaguely yeah, because she lived in Hungary. I guess we went visiting, maybe she came to Vienna I don’t remember. She was a big woman, very big, grey hair with a bun, made up a bun, typical grandmother style. That’s about all I can really remember about them.

**Paul:** Can you describe your mother’s personality for me also.

**Franz:** She was very nice. She was sweet and even tempered. She was real nice.

**Paul:** Did your mother ever work outside the home?

**Franz:** No she didn’t, just a housewife.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit about school, going to school when you were in Vienna.

**Franz:** The elementary school was maybe four blocks, five blocks away from home. That was four years it was, elementary school, four years. The only memorable thing about elementary school or the only thing I can remember is there were steps going up to the front door.

I remember one time I wasn’t looking, I’m still in that same habit not looking where I’m going, I fell down the steps and broke my nose. That I remember and that’s about all. I don’t remember anything about teachers.

When I went back a couple of months ago, I know that the building was still there but it’s not an elementary school anymore, it’s some kind of a special school for music for the city of Vienna.

**Paul:** What about religious life? What religion were you?

**Franz:** I was Protestant.

**Paul:** In what denomination?

**Franz:** In Austria they only had two denominations; one was abbreviated A.B. and the other one H.B. The A.B. is Augsburg Confession, translated and the H.B. is Swiss or Helvetian Confession. I belonged to the latter. The church was downtown.

Later on when I was in high school, religion was part of the instructions. The country is predominantly Catholic, Roman Catholic so our religion courses had to be on Saturday. I had to go downtown to the church for instruction on Saturdays. The others had during school hours, during the week.

**Paul:** Were your parents religious themselves or?

**Franz:** No, not particularly.

**Paul:** Can you describe a holiday celebration for me, maybe Christmas. How your family celebrated Christmas when you were growing up?

**Franz:** Yeah. Later on when I was maybe 10, maybe a little earlier, around that time, I used to go ice skating. Some skating ring always you have to take a street car subway to get there.

I remember very clearly, especially on Christmas Eve which was the main day when you celebrated on the eve Christmas Eve, coming back. My parents were glad to send me skating on Christmas Eve, then they could fix the tree and everything else.

I very clearly remember that year after year coming back, getting off the subway and walking a few blocks to where I lived. It was dark at that point in time and you could see trees being lit up in different houses as you went by.

I remember that coming home and the tree would, I suppose by the time I arrived and it was later, but I remember we always had a big tree and it is behind closed doors. Then they lit the tree with live candles, which now I think what a fire hazard. Then the door was opened and there’s the tree with the presents underneath. That was on Christmas Eve.

**Paul:** Is there a Christmas present that sticks out in your mind? Something you got one year that made an impression?

**Franz:** No. I don’t think I was coddled with a lot of presents. I think my parents were [frugal 00:12:45], I don’t remember any present ever.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit about high school or what your equivalent to our high school would be.

**Franz:** The high school, which is eight years, junior and senior high school, that was all in one building. That was a little ways maybe a mile a mile and a half and you had to walk, you could take a street car, I had to walk.

In Austria three were three types of high schools or middle and high schools. One was where they concentrated on engineering, mathematics and engineering type of subjects. Another one was Latin, Greek, the Roman languages. The third type was in between, a little bit of both. I went to the former. I went to an engineering type of school.

We were there eight years, I was there eight years. I think there were small classes. I know that in high school, the last four years, there were only about maybe 20 or 21 students. That was the only class, eighth grade or seventh grade or whatever it might have been, no more than one. We had one girl in our class, rest were all boys.

One thing was interesting about the high school, I forget now what grade it was, maybe the equivalent of fifth or sixth grade. That particular school had made arrangements and then we spent one week out in the county, learning everything about real life out there.

We learned surveying out there and animals that might be crawling around, we had lessons under the trees. It was very nice. I think it was the only school in Vienna that did that. Then I graduated in 36 I think it was.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit about the political climate in Vienna at that time? Because this is just the beginning of the end at this [inaudible 00:15:18].

**Franz:** Yes, that’s right.

**Paul:** Tell me what you remember specifically about that.

**Franz:** I remember, that goes even further back than that, I remember in 1927 I spent part of a summer in some camp not far from Vienna in July. While I was there they had a, I wouldn’t say typical, but they had a little revolution. The justice department building was burned down, I remember that. That was a little political upheaval at that time, that was in 27.

