

EI-1024

EUGENE PASTERNAK

BIRTH DATE: JUNE 25, 1919

INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 14, 1998

RUNNING TIME: 1:28:05

INTERVIEWER: STACEY WATERS

RECORDING ENGINEER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: EAST BRUNSWICK SENIOR CENTER,
EAST BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED AND REVIEWED BY: STACEY WATERS, 11/1998

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1939

AGE 20

PASSAGE ON "THE SATURNIA"

SIGRIST: All right, good morning. This is Paul Sigrist. I am the Director of the Ellis Island Oral History Project and I am here with Eugene Pasternak and with Stacey Waters. And Stacey Waters is a student intern with the Oral History Project and this is Stacey's first interview. So, go ahead Stacey.

WATERS: Good morning, this is Stacey Waters for the National Park Service, where I am currently interning. Today is October 14, 1998 and I am at East Brunswick at the Senior Center with Eugene Pasternak, who came from Czechoslovakia in 1939 when he was twenty years old. Why don't we start by you giving me your full name.

PASTERNAK: Eugene Pasternak. Do you want me to spell it?

WATERS: Sure, Could you please spell it for the tape for me?

PASTERNAK: Eugene, E-U-G-E-N-E and P-A-S-T-E-R-N-A-K.

WATERS: Okay, Can you tell me your date of birth?

PASTERNAK: June 25, 1919.

WATERS: And where were you born?

PASTERNAK: Czechoslovakia.

WATERS: How long did you live there for?

PASTERNAK: Till, till, till coming here.

WATERS: Could you tell me the name of the town that you lived in?

PASTERNAK: Yes, very little, very little village, only six, six thousand population, Krompaachi. [Do you want me to spell it?]

SIGIRST: Here, do you want a piece of paper? Will that

help? Just write it in the corner there.

PASTERNAK: But, my writing is bad.

SIGRIST: (addressing Ms. Waters) At a moment like this you might want to say Mr. Pasternak is now spelling, on a piece of paper.

WATERS: Okay.

SIGRIST: (addressing Ms. Waters) Because remember on a tape it is all silent. (Mr. Pasternak silently spells on a piece of paper)

WATERS: Right.

SIGRIST: Spell it out loud, Mr. Pasternak, for us.

PASTERNAK: K-R-O-M-P-A-A-C-H-I.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

WATERS: Can you just tell me, where this town was in relation to the rest of the country?

PASTERNAK: Well, the big, big town Koscie, and, and close I could drive from my house, you could see the

Tatra Mountains, which is one of the biggest mountains in, how do you say that?

WATERS: Okay. Can you describe to me maybe what the town looked like a little bit?

PASTERNAK: Well, it was very nice little village, town between the mountains surrounded all around with, high hills and mountains.

WATERS: Okay. Could you maybe describe your home for me?

PASTERNAK: Well, we had two, two houses. Nice big gardens and trees, fruit trees.

WATERS: So, you said you had two homes?

PASTERNAK: Well, the store, one, in one where we lived and the other houses was for apartments like.

WATERS: Maybe you could describe to me a little bit what the house you lived in looked like.

PASTERNAK: Where we lived, first we had a glass and porcelain store and framing we did, picture framing in there, too. And, uh...

WATERS: Did you, how many rooms did you have in your house?

PASTERNAK: About six, including the kitchen.

WATERS: Do you remember any of the furniture maybe? Could you describe the furniture for me?

PASTERNAK: Well, we were six children, so some of the children slept in two, two in a bed.

WATERS: Who lived in the house with you?

PASTERNAK: At that time? My four sisters and a brother.

WATERS: And your parents?

PASTERNAK: And my parents, which my father later on...
(Break in the tape)

SIGRIST: We are going to pause for just a second.
(Someone from the senior center walks into the room causing disruption on the tape. The tape is stopped and than restarted)

WATERS: Okay. We just had a slight interruption, so we are restarting the interview again. We had just

finished speaking about Eugene's home. You said you had how many brothers and sisters?

PASTERNAK: One brother and four sisters.

WATERS: Were you the youngest or...

PASTERNAK: I was next to the youngest.

WATERS: Could you tell my your father's name?

PASTERNAK: Herman.

WATERS: Herman, okay.

PASTERNAK: Yeah.

WATERS: Could you maybe describe your father's Personality for me?

PASTERNAK: Well, it was very pleasant. I mean, I can I say my religion? I was a religious Orthodox Jew and...

WATERS: What type of religion did you practice?

PASTERNAK: Jewish.

WATERS: You were Jewish. What kind of job did your father have?

