

EI-1065

CHARLES VIDOVICH

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CROATIA, 1913.

PORT: FROM FRANCE ON “WONDERLAND” [“VADERLAND”?] TO NEW YORK.

RESIDENCES: CROATIA

BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN

LORAIN, OHIO

LEVINE: Today is April 27, 1999, and I’m here in Lorain, Ohio with Charles Vidovich

...

VIDOVICH: Um-hmm.

LEVINE: . . . who came from Croatia in 1913, when Croatia belonged to Austria-Hungary.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, um-hmm.

LEVINE: And he was just six months old when he came to this country on the “Wonderland” [“Vaderland”?], the ship “Wonderland” [“Vaderland”?]. At the time of this interview Mr. Vidovich is 86 years of age . . .

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: . . . and I'm here with Mrs. Vidovich, who has just been interviewed, having come through Ellis Island, and their daughter-in-law, Dorothy Vidovich. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. OK, if we could start, if you would tell Mr. Vidovich, how it was, that you came here at the time that you did.

VIDOVICH: I, I don't remember that because I was six months old, see. (laughs).

LEVINE: But just your mo-, tell about your mother being pregnant and . . .

VIDOVICH: Well, yeah, well, she told us . . . she told me that she couldn't come, my dad send her the passport and everything, for her to come. She came up to France and she was pregnant, they wouldn't want, nobody could take care of her, so they send her back and they told her after I was born, that she could come. Well, after I was born, well she stayed there till April, then . . . she came the April 12, yeah.

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

VIDOVICH: Rok.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

VIDOVICH: R-O-K.

LEVINE: OK. And your mother's name?

VIDOVICH: Anna.

LEVINE: Anna.

VIDOVICH: Anna.

LEVINE: Her maiden name?

VIDOVICH: Skrebik.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

VIDOVICH: Oh, I, no. Skrebik. (laughs)

LEVINE: (laughing) You can make a better guess than I can. Just try something.

VIDOVICH: S-K-, Sybert, ain't it. Subert. (laughs) That was thing. Her brother's name, Subert. My mother's brother.

LEVINE: Is, that was his last name?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, Subert.

LEVINE: How would you spell that?

VIDOVICH: S-U-B-E-R-T. Yeah, Subert.

LEVINE: That's his name . . .

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: . . . in this country.

VIDOVICH: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That was my mother's brother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, so my mother's name was Subert, too. Skrebik, yeah.

LEVINE: OK. And now you say your father was already here.

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, oh yeah. He was here. They missed the, the how you call that went down, "Titanic." They missed that boat, they missed, on a train, the train didn't come in time, otherwise they wouldn't have been here. Him and my uncle.

LEVINE: Your father came with his brother?

VIDOVICH: Yeah. Hmm.

LEVINE: And what, so he must have, now wait a minute. What year would he have come then?

VIDOVICH: The 19-, I think the 1910, 1911.

LEVINE: Hmm, OK. So he was here for a period of time.

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, yeah. Then he sent for my mother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was he doing? What was he doing for work when he was . . .

VIDOVICH: Well, he came, they came first to Battle Creek, Michigan and he worked on the railroad . . . over there.

LEVINE: You mean building the railroad?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, they were building, yeah, they were working on the railroad. That's where he got the first job.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Then when we came to America, we came to Michigan, from Michigan we came to Cleveland, we moved to Cleveland, to Collinwood. He was still working on the railroad, then we came to Lorain. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did he continue to work on the railroad after?

VIDOVICH: No, no. He went to the National Tube.

LEVINE: Oh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now do you know why he came, was he transferred to, just working on the railroad, is that why he first came to Cleveland?

VIDOVICH: Well no, oh, h-he got a job there, yeah. But when he was in Battle Creek, he was working on the same railroad that was in Collinwood.

LEVINE: Oh.

VIDOVICH: He was just transferred over there.

LEVINE: I see.

VIDOVICH: Then, we don't, I don't know, I think we lived in Collinwood about six months and we came to Lorain. They were looking for, people over there, United States Steel that time or National Tube, so he came over here and he got a job.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah. And he, that was in, I think 19-, 1916 we came to Lorain.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Um-hmm.

