

DP-53

URSULA RUPPE

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YUGOSLAVIA, 1921

AGE 16

PASSAGE ON "THE PANNONIA"

DALLETT: Okay. I think we're ready to begin, then. My name is Nancy Dallett and today is Monday, November 6, 1989. And I'm going to be speaking with Mrs. Ursula Ruppe, R-U-P-P-E. And this is the beginning of Interview Number 427 [DP-53] for the Ellis Island Oral History Project. Mrs. Ruppe came through Ellis Island in 1921 from Yugoslavia when she was sixteen years of age. Okay, Mrs. Ruppe, let's start at the beginning of your story, and could you tell me where and when you were born?

RUPPE: I was born on October 20, 1904.

DALLETT: And where was that you were born?

RUPPE: That was, the village was Laporje. I don't know how should we spell. A, L-A-P-O-R-J-E, like that. Because we, J is our U, you know, like Y here in the United States, yeah.

DALLETT: Okay. And how do you pronounce it, again?

RUPPE: Laporje.

DALLETT: Laporje.

RUPPE: Near Slovenska Bistrica. Oh, wait a minute, I'm going to give you something that you could, I won't have to spell it. (Shuffles through papers.)

DALLETT: You've got something where the things are spelled out?

RUPPE: I got a card.

DALLETT: Oh, good. Oh, I see. Terrific. Okay. I'll just copy that down. Okay.

RUPPE: Yeah. That was about six kilometers from our (?) home.

The city, I was there a lot of times.

DALLETT: So it's called Slovenska Bistrica [PH]. Bistrica [PH]?

RUPPE: Bistrica {PH}, yeah, because that's our TH, you know, over there. Here a lot of it uses as a K.

DALLETT: I see a photograph of it here. Is this how you remember it looking when you were a child?

RUPPE: Yeah. I was even in the church a lot of times, yeah, a few times. Now it's like some kind of a restaurant or a little place, you know, they have like that. Then it's another nice building, you know, one corner, yeah. But this street I walk a lot of times, yeah.

DALLETT: Tell me about your childhood there. Tell me about your family.

RUPPE: We are, as I remember, my father was a cooper. Sometimes when he went to repair some buckets or barrels or something, I would walk with him carrying some little toy. My father had it like a wooden thing, you know, like a, I don't know, like, he would make it like a basket, you know. But it was all with the wood, with the suspenders there, he put all

the saws and, I don't know, whatnot, in it. Yeah. That way he was, and at home he made a lot of new barrels and--

DALLETT: So he made the barrels.

RUPPE: Yeah.

DALLETT: But he carried his tools in the barrels, too.

RUPPE: His tools, when he had to go someplace to have a repair done, yeah.

DALLETT: So he would do some work in the home, and he would also travel.

RUPPE: No, no. Then my mother was a housewife taking care of the kids and we had a little patch of our land, nine acres, and a little orchard, a little vineyard, enough you, plots plowed. Yeah. That's what it was around the house.

DALLETT: Can you describe the house? Do you remember the house where you were born?

RUPPE: It's right up there. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: Oh, you've got a photograph here. Does it have a thatched roof?

RUPPE: Huh?

DALLETT: Tell me about the roof?

RUPPE: Straw.

DALLETT: It's a straw roof.

RUPPE: Yeah. I heard that it is no more, that it was torn down, when my sister was there about four years ago. It was gone. And now they are, now the relative who's here visiting from Slovenska Bistrica [PH], and she said it's a brand new home built on top of that place, yeah. Nice, Beautiful place. You can see far around, yeah. I still can picture it.

DALLETT: Tell me how many were there in your family?

RUPPE: There were seven of us girls, and a mother and a father.
(She laughs.) Nine people. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: How many, were there different bedrooms in this home?

RUPPE: There were just two bedrooms and a kitchen.

DALLETT: Tell me about how it was laid out a little bit.

RUPPE: It was, at one end, with that, I have it here. I don't
have to look up there. (Shuffles papers.) It's right
here.

DALLETT: You have a photograph of it?

RUPPE: Yeah. See, right here was one room, then here it was the
entrance to it. That was a kitchen. And then we
had another room that was like a sleeping room and a
storage and everything. That, next to it was a garden,
enough room for three cattle, and then there was the
other big barn further down that like we used for hay,
thrashing and things like that. Hay loft was up here.
And right in this corner here there was a well for water,

yeah. And here was a grapevine growing. Yeah.

DALLETT; The grapevine was attached right here to the side of the house.

RUPPE: Yeah. They used to have two beehives, when my father was home, up in the attic. Yeah. In the front was a, two apple trees, and blue grapes stretch up, growing on it.

DALLETT; And who's the woman standing in the front?

