

DP-40
MARY YANKOVIK GRANDE
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YUGOSLAVIA, 1920
AGE 10
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

PHILLIPS: This Andrew Phillips. It's Monday the 28th of August, 1989. I'm with Mary Grande, spelled G-R-A-N-D-E. This is Interview Number 414 [DP-40] of the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Commencing this interview at a little bit before 12:30. Mrs. Grande, could you start by telling me what your name is and where you immigrated from.

GRANDE: What my maiden name was?

PHILLIPS: Uh, let me just get the microphone set up. That's fine.
That's fine.

GRANDE: My maiden name was, uh, Marija Yankovik. And we came, my mother and I came from Kandijaright over Novo Mesto, which is in Yugoslavia now. Originally it was Austria/Hungary. And we came here, we left there August 12, 1920 and we stayed a few days in Trieste, Italy.

PHILLIPS: Can you spell that for me, please?

GRANDE: T-R-I-E-S-T-E, Italy. And then we got on the ship. I believe the name of it was America. And it was right after World War One, so they stopped it in a lot of places. In London, and I suppose Paris, and all over. But part of our clothes was stolen in Trieste, so a fellow that my mother knew, he went in, I believe, in London, to buy some clothes for us. He could speak American. He came back from the States and who he bought back I don't remember. But, uh, he bought some clothes so we had something to change in to, to wear.

PHILLIPS: Before you tell us about travelling from your home country to the United States, could you tell us a little bit about what your home was like. For instance, start by telling us what your parents did for a living.

GRANDE: Well, my father was here in the States since 1911. In

fact, he was, during World War one here in the United States, and my mother was a farmer, and she raised some cattle and bartered with them.

PHILLIPS: Tell me what your home was like. What did it look like?

GRANDE: It was an average peasant home. It was three rooms, living room and kitchen in the middle and a small room on the side. And then facing what would be, I guess, the east side was half, was a barn where the cattle were.

PHILLIPS: So the cattle were actually, they were part of the house. The barn was part of the house.

GRANDE: Yes.

PHILLIPS: Explain that to us, what was that like.

GRANDE: Well, it was all one building and there were, later on they made that as all one room, but at that time we had a half a room was like for the barn, for the cows, or when my brother had horses it was there. And then there was a manure pile just to the side of it. And the majority of people had it similar like that.

PHILLIPS: Why were the houses and the barns constructed together like that?

GRANDE: It's been historical, as far as I know. I don't know any different. They don't do it now any more like that, but they used to.

PHILLIPS: And what was it like for a little girl to be living so close to the animals? Did you enjoy that, or were you--

GRANDE: Oh, yes. I enjoyed it because they were part of my life. In fact, I had a pet cow that I loved very much. And then the pigs were, the pig sty was just across from the kitchen door, just a little ways away. So all the animals were right close to the house. It was just a regular home life between the animals. You wouldn't bring them in the house, but you had them outside.

PHILLIPS: So you could, when you were sitting down to eat, for instance, you could look out the kitchen door and there were the pigs.

GRANDE: Right.

PHILLIPS: And you had names for the pigs?

GRANDE: Sometimes.

PHILLIPS: Did you like the pigs?

GRANDE: Oh, yeah. They used to slaughter them in winter and save some meat, cured it, for the summer. And some of it was for right away. Not too much fresh, but mostly cured.

PHILLIPS: How did they cure it?

GRANDE: Uh, salt and water and pack it, put some rocks on it and let it stay like that and then they would smoke it.

PHILLIPS: Did you used to help do that?

GRANDE: I had to help with, when they killed the pigs I had to catch the blood. I didn't like it, but that was part of my job.

PHILLIPS: Can you perhaps remember actually what you did? Can you describe that for us?

GRANDE: Well, when my mother got the fellow to kill the pig,

well, I had to hold the pan there and catch the blood, because they made the blood sausage out of that. Of course, they worked with it to make it good, and then they made the blood sausage and usually they fried the liver right away, good and fresh. That was really good. Then later, out of the other leftover pieces of regular meat they'd make smoked sausage and they'd smoke them and have them for during the summer. They had for special occasions, or when they had hired help. They had different pieces for different times.

PHILLIPS: So you got a lot of different, uh, meats. You got your money's worth out of those little pigs across the way from the kitchen.

GRANDE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And then, of course, we had the milk from the cows. We didn't kill the cows at home. It's very seldom we had beef but, uh, we chickens, so there was chicken meat and eggs and pigs and milk and cheese, whatever. (Sound of door opening in the background.)

MITZI STACKHOUSE: Hello.

GRANDE: Hi.