PASTERNAK: My father later in 1925, he came to America because couldn't make a living here from the store when he had six, seven children.

WATERS: What kind of job did he do before coming to America?

PASTERNAK: In a store, he was a glazier, and a selling...

WATERS: He was...

PASTERNAK: And a frame, picture frame. They used to come to Us, making frames for religious organizations.

WATERS: How, how did he learn to do that, to make the picture frames?

PASTERNAK: Just...

WATERS: Just learned it.

PASTERNAK: Yeah is, just had to try to make a living, so he

had to.

WATERS: No one else in your family had done that before?

PASTERNAK: Yeah, even I did it sometimes later when my father came to, to the United States and the only living that you made he used to. Also from the beginning doing this glazing and going buildings putting in windows and he send home. That money was big. He would send, send three hundred dollars a month that they could feed the whole family and paying taxes, for they make taxes on the store which didn't, didn't make a living from that, the taxes.

WATERS: Did you, did your father own his own store?

PASTERNAK: Yeah.

WATERS: Yes.

PASTERNAK: Yeah, later on, when he left, my mother took over and she was going like shopping for the store.

WATERS: Where was the store located?

PASTERNAK: In the, in the front of the house.

WATERS: Oh, okay. You said that he made frames for religious...

PASTERNAK: Yeah.

WATERS: Was there a way that he had to, he had to make the frames for religious purposes or...

PASTERNAK: Oh, no, no, They just bring in the, they brought in the whatever picture they wanted, and they wanted to be framed, that's all.

WATERS: Okay, Can you tell me your mother's name?

PASTERNAK: Mathilda, M-A-T

SIGRIST: (addressing Mr. Pastrenak) Want the paper?

WATERS: Right now, Mr. Pasternak is spelling his mother's name for us.

SIGRIST: It's quite the busy place. (reference to the busy activity in the senior center)

PASTERNAK: Yeah, well originally there were five thousand seven hundred members.

SIGRIST: (addressing Mr. Pasternak) Go ahead and spell it out loud.

PASTERNAK: M-A-T-H-I-L-D-A.

SIGRIST: (addressing Mr. Pasternak) Thank you.

WATERS: What was her maiden name?

PASTERNAK: Grunwald.

SIGRIST: (addressing Mr. Pasternak) Go ahead and spell it for us.

WATERS: Mr. Pasternak is now going to spell her maiden name for us.

SIGRIST: It's important because we want to make sure that everything is correct.

PASTERNAK: Except, in our language that on a "u" (referring to the spelling of his mother's name)

SIGRIST: (addressing Mr. Pasternak) Go ahead and spell it

out loud.

PASTERNAK: G-R-U-N-W-A-L-D.

SIGRIST: Thank you

WATERS: Describe your mother's personality for me.

PASTERNAK: She was, she was a very lovely woman. A very friendly worked hard, because not so easy for, to.

WATERS: You said that she took over the store when your father came to America. Did she always work in the store?

PASTERNAK: Yeah, when anybody come in the store, even I, I later on so, and I had a brother also.

WATERS: She didn't have any other job outside of the house then?

PASTERNAK: No

WATERS: Okay, Did you go to school when you were in Czechoslovakia?

PASTERNAK: Yes

WATERS: Can you describe any memories maybe that you have of attending school?

PASTERNAK: Well, it was in Czechoslovakia actually they were first five grades public and later and you had to go to school eight years whether you went, want one class in the eight years or not you had attend eight years. If somebody didn't the police used to come and take them and they had to go but, schools were all right of course, there is certain subjects that because we had I think if I am right about fourteen or fifteen different subjects. Not just like in the United states where it just but over there was about from each one if you failed three times you had to repeat major had to be three time when fail you had to repeat a class again. If you went through five than you would go into the other four classes and than, than you could either go to the four other classes of if you, were good enough you could skip those and go gymnasium.

WATERS: Okay, and what did you do, did you go to the

gymnasium?

PASTERNAK: No, because my family was religious so it was not allowed to study and so I went to Hebrew study after this which is usually when had to travel far away from home and it was six and six months through the year and if, if families that could afford to, to have the child come back after six months they came, if not they had to stay there.

WATERS: Where did you go to Hebrew school?

PASTERNAK: I went, well, I went in three different ones that were like middle class, and a higher class and each time I was, I went to three different towns, which I attended to my age of eighteen and I stopped it, I didn't want to study anymore, and that's.

WATERS: Okay.