RUPPE: I think it's my father's sister-in-law, yeah.

DALLETT: Did you help around the house? Did you work with the animals and--

RUPPE: Yeah, because we only had, we very seldom we had our own cows. Sometimes my mother, because we had a little bit of hay, my mother boarded some cattle. Once she had two, to get some manure. But the pigs would, you have two, and about ten chickens. And a cat, neighbor's cat. (She laughs.) Now, our neighbor's cat, she got, there were a lot of people there, so she stayed with us. (She laughs.) That's all.

DALLETT: And you remember going into this town that you talked about?

RUPPE: Oh, yeah, because--

DALLETT: How far away was that?

RUPPE: About, oh, a good, I think a mile is more than a kilometer, but they claimed it was about six kilometers to the place, It would be about maybe five miles, yeah.

DALLETT: And you would go often into town?

RUPPE: Just walking, all the way, walking, yeah, into the town.

DALLETT: Did your father have a bit of a shop on the side?

RUPPE: Yeah. Right here it was, then next to it was a room that he had his, for his wood and tools and things like that, you know. Gosh, he had quite much. He had a lot of it. That he built with some kind of a new partition. People, you know, you didn't lock things. The people

live, and they didn't steal, no. There was no, you just leave it open, everything.

DALLETT: And the barrels that he made were mostly for what?

RUPPE: For wine. For wine, cider, or like he would make this like a vat, as you call it, there's got to be a straight, a straight container for sauerkraut, because we make an awful lot of sauerkraut in our neighborhood. (She laughs.) Yeah, yeah. And the buckets for water. Everything was wood. And the buckets to carry the wood, I mean, the water, and everything was a little bit much as the plain ones, and some of them were a little bit fancy. That was like a straight thing, that was a fancy bucket that they put it up on the head, there, carry the water. But I could never carry water, no. I could never carry water. I just, down here, but not up on the head.

DALLETT: Did your other sisters carry water?

RUPPE: Because they were younger, see. I was the second, I was really the oldest one, because the oldest sister was staying with a relative, and another sister that was a year younger from me, she was with the other relatives. Yeah. I was, home, the oldest. I helped with all the work. Chopping wood, sawing wood that you could pull that long saw, working

in a vineyard digging. Because we dig very deep into the ground, and planting, pulling weeds and hoeing. Everything, raking hay, everything what we had to do. The kids started to work about ten years old. (She laughs.)
Yeah.

DALLETT: And when was it that your family first started to talk about coming to this country?

RUPPE: See, it happened this way. 1912. It was right when we were planting, the first week in October we were plowing a patch for barley. And one man, he was here in America in Milwaukee, he was home during the summer. So he came to my pa. He needed some barrels to be patched to put his wine in, then he planned to go back. So he came here and he asked my pa, he said, "How is your business?" And my pa was complaining how hard it is, the people have no money to pay, and yet he had to go way down to the Hungary to get the nice oak wood, that's the only wood could be used. And so on. And the man said, you know, "John, with your trade, why don't you got to America with me when I go back? You will be no problem to get the work, and you're going to be good paid worker, too." And that was that. Yeah. And he, sure. We didn't have no money. He had to borrow it. But anyway, his cousin loaned him enough money that he could get over here, and he brought a few dollars with him that, to keep, because a man advised him, you know, about how much. Yeah, he needed. So he, that way it was. Yeah.

Yeah. He said he will gave it much better, sure enough. So then that was in, that was in, the first week in October. Then the last week in January he was on the way, yeah, the following year, 1913.

DALLETT: Do you remember when he left? Do you remember him leaving?

RUPPE: Yeah. In the morning it was, first he had his brother that took his homestead over, he was married that day. And first they had a breakfast at his house, then they had to walk a whole hour to get to the bride's place to, then to go to church there to get married. There they went. My mother and father went for breakfast. Then my father come home, then they come back, and I knew. I went to school. Then, in the morning, before I went to school, you know, I bade him a goodbye, and he hugged me and kissed me and asked me, he said, "Be a good girl." And this and that. And I tried to ask him, "But please don't forget us." You know, this and that, and so on, and then went to school. Yeah, and when I come home from school, he was gone. Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: And then what was it like after he left?

RUPPE: It was like, more lonely, empty house, you know. You miss the person. Then this Austrian, because at that time it was Austria,

you know, Austria-Hungary, in Austria, gendarme, we used to call, like a county police, you know. They get that thing, that, like a metal hat on it, and something. He came--

DALLETT: What kind of a hat was it?

