

EI-1069

NAME: MOUSJA SAKOVICH

BIRTH DATE: APRIL 23RD, 1918

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL, 29TH 1999

RUNNING TIME: 60:00

INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME AS ABOVE

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: AMANDA CARELLA

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: NOT YET REVIEWED

RUSSIA, 1921

AGE: 2 YEARS OLD

SHIP: ROTTERDAM

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

RUSSIA: MOSCOW

NETHERLANDS: HOLLAND

UNITED STATES: Berkeley, CA

San Francisco, CA

TRANSCRIPTOR'S NOTE: The following interview was conducted at the Sakovich's house, with Mr. Sakovich (here denoted as "(L) Sakovich" in attendance.

SIGRIST: Good afternoon, this is Paul Sigrist, for the National Parks Service. Today is Thursday, April 29th, 1999. I'm in Sonoma, California, and I'm here with Mousja Sakovich. Mrs. Sakovich came from Russia in 1921, she was three years old at that time, and her family came to this country on the Rotterdam, ship, and we're in a very lovely, two year-old home here in Sonoma. And I would like to also say that Mr. Sakovich is also in the room, with us, listening, but he's been told he can't say anything (laughs)

So, umm great, let's begin by you giving me your birthdate.

SAKOVICH: Uh, April 23rd, 1918.

SIGRIST: (repeats) April 23rd 1918

SAKOVICH: Mm-hmm

SIGRIST: And what was your name when you were born?

SAKOVICH: Mousja. Well, it was Maria, actually

SIGRIST: Okay.

SAKOVICH: Eh – uh – Mousja is a diminutive of the uh, uh, real name – like Betty is to Elizabeth –

SIGRIST: I see

SAKOVICH: But, so it was Maria on the passport and so forth, but, uh, mother always called me Mousja.

SIGRIST: And your surname when you were born?

SAKOVICH: De-Dehe. Because my father was Dutch.

SIGRIST: Spell that please?

SAKOVICH: Spelled D-E-H-E. D-E-H-E-

SIGRIST: Did you have any middle names? Or anything?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, no-- in Russian they don't.

SIGRIST: They don't

SAKOVICH: They don't, no.

SIGRIST: And, uh where were you born?

SAKOVICH: Moscow.

SIGRIST: Born in Moscow.

SAKOVICH: Mm-hmm

SIGRIST: Born in the house or in the hospital?

SAKOVICH: (pauses) I think a hospital

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about the day you were born? Did your mother ever tell you a story --?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, no, never did.

SIGRIST: Well, I think one of the things that strikes me—

SAKOVICH: [interrupts] It was during the Revolution, so things were not, you know, very great. (Laughs) You didn't do things in order.

SIGRIST: Well, why don't we start right off by talking about your parents, and the thing that strikes me as being very interesting is that your father is Dutch. And you're born in Moscow.

SAKOVICH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So let's start by talking about your dad. What was his name?

SAKOVICH: His name was Willem. W-I-L-L-E-M, uh, Dehe, and he was a – a – cellist in the symphony in S-s-Moscow. He left Holland – um – when he – uh, graduated from the conservatory and so then, uh, he got a job as a cellist in Mo-uh-Russia. Well you can imagine -- you know – a little boy from Holland going to Russia? And that was about 1906, so he traveled all over Russia with the orchestra, and I have postcards of all of his – he wrote his mother, his grandmother, his aunt, his--everybody! And so my mother kept all those cards. And so, uh, that was – then he met my mother. In Yalta. And uh – I-I never have many details about this, it was just as if – well do you have to know everything? You know? (Laughs). So all I know is as a musician he toured all over the – Russia, and when they got to Yalta, I guess he met my mom. So I was born, then we went to Moscow, and then of course the Revolution was just too bad.

SIGRIST: Did your father ever speak to you in later years of his own childhood? Wh-What do you know about your father's growing up?

SAKOVICH: Oh! A lot. I mean, yeah. Well, I have pictures too and, so—

SIGRIST: [interposed] What are some of the things that come to your mind that he told you about his own childhood?

SAKOVICH: Well that he was—uh, always musical. And the family was musical, his father was a violinist in the symphony. That's why many of the postcards have the programs of all the places, you know—he want to tell his father what music was being played. And, uh, uh, my grandmother and grandfather lived in a little—he was born in Groningen, but then they had a little house in Groet. Which is a little kind of country--country place.

SIGRIST: [interposed] How do you spell that please?

SAKOVICH: G-R-O-E-T. And uh, well they had a very good life, I mean, not rich. But uh, uh, one of the brother's became an artist – a very good artist, and then of course, my grandfather played, so it was a musical/artistic family.

SIGRIST: Did you know your father's parents in later years?

SAKOVICH: Yes, they came to see us in 1928, and my Russian grandmother came to see when my sister was born.

SIGRIST: Talk about your Dutch grandparents first.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Okay.

SIGRIST: What are the impressions that you have when you met them?

SAKOVICH: Oh, well they were just wonderful (laughs). Um – they were very loving, and they adored my father. They thought – in fact, it wasn't

so good, because my aunt didn't feel that she was very important in the family because, you know, my father was going to Russia, playing cello, you know, big deal. So, that was kind of, yeah. But, uh, it was uh – you asked me what?

SIGRIST: I asked you about, um, to describe your parent's—grandparent's personalities a little bit; what were the impressions—

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Grandparents, yeah, well oh, Opa, grandpa, he was a bit strict, he was the typical—maybe this is a nice example: my mother loves to—was very independent. And so, when we went to Holland—we went to Holland from Russia. You said there in the beginning that we left there as a family, but we went to Holland and then my father left my mother and me in Holland while he was, uh, joined a symphony in um, United States and went all over the United States to find out where he'd like to settle.

SIGRIST: I see, I see.

SAKOVICH: So, um, he always wrote to my – you know – his father and everything and before he left he said, "if Mousja – my mother's name was Mousja – if she needs any money, you give it to her!" Well he was shocked, Grandpa, I mean this is ridiculous, the father's supposed to tell—she needs the money, you give it to her. She-She has to have it, that's all. And so there were a few little things, I've been reading some of the letters that, uh, my, uh, grandmother wrote to papa—

(sound of a bird clock in the background)

SAKOVICH: (gasps) Turn that off! Oh heavens –

SIGRIST: Oh, that's all right—what is it?

SAKOVICH: – That's that clock! With the birds on it! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: If it's being picked up on tape, the bird sounds are coming from a clock! (Laughs) Well, sometimes we've done interviews where there were like, parrots and we had to put something over—

SAKOVICH: [superposed] (Laughs) Oh that's terrible! Mmm – that's terrible!

SIGRIST: Well, that's interesting, I didn't realize that, that dad had come to America first—

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes.

SIGRIST: Well how long were you in Holland?

SAKOVICH: A year.

SIGRIST: Just a year

SAKOVICH: A year. So that's where I picked up Dutch and I tr—my mother didn't learn Dutch right away so I translated for her. And, I'm three years old you know, but, uh, children pick it up very quickly. And uh, so – but she was very sad, she wanted to go to America. And I was just reading the cards before I show 'em to you and almost every letter he says – he writes about every day – : “Why aren't you writing me? You never write me!” And he's writing all these letters, you know? So it, it, uh –I guess different, people are different (Laughs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] You're very lucky to have that

SAKOVICH: Oh I am! Well, my grandmother and grandfather -- Dutch gran – they were wonderful writers and I guess my father got it from them and so it continued.

SIGRIST: Do you know where in the United States your father um, was, prior to your coming?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes. Yeah—oh, well he went almost every state, and he – I have all the postcards

SIGRIST: Was it a touring orchestra

SAKOVICH: A touring orchestra

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of it?

SAKOVICH: No, and I – none of the cards say anything

SIGRIST: [interposed] Isn't that interesting?

SAKOVICH: None of the cards. And the only thing—well that's, that was in Russia, that he was also in a touring, but that belonged to the Royal fam—it was the Queen's orchestra. But, uh, when I went to Russia, I went on the Volga, and I went the same places he went, and he has a picture of the boat with the symphony on it and so this is where – and Yaroslavl was one of the places we stopped. I thought that was really something to get, you know, postcards of where I was going right then! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: But, uh, yeah, no, I don't know, as I look back, we just didn't talk about those things a lot. Well, they didn't want to talk about the bad things –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Right, of course

SAKOVICH: Like, when my grandmother came after Stalin, she, she just didn't – it was just too horrible, everything, you know? So we really never dwelled on, um, what we did in the past, I mean –

SIGRIST: Well, we'll try to—we'll put the pieces together

- SAKOVICH: Yeah, yeah
- SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about your father's personality
- SAKOVICH: Well, he's right there, but –
- SIGRIST: Okay, that's a photograph –
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] –That was a photograph
- SIGRIST: [interposed] – on your piano
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah, where that's when he was ten. His great-uncle painted that, he also played the piano. He actually was a pianist, but the job in Russia came up for a cellist, so he played the cello then and then continued.
- SIGRIST: Well tell me of course, you know, as you were growing up, what were some of his personality traits?
- SAKOVICH: Well he was strict, he was very strict, but, uh, in evidently – in a, in a very wonderful way, because I mean, n-not cruel, you know?
(Laughs)
- SIGRIST: Well, wh-what were ki—can you give me an example of the strictness?
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] Well, like he didn't want me to read—you know we had to bring current events to school? He didn't like me to read the newspaper, he didn't want me to—he had books of all the musicians, and there were certain musicians I wasn't to read about!
(Laughs)
- SIGRIST: (Laughs) Really?

SAKOVICH: Tchaik—I think he was on t.v. the other night—they had Tchaikovsky's life, I think he's a homosexual so I – maybe that's what – I don't know!

SIGRIST: [interposed] Isn't that interesting?

SAKOVICH: But he – yeah, no, these things—he was really a tight rein, I would say, uh, and uh – but he just loved his kids—I have a sister. Just absolutely adored, I mean –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Was your sister born in Europe or born here?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, she was born in uh—

SIGRIST: [superposed] Well good, we'll get to that then (Laughs).

SAKOVICH: [interposed] (Laughs) Yeah, yeah. So he –

SIGRIST: Well, what-what kinds of things do you remember doing with your father? As you were growing up?

SAKOVICH: We had to go for walks. He loved to go for walks. (Laughs). So I remember going for walks – I don't know if you know Berkeley at all, but there's the University of California there, and they have the Greek theatre. So we would walk from our house to the Greek theatre, I imagine it was about a mile, I don't know. (Sniffs) And so we did that a lot. And he was very busy of course, too teaching. And, uh, very often they would have the discussions, the, uh, students would ask Papa about uh, communist uh, Russia, you know, and how it was.

And I 'member he always told—oh they said how wonderful you know that the communists came and freed the people, and of course then my father said “Well it wasn't worth the sacrifice.” And so there were

big – lot – I remember lots of discussions, especially with his older students. And uh—

SIGRIST: Were the students ever brought into the house at all?

