

EI-103

ANASTASIA PULA DATZENKO

BIRTH DATE: MARCH 27, 1897

INTERVIEW DATE: 10/2/1991

RUNNING TIME: 1:00:37

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE PH.D.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: STRATFORD, CT.

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 2/1993

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 2/1993

AUSTRIA (UKRAINIAN), 1911

AGE 14

SHIP: BARCELONA

PORT: ?

RESIDENCES:

- **AUSTRIA: ZATOUREN**
- **US: NEW YORK, NY 13TH STREET**

Oral Historian's Note: This interview was conducted in a nursing facility and is filled with the interruptions and background noise one would expect at such a place. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 2/27/1993.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine, and I'm with Mrs. Anastasia Hleva Datzenko. We're here at the Lord Chamberlain Health Care Facility in Stratford, Connecticut. It's October 2, 1991. Mrs. Datzenko came from the Ukraine in 1911 through Ellis Island at the age of fourteen. So I'm very happy to be here, and I will ask you some questions, and whatever you can

EI-103/DATZENKO

remember will be very good.

DATZENKO: Memory is good.

LEVINE: Great. Well what, do you remember your birth date?

DATZENKO: My birthday on March 27, 1897, I am born. Or 1899, I think.

LEVINE: How old are you now?

DATZENKO: I'm now ninety-four years old.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. '97 then, you would be.

DATZENKO: Seven.

LEVINE: 97, uh-huh, you were born. Okay. Well, where were you born?

DATZENKO: I was born in the south village, Zatouren.

LEVINE: Zatouren.

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. And was that a small village?

DATZENKO: That was small, not too big village. And, you know the state capital at that time was Franz Joseph and the Yama. That was our state capital.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So this village was part of Austria?

DATZENKO: That was Austria that time when I was.

LEVINE: I see.

DATZENKO: And then you know where the Halic?

LEVINE: The Halic.

DATZENKO: Yeah. That's a big city. There used to be the state capital over there, but I don't remember. I was too young. I will only tell you whatever I remember.

LEVINE: Yes. Tell me whatever you can remember about Zatouren.

DATZENKO: Oh, I, we used to, I was only a young girl. I went to school and there was a small village, and we had a church.

LEVINE: What church was that?

DATZENKO: Oh, the church was St. Mary's.

LEVINE: Was it a Catholic church?

DATZENKO: Catholic? Yeah. Ukrainian Greek Catholic, they used to call, because we didn't belong that time under the Rome. They belonged under I think

EI-103/DATZENKO

some place, a Greek bishop. It doesn't matter that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was your family religious?

DATZENKO: My family was very religious. And we went to church because we had a church, and we were Ukrainian. All the time we talk Ukrainian in the house. After World War, 1914, they had, you know, they had a World War till 19, uh '23. I didn't hear nothing from Europe.

LEVINE: You were already over here?

DATZENKO: I'm here. I'm here in 1911. And '14, World War come. I didn't have no letter, nothing. Just from the paper what's going on. So when I here my mother wrote, my two brother got killed in the World War, my father got killed. And Russian soldiers take my sisters too, only, I think eleven.

LEVINE: Russian soldiers, wait. I'm sorry, I didn't understand, Russian soldiers took your sisters?

DATZENKO: Yeah. They are soldiers, you know. They used to come, World War, they didn't care. They take the young girls. So my mother wrote to me. My mother died in 1933 and she was alone.

LEVINE: Well, when you were in the village of Zatouren, what was your life like then?

DATZENKO : Well, I went from that, we used to go the state capital, like I told you, Vienna, that's Austria at that time. And then we had a, how do you call it,

EI-103/DATZENKO

when we write the letter, we used to write Austria Galicia. But we was Ukrainian people, but we belonged under the German government at that time.

LEVINE: Now, had your family been in that village for generations, or how long had your family been there?

DATZENKO: Well, my family there. (knock on door) Come in. (break in tape)

LEVINE: We've just paused here because someone came in to deliver clean clothes to Mrs. Datzenko. We'll continue now.

DATZENKO: So all I know we had a, like a library in the village. And my father was, how you call, like a manager over there in the village for quite some time. And we believed church, we go every Sunday, whatever go on. Since I remember I was a little girl.

LEVINE: Did you have festivals? Did you have high religious holidays that you celebrated?

DATZENKO: A what?

LEVINE: Did you have high holidays that you celebrated?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah. Every holiday we celebrated. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And what did you do on those celebrations, can you remember?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Go to church. We go to church, and then we read and like I told you we go to library, we get together, all young people used to get together and read the books.