During high school, you asked about later on, I wasn’t particularly politically interested in politics but there were. Let me back up a little, my father was in the First World War and he was quite a strong monarchist even afterwards here.

I guess he was in the reserves, because I have a picture of him maybe in 1920, 21, which was after the First World War, being out there in the palace in front of some troops, where they say, “Burn all that stuff.” He was a monarchist type.

I remember in the 30s, there were several political parties. One was the one, I can’t think of the name now, but one was where Dolfuss was the Chancellor. He was, I suppose, calling him a dictator is a little bit strong but he was a strong person. I think that’s the beginning of the end of Austria, because he was assassinated, I don’t know when but in the mid 30s maybe.

Then the chancellor became a man by the name of Schuschnigg. It was during his regime that the Germans then came in. Both of them were fervent nationalists, Austrian nationalists. Then there were the other parties that, some were Nazi parties, some were communists they had some communists parties, they had some that were military oriented. That’s about all I remember.

I want to go back about something I was speaking about, it relates to political parties. In Vienna we had since the end of the First World War, we had a lot of, what is called here public housing, housing for low income families.

I think most of those years we had a socio-democratic regime, that would fit and huge projects and buildings all over the city. Many of them were put at strategic locations, like at the head of bridges, near bridges. In case of an uprising they could control the approaches to the city or give them strategic points.

They were designed, they had like a parapet on top. I’m not sure whether it was in 1927, there was another little uprising in 33 or early 30s where they used those buildings for that very purpose, the military.

I remember seeing the results of artillery shells going right through from one end to the other across -They had courtyards with arches and they go right through, in one and out the other. I remember that. That has a little bit to do with political parties.

**Paul:** Is this a scary time to be living in Vienna or did you …

**Franz:** No, I don’t think it was particularly scary. I didn’t pay much attention to tell you the truth.

**Paul:** What did your father think of all of this?

**Franz:** I don’t know, I don’t think we discussed it much. I was sort of oblivious, I was young and oblivious to all what was going around me. I wish now I hadn’t been.

**Paul:** It’s a very important time in history.

**Franz:** It was an important time in history, but I was just doing my thing and that was that. I was in school all those years.

**Paul:** Did you get a job when you got out of school?

**Franz:** No. When I got out of school, out of high school, I went to an engineering college, technical college, for one year. That was 36 to 37. At that point in time the political situation got more shaky and we had conscription in Austria, I guess ever since the end of the First World War.

I don’t know at what time they called you at the service, 18 I guess. I don’t think I was 18, but if you’re a high school graduate you could volunteer and get it over with and you can also choose the service that you wanted to be in. Would you believe they had a navy even in Austria on the Danube? A couple of ships.

In 37, my parents thought it be best to get the damn thing over with, because it looked pretty bleak. I signed up in the equivalent of Austria Officer Candidate School. You’re supposed to serve for a year. I was assigned to an engineering battalion building pontoon bridges.

That’s where I was at the time March 38 came along and Hitler took over, I was in the service, in the Austrian Army. My service ended traumatically, suddenly, we had to show German officers that came by to inspect all the time, how we built pontoon bridges.

All of us in the service there being young and stupid, we demonstrated how to build the bridges, but that was long before mechanized equipment was around so you had to carry all the component parts of a bridge from where it was stored to the water.

Some of those beams they use, on which the planks are laid on top, they’re all heavy so they have huge holes in them to lighten the weight. The way you carry them from where they were stored to the water is they put a big long pole through a hole up in front of the beam and another through a hole in the back. On each end of the pole there’d be one man. The pole would be lying across, what you call this here inside of your arms. That’s the way four people carrying one of those huge beams down to the water.

There was a little ways to the water and so we made-believe we were playing airplanes pilots, instead of banking around the curve walking. The beams started to slide, when it got to my arms I let go. It fell on my foot and I had several multiple fractures there. I ended up in the hospital and ultimately I got a military discharge. That ended my military career.

**Paul:** Probably at a good time to end …

**Franz:** Probably at a very good time because that enabled me to be able, without any particular problems, to get out of the country.

**Paul:** When did you first want to leave the country?

**Franz:** It wasn’t my idea, it was my parents’ idea.

**Paul:** They’d been thinking about this all along?

**Franz:** I suppose so, but while I was in service of course there wasn’t anything that could be done about it anyhow. It was a combination of things that motivated my parents. One was the economic situation hadn’t been very good anyhow all along. That was still sort of the end of the depression at that time.