LEVINE: OK. Now did you, were you the only child? When you came over . . .

VIDOVICH: No, no. I had a brother, John, he was, he was born in Europe, too.

LEVINE: Oh, . . .

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: . . . and when you traveled when you were six months, it was your mother, your brother John . . .

VIDOVICH: Eh, John. John was . . . three years old. Yeah. Now, he was three years older than me.

LEVINE: So your mother had her hands full.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, that's right.

LEVINE: She had a three year old . . .

VIDOVICH: Yeah, that's right.

LEVINE: . . . and a six month old.

VIDOVICH: That's why she had to go back. (laughing)

LEVINE: Ok. Did your mother ever tell you anything about the trip? About coming through . . .

VIDOVICH: Nooooo. Uh-uh.

LEVINE: . . . and France and . . .

VIDOVICH: Well, she only told us she was weighed down with all them people, she didn't understand them and, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Um-hmm.

LEVINE: And did she ever tell you anything about coming into New York or Ellis Island? Any of that part?

VIDOVICH: No, uh-uh. Uh-uh.

LEVINE: OK. So now were you in, would, do you remember anything about life in Michigan?

VIDOVICH: Michigan?

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: Battle Creek?

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: No, not too much. We were just, we weren't there too long.

LEVINE: Right.

VIDOVICH: No.

LEVINE: Yeah. And so, when you came then to Collinswood . . .

VIDOVICH: Collinwood.

LEVINE: Collinwood.

VIDOVICH: Um-hmm.

LEVINE: That, you do remember that?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, oh yeah, that's the time they had that flu epidemic.

LEVINE: Oh, what do you remember about that?

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. My dad saved my mother. She, put her in the bathtub and covered her with a blanket, and made her drink rum.

LEVINE: Really?

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: So then, and she recovered.

VIDOVICH: Yeah she recovered, yeah. That was, everybody was sick.

LEVINE: Can you talk about that a little bit? What do you remember about other people who had that flu during the epidemic.

VIDOVICH: Well, I don't remember, you know, that much, but I know my ma had it bad.

LEVINE: Um-hmm. Yeah. So, was there, were you, was your family part of a whole Croatian community?

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Once you got here.

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, we, all Croatian people were here. Yeah.

LEVINE: Were there Croatian people also in Michigan? Do you remember?

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, oh yeah, um-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: We moved out, the Croatians moved, anybody that came the year . . . them immigrants, they would come by my dad, be a boarder and stay and, then, you know, get married here and go. And they, every time anybody came from Europe that he knew, they would come to our parents and, yeah. Oh yeah, my ma had a lotta them boarders come around . . .

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: . . . and stayed with us from Europe.

LEVINE: So in other words, did she, did she take in borders for money? Was it . . .

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, oh yeah, um-hmm. Yeah but, (laughing) they never paid.
(laughing)

LEVINE: (laughing) Well, do you remember the boarders as a little boy?

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, oh yeah. (laughs)

LEVINE: Where did they mostly work?

VIDOVICH: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember where they . . .

VIDOVICH: Over here in the National Tube.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, they, they all, my dad used to write to some of 'em to come and they would give 'em a job over here. You know they were hiring here at that time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, did, were, were they nice to you? Do you remember?

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. They were, they were good. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember now, did your mother cook for them?

VIDOVICH: Yup, um-hmm. She used to get up five o'clock in the morning and even wash their clothes. Yeah. (laughing)

LEVINE: And . . .

VIDOVICH: And what they, old, (laughing)

LEVINE: . . . with a wash board.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now do you remember, (coughs), like, where you lived? Could you describe, I mean, were there beds set up all around the house, or h-how was that?

VIDOVICH: Well, we, mostly we rented. First we rented. Me and my brother John, we used to sleep on the trunk. We didn't have no bed. We used to sleep under, one of them trunks. Well, till they found the place to live. Yeah.

LEVINE: Um-hmm. And then when you found the place where your mother started taking in the boarders.

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, that's, that's where her mother came . . . to our house. And, when we, rented the house and her stepfather, he was our boarder.

LEVINE: Ahhh.

VIDOVICH: Martin, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah.

VIDOVICH That's, that's where her mother came to our house.