LEVINE: Now, what did you say your father did?

DATZENKO: My . . .

LEVINE: What did your father do for work?

DATZENKO: My father?

LEVINE: Yes.

DATZENKO: He was a farmer.

LEVINE: A farmer. Uh-huh.

DATZENKO: He was a farmer. We had a little farm, we sell, I remember eggs, milk, everything like that.

LEVINE: Was it your father's own farm, or did he work for someone?

DATZENKO: No. He was, he make the cloth. All kinds of stuff, you know. You know. And he could be, he was a shoemaker, and he was making, I don't know how you call that?

LEVINE: A tailor?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Yeah. He was like that.

LEVINE: So he did a lot of different jobs?

DATZENKO: Yeah. And children never, we never work. When they're on the farm once in a while, but we went on school, in the morning.

LEVINE: Now, how many children were in your family?

DATZENKO: In my family was six.

LEVINE: And could you name them, and tell me where you fit in?

DATZENKO: Yeah. Well, my first brother was Michael. My second brother was Gene. And one was William. There was three. One died when I was home.

LEVINE: What did he die of?

DATZENKO: He broke the arm and somehow, you know.

LEVINE: Was there a hospital in your town?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. He went to the therapy room, you know, in Europe. That therapy all come over here, I think they're all from Europe. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: But then he died from that.

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: He died from that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, how about your sisters? Who are they?

DATZENKO: My sister, my sister, older than me, Anne, and then I had an Olga, a sister Olga. They both died the first time they had a baby, and they died when they had a baby.

LEVINE: And were you still there? Were you still over in Zatouren when they died?

DATZENKO: No. They all died. I thought, my God, you've got to excuse me. When I got married I got pregnant. I thought I'm going to die because my two sisters died, but no.

LEVINE: Good.

DATZENKO: I strong, because I was here. Yeah, who knows. Only God.

LEVINE: You're strong and you were here. Was it usual in your little town for women to die when they had a baby?

DATZENKO: Oh, no. Nobody. There was something that happened to them. I don't know. They probably just didn't have a good doctor or something. I don't know.

LEVINE: Now what was your mother's name?

DATZENKO: Betty.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Betty. And what was her maiden name?

DATZENKO: Her maiden name? Pula.

LEVINE: Pula. That's P-U-L-A.

DATZENKO: Yeah. Just like my uncle.

LEVINE: Yes. Well, now tell me more about the little town of Zatouren. Anything else you remember? Do you remember . . .

DATZENKO: How much I could remember? I was only, yeah, I was a young girl. I'll go to school, and I know we have to go to church every Sunday and every holiday.

LEVINE: And what about school? What was school like? Can you describe it?

DATZENKO: In the village we had a school. All the children go.

LEVINE: Now were there other, were most of the people in your village Catholic, or were there other religions in the village as well?

DATZENKO: Oh, there's some, in our village not many Polish people. Only quite few. They're all the Ukrainian.

LEVINE: Were there Jewish people at all?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Very many?

DATZENKO: Yeah, quite a few. But the Jews, but, you've got to excuse me. Jewish people used to buy stuff from us, you know, from the farm. They used to come down and buy potatoes and whatever you had, any kind of vegetable. They buy that, and they had a store and they sell them to the other people . . .

LEVINE: I see.

DATZENKO: For the big city, you know, when they didn't have any farm, they buy it.

LEVINE: I see. Now, did the Jewish people get along good with the other people in the town or not?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. They were good first time because when you want to borrow the money you didn't have it. You borrow from the Jewish money, and they let you take it. And then you pay them. If you didn't pay them, you give them food. They take food from you. Sure. Because the farmers didn't have much money, but we always had it. My father could manage, because we used to plant the tobacco, and government take that. Government take that, and before Christmas I remember my father went to big city, Manisteriska. You know, he went to big city, and that way he bring fifty dollars, sometimes a hundred dollars for that. And we had enough, you know, for the food, for everything, oh yeah. If you manage years ago you didn't have it bad, but only now everything upset.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: You could make a living if you managed it well.

DATZENKO: Yeah, sure. Like I said, Mother bake own bread. We always had enough food.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of the foods that your mother cooked besides the bread she baked?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. She make with the yeast cake, big bread. We had everything enough. That's only now the people are hungry like that, because everything upset. One government was with Poland. They wouldn't let the Ukrainian to go to school. If you graduate from school, you wanted to be a lawyer, or a professor, they won't let you. You've got to say you're a Pollock. Yes, ma'am. That's what they do.

LEVINE: You mean, are you talking about today, or are you talking . . .