PHILLIPS: Just a small interruption there. Clyde and Mitzi

Stackhouse. Mitzi is the daughter--

GRANDE: Yeah.

PHILLIPS: --of Mrs. Grande. Okay. We were back, you were telling us a little bit about your life on your farm. Can you tell us, perhaps, how you warmed the place in the wintertime. What, was it cold for you?

GRANDE: Well, we, uh, heated it with the wood. There was times that my mother later on got some coal, but not very much. It was mostly wood. And the forest wasn't far from the house, so we used to get the wood there. And, of course, she had quite a bit hauled in the fall, so we would have wood.

PHILLIPS: You say hauled in the fall, she got the wood during the fall?

GRANDE: Yeah, so we'd have it all winter long. But she would cut it up herself, saw and chop it and, of course, later on when I was bigger I tried to help, which I wasn't much good. But I helped on the farm what little I could, and I had a mile or better to go to school.

PHILLIPS: Before you tell us about going to school, can you tell me what your life was like for your mother. She was, just one moment. We need for you to be as quiet as possible (addressing daughter and son-in-law).

GRANDE: Well, originally she was a widow and she married her husband. And then she bought this home. And then when she met-- (Break in tape.)

PHILLIPS: Okay, Mrs. Grande, could you continue please? I think we were just talking about how difficult it was for your mother. You said she was a widow and married again.

GRANDE: She was a widow, and she had two boys. One died before, but two of them were living, so she was raising them. And then I came along after she married with my husband, uh, my father. And, uh, he came to the States, and there was another sister born after that.

PHILLIPS: Could you tell me, I mean, it sounds like your mother must have been a tremendously strong and hardy woman to look after a farm and bring up these children and chop the wood. Was that normal?

GRANDE: Normal, normal. Most all the women did similar work, worked on the farm and just took care of everything. There was quite a few men that came to the States to make a livelihood and then probably come back, which a lot of them never did. A lot of them took their family over here, but a lot of them, some did help. But during the wartime they couldn't help back and forth at all. So my mother used to kind of sell milk and eggs and whatever she could, products. Not too much off the farm because that was our livelihood throughout the year. And you had to keep some for the seeds for next year.

PHILLIPS: Did you tell me how ,any were in your family? Could you tell me that?

GRANDE: Well, there was, actually, uh, four, five, with my mother. And then my sister died. Oh, she was about a year old when she died, so there was four of us. And, uh, we'd done the best we could, just like a lot of others.

PHILLIPS: Why did your sister die? What did she die of?

GRANDE: Childhood problems.

PHILLIPS: Was that very common in your village?

GRANDE: Well, there was quite a few children that did die. I don't know exactly what the cause or what it was, but she died.

PHILLIPS: Now, could you tell me, please, about going to school. You said you had to walk to school. Tell me about your school days.

GRANDE: Well, it was a good mile, or maybe further, past the cemetery, which I wasn't scared of. I didn't mind it a bit. And we crossed the track. And, of course, one time I didn't pay attention, the weather as bad and I had my head down, the rails were down that the train was going to come, and I bumped in there, which wasn't very good. But that woke me up to pay attention. But, uh, we walked back and forth. We didn't think nothing of it. That was normal. Nobody had cars or anything, and they didn't take them with the wagon because there was too much other work to be done. And then when my brother got older, he was quite a bit older than me, well, uh, he went and stayed with my aunt for a while on a different part of the area. And so my mother and I were alone for quite a while. And then she bartered with the cattle, and sometimes I'd stay with the neighbors overnight when she'd go and barter to different places. And all that she done, all of that

walking. She didn't have no other transportation. So then after the war, when my dad started writing about coming to the States, naturally we were all enthused about it. I don't know if my mother was enthused or not, but I was.

PHILLIPS: Tell me what it was like for you during the war. Do you have any memories of that?

GRANDE: Well, we had to have refugees from the Italian side, and the extra room that we had that was like, it could have been a summer kitchen. Well, we had to give that to the refugees and everybody had to share their home with the refugees. And, of course, they spoke quite a bit Italian, but we managed to understand each other pretty good.

PHILLIPS: Do you know, or do you remember, whether it was the government that forced you to take the refugees, or the people in the community just did it?

GRANDE: It was more or less a government decision that everybody would take some refugees. And we went down by the river which was about a good half-a-mile or further

to wash clothes on the rocks. I don't know if you ever heard of it or not, but that was, and then my mother would take them sometimes over to the hospital which was the other way. It wasn't as far. The only thing, she didn't like to go there because there was too much bloody stuff in there.

PHILLIPS: Why?