Then the military situation, no, the political situation, wasn’t all that good either. By the time I was in service Hitler had already invaded the Sudetenland and earlier, part of the [inaudible 00:24:48] and France. It got harder all the time. I think my parents thought that this was not a good place to be.

**Paul:** Did they have relatives in America?

**Franz:** No.

**Paul:** Then why America? Why did they want to come to America?

**Franz:** I guess you should know everybody wants to come to America I suppose.

**Paul:** Yeah but …

**Franz:** The opportunities.

**Paul:** Some people were going to South America at that time.

**Franz:** We didn’t have any relatives here but somebody, maybe you can call him a relative I had never heard of him before, some very distant somebody. You had to have an affidavit that you would not become a public charge to get a visa so they got that through him.

**Paul:** When you were a kid growing up, what did you know about America? How did you perceive America?

**Franz:** Nothing. The only thing is America is gangsters or Indians, that’s about all. I didn’t think much one way or the other.

**Paul:** The movie has colored your view of America.

**Franz:** I’m not even sure about movies I think it was more books. I had no particular feelings one way or the other. I know now especially that my parents were right, that there was no future there. I do know that it was difficult. If you had a job you better hang on to it for the rest of your life. That wasn’t too good an idea.

**Paul:** When the decision was finally made to come to America was there a long gap of time while they were trying to get papers? Of course this is a rather tumultuous time.

**Franz:** Yeah it was. I think I applied for the visa soon as I got out of the army, which must have been in the late spring or early summer of 1938. The political climate got worse at that point in time. We found out the visa wasn’t available yet, you had to wait.

I think it was September of 38 that’s when Hitler went into some other country there, maybe the rest of Czechoslovakia, some place. My parents decided we better get out because they were calling up more men for the service.

I went to Budapest where I had cousins, my father’s brother lived there and his family. I spent three months there. The situation got even worse by that time. I guess my uncle, probably in consultation with my parents, decided it was better to go out and get to the Western world, to England. I had some friends in England.

The only way you can get from Budapest to the Western world, without going through German territory was by boat through Italy or cross some other countries into France. That was all German dominated, some of those countries.

I think they wouldn’t let me stay in Budapest longer than three months, the authorities, so I spent a short time in Zagreb Yugoslavia. I don’t remember anything about it other than having been there.

Then, what I now think was in the nick of time, took a train, it was through Italy I think into France and then I went on to England. I don’t recall exactly when I came to England but I stayed in England until February 1940.

**Paul:** This is taking a spun of time.

**Franz:** Yeah it’s taking a spun of time, about a year maybe.

**Paul:** Was the intention to meet your parents in England? Were you intending to all travel together to this country?

**Franz:** I’ve been asking myself that same question. I think the answer was no. I’m not aware of it, but my parents I think felt they were too old to go all this adventure and they preferred to stay there. That’s what I think. I don’t think we ever discussed it and I don’t recall ever anything about meeting my parents some place or rather.

**Paul:** What do you remember about this trek across to Europe, being on the train? This is quite an adventure.

**Franz:** Yeah. The only thing I remember really is leaving Vienna on the train for Budapest. After the train left, I really felt lost all by myself there going into an adventure and I felt very sad and lost. After that, I was on my own and I don’t remember too much about any emotional thing.

**Paul:** Were you in communication with your parents during this whole process?

**Franz:** Yeah. At least until the war broke out in England in 1939. Then we were restored the communication through some friends I had in Switzerland.

**Paul:** When had you booked your steamship ticket? Did you wait to get to England to do that or was that already …

**Franz:** I don’t know, I don’t remember anything about steamship ticket. It may have been through some refugee organization probably in England, I’m not sure.

**Paul:** Do you remember what kind of luggage you were carrying or what you were bringing with you to America?

**Franz:** No, not really. All I remember is I had a photo album, I had a stamp collection and I had $12. That’s about all I remember. I’m sure it wasn’t much, but I remember those things.

**Paul:** Were you in South Hampton is that?

**Franz:** No, I was in Maidstone, England which is in Kent. I spent, it must have been early 39, about a year.

**Paul:** Where did you live while you were in England?

**Franz:** I had some friends in Maidstone that’s why I was there, that’s why I stayed with them. As an alien I couldn’t work but I did some work right after the war broke out. I’m not sure whether I volunteered or whether they paid me, but I worked in the blood transfusion center, sort of a war effort.