DATZENKO: They turn, they said, "You want a job?" When Poland took it. I wasn't there, because I'm over. But I read about that.

LEVINE: I see.

DATZENKO: See? And they make them. You want to be a lawyer, you can't be till you sign your name you're Polish.

LEVINE: I see. This is when Poland, when the area you grew up in became part of Poland.

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: I didn't grow up, I didn't see the Poles.

LEVINE: Right. That was later, after you had gone.

DATZENKO: Because it was later. There must be 1925 or '28 when Poland took it, you know, when Russia take his part, and Poland take his part, and all nationality mix.

LEVINE: I see. Describe your mother to me. What was your mother like, when you were growing up?

DATZENKO: My mother? She work hard on the farm and milk the cows. She cook, she bake. Like I said, my father was working, he was working and making. We had a two rooms, one room, my father had it all kind his, he make the shoes and he make the, like, tablecloth and bedspreads. He do that.

LEVINE: He sewed things?

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did he have a sewing machine?

DATZENKO: No. He didn't have.

LEVINE: By hand?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: No, he didn't sew. He had a machine, you know, you put the thread, like you . . .

LEVINE: Oh, it wove the . . .

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: It wove the thread into tablecloths.

DATZENKO: Yeah. It was like that.

LEVINE: I see. So one room in the house was for his work space, where he did . . .

DATZENKO: For his tools. And two rooms, we had three, I remember we had three rooms.

LEVINE: Can you remember what the rooms looked like?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. Like over here. They had a big window, and like you had a door, you close it. I don't know. We had a nice home and enough food.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, how did you, like, would you have, would you all eat together as a family?

DATZENKO: We eat together on one table. My mother cook, and we had a long table and had two benches or three benches sitting like that, and we . . .

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you always sit in the same places?

DATZENKO: No. We had a dining room between the rooms, and we had it right in the middle. And that was dining room. I see the shelf, we had a bread over there, we had a table. And all this, and we eat together all the time, whole family. That's the way I grow up, I remember. I have it just like we had it here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, what was your father like? What kind of a man was he?

DATZENKO: He was same thing. He came from same village as my mother.

LEVINE: They both came from that village as well.

DATZENKO: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: What was he like as far as his personality?

DATZENKO: Oh, he was good man, personality. He had a good, he had, like he was mayor and city and go there. He had it, like I told you, we had it like library.

LEVINE: A library.

DATZENKO: He was interesting. In the day time he works home, and evening he goes . . .

LEVINE: To the library?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Yeah, to the library. And a lot of young boys come there, and they're interested. But years ago everybody was interested to go. But no more now. Everything mixed up, whole world like that now. Even here, we had it worse than they had in Europe.

LEVINE: Well, tell me, how was it decided that you would leave your little village and come to the United States?

DATZENKO: My uncle go, and that's my mother's brother. And he came to my mother, and he says, "Do you want, I want to take one girl with me to the United States." And my mother says, "I won't let my children go." I says, "Ma, please. I like to go." And I decided, I said, "I like to go." So uncle even take me on his name. When we came to New York, to Ellis Island, I saw the Statue of Liberty, but, you know, where you pray, I was crying. Just, "What I did? I came here without Mother, and with an uncle, and my brothers, sisters home." But . . .

LEVINE: You were sorry. You weren't sure you should have come.

DATZENKO: I was sorry. I wasn't sure. But then the, we came on March. It was very windy on the boat, and then my boat was Spanish. They called Barcelona. And we were 23 days. Stopped the France, because they can't go any farther because there was too hurricane on the ocean. And then they stop in England. And then we finally got to the United States?

LEVINE: They stop in England, did you say?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: No, no. To England. And then we came to the United States.

LEVINE: Now, why did they stop in England?

DATZENKO: Because on account of the hurricane they can't go any further because otherwise the boat, we'd all drown. So when we came to New York the boat stopped right in New York near the Saint Joseph Manor.

LEVINE: The Saint Joseph . . .

DATZENKO: Like a Cathedral.

LEVINE: Cathedral.

DATZENKO: Yeah. Because I remember a man came and take us out of the boat, but a lot of people went back. The doctor came, examined you. If you didn't look good, you don't feel good, they sent them back. They put them on the boat, and they sent them back home.

LEVINE: Did you see people who were being sent back?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. Because they examined you, and they examined me. I thought they're going to send me. But no, I was on good condition. And I came here, and then my uncle know some people. I remember East 13th Street. And East 13th Street, he knows some family, and he take me there. I stayed there for a week, and then they find me job. I work for the doctor, dentist. I work there, eight dollars a month, three children. I cleaned the office. (she laughs) When he pulled the teeth, all the blood,

EI-103/DATZENKO

I couldn't eat after. And then I was crying. I says, "Ma, God punished me because I didn't listen to you." You know, I was a young kid, I'm only a kid. But I made it.