SAKOVICH: Oh yeah, well they came for lessons to the home. And Russians are very hospitable. You might have to wait for a Dutch family to uh, they wouldn't invite you to supper, but the Russians will!
(Laughs) And –

SIGRIST: (Laughs) You know it's interesting, you know, that there's two very different factions that married—

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Very different! Very different! An – And my father always used to say anything good that came to Russia was because Peter the Great came to Holland, and he learned from the Ho—from the Dutch. (They laugh)

SIGRIST: When your father wasn't playing his instrument, or teaching, what did he do for his own enjoyment?

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Read. He loved to read.

SIGRIST: [interposed] And what did he like to read? Specifically?

SAKOVICH: He read all of the Russian literature. We had a set of eve— Pushkin, Tolstoy, all of them. All the sets. He was—it was—it was just unbelievable, because after all it was his second language, you know? And uh, that was his main pleasure, he loved to walk.

And there really wasn't a lot of time for other things, you know? He listened to music on the radio, and things like that. Uh, there was a lot of partying, I remember, because I was the only child and so I—they never had babysitters, so I, of course went to the – wherever it was. And if it

was late, I got to sleep somewhere, and then they took my home
(Laughs) –

SIGRIST: What are some of the impressions you have from being at some of those parties? What were some of the things you were exposed to in an adult social situation?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Well I, I thought it was kind of wonderful, you know, to see these people that were such wo—George Gershwin came once, and uh, Petty Gorski –

he's a cellist that papa taught in Moscow and then he became famous in America. And, uh, to know these names you know, and then have 'em come to your home was always very very nice.. And my mother being Russian, the party was always good and good food and lots of fun! And uh – it was really – I – was blessed, it was a wonderful life, it really was.

SIGRIST: Did your father ever try to impose any kind of musicality on you?

SAKOVICH: No, he – he – he called me wonder-child because I wasn't.
(Laughs) He—I took piano, and I started cello. I have pictures of myself playing the cello. When I started teaching him, then he dropped me. (They laugh) That was – that was enough! But uh, I wasn't gifted, I practiced and—well of course, I had to practice—but, um, he could see, you know that, I tried, I tried. And I was – was okay, you know, but uh, I wasn't, no. And –

SIGRIST: At some of these parties were there ever, uh, improvisational musical moments—

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Oh! Oh! Oh yeah, all the time. Especially with, I don't re—it was a D – see this is all in the olden days—Dr. uh, Leo Eliweser [ph] was a very famous surgeon in San Francisco and he

just loved to play quartet with Papa. So they would get a group together and that was—my father always said that quartet playing was a very—I thought it was very hard to listen to, you know? And uh, he said, no, it was supreme love for the cellist or the musician who was playing, there was something nice about four people playing in harmony. So no, they did a lot of that. Yes, that, I forgot, they did that as pleasure. Yeah, yeah --

SIGRIST: [interposed] Oh, that's interesting. Well let's talk a little bit about your mom. What was her name?

SAKOVICH: Her name was Maria, Mousja –

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

SAKOVICH: Uh, Lukina.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

SAKOVICH: L-U-K-I-N-A

SIGRIST: And what do you know about her childhood and early growing up?

SAKOVICH: Not too much. She was uh – brought up in Yalta, and my grandmother, Russian grandmother was very stern. She wasn't like my Dutch grandmother. She really was very demanding and my mother used to kind of complain that she had go to church on Sunday, and they got the kids all dressed and they shouldn't get dirty, and the Russian services are very long –

SIGRIST: And what denomination?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Uh, Russian—what do they call it? Eastern Orthodox.

SIGRIST: [superposed] Eastern Orthodox Church

SAKOVICH: I always say Russian, and now there are hardly any Russians left in our church. But uh, Russian , the Orthodox Church.

SIGRIST: [interposed] And is that the faith that you were brought up?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. Um, wh-what other things did your mother talk about in her childhood?

SAKOVICH: She did sometimes talk about the horror. Like, uh, oh, something will bring something up and she'll say: "Oh, you don't know anything about lice! Now on the train trip from Odessa to--" Oh! When we say Dr. Zhivago, she said that was so – reminded her of it. And both my mother and I had typhus and we lost our hair – we have a picture of us bald, together. But we survived! And, um, on Easter -- that's a very big event for the Russians, tremendous, uh, event – they wanted to make *paskha* and *kulich* the food for Easter –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Can, can you spell that?

SAKOVICH: Paska? P-A-S-K-H-A.

SIGRIST: [interposed] and *kulich*—

SAKOVICH: --and *kulich*: K-U-L-I-C-H.

SIGRIST: Thank you

SAKOVICH: And, uh, they would, uh, ask all the neighbors, maybe one neighbor had an egg, maybe another had a little flour and they'd all get together and they'd make this *paskha* and *kulich*, but it was getting harder and harder, so it was hard to do. But, uh—

SIGRIST: Did you mother ever talk about, um, you mentioned that she was forced to go to church as a child—

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Were there any specific stories that she would tell from her childhood about something that might have happened?

SAKOVICH: She played with the children of the Czar, which I thought was ver— because my grandmother was very poor and she was a peasant lady. And uh, Mama would say: “Oh when we were in Yalta, yeah, we would play with the children,” and –you know, I went to Russia in '65 and a few times after, and I'd show her the pictures of Yalta, and she'd say: “Oh yeah, that's where we played.” And so I thought, ‘gee that's kind of funny that they would play with them’ you know? Didn't realize that could happen.

But, uh—she didn't, really, uh—I don't know if her childhood was especially great with my grandmother. She did have a brother who died—little, little brother—and a sister who died, oh, about seventeen or eighteen. So I guess there was a lot sadness along the way, and then the father left my grandmother – I can imagine why – Mama was terrific in mathematics, and he--she said that was because her father played cards with her (laughs) and she learned all these things, but I guess she couldn't take this—I guess more she was, she was such a church-going lady and that was so important to her and I don't know, it just—I don't know what happened.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever talk about her relationship to the father before he left at all?

SAKOVICH: Just that he was wonderful. She told me that whenever she got hurt or anything, her father would tell her to just lick her elbow, and that'll make it go away. (Laughs) Well, by the time she could lick

her elbow, it was--forgot what was wrong with her! But he was evidently lots of fun—you see—and my grandmother wasn't.

SIGRIST: And she—did she ever see him again, after that?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, no.

SIGRIST: That's too bad

SAKOVICH: Yeah. This was too bad.

SIGRIST: See, you really do know a lot about your parents? (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: Well, not—little things though. (Laughs) 'Cause—there's a lot I don't know

SIGRIST: Well

SAKOVICH: Yeah, that's you know

SIGRIST: Well, you don't think to ask, I guess. Or as you get people—

SAKOVICH: [superposed] No, and "I'm gonna ask later" and my father died when he was fifty-six—

SIGRIST: --Well

SAKOVICH: --well just when I'd become interested in all the—and then my mother, every time I would talk to her about this, it was as if, "Well you're gonna die," well I didn't want her to--I was just interested and my boys were interested! I have three sons and they wanted to know. But there were a lot of bad things, like my grandmother seeing her oldest son being shot during Stalin's time. So it was-- when she came to our home in '28, in the evening my mother took papa to the symphony, and we would talk about all these things that happened in Russia

SIGRIST: [interposed] You and your grandmother

SAKOVICH: Yeah, and—

SIGRIST: [interposed] Could you tell me some of the things she told you?

SAKOVICH: Well, th – horror stories. I mean, how she saw these – and no food, and that, uh, the – uh – uh –interrogation of Stalin, and they were all so afraid, you know, and it was just a horrible, horrible life. And tears would go running down my cheeks! I'm still afraid to be alone at night and I always attribute it to that. Because I would write letters for her to her sister who left – was staying in Odessa, stayed there, and so she would tell me what to write, and then she would remember something and we—and so (laughs) it was a wasn't a happy combination

SIGRIST: [interposed] So there may be reasons why she was an unhappy in some ways

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Yeah--yes, yes, there were, there were. It's just – but her person – my mother was so different

SIGRIST: [interposed] What was your mother's relationship with her like with her mother, especially when, when the mother came in 1928?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Impatient! (Laughs) Impatient! Well my sister was born in 1928, so she helped a lot, and it was wonderful. But my mother was a little bit impatient with her. (Sniffs) Yeah (laughs).

SIGRIST: Well, talk a little bit about your mother's personality, like what we talked about with your father

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Wonderful. Just very very happy. She was just the life of the party, everybody that we meet today, you know after not seeing them for long: "Oh your mother was great, she was very

outspoken!” My mother—she didn’t give compliments, she told:
“Gee, that’s an awful-looking shirt you’ve got, you know? You
shouldn’t wear that color!” I mean, that – that – but people, I guess
they felt she wasn’t doing it to be mean, in fact I told her once:

“Mom, why do you always criticize me?”

“Well how are you gonna be better if I don’t tell you?”

But, she’d always pick out some one thing that was wrong, you know? And, uh--I guess,
they weren’t allowed to compliment. You wer – You don’t
compliment. In fact you don’t compliment, my grandmother told me
that you never--“oh, what a beautiful baby,” you don’t say that. No,
no, that’s bad luck. So I guess that’s why – there was – the only
praise that I heard about was if somebody told,

“Gee, your father told us that you got all A’s!”

I said “My father – what ? My father never says any –”

“Yes, he’s so proud –”

“He’s proud of me?”

I mean, I didn’t know. I didn’t know, it’s really amazing how, you know, could be this
way. But, it’s so different from today, you know, you’re supposed to
make your childr--your children—“Oh that’s a beautiful drawing you
did,” and it’s really crummy (Laughs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] Right, right. E-especially to think that it would be bad
luck to—to—to recognize the fort—the good fortune

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Yes! Oh no, no, you ruin the child! Or like she’d
criticize me because she wanted me to be better. But, you know

once you “Oh gee, you look pretty,” you know, never, you cou—but she was a very, very happy, everybody loved her.

SIGRIST: What did she enjoy doing for her own pleasure?

SAKOVICH: She just looked after my father. She was a perfect wife. She – that house was spotless, she cleaned—she just did everyth—she had to pick him up to take him to rehearsal, and bring him back, and, and uh – she – her day went looking after my father. Um, she saw that Margie and I were fed, and taken care of, but the time –

SIGRIST: [superposed] Margie’s your sister?

SAKOVICH: My sister – went to taking care of what my father’s needs were. She was a wonderful cook, so she – you know, p-people would ask her to bake something to bring, or she would invite people so she’d be cooking

SIGRIST: Were there certain, uh -- we’ll sort of jump ahead a little bit, but this is a good time to ask this – were there certain traditional foods that she prepared--?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh yeah, oh yeah

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit--?

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Well all the Russian—*pirozhki* [alternate: pierogies, a type of meat-stuffed bun] have you ever heard of *pirozhki*--?(Laughs)

SIGRIST: [superposed] And you have to spell them—(laughs)

SAKOVICH: That’s those, well now they call them what, pockets? Where, they’re—uh, hamburger encased in dough. That’s *pirozhki*, P-I-R-O-Z-H-H-K-I. And then um, you can, if you don’t want to make it in

a little, you can make a big one. And then cut it, so. That was one of the very basic, and then buckwheat *grøts* [grits, porridge], which I do not care for, but is very healthy today! *Greshnikasha*. That, that's uh—in fact I think some of the boxes even say “K-A-S-H-A”—

SIGRIST: [superposed] *Kasha*, yes I've heard of it

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, they say *Kasha*, and uh—

SIGRIST: --and what was the first word you used?