SIGRIST: We should say for the sake of the tape that we are in a room with a refrigerator and it has just kicked on so someone listening to this tape will want to know what that noise is. (he and Mr. Pasternak laugh)

WATERS: Mr. Pasternak you said that there were fourteen or fifteen different kind of subjects that you studied, different than America. Maybe you could tell us what kind of subjects you studied?

PASTERNAK: Well, for each subject there was each class according the first class was only like reading and writing and the second class was something higher like, like reading, writing this was all different subjects and till you reach the highest class. The first five classes just each year just went higher and higher education.

WATERS: Okay, Do you remember what types of games that you played as a child?

PASTERNAK: Practic, Practically none, because from the regular school I had to go to the Jewish school and study the religious subject whatever.

WATERS: So, you, you never played as a child?

PASTERNAK: Practically, maybe the first five years or six years after that what ever was you had to go to synagogue and than religion and Jewish classes

from the classes, from the regular classes come home and go to the Jewish classes and than. So, I can say one thing, me as a boy I was not Allowed to, I never had any toys and.

WATERS: Did you have chores that you had to do around the home maybe or you just had to concentrate on school?

PASTERNAK: Well, most because that was enough, as ages like later on when I went to Synagogue and over there the butcher so, I would bring home the meat.

WATERS: Okay, Well you have already said that you were Jewish and that your father was a very religious man maybe you could describe for me some of the different religious practices that you did?

PASTERNAK: Well, from the beginning in the morning you had to pray, had to pray and then also that was one kilometer from my house that synagogue was. I had to go first to synagogue and then come home eat and go to regular school and then I came, finished the other school and then you had to go again to Hebrew study.

WATERS: Do you maybe remember any special holiday celebrations?

PASTERNAK: Well, the holidays it's the same all over, it's like the main the holidays of course Sabbath is the main highest religion in Jewish. Then, then you had other, like Rosh, Rosh Hashanah the Jewish New Year, than which, Yom Kippur which, which is a very big holiday too but not bigger than, than Sabbath except if it came together Yom Kippur with Sabbath that was higher but Sabbath was even though a lot of people don't think that's the, that's the highest religion. And then what did I say Yom Kippur and than come what they call Sukes which is, which is in a tent and eat the meals and and then Hanukkah which is eight days and you light the candles. Let's see if there is any other, can't just think no but.

SIGRIST: (addressing Ms. Waters) Perhaps you might want to
ask Mr. Pasternak to say a prayer slowly that he learned as a child.

WATERS: Could you, Do you remember any of the prayers that you had to say.

PASTERNAK: Yeah.

WATERS: Maybe you could say one for us in your, in your native language?

PASTERNAK: Yes, in the morning you washed your hands and wash, wash up there was a prayer saying. You want me to say it in Hebrew?

WATERS: Yes, please

SIGRIST: (addressing Mr. Pasternak) Slowly.

PASTERNAK: (recites a prayer in Hebrew) Which, slowly interpreted, I'm, I'm thank you for, because we believe that, at night when you go to sleep that. I can't explain what it would mean but anyhow. Mostly it's say I thank you for returning my give me back the. Can I ask something in English when a person dies what do you call it?

SIGRIST: Your soul.

PASTERNAK: The soul, soul. So on that the prayer is that you are returning my soul and I thank you very,

very much for that. That was everyday in the morning saying that was told to all children from, from when they start to speak but when they came the other highers that was very hard.

WATERS: Okay. Did you, did you suffer any kind of persecution because of your religion?

PASTERNAK: Yeah, yeah there were stone throwing and a calling names "you dirty Jew" and whatever. Of course, I suffered in the Holocaust, I lost my family not my father, my mother actually was here and she died here in United States but it was they died in Holocaust in general the anti-semitism was quiet even, even we were best friends but there was still fights.

WATERS: Okay, um Can you tell me why your family decided to come to America?

PASTERNAK: Well, because a started with, with Austria was occupied with Germany with Hitler when he started, slowly so, they started to come to Czechoslovakia too and my father, my father used to send money home so he always used to stay in United States one, one, two years and

then come home and go back and it came and it came that the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Already being that my father was American citizen so our family was openly not persecuted only, only later when left the United States my sister and me and my mother. Then my family later on when it started with the persecution there started. I was yet in Czechoslovakian army and I was maybe one from the I was maybe from hundred Jews that I was still I wasn't put in an concentration camp or anything but I still in the army I was, I was, I had to go except the only thing was that I went around with a mark JS, FJ, F, FI which meant friendly in German (states word in German) trustworthy Jew so then the gentiles knew that I was Jewish, but they was afraid openly to do because that time the American had respect at time they were afraid to start until the Polish War.