LEVINE: Well, tell me this. When you, when your uncle wanted to take one of the girls with him, what had you heard about the United States? Why did you want to go?

DATZENKO: I wanted to go to the United States to see how the United States looked.

LEVINE: Had you heard anything about it?

DATZENKO: I was interested.

LEVINE: You were interested. Had you heard stories about the United States?

DATZENKO: Yeah. I like United States. I says, "I want to go out of the village." You know? You, not many, of course, we had a big city right in Zabarlieu, Halic, Haraginca. You know, all those big cities. Because I remember I went with my father when he had something to sell. He used to go there. They had once a week, they had it, like, sale, you know. You bring that, and he take me. I says, "Pa, I want to go with you, and see what's going on." I was that type.

LEVINE: You were the type that wanted to explore.

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. I want to watch everything. And that was the same thing over here.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Now, had you read any books, or did you know any people who had been to the United States?

DATZENKO: I don't know anybody, only those people my uncle know, and I went there and they take me to 7th Street, St. George Church, and then they got me job, like I said, in the dentist. I worked there. And I used to have a day off. Every, once a month only, for eight dollars a month. Because you had food. But I find it, find the people or find a friend, you know.

LEVINE: Did you live there?

DATZENKO: I lived there and I sleep there. (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. A nurse just came in and we're resuming now. So you lived there and you worked there and you ate your meals there, everything.

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah, they give you meals, and you had a room to sleep. Like home.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you like the people you worked for?

DATZENKO: Why, yeah. He was nice, because I had good food, and I take the children. Only one time I cry, because they were Jewish, and I have to work on Sunday. They won't let me go to church. But you'd better get used to it. Where are you going to go?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, now tell me more about the trip on the boat. What was that like? The trip on the Barcelona. What was it like on the boat?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Oh, you mean on the boat? Well, there was very danger to go. But, you know, they used to have, on one floor, all the ladies. Even if husband and wife go, they separate them. They never had them together.

LEVINE: On the boat, they never had the men and the women together?

DATZENKO: No. Not years ago.

LEVINE: Were you down in the hold? Were you in what you call steerage?

DATZENKO: Yeah. You had about five, six steps way down.

LEVINE: So this was like a dormitory, with the men in one dormitory and the women in another one.

DATZENKO : Yeah. They had one for a man, only the man, and the other just for women.

LEVINE: So then you were separated from your uncle?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Till we get to the end, I told you, that St. Joseph Cathedral. And then he went to these people on 13th Street, and there, I was over there for three days.

LEVINE: On Ellis Island.

DATZENKO: Yeah. I know that building with the sister, you know, nun. Oh, yeah.

EI-103/DATZENKO

With the nun, I was over there for three days. And then my uncle get me, the lady get me, because they never let the little girl go with the man.

LEVINE: Oh, in other words, you couldn't go with your uncle.

DATZENKO Yeah. But even from the boat they wouldn't let you. That's your uncle, but you can't go with him to somebody else, from lady. Because years ago, you know, a lot of them, they take the little girl and they don't know where she was and what.

LEVINE: I see. So he went to St. Joseph's church, and he got the nun to come and get you.

DATZENKO: Yeah. He got that lady, and she got me. And she got me a job. And then my uncle worked someplace in New York, in Brooklyn, you know where they smoke, in the smokehouse, where they smoke the fish and everything. He worked there. He worked there for one year, and my uncle died. I didn't have nobody.

LEVINE: Now, what was your uncle like? First of all, what was his name, his first name?

DATZENKO: That's what I told you there, Pula.

LEVINE: Pula was his second name.

DATZENKO: Yeah.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: What was his . . .

DATZENKO: No. My uncle was my mother's brother.

LEVINE: Right. And your mother's maiden name was Pula.

DATZENKO Yeah.

LEVINE: But now what was your uncle's first name?

DATZENKO: Oh. Who, my mother?

LEVINE: No, your uncle.

DATZENKO: My uncle, Willie.

LEVINE: Willie.

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. What was Willie like? Tell me about him.

DATZENKO: His, I don't know. They lived same thing like we lived. We used to go like, on Easter and Christmas together, the whole family come together for supper. My mother was cooking, and she invite everybody who she knows, friend or friend, from the church.

LEVINE: Well, now, your uncle Willie, when you got to New York, did you see him

EI-103/DATZENKO

very much?