SAKOVICH: *Pirozhki*?

SIGRIST: No. Wh—in front of the *kasha*—

SAKOVICH: [interposed], Oh, *greshni*, uh, um, *greshni*, um, well, Greek! (Laughs). But – but – but buckwheat *grøts* they're buckwheat *grøts*, that's what they are. In Russian, you say *greshnikasha*.

SIGRIST: and *greshni* is spelled--? (Laughs) G-R—?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Hmm. G-R-E-S-H-K-I.

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Okay, thank you!

SAKOVICH: [corrects herself] *Greshni*—N-I. N-I.

SIGRIST: N-I. N-I. Um, were there special foods that she made which were traditional?

SAKOVICH: [superposed] *Borscht*, *borscht*, of course. That's the soup, you know, the beet soup. And there's a salad you do on Easter especially that's basically beets, but lots of vegetables too. And uh, then she, uh, also learned to make a few Dutch things—

SIGRIST: That's interesting

SAKOVICH: --from my father, yeah, but, but, it was—no, he really liked her Russian cooking. It was fine.

SIGRIST: Well it sounds like your father had a very highly focused appreciation for Russian culture—

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah, very, very much. Yeah. He really—no, they were so compatible for being so different, you know? And uh, just entirely different people, uh, in personality and everything, you know? But she, she you know, catered to him—which was nice (laughs). But he never got up from the table from any meal without thanking her for it. And you know just the little thing like that, and uh, it was nice.

SIGRIST: What did you enjoy doing with your mother when you were growing up? Was there a certain activity that you both enjoyed doing together?

SAKOVICH: Well, we did sew, we did – and I liked to sew, I liked to make doll clothes.

SIGRIST: Did she teach you how to do that?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah. But she—uh, she really was not really aro—she didn't do that much with me. You know? I mean, children are supposed to be seen and not heard! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: (laughs)

SAKOVICH: So – And of course, when Margie was born -- that's ten years later – then I really took care of her. I just adored my sister. So, uh I think that she just zeroed in more on my father, and taking care of the home. We had a very large home in San Francisco, beautiful home, 'cause he would give recitals of his pupils every month so we needed a nice place to live, so she was really very busy.

SIGRIST: Did she have uh, a developed sense, er—uh, a developed appreciation of music?

SAKOVICH: Just appreciation. She didn't play—

SIGRIST: [interposed] She didn't, do anything —?

SAKOVICH: [superposed] No, no, no. And she didn't like to read a lot and she didn't like to write. (Laughs).

SIGRIST: [interposed] She was, you know, the party girl! (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: [superposed] The party girl, yeah! No, she was just perfect. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: So, your father — just to re-track a little bit — your father originally was a pianist, learned —

SAKOVICH: [superposed] In the conservatory you had to take three instruments and he took —

SIGRIST: [interposed] --and that was in Holland, right?

SAKOVICH: [superposed] —the tuba — . Right yeah.

SIGRIST: Alright. In, Amsterdam? Or would it be in Holland?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, well, no. He was mostly in,uh, Groningen: G-R-O-N-I-N-G-E-N. That was — when I went back to Holland, my relatives showed me Groningen, and it's a very, um, artistic town. And I guess that's where he went to the conservatory.

SIGRIST: And then somehow or the other he got hired to go to Russia?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] I think he searched for a job, he wanted to go, he wanted to go. Uh, Holland is lovely, and, and he adored — he was always very patriotic about a country where he was born — but it's

narrow, you know, and he wanted to go see the world. So he did!
(Laughs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] Well of course, Moscow you know, in 1906, must have been a tremendous artistic community

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Oh, can you imagine? Unbelievable!

SIGRIST: Um, so he goes, and he meets your mother, somewhere along the line.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

SIGRIST: And um, you're born in Moscow.

SAKOVICH: Mm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Okay. Uh, did they ever speak about the revolution, or what their recollections of the Russian revolution –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Well, just the horror of it, nothing, uh – Papa would talk more politically when he spoke to his students. But he acted as though I wouldn't be interested in Tolst – you know who the head is, or Lenin, or what. Except he always talked about Kerensky [Alexander Fyodorovich]. Now he thought that – if he had taken over that the world would have been better. But, uh – no, he really, to me he didn't talk—I-I never asked either. I didn't ask, isn't that funny?

SIGRIST: So, how long, how long in Moscow before he goes to America?

SAKOVICH: Well I was born in 1918, and that was in Moscow.

SIGRIST: [interposed] That was in Moscow, and then you all went to Holland

SAKOVICH: [interposed] So we went to Holland in uh, '21, so Mama, er, Papa must have gone in '20.

SIGRIST: Went in '20

SAKOVICH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, and you all went up to Holland and then he left from Holland –

SAKOVICH: – he left us. Yes. Yeah

SIGRIST: [superposed] I see. You mentioned earlier that you had typhus and something about the train trip? Was that the train trip from Moscow to Holland?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh, no. That, when we saw Dr. Zhivago Mama said —

SIGRIST: [superposed] Right

SAKOVICH: --she remembered the lice and all that in the tr – on the train and everything, so I guess we had—

SIGRIST: Oh, so that was from her—

SAKOVICH: --that wa—yeah, yeah

SIGRIST: I see. And, um, talk a little bit about having typhus. How old were you?

SAKOVICH: I, don't remember. Two.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Anything was said to you?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, no, Mama just said, "when you were little."

SIGRIST: [interposed] Were you in Moscow?

SAKOVICH: [superposed] I used to – I used to say typhoid fever, but it wasn't. It was typhus—

SIGRIST: --[interposed] they're different – things

SAKOVICH: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, in, in Moscow, did that happen? Oh, I see.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Where does your memory come in? What's the very first thing in life you remember?

SAKOVICH: You know, they say you can't tell the difference between people talking about something or you remembering it. I think I remember some things in Holland—

SIGRIST: [superposed] Okay, what do you think you remember?

SAKOVICH: My grandmother had—what do you call them here? They're little chocolate – they call them *muisjes* [Dutch: mice], little mice. Er, little chocolate bits? And they put it on the bread. If I was a very good girl, then they put that on the bread for me. I remember that! (Laughs) I thought that was so delicious! And I remember some walks. 'Cause Papa was always going, walking around. But, um, no, I really don't honest to goodness – and I adored my aunt, who taught me piano later—she came to Berkeley, and uh, I don't remember her there –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Was that your Dad's sister?

SAKOVICH: --Dad's sister, yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do remember being on the ship at all? Do you have any memories of that?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, no.

SIGRIST: Uh, so you—did you, did your father come back—

SAKOVICH: [interposed] I think I wrote, this is what I did, on the ship, I think.

SIGRIST: Oh my goodness, look at this!

SAKOVICH: (Laughs)

SIGRIST: I should say—since we're just doing audiotape here—we're looking at a list of the cabin passengers from the Rotterdam; cabin passengers I assume meaning first and second class, yeah

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah

SIGRIST: And um, we're looking Mrs. Sakovich's artwork –

SAKOVICH: –art! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: – as a child! (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: (Laughs) Pretty bad!

SIGRIST: No! There's a cute little mushroom here, and like a little elf with a doll! (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: I think she was trying to keep me quiet, or something

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Oh that – and a man sticking out his tongue!

SAKOVICH: (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Looks like he has an épaulette maybe he's one of the officers?

SAKOVICH: See – I – you know I just don't remember anything about that – (laughs)

SIGRIST: That's -- that's really quite charming, actually, that you would have this. Did your mother, um, you say your father came to America and you met him in New York?

SAKOVICH: Nope, we met him in Berk – uh – the train in Berkeley.

SIGRIST: Oh, so he stayed on the West coast. And you two—

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Well, he started, you know, in New York—

SIGRIST: Right.

SAKOVICH: – And then went all the way – and then he was in um, uh Berkeley, wh –to meet the train when we came

SIGRIST: I see, so your mother and you did it by yourselves?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] All by ourselves!

SIGRIST: (laughs)

SAKOVICH: But she's very capable! So

SIGRIST: (Laughs) I-uh, it sounds it. Did you, uh, ever hear anything about anything that happened on the ship? Did your mother ever say anything?

SAKOVICH: No, no. You know this, this is really a mystery to me. Wouldn't you think something, if I asked her?

SIGRIST: [interposed] Of all of the things that might happen just being on the boat—

SAKOVICH: [superposed] I know from all of the letters that she was very, very unhappy in Holland. She was just, uh, "When are you go – you know, when are you goin – when am I going to come?" And then I have, I told you, the grandmother's letters, and she said: "Oh,

Mousja made a dress for me today, and, uh, we're trying to make her happy, but oh, son you better hurry (laughs) because she w--!" so I'm just wondering if maybe she kinda just sorta blocked it out, 'cause she never mentioned it.

[END OF SIDE A]

SIGRIST: Well, it depe—I mean if there, if there, if she was living with her in-laws and—

SAKOVICH: Mmm, and they were so nice! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] Yeah, but nevertheless it's still not her house –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, no no,

SIGRIST: – and you know, there could be a lot of reasons

SAKOVICH: [interposed] And she was—you know a year I guess is a long time to leave your – and they were so in love, so, yeah (laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections then of the trip across the United States? You came second class, so we're assuming you did not come through Ellis Island –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, that's what she said

SIGRIST: – you came second class? Um, do you personally have any recollections of that experience, coming across the United States? Did your mother say anything about that?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No, no, no. That – that's, yeah that's puzzling.

SIGRIST: We – it is when you put in the context of you're going across a strange country and you don't suddenly see –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, wouldn't you think? Now if my father had been with me, he would have given me a running history of every state we went through. But my mother, I guess, all she was thinking about was she was gonna see her husband pretty soon. That's, that's what I figure. 'Cause that's very funny.

SIGRIST: Well tell me what happens when you finally get to California

SAKOVICH: Well, we – well (pauses) he got a position as uh, first cellist in the San Francisco Symphony, but for some reason or other they lived in Berkeley. He wanted to live in a smaller town.

SIGRIST: Did you, um, had you already gotten here when he got that position? Were you already here?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah. Well, that's what they were waiting for –

SIGRIST: I see

SAKOVICH: –see they were waiting to see where he was going to settle.

SIGRIST: [interposed] I see

SAKOVICH: And he loved New York, but he said it was too big. So then San Francisco – and I think the, uh, sand dunes reminded him of Holland, 'cause just identical! It just looks that beach there out at San Francisco, so, uh, he loved San Francisco but he said, "Let's live in Berkeley, it's a quiet little town." So we did until I was fourteen, and then we moved.