WATERS: Did, did your family have to wear markings also or just you because you were in the army?

PASTERNAK: No, before, before we left the family they didn't start already until 1940, after 1940 already then they started to and Slovakia went together with Germans so then they would

picking up. I was still in the Czechoslovakian army there after the Polish War. After the Polish war my father send the papers and tried to bring us not all of the but children were below the twenty-one they were could go without quota otherwise was had to make a quota a certain month. My father always said he had less it was still in 1938 he came to visit the family but they were recalled by the American Consul to come back because they started problem maybe so.

WATERS: So, Did were your brothers and sister under twenty-one or?

PASTERNAK: They were older.

WATERS: They were older.
(background noise because of nearby bathroom)

PASTERNAK: Only, one younger sister she came with me to the United States.

SIGRIST: (addressing Ms. Waters) We are at the thirty minute mark. Just so you know.

WATERS: Okay. You said that it was just you and

your sister that came to America?

PASTERNAK: And my mother.

WATERS: And your mother, where, where were your other brothers, your other brother and other sisters?

PASTERNAK: They, they remained home and than in 1940 already they started to pick them up. They didn't they confiscated our houses and they were, slowly put in concentration camp.

WATERS: So, you lost your brother and your sisters in a concentration camp than.

PASTERNAK: Yeah, most of my mother's family too. My mother had nine sister, nine sisters they all big family only, only couple maybe five, six survived from that.

WATERS: Do you know at all where they were taken or you don't know what happened to them after they were taken?

PASTERNAK: Well, actually I was, we were only told by, by friends of our family who had survived how they were taken Dachau. Well, my brother he

didn't have to go yet but he, he went to himself because of, he knew of the sisters was in which concentration camp, so he, he volunteers as a cook there he thought, this way he could help but when they, he died when they were actually killed I can't say but I was one of the older sister and a, and a two year old child who was born one of the group that alien group.

WATERS: Okay. You said you were in army right before you came to America . Were you released from the army of did you just leave?

PASTERNAK: Well, I had, I had a heart problem, and I had they the consul tried to find me everything but they didn't. They denied that I am that I am dead in there. When the Polish War started I was forced in the Slovak army to go and but the American Consul some how found me and that what I am in the citizens, American citizen and was consulate or a consul and so for help they find me and.

WATERS: So your father went to the American Consul to look for you is that?

PASTERNAK: No, no the consul themselves my father just contacted the, the consul and at that time it was in Prague yet, later on it that's why I came the other way because Germany closed the border. Czechoslovakia but actually called the heart of Europe because it was middle Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Romania so, actually from there.

WATERS: So, from?

PASTERNAK: We supposed our father, our father send us the paper to first the to go through France but because the German border was closed so we couldn't go there so he had to send us paper through ah, through ah, through Italy to come and actually, I was a deserter at that time because I just went to Italy and there waited to the papers come and than my mother and sister they also came. My father changed the passport and all the visa, visa for the there from there we went and that was originally supposed to have been Conte Savoia which was a very big, big boat forty-seven thousand tons instead of that they put us on the Saturnia and which later on the United States had a grabbed ah...

SIGRIST: Oh, I know how to spell it I know the ship yes
(He laughs)

PASTERNAK: So, so the problem with me was I couldn't the papers were sent through going through Hungary and Italy wait for the papers but I had to I had to go through the Hungarian I mean the Slovak to Hungarian border and over there I, I was smuggled in which was some, some people that they still tried to help what ever they could do and the boat just across the border to Hungary.

If I had run the other way, they would have grabbed me and at that time already America didn't started it's the Slovaks and the Hitler, the Germans that was the and then, then it came to actually came the day we had to go through the train and to the boat and boat that it.

WATERS: How, how did they smuggle you into Hungary?

PASTERNAK: It was I came on a boat through the Danu, Danu Danube that's between, separated Slovakia with Hungary a little boat just took me right through even they didn't take no money even though if they would have caught me they could have been killed too, but once we had all the paper to go

through Hungary into Italy and over there in Italy we waited until the papers came and then did this instead, until getting on the Saturnia I mean Conte Savoia a big boat they put on Saturnia which was a small boat seventeen thousand or fifteen thousand under a light almost two thousand people.

WATERS: So.

PASTERNAK: I can't even think of this it took us eight, eighteen or twenty days coming from Italy to the United States.

WATERS: How did you get to Italy from Hungary?

PASTERNAK: That once we got to Hungary we had, we had all papers, we had all the papers, but only on the Borderline we would have gone the way it was on the train they stopped all the trains and I they would grabbed me like that once I was, I was already Hung, Hungary. The only bad thing that was instead of the Conte Savoia they put us on the Saturnia and.