DATZENKO: I didn't see him very long because he work in Brooklyn, and I worked on 55th Street, housework. So he didn't come to see, but I go to that lady where I told you on 13th Street. Her name is Mabetka. Mary Mabetka.

LEVINE: And she was the nun that came and got you?

DATZENKO: Yeah. She was, she got me job, and she take me to her house.

LEVINE: I see. Now, Mary Mabetka, was she the person that you worked for, or it was she that found you the job?

DATZENKO: She take me to the agent where I got the job, through the agent.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

DATZENKO: Yeah. I worked there, I remember, about a year-and-a-half for eight dollars, and then I ask for a raise. And then another lady want a girl, she says, "I give you twelve, you come to me." So I left the job. I told him, I said, "You don't want to give me raise, I work here." And, you know, with the four children, that's a lot of work. I says, "She want to give me twelve dollars. I go over there." So I left. I went on the other job. Then I went, like I told you, she let me go to church on 7th Street because that's the Ukrainian church there. You probably . . .

LEVINE: Oh, on East 7th Street. Yes, I know that church.

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So that's where you were living? Were you living down on East 7th?

DATZENKO: No, I didn't. I go to church over there, but I work on 55th Street, and church on 7th Street. I used to take the elevated for five cents and get to church. I go there, and I find a lot of Ukrainian people in that church. I even find my first husband in there.

LEVINE: Oh, so how did you meet him? What happened?

DATZENKO: I was, we was in church, and I ask him from where he is. He says third village from me.

LEVINE: Say that again.

DATZENKO: Yeah. And I know because I had an aunt there. And I used to go with my father over there because that's my father's sister, so we used to go there. I says, "Ooh, I know your village," I said. So we started to go together.

LEVINE: He was from a different village from you, or from the same?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. From different, different village. But I know that village. Like I said, my father's sister lived there. And when they had any kind of holiday, they invite us, and they used to come from there to us. It was the third village from us. It was quite some time.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, what was your husband's name?

DATZENKO: John.

LEVINE: John. And his last name was Hleva?

DATZENKO: Hleva.

LEVINE: Hleva. L, H-L . . .

DATZENKO: Yeah. H-L-V-V-E . . . V-E-A. Hleva. I forgot. My head.

LEVINE: Oh, that's good. That's fine. Okay. So John Hleva was his name. So did you, did he court you for a while? How long did you see him before you got married?

DATZENKO: Oh, no. We were, we went together about one year, and maybe even longer.

LEVINE: And what would you do when you would get together for a date? What kinds of activities?

DATZENKO: We didn't go, we met in church, and say hello to each other, and talk. Said, "I have to go, you know, because I'm going to work." I've got to be there, because they wait for me. They let me to go church for an hour, an hour-and-a-half, and then I've got to go back. (knock on the door)

LEVINE: I see. (break in tape) Okay, we're resuming after someone came into

EI-103/DATZENKO

the room. Let's see. So you just see your husband, your first husband at church, and then you had to quickly go back to work, because you only saw him very briefly on Sunday.

DATZENKO: I didn't see him, only on Sunday. And then his brother got married, older brother. And they invite me to the wedding. And I ask my lady if I could go, and she says, "Yeah, you could go." So I went, and we started going together. And then we got married, 1915.

LEVINE: Well, now, after you went to your husband's brother's wedding, then did you start to see him more after that, or did you just keep seeing him in church?

DATZENKO: No, I see him after that. He used to come to visit me. Yeah, where I work.

LEVINE: Now, were you able to go out with him from where you were staying and working?

DATZENKO: Like, every day I stayed working, he come only to the door, and I say, "Hello. I have to go back to work."

LEVINE: So you really didn't have any time off from your work, did you?

DATZENKO: I didn't have a time off, but I did very good. Honey, my story is a big story. But then we got married, and then I had children. In 1941 he died, and I lived with the children, and then my sister-in-law take care of my children, I went to work in Remington because that's a government job.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: In Remington?

DATZENKO: Yeah. I work on ammunition. Backing and expecting, primer. They had three shifts because that's the World War. I worked there for twenty-five years.

LEVINE: Oh. And you started in 1941?

DATZENKO : Yeah. Then my children, when my husband died I had a chance to get married. I don't want any man to pick on my children. So I said, "I'm sorry. I'm not married." So I keep the children going like that till they got married. They got married, and I owned the house, I bought the house, and I worked in Remington. I had to take the loan, like years ago, and you could pay the loan. Just as soon I get it, I get paid, I pay the first loan. And anything left I buy for myself, and anything, I buy for children first, not for myself. I had two dresses. I wash one, wear to work, and the other was dirty. But I make it. I manage all right.