SIGRIST: We-Well tell me what you're early childhood memories are of, of living in Berkeley and growing up in this--

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh, nice, nice, good

SIGRIST: -- very interesting household (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: [interposed]—yeah really, because my aunt then came over, she taught me piano, so then she was another musician there, and, and, uh, uh, again – well, it was a lot of music, there was a lot of music.

SIGRIST: You mentioned that you lived in a big house.

SAKOVICH: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did you live there right away?

SAKOVICH: No, well we had a big house, but it wasn't as elegant in Berkeley as it was in San Francisco, it was just big. Because he needed to have his –where he could pra – study, and then he needed for uh, uh, teaching his pupils and for recitals and all that, so, uh – but in, when we moved to San Francisco, then we had a really nice place.

SIGRIST: I see. So you were in Berkeley first, and then--

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Berkeley first, yeah

SIGRIST: And you were in Berkeley 'til you were fourteen?

SAKOVICH: Yeah

SIGRIST: Can you describe the house that you lived. In Berkeley

SAKOVICH: [interposed] In Berkeley? A little bungalow, nice, very nice. I went by there (sniffs) one day later and it's not like it was when I saw it, but it – it was new, and we moved from the first house that we had to this one and it was just uh, it was wonderful. And then one fine day, my mother and father said: "We're moving to San Francisco tomorrow!" I was supposed to graduate from junior high. And we were talking about what high school we were going to. There was – I didn't! – !! –I was either very dumb, or they didn't talk about it – I

mea – how could they not talk about it? Maybe when I went to bed, I don't know. (Laughs).

But that was such a shocker! So I stayed with some Russian friends (sniffs) until I could graduate from junior high. And then I m-moved to San Francisco when I entered high school.

SIGRIST: When you were living in Berkeley did you have your own bedroom?

SAKOVICH: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me? (pause) What –

SAKOVICH: Just a bedroom (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Does anything stick out in your mind about things that you had that were yours in that room?

SAKOVICH: No, no, it was just uh – it was a nice room. When my grandmother came, she shared the room with me. For a while. So it was very small. But uh, then later she moved into another room; they fixed it so that she would have it nice. Uh, no, it was just a plain room. Yeah, it was –bungalow type, you know, very – umm, you just went up two steps and then these two bedrooms were there. And uh, after my grandmother came there was a lock on the doors and I'd always lock 'em, and then my father would come home from symphony at two o'clock in the morning or twelve – whenever it was – and I had to wake up and unlock (laughs) that door! I was so afraid after you know, after talking about all this stuff. But, um, no, it was just a nice house.

SIGRIST: Your, your sister Margie was born in 1928 –

SAKOVICH: Yeah

SIGRIST: --which is the year that your grandmother came

SAKOVICH: Mm-hmm

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your sister Margie coming into the world?

SAKOVICH: Oh, lots. (Laughs) I was in seventh heaven. That was just wonderful.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Can you talk about what happened before; your mother's pregnancy, if you knew she was even pregnant –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] My aunt explained it to me. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: (Laughs) [interposed] H-how did she explain it to you?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] I guess I – I would jump up on Ma a lot, or something or hug her or something, she said: "You mustn't do that, because you're going to have, your gonna have a baby!" I mean I – my mother never told me. And uh, then when she was born, then uh – that was of course ecstasy –but my father – this was really remarkable—he would get up during the night all the time to feel her because she wasn't crying. I cried. For all the first, whatever, three years of my life? And – well, hungry, you know. (Sniffs) And uh, he just couldn't believe that this baby was lying in the crib and not crying! And she was a good baby. She was a good baby, besides. And very pretty. So that – that I just always remember – how he would just, oh he just – thought she was marvelous.

SIGRIST: And you mentioned earlier that your grandmother was helpful

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah

SIGRIST: --in that whole process. In what ways was did she help?

SAKOVICH: Well, she did a lot of the cooking and, of course, babysitting –you know. I mean my m –we never had babysitters. So she would stay with me in the evenings so Mama could take Papa to the symphony. And well they went then by what, boat? Oh. Yeah.
(Laughs)

SIGRIST: [not understood]

SAKOVICH: Yeah, so took a while. But, um, yeah, she, she took real good care of the house. She gardened – she had a big garden – she had a rooster that didn't like me! And –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Is there a story about the rooster?

SAKOVICH: Just that I could never come into the backyard until *babushka* [Rus. Grandmother] took the rooster away. But, uh—

SIGRIST: *Babushka* being, what you call your Russian grandmother?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] –grandmother, yeah, yeah (sniffs). So it was – uh, yeah – that was – that was – that wasn't fun. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, what language did you speak in the house? In your early childhood?

SAKOVICH: I think mostly Russian. Except when my Dutch grandmother and grandfather came. Then we'd speak Dutch. But then my Russian grandmother was there, so, uh, it was – I guess it was kind of a mixture. Bu-but Mama and Papa talked a lo–spoke a lot of Russian.

SIGRIST: Umm, can you, can you talk about –their attempts at learning English, did they even learn English?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh yeah! Oh, my grandmother got her citizenship!
She went at night to – (sighs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] tell me the story

SAKOVICH: -- Well, I get a little angry about at this, because, uh – you know today you're supposed to have teachers for every –if you're Chinese, or any – any other – group. And, uh, I learned the English language, and my grandmother, who – it was so hard for her, “the representatives”, “the senator” -- she didn't even know what the words meant – and I'd study with her every night and tell her and explain to her 'cause she wanted to get her citizenship. And, uh, my mother and father had gotten their citizenship before, (sniffs) and so they learned English evidently qui – well, Papa would learn it immediately, and then I guess Mama – learned pretty –pretty fast after. And, uh, then when my grandmother came, they wanted her to – and she wanted to! And she went to night school – my Dutch grandfather went to night school when he stayed with us! Every week he went. To speak – to learn English. It was – it's you know, it's really remarkable.

SIGRIST: That's actually unusual, for people of that generation –

SAKOVICH: Really?

SIGRIST: --To do that, yes--

SAKOVICH: [interposed] It is?!

SIGRIST: --It is. In my experience, um, usually people of that – 'cause they were what, in their sixties at that time?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah!

- SIGRIST: Fifties or sixties –that, that would have been unusual for – for people of that age –
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh! No, my grandfather he was tickled with it. He was only a year but he signed up at that school, and he, he walked! See that’s where my father got the walking. But –uh – my grandmother, she just wanted to be a citizen. And, uh, that’s funny too, because she, you know, well – In those days, I guess, you know, Russia didn’t –she still loved the motherland, but not the politics, so – (sniffs)
- SIGRIST: Do you still remember when she actually went to the ceremony to become a citizen?
- SAKOVICH: No. No I don’t. So, I guess I wasn’t – I didn’t go –I guess my mother took her. Maybe I was in school. It was in the morning—
- SIGRIST: [interposed] How did you become a citizen?
- SAKOVICH: Through my father. Yeah. Because I was a minor, I guess. Then I was, uh –uh – I – that’s how I got my naturalization.
- SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about living in this, sort of, multicultural household –(laughs)
- SAKOVICH: (Laughs) Multicultural!
- SIGRIST: --And, and yet – you know, when you left that house and went to school –
- SAKOVICH: --I was American! (Laughs)
- SIGRIST: --It was a whole different world over there. Can you talk about –
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] I told the kids not to talk – I told *babushka* not to speak Russian when my friends came over. To the house. Which is

really terrible. But, I said, “Now they’re coming over after school and you don’t say anything in Russian.” (Laughs)

SIGRIST: And – And how did she react to that?

SAKOVICH: Well she couldn’t understand it!

SIGRIST: [interposed] –Was she –but was she able to actually --?

SAKOVICH: Well she kind of tried to help me but she thought (laughs), that was kind of cr – you know, that’s crazy, to not—

SIGRIST: Wh-what are some of the psychological compromises that – that a person in your position has to make to be able to balance both of those worlds?

SAKOVICH: I don’t know, it just came very natural. You know? I do– I don’t – I don’t remember any problems. I’m surprised that I could speak Dutch – you know -- because ,uh, after –we left –well, Papa would sometimes say Du–but I can read Dutch. I think when you learn something when you’re very young. That it stays with you. You know? And then, uh, Anica –my aunt, who taught me piano – she would very often, at piano lessons, speak Dutch to me. So that was nice. And then, you know – ‘cause I could, uh, really – because Papa would – oh, he would talk to me if I wanted to, but we mostly, I think, lapsed into the English and the Russian – more.

SIGRIST: Were there ways that you acted differently when you were with your parents, than when you were with Americans? – I mean, there are –I was different

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Kids? I wasn’t as respectful (Laughs).

SIGRIST: (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: --I wasn't as respectful. I was a little bit, um. I was very upset about my name. And – that –my –that's been a – a real bad thing for me. Because, uh, when –uh –my mother enrolled me in kindergarten, and I was with a "lady" that came with my mother. And my mother put "Maria" you know? Or Mary! She may even have said Mary --And "Oh no! You can't ruin such a beautiful name as Mousja! You can't do that!" And then they came up with M-O-U-C-H-A. Well that's not Mousja! That's *moo-cha*. So I was "moose-face" and "moo-cha" and "Wh-why'd your mother give you such a dumb name?" You know? From the very beginning! So this, this really bothered me. But otherwise, uh – I mean, I was not ashamed or anything of you know--well I didn't want my grandmother to speak Russian in front of the kids – but --

SIGRIST: [interposed] That's a little ashamed (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: --No, I wasn't, I wasn't ashamed. I wasn't ashamed of my mother and father at all! (Sniffs) And, uh, I guess I just adap – I guess kids just adapt, huh? They must just--

SIGRIST: [interposed] Some do, and some don't –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Some don't, huh? Well I – I—

SIGRIST: [interposed] --That's why we ask questions! (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: [superposed] --I loved school! I just – I had a wond –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Can you – 'cause we haven't really talked about school, could you talk about school?

SAKOVICH: -- Oh, I had a wonderful kindergarten teacher. Oh, she was wonderful! And of course I was, you know, not speaking English yet.

SIGRIST: Why was she wonderful?

SAKOVICH: Because she – she treated me just like I was, you know, o-o-one of the, the gang. “Now here we have a very strange girl from Russia, and her name is Moucha!” (Laughs) She di – she just was –and she had a puppet. And she did everything with this puppet. And I was just absolutely fascinated. Ms. Turner, she was a doll! And uh – I think probably –I skipped one grade. So I think she was so wonderful, and then I learned, you know, so quickly with the other good teachers. We had wonderful teachers, they were all so caring.

SIGRIST: Do you remember other immigrant children, perhaps of different nationalities in your classes?

SAKOVICH: Later, in – in junior high, I met the priest’s, um, daughter, and she became a ballerina in New York. She just passed away recently. Um, yeah, I – she was – well she was good too, she –she really fit in fine.

SIGRIST: [interposed] What was she?

SAKOVICH: Wh-?

SIGRIST: Was she Russian?