WATERS: And, and you met, you met your mother and your sister in Hungary than.

PASTERNAK: No, yeah, yeah.

WATERS: Do you remember where you left from in Italy?

PASTERNAK: I think Naples but that was also supposed to have gone with train, with train and from there right from the boat but instead that the ship was put us on a train and go back I think Naples.

WATERS: Do you, How did you feel when you were leaving the country? Were you happy?

PASTERNAK: Of course, I was, of course I never expected that ah, be lucky enough that way but my mother still, my mother and sister still went to the train to Budapest, Hungary but I just, I just met them there from Budapest they packed what ever it was, it was most of it was stolen anyhow so, practicing nothing because it was supposed to been stamped everything closed but there were plenty thieves.

WATERS: Okay, um how was it decided that just you and your sister were going to come and your brother

and your sisters were still gonna stay?

PASTERNAK: The couldn't be brought only on a quota and for the already there was a borderline between Slovakia and Bohemia in which Prague was the consul but then, then when started all the trouble so it was ah, it was no consul in Prague you had to got to, got the papers were made but, but my mother and my sister was no problem but if I would have gone with the train I would have been.

WATERS: You said most of your stuff was stolen but do You remember, maybe what was packed for you to come?

PASTERNAK: Lot of things, I, I, I remain just with one suit and, and, and one coat and maybe a couple a couple. It was, it was a lot of things packed there silverware and goldware and it was supposed to be actually by government stamped and not supposed to be opened just when it comes but ah, the just saying everybody tried to grab what ever they could.

WATERS: Okay, Do you remember what day you left to go to

America? Do you remember the date?

PASTERNAK: That, that it was very early in December very early I, I don't all I know is they took us, took us to get to, to New York eighteen, eighteen or twenty days.

WATERS: Did you make, Did you make any other stops on the way or you just came straight to America?

PASTERNAK: Well, the, the, the boat, the boat made, made straight but we had some problem on the go, it was very stormy and the boat was rocking and everybody was sick, the food was horrible and, my mother and my sister, they sick. Money was they allowed for three of us ten dollars so, and it was only on the boat two, two guys, waiters that were sorry and they felt sorry for us and they give some food, that they.

WATERS: Do you remember what class that you traveled on?

PASTERNAK: That was the, they were ah supposed to have gone on the first class but on the Saturnia because all the people were there all this for the actually, from the, from our windows you

could see, see the sea but we were three still at three, three more completely in the sea.

WATERS: Do you remember why, the ships got changed on you? Do you know why that happened?

PASTERNAK: Why just yes, because they just tried to ship, ship out everybody and it was on the boat very bad the captain was very anti-semitic he was Bulgarian of course they were friendly Jews and I was hungry I used to, used to used to go my mother couldn't eat they just anything it was the only, only thing was the Italian wine, which was very good for seasickness, that helped with me but otherwise.

WATERS: So, is that what they gave everybody Italian wine to help with their seasickness?

PASTERNAK: They, that you could have plenty but the, the bad part was that my mother and sister didn't want eat only kosher so they gave us kosher food but what a tuna fish in the morning, tuna fish in the am it's bad enough the, the way it is so you eat it so I used to sneak up on, on, the first and used to steal the fruit or whatever I

can and I and the when the captain came he was very anti-semeitic "stinking, stinking Jew" this and this started what.

WATERS: So did he keep the Jewish people separated on the ship or?

PASTERNAK: Well, he couldn't separate the, the first class but he put the Jew people mostly on the wherever on the higher on the other put three more of course, on a seventeen thousand ah or instead of forty-seven thousand tons of course, the ship was three quarters when we came to what's the we made one stop from Naples and I can't think now big, big ah, big city I can't remember how from there I was a smooth ride up till the but once, but once we left the gave us very good, terrific meal, that time and but soon we as left, the next day from there it started to storm and we were just.
(Intercom voice in background of tape)

WATERS: Do you remember where you slept on the ship?

PASTERNAK: Yeah, we had very small bunks three people, three people in a cabin but that's like,

you have like children also who have this

SIGRIST: Bunkbeds.

PASTERNAK: Bunk, but yeah, but believe it or not this was so actually when you slept, you couldn't sleep like this. (Mr.Pasternak gestures with his hand how he slept)

WATERS: You had to sleep on your side

PASTERNAK: On our side, and beside you couldn't sleep an of because it was so stormy and the that we had another thing happen that we were stopped before we came to.

WATERS: You were stopped before you came to America.