RUPPE: Like a metal, you know, they had, like, a round, I don't know how they call it, sometimes you could see these in the movies. The British are still that way. (She laughs.) And, uh, he came in a couple of days. He said, "We heard that your husband is gone." "Yeah." Because he had to skip. If he asked permission he wouldn't be able to go because he was still under Austrian military obligation, because he was a soldier, yeah. So he had to skip. My mother said, "Yeah, he did." And they said, "But when is he coming back?" She said, "He isn't there yet." (She laughs.) Yeah. Well, see, but they had to skip, you know. But if it was a real Austria state, I think he will be punished if he will come back, yeah. But then the war broke out in 1914 and then we didn't hear from each other for a few years, and after, when the war was over, he was planning to go back, but then one good friend here in Milwaukee, on Virginia Street, advised him, and said, "No." They said, "With the money that you saved, don't go back, don't go, don't waste it there. Bring the family over. Because," they said, "you only have girls. For girls it will much easier to get, to make a living than there." He said, "You know how it was over

there." And he listened to him. So he right away wrote to my ma when, as soon as the mail start to go, after the war, 1919. So my ma, "Yeah, sure." He didn't have to ask my ma twice. (She laughs.) She, too, you know, got away, had the pictures made, and on top of that was our passport picture for, and preparing, and the birth certificates for every family. She made, went to the parish, the pastor or a priest, that he made it that there were ages and everything on it. Then he could help us pay according to age. The fare and everything. Yeah, oh, yeah. So then it took, uh, oh, a whole summer, 1920, that she had to Ljubljana, she had to go a couple of times to Zagreb about the papers and things like that, to get the permission for one consulate to the other consulate, you know. You had to pay.

DALLETT: How did she support herself in those six years?

RUPPE: You know, during the war, Austria gave like a relief money to those who had somebody in the United States, because they couldn't send money over before, we made every little bit at home, our food. And we kids went to help other farmers, so we got the meal. Sometimes they gave us a couple of pounds of beans or some potatoes to take home. Never got money, material, you know. Out in the country you live any old way, you know, that you stay alive. Clothes you don't wear, only one dress on and on. One better dress for Sunday, or go to city. Barefooted, you don't have shoes in the summer, yeah. So we kind if, mama had enough money that she, with the

farmers had something to sell, enough food, she would be able to buy. Or sometimes when we went to work or something, help, they would give us food, you now. Yeah. That, we struggled on. When he was able to send money, then my pa send money, you know. Because, uh, dollar was five Austrian kronen and that was a lot of money over there. Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: What kind of work was your father doing that he was able to send you some money?

RUPPE: He was working first at Milwaukee Road Shops, He got a job in these models, I think, where they pour the iron in, I don't know what they did. Then in, that was 1913, in the fall, he was laid off. So he landed in, he tried to go to, first to Grafton there was no work, Port Washington he couldn't find, so he landed in Sheboygan. He was during the war, number one, in Sheboygan, working in a tannery, mixing those big vats where they soak the skins and things like that.

DALLETT: He made the vats for the tannery?

RUPPE: Yeah, yeah, yeah and repaired. Everything, what, wood, wood. That was his work, wood. Yeah. And then after, when the war was over, then they start to cut the wages, and the factory went on strike. So he waited three months, but they didn't settle the strike, so he came back

to Milwaukee. So he landed at Pfister Vogel. Yeah, he work in the Bay View plant until he was laid off, then during the Depression.

DALLETT: So keep going with the story you were telling about when you heard from your father and your mother got the papers all in order and then what happened?

RUPPE: Then when we were told to go we left the place, our house, on the 7th of December, 1920. Then first we had to go down to Zagreb to, all of us children, to the medical, you know, examiner, vaccination and things like that. So overnight we slept right on the floor in the depot. The next morning, on the 8th of December, we went on the train again that went straight to Ljubljana. Then in Ljubljana, again, we waited a few hours. Then we went another train. So we went through, uh, that we got into Trieste. Only on the border, first, one station before Austria, Yugoslavia, Italian border, Italian officials came up. We took out the papers. Yeah. So then they put that, I think, because they went, somehow those who are, we travellers, that we are in the one car, that they just move, you know. So then they took over the papers and in a station after that, Italian border, and then we got them back again. Yeah.

DALLETT: Now, how many were travelling? How many, all seven girls?

RUPPE: All seven girls and our mother. All eight of us together. And we had our little wicker satchels that we put the clothes in, a little bit food we took. Our mother baked the bread. We had some smoked meat from because she butchered the pig before. Yeah, that we had our own food with us, because there was no food like now. (She laughs.) Yeah. So then we got about, I think it was close to midnight that we got into Trieste. So then there's some kind of a small, hunchbacked fellow came to meet us, and he went into, we went into some building. It was like a big warehouse. They put us all, men, women, children all together, sleeping. But we didn't change clothes. No. Because you don't change clothes. And buggy, lice. (She laughs.) Then we were a whole week until the 14th of December. Then on the 14th of December in the afternoon, we boarded the boat, and then we were on the boat until the 10th of January that we came into New York harbor.