SAKOVICH: Russian—

SIGRIST: [interposed] Russian

SAKOVICH: --yeah, Naporsky [ph]. Mm-hmm. Yeah. She was, uh – her father was a priest in the Berkeley Church, so we went on Sunday. An – later we went in San Francisco, and that’s how we met my husband, but--(laughs)

SIGRIST: That's, well, we're coming right up to that actually (laughs)

SAKOVICH: But – uh – she –no—uh. And then there was a girl, Nina Schnaeroff [ph], she was a real nice Russian gal, and she had had polio, and she limped very, very severely. And she was a real good friend. But –uh – No, in Berkeley there were not –there –there weren't even any black children, you know?

SIGRIST: Was there somewhat of a Russian community?

SAKOVICH: Very small.

SIGRIST: Small?

SAKOVICH: Very small. It was when we came to San Francisco then that really was tremendous. In Berkeley it was this fath – Zoya Laporsky's [ph] father, and, and a small group, you know, faithful group. Um-- there were some uh--oh I ca--what do you – (says something in Russian) I don't know what you call that – but of royal, of royal birth, and he was there and they all – so when there was a party, he was there. And, uh, Dr. Maximov, she was a Russian doctor –her husband too –in, uh, San Francisco –so for some reason or other he – she would be there. There were -- there was, was a group of Russians, and very few – well, there were Dutch too. A lot of Dutch people f-from Santa Cruz t-that lived there –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Really?

SAKOVICH: --and uh--uh-- a symphony member, he played the violin. So Dutch and Russian, th-there were, occasionally, but otherwise –until I got to high school, there was one black girl. And that was really –just – it's funny huh?

SIGRIST: Did your family maintain a strong religious life once they got to the United States?

SAKOVICH: My mother. Wel – um, actually, my grandmother. My grandmother and I. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what language, did they conduct the services in?

SAKOVICH: Russian. Well, Slovanic and Russian. Sermon was in Russian –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Is there a prayer that you remember that you can recite in Russian for me?

SAKOVICH: --Oh, well. Oh, you know, the Lord's Prayer, and the creed, and all those.

SIGRIST: Can you do the Lord's Prayer in Russian, slowly please? (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: Oh, dear. You don't want me to spell it?

SIGRIST: No, no, I just want you to say it.

SAKOVICH: (Laughs) Отче наш –That's the Lord's Prayer --

Отче наш, Иже еси на небесех!

Да святится имя Твое,

да приидет Царствие Твое,

да будет воля Твоя,

яко на небеси и на земли.

Хлеб наш насущный даждь нам днесь;

и остави нам долги наша,

якоже и мы оставляем должником нашим;

(Mutters) I mean – (L. Sakovich whispers in Russian)

SIGRIST: It's all right

SAKOVICH:

и не введи нас во искушение

но избави нас от лукаваго. Yeah. (Sniffs)

SIGRIST: Thank you. Is there one in Dutch you can say?

SAKOVICH: Not a prayer. No.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Is there something in Dutch that you learned as a child?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh, I know all the songs.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Can you sing the song in Dutch that you sang as a kid?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Sure

(L) SAKOVICH: No!

SAKOVICH: (Laughs)

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Mr. Sakovich (laughs) is your critic here!

MR.SAKOVICH: [not understood]

SAKOVICH:

Zagen, zagen, wiede wiede wagen

Jan kwam thuis om een boterham te vragen

Moeder was niet thuis

Vader was niet thuis

Piep, zei de muis in het voorhuis.

[In English: Sawing, sawing, weeding-weeding-wagon/John came home to ask for a slice of bread/ mother wasn't home/Father wasn't home/ Peep! said the mouse in the hall.]

Uh –I mean –I – Papa played all these, and then I played them af--when I started. And we had all these Dutch songbooks. Yeah

SIGRIST: [interposed] Is that a folk song of some sort?

SAKOVICH: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh. That's wonderful!

SAKOVICH: Yeah, there – there – there –are a lot of those. And now my – niece has married a boy of Dutch descent, and they have a little boy, three. And – and so I have these wonderful Dutch songbooks that I can give him. And –uh it's such fun to be able to speak them, you know, and have the fun with the songs.

SIGRIST: Was there some way that your parents –coming from a –you know –a different generation and, and being immigrants –looked different than the parents of your American friends?

SAKOVICH: No.

SIGRIST: A difference in clothing, or hairstyle, or anything like that?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, no. Mama was a very – she took even a course--oh that's--you asked me what she did in her spare time –she took a

course in fashion design. And she designed hats –she had sewn already, she knew how to sew. She was sew –teach – uh – making things for my Dutch grandmother. But she wanted to take uh, so that she could sketch and do all that. So, she did, uh, pass that: I have her, uh, certificate that she passed that. And, uh, I had forgotten because that was something she did do. Yeah. But no they did--

SIGRIST: [interposed] Sort of a creative outlet?

SAKOVICH: [superposed]–yeah, yeah. No, she--they didn't uh-- well Papa, of course, he had to dress always nice in a suit and a tie –and you know, I mean, symphony, and--what is it? I remember him putting on the tuxedo, the full dress at night. Ho-I don't know how they played, you know, with all that stiff cardboard –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Celluloid collars probably.

SAKOVICH: Yeah, awful, you know? So he'd come home and he was so glad to take that stuff off! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: What are some of the things that stick out in your mind, um, about your father's work with the symphony? The San Francisco Symphony, maybe a story that--?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] He was just in a– he was in a quartet. Uh, the San Francisco String Quartet. And, uh, that was – we went very often to hear them. Uh, evidently it was funded, uh, by wealthy people in San Francisco got together, and then they would, um, I don't know how you'd say that. Well, different beautiful homes, you know, and –that was really fun to be able to go –

SIGRIST: [interposed] They'd have like, musicales? [ph]

SAKOVICH: --yes, yes. Uh-huh. And so that – that – was – uh – that stood out in my mind. But, uh --And then he was on the radio program for a while, I've been trying to get my son to see if they could get – they want to hear how he played, and that's the only thi – recording that we have. And he went to –he is, a, professor at San Francisco State –and he asked them for it, and they said they threw those ar –things away, they aren't even in the archives –well, of course they can't save everything –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Right

SAKOVICH: --but I wish they'd saved that.

SIGRIST: Were there certain conductors that he didn't like or did like?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes. Oh, didn't like? Oh he was amazed at Monteux [Pierre Monteux]. Monteux, he never used a score, he always did it just, without looking –well I'm sure he had memorized it, but, uh-- that was-- that was very – uh – unusual for a conductor to do that. But he liked Papa Hertz [Alfred Hertz] – that was – he was the first one. He did a lot with children's symphonies –I used to go to the children's symphonies – and uh – uh – I think – Kusovitzky [ph] was his favorite, but that was in Russia. That was in Russia. But he thought that Monteux was a very fine, uh, conductor.

SIGRIST: Hmm. Could you talk a little bit more about your father's cello?

SAKOVICH: Oh, he had a nice cello. A friend gave it, uh–he was teaching a young ma – uh, he wasn't so young, he was an older gentleman – and when he died, he gave that to my father.

SIGRIST: And it –did it have a certain provenance, or --?

SAKOVICH: No, it just, it was um–it was – it was lighter than most cellos. But it had beautiful tone. Beautiful tone. And I remember when my

father died –my father died in '41, before my first son was born – and, uh, Mr. Blinder, who was the first violinist in the –he was gonna sell it to somebody –y'know, find a buyer. I ju –I cried, I couldn't stop crying that my mother would sell that cello! I think was –it was like, I dunno, 1500 dollars or something like that, no it was a beautiful cello --

SIGRIST: [interposed] Of course, that was a lot of money back in 1941 (laughs)!

SAKOVICH: --But why--yeah, yeah. And my mother was a widow, so, yeah. But uh –that – that was very, very hard.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Were there certain rule in the house about how the cello was to be treated?

SAKOVICH: Oh, nobody touched it! (Laughs) No! He had a hard case there, and he's put it, you know, with the satin –Mama made a satin covering for it and everything. Nope, you didn't touch. You didn't touch. (sniffs)

SIGRIST: Oh. Well, in our last few minutes –we've got about seven or eight minutes left – tell me about getting to San Francisco, and meeting Mr. Sakovich.

SAKOVICH: Oh, my goodness! Well, like you know, when they say, "Where did you meet your husband?" I met him in church. So, and that's absolutely honest. Because when we moved to San Francisco of course, we went to the Holy Trinity Cathedral on Green Street (sniffs), and we, um– well, Father Sakovich had –uh –two boys and two girls. And Fa –uh –Leo –and – would always help in serve church –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Father Sakovich being Mr. Sakovich's dad?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Uh --father, yeah [not understood]

(L) SAKOVICH: [interposed] I was an altar boy.

SAKOVICH: Altar boy, yeah. He was an altar boy.

SIGRIST: [interposed, directed towards Mr. Sakovich] You were an altar boy

SAKOVICH: And, um. Then --uh --uh -- Well. I knew who he was, and I even have a picture of both of us when I was -- first came over and when he was there too. And our fathers and mothers were there together in Petaluma [Petaluma, CA]. A lot of the Russians had, um --uh-- egg ranches there in Petaluma --and so --well you were in Petaluma today!

SIGRIST: [interposed] I was just there today! Yes, interviewing an Italian gentleman

SAKOVICH: Yeah, the egg basket, egg basket of--! So, um --he --um -- I -- I -- I -- I saw him every Sunday, you know? Suddenly went to church a little more often, maybe, than I used to? And then he -- uh -- tells me that he's going to Bahrain. That he got a job -- he was eighteen --he got a job, and, uh, they were opening a hospital on the Persian Gulf --nobody knew where the Persian Gulf was, Bahrain? The old country. So, uh, he did write to me, once. Sent me a Christmas card. Signed it, "Leo."--

(L) SAKOVICH: [interposed] I always sent you a Christmas card [ph]

SAKOVICH: --Signed it, "Leo". Nothing! No message, nothing! Anyhow, when he came back, I had gotten my teaching credential and we really -- we uh, went together.

SIGRIST: And what year did you marry?

SAKOVICH: Uh--'41.

SIGRIST: And, um, name your children for me.

SAKOVICH: Uh, we named --uh – the first one after my father, Willem. And then the second one we had to name after his father, Vladimir. And then the third one, Nikolas.

SIGRIST: Spell Vla-Vlad-Vladimir.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Vladimir? *Vla-dimir*.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Vladimir! Right!

SAKOVICH: V-L-A-D-I-M-I-R.

SIGRIST: And um, did Mr. Sakovich's father marry you?

SAKOVICH: No. He had died.

SIGRIST: [interposed] He had died

SAKOVICH: --Yeah he died very early. Yeah. My boys both didn't have grandpas. But, um –uh – we were married in that church, and my middle son goes quite regularly over there, and he –his grandfather's church, you know, and all this. So it's kinda nice that somebody is carrying it on a little bit. (Sniffs)

SIGRIST: What did you do in your life that you're the most proud of?

SAKOVICH: Oh, I – I –Gee, not most proud of, but I was very happy teaching and being a librarian, I loved it.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me just a little bit about that?

SAKOVICH: Well, I had –

SIGIRST: Because we really didn't talk about it.