LEVINE: When her mother came from, from . . .

VIDOVICH: Europe, yeah, in 1921 on 29th Street and Vine Street.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "But they were already married then.")

VIDOVICH: Huh.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, “They were already married then.”)

VIDOVICH: Noooo, they got married in St. Cyril’s Church.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, “Their father lived with the sister Agnus on Abbey Road, that’s where they . . .”)

VIDOVICH: No, they were on . . . he was over with my, they lived with my, with . . . that was his brother-in-law, too, lived there, George. And that’s where your mother came, to our house on 29th Street.

LEVINE: Do you remember, when your wife’s mother came?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, I remember her mother when she came. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: And how did she strike you? Could you describe her mother?

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, she, she was a pretty happy woman then. Yeah, um-hmm. Yeah, then, then my folks were her best, when they got married in church, St. Cyril’s Church.

LEVINE: When your wife’s mother married her stepfather, your mother and father were the best man and . . .

VIDOVICH: Yeah, um- hmm. Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

VIDOVICH: They got . . .

LEVINE: Did you go to the wedding?

VIDOVICH: Well, there wasn't a wedding that day, that time. They got married, they got married in, boom, they drank everything up (laughing), that was it.
(People talking in the background.)

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: That was it. (laughing) Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: Then they didn't have weddings.

LEVINE: Yeah, is there anything else about the boarding house that you remember?

VIDOVICH: Nooo, well . . .

LEVINE: Did your mother pack a lunch for the boarders?

(Unidentified person in the background talking)

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: So she . . .

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich, says, "That's what my mother, that's his father, that's him, and that's his mother. That's when they stood up for my mother and father-, my stepfather because . . .")

LEVINE: Well, they're beautiful pictures.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich, says, "And this is my father when he was in the service, and that's me, and that's my mother when she came from Europe. And (?). That's my daughter. That's our wedding picture." [laughing])

LEVINE: Oh. Beautiful. Nice, nice. So you really, you really were connected from the very beginning.

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. (laughing)

LEVINE: Ok, well, (coughs) . . .

(His daughter-in-law, Dorothy Vidovich, says, "Here.")

LEVINE: . . . now, were you speaking Croatian at home?

VIDOVICH: Huh?

LEVINE: Were you speaking Croatian at home?

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: They were, they were all Croatian.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich, says, "W-Would you believe me, I paid \$50 for my dress and \$5 for my veil." [laughing])

LEVINE: It looks beautiful.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "That was really depression time." [laughing])

LEVINE: Well, it looks beautiful. So you were speaking Croatian and you didn't really speak English until you went to school?

VIDOVICH: Yeah. When we, we learned English . . . me and my brother John, we, we learned, we didn't know, among big kids, yeah.

LEVINE: You mean even playing . . .

VIDOVICH: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: . . . with kids before you went to school.

VIDOVICH: Then I went, first, first time I went to school was in St. Cyril's Catholic school. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you were also Catholic from the beginning?

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And, and, do you remember starting school?

VIDOVICH: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember when you started school?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, I was six years old. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: And so your brother was three years ahead of you?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, yeah. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: He went through the public school, Lincoln, I went through the Catholic school.

LEVINE: Why was that?

VIDOVICH: I don't know. I-I wouldn't know why, he went to the public school, but I went to the Catholic school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: And, (clears throat) let's see, (pause) were a lot of the children in your school, also Croatian?

VIDOVICH: No, there were Slovenian mostly, because that was a Slovenian parish.

LEVINE: Oh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So could you communicate, could you talk to each other?

VIDOVICH: Where, in the church?

LEVINE: In, with the Slovenian and the Slovak and the . . .

VIDOVICH: No, no. Uh-uh. We were all talking English that time. We didn't, no. But that was a Slovenian school.

LEVINE: And how about your mother and father. Did they, did they speak English?

VIDOVICH: Noooo. They learned later on. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: She had to learn because she had to get her citizen paper, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: But my father never got the citizen paper. Yeah.

LEVINE: And so, you, you, how long did you stay in school?

VIDOVICH: Me, hmmm, up till the eighth grade.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: And so, when you, so did the Depression hit your family hard?

VIDOVICH: Oh, boy. You better believe it. (laughing) Oh, man.