DALLETT: What was the boat? Do you remember the name of that boat?

RUPPE: Pannonia.

DALLETT: Pannonia.

RUPPE: Yeah.

DALLETT: Do you remember the boat and the ride?

RUPPE: Yeah. We were, first we stopped, first we stopped, because it goes on the Adriatic Sea, then it goes around the Mediterranean. Then first we stopped in Patreus, Greece, three days. You'd be surprised how many raisins they put in. Ooh, they were loading and loading those raisins. Cases, you know. And they get a lot, the Greek people came up on the boat too, yeah. So then, after waiting around, then we went to Naples in a few days. Then Naples we only stayed a day. They put the coal in. Yeah. So then we stopped at Gibraltar, but that was, sometimes during the night it stopped, but we were out in the ocean, not in the harbor. But then we went the same day, into the Atlantic, then across the Atlantic. And it wasn't too stormy. It was nice, warm, not cold, yeah. It was wobbly once in a while a little bit, water would splash through those little windows. I don't know how they call this little windows on the boat.

DALLETT: Portholes?

RUPPE: I don't know. They have a certain name, yeah. But it was nice. I enjoyed it. And we were glad we come in to New York City, because it was so many people they couldn't take us off the boat right away.

So we took three days, then we took, in New York first we went to a little boat. Then from that little boat went into what is Ellis Island. But they called it I think, Castle garden years ago. If it was a different buildings or the same, I don't know. Yeah. But after there we were, then again we had to go through the physical. They examine us, if we are perfect people. Again, they made the doctors look us over, if we are healthy. I still remember they took some kind of a little spoon, they turned our eyes over to look in. Oh, yeah, at that time the people couldn't come in if you had some kind of a, things, a patch or a blotch. You will go back, yeah. So we were okay people. So in about night, it was pretty dark because it's a short day. I don't know what time it was, but I know it was getting dark. They put us on the boat again. So we went to a depot. I think it was Pennsylvania, a railroad or something. So then they put us there. Then we, in the evening, then we went through the whole night. whole day, and again whole night, and the same day that we got to Chicago, only in the morning about six o'clock or something, I think it was, in Chicago.

DALLETT: Before you tell me more about Chicago, what else can you remember about Ellis Island? It sounds like you were just there two or three days.

RUPPE: When we were in Ellis Island because the first person that talked to us a little bit that we understand him was Jehovah Witness.

He gave us little booklets, that were Czechoslovakian language. Yeah. First, then they ask us to buy these boxes, lunches. It was a dollar a box. There was some sausage in it, bread and fruit. Yeah. They sell that to have food on the way down till we reached Milwaukee. You know, everybody, they would ask, you know.

DALLETT: Did you still have food left that your, from, that your mother had packed, or did you buy those lunch boxes?

RUPPE: We ate almost everything except a little ham that my mother was saving for my father, so that he would have something from home, yeah. Liquid, we couldn't take anything along with it, that time. It was Prohibition, yeah. A lot of people had it, but had to throw it in the ocean. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: People had brought it with them, and then they thought--

RUPPE: They thought they're going to bring it in, but they no, uh-uh. Because my mother was told already in Europe, because those people who came over, back, you know, after the war, they told her, don't take anything. No liquid. Because if you want to, your husband will want to have some taste from his home state. They said don't, because no liquid. So my mother didn't even take nothing from her house. Yeah, because we were

all women, and the kids, so we didn't, you know.

DALLETT: Now, what languages, I'm wondering how you got through the Ellis Island thing, because you didn't speak English, right?

RUPPE: There were people there talking to us in our language. Oh, yeah. They were workers.

DALLETT: Translators? People who--

RUPPE: Yeah. Because, uh, you know, because the government knew, you know, that they needed, there were a lot of them. They were employees. The way they were there to take care of us. Yeah, they explained to us, take that lunch box that you will have, because you can't buy nothing on the train, that you will have something to eat on the train, too. And we were hungry, we ate it right there, some of it too, yeah.

DALLETT: And you didn't have any trouble with your medical examination. All seven children and your mom.

RUPPE: All of us. They call them taublich [PH], in German.

DALLETT: What does that mean?

RUPPE: On means okay.

DALLETT: Okay. Like healthy?