SAKOVICH: In – in – uh--Santa Rosa, I worked for the Sonoma County Office of Education, and I had eighty schools. And I was supposed to fix libraries in all the schools. Well, that was really something. But I did it, and it was a wonderful experience. And uh, one nice thing – well that's bragging a little bit – but when I retired, instead of giving me a gift, they made it so that there was money, that every year I choose a book for all the children in Sonoma Country. Each school gets a free book. But now there's a hundred five schools instead of eighty, and books aren't a dollar a piece anymore (laughs) so –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Wow

SAKOVICH: -- But they're still –still doing it every year, so that's very nice. And I just loved my job, but I love being a mother too. I – the boys –that part was a wonderful part of our life.

SIGRIST: Do – do your children have a developed sense of their background?

SAKOVICH: Oh yeah. The only thing is, I think it was a tragedy that they – they see the pictures, and they hear me talking and I tell 'em about the postcards and everything, but they didn't know the person. They didn't know my father –

SIGRIST: [interposed] And that makes a difference?

SAKOVICH: --and it makes a big difference. Something very interesting happened. (Sniffs) Uh, my uh oldest son, he lives in Saipan [Marianas Archipelago] –do you know where that is?

SIGRIST: [interposed] Saipan? It's in Asia, somewhere –

SAKOVICH: It's an island in the Micronesia –and uh, he – well, we won't go into –but anyhow he's over there, and he came home, which is not very often, so we had the three boys in August. And when he got off the plane, my sister met him. And she said soon as she saw him she thought, a–he's right there – that he looked just like my father. And, so he was about that –fifty-six, my father was fifty-six when he died –

SIGRIST: [interposed] That's the photograph you have

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: He really, he has the same shape --?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] He really –it was jus – and so then when Margie brought him up here and I saw him I said “that's Papa!” you know? And it was really – that way. But –but the children never met their grandfathers, you know? That's– that makes – I wish they had. I wish they had.

SIGRIST: When you think of yourself in terms of nationality – and you have several to choose from here – (laughs)

SAKOVICH: [interposed] (laughs) Which is the best?

SIGRIST: Well, how do you think of yourself in terms of nationality?

SAKOVICH: I –I think of myself as very Russian, you know, because I'm so – well when I was a librarian, I used to talk to all the kids about Russia and I had dolls about Russia and you know pictures and all this. So, uh, Russian comes in there pretty important, but then I love some of the Dutch too, and I'm certainly an American, but it has been fun, being a Russian. People – as you're older now, they don't call you moose-face anymore. Now, you know, “Oh, you're Russian background? Oh, well, tell me about it.” (sniffs) But –

SIGRIST: If you have some advice to bestow upon somebody that's going to listen to this tape, two hundred years from now –and somebody will, I guarantee you – what kind--?

SAKOVICH: (Laughs)

(L) SAKOVICH: [not understood]

SIGRIST: We're gonna – we're gonna preserve these forever (Laughs).

(L) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Two hundred! [ph]

SIGRIST: Mr. Sakovich is laughing again (Laughs). What kind of advice would you give somebody in the future about how to live a long and happy and satisfying life? What are your life's philosophies?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] I didn't do anything special! I didn't do anything special though, you know? It all just evolved. If didn't seem like I was "Oh, well I've gotta do," I don't know. That's a very hard question. But, uh, I think –. My father was a very democratic person and I never – he wouldn't tolerate any, you know, uh, looking at somebody because of th – wr –wrong color skin or something, and I think we – it was thanks to my father that, uh, Marge and I just turned out okay, you know? I mean my mother helped too, I'm sure. But – (laughs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] So it's upbringing, it's upbringing.

SAKOVICH: --Upbringing, I think it's upbringing. Because, uh, never –my sister wanted to go to a certain junior high and my father wan – said,

"What's wrong with the one around the corner?"

"Well there's some black kids go there,"

"Well then that's the school you're going to."

I mean he never – he didn't permit any of that. He didn't care for that at all. So, uh, no
I-I-I don't know. I don't know. But I-I wish everybody as good a
life as I have. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Well, do you have any final things to say before we sign
off?

SAKOVICH: No. But –I– I – it's – I really appreciate your –you've got me all, you
know, in this again now, and I have to think about translating some
of those postcards –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Well, tonight, you know as you're going to sleep –

SAKOVICH: Yeah

SIGRIST: -- tonight, your mind is going to be [not understood] and you're
going to start remembering all these things

SAKOVICH: [superposed] -- Gonna go around. And I'm terribly sorry that I – I
plead with everybody to ask their parents about things – well, I
don't think you have to do that anymore. I think children talk –

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Oh, I think you do.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Don't they?

SIGRIST: No.

SAKOVICH: No? [interposed]

SIGRIST: [interposed] Not necessarily. I think that's great advice for
someone in the future, you know.

SAKOVICH: Okay, because this – this – this is my one re--great regret. And
when I to –talked to my sister, telling her that you were coming
today, and I said, "Why didn't we ask Mom about this? How come

we don't know about the boat and the –how come we don't know any of those things?" But you – you –just –we just obeyed our parents, you know? And uh-- those things didn't come up I guess. I-I don't know. I thank you though.

SIGRIST: Oh! Well, I thank you. (SAKOVICH laughs)Uh, this has been wonderful and it's so nice to be in a nice place, and this is Paul Sigrist, signing off – let me get this right – with Mousja Sakovich, and today is Thursday, April 29th, 1999, with Mr. Sakovich in attendance and we're in Sonoma California. Thank you very much.

SAKOVICH: He pronounces my name so well!

[END OF INTERVIEW]

LEONARD SAKOVICH

BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 7TH, 1913

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 29TH, 1999

RUNNING TIME: 30:00

INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME AS ABOVE

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: AMANDA CARELLA

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: NOT YET REVIEWED

RUSSIA, 1917

AGE: 4.5 YEARS OLD

SHIP:

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

CANADA

UNITED STATES: San Francisco, CA

TRANSCRIPTOR'S NOTE: The following interview directly follows the above, with Mrs. Mousja Sakovich. She is in attendance, and here noted by "(M) SAKOVICH."

SIGRIST: Good afternoon, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Parks Service. Today is Thursday, April 29th, 1999. I'm in Sonoma, California and I'm here with Mr. Leo Sakovich, and Mr. Sakovich is the husband of Mousja Sakovich, whom I have just interviewed, we've had a – a delightful interview – and we're now going to interview, or I'm going to interview – Mr. Sakovich (bird clock sounds) –oh that's the bird clock again! (laughs) The Sakoviches have a clock that makes bird calls. (noise from microphone)

SAKOVICH: (laughs) Wh-what? [ph] Turn that off.

SIGRIST: (laughs) Oh no it's okay. It's all right. Um, Mr. Sakovich's father was an Eastern Orthodox priest, and, who upon occasion went to Angel Island to meet immigrants –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] –To – to – to meet – to meet, yeah, all the Russian immigrants. Yeah.

SIGRIST: [interposed] To meet them, Russian immigrants. And we're going to talk a little bit about that. Before we do, I'd like to know what your birth date is.

SAKOVICH: Nine – uh – January 7th, 1913.

SIGRIST: 1913. And where were you born, Mr. Sakovich?

SAKOVICH: Uh. (sighs) In Latvia.

SIGRIST: In Latvia, really?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Ye--Yeah. At that time, it was part of Russia.

SIGRIST: This may be a longer interview than I thought! (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: (Laughs)

SIGRIST: When did you come to the United States?

SAKOVICH: Uh – (sighs) well, we went to Canada first.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

SAKOVICH: We stayed there for about four and a half years, and then – and then came to San Francisco. Oh –

SIGRIST: What year did you go to Canada?

SAKOVICH: (sighs) Jesus. Let's see, we came to the United States – (pause) –

SIGRIST: How old were you?

SAKOVICH: (pause) We went to Canada when I was about – about –uh –f – f – about four years old.

SIGRIST: Four. So –

SAKOVICH: So we came out here – we stayed there about four years, then we came here.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Right, so, like about 1917 or so you lived in Canada.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes –yes –yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Wow! Well, this'll be interesting. Um, do you have memories of Latvia?

SAKOVICH: No. I was – I was just born there.

SIGRIST: Just born there

SAKOVICH: Yeah. I don't remember how I was born.

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Did anyone tell you about it?

SAKOVICH: No, no that was – it's none of your business! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] Uh-huh. Do you remember – do you have any memories of going to Canada?

SAKOVICH: No.

SIGRIST: Being on the ship or anything like that--?

SAKOVICH: N-no.

SIGRIST: What's the first thing that you remember?

SAKOVICH: Coming from Canada to – to San Francisco. On the –

SIGRIST: [interposed] And what do you remember about that?

SAKOVICH: --On the train. That my mother was sick all the – all the way. She had migraine headaches. And she – she – she had to – we had to – yeah – well, she, she just was in bed all -- in the Pullman car.

SIGRIST: Was your father a priest in Latvia?

SAKOVICH: Yes.

SIGRIST: He was. What was his name?

SAKOVICH: Uh – uh – V-Vladimir

SIGRIST: Vladimir.

SAKOVICH: Yeah

SIGRIST: We have spoken about that in the first interview, but we'll say it again, his first name was Vladimir.

SAKOVICH: Yeah. Yeah . Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know why he became a priest, or how that happened?

SAKOVICH: Uh – (sighs) no, I thi – thought –

(M). SAKOVICH: [interposed] Remember what Galya said?

SAKOVICH: He was called .

(M). SAKOVICH: Yes.

SAKOVICH: He was called.

(M). SAKOVICH: [interposed] Galya his sister told me.--

SAKOVICH: Yeah

(M). SAKOVICH: --He was called to the priesthood. He was called

SAKOVICH: He was called to the prie—

SIGRIST: [interposed] A spiritual calling.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah

(M). SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes.

SAKOVICH: So he was – he was a really excellent priest.

(M). SAKOVICH: Beautiful voice--

SAKOVICH: Yeah, he had a – ba – uh – uh – bass baritone.

SIGRIST: In the Eastern Orthodox liturgy, is there a lot of singing done by –

SAKOVICH: Y-y-yeah – well, it's a whaddy call it –

(M). SAKOVICH: Choir, and –

SAKOVICH: Th-th-th-th-th –priest would – would say it, and then the choir would – wou-would – would answer.

SIGRIST: [interposed] A kind of response [ph]

SAKOVICH: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Um, tell me a little bit about your father's personality.

SAKOVICH: (sighs) I know very little about it. He was very kind. The only time we really – (sighs) uh, really knew him, wh –wh-when, uh, when we went on vacation. We, uh– the Freeman-Aulderson Ranch [ph] d-d- you don't know that, no, well he was, editor of the Coal Bulletin [ph]. And anyhow, he – um – he – he met everybody on the ship h-h-he, yeah, he was really a kind man, and he -- a lot of people came to him and uh – s-s-I noticed that sometimes he'd give 'em money. He'd say, "You – you just take it, forget about it, forget it, forget it."

"I'll repay you!"