PASTERNAK: Yeah, we were stopped by, we all thought it was German, German but it happened to be a French, France U-boat came but nobody they didn't make announcement or anything but the Captain and three more people went, went on the boat and they went away with. They didn't say why or, or what so everybody start to cry and this and I me like a dope went up on the, on the top of the boat never seen before but all

suddenly two, two U-boats from one from and back and they, they stopped and came up on the boat, the uniform, the French uniform was the same like Germany so everybody, start to hide and cry. I said, "Oh were gonna, the boat they are going to kill us" all, all this but they came up on the boat and started to go around asking questions they, they speak to me also, not everybody in German, and they started to call name, names to come up to see the captain and wait my name is Pasternak there was one guy there with the name Pearlstin and when they come to me he says, "yeah", the Captain says, "yeah he's, that's him" because they took all our passports before we never got, got a passport till when we came to the United States so, he didn't like me and this he wanted if I should take me off the boat and but, but, they didn't because I said my name is Pearlstin, not Pearlstin, Pasternak.

WATERS: So did they take anyone with them?

PASTERNAK: Yeah, they did they were a lot of, a lot of people well, well with a [Christ] on and they, they went around but when they stop they

hide or took off their the flag whatever and, yeah they took about twenty some odd people. All because, the one of the officers talk to me in German he says, " we just trying to find out because lot of lot Nazis and Germans try to come on" and so he just tried so they took him off and they said they took them to a jail and over from there I was friendly with one guy he spoke to me in my own language I, I don't know if he was one of the Germans to or not but they took him off and he was talking to me,"if we get stopped or anything, anything" he says, "they join the English army" but I never seen him after that but he was one of them that I knew that was taken of an, and, and I said before to go on a thing before I had never seen a U-boat even in the army because Czechoslovakia didn't have any, only the Danube was but, it was U-boat can be so, me like dope I'm looking there and there everybody hide and everybody cried and everybody.

SIGRIST: This is actually a good place for us to just pause for a moment.

WATERS: Okay.

SIGIRST: So, I can put another tape into the machine so, we are just going to pause for a minute with Eugene Pasternak.

(Beginning of Second Tape)

WATERS: Okay, this is Stacey Waters for the National Park Service where I am currently interning as a, an intern from Rutgers University this is we are just resuming our interview with Eugene Pasternak from you came here from Czechoslovakia when he was twenty years old and today is October 14, 1998. We had just finished speaking about the trip over on the boat from Czechoslovakia to America.

PASTERNAK: From, it was from Italy

WATERS: From Italy, was anything else that you remember about the ship?

PASTERNAK: It was very dirty, and the food horrible even, even believe it or not we didn't have any fresh water but seawater.

WATERS: What do first remember about reaching America?

PASTERNAK: Well, before we came in we saw the Statue of Liberty that was something right but. But what you want what you mean what I remember?

WATERS: Well, how did you feel when you first reach America and you saw the Statue of Liberty?

PASTERNAK: Well, that felt good but you felt strange you coming in and you don't speak English and and being that the boat, boat was so bad so we just wanted to get off as fast as we can. We did get off before the people, the other people, being that my father was a citizen he didn't have to go through the, the other thing they they let, they let my father come up and he took us off the ship but the other people still had to go who came without any relatives or anything.

WATERS: So, you didn't go to Ellis Island

PASTERNAK: Yeah.

WATERS: Oh, you did.

PASTERNAK: Yeah, we was there but they let us and they

started and they let my father in and it was still, was still everything there but the other people who didn't have anybody they stuck them and they put them in cells or something I don't know. Being, being that we had my father a citizen so, we didn't have to go.

WATERS: Do you remember how you got to Ellis Island after the ship?

PASTERNAK: Well the ship if I remember they let us, off the let us off the ship, the still was not parked what that the ones that needed to be off taken off, they took them off.

WATERS: Describe to me what, what Ellis Island looked like?

PASTERNAK: That time, didn't look much, didn't look much anything like homes or anything just the seeing Liberty, Statue of Liberty that was seen far. How far we were actually from, from Ellis Island, I mean from Ellis Island but.

WATERS: What did you do when you were at Ellis Island?

PASTERNAK: We waited they, till, they checked us to that we could go out because a lot of people were, were detained but our papers, were so, whoever whoever had people they didn't. But see before, before you came to Ellis Island they before, they used to do is, they had to be examined and everything but we're, we're already went when it was the German border, closed we had to go before the we got our papers from the consul. We had to go be examined and otherwise we couldn't go even go on the boat.