LEVINE: In what way did, did it affect you?

VIDOVICH: Well, we were on welfare. (laughs) We used to get eggs and canned beef and things like that. And we used to get a little slip, where we could get groceries with. Three doillars a week.

LEVINE: For a family of four?

VIDOVICH: Um-hmm. Yeah. Oh, there was, no, there was five of us.

LEVINE: Your mother had another baby?

VIDOVICH: No, well, yeah, I have a sister. I had two brothers. They were Bobby and Mike and John, and me and my sister. There was five of us.

LEVINE: Oh, five children.

VIDOVICH: Yeah. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Wow. So your father had been working over in the, the Tube.

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: But he was laid off during the Depression?

VIDOVICH: Well, yeah, he was laid off, off and on, but he died.

LEVINE: He died when you were young?

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. He died before we were, well, we just got married, after he died.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: 1936, right? He died in 1936.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "What?")

VIDOVICH: My father died in 1936. Yeah

LEVINE: Well now, so was that what was going on? People would be laid off and then they would work awhile?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, oh yeah. Welfare, all welfare. Yeah.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, “He died three months before Charles was born.”)

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: So when you stopped school at eighth grade, were you able to get a job?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, I got a job, by the National Tube. I told ‘em I was eighteen. I was only seventeen and I got a job. Hey, there was men over there that weighed 200 and some pounds, and I was only, 112 pounds. And when I went into the office there, the fella looked at me and he says, “Hey, where am I going to put that fella.” And the fella that hir-, tol-, hired me, he says, “I got a job for him.”

LEVINE: What was the job?

VIDOVICH: Huh.

LEVINE: What job did he have for you?

VIDOVICH: Oh, I worked in a (?) mill. I had an easy job, turning the things. I, the first day I got, I made a hundred and, no, fifty-nine dollars.

LEVINE: Wow.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, “That was big money then.”)

VIDOVICH: Fifty-nine dollars.

(His daughter in law, Dorothy Vidovich says, “For how, how long?”)

LEVINE: How long did you work for fifty-nine dollars?

VIDOVICH: Fifty-nine, oh, well, it was twelve day pay.

LEVINE: Twelve days. Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, Um-hmm.

LEVINE: So di-, so what was your job again? Say again what you, what you did.

VIDOVICH: Well I was, well, anything, I was on a, pushing the pipe around on the, turning wheel. On the spin-. Then after that, I went over in the cement[?] mills. Then I got a job on the, hot end, and I became a crane man, I was, no I was a heat chaser.

LEVINE: What's a heat chaser?

VIDOVICH: Well, he, he followed the heat. It was, it was a pencil job.

LEVINE: Oh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, pencil job. Then the fella that went, he quit, he went to be a policeman and they put me on a crane, a builder crane.

LEVINE: Were you excited about that?

VIDOVICH: No. It wasn't too good of a job because I, I had four furnaces always blowing, you know things. I learned a magnet crane and that's when I was supposed to go in the army, then the army came, they started to make bomb steel. And they couldn't get nobody to run that crane, they even tried a woman . . .

LEVINE: Ummm.

VIDOVICH: . . . to work up there, they couldn't do it.

LEVINE: Was it a heavy job?

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. It was a, it was a smoke, a lotta smoke up there. You have to watch, and you have to watch what you were doing because all the steel that was made, the bomb steel, you had to know all your heat numbers and everything else. And there was always the army men there.

LEVINE: Oh, because you were making the bomb steel.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, um-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: And that's where I got deferred. Cause I had, I was what, 139 in the draft, right? My draft number was 139.

LEVINE: But you never went in. Did, so did you, were you working even overtime during . . .

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, overtime. Um-hmm. Oh yeah, a lot of overtime.

LEVINE: Gosh. Yeah. So did you, were you, did you get job satisfaction from going?
(laughing)

VIDOVICH: Well, from there after that, I went into the production and planning and I went on salary and I, I didn't work nothing then. (laughing) I was working in the office.

LEVINE: That was the easy job. (laughing)

VIDOVICH: Yeah that was, that's where I retired from.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "You retired when the computers come in. Computers. You didn't know how.")