He said, "Forget about it."

Well, they never did repay him. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Did he – did he have a parish in Canada?

SAKOVICH: Yes. Yeah, he had a parish. And then he was transferred to – to San Francisco.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about life in Canada when you were there?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] I know very little.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Little bit

SAKOVICH: Very little. Uh, the only thing I know it snowed in winter, it was very cold, and I – uh—the only thing –w-w-w we – uh – what was it uh -- (says something to M. Sakovich in Russian)?

(M). SAKOVICH: (responds in Russian)

SAKOVICH: Ye-ye-yeah. Uh – it – it was in – um (pause)— in favor of the church – the –the church organized it, and there were, there was dancing after.

(M). SAKOVICH: [not understood]

SIGRIST: This is an event of some sort –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah. Y-yeah. A fundraiser. So he went –he'd go there, and --but he had to back at a certain time, because of the next day was liturgy, had to – had to be back by –oh, I don't know w-what the time was but, but –so we all came--. Oh, we, yeah – what did the – it was snowing and – and – w-w-he hired a-a carriage –there were no taxis then – they hired a carriage, a couple of horses, and the-the horses couldn't go up the hill because it was so, so slippery. So they let us off so we had to walk up the hill t-t-to the parish house. He built the house --well, he built the -- he built the church in Canada, and then he was transferred to San Francisco, and he buil – oh, it was –uh –heavily mortgaged, so they were – they were – they were gonna s-sell the church at the auction. So he went around people that – that was influential, like, like, like Freeman Alder [ph], asked them for – if – if –if he would give, if he would donate, and if – if he would give money, then he would go to somebody – he would go to newspapers, and, uh, they gave him money for the church – to-to get – t-to pay the mortgage off. Well he – that's – well, he paid the mortgage off in six – well

they, no, they had to be paid soon! I don't know what this story is, but they has to be. So he went to all the business men and papers, and I guess he knew how to – how to talk to people and they would give, th-they would donate.

SIGRIST: He was a good fundraiser! (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: Yeah, a very good.

SIGRIST: Were there ways –when you were growing up in the house –were they ways that your father insisted that you practice your religion, at home?

SAKOVICH: N-no. No. B-because he was a priest and I was an altar boy – that was just –just came natural. So – I was a–

SIGRIST: Tell me about your brother

SAKOVICH: Oh my brother, he was – he was three years old. (Laughs) And they think he was the cutest little altar boy. He could --uh – he'd – he– hardly could walk, but he'd go – th-they thought, "Well, he's gonna be the second priest here, he's gonna be the second priest!" Well, it d-didn't work out that way.

(M). SAKOVICH: [interposed] But he's still helping our church! He's unbelievable.

SAKOVICH: Oh yeah. Yeah. He still helps.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

SAKOVICH: Maria.

SIGRIST: And her maiden name?

SAKOVICH: Uh –

(M). SAKOVICH: Re –Rebouha

SAKOVICH: Yeah, R-R-Rebouha

SIGRIST: Can you spell that?

SAKOVICH: No – she –

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] R-I-A-B-O-U-K-H-A. Riaboukha.

SIGRIST: [interposed] All right, R-I-A-B-

(M) SAKOVICH: O-U

SIGRIST: --O-U-

(M). SAKOVICH: Riaboukha: K-H-A

SIGRIST: K-H-A. And um, what are some of the things that you remember about your mother when you were growing up?

SAKOVICH: Oh, she was always with us. She was, uh– we were raised in the church house. And uh –w-we had a –a na –well th-they – they brought a nanny with-with her, b-but she was part of the family, Dora.

SIGRIST: Dora?

SAKOVICH: Yeah. S-so, so when mother had to go out, s-s-she took care of us. But, but mother was really – I didn't realize how, how good she was until I – until I grew up. And she was a business woman. We were in debt, so she said, "Oh, I'll give you the money next – because I have to pay this fella—I have to pay the grocery first, and then I'll give this fella—" and s-she kinda going back and forth. Until I –until I got a good job, and then I cou –then I could – th-th-then I could support her.

SIGRIST: Are you the oldest child?

SAKOVICH: No. M-my sister was.

SIGRIST: And what was her name?

SAKOVICH: Galina.

SIGRIST: Galina.

SAKOVICH: She –

SIGRIST: [interposed] And then you -- ?

SAKOVICH: And then me, and then H-Elena, tha-that's sister, E-Elena,

SIGRIST: [interposed] Helena—

SAKOVICH: [interposed] and, uh, Constantine.

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Const-

SIGRIST: [interposed] Is it Elena or Helena?

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Ellen

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Ellen

SIGRIST: [interposed] Ellen. Ellen

SAKOVICH: --Ei-Elena.

SIGRIST: I see.

(M) SAKOVICH: [not understood]

SAKOVICH: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Anyway. Um, do you know how your parents met?

SAKOVICH: (pause) No. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: (Laughs) I thought I'd ask [ph]

(M) SAKOVICH: (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: (Laughs) I wasn't--I wasn't there!

SIGRIST: (Laughs) But it was in Latvia, we can assume?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Were they both born there?

SAKOVICH: Uh (sighs) – no. My mother was born in-in –no, my f-father was f-fr
– came from Ukraine.

SIGRIST: From the Ukraine

SAKOVICH: --And my mother came from the Ukraine.

SIGRIST: How did they end up in Latvia.

SAKOVICH: Uh – (sighs) –well this part of [ph] Russia I gu – I guess they
traveled – no – I guess –

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] He came here to get his priesthood, remember?

SAKOVICH: Oh, that's right. Yeah. He was ordained i-in Latvia, and then he
came, uh – then he was sent to – to Montreal and then he was
transferred to San Francisco.

SIGRIST: Oh. Those are three very different places –

SAKOVICH: Yeah, yeah.

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yes, mm-hmm.

SIGRIST: So you – the first thing you remember is your mother having
headaches, going to San Francisco –

SAKOVICH: Yes, yeah, yeah

SIGRIST: --What are some of your other earliest memories?

SAKOVICH: Oh, she was very good. She was very good mother, she took care of us --and, uh--

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] And the parish!

SAKOVICH: An -- and the --yeah

(M) SAKOVICH: She had to cook on Sundays.

SAKOVICH: Yeah she coo--

SIGRIST: [interposed] She had responsibilities in the parish?

SAKOVICH: W-w-w-yeah-well, she volunteered. (M. Sakovich laughs). Yeah, so, so she --they volunteered her in other words. (Laughs). Yeah. No, she was an excellent wife

SIGRIST: Well let's talk about you a little bit. What are some of your earliest memories, growing up?

SAKOVICH: Uh -- (sighs)

SIGRIST: --Things that made impressions on you?

SAKOVICH: (pause) I don't --I don't remember much in-in Canada, but we -- uh -- went to Sa -- went to San Francisco

SIGRIST: What do you remember in San Francisco when you were a small child?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, in San Francisco, yeah --

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Sherman School! Sherman School!

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah – yeah, the school was just –uh – a block away from us, from the church house. So we went to –Sh-Sherman School there.

(M) SAKOVICH: Tell him about “the one,” “the” – I think that’s terrible

SAKOVICH: What?

(M) SAKOVICH: He had terrible teachers!

SAKOVICH: (Laughs) Oh.

SIGRIST: They were teaching you the Roman numerals, and he didn’t even know the language!

SAKOVICH: Oh, well –yeah they taught us Roman num-numerals. Uh—One-I: one; Two-I: two; Three-I: three; IV: four; V: five; V – IV: six, and on and on, so we had to learn that. And uh – and I wasn’t a good – good learner. (Laughs) But now I know.(Laughs)

SIGRIST: [interposed] Because you’ll never forget them! (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: No! (Laughs)

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] That’s terrible! He had entirely different experiences in school.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Can you talk a little bit about learning English and what that process was like for you?

SAKOVICH: Well, we picked it up –we picked it –we picked it up in school. Al- Although, I-I went to kindergarten. I cried all the way t-to –when they took me to k-kindergarten. All the way there. But once I was there, I was fine.

- SIGRIST: And was that in San Francisco?
- SAKOVICH: In San-Francisco. There was uh, yeah, I remember this– no uh, y- you stand in the circle and then somebody goes out and “They won’t bite you, they won’t bite you, they won’t –, and I-I said, “You’re toobachu, toobachu, toobachu [ph].” (Laughs) Sk –
- SIGRIST: (Laughs) What language did you speak at home?
- SAKOVICH: Russian. –
- SIGRIST: [interposed] You spoke Russian at home--
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] – Russian, Russian at home.
- SIGRIST: Did your parents speak English at all?
- SAKOVICH: Oh, yeah, m-my father, he spoke -- he spoke Serbian, and, uh, Russian, and English, of course. And my mother spoke English, English and Russian.
- SIGRIST: Did you ever have an occasion when the kids – your, your – the other schoolchildren made fun of you? Because you were an immigrant?
- SAKOVICH: No. No, they didn’t. (Pause)There was – we was –were--all – compatible.
- SIGRIST: Um, well, tell me a little bit about, about your father’s work at Angel Island, which is where the immigrants came [not understood] harbor.
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] He – yeah –uh – yeah, he met them all. He made, uh – well he had to translate, ‘cause they didn’t know –. Some of them took E-English lessons in China and Harbin, so they knew a little bit. But, uh, it – th – they – h-h-he brought them to San Francisco

then, and – and – and got them jobs or a place to live, -w-with their families, or – or – or individuals, just-just to room. And at that time they had – uh -- dining, R-Russian's [not understood] dining in the evening. They would go fro – then and the Russians had a dining area in the evening – at the –

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Boarding house

SAKOVICH: [interposed] It was a boarding house. And they – they would eat – eat – eat dinner there.

SIGRIST: These particular, uh, immigrants were all from Harbin? They were Russians coming from Harbin, China?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Y-yes. Most of them.

SIGRIST: There was a Russian --If I remember correctly, there was a Russian community in Harbin?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh, yes! Yes.

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh, yes!

SIGRIST: [interposed] That's H-A-R-B-I-N – I believe.

SAKOVICH: Yes, yes. No, that's – well, they were – they were pushed out. Well, they, they ran away – they were running from, from the Soviet Union. And they were being pushed out close – close to the –they went to Ch-China, Harbin was the closest, and then th-the har – or, um –some of them went to Vladivostok. And then they came by ship. And my father m-m-met-met all of them. And got them jobs, got them, uh, places to live. And some of them he shoved a little money, so that –

SIGRIST: [interposed] They probably didn't have much.

SAKOVICH: No, no, no! A lot of them didn't.

SIGRIST: Do – do you know, Mr. Sakovich, what-what the economic or intellectual level was of the Russians coming out of Harbin?

SAKOVICH: Well, some of them were really bright! They were – they were professors –

(M) SAKOVICH: And they had been wealthy!

SAKOVICH: Y-yes, some of them were, yeah.

SAKOVICH: W-well they took the money away.