WATERS: Do you remember if you had to go through a medical exam at Ellis Island?

PASTERNAK: No

WATERS: You didn't

PASTERNAK: No, the other people yes, but me we had the examination in Prague yet, when the consul was there so, and ah being father American citizen so.

WATERS: Was there anything that you saw for the first time on Ellis Island?

PASTERNAK: I, I really couldn't tell very much because ah the way how bad was the trip you just wanted to, to, to a because being on the boat eighteen, eighteen or twenty days and just can't even look on the food or anything else. Except once, the one of the waiters felt sorry for us that couldn't have so he, he told us that he told me anyhow that ah that, that today you are going to have meat and which came out that it was frankfurters, that was the meat.

WATERS: So you were, you were only at Ellis Island for a couple of hours then?

PASTERNAK: Yeah.

WATERS: Okay, and your father met you there?

PASTERNAK: Yeah, he was, he was he could they let him go on the boat.

WATERS: Where did you go after Ellis Island?

PASTERNAK: We went to, to family my father's house, my father's brother's house.

WATERS: And where was that?

PASTERNAK: In Bronx.

WATERS: In the Bronx, okay. Do you remember how you got there?

PASTERNAK: Somebody must have picked us up but, I, I really couldn't say till what would that be because we stayed with my father's brother I think ten days.

WATERS: So, you only stayed with your uncle for ten days?

PASTERNAK: Yeah, and then we got an apartment.

WATERS: And did you get an apartment in the Bronx Also or...

PASTERNAK: Well, it well for awhile, awhile not a just for about a week or two, it was like a hotel or what ever it was but then we got our own apartment in fact unbelievable four, four rooms in the Bronx beautiful on ground floor at forty-four dollars a month and in two months free, free rent it's not like today. (he laughs)

WATERS: Describe your new home to me. What did it look like?

PASTERNAK: Well, my father ah we had three rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom.

WATERS: What was the neighborhood like?

PASTERNAK: It, beautiful a that time not like Bronx today.
(he laughs)

WATERS: Do you what type, what type of people lived there, was there a lot ethnicities?

PASTERNAK: Pardon me?

WATERS: Was there um a lot of different ethnic people there or was there?

PASTERNAK: What you mean?

WATERS: Did you, do you was there a lot of Czechoslovakian people living in the neighborhood or?

PASTERNAK: No, Czechoslovakian they were in, were in, in Manhattan. They were in 70th Street but no there

were, mostly Jewish people in that area was in Bronx lived.

WATERS: Was there a synagogue nearby?

PASTERNAK: Lot of synagogues.

WATERS: Lot of synagogues.

PASTERNAK: Lot of synagogues, I mean the only thing I still laughing up till today I didn't speak any English at all or anything but I saw signs and that apartment to let and it said, when it was written, the way it was written, you read it in my language would read it toilet and so, and everybody used to say oh the, the America's is gold, gold they know that Americans still had to work or it was pretty, pretty bad in 1940, no jobs or anything so, I for to let I read it as toilet. I said this is a golden country that, that you have to advertise that I is a toilet and yeah at that time I know like in Brooklyn to, excuse me, when toilet outside in hole or anything so, but said, the way I read it I said that it, I said we had toilets too.

WATERS: What kind of job did your father have?

in America?

PASTERNAK: Well, he for a, for a, for a time he was a rabbi in Pennsylvania and then he used to collect money for hospitals and this with other but ah and then he had a very, very nice voice so on the high holidays he used got to Russian and over there and pray so, that he made big money sometime, it's have the living but.

WATERS: What was your first job when you came to America?

PASTERNAK: For awhile, I couldn't for months 1940 was like a depression I had no jobs, I know even my cousins, they couldn't get jobs. One was a professional plumber and he as collecting fifteen dollars but my first job was the, they send me to, to at that time, they Horn and Hogs restaurants you don't remember, that even in New York they were Horn and Hogs the food was cheap, good food and cheap so, they send me there at that time minimum was was twenty-cent.

WATERS: What did you have to do at your job?

PASTERNAK: I had to clean, clean the tables and take, and take off the food and was hungry they didn't, didn't tell me I could eat so there was one manager there that went after, after me and started on oh sitting your sitting you not doing nothing so, he got me very mad I was hungry I couldn't go eat or anything so, when he came out, came again, I picked up the food from the plate there it right in his face, you can have your job for twenty-cents I mean. Even though figured out in Czechoslovakian money was, it was pretty good because Amer, American dollar was big but then, then I have very hard jobs. I had no profession so actually anything. HIAS used to send you out at that time, my father used to give me one dollar for, for the carfare at that time carfare straight five cents and go look for a job, look and they didn't like me because I was very much, because I was very religious the way he wanted me so, was a struggle too.