RUPPE: Healthy, yeah. That we were no, yeah. Simply because we were in that big building, they thought we were just in those benches, sitting, and what to do, went through the examination, and it was just sitting and waiting, yeah. The first religious man, first was Jehovah, greeting people in New York. (She laughs.) Yeah. When it's so, when you come into a strange place, you don't just grasp and catch on what is really doing. After, when you are looking at it sometimes, the same thing in Milwaukee. It was strange. We'd come, my pa was meet us at Milwaukee Road that they used to call it (?), Milwaukee. Yeah, and the old depot. We walked to Virginia Street across the 16th Street viaduct. Yeah, it was nothing to walk that distance. It was kind of strange. It took us, when I start to work in a factory down on Chicago Street, so one lady was taking me downtown on Wisconsin Avenue, that way, you get used to it. The building, the things like that, you know. It

takes time when you come. It doesn't, just like that. Even now, now the city is a city, yeah. To me, but not before when you're out in the country all the time you, it was strange. I know in the harbor, it was a sign all the time moving, cocoa, Lipton tea, and coffee. Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: In New York.

RUPPE: In New York harbor, yeah, it was that someone was changing signs, like that. That's what I really remember. When there was all, all kinds, about these whistles also, those tugboats, you know, going. But, you know, I think certain nationalities were more together taken that they can handle them easier, you know. Yeah.

DALLETT: Okay. I'm just going to turn the tape over now, okay, so we'll just pause. That's the end of side one of Interview Number 427 [DP-53] with Ursula Ruppe.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 427
[DP-53] wit Ursula Ruppe. You have such a great
memory for all of this. It's so vivid. Anything else
you can remember about the harbor, or Ellis Island, or
the food there, or the people who helped you, and--

RUPPE: No, not much.

DALLETT: You just sat, you sat in the big room on the benches.

RUPPE: When we were finished with that, they were interviewing,
and examinations and, you know, these tests. So we just waited. Like how
they call it, following the leader. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: Did you see what happened to some of the other people who
came through, some of the Greek people and so forth
that were on your boat?

RUPPE: No, no, because this was more on the side, what was
examinations, we didn't, that you saw people moving back and forth and that
was that, you know.

DALLETT: Were there a lot of people there?

RUPPE: There were a lot, phew. It was really a lot of, a couple of thousand, I think, it could be. You know, because people just came, like on our boat they claimed it was about three thousand people, Greeks and Yugoslavs and Italians and all that, you know. That time, with families, you know. Really families. Or like, like children coming for the, when the parents get them over. Yeah. They left them there before. Then, during the war, they grew up a little bit, and they got them over. The parents didn't want to go back no more, yeah. There was a lot of cases that way, too. Children that, somebody that went from a village, from the place, they took them a long as a guardian, yeah.

DALLETT: Do you remember when you came into Milwaukee on the train meeting your father? Did he meet you there?

RUPPE: Yeah. We, I recognized him right away. I recognized him right away. And we hugged him, and he hugged us, and we were happy that we were together. Then he took us to the home on Virginia Street. Upstairs one lady had lunch for us prepared, homemade sausage and bread, home

white bread. You know, that was a novelty, you know, kind of nice for us, and coffee. You know, in that way we begin. Only, because we were full of lice, my father went right away to the drugstore to get things, we changed our clothes, take our clothes off, and my mother washing, right away washing the clothes. And what we found in the house we put on our bodies that, you know, till the clothes dry again, you know, that we get rid of that lice, and things like that, you know. Yeah, we were clean in a day. You know, it takes work, wash, and that, we got cleaned right away. Because my father got certain things from the drugstore that you spray it on the seams of the clothing, the bugs died in that, you know. Because they stay clothes there is that you don't wash. Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: Did your father help to teach you some English?

RUPPE: No. He didn't much English himself. He got along by, nice with the German language. Milwaukee was a German city years ago. Yeah. If you knew german, you could pass anything. With the german language, he never learned much English. Enough to, but after, when my ma came, and right away he gave her our money that he had, he said, "Now, you

manage your household and everything." So, of course, there were a lot of these Slovenian businessmen. Like, our butcher was right there about a block away where we lived, and we didn't have to know much of our English at the time. You could buy what you needed. You, know, because we ate, at that time was no things like now. You would never dream of the food that's going to exist like it is now at that time. It's plain. A piece of meat, potatoes, some vegetables, bread. That was that. We were satisfied. (She laughs.) Yeah.

DALLETT: Tell me more about the community where you lived.

RUPPE: Yeah. That's, what I said, it was a lot of Slovenians, even from a place where we come from. You know, you meet people, one fellow right away came to see us, because I even went to school with his sisters and brothers. Right away, when we came, he said, he come, "How it was?" And that, yeah. Right away. A lot of, when my mother come, because a few, about one mile away my mother was born from that part too, there were quite many of them in Milwaukee, yeah, living. That was more of, uh, Milwaukee was more of, from that part of, uh, settlers, yeah. And all belonged to that old Holy Trinity Church down there, yeah. So it was more like that, you didn't miss much, Europe, no.

