

EI-1137

MARY PETRICK

BIRTHDATE: MAY 11, 1908

INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 8, 2000

RUNNING TIME: 00:00

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: KIMBERLY MAIER

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: JANET LEVINE

HUNGARY (SLOVAKIAN), C. 1913

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SHIP NAME NOT KNOWN

[        ], HUNGARY

BENTLEYVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA; TO GOWN, OKLAHOMA; TO PENNSYLVANIA;  
TO OKLAHOMA; TO CHICAGO, ILLINOIS; TO CLEVELAND, OHIO; TO  
HOLLYWOOD, FLORIDA

LEVINE: Okay, today is March 8, the year 2000. And I'm here in Hollywood, Florida with Mary Petrick who came from Czechoslovakia when she was five years old, and since she was born in 1908, we're thinking it was 1913. It could have been 1912, depending, but anyway. Mrs. Petrick is, we'll say 91 at this time, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Okay, if you would say again please, Mrs. Petrick, for the tape, your birthdate and where in Czechoslovakia you were born.

PETRICK: I was born in Hungary.

LEVINE: You were born in Hungary?

PETRICK: I think that's where it was. In Tridahrusa. That's the city that I was born in.

LEVINE: I see. So did your family then move to Czechoslovakia?

PETRICK: No. They didn't move to Czechoslovakia. They came from, I think it was Hungary at the time. All I can remember that we came here. My dad came first, then mother and I came.

LEVINE: I see. So, actually, you lived in Hungary until you came to the United States.

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: But were your mother and father Czechoslovakian?

PETRICK: My mother was Slovak. And so was my dad.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So they were Slovak, but they were living in Hungary. And your birthdate is May 11, 1908.

PETRICK: Right.

LEVINE: Now, do you have any memories of Hungary before you came here?

PETRICK: Not at all.

LEVINE: Not at all. Okay. Now, do you know about your mother and father's families? Did they live in that area in Hungary for generations? In other words, did you have grandparents?

PETRICK: Yes. I had grandparents. Yes.

LEVINE: They lived near you?

PETRICK: They lived there. I don't know. See I don't remember anything because like I said, I was five years old and I don't recall anything from when I lived there.

LEVINE: Okay. Um, so ah, you say your father came first. Do you know how many years ahead of you your father came to this country?

PETRICK: I imagine about a year or so.

LEVINE: And what, do you know why he came when he did?

PETRICK: Well, to better himself.

LEVINE: And what did he, you know what he did for work when he was in Hungary and then when he was in this country? Do you know what he did for work?

PETRICK: Well, over there I think they were ah, doing lumber work. Cutting down trees, you know. And ah, that was hard work because I remember mother saying that they had to do that too, to help. To cut down the trees. Then they'd dump 'em down into the river and they'd push 'em down, you know, and that was hard work. And he tried to better himself so he came here. And then when he got enough money for our transportation, then he sent for us.

LEVINE: I see. Now, were you the only child?

PETRICK: At that time. I'm the oldest.

LEVINE: Did you have any brothers and sisters born in Hungary? Or were they born here?

PETRICK: No. They were all born here but me.

LEVINE: But you. Do you remember, what was your mother's name?

PETRICK: Mary.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

PETRICK: Gados.

LEVINE: How would you spell that?

PETRICK: G-A-D-O-S

LEVINE: And your father's name?

PETRICK: Styk. S-T-Y-K.

LEVINE: And his first name?

PETRICK: Steve

LEVINE: Okay. And you mentioned that at some point, the name got changed from S-T-Y-K, to S-T-E-C-K.

PETRICK: Yeah. The kids didn't know any better and they didn't know how to spell it right, so they just started spelling it Steck.

LEVINE: And then did you start spelling it that way too?

PETRICK: Yes.

LEVINE: So do you know how your mother got along while your father was away in America before you and she came over here?

PETRICK: Did what?

LEVINE: How did she get along? Did your father send money home? Or did she work?

PETRICK: Well, I imagine she worked while we were there.

LEVINE: With that hard work, with the lumber?

PETRICK: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, boy. That's quite hard for a woman to do.

PETRICK: Right. Especially in the wintertime, when they got wet you know, their skirts froze, they were stiff and they had the boots on. So it was kind of hard.

LEVINE: So, let's see. Do you remember getting ready to leave or anything like that? Going to the port?

PETRICK: Nothing at all.

LEVINE: Do you have any idea what ship you came on?

PETRICK: No.

LEVINE: And how about Ellis Island or the Statue of Liberty?

PETRICK: That is kind of faint that I, we got off the boat and then we got in, I don't know whether it was a ship or whatever it was, but anyway, we got into the smaller boats and they were rocking, you know, and then we got off and start walking out on the street. And that's all I remember there.

LEVINE: Mm, hm. Now was your father, did your father meet you? Do you know?

PETRICK: That I don't remember. I think it was just mother and I, and I think we came out to Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: [Aside: Could I ask you to put your keys down? We're going to pick up that little jingle, it'll be in the tape. We want to make a nice clean tape.] Okay, so he was where in Pennsylvania?

PETRICK: [Bentleyville.]

LEVINE: Bentleyville. And was he working in the mines there?

PETRICK: In the mines.

LEVINE: And what kind of mines were they?

PETRICK: I don't know.

LEVINE: Coal?

PETRICK: Coal, coal mines. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you know why your father went to Pennsylvania? Did he know someone there?

PETRICK: I imagine. I don't know.

LEVINE: Like was there a community of people when you got there that had all come...?

PETRICK: Yes. And then my mother had big company house, you know, and she had boarders. They called them boarders at the time. That's the roomers. And ah,

they had an upstairs and downstairs and so they, mother made a little extra money on that, you know.

LEVINE: Now, it was a big house?

PETRICK: It was a big company house.

LEVINE: When you say a company, you mean the coal company?

PETRICK: Yes. They owned everything. The city (she laughs) and everything, you know, so you didn't have no choice.

LEVINE: What do you remember about the boarders?

PETRICK: Well, not too much. Only one, he had an accident in a coal mine and he smashed his leg and the doctors wanted to amputate it and this man was knew enough, he says, he'd rather die than have his leg taken off. So mother said, okay. So she, at that time, she was nursing my brother. I don't know how old he was. He must have been about four or five months old. And they used, they had remedies of their own at the time. So mother said, well, she'll try, if he's willing to suffer. And so she started to clean it up and, but I can't remember the name. Bob can tell you. He remembers. I told him when I knew it (she laughs). And those leaves, they wash 'em and then they'd go like this to make it tender, so, and when

she cleaned the leg off, and she put, the time she was nursing, she put her milk from the breast and put it on that leaf and then put it all over the leg where it was sore. And she really cured it. And the man walked, and he was always thankful to mother that she did that. But I was just wondering, is this on tape. What they were doing for bedpans. Because at that time, you know...

LEVINE: Your mother must have really had a job on her hands to take care of him.

PETRICK: Right. Dad was always helping her to ah, pick him up, you know, and turn him over because they would get bedsores. But he didn't have any bedsores. Like here in, when you're in a hospital you get bedsores. And I don't know how they do that.

LEVINE: How long did your mother nurse this man? Do you know?

PETRICK: Oh, quite a... about a couple months I imagine.

LEVINE: So, did she cook for the boarders or roomers?

PETRICK: Yeah. She cooked.

LEVINE: And how about, did she make their lunches? Can you remember?

PETRICK: Oh, yeah. She made lunches for them to take to the coal mine. They had pails like this, you know, with the top that opens up. And ah, they'd have a bottle in there to keep either soup or coffee, whatever they needed. And those lights on the caps, they used to call 'em carbine lights. And that was my job in the evening. To fill those up with that carbine stuff so they'd have light when they went into the coal mine.

LEVINE: Did you hear stories about the dangers of the coal mines, of working in the coal mines?

PETRICK: Oh, yeah. It was dangerous. They were, like my, I don't know whether he was an uncle or a cousin. Because, you know, they always had like, you say, Mr. and then we'd call 'em like Uncle Styk, so ah, they would go and say how bad it was to get in there, and that smoke and smell. And especially when they put that dynamite in and it would blow up the coal loose. And then the coal miners had to ah, shovel it into the cars. The little cars they had. And that's how they got in. But the one, my uncle, he was killed, the mule kicked him, he got scared. Somebody hollered or something and the mule got scared and he jumped up and he happened to kick backwards and he hit him in the forehead and killed him. So my aunt was left with eight children. Was the widow.

LEVINE: Now, was this the mule, was like outside of the mine?

PETRICK: Yeah, they were out already, on the, out, you know, by the entrance.

LEVINE: Did mules actually go into the mine?

PETRICK: Oh, yeah. They took mules down there. Some parts, you know.

LEVINE: Wow. So did your father continue to work in the mines?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did he ever tell you any stories about it? Or did he ever talk about it?

PETRICK: No. They didn't talk much about it. Like I said, when they, after we moved from ah, Bentleyville to Oklahoma it was on a farm. There was five of them. An agent got ahold of them and ah, sold them a farm. But it was all, it was near the river and when it rained, it always overflowed. And you couldn't raise nothing. Aw, there was nothing but snakes, you know. You know when you see all these snakes in the movies? Well, that's what it was like. And then the neighbor's little girl got lost and my dad went down into the, he dug a well, and the snakes took the well over. There was a bunch of 'em just like you see in the movies and he was pulling a stick there to see if he could feel a child in there, but she didn't fall in the, in the well. She got lost. She was two miles away from home. It was near school. And the Indians then, aw, we didn't know, we just knew Indians,

but they weren't dressed as Indians. They were like us. And so, ah, they brought 'em over, brought the little girl over and she had frozen finger tips. And it was kind of hard.

LEVINE: Well, how long did your family stay in Pennsylvania?

PETRICK: Well, not too long. I imagine about a year maybe.

LEVINE: Did you go to school when you were in Pennsylvania?

PETRICK: No. I went, I started a school in Oklahoma. But I'd go to school maybe one day and then I'd stay home a week. When mother was sick, I couldn't go. So I didn't have really any education in school. I'd start learning the alphabets, you know, when I got back, I didn't know what it was all about. Cause I missed all that.

LEVINE: Cause you missed a lot.

PETRICK: Right.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you have memories, other memories of life in Pennsylvania? I mean, did your mother and father have a social life? Did they see friends?

PETRICK: Oh, yes. I ah, when we came back the second time, see, we traveled a lot. We were in Oklahoma and then we came back when my uncle was killed, you know, I told you, by the mule. Ah, we came back because Dad was helping out to take care of her, make arrangements for her to either still live where she lived or to move near us someplace. So that's it. So then I was older already. I was doing housework there.

LEVINE: I see. So ah, was your uncle who got killed by the mule, was he your father's brother?

PETRICK: That's what I don't know. I don't think he was a brother. He was just a...

LEVINE: By marriage, it was his wife?

PETRICK: I imagine, I don't know.

LEVINE: Was his last name Petrick?

PETRICK: No.

LEVINE: No. I see. So it was probably your aunt who was...?

PETRICK: Well, I don't know either one, which one was which. You know, so that's that.

But like I said, then I was doin' house work and then ah, fer a couple years, then we moved again back to Oklahoma.

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness. Well, tell me about the agent. How did that work?

Somebody came around and tried to convince you....

PETRICK: Somebody came, right, somebody came around and there was four of 'em that were in that group, you know, and they met. And they says, well, sure, they'll take a chance, you know. They were like...

LEVINE: Pioneers.

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did they have to give money? Did they have to buy this land that they were going to ?

PETRICK: They bought it, but I don't know what they paid for. But after that when we went, they just picked up and went. Nobody sold the land or nothin'.

LEVINE: Oh, they just left it.

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, do you remember leaving Pennsylvania and going to Oklahoma that first time?

PETRICK: The first time? No. I don't remember that. I, all I remember is being in Oklahoma then.

LEVINE: Okay. So, and what you remember about Oklahoma was the snakes and the, and you really couldn't grow things because of the flooding of the river. So your mother and father must have felt very disappointed.

PETRICK: Well, yes they were, but they had to stay there for a while 'til they could get some money. Like we'd, if the train go by, we were livin' near tracks, like from here to Taft [the distance from her house to Taft Street in Hollywood, Florida], you know, and the train'd go by and some coal lumps would fall off the ah, coal cars. We'd go pick 'em up and that's the way we had heat. And we'd cut wood, you know, and had those belly stoves. (laughs) And we'd have that.

LEVINE: Wow. So how did your father get enough money to leave there? Did he work anywhere else?

PETRICK: Well, he was workin' in the coal mine over there in Oklahoma also. Colored fella owned the coal mine. And that's the first time I seen a colored person. And he explained, I had to go get his money because he had a leg, when he was, I don't know, a coal lump fell and hit him and did something to his ankle and he could never heal it. No matter what mother did. She couldn't heal it. It was one of those kind of a sores, I forget what you call it, that it always runs. It heals a little bit and it opens up again. So, that was that.

LEVINE: And that came from being in the coal mine.

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you said your mother was not well. What was that?

PETRICK: Well, she had twins and she had no help, just neighbors. And I don't know, something happened to her, and she was always sick. And always dying, and I'd have to run for my neighbor to come and help dad, you know, they'd say any minute, any minute. She lived fifty years after that. (pause) So...

LEVINE: Did she have other children and did the children all survive?

PETRICK: Yeah. There was three boys and three girls. But the three boys are gone. There's just the three of us girls that are left.

LEVINE: Wow. So you were the oldest, so I guess you had to take a lot of responsibility for chores and...

PETRICK: Right.

LEVINE: How about learning English. How was that for you? How was it learning to speak English?

PETRICK: It was hard, because Mother wouldn't learn. She didn't want to forget her language. Dad learned some, where you could understand him, what he wanted, you know.

LEVINE: Now, what language was your mother speaking?

PETRICK: Slovak.

LEVINE: And your mother and father spoke Slovak at home?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: So did you have to, did you have to, did you help them? Did you help your father with his English at all?

PETRICK: Well, some, you know, where he'd want to know if I knew what he wanted to know, I'd try to help out.

LEVINE: But it must have been hard for you in school, because you didn't go all the time.

PETRICK: I didn't go. And it was, like you said, it's extra hard, you know, when you're trying to catch up on things. But after I got married I went to night school and got my diploma.

LEVINE: Oh, good for you.

PETRICK: Because I became a hairdresser too.

LEVINE: Oh, you did. That's great. (Mrs. Petrick laughs) Well, let's follow along. First you were in Pennsylvania for let's say around a year, went to Oklahoma. Were there for about how long before you went back, before your uncle was killed?

PETRICK: Well, see how many there (she laughs) was?

LEVINE: Did everybody go back? All the four people, families?

PETRICK: No. Some of 'em stayed in Oklahoma, you know. The one that, she had two boys and three girls so when the tornado came, we called it cyclone at the time, and ah,

LEVINE: I want to hear about that, let's just pause. [        ] Tell me about the cyclones. That must have been something new and different.

PETRICK: Oh, that was terrible. I was at my neighbor's house. And it was coming out ah, it was rainin' and then it was, it looked like white, you know. You couldn't see nothin'. And I said, my girlfriend, I says, let's go to my place. And her dad was in the house, he says, you can't go. Wait 'til this stops rainin'. And as he said that a big plank came through the window and just missed us. And so when we got out, when it was over with, we went to my place, my house. The house was tipped over. They had a climb out the window and a big tree fell over. We had a cow that was tied to the tree and the poor thing, aw, her whole hip was skin. And when we cut her loose from the tree, she ran into the woods and she wouldn't come back. And finally, a few days later, I kind a coaxed her to come home and I fed her then. And my mother was standin' by the stove when the house tipped. And my sister burned her foot on the stove as the stove came down. And she kept cryin' and nobody could find out what was wrong. So finally I took her, and I happed to look at her bottom of her foot and she had a blister. So then we took care of that. So she quit cryin'. Then after that we had a sandstorm.

LEVINE: What was that like?

PETRICK: O-h-h-h, that was worse than the cyclone because the sand, you couldn't go outside, it hit and it penetrated in your face. You had to cover your eyes cause it would get in your eyes. And they had a, the burials that the people died. They had a postpone everything because they couldn't get out.

LEVINE: How long did the sandstorm last?

PETRICK: It lasted about four days. Yeah. And then the one that ah, was livin' across, there was like a pond, and her daughter, two daughters were at our place and I says stay here 'til it's over, just like me. I says, I'm goin' home, you know, so it must have been her time to go. She got killed, and all that was left was the horse, standin', the barn, it picked the barn up and left the horse there. And the lady, the mother, her hip, all skinned, taken off, and her son, the scalp; they had to have that plate put in?

LEVINE: His scalp came off?

PETRICK: Yeah. They took his scalp off and they gave him that artificial... And ah, who else, that was the two of them that lived longer. And after that, we start getting' those tornadoes, you know, and we had, Dad had a build a cellar. One neighbor

had a cellar because she kept all her canning stuff, it was cool in there. And then when it start a storm, we'd all run to her place. And she'd let us in to the cellar to be safe. And we were safe for quite a few years, you know.

LEVINE: Do you think your mother and father were sorry they had come to this country?

PETRICK: That they never said. But once he made a remark about something and I says, if you don't like it, why don't you go back if it's so good in (she laughs) the old country, we used to call it old country. I says, go back to the old country.

LEVINE: But he didn't want to.

PETRICK: No. And mother never wanted, I wanted to take her, you know, for a visit. But she wouldn't go.

END SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

PETRICK: ... was afraid of the water cause she was sick, and I wasn't. She told me that I wasn't sick, and I'm not sick when I go on a, water. So, but I was always train sick and car sick. Oh, I never enjoyed any of that stuff. Because I was always in the watch-a-call it, vomiting (she laughs). Terrible.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Wow. So let's say, okay, you stayed in Oklahoma that first time, for a few years?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then you went back to Pennsylvania when your uncle was

PETRICK: killed.

LEVINE: killed. And how long did you stay in Pennsylvania then, before you went back?

PETRICK: Well, we were.... I don't remember. It must have been quite a few years because like I said, I ah, when I was old enough I got a job as a maid.

LEVINE: In Pennsylvania.

PETRICK: In Pennsylvania, while we were there.

LEVINE: Did you go back to the same town?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: It was Butlersville?

PETRICK: Bentleyville.

LEVINE: And did you have relatives there besides that uncle and aunt?

PETRICK: Just friends that mother had, so it was nice, go back.

LEVINE: And did you father go back in the mines, when he went back?

PETRICK: Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: So by then, now did you go to school there when you went back to Bentleyville?  
No? You were working pretty much by then. Uh, huh. And what was  
Bentleyville, like, could you describe it?

PETRICK: It was nice. It was a little town, you know. And they had a big brewery where  
they made beer. And when they, what was that when they start getting' rid of the  
beer?

LEVINE: Oh, Prohibition.

PETRICK: Yeah, in Prohibition they were spilling all that beer out, and Dad says, here's a  
bucket, go get some of that beer (laughs).

LEVINE: Is that what people did? I mean it's a good idea.

PETRICK: Yeah. Because they didn't care, you know, they were spilling it out. So if they got it....

LEVINE: And do you remember anything else about prohibition after that, after they spilled out the beer?

PETRICK: Not too much. I think we moved later on, again. It was just constantly movin', movin', movin'. Then finally we got to Chicago.

LEVINE: You went back to Oklahoma, and did you stay there for a while?

PETRICK: Yeah. We stayed there for a while because my sister was born there. The youngest sister, and my, the twins were born there. That's my sister and my brother. The three of them were born there.

LEVINE: I see. So did you go to work when you went back to Oklahoma?

PETRICK: No. I didn't work in Oklahoma.

LEVINE: Where in Oklahoma were you? Do you remember the name of the town?

PETRICK: Gown. G-O-W-A-N. G-O-W-N. Gown.

LEVINE: Gown. Uh, huh. So from Oklahoma, the second time, is that when you went Chicago? Or did you go anywhere else in between.

PETRICK: That's, I don't quite remember.

LEVINE: Did your father work the land? Did he try to work the land when you went back to Oklahoma?

PETRICK: Yeah. We had cotton, you know, if it didn't pour rain. If they didn't have a rainy season, you could grow cotton. And then you'd have those great big long bags and you'd pick it, and you maybe make fifty cents a day. You'd have to get up about five, six o'clock in the morning to go out and start picking, and then work 'til it was dark. And then, they raised sugar cane and made molasses.

LEVINE: Did your father work in the mine at all?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: He did. The second time too?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did he go back to the same piece of land that you had been on the first time you were in Oklahoma? Or did you move?

PETRICK: No. We went into town then. And we stayed there, because they, there was one mine that was closer. So... And me, I was a coal picker.

LEVINE: What does that mean?

PETRICK: That means those dumps they had? A great, you know, they'd get all the rubbish out of the coal mines when they were through. They'd pile it up and they'd have big, high stacks. They used to call 'em dumps. And ah, I used to go over there with a, a bag and pick coal if there's a piece, you know, that got tangled up with the good stuff. So we used to burn the coal then in Pennsylvania, and also in Oklahoma. Only in Oklahoma we picked it off the railroad tracks.

LEVINE: When you say you picked it out of the rubbish, was that like other stone?

PETRICK: Yeah. Stone and dirt, gravel, anything, you know. And then it sometimes you got one that was burnin' and it smoldered. You get burned sometimes (she laughs).

LEVINE: From the dynamite, is that why it would be burning?

PETRICK: Yeah. Right.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Wow. Okay, so when you went to Chicago, did you then stay there in Chicago?

PETRICK: Yeah. We stayed there 'til I got married, in Chicago.

LEVINE: And what did your father do there, for work?

PETRICK: He worked in Edison, electric company. Makin' bulbs. Electrical bulbs.

LEVINE: And did you...

PETRICK: My ah, uncle, that's mother's brother, was there first and ah, he wrote and told him to come, you know. He got him a job there.

LEVINE: And was he from the same part in Hungary where...?

PETRICK: Yeah. That's my mother's brother, yeah.

LEVINE: So, did you ever go to school in Chicago?

PETRICK: No.

LEVINE: So...

PETRICK: Oh, yeah, I had to go in Chicago, because ah, I got (she laughs) my certificate there, you know.

LEVINE: Oh, you went to night school there?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what were you doing during the day in Chicago for work?

PETRICK: Well, I was workin' in a factory. A pickle factory.

LEVINE: Oh, uh, huh. What was your job?

PETRICK: (laughs) I was packin' 'em in the jars. And ah, then I wasn't makin' enough money. I heard that other places paid more so I went lookin' for another job and I got a job in can factory, where they made cans and you know, this Albert Tobacco can? Well, I was makin' those tobacco cans. I was puttin' up bottoms and the covers on the body.

LEVINE: Oh, uh huh.

PETRICK: So that was hard work.

LEVINE: Was that better?

PETRICK: Well, it paid more, but ah, then we went on strike. They weren't satisfied and so I went lookin' for another job. (chuckles).

LEVINE: Do you remember what you were making? Is that why they went on strike? Because they weren't making enough money? Or was it because of factory conditions?

PETRICK: I think it was factory conditions at that time. But ah, I left. A friend of mine, you know, said that we're, he was workin' at the Addressograph that they were hiring. So I went over there and he was gonna come down to talk to the ah, um, employer that was hiring. By time he got there, I had the job. (laughs) He said, how long did you work on the machine? I'd never seen it. (laughs) I bluffed my way in on that one. And I got it. And I worked because they have to show you how they operate theirs, you know. So I caught on to it fast and so I was there for quite a few years.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. What did you do for enjoyment, when you were in Chicago? Did you go out with friends?

PETRICK: Go dancing.

LEVINE: Where would you go? Like what kind of dancing?

PETRICK: Well, plain or Charleston or any of those, you know. Mary Gardens, that was the name where I used to go. And then, I can't think of the other good place that we used to go.

LEVINE: Would you go with your girlfriends?

PETRICK: Yeah, with girlfriends, and then we'd, boys would ask us to dance.

LEVINE: And was it a very Americanized? Or was it, were there people, Slovaks? A lot of Slovaks?

PETRICK: No. More American. And we were just, you know, extra, put in (she laughs).

LEVINE: Were there a lot of people from other countries that had come over like you had - in that Chicago area where you were?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Where, do you remember where in Chicago you were living?

PETRICK: On Julian Street. But that's all, I think, all gone. It's all highways now out in there.

LEVINE: How do you think about that time in Chicago? Was that a good time for you?

PETRICK: Well, it was better, you know. Because I was workin' so hard then.

LEVINE: How come you got it in your head to go to night school?

PETRICK: Well, because I wanted to advance myself. I wasn't satisfied, you know. I wanted to better myself. So I kept goin'.

LEVINE: And you did. You finished?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Great. So now, did you become a citizen?

PETRICK: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: How about your mother and father?

PETRICK: My dad became a citizen, but my mother didn't.

LEVINE: Now, was your mother able to speak Slovakian to enough people that she didn't have to learn English? In other words, did she have enough people in the neighborhood?

PETRICK: Right.

LEVINE: Can you think of any attitudes or values or ideas that your mother and father tried to pass on to you? Any either ways from the old country or anything that they tried to make sure you learned?

PETRICK: No.

LEVINE: How about religion? Was religion important in your family or no?

PETRICK: Yes. We used to have a church in Chicago in our house, you know, because there wasn't, it was out in the country then. And ah, there was just a few people that were comin' so ah, Dad and Mother, I build 'em a house, you know. And ah, so we had that and they came in and had mass.

LEVINE: This is a Catholic church?

PETRICK: Yeah. Catholic.

LEVINE: When you say you built them a house, what do you mean?

PETRICK: Well, I, that's how I got started in Chicago. A friend of mine bought a place out in the suburbs, you know, and it was ah, like five acres for three hundred dollars. And it was getting' Depression and everybody was losin' their money. So you drew the money out and I says, let's get three acres. And we'll borrow some money and ah, Dad can build a house, you know. We all helped. I used to work during the week and on Saturday and Sunday if I didn't have to work on a Saturday, I'd go out there and we'd help to cut the wood or whatever he needed, you know, I was into everything. I had to cook (she laughs) and everything.

LEVINE: So you actually knew how to hammer nails and saw wood and all that kind of thing? Did you know how to saw wood and hammer nails?

PETRICK: Oh, yeah. I can saw wood, I can chop wood with an axe, everything. Because that's how, what I learn on the farm. I was my dad's helper. You know, if he needed, he had one of those long saws and I pulled one end and he pulled the other end and we were cuttin' wood.

LEVINE: Just to go back a minute. When you lived in the housing that belonged to the mine in Pennsylvania, what was that like, being... As you say, the people who owned the mine, owned everything. What was it like, being sort of having them in control of everything?

PETRICK: Well, you just rent. You had to make sure that you had enough money to pay rent, or you'd get out.

LEVINE: Did they have like a company store?

PETRICK: Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: And would people, would people get what they needed?

PETRICK: So much on credit, they used to say credit. So and, you couldn't get any more if you couldn't pay for it, you know.

LEVINE: I see. So you were allowed as much credit and then if you didn't pay, you weren't allowed any more.

PETRICK: Yeah. Right, right.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