SIGRIST: (addressing Mr. Pasternak) Can I just ask a question the HIAS sent you out, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society. I just wanted to make sure I heard that right can you, can you

just say what they sent you out for, when you say they sent you out?

PASTERNAK: They send me out, that time send me out on a job but to a furrier. I knew little but so, they send me out for a eight dollar a week and ten, ten hours a day a not was, Saturday no, but six days a day so I came there by that time somebody else because everybody looked for a so, we used to talk together so, when I got my job it took quite a long time before. I so if he ask me I didn't think that it was going but he ask me oh you got where are you going so, looked for the address and he went down there he didn't know anything about it but he wanted a job and I came there it was well he says, I have somebody already, somebody came so, my friend who supposed to have been friend and he took it took the, took the job some Americans told me that he don't, doesn't want me.

SIGIRST: (addressing Ms. Waters) I'm sorry Stacey I didn't mean to interrupt but, I, I wanted to hear more about that.

PASTERNAK: So, it was, it was very hard they would give you HIAS house may a sandwich but not much mostly,

eight dollars for eighty hours that's in actuality was, otherwise employment agency used to send me but, but being that I didn't work on Saturday so, if I, I did get a job already didn't come Saturday they told, they don't need me here till, till finally someone, the first one, one year or two years I was smoking and my father was against smoking so, he gave me when I came here he gave me fifty cents so, of course, I at that time I bought the pack of cigarettes eight cents so, so of, lot of money so, went to, so when fifty cents, I used up mostly for cigarettes and my father told me you want a cigarette the, than you get, the when you work you get money than, my money you wont' smoke. Being, not having a trade was hard.

WATERS: Did your mother or your sister work?

PASTERNAK: My sister did, yeah I had become my sister worked she went to school and than she worked and at that time in the forties, 41' at that time diamonds in the could, couldn't get from Belgium originally used to do, so they become a big, big thing here and they were good jobs

you could make nice money.

WATERS: Your sister went to school?

PASTERNAK: She went to school but she worked, still was no sometime not enough but my father made this clothing or anything was so I finally, till I got a to the lady garment union over there and started to work and then I went to diamonds to and that, that's the only job I liked. (Knock on the door)
(break in the tape)

SIGRIST: Oh, were just going to pause. Now resuming after a short interruption.

WATERS: Okay, Um How did you learn to speak English in America?

PASTERNAK: Just by reading, by reading or listening I couldn't, I couldn't go to school because I had to work because my father being that I, I didn't do the way he wanted to do, he didn't help or anything so, I help myself later on. I started with the garment union when they send me on a job making belts so, started from than by diamonds I used to, be it took there and over there I made a nice but unfortunately didn't

last long, never sick in my life after months, I got sick and I wind up in Montefiore Hospital for three and half years patient there up till today they don't know what the problem but arthritis, [noritis] I don't I lost all my muscles and, and then from there I went to. I made application for, you know I can't even think my for my I worked of the New York City Transit and that made good job worked for twenty-three years and now I have not anything but I have a pension and a social security that I can, will it took a long time.

WATERS: Did you ever get married?

PASTERNAK: First of all I lost a wife and a child two year old child in Holocaust than, I still after all that, I still didn't want to get married or anything but one day I married second wife and that's I have my son from this and I lost my second wife in sickness when she was after forty years of marriage after she was sick and I was not told that maybe I could have helped it depends wouldn't have and than, then I married the third time and I lived with my wife twenty-six years and after that, after twenty-six

years I have to divorce, I had to divorce because she had a daughter and three grandchildren and that's her whole life that what

SIGRIST: (addressing Ms. Waters) Since, they told us we need to get out of the room why don't you go ahead and ask the final question.

WATERS: Okay. I just wanted to ask you how you think being an immigrant to America has effected your life?

PASTERNAK: Well, which way you mean I, could you repeat?

WATERS: Well coming to America, how did you, what were, are you glad you came to America?

PASTERNAK: Of course, I am of course, I am there a lot of things I don't know, there is no country of course that, if not first of all, if not at that I probably would be dead.

WATERS: Okay. Well I just wanted to thank you Mr. Pasternak.

PASTERNAK: If you, if you have some other times you want something if you tell me, what if you tell me

what would be important or if this.

WATERS: No, this is okay. Thank you. Okay, This is Stacey Waters signing off with Eugene Pasternak on Wednesday October 14, 1998 in East Brunswick, New Jersey.