VIDOVICH: Huh? Yeah, then the computers came in. Bah, I didn't know nothing about that, you know. They would send me the paper. We already sold the pipe and everything, here comes the paper, computer papers. You got this, you got that. Huh, we ain't got that, we sold it already. Yeah. They were so late. Yeah, well, that was just started, you know, that just started that computer business.

LEVINE: Right.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So . . .

VIDOVICH: I-I used to get them papers. I threw 'em in the waste basket. They was wondering. I was supposed to turn them, we were supposed to turn them back. We never send 'em back. We threw 'em in the basket because the pipes were gone. Yeah. (laughing)

LEVINE: Now do you remember when you met your wife?

VIDOVICH: Oh, oh yeah. I, I remember when I met her.

LEVINE: Wha-what did you, what did you think?

VIDOVICH: Well, she used to come over our house with her mother and father all, all the time when they come to visit.

LEVINE: Oh, from the time she was a little girl, well from the time she came here.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, well, yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So do you remember when you asked her for her, for your first date?

VIDOVICH: No. I don't know if I did or not. (laughing)

LEVINE: Who, was her story accurate?

VIDOVICH: Yeah, oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Ohhhhhh, yeah. (laughing) Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: So, w-when you think back . . .

VIDOVICH: See I figured that I was going to be turned down. My brother Bobby would be turned down, not me. (laughing)

LEVINE: Oh, I see. (laughing)

VIDOVICH: I wouldn't feel that bad. (laughing)

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "But that was (?), I got only a dime for myself, can you pay your way. (laughing) We used to go to show for ten cents before six o'clock.")

LEVINE: Can you remember going to the movies?

VIDOVICH: Huh?

LEVINE: Can you remember the movies?

VIDOVICH: Oh, I don't know. (laughing) If we remember the movies, what we went to see. (laughing) When she was pregnant, we used to walk from 29th Street all the way downtown. For a dime. It was ten cents.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "Save a nickel, huh?")

VIDOVICH: Yeah, save a nickel. (laughing)

LEVINE: Yeah, and you would go to the movies.

VIDOVICH: Huh?

LEVINE: Is, is that what you would do? You would go to the movies?

VIDOVICH: Yeah. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "And you know, one time we had a theater, right by, where the thing, on Grove, and we were watching a movie, (laughing) cowboy movie, and he leaves a dirty fart and the music stopped and he's a fart, gives me a dirty look. (laughing) Leave me that I did it, but he did it." (laughing))

LEVINE: So, let me ask you a funny question. Did you ever have any heroes in your life? Was there any, ever anybody . . .

VIDOVICH: Nooo. No. No.

LEVINE: . . . you looked up to that you wanted to be?

VIDOVICH: No, no, but, I had a good orchestra.

LEVINE: You did?

VIDOVICH: Oooh, and how.

LEVINE: What was that, what, what did you play?

VIDOVICH: I played the bass.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how many people were in your orchestra?

VIDOVICH: Five.

LEVINE: Five.

VIDOVICH: Five. Oh, we played all over. Oooh. Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Cleveland, all over.

LEVINE: What was the name of it? Your group?

VIDOVICH: My group?

LEVINE: What was . . .

VIDOVICH: Javr. Javr, in Croatian. Javr

LEVINE: Y-A-?

VIDOVICH: J-A-V-R. Javr.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what does that mean?

VIDOVICH: Huh? Oh, I don't know, it's some kind of, what would it mean, Javr. That was a name. Yeah.

(His daughter-in-law, Dorothy Vidovich says, "They called themselves, called yourselves Jollyboys, right.")

VIDOVICH: Huh?

(His daughter-in-law, Dorothy Vidovich says, "Didn't you call yourselves Jollyboys.")

VIDOVICH: No, no, Jollyboys was my brother. We weren't the Jollyboys.

(His daughter-in-law, Dorothy Vidovich says, "Ahh.")

VIDOVICH: No. Uh-uh. That was.

LEVINE: So what else was in the orchestra? The bass and what else?

VIDOVICH: Well, we had a, we had a prima, brać, bogalia, and a bass. There was five of us. There was, Mike Mozarić, Frank Prevanić, Matt Noičić, my brother John and me.

LEVINE: And you played Croatian music . . .