LEVINE: Good for you.

DATZENKO: And then my, all my children married, and this, my name is Datzenko now. His wife, they had a son. He was a pilot in a plane. And he make forty-three mission. When he come back after World War he tried a new plane on Long Island, near it fall apart and he burn. He burn, they didn't bring nothing, only bones. And then his wife, that man who I married now was the name, his wife got heart attack and she died.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: She died when her son got burned?

DATZENKO: Yeah. Well, you know, the son, she had only two, two boys. And then she die, and he was alone. He had a business.

LEVINE: What kind of business?

DATZENKO: He was furrier. He make the fur coats. So he was Ukrainian, but he came from the Russia. He come from Williamgrad. So I marry him.

LEVINE: How did you meet him?

DATZENKO: I know him.

LEVINE: From church?

DATZENKO: Because I bought a coat. Yeah, from church. From church, and I bought a coat. Everybody know him over here in United States. He had a, first he was furrier in New York, and then he came from Bridgeport, and he had a business across the street from St. Charles Church, on East Main.

LEVINE: I'm sorry, from St. Charles Church?

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, let me ask you this. After you married Mr. Hleva, did you settle in New York, or did you move to Connecticut?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: We moved to Connecticut 1918. We came to Connecticut in 1918.

LEVINE: To Stratford? Stratford, Connecticut?

DATZENKO: No, to Bridgeport.

LEVINE: Bridgeport, uh-huh.

DATZENKO : Bridgeport, I remember, on Hamilton Street. Yeah, because we came here, my husband's brother lived here. He worked in Columbia Grafflin. Remember, they make the records? You don't remember.

LEVINE: Columbia Records. Yes, yes. Uh-huh.

DATZENKO: Columbia Records. So he worked there, and he got a job, my husband. That's why we move here.

LEVINE: I see. So then your husband worked for Columbia Records, too.

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. He worked for Columbia Records. And then he teached some, he like foreman, and he was teaching some fellow for the, how they make the records. And he always worked days. That time they put him on night for one or two weeks, I don't remember. And then one time was explosion and he was all burned. But they called me. They called me. I remember we lived that time on Grand Street in Bridgeport, near that Columbia, you know, not too far past Central Avenue, between the Seaview and Central Avenue. So when they called me to Bridgeport Hospital I came and he was laying still on that, all bandaged. I says, "What happened to you?"

EI-103/DATZENKO

He said, "You know, we had an explosion. But I'm burned a little bit. Don't worry." That's all he, "Don't worry," he says. "You go home. You make the soup for me, you watch." I went home. Honey, he suffer six days and he die. Oh, the doctor told me if he live he won't see, he wouldn't be able to walk because his body burned, everything burned. So I went through that.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness.

DATZENKO: But what else I'm going to do? Got to make life.

LEVINE: Yes. Now, tell me about your children. How many children did you have?

DATZENKO : I had five.

LEVINE: Five.

DATZENKO: Yeah. And my children had, my younger daughter had a college, and the other, my boy got a job in Suporsky, and Suporsky send him to school. And he's like electrical engineer. Very good. (she coughs) Excuse me. (break in tape)

LEVINE: Maybe you can tell me the names of your children, maybe from the first one on down.

DATZENKO: The first one was Jean, a girl. And one was May, and one was Anne, and my boy is Harry, and fourth girl, baby, she was Mildred.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Now, can you tell me the kinds of things you tried to teach them?

DATZENKO: I tried to teach them to behave, go to church and respect the older. They never swear, they never fight, and they could learn. I'm telling you, I had good children. I never had trouble like some people had, because now it's hard to raise the children. And I had, my great-granddaughter, first, she had a baby last year. That was my name in the paper holding the baby. Yeah. I love them all.

LEVINE: Great. Now, you said before when we had the tape recorder off that you tried to tell your children to remember where they . . .

DATZENKO: I tell my children remember who you are, what nationality you come. Never be ashamed to tell anybody.

LEVINE: Why did you think that was so important to teach to your children?

DATZENKO: Too important for me, because I work hard, and I brought them up, I teach them that way. Let them remember they had a mother.

LEVINE: Now, when your husband died, what year was that?

DATZENKO: '41.

LEVINE: '41. And then you, that same year is when you started working in the ammunitions.

DATZENKO: That year I started working, I never forget I work. And before World War,

EI-103/DATZENKO

and I had laid off, you know, from Remington, but they always called me back. And I worked there for, that was government job. A lot of people who wasn't citizens, they couldn't get a job in there, because that was ammunition.

