

Anthony Matl  
5th Grade  
11 years old  
Incarnate Word Academy

## Immigration Interview

Interviewing: Peter Matl

Current Age: 40

Age when immigrated: 9-10

From: Czechoslovakia

How did it feel to immigrate?

*Once I knew we were going to the United States I was confused and happy.*

Why did you immigrate?

*One of the reasons my parents immigrated was because their children would not be allowed to go to college. The reason for this was because my parents were not members of the communist party and the communist have a rule that the children of people who were not members of the communist party could not send their children to college. Additionally my parents could not stand the communist propaganda that was taught to even elementary school age children. This involved being forced to sing songs of praise for evil men like Stalin and Lenin.*

Were you scared when you immigrated?

*A little bit.*

What is your story?

*The communist regime treated its citizens as property of the state. They wanted to prevent anyone from escaping the country. In order to escape, my parents had to resort to a bit of deception. If my parents were caught while trying to escape or even being suspected of trying to escape, they would have been thrown into a labor camp and my sisters and I would have been put in a state orphanage. So my parents told no one about it: not even my grandmother. My parents said we were going on vacation but my dad had to go on a separate vacation so it wouldn't raise suspicions. I went with my mom and my two sisters in my mom's car. We met up with my dad in Yugoslavia. He told me that we really weren't going on vacation: we were immigrating to the United States, and never going back. At first I thought about my friends and family, including my paternal grandmother, whom I would never see again. That made me pretty sad. In the morning we quickly crossed over to Austria and stayed in a special house for immigrants. We stayed there for more than 6 months until we were legally allowed to move to the United States. On the flight over to the United States, I imagined the United States as a place literally paved with gold. I was very excited! We arrived in New York and I was the first one to get a job. My job was to help the janitor of the apartment building.*

How long did it take you to fit in?

*It took many years. The most difficult part was learning to speak English without an accent.*