DALLETT: It was like a little European--

RUPPE: No, I didn't. Yeah, yeah. Like you'd always meet somebody. But in a way my five sisters, younger than me. I was sixteen. I didn't have, they said, "No, Lilly, you don't have to go to school." But my younger, one year younger sister, she was fifteen and day when we landed in Milwaukee, she went, and a younger one. They went to school, yeah. And they too, the teachers looked for a kid in school if they knew our language that they were a little bit interpreting. You know, tell, they say, this is this, this is that way, in English. This is that way, in English. So they, for the older two sisters, they got, it was a lot more foreign kids, they called it special classes, for the younger ones, whether to put together, you know, all the ones together. So that sister went there, she was sixteen years old, and the other one went there she was again, when they were sixteen years old, that one, they went to public school. Yeah.

DALLETT: And you didn't. You went to work.

RUPPE: Yeah. But then I, uh, went to work in a restaurant, on Ash Avenue. To one of our ladies, she was a widow, she was working nights, and she, they needed one help, so she told me, she told them about us, so they sent one of the workers, Slovenian fellow, too, come to the house. Yeah, that, introduced himself and told that it's a job, if you want to go to work. So I went. I was like, my very first job was peel one bushel of

potatoes. I always like to tell anybody that was my first job to make, to start to make a living. Yeah. Then a bushel of cooked potatoes. Then I washed the pots and pans because they baked their cakes and pies themselves.

There was no bakeries like that, like now, and a pie, cakes like that. They had to, all the restaurants, they had to bake their own. So they washed their pots and pans that was in the basement. And after it went up, when noon came, then it was upstairs, a dining room, then it was regular dishes, again, to wash. I worked from seven to two o'clock in the afternoon, then go back at five to wash the evening dishes until seven. Seven days a week, every day, ten dollars a week. I make at first twenty dollars. Then my father took me to a Stumpf [PH] store. It was on the Fifth and National. I bought like a suit. Skirt, blouse and a jacket, twenty dollars. That was my first American made clothing that I bought. (She laughs.) Summer, like a spring coat, one lady gave it to me. (She laughs.) They had it, yeah. I still remember that.

DALLETT: And then you mentioned before that you worked in a factory? Was that after the restaurant?

RUPPE: The factory was after. I worked there for thirteen months. I don't know, because, when it was kind of warm, I think, then they had a great, big icebox, you know. And he need this and that, he asked me, he said, "Come on. Ursula, go down to the basement, bring me this and

that." I don't know it was that, because whole body got ache and pain. Like a rheumatic fever or something. So then my mother took me to a doctor. He was a Slovenian doctor, too. Near where we lived he had the office. And he said, "Let her leave the job and stay home. You know, don't let her go to work no more there." So I stayed home maybe a month. So then my younger sister, she stopped going to school at the end of June. In vacation she got a job on Florida Street, sewing, so we went to, us two together to work in sewing. I pay, I was paid twenty cents an hour, because she was only, at sixteen she was only paid eighteen cents an hour. You know, we worked there a month and another lady, again, we were living in a rented flat. And she said, "K. Keifer [PH] Box Company, 89 Canal, they are hiring people. They pay a little bit more. Let's go down." So we walk down. We were standing there by the door. Sure, they hire us, twenty-five cents an hour. Ooh, that was a nice wages, ten hours a day. (She laughs.) Sometimes a little bit piece work. You know, if you made more, there was just so much, one hundred thousand boxes. We were making those creases, you know, that the box can bend.

DALLETT: Sorry, say that again? You were making--

RUPPE: There was like a machine that was making like a chopping on the paper that the box could fold.

DALLETT: A crease so the box could fold.

RUPPE: Yeah. That was, I was working on that. Helper, yeah. The lady first pushed in, then I had to guide it. Then I put it on the side. (She laughs.)

DALLETT: So it wasn't sewing, handwork, it was working with folding the boxes, creating the boxes.

RUPPE: Yeah. It was only making those folds, you know, those folds. Yeah. Then I worked there, then I got scarlet fever in the winter. Then I went back again. So then I, one shop on Chicago Street, they bought another shop, sewing. Then later, again, another Slovenian lady said, "Come on. Why don't you go to work down by Monarch's?" So I went. Then I was paid thirty cents an hour because I was experienced. So then piecework, I made pretty good. I worked there five years and five months. Sure, then I got married, then the Depression set in. Unemployment, yeah. So then I didn't work until after, again, when the, America got into a war, then I started to work again. I worked for that company for thirteen years all together. I liked that. It was all leather work, sheepskin coats, and things like that. I liked that, leather work. Because it was heavier. And I didn't have to be such a speedy, because I never was, flimsy things I couldn't handle. I wasn't that type. And again another lady said to me,

"Ooh, that's the," when it was those little taps, or something. "Ooh, that's the best job." I said, "You can have it." (She laughs.)