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. Um-hmm. All Croatian music.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "All string orchestra.")

VIDOVICH: All string orchestra. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So, and, so did you, you went to Croatian communities, around the country?

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Croatian weddings, dances, picnics.

LEVINE: Where . . .

VIDOVICH: Pre- . . .

LEVINE: Where were the places? That . . .

VIDOVICH: Well, we had a lot played out over at our church, St. Vitus, and we had our picnics, where our house is built here

LEVINE: Oh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich says, "This was all wooded area.")

VIDOVICH: This is all woods at that time.

LEVINE: And, and like you said you went to Pennsylvania. Can you tell me the towns that were Croatian, that you played in?

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We played over in McKeesport, then in West Virginia we played in Barrackville [?]. In Cleveland, we played over in Collinwood.

(Unidentified person talks in the background)

LEVINE: Do you still play?

VIDOVICH: Noooo. I quit 1960. When my brother John died I, well all, I'm the only one living of our orchestra. They're all, all the rest of 'em died.

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LEVINE: Your brother was in your orchestra?

VIDOVICH: Um-hmm. Yeah. Everyone of 'em died, except me. I'm the only one left.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you, do you, must know, do you know like the words to Croatian songs?

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah, all ours are Croatian songs.

LEVINE: Is there any chance you could sing something?

VIDOVICH: Who me, now?

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: Noooo. Uh-uh.

LEVINE: You sure?

VIDOVICH: Uh-uh. Uh-uh.

LEVINE: We'd love to have a little Croatian song on your tape.

VIDOVICH: No, no.

(His daughter-in-law says, "Pick your favorite one. Sing that one.")

VIDOVICH: Noo.

LEVINE: Just a little bit.

VIDOVICH: No. I don't sing.

LEVINE: You don't want to? Well, it would be nice to have it on the tape, but, OK, so that was your interest, music.

VIDOVICH: Uh-huh. Yeah. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. What else gave you, has given you a lot of satisfaction in your life?

VIDOVICH: Well, all my kids and everything else. Yeah. Living easy. Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

VIDOVICH: Don-don't work too hard. I retired twenty-three years ago. (laughing) So . . .

LEVINE: So you went to Florida.

VIDOVICH: Oh. (laughing) Oh, how many times. About thirty times.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you feel your life's been good?

VIDOVICH: Huh? Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Do you feel as though your life's been good, yeah?

VIDOVICH: Yeah. Well, now, we're going again, but the first time last year's the first time I ever flew on a plane.

LEVINE: Oh. How was that for you?

VIDOVICH: Both of us. How, how did you like it? Oh good. It was good, huh. All, all of the . . .

LEVINE: So now you're not afraid to do it again.

VIDOVICH: No. All the time we were going to Florida, all them years we were driving and driving, back and forth. Twelve, twelve hundred, fourteen hundred miles. Two days on the road.

LEVINE: Do you, do you, when you got to Florida, do you go to a place that has other Croatian people?

VIDOVICH: Nooo. Uh-uh. Uh-uh. No, we go to Treasure Island.

LEVINE: Oh. Um-hmm.

VIDOVICH: Yeah. Um-hmm. That's a resort town.

LEVINE: Yeah. Near St. Petersburg.

VIDOVICH: Yeah. Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

LEVINE: Now, let's see, is there anything else that you can think of . . .

VIDOVICH: No.

LEVINE: . . . about . . .

VIDOVICH: Uh-uh. Only know, I know, I've got two hips and a knee and that's it.

LEVINE: You got a replacement.

VIDOVICH: Yeah. (laughing)

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh-huh. Do you, can you think of anything that your, either your mother or father talked about, about this country, about being different from . . .

VIDOVICH: No. Uh-uh. Um-hmm. Uh-uh.

LEVINE: So you're having a good time in your retirement.

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. She was going to leave me one time because I was bumming so much. (laughing)

LEVINE: Well, you're glad she stayed I take it.

VIDOVICH: She put the suitcase on the porch. (laughing)

LEVINE: Is there anything else you can think of when you, when you saw Ellis Island, did it make you feel anything special or . . . ?

VIDOVICH: No. Uh-uh. Uh-uh.