GRANDE: Uh, to wash clothes in shelter instead of outdoors.

PHILLIPS: But you said there was some bloody stuff in there. Why?

GRANDE: Well. it was a hospital, and they'd let women come there and wash clothes but naturally the hospital supplies were going through first.

PHILLIPS: So the rubbish and the effluent from the hospital was thrown into the river.

GRANDE: Yeah.

PHILLIPS: And so you probably tried to wash upstream from the

hospital.

GRANDE: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Definitely. And there was two hospitals. One on one side of the river was for men, and the one on the other side of the river was for women. They didn't have them all combined together like they have over here now. They have them like that now too over there. But at that time there it was each separate. And there was a castle right across the street from the hospital, which is now tuberculosis sanitarium. They don't have no castles no more. So there's quite a bit of changes any more, too.

PHILLIPS: But in those days who lived in that castle?

GRANDE: The Austrian people. They were the higher-ups from the Austrian, not government, but they were well-to-do and all that. But--

PHILLIPS: What language did you speak?

GRANDE: Actually Slovenian, and we had to take German.

PHILLIPS: Not Hungarian.

GRANDE: No, no. German was our main language, like in office or

different places, you almost had to learn how to speak German to get along with them.

PHILLIPS: That was the official language.

GRANDE: Right.

PHILLIPS: So how many languages were spoken, then, in your village?

GRANDE: The two. German and Slovenian.

PHILLIPS: Do you remember much, at that age, about any political structures or political problems, or--

GRANDE: All I kind of remember when, I guess it was about 1918 when they was going to overthrow Austria/Hungary altogether and change it to Yugoslavia.

PHILLIPS: When who was?

GRANDE: Well, the government was a changing deal because the--

PHILLIPS: I'm sorry, which government are you talking about?

GRANDE: Part of Yugoslavia. And the First World War started down in Sarajevo in what is now Yugoslavia. It's down more or less in the Serbian section. That's where Ferdinand got killed and World War One started. and I kind of remember when they had the meetings around 1918 and '19, '20 and after all that, well, it became Yugoslavia. So actually I was born in Austria/Hungary and came here from Yugoslavia.

PHILLIPS: Do you remember what your older relatives, or your mother, or people who came to your house, were talking about during those times? Were they afraid? Were they excited? What was the atmosphere like?

GRANDE: Well, during the war they were excited and all that but, uh, not too much, because you just had to go along. There were restrictions on certain things you couldn't buy. And, uh, the people that lived in the city, which was across the river from us, they didn't have food, and we had more food because we were out in the country. So for any small amount of food, either eggs, or chicken, or no matter what, or milk, they would

share clothing because they had plenty of clothes, but they had a hard time getting food.

PHILLIPS: And so that was, did that become a barter system that you, part of the barter system you were describing before, or not? Or did they pay money for the food?

GRANDE: Oh, no. It would be a bartering. I had, I usually had real nice clothes and, uh, when we were coming here to the States I'd have had beautiful clothes if it wouldn't be stolen in Italy while we were waiting for the ship. We had to stay there three days and they had us, they had my mother put the suitcases in the storage, and when she went to get them they were gone. Not only hers, a lot of others too.

PHILLIPS: Meanwhile, back before that happened, how did the people cross that river? Was there a boat, or a bridge, or--

GRANDE: Oh, further down there was a big ridge. There was, uh, or they went with wagons and whatever needed to be. Of course, you don't see the wagons now any more. All you see is cars. But at that time there was wagons.

PHILLIPS: When was it that you first learned that you were going to travel to America?

GRANDE: Oh, it was, oh, I guess about, not the very first part, but about towards the second part of 1920.

PHILLIPS: And tell me how you learned about that?

GRANDE: Well, my mother was telling me about the letters she got from my father, and then he sent us the tickets. And she had to go to different places to get it approved and all that. But, uh, not too many. Like some of them had to go through more than she did. And I didn't have to go anywhere because I was a minor. So, but on the passport, uh, her and my pictures were together, so everything went, whatever she got, it was for me, too.

PHILLIPS: And how about the other children?

GRANDE: Well, my oldest brother, he had to go in the army. See, they have to serve three years all the time. But, uh, he had to go in. And then the other one, they

was going to bring him here. And in the spring, when he was supposed to go kind of like to report for the army, he was on the wagon and he fell or jumped or whatever, and he got killed. So then this one got to come from the army earlier to take over the farm.

PHILLIPS: Because his brother had been killed.

GRANDE: Yeah.

PHILLIPS: And so did your brother accompany you to the United States?

GRANDE: No. He would have to come after it. It was just my mother and I that came then.