DALLETT: Tell me about the work you did with the sheepskin coats.
What kind of work was that?

RUPPE: It was all sewing sheepskin together, or leather. That was more leather, leather out, out, out, then they put the sheepskin lining in. See, for sheepskin they have a different machine, you know, to put together. But my sisters, younger sisters, they were working on a sheepskin because they too, they went too, after they, all of us went down to work in that company after, when they were older, except the youngest one. She was kind of a little, so, she was sixteen. Then she made eighth grade, yeah. She finished the eighth grade. So she said she want to, we want to send her to high school but, she said, four years, I'll be twenty years old, no. So she went to this vocational school. She took bookkeeping. She went two years. Then the telephone company gave her a job, and she worked for the telephone company for thirteen years. Yeah.

DALLETT: And the man you married, was he Slovenian too?

RUPPE: Yeah, sure. Different, little bit different part of Slovenia. He came two years later, but he came first to, uh, Calumet,

Michigan. So from Calumet, Michigan, he came to Milwaukee to his uncle. So we met him at a, like a picnic, church. You know, where we Slovenians, we were congregating together, in a hall, when he had, like, a lot of, years ago they used to have a lot of dancing, or they had a, these things, like a, a place. You know, actually on the stage place, we would go to that old, there was an old south side Turner Hall down on National Avenue. It was our, congregated together. Lodge meetings, we had, I joined them all. First this lady that make our first meal. They got my mother in a lodge because, fraternal organization. You know, a little benefit, sick benefit or dead benefit, things like that, yeah. Then after, when I start to work, the rest of us start to work, so we joined all the lodges.

DALLETT: What was the name of the lodges?

RUPPE: It was the Slovenian National Benefit Society. It was Vinas [PH], a lady's name in Milwaukee, a ladies lodge. But they had different lodges for the menfolks, too. Yeah, all kinds of, yeah. But there isn't so much now no more. Old people died, and younger generation are not for the fraternal.

DALLETT: Tell me about the next generation. I spoke to your son Michael. Tell me about your kids.

RUPPE: Kids went to our doings and everything. He still belongs to one of these Slovenian National Benefit Society, organization. My daughter and granddaughter and a great-granddaughters, they all belonged to one lodge. Because young people made their own lodge. You know, then they joined into the organization. Yeah, so they belonged there. They called them the Badgers.

DALLETT: Badgers?

RUPPE: Yeah.

DALLETT: So your sisters all stayed in the area and married? And you must have a large number of--

RUPPE; Yeah. And so far we were all lucky enough, we all own homes. When we were, you know. But one sister still, she's eighty years old, her husband is eighty-five. They live on 47th Street near Capital Drive. She's still, she's still in her home. The rest of ours, like I sold, oh, yeah, another sister down on (?) Street, she's still, too, she's in kind of an old home, yeah. She's still, she;s a widow. The rest of us are widows. And three died, three died, the oldest one, and the one that was two years younger than me, and one that was five years younger than me

died thirteen years ago.

DALLETT: Did you, have you ever gotten all together, all the sisters, the next generation?

RUPPE: Oh, yeah. We would get together, a few, there, yeah. Visit one another years ago, yeah. I did too a little. It was like a I was able to go around on a bus. But when it came that I couldn't no more, so I didn't.

DALLETT: I mean, recently, has the whole family gotten together?

RUPPE: Yeah. About three, three years ago when one of the relatives from Slovenska Bistrica was visiting here, then we were together in New Berlin by my daughter's place, all of us. Younger and older sisters, yeah.

DALLETT: Must have been a lot of people?

RUPPE: Yeah. There was quite a bunch, yeah. She has a nice, a little bit of a higher place, and she had a nice, about three quarters of an acre of land around the house, yeah. She built it fourteen years ago, yeah.

DALLETT: And when did you become citizens?

RUPPE: Um, we, when my pa took citizens papers, it was about a year after when we were here. He went to school. At that time, the children could be citizens with the father, yeah. I think they were up to eighteen or twenty-one. I think twenty-one, but not wife. At that time the women demanded their own rights. They lost that right to be citizen with the husband. I think before it was children up to eighteen and a wife. And after it was the children up to twenty-one but no, not the wife. Yeah. So my mother went to school. We practiced at home, and the questions and all kinds of things that she got her own paper after. And we were in our father's name, our father's paper, all of our names. After, when we looked for jobs or something like this, always have to beg him for his paper, you know. So we went and we got our own. They call derivative paper, the citizen paper, yeah. All of us got. Sure, like pa paid five dollars, and it cost us ten dollars each. And one witness for us, but pa had to have two. Yeah, yeah.