**Paul:** Did you speak any English?

**Franz:** I had English in school for a number of years. French from probably eight years in school, maybe more, and English four or five years. I spoke some, but I learned it more there.

**Paul:** What other recollections you have of the war breaking out in England? What do you remember, if anything? Did you see anything firsthand or?

**Franz:** No, but of course you were shocked really, I was shocked. Yes and no, I mean it was expected. No, the only thing I remember is blackouts. I’m proud of the fact that I don’t get lost, I have a good sense of direction.

I remember in one of those blackouts I visited somebody, took a bus to the end of the line and it was an evening. I tried to remember exactly when I get off the bus, I go straight and then I turn left. That when I come back to the bus I know, it was pitch black. All of a sudden coming back to the bus I got lost and I found myself in front of a tree. I heard the bus later so I followed the sound.

**Paul:** This is a scary time in England.

**Franz:** It was a scary time and it was dark, the blackout and it was winter time anyhow, it was dark. In Maidstone there weren’t any air raids or anything of that sort that I remember. I’m quite sure there wasn’t. I was also quite involved in the boy scouts, both at home in Austria and in England, and I made a lot of friends that way.

**Paul:** Because you were Austrian, did you experience any prejudice in England because of the war and any kind of thing like that?

**Franz:** No, none at all. I guess the people I associated with, who they associated with, were all quite liberal maybe or something I don’t know. The answer to your question is no.

**Paul:** Because you’re what 20 at this point?

**Franz:** Yeah.

**Paul:** You say you were associated with the boy scouts. What were you doing because that’s old to be a boy scout, isn’t it?

**Franz:** I started out as a boy scout at home and then became a Boy Scout troop leader. I went to international jamborees. The only thing I remember about scouts in England was I went to some summer camp or some camp, must have been in the summer time, and camped there with them. I don’t recall being involved too much in any particular troop or anything.

**Paul:** Do you miss your parents and your home in Vienna or are you still pretty much caught up in the adventure of it all?

**Franz:** The older I get the more I miss my parents. I really miss them more now than I did. No, not Vienna I don’t miss at all.

**Paul:** When you were in England [inaudible 00:35:34]?

**Franz:** In England? I suppose I did.

**Paul:** You said you were communicating with them though?

**Franz:** Yeah I was communicating with them, but I suppose I did.

**Paul:** You may not know the answer to this, but when you were in England waiting for all of these to leave, did you realize that they weren’t going to be coming with you?

**Franz:** I think that began to sink in a little more especially with the war having broken out, that was virtually impossible at that point in time.

**Paul:** When was it that you finally went to get the boat?

**Franz:** In February of 1940 I remember going. First I had some very distant cousins in Edinburgh. I went from Maidstone to Edinburgh to visit and then to Liverpool where the boat was leaving. That was in February 40.

**Paul:** Did your friends come down to say goodbye to you? Do you remember any of that?

**Franz:** I don’t suppose so, I don’t remember. Not the ones from Edinburgh. I think the ones from Maidstone, because I didn’t get back to Maidstone I just went directly to Liverpool.

**Paul:** Do you know what the name of the boat was?

**Franz:** I think it was Cunard line and I think it was Britannia, but I’m not sure about that. I don’t have any records of it either.

**Paul:** Do you remember where you slept on the boat?

**Franz:** No. I don’t remember, it’s sad but I don’t remember a thing about the whole passage except arriving in New York in the harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty in the morning. I don’t remember where I slept, what we ate, anything. Maybe it was too exciting or something, I don’t know.

**Paul:** Did you get sick maybe?

**Franz:** No.

**Paul:** Do you remember how long it took?

**Franz:** No, but it must have taken five, six days probably. I don’t know whether we came in a convoy, probably not. I remember absolutely nothing. My kids have asked me and I just don’t remember anything about that.

**Paul:** You do remember coming into New York harbor?

**Franz:** I remember coming in New York harbor in the morning, it was morning. Seeing the Statue of Liberty, that I remember and of course should because you never forget that.

**Paul:** You probably don’t remember who else is traveling other?

**Franz:** I haven’t the slightest idea. I don’t think I knew anybody on the boat.

**Paul:** What happened then? What happened when you came to New York harbor, you saw the Statue of Liberty, then what happened?