PHILLIPS: All right. Now, tell me what you actually had to, to do to get your papers.

GRANDE: Well, I wasn't with my mother too much, but she had to go through quite a bit of different courts and different offices and get approvals of, oh, different higher-ups that were in line with the travelling and all. So she had to make quite a few different trips.

PHILLIPS: Do you know how long it took her to get the approval?

GRANDE: Oh, it was about, the last month before we left it seemed like she was always coming or going to different places.

PHILLIPS: And meanwhile your father was in America?

GRANDE: Yeah.

PHILLIPS: So tell me about finally leaving. How did you feel?

GRANDE: Oh, I was anxious just to get here to meet my dad.

PHILLIPS: Weren't you going to miss your friends?

GRANDE: I didn't think about it then.

PHILLIPS: How old were you when you were leaving?

GRANDE: Ten. I was just anxious to meet my dad.

PHILLIPS: And how had your school life been? Had you enjoyed

school back in--

GRANDE: Well, I like school. I had average grades. I wouldn't say they were exceptional, but I had them average, and I had to take German for two years in third and fourth grade. Of course, Later on when I came here there was no German people around, so I just kind of forgot it. But, uh, it would be nice if I had remembered it.

PHILLIPS: So how did you, you got to Trieste, think you described.

GRANDE: We went by train. We went by train, and then we got to where we had, where my mother checked in the suitcases and, uh, we just had like a barn place. It wasn't a hotel or anything, where we stayed for, till 15th. And then we went on the ship. And, uh, my dad paid for first class but they put us down on the bottom and then this one fellow spoke up that was, uh, here before, and he seen my mother's card, and he said, "You don't belong down here. You should go up higher." And we had mostly fish and macaroni on the ship, which I didn't like very well, but you had to eat something.

PHILLIPS: So did you manage to get up to first class?

GRANDE: Not first. But we got up to second. We got up to second class. It was better, but nothing to brag about compared to what the ships are now.

PHILLIPS: Did you still have to eat fish and macaroni?

GRANDE: Oh, yes. I guess that was the basic, it was an Italian ship, so I guess that's what it was. And they stopped it in London, they stopped it in different places until finally I guess they got a call from the United States where the people are that were supposed to be in by a certain time and they weren't, and so the ship started going real fast, and finally got to New York.

PHILLIPS: Do you remember that?

GRANDE: Well, I do some, not too much. I suppose I was too excited about getting to my dad's place. I know there was quite a few that had eye disease and they had them there for a few days, and then a lot of them were sent back from where they were coming from, either Italy, Germany or Yugoslavia. And then uh, well, we were there, and they vaccinated us again and checked us through and all, and finally we got to go and I think we changed trains in Chicago, from New York to Chicago, and then changed

trains. And there were some people that went here to Denver that were from more or less the same area as we were. But, uh, we got on a different train in Chicago. The train they got was different than the one we had. And that's the first time I got to see bananas, on the train. And, of course, there was a fellow that, he went over there to get his two children, and he didn't buy them very much. Whatever, the rest of them, like my mother and this other lady bought, we shared with his kids. They didn't like it very much, but what can you do. So we all went, there was a lady with her two daughters, and this man with his two children, and my mother and me, we all went to the same town in Utah. We got off in Price, and we, of course, that's where my dad met us, and then we had to take the bus twenty-eight miles to Sunnyside.

PHILLIPS: Why was it that you decided to move up to, you were on your way to Denver, I take it?

GRANDE: No, no. We were on the way to Utah to begin with. That's where my dad lived.

PHILLIPS: Why had he chosen to live in Utah?

GRANDE: Well, he was working in coal mines. He worked in different mines in Utah, around. He worked part-time years before that in

Aspen, Colorado, but he went back to Utah around Tooele. And at that time he was in Sunnyside, and so we lived there about six and a half years, and then his health went bad, and so we came to Colorado.

PHILLIPS: I see. Can you tell me how you felt when you arrived in the United States and how eventually you must have started school, what was that like for you?

GRANDE: Well, we lived, my dad rented a company four room house that was a double, and the other family was similar in nationality as we were. And so, uh, the kids could talk broken Slovenian, so we kind of got started getting along, and I'd pick up words from them little by little. And we came on a Thursday, and the following Monday I went to school. And being that these were going to the same grades, so they put me in the fourth grade instead of the first. And I struggle along pretty good because as far as figures you didn't have to talk. You could just write, and it was good. And, uh, so I was in a county contest the first and second year for arithmetic to where we went from Sunnyside to Price, we stayed overnight. And it was good. And then I skipped the sixth grade and in seventh grade I was in a running contest. I wouldn't go now, but I did go then.