LEVINE: Well, you wouldn't have remembered it for sure.

VIDOVICH: No. Well, I used to drink a lot that time too. You know, when we had the orchestra, drink a lot, come home, be sick, and everything. (laughing) But after that . . .

(His wife, Mary Anne Vidovich talks in the background.)

LEVINE: OK, is there anything else you can think about . . .

VIDOVICH: No, that's, no.

LEVINE: . . . that you'd like to talk about?

VIDOVICH: Uh-uh. No.

LEVINE: Yeah. OK. Well, do you have any of your Croatian, of your orchestra music on tape? On cassette tape?

VIDOVICH: Uh-uh. No. Well, my brother Mike has, but he died and I can't get a hold of that.

LEVINE: Oh. Oh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, we got a lot of that on tape.

LEVINE: I was going to say, we could put it in Ellis Island, you know, just to have that.

VIDOVICH: No, because she, she won't give me it. She, I think they got my bass. She won't give me my bass either. Yeah.

LEVINE: OK. Well, I want to thank you. That was interesting, even though you were six months old. You still have a story to tell.

VIDOVICH: (laughing) Oh, yeah. Well you know, it don't seem like I was born in Europe, because everything is here. I don't even know, what it is over there. You know. Yeah. You know.

LEVINE: You're a, you're a real American.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, I-I could say, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: OK, well I've been speaking with Charles Vidovich and he came to this country from Croatia when he was six months old, and he's eighty-six at the time of this interview and this is Janet Levine of the National Park Service signing off. OK, we're resuming here because Mr. Vidovich just brought up the tornado that came to the Clinton area.

VIDOVICH: The Lorain area.

LEVINE: Lorain area.

VIDOVICH: Yeah, 1924, on a Saturday, Saturday afternoon. And, we were kids, I was kids and the storm came over, blew over, the south Lorain was not hit, but everything was hit up that way. So, one of the neighbors, lady, girl, was coming from town. She was crying and bleeding, she said the whole town is . . . blown down. And that's the first time, we knew that there was a tornado over there. And my dad, he worked over at the mill, he was in the gas house. He worked in the gas house, and he seen the train going there and the wind blew the train right off the . . .

LEVINE: Tracks?

VIDOVICH: Track. Right, right into the river. And he knew there was something wrong and he had a brand new Ford and the water was on the street that deep and we had boarders. The boarders come and took the Ford and put it on the porch. It was a touring Ford. Then my dad, after that my dad got a permit, he had to go downtown, they, all was destroyed. The theaters and everything. I don't know, about eight-four people were killed. And . . . he had a permit, because we couldn't go from the subway, nobody was allowed to go downtown without a permit. So he had the card, and he took us down there. We went, I seen buggies. You know little baby buggies, way up on the top of the tree. The way the wind blew 'em down. Well, we seen all the downtown because my dad worked over there. He helped volunteer. All from the mill, they all had to go work there.

LEVINE: Did you know people personally . . .

VIDOVICH: Huh?

LEVINE: Did you know anyone personally . . .

VIDOVICH: No, I didn't know anybody personally but just, just this younger girl that came from town. You know, her mother was, children were there. They were in the theater. Yeah, blew down. Everything blew down.

LEVINE: Wow, that must have been quite a period of build-, of rebuilding?

VIDOVICH: Oh yeah. We wasn't allowed to go from south Lorain, nobody was allowed to go uptown. There was, there was so, so much vandal, stealing, people were stealing. Well.

LEVINE: Huh.

VIDOVICH: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. You lived through quite an event.

VIDOVICH: Oh, yeah. Um-hmm. That was, that was, that was bad. That was really bad. Um, huh. How many, how many, that one family was over in the lake, they blew 'em right into the lake. The wind blew 'em right in the lake. I don't know if they ever found them or not. Yeah. Four o'clock in the afternoon, boom. My mother was lucky. She had a gas stove and a coal stove that time. They didn't have no gas, she was lucky she had the coal stove to cook. Yeah. (pause) We didn't have no electric or nothing. Everything was down. (pause) That's it.

LEVINE: OK, well, thank you. That's a, I'm glad we added that. OK, this is Janet Levine signing off and speaking with Charles Vidovich.