DALLETT: And back to that period when you first came here, you were talking about how everything was so new and it took a while to get used to it and all that, how many years do you think it took before you began to feel at home here and understood how it works here?

RUPPE: About two, three.

DALLETT: That quickly you felt at home here?

RUPPE: Yeah. That you know where, that you know how to take a streetcar. At that time it was streetcars that you got there. When you read, heard about it, this is there, that you know how to get there, and back home again. Oh, yeah, it takes a little time, you know, like that. But now, when we were in the city all the time, now it takes less. Now you catch on easier, especially if you have a, but I have to have a map.

DALLETT: And did your mother adjust into it pretty well here?

RUPPE: Oh, yeah. She was too pretty good, and she learned pretty good English too. Oh, yeah. With the kids. And she did it.

DALLETT: Did you ever go back?

RUPPE: Huh?

DALLETT: Did you ever go back to your home town?

RUPPE: Not me. No. No., but we were planning, my husband and

I, that we're going to take a visit in '62 or '63, but then his sister died, then he lost. Then he didn't ever care to go. So then I never pestered him. But one of my sisters that she lives on 47th and Capital Drive, she was there four times, yeah, with her husband. Once she took one daughter. She has two daughters there now. She was a daughter, that daughter was married. She took that daughter and her husband. They went together, and next time, another time, she took another daughter with her. Both her daughters were there, they know how it is, yeah.

DALLETT: And did you ever go back to New York and see Ellis Island, where you came from?

RUPPE: No, no. I didn't. I didn't have no chance.

DALLETT: Would you like to see that again?

RUPPE: Yeah, but not now, the way I am. But I went with my daughter and a son-in-law and a little granddaughter, she was about eight, nine, ten, ten years old. Yeah, we went to the western states, twice I went there. Then I'm pleased, when the people talk about the Grand Canyon, Zion Canyon, or things like that, that I know how, what it is. Yeah. I saw the west pretty good. Through the Utah and all that. Then it was, way up, when you see that mountain and the hole goes around, and the edge of that, you

are scared before you are there. But my son-in-law is a good driver, but I was wondering sometimes, people have those house trailers, how they navigate on those roads, but they do.

DALLETT: Yeah, they go around.

RUPPE: Yeah.

DALLETT: Okay, I think I've asked you what I need to, unless there's anything else you just want to add?

RUPPE: I don't know. Yeah, because my daughter sent in my name, my husband's name, and my parent's name, they're going to be engraved there, you know. Is this Iacocca, what's his name, his name is still in that?

DALLETT: Yes.

RUPPE: But it was shame how they wanted to bounce him off, isn't it. He started it, he was real nice. And right away they wanted somebody else. That wasn't nice. Even though he's a capitalist, and this and that, but when a person starts something and does so good, let him finish,

yeah. See, I was in that Ellis, when it was this, uh, Statue of Liberty, yeah. Because my youngest, the sister that she's a year younger, yeah, she lives down, right almost under that high bridge, you know, on (?) Street, you know. She was active in that part of our city. Pretty much with the Spanish people in there. And first there was one Serbian girl. She was going to Wisconsin University, and that was her project to do something with that, to do some writing and things like that. And asked her, so she gave her my name, and I got so involved in that, you know. So I went to the museum, no, library. We had to go inside the movies, and things like that, you know. Even though there were pictures there, yeah, a few pictures. So they got me into it a little bit, a little. And when they came to this Ellis Island, I think, I don't know, was it Ellis Island, no, Statue of Liberty. That was the one that all the Slovenian lodges, too. Oh, everybody you can think of was in it. They asked to the nations, then they donate money. Yeah, because it cost millions. I know this because it was in our papers, because I still get the one paper that belonged to this Slovenian-- (Looks through papers.) No, no. Yeah, here. This, they were all, they always write a lot in it

about that Ellis Island, and that was about the Statue of Liberty. It was a lot of writing in it, in that news. This is the only weekly, once a week they call the organization's official organ, they tell what goes on in the organization. Yeah.

DALLETT: Okay. I'd like to have a look at that.

RUPPE: Yeah. We have all kinds of things going on. Anniversaries, now it's eighty-five years old, that organization.

DALLETT: Okay. I think that's it, then. Okay, that's the end of side two of Interview Number 427 [DP-53] with Mrs. Ursula Ruppe, and the time is 10:40. Thank you very much.

RUPPE: Yeah. Thank you very much.