LEVINE: Now, when did you become a citizen?

DATZENKO: Before I get married. Years ago we have to be here five years before you become a citizen. Again you only first paper. A regular citizen, you've got to be about seven years over here. If you don't know the questions, and the United States law, you wouldn't get it.

LEVINE: What was it like learning English when you came here? How did you learn English?

DATZENKO: Little by little I learned. I have no chance, because they didn't have schools, they didn't have it in school, night school, like they got now. You've got to learn yourself. That was tough, but I made it.

LEVINE: Do you remember how you learned? Do you remember, did anybody help you to learn English, or you just picked it up yourself?

DATZENKO: Anybody talked English, I always asked them. I says, "What's that mean? What's this mean?" That's the way I learned.

LEVINE: Good for you.

DATZENKO: Anybody want to learn something, they do it. At least, you got to excuse

EI-103/DATZENKO

me, they didn't care, they lazy, they don't want to, so they never learn. They don't know how they live and who they are.

LEVINE: Now, tell me a little bit about when you came in on the boat, when you and your uncle were on the boat, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

DATZENKO: Yes, ma'am. I remember, but I don't know who she is.

END OF SIDE A BEGINNING OF SIDE B

LEVINE: Okay. You were saying you belonged to the International Institute.

DATZENKO: Yes, ma'am. I always helped them. Whatever they had, I used to work on three shift at Remington. When I work from three to eleven and from seven, then a lot of time from eleven to morning, but then I had a chance to go there. I used to bake cakes and sell them over there and give that money to International Institute.

LEVINE: Now, what does the International Institute use the money for?

DATZENKO: I went because I wanted to represent our name, Ukrainian name. There was only three of us, I think, or four belonged. The rest don't. And then we went to the Statue of Liberty, a hundred years old. They let us, we had it three times, supper and hotel, free. And then they had a bus from Bridgeport to go to the island. (she coughs) To Ellis Island to see the Statue of Liberty. We went by bus to New York, then we take the boat and go right to the Statue of Liberty. (she coughs) Excuse me. And

EI-103/DATZENKO

then I said, "Oh, I see the Statue of Liberty when I came to America, but I didn't know who she was."

LEVINE: Did you have any ideas?

DATZENKO: I had, because a lot of time I went to New York, and I take the boat and go over there. Again, we had it free. Oh, yeah, I went quite a few times on the boat, because they had a boat, anybody want to go. We take train from Bridgeport, and over there we go to New York and go to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Now, you, when you went to Ellis Island after you came from Europe, you were there for three nights. Is that what . . . For three nights?

DATZENKO: I didn't stay, because I didn't feel good.

LEVINE: You didn't feel good.

DATZENKO: No. I didn't feel good. I was, I got sick for some reason.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about what it was like there for those three days?

DATZENKO: I don't know, honey. I forgot.

LEVINE: Were you in the hospital there?

DATZENKO: No, I wasn't. I wasn't in the hospital, but I just got sick. And I told the other woman, and she didn't feel good, too, was went home. And they

EI-103/DATZENKO

left, and the rest of them. But I don't know how many.

LEVINE: Now, when they, when Maria Broka, was it, who came for you at Ellis Island?

DATZENKO: Ellis Island. I don't know. I don't remember the name. But I belonged for quite some time to help the people. We used to bake and sell the goods. My name was on a paper there. My name was on the stationery, at that time.

LEVINE: I see. Can you remember when you came from Europe and you went to Ellis Island? Can you remember anything about Ellis Island at that time?

DATZENKO: I don't remember much, because, like I said, we see the Statue of Liberty, but I don't remember nothing else.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, now, is there anything else that you can think of that has to do with your being in the old country, being Ukrainian and coming to the United States and working hard and raising your children. Is there anything that you can say about what that's meant to you in your life?

DATZENKO: Well, I never say, but I say to our people, a lot of them want to take my story, but I was always working hard. I didn't have much time before. You know, like I said, I left widow. I have to work for my piece of bread and butter and manage, too. So far so good. I did all right. My children all right. They come every day over here to visit me. I brought them up, and they all, so far no divorce in my family. So far, good.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Now, your children have children.

DATZENKO: Yeah. But my son had two daughters. One, they both were one teaching, and the other, she work for a lawyer. She went to college, too, but they both married. And the other, my granddaughter, she's a typer, she works on typing. And my last daughter, she had college. She was like, give medication, or something like that. When anybody's sick, she used to, yeah. The young one, that Millie. So she married. There name was Fatn. F-A-T-N.