**Franz:** I had several friends that had immigrated to the United States before I did. One of them was supposed to meet me at the boat when I arrived. For some reason and I still haven’t the slightest idea, I didn’t get off the boat and I came to Ellis Island. I remember I asked somebody to get in touch with this guy that I wouldn’t be there, that I wouldn’t get off the ship.

Then I ended up here in Ellis Island. I haven’t the slightest notion whether I stayed here for one hour or six hours. I don’t think it was over night, because I do remember taking a ferry boat back to Manhattan from here to the Battery and it was evening.

I’ve been in touch with this friend of mine that was supposed to meet me. He doesn’t recall at all anything about meeting me, even earlier when he should have met me and I wasn’t there. Again this is a blank.

They lived in New York and I stayed with him for a week. His brother was a classmate of mine in Vienna, we were close friends. I thought this friend of mine, his brother was in New York at the time, but when I ask him he said no, he wasn’t. I stayed in New York for a week. Then I left and went to Utica, New York.

**Paul:** Do you have any recollections of being here at all in Ellis? What it looked like?

**Franz:** No, nothing.

**Paul:** Nothing? Like the ship just kind of …

**Franz:** It was overwhelming. The more I thought about it more recently, the more I think the reason I was here was because of my military service was in Austria, but I wouldn’t be sure. That’s the only explanation I have being here in the first place.

**Paul:** Do you remember any questions?

**Franz:** I don’t remember, absolutely nothing.

**Paul:** Why did you go to Utica?

**Franz:** I went there because I had a job. I think, that I’m reasonably sure, I got through some refugee organization.

**Paul:** While you were in New York, they hooked you up with …

**Franz:** I don’t know whether it was while I was in New York because I don’t recall going to any here in New York. I don’t recall going to any in England either, but it’s more likely.

It is possible that this refugee organization paid for my passage. It is possible that that may have had a bearing on my being interviewed or whatever, interrogated here in Ellis Island. Because maybe the question was, “Can I support myself?” That’s another possibility. I don’t remember the specifics.

**Paul:** [Inaudible 00:41:48]?

**Franz:** Yeah. I had this job that was promised to me there and that’s why I went to Utica.

**Paul:** Before you left for Utica you said you were in New York for a week?

**Franz:** Yeah for about a week.

**Paul:** What do you remember about that week, if anything? Did you see anything in New York?

**Franz:** Yes, obviously all the skyscrapers and all. I don’t really remember much, but I just imagine that I must have been all over the place down here and looked at everything.

I remember trying to make a contact with that person that gave me the affidavit. He had some factory here in New York in Lower Manhattan, they lived in Long Island. I think I called him and he said, “Come and visit me at my office.” I’m reasonably sure I did.

I don’t think he was particularly interested in me or my future and I couldn’t care less. I vaguely remember that I ask him for some little bit of money that I can buy a radio and that upset him. I think that was the last time I ever touched base with him.

Then I went to Utica on a bus. Utica is in the Mohawk valley, you come in town and you see the city in the morning. It was an overnight bus. It was a beautiful day and see the city down there in the valley. It was nice.

**Paul:** How long did you stay in Utica?

**Franz:** Just about a year and then I was drafted in the American army.

**Paul:** Tell me a little about that year in Utica. Of course you’re rather a cosmopolitan person, you’ve lived in Vienna and been in a lot of places and Utica is right in the middle of nowhere.

**Franz:** That’s right, but it’s [inaudible 00:43:55] experience.

**Paul:** Tell me about the job that you got?

**Franz:** The job was a very simple job. It was in a radiator factory in the lab. I was testing sand before it goes from the foundry. That’s about all I did this year. It was nothing special, they taught me that in the first day. I made some contacts there, I met some nice people.

**Paul:** Where did you live while you were …?

**Franz:** At first I stayed in the Y when I arrived and probably, I don’t know maybe a month perhaps. Having being an outdoor type I somehow got connected with a hiking club in Utica. Through that connection I moved to, one of the old ladies that owned the house there offered me a room there in the house. That’s where I stayed. She became my adopted grandmother.

**Paul:** Do you remember what her name was?

**Franz:** Yeah, her name was Sarah [Maberry 00:45:04]. She was a music teacher, piano teacher. She was a real motherly type, just what I needed I guess. I again got involved with some scouts. I got involved with the church group.

**Paul:** The Helvetian?

**Franz:** No, that was Lutheran. There was just a Lutheran church, Missouri’s happen to be -No it wasn’t Missouri’s but Lutheran Church. I was involved there and you meet all kinds of people. Utica is not far from the Adirondacks, whenever I could I hitchhiked up in Adirondacks and spent the weekend there.