(M) SAKOVICH: Well, yeah, if they had been, they were of very wealthy families and –

SAKOVICH: [superposed] Yeah yeah, yeah. Some of them were –uh – uh – what do you call? –Fr-from the royal family

SIGRIST: Sort of aristocracy –

SAKOVICH: Yeah, yeah, aristocracy. So, so he met all of them, found – found 'em jobs, found 'em places to live and--

SIGRIST: Do you know anything else about your father's work at Angel Island?

SAKOVICH: Well that's the main, that's the main thing, is to go to Angel Island, translate, and find 'em homes. If they didn't have a place to live, they – they had to stay in Angel Island! So he-he got 'em places to stay, either just a room or with their families – yeah, it was very active in that way.

(M) SAKOVICH: Tell him about Fort Ross

SAKOVICH: Fort Ross?

- (M) SAKOVICH: In 1925, he established a center [ph]
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh, the fort, Fort Ross. Do you know Fort Ross at all?
- SIGRIST: No [ph]
- SAKOVICH: Oh, you don't?
- (M) SAKOVICH: (Clicks her tongue)
- SIGRIST: [interposed] I don't. (Laughs) It's only the second time in my life I've ever been out here, so --!
- (M) SAKOVICH: [not understood]
- SAKOVICH: [not understood] Oh, I see, oh well, we're -- you're excused!
- SIGRIST: Yeah
- SAKOVICH: [interposed]. Yeah. No, Fort Ross is a -- uh -- uh -- Russian establishment -- they -- uh, th-the Russian -- uh, fisherman used to -- (says something to M. Sakovich in Russian) the village
- (M) SAKOVICH: --Fur trade. Fur trade.
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] -- a-a-and fur trade --
- SIGRIST: [superposed] But is it -- is it like a residential community that's called --?
- SAKOVICH: Well -- uh -- (sighs) it was a residential after, but in the beginning, they, they built a church, and um --
- SIGRIST: [interposed] That's okay, we can look at that afterwards

SAKOVICH: Th-th-they yeah, they –uh –so my father established to go there every F-Fourth of July and have service there. And a lot of people would – would come and pick-picknicking after, and some of them would go fishing and –I don't think they caught anything, but anyhow (Laughs)

SIGRIST: (Laughs) What kinds of occupations did the,uh, Russian immigrants get in the San Francisco area?

SAKOVICH: Well, f-f- a lot of like janitors. But then, they would – soon as they kn-knew the language – 'cause then they could – then they would go into other, other professions, or would –

(M) SAKOVICH: Sales people, 'member? [not understood] --

SAKOVICH: Yeah, all sales, yeah, they were --

(M) SAKOVICH: --yeah, shoes—

SAKOVICH: Yeah. Yeah. F-f-Yeah, one fella--. Yeah, I was going to, I was going to Bahrain, and one of the s-s- the – they-they gave me a list of what I should have, w-white –uh – white-white trousers, and th-that was in N-November, and you couldn't find any. So there was a Russian working in – wh-yeah, white shoes – and one Russian was, um, working in – H-Hale brothers –it's a department store. So he got – s-he got -- uh –he wrote to the factory, and he got me tw-two pairs of white shoes. So if you knew somebody, you'd – you'd get things. (Laughs)

SIGRIST: Well now, in Mrs. Sakovich's interview, she explained a little bit about how you were going to Bahrain, but in case somebody is listening to this interview without having heard that one, can you explain for me about why it is that you went there, and –

SAKOVICH: Oh, uh –

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Tell him about the Dr. Pope [ph]

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, th-there was a doctor, that I –I was working at Stanford hospital--

SIGRIST: How old were you?

SAKOVICH: Ohh-Eighteen? About eighteen, nineteen? Is-e-eighteen? Uh. He came – said “You want to go to Bahrain island,” I said, “Sure,” didn’t know where it was, and he said, “W-Well it’s in the Persian Gulf,” so I had to run home and look it up, where Persian Gulf was. “Well, you talk to your mother first,” or he said no –

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] “Go ask your mom!” (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: (Laughs) [interposed] “Y-you –you go ask your mom!” (Laughs) So she was – sh-sh said, “Sure, if you wanna go. Do you wanna go?” And I said, “Sure I wanna go.” Well, any-anyhow, I got the job there.

SIGRIST: Doing what?

SAKOVICH: Uh – (sighs)

(M) SAKOVICH: Lab technician

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, Lab-la-laboratory work.

SIGRIST: Is that what you were doing in Stanford hospital?

SAKOVICH: Yes.

SIGRIST: [interposed] Laboratory work.

SAKOVICH: Yeah, so. So, uh –

SIGRIST: What do you remember about going to Bahrain?

SAKOVICH: It took me thirty days to get there (laughs). Because ther-th-the air-
airplanes were just started, there was no Trans-Transatlantic.
You—I took the (sighs) train from San Francisco to New York, and
then New York to Sherbrook [ph], and then to – then b-b-by train all
the way to Istanbul. And then, uh, by boat, little, little ship across
the channel, and then we went to –was a train –uh – S-S-Simplon
Express Train [Venice-Simplon Orient Express]. It was a good,
first-class train. So we went –yeah it took me thirty, about thirty
days to get there. But I enjoyed every minute of it! (Laughs)

SIGRIST: What did you see during that whole experience that you had never
seen before?

(M) SAKOVICH: Oh, good question [ph].

SAKOVICH: Uh, it was raining one day, and there was a cliff, and it was just like
silver. That I remember, looking out the window -- it was just like
silver. So –

(M) SAKOVICH: Tell him about the food.

SAKOVICH: (pause) The food?

(M) SAKOVICH: You never had eaten like that before!

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Oh, the food! Oh!

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Gosh! [ph]

SAKOVICH: They – well that was on the ship

(M) SAKOVICH: Well –

SAKOVICH: Yeah, the ship.

SIGRIST: What ship did you take over there?

SAKOVICH: Oh – (sighs). C'mon

(M) SAKOVICH: It was an Italian ship

SIGRIST: There were lots of 'em

SAKOVICH: Uh – Bianca –Ma –uh-- C-C-Countess Bianca –

SIGRIST: [interposed] Bianca [not understood]

SAKOVICH: Count-Countess Bianca Mana [ph]. And the first, well the food was anything you want. I ordered, "I wanna baked apple," and they didn't have it, they said, "Just a minute, we'll have it." I waited an hour until they baked the apple for me! (laughs) I said "That wasn't important!" Said, "You wanted it, sir." No, the ship, the food was excellent on the ship--

SIGRIST: Wow.

SAKOVICH: It's --

SIGRIST: And how long did you say in Bahrain?

SAKOVICH: Uh, three – th – three years and four months.

SIGRIST: And what happened when you got back?

SAKOVICH: I had to go to work! (Laughs) No. Uh. What did I do?

(M) SAKOVICH: You went back to the lab and John took you.

SAKOVICH: Yeah, yeah, I went back. I went back t-t-to the lab, where there was a fr –uh –John was the supervisor of that lab. And I went back and he said, "They did time, you have time, you come over. And we'll – you'll always get a job here." So anytime I took a va – oh, he wanted a va – a vacation because he just took weekends off

because he couldn't trust anybody. So he went for two weeks on vacation, I took over his job.

SIGRIST: [interposed] That was good timing!

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you –get back to your father just a little bit –did your father ever assist, or even in his parish, did he have any immigrants who were not Russians?

SAKOVICH: Uh – (sighs).

(M) SAKOVICH: The Serbs.

SAKOVICH: The S –well yeah, the Serbs.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about that particular group of people?

SAKOVICH: Well, they're–th-they're – they're Yugoslavians.

(M) SAKOVICH: They didn't have their own church.

SAKOVICH: No, at that time, no. They didn't have their own church, so – so they came to – uh –wh – they came to our church, o-on Green Street.

SIGRIST: Did they live in the same area as the Russians lived?

SAKOVICH: Well, San Francisco, just anywhere.

SIGRIST: I see, there was no specific Russian neighborhood or --?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] No –no –no.

SIGRIST: Oh, okay.

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Well, th-th-there might be. They – most of them settled around (sighs) O’Farrell Street. O’Farrell, uh, Ellis –

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] That’s kind of downtown.

SAKOVICH: --No, no, it was fa --near Fillmore [Fillmore Street]. Near Fillmore. They kinda, they rented, uh, a flat. They didn’t have apartments, they had flats, those days. If you lived with the first – f-first flat, second flat, third flat was a little hard (laughs) – to go.

SIGRIST: Were the Russian businesses in San Francisco um, located in one area?

SAKOVICH: Uh (sighs). Uh –w – well they had uh – well, not Russians, there were–

(M) SAKOVICH: – They don’t have it like today. Today there’s a whole area that’s just all Russian. Then it was th–

SIGRIST: [interposed] It was different at that time –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah --

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] “--Delicatessen on O’Farrell”

SAKOVICH: Delica – yeah, that’s the yeah they–

(M) SAKOVICH: [superposed] Remember? They called it, “Our –This is Our Priest [ph]”?

SAKOVICH: [interposed] W-well that was a Jew-Jewish boy

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah, yeah. Yeah that was then [ph]

SAKOVICH: Yeah – yeah – [not understood]

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] This is our priest

- SAKOVICH: [interposed] Th-th-th-th – when they introduced – “This is our priest” (laughs). No, and then la-later on they all s-s – they had their s-s –well, a lot of them they were janitors at first. And then they – when they got the English language, and then they got spread out, and then they got good jobs.
- SIGRIST: Did your parents become citizens?
- SAKOVICH: Yes. Uh --. Yes, my father did.
- SIGRIST: Do you remember any of that process?
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] N-no, no. He just, uh, I ju – well, no, he was uh – when they had to go to take the oss –o – uh –
- SIGRIST: [interposed] The oath?
- SAKOVICH: [interposed] – Oath, the oath. So we went – to-and th-t-t – and then I was – uh – I was bu –because of my father being a citizen, I was a citizen then –
- SIGRIST: I see [not understood]
- SAKOVICH: --Yeah. And my mother – yeah she took citizen –
- (M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] Yeah. Yes
- SAKOVICH: --Yeah she took citizen. And she was a citizen.
- SIGRIST: How do you define yourself in terms of your nationality? How do you think of yourself?
- SAKOVICH: (sighs) American. Or Like – li – like (laughs) you said [referring to his wife]
- (M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] –Half Russian. (Laughs)

SAKOVICH: [interposed] --Half Russian, half, uh, half Latvian, and all American!
(Laughs)

SIGRIST: (Laughs) Well that's great. Well, Mr. Sakovich, thank you very much for letting me, uh, ask you some more questions. Do you have one final thing you'd like say before we stop?

SAKOVICH: Can we stop now?

(They laugh)

SIGRIST: All right –

SAKOVICH: [interposed] I'm not – I'm not an interviewer, you know?

SIGRIST: [interposed] No, I think you did a very good job, actually!

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] You did okay, Leo.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist, signing off with Leo Sakovich, on uh – April 29th, 1999, with Mrs. Sakovich in attendance also. Thank you, sir.

SAKOVICH: You're welcome.

(M) SAKOVICH: [interposed] You didn't –

[END OF INTERVIEW]