LEVINE: F-A-T-N.

DATZENKO: Yeah. Fatn.

LEVINE: And so now do you have any great-grandchildren?

DATZENKO: I have one. They live in Wallingford.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think that is a wonderful story, and I thank you so much for telling it.

DATZENKO: I said, you know, now I'm ninety-four years old. But thank good Lord for the good memory, I remember everything. Like I said, a lot of people come on the boat, they never know what the name boat. I know I told you Barcelona. There was Spanish, and we went to Germany to get that boat with my uncles, oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Did you have to wait?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Bremen.

LEVINE: Bremen. Uh-huh. Did you have to wait for the boat?

DATZENKO: We wait a whole week.

LEVINE: Ah. And where did you . . .

DATZENKO: We stayed in Berlin.

LEVINE: In Berlin.

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did, and do you remember anything about Berlin, about that week?

DATZENKO: I only remember they had a beautiful bridge over there from the, in Germany, from the, I forgot the name, to the Bremen. It had flowers all over. There was beautiful city. I've been quite a few places, and always, even over here, when I was young, I belonged to an organization, and I go places.

LEVINE: Was it an organization with other Ukrainian people?

DATZENKO: Oh, yeah. All the Ukrainian. Some our people came, they never mentioned who they are or what they are. They went, and they lost. Not

EI-103/DATZENKO

me. I came young, but I remembered. I always stick. I never was ashamed to say who I am, what's the name. I never say that, because I wasn't ashamed. That was my name, and I was proud of it. And I said to my children, they laughed. I said, "You know why? I'm not going to die. Remember, till I see the Ukrainian free." That's what I got in my mind. I didn't do any harm for anybody. I love all the people. If I see I can't get along with the people, hello and goodbye and that's all. I don't like that some women gossip and this one, this one, ah. Not me. I want that. I want something positive. Get organization, and be interesting to something. Not to go and, you know, you've got to excuse me, bumming around. Who are you? Why you got to be here? How your family feel when they see the mother like that, or something like that. No way.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you're very interested today in what's going on in the Ukraine.

DATZENKO: Oh, I read, and believe you me that hurt me. It hurt me all my life, how those people, our people, suffer in there. How many got killed? For what? But sometimes, I'll be honest with you, our people will fall. They don't stick together. They went with the Commies, and they stick to the Commies. They didn't stick together. That's the whole trouble.

LEVINE: The trouble is they didn't stick together.

DATZENKO: Yeah. That's why we didn't have a country. But that, they got free, like Czechoslovakia and Hungarian and what ever, the other nation.

LEVINE: Yugoslavia?

EI-103/DATZENKO

DATZENKO: Yugoslavia. But they not free yet. And they said they freed them. What kind of freedom they are? They not free them. I don't know. Everything is more special now. When you look on that paper, I hate to see the paper. I'll be honest with you, not money kill them. It was Saturday paper when some boyfriend killed the girl. He beat her to death, over there in Bridgeport on the East Side. Terrible things, what's going on. But it gets all over. I don't know.

LEVINE: Okay.

DATZENKO: Then look. They look like it's going to be better.

LEVINE: Let's hope so, huh?

DATZENKO: I hope. I hope, because those people suffer. Our people suffer all our life. They had it good in the United States, but in Europe they never had it. They didn't get any freedom. Like I said, when Poland gets there, when they had a good education, doctor or a lawyer, you got to sign you're Poland. If you didn't sign, they wouldn't give you a job, because that's the Polish government. That wasn't right either.

LEVINE: So you came here and you had a freer life than you would have had?

DATZENKO: I thank good Lord for everything. I like United States. I've never been to Europe after that. What's going on there, I wouldn't go. For what? But my daughter went to see. She liked it, (?) like (?). You probably know. Yeah. She went there. She says it's a nice city.

EI-103/DATZENKO

LEVINE: Okay. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate your talking with me.

DATZENKO: You're welcome. I appreciate you calling.

LEVINE: Oh, good. Okay.

DATZENKO: At least, I spend the afternoon, I had to talk to somebody.

LEVINE: Well, I'm very happy.

DATZENKO: Otherwise, I take my Readers Digest and I read the nice story. I don't like, I be honest with you. I don't like even look on the paper. It's not money, killing and killing. You're not safe to live alone now in a house. Terrible things might happen. I think we could, too. The government tries, but the people won't listen.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you very much.

DATZENKO: You're welcome, you're welcome.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I've been here today speaking with Anastasia Hleva Datzenko.

DATZENKO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Thank you very much.

EI-103/DATZENKO
END OF INTERVIEW