**Paul:** Are you writing to your parents?

**Franz:** Yeah, through Switzerland.

**Paul:** That’s right because it was war time so they’re probably.

**Franz:** That was war time over there, it hadn’t, there was no …

**Paul:** [Inaudible 00:46:09] were getting mail over there?

**Franz:** Yeah it was through Switzerland.

**Paul:** They were actually receiving?

**Franz:** Yeah, they were receiving mail and I was receiving mail.

**Paul:** They were still in Vienna?

**Franz:** They were still in Vienna.

**Paul:** What were you telling them about America?

**Franz:** I don’t remember.

**Paul:** Did you want them to think that this was a wonderful thing for you? Did you want them to think that you missed them terribly? Do you remember how you were … ?

**Franz:** Now you put me on the spot, because obviously I should say yes I miss them terribly and I probably did.

**Paul:** Not necessarily.

**Franz:** No, I probably did, I don’t remember, but I probably did.

**Paul:** I’m just curious how you wanted them to perceive you in America?

**Franz:** I don’t know I imagine I just described what I was doing. Maybe they asked some questions and I answered them. I haven’t the slightest idea. Later on, unfortunately now, I threw away all the letters I had them all collected and I threw them away. I figured, what’s the use?

**Paul:** You get drafted. This is an interesting twist of your story.

**Franz:** I get drafted. I got my call and since I wasn’t a citizen I could refuse it, but my chance of becoming nationalized later would have been somewhat less I’m sure. I didn’t mind. I figured, well it’s another adventure. I was drafted on April fool’s day, April 1st 1941.

**Paul:** Into what division of military?

**Franz:** Into the sea coast artillery, strictly access, nobody asked. If they asked they didn’t pay attention to the answer anyhow. I was drafted and I went to Fort Eustis in Virginia for basic training.

Then I ended up in the Harbor Defenses of Boston. I was there on and off three years. Then I went to some special training back to Virginia, back to Boston again and back to Virginia again, back and forth.

**Paul:** What are you thinking about what’s going on in Europe at this time? In 1941 and 42, what are you thinking?

**Franz:** In 41 when I was in the service I became more conscious of the fact that it was getting worse. The war had already broken out in Europe of course. The idea at that time was, you’re in for one year here and then you’re out of the service again. Everybody was looking forward to April 1st 1942.

I remember that the war broke out and that was the end of that. That didn’t faze me. I was made a staff sergeant fairly quickly because I think I was a little more adept at adjusting to the military situation than a lot of the draftees. That’s why I went to all those specialist schools.

Then I wanted to go to OCS and of course without being a citizen you couldn’t. They changed the laws, it must have been early 42, that if you were in the service, you were an alien who went into service you could become a citizen right away. In May 42 I became a citizen, just about two years after I arrived.

**Paul:** Was that always your intention?

**Franz:** Yes.

**Paul:** There was never any intention that you would return to Vienna after the war?

**Franz:** No, that was definitely.

**Paul:** You were here to stay?

**Franz:** I was here to stay. I became a citizen in May and then in the summer or fall I went to OCS again in Virginia in Fort Monroe.

**Paul:** Did you ever see your parents again?

**Franz:** No, never did. Then when war broke out, the communication, even through Switzerland, became more difficult. I was in service I didn’t write. This grandmother, Sarah Mapary, communicated with them. Then that stopped, I don’t know when, but it stopped.

The only conclusion I came too later on when it was 43 I guess, that -My parents moved from where I had been brought up to a different part of the city, that I knew because had the address. It was near railroad station, one of the bigger railroad stations. My guess is that we bombed the hell out of that whole section there. They were victims of that.

**Paul:** It wasn’t a matter of after the war you then regained communication with them, you just …

**Franz:** No, I never did. Frankly, somehow or rather I decided what’s passed is passed and I didn’t want to make any effort. Because they could have communicated, they could have found me through this Ms. Maberry, but they didn’t.

I figured it was very likely that they were bombed out. What’s the use of trying? I figured it’s no use trying to figure out what happened. I broke with the past.

**Paul:** When was the first time you returned to Austria?

**Franz:** All depends, at the end of the war -I have to give you a little, can I back up a little bit?

**Paul:** Sure.

**Franz:** I was in the coast artillery. After OCS they sent me to Los Angeles. I was stationed there in the Harbor Defense in Los Angeles. Then from there I was send to the Aleutian Islands. This is a God forsaken place.

I tried, ever since I got out of OCS, to be assigned to Europe so I can do some more good with language and all that. I got nowhere. When I was in the Aleutians, one day my battery commander says, “Lieutenant, we need to take my cat to the colonel down in the other end of the island he wants to mate his cat with mine.” I said, “Yes Sir.”

I took a jeep and the cat and went down the other end of the island. That colonel, he was the colonel down there, he had just gotten a package of food from the States and he offered me candy or whatever, I don’t remember what it was. He said, “Sit down.” I sat down, I was a lowly second lieutenant and he was a full colonel.

We got talking, he was very friendly, and I bitched about the fact that there I was stuck in the Aleutian Islands when I could be better used and I got nowhere. He said, “I’ll fix you up.”Apparently he had a buddy in the war department G-2, military intelligence section that he communicated with.

Within three weeks I was flown out of there back to the States and I went to military intelligent school here for three months. Then went to Europe. This is back to Europe now, back to your question that is when did I see Austria again.

**Paul:** Is this still during the war or is this after the war?

**Franz:** No, this was in 43. I left the Aleutians on February 29th 44, I know it was leap year. It was that date February 29th that I left came back to the States.

In the summer of 44, I went back to Europe after having been there for three months in school. I was assigned to 101st Airborne Division. The military intelligence service had a staging area in England from which they assigned you to different outfits.

I was supposed to interrogate prisoners of war, that was my job. Then you get attached to different units. I was attached to 101st Airborne. I joined the 101st Airborne in England. They were supposed to first go into, this was after the invasion of Normandy.

First they were supposed to go into somewhere near Paris or somewhere. They were all ready to go and the [inaudible 00:55:33] got there first and then had to go someplace else and [inaudible 00:55:35] got there first. Finally we did go and went into Holland. We were there for three months. I came back to England, to France to [inaudible 00:55:49] to staging area.

Then the Battle of Bulge broke out and I went to Bastogne. Then coming back from Bastogne, I was assigned to 12th Corp. some headquarter, and went with them through Germany.

At the end of the war I was stationed in Regensburg, which was Bavaria just north of Austria a little bit. The day the war ended another fellow and I, we decided we’d go to Austria and just look around. We had permission, took a jeep and went into Austria and got the lake district Salzburg in that area there. Spent maybe a week or so just having a good time.

I got as far east as Linz on the Danube, but never further, the Russians were beyond that. That was my first reentry into Austria right after the war. Then I had some cousins in Prague and some of I did communicate with them after the war when I was in Regensburg.

We met in some town in Czechoslovakia, I forget now where. That was weird because I had to drive through the Russian occupancy, all the Russian troops were there along the way. I never got back into Austria. The first time I really went back was in 76.

**Paul:** You went into Vienna?

**Franz:** In 76? Yes. In 76, my wife and I, we spent a month in Austria.

**Paul:** In our last two minutes here. Tell me what it was like to be back in Vienna, if it had any emotional impact on you at all?

**Franz:** No, not particularly.

**Paul:** Of course you had seen a great deal of a life since … ?

**Franz:** In fact, I was amazed really how little it had changed. I looked at it with different eyes and everything was smaller. I had no sentimental attachment to it. Vienna was never my great love, Salzburg, in the mountains, I was always more interested in that anyhow. That’s the first time and since then I’ve been back two or three times.

**Paul:** Are you glad that your parents made the decision to send you off to America?

**Franz:** Yes indeed. I don’t know what I would be, where I would be, what I would do if hadn’t come here. I’m sure it wouldn’t have been as good or as pleasant or as nice.

**Paul:** Do you think things would have been a lot different had your parents come here with you?

**Franz:** I don’t know because they were getting older and it’s much more difficult to adjust. I don’t know how they felt about losing me, their only child. They must have felt probably worse than I did in a way. Had they come with me, it might have been easier for them. No, I just adjusted, I figured I’d take care of myself and tried to do that.

**Paul:** Only children are always so independent.

**Franz:** Maybe, I don’t know.

**Paul:** Mr. Vidor I want to thank you very much for giving us an hour of your time and letting us have you tell your story for us on tape for the Oral History Project. Thank you.

**Franz:** It was my pleasure.

**Paul:** This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Franz Vidor on Monday July 26th 1993 at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, up in the recording studio with the portable equipment. Thank you.