PHILLIPS: Okay. Let me just turn my tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

PHILLIPS: This is side two, Interview Number 414 [DP-40], with Mary Grande. Um, so, uh, you did fairly well at school?

GRANDE: Yeah, I done, I'd say I wasn't the best, but I was with the top ones.

PHILLIPS: Now, tell me what life was like now for your mother. She no longer had all of those animals to look after. It must have been very different. What did she do?

GRANDE: All we could do was housework and laundry, cleaning and cooking, and that. So she got adjusted pretty well. She always hoped to go back, but she never did because they started talking about the war and she didn't want to be in another war over there, which they had it worse right in our area in the second one than they did in the first. And my brother, half-brother, of course, he lived there until the '70s when he died. She gave the property over to him. And they had pretty rough deals there during the second war. In fact, one of his daughters got deaf and dumb on account of the noise of the cannons that they were shooting on their farm. We were right close to where they had the battles and everything, my brother was,

so. But, uh, I got pretty well with the kids in school. Of course, I couldn't speak, but I started learning very fast the best way I could and I enjoyed the school.

PHILLIPS: And where were you living at this point?

GRANDE: In Sunnyside, Utah.

PHILLIPS: When did you, well, before I ask you that question, uh, can you tell me a little bit about the Depression years for your family. What was that like?

GRANDE: Well, the Depression really hit us after I came here to Colorado. Right after I got married, that's when we had the worst Depression. But, uh, dad was kind of, his health was going down great, so he couldn't, uh, work and he figured, well, between my mother and him, they figured maybe he could do some outside work over here, and we had, my mother's sister lived up on northeast of Greeley on what they call the dry land, so we were there for a week, and then we came to Denver. So he got a job finally over at the smelter, and he worked there for a while, but couldn't work too long. And then little by little he tried to work, he went finally back into the mine, and he couldn't work too long there. Finally the doctor said he couldn't work no more.

PHILLIPS: What was, uh, how did you feel, at this point, or how did your family feel about being so far away from home? Did they miss--

GRANDE: My mother missed it a lot. But, uh, I'm sorry to say, I didn't .

PHILLIPS: So you got married. When did you get married?

GRANDE: In 1927, here in Denver. And I've been here ever since.

PHILLIPS: And, uh, you moved to Denver when, from Sunnyside?

GRANDE; In 1926, in October. We drove a Model T. In fact, I drove it most of the way, and we stopped in Aspen. I had an uncle, my mother's brother, there. We stopped there for a month, and then we came on to Colorado. And, uh, after a while we both got jobs, and it worked out. And I met my husband on New Year's and married him in May. He was from the same area as I was, and years later we went back there. He liked the area where I was raised much better than where he was because it was close to the city. And him and I went back there three times, one by car and twice with the plane. And, of course, I've been there since a few times.

PHILLIPS: Why was it that there were so many people from your, from that area that you came from in Europe, living in this area around Denver? Do you know?

GRANDE: Well, it's a settlement. When a group gets settled and then somebody else tries to come in, and they just like to integrate together.

PHILLIPS: Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to, think we might be interested to hear about?

GRANDE: Well, I worked later on. During the Depression it was kind of rough. My husband wasn't making much. Worked every other week and the girls were getting to the point, being in school, we sent them to parochial school. And naturally we had to pay. It wasn't like now that somebody else pays for them a lot. And then, uh, U finally got a job in a packing house, which I worked close to thirty years in it. And in between every so often I had to have different surgeries and I'd be home.

PHILLIPS: What kind of work, excuse me, what kind of work particularly were you doing?

GRANDE: Cutting up meat, pork and beef. Cut it for scraps for

sausage and stuff. And then later on she came into the packing house and she worked with me for a while, and then she went down in the smokehouse where they have to smoke bacon and ham, and she worked there until she had to give up medically on account of it.

PHILLIPS: Let me explain for identification who she is.

GRANDE: My daughter, Mitzi.

PHILLIPS: M-I-T-Z-I. Mitzi Stackhouse.

GRANDE: Yeah. I have another daughter, Jenny Musk. She's a nurse. She lives way up in Northglen.

PHILLIPS: Okay. Unless there's something else you think you'd like to us all.

GRANDE: Well, we became, my husband and I became American citizens in 1932 and we tried to vote every time ever since. Maybe not right, but we try our best. And every time I go back to Europe I'm happy to come back. This is my country.

PHILLIPS: Okay. That finishes Interview Number 414 [DP-40] with Mary Grande, It's five after one.