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Question: ...when they came to Burgenland, or did they live a long time or (???)¹ in Burgenland, or...

Answer: I believe that my, I can only go back as far as my grandparents, I think my grandmother was...

(Kurze Pause am Band, Aufnahmefehler o.ä.???)

A: My mother married a man from Budapest, but they lived in Schlaining then also, and that's where I was born.

Q: So do you have any childhood memory of Schlaining or...?

A: I really do not remember very much, I was six years old when we left, and probably I should remember more than I do, but...I might have a mental block because times were not the happiest then and maybe I blocked it all out. I do have a memory of the Nazi soldiers coming, knocking on the door, and my mother – I must have been maybe four years old – and I do remember my mother telling me I was not to speak. And they came in and searched the house. I think after that, I don't remember, I know that we left, I think we went to Vienna and left from Vienna to the United States. I don't remember the trip on the ship, I have a picture of it, I know I was there, I don't remember it. I do remember when we arrived here, we came in June 1938, and we, my mother had two brothers living here who helped us come over. And I must, I must tell you that my mother told me over the years that had it not been for her Christian friends in Schlaining, we would not have gotten out.

Q: So what... How...?

A: But we did have the conn... the family in New York who was... who gave us the visa... the...

Q: I think you needed a kind of an invitation?

A: We needed – I forget what it was called, but they would be...

Q: An affi... Was it an affidavit²?

A: Affidavit, that's what it was, yes, yes...

Q: So did you have brothers or sisters?

A: I had, I had a half-sister, and my parents were divorced. And my sister went with my father, and I went with my mother. And...I...we came to the United States, and they went to Budapest, and I have not heard from either one. As a matter of fact, I'm trying to find my sister.

Q: so your parents were divorced before '38?

A: When I was three years old...

Q: Oh yeah...quite uncommon at the time...

A: I'm sorry...?

Q: Divorce – that was not so...

¹ Mit (???) markierte Stellen sind akustisch unverständlich

² **Affidavit** - a sworn statement in writing; a declaration in writing, signed and made upon oath before an authorized magistrate. (Source: *Ultralingua Online English Language Dictionary*)

A: No, it was not common at the time

Q: I can imagine in a small town like yours...

A: My father was an artist, he (???) some painting in the Catholic church here (???). And he travelled a lot, my mother travelled with him and I think my sister and I were left with my grandmother in Schlaining. I know I certainly was when I was an infant, they might have taken my sister along, but...

Q: So, you went alone with your mother to the States?

A: Yes, and I went with my uncle, who also lived in Schlaining.

Q: Do you..

A: My grandmother, my grandmother went to the United States a few years earlier, 'cause her sons decided it was time to get her out before anything happened.

Q: So, obviously, there was some feeling even before it happened '38?

A: I think so, I think so. That's why they insisted she leave.

Q: So do you remember anything from the first days in the... from the first years in the States?

A: That I do remember, yes. Like I said, I was six years old and it was June, so I was going to start school in September, so my uncle spent the summer trying to teach me English. I met some other little girls there and I learned it quickly enough, but I was different when I went into first grade. I didn't look like the American children that went to first grade and my English was not certainly as perfect as theirs. And I, I think I became very shy at that time. I was afraid to speak, I was afraid somebody would laugh at me. My mother hand-made all my clothing, which was totally different from what the American children were wearing. I was self-conscious, I became very shy, and I don't think I was that way before. But I adjusted pretty well, people were nice...most people were very kind, even the children.

Q: Was it a normal American school, or?

A: Yes, yes, it was a public school.

Q: Did your mother speak any English?

A: She went to night school and learned English, and she went right to work.

Q: (???)

A: When she first came here, she couldn't speak English, she went to work for...as a helper to an old lady who spoke Jewish, which was similar to German, and she was...my mother was able to communicate. And that was a very hard time for me, because she had to be there all the time, she only came home on the week-end and I had never been without my mother before...

Q: So where did you stay?

A: I stayed with my grandmother and my aunt and uncle. So that was another adjustment that I had to make at that time. So those memories are clear.

Q: So, when you went to school, did you want to be American or...?

A: Oh yes, I really...I was ashamed to be spoken to in German. I don't like to think about that now, because I might have hurt my grandmother's feelings or my mother's feelings without even knowing it, but I guess I was very self-conscious about it.

Q: Did the other kids know who you were or...I mean, did the teacher explain...?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes? They accepted you?

A: They did, they did. Some of them took advantage of my "sensitivity" and put a little fear into me. As one thing I remember quite clearly this girl. There was a water fountain in the schoolyard, it was broken and I didn't know it. I went there to get a drink and this girl standing there and she said "You broke that! I'm gonna tell the teacher, you're gonna be in big trouble!" Well, for weeks, I didn't tell anyone, I didn't tell my mother, I just couldn't go to sleep at night, I was so afraid that something terrible was going to happen to me. I'd might have associated it with the Nazis, I don't know, but in a six-year-old's mind, this girl was...had this threat hanging over, she threatened to tell on me and I get into big trouble, so... That passed.

Q: Did your mum talk to you about what happens...?

A: Not very much, and I didn't ask too many questions (which I regret now). I wish I knew more than I...She answered the questions that I asked her, I don't remember really asking her too many questions about what happened, and why we had to leave.

Q: But she never talked...?

A: No.

Q: Did she ever come back?

A: No. She unfortunately passed away when she was still quite young. She was only fifty-six, but she...No, she never came back.

Q: And your grandmother?

A: No, she hadn't come back.

Q: Did your grandmother talk about it or...?

A: No, I don't think my grandmother experienced anything like that...

Q: Of course, she left... (???)

A: She came before the *Anschluss*. She would talk about her life here, she had a pretty hard life. They lived in - I found the house -I'd love to go in there. I would love to go and see it. You wanna hear what happened yesterday?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, I thought it was a certain house, Nr. 4. But there were two number fours. So we went to the pink house that was number four and Eva³ went and knocked on the door, and a lady came out and...

(Interview unterbrochen, jemand scheint ins Zimmer zu kommen)

A: And the lady came out of the house, and I, in my broken German, I tried to explain to her that I think I was born in this house and I was six years old when I left, and she looked at me and she said "Are you Marika?" She was my little friend. She said this was not the house, she pointed...she showed us the house where it was. She said "I used to walk over there all the time and we would play together"

Q: But you don't remember?

A: I don't, I don't. But it was a very emotional, very thrilling and exciting thing.

Q: Are you going back there?

³ nicht sicher wegen Name, klang aber stark wie „Eva“ – ihre Tochter oder sonstige Begleitung?

A: Yes, yes. I'd like to speak to her some more, and hopefully I can get into the house – the real house that I was born in.

Q: So you didn't go back yet to your...?

A: No, we had to...we had another appointment. We visited *Herr und Frau Kropf*, so we didn't have the time. I'm on my own for this one, I think. Eva did the first part, I had to do this by myself.

Q: So how did it feel when you met this person?

A: It's really hard to describe, it's a very, very emotional thing. It was an unbelievable thing, it was like in a dream. It doesn't seem real, it doesn't seem real that I'm in Schlaining. A place that I don't remember, but I know I was born here. I played on these streets, my mother was here, my father was here, my grandmother. I brought pictures along, just for the background, so I can see where they sat and where they went. I haven't gotten around to doing that yet, but it's...I guess, it's a "once in a lifetime"-thing.

Q: Would you have come to Schlaining if there hadn't been this meeting? Would you have come (???)

A: We were planning to, but it would not have been the same. This is very special.

Q: Did you intend for a long time to do that or is it...?

A: Well, I met...Regina contacted me...

Q: I meant come on a holiday here once?

A: Oh, we were planning to do that, yes. We have been talking about it several years now. And we were planning, we didn't have a date set, nothing, no real commitment, but we were planning.

Q: It wasn't like you said "No, I never want to go there"?

A: Oh no, I did want to come, I did. I have no bad feelings.

Q: Did your mother have any or did she...?

A: I don't think she had "bad feelings", I think "sad feelings" to have to leave the only home that she ever had and leave everything behind, but we got out. We did lose some family here who didn't make it out. I don't think she had bad feelings for the town, for Schlaining, it was her Christian friends here in Schlaining who helped us get out. She had nothing but good feelings, and good thing to say, about all the people here. So she, she didn't...she probably would have come back, had she had the opportunity and the money. But she didn't make it back. Had she lived longer, maybe we would have made the trip together. No, she had no bad feelings about the people here. It was not the town's fault what was done.

Q: So, you told me you came to New York and went to school there. So did you stay for the whole time in New York?

A: Yes, we lived in New York the whole time, until I got married, then my husband was in the Air Force, so we moved around a bit and came back to the New York area because the family was there. We settled in New Jersey first, and then we moved out to Pennsylvania.

Q: What's "home" for you now?

A: Well, Pennsylvania is "home", but...

Q: ..."Heimat" ...?

A: ...the roots are New York, yes.

Q: How do your children feel about it? I can actually see that they are interested.

A: Oh, they were the ones that started us thinking and planning on coming. Not necessarily that they would come along, but they were the ones that insisted that we have to make the plans to come. And then when this opportunity came, they all wanted to come.

Q: But they are interested in the family history?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Your daughter has been back before, hasn't she?

A: Yes, she was here 20 years ago. She came right after College with a friend, they travelled through Europe and she said that she would like to go to Schlaining. And at that time, we still had some contacts here, so she was able to stay with friends of the family in Schlaining.

Q: Yes, she showed me the photographs. So your mother had still always contact with...?

A: Yes, she corresponded with her friends here. There were really truly no hard feelings for the people here.

Q: Do you think your children will come back again? And you?

A: I would like to, I would like to.

Q: What did you expect before you came here?

A: I didn't know what to expect. I...the whole thing is still unreal to me. I wake up in the morning and say to myself: "I'm in Schlaining, this is where I was born! This is where my mother walked and where I played!" I have to keep telling myself this is where I am. It's the most exciting emotional thing, it really is. I don't know how else to describe it.

Q: You will become a celebrity of Schlaining. It will become so exhausting!

A: I'm enjoying every minute of it!

Q: When you were at the school yesterday, were there pictures? I haven't seen the exhibition yet. Were there pictures of what you thought would be your parent's house?

A: ...across the street?

Q: No, the exhibition

A: No we didn't do the exhibition yet.

Q: So that was someone else...

A: No, but you know, last night, when we came back from Mr. and Mrs. Kropf, we had to go straight to the restaurant, and we saw Maria, which is *meine Freundin*...

Q: ...wiederentdeckte Freundin, ja...

A: ...and she took us into a gallery there with pictures, is that what you are talking about?

Q: No, the school (???) are two things: one is in town here...

A: it was (???) with pictures. She took us in to show us some of the pictures of the people.

Q: That's where we...today at four o'clock, I think.

A: Is that where we're going?

Q: Yes, I think so. You go there downstairs.

A: No, we...

Q: No, you came from the street. When you come from this side, you have to go downstairs

A: OK, we didn't go there.

Q: And also the school made a project...

A: We haven't gone there yet

Q: I see, because some went there yesterday with the Austrian television.

A: Oh...

Q: And the kids at school...I don't know, I haven't been there, they prepared something about every street in Schlaining and who lived there, something like that...

A: Oh.. I think...

Q: I think we're going there tomorrow.

A: Tomorrow, yes.

Q: In New York, where you lived, was this in the Jewish community? I mean when you arrived?

A: It wasn't totally Jewish, but I would say there were more Jewish people living there. It wasn't like a "ghetto" type of place where it's all Jewish people. It was a street with several tall apartment buildings and the whole family lived in the same street, not necessarily in the same house, but on the same street. My uncles, my aunts, and some friends from Schlaining moved to the same street. My grandmother had a friend here in Schlaining. I think they may have gone to school together, they lived together in Schlaining, always, raising their families. Then, when they went to the United States, they moved on to the same street, just a house apart. And they were always together, every afternoon they got together for their coffee and they were just always together.

Q: That sort of was a community of immigrants...

A: Yes, and anyone who came was just...the doors were always open.

Q: So there was helping each other and solidarity?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: But the school, it wasn't a special (???) school in this area?

A: No, it was a public school and there were all religions in there.

Q: Did it take very long for you to adjust or to...?

A: I don't think it took too long. I felt, you know, like I said before, a little bit out of place, because I looked different and I talked different. I think my personality probably changed. But it didn't take too long to adjust. I just talked last year when my granddaughter in fifth class was studying World War Two and they wanted to have some grandparents or friends or any relations to come in and talk and she asked me if I would come in. That's pretty much what I talked about, my coming here and starting school...I made the newspapers then, too... There was a reporter there, I had no idea that she was taking pictures or anything and the next day, my granddaughter called and she said "I went to school and my friend came with a newspaper!" And I was there hugging her...there was a picture in the paper.

Q: So it isn't just Schlaining?

A: No. No, but I'm a bigger celebrity here!

Q: I think I've asked you everything I wanted to know

A: OK

Q: Unless you have a story to tell me which I haven't asked you yet? Connected with Schlaining or...?

A: I don't think so. I think that's my final...my last act of connecting was my talking to the fifth-grade class. I don't talk about it too much.

Q: Yeah, that's one question. How does it feel, because certainly (???) and you have to talk about it, that must have been quite an emotional thing?

A: It is, it is. I think I'm getting through it okay. Every once in a while I get choked up, but that's...I'm thinking about the past, I'm thinking about my mother, my grandmother. I'm just so happy to be here.

Q: Do you have any relatives still here?

A: No.

Q: Somebody you really know?

A: No one that I know, but *Frau Kropf* remembered me as a child. She said she used to come and take me for a walk all the time, so I've now met two people who remembered me.

Q: You have to walk a little more long...

A: But there was the only family that was left here in Schlaining when we left was my grandmother's brother and his wife and his sister-in-law, who lived...and *Frau Kropf* told me that they lived in the house by the synagogue, so this right here must have been where they lived, my uncle... She said the house next to the synagogue was where they lived. But no, they perished in the... in the war. They did not leave, so we...lost them, and they were the only relatives left here in Schlaining. We had relatives in Vienna and...but they made it out.

Q: Where do they live now?

A: All over.

Q: All over the place?

A: Yes.

Q: It's interesting that you don't remember the ship, because most of the time ???

A: I don't...it's a total block. I was hoping that being here and seeing this streets would bring back memories to me...I can't say that it has. If I could get into the house, maybe that would do it.

Q: Why don't you go?

A: I might just knock on the door...well, let my husband knock on the door. He's good in knocking on doors.

Q: Now you know where it is?

A: I know where it is. Actually, Maria said she would telephone them, so...I will do that.

Q: Does it look this...well. Of course, you don't remember, but...you had a picture.

A: I have pictures and...

Q: Does it still look the same as it looks on the pictures?

A: No. Not if the picture that I have was taken right in front of the house we lived in. And I thought it was, but it doesn't look the same, but that was a long time ago, and you know, the houses are still there, but I'm sure they look different than they did then.

Q: Because some houses, some houses basically have been restored, but...

A: They still look the same on the outside

Q: So this one on the outside looks...?

A: Well, there was one when I was really little, I must have only been about a year old, and it had two steps. Now it could have been two-third, the house is kind of out of corner, and on the next corner is a door with two steps, so it could have been there, didn't have to be totally...

Q: (???) is here still in the Burgenland, two steps, they still have some in the north, with two steps, where the ladies clean the two steps. So it's also an excuse to hear the gossip in town, because you are cleaning the front steps...

A: But there aren't too many here with steps...

Q: Not here, still in the north, you see them more often, the front steps

A: I really, before I leave, I would love to go into that house.

Q: You have nearly a week, and if this woman phones I'm quite sure there shouldn't be any problem.

A: I would think that they will allow us to come in.

Q: (???)

A: I have a picture in my mind of the inside. I don't know if it's real, but I do have a picture in my mind, and if I could see it and if it's really true, then I've gotten some of my memory back. I'll let you know.

Q: Yes. I would like to know.

A: Yes. I will let you know.

Q: I am sure you will see it. Cause there shouldn't be any problem why not.

A: I wouldn't think, I wouldn't think they would object too much if we just went in to look around.

Q: (???) Well, thank you. (???)

A: My pleasure.

Q: Hope you got a little bit warmer, because the lights are warm, anyway, that you could warm up a little bit.

A: Yes, oh, I'm fine. It's fine, it was just wet and cold – no, it's great

(Ende Band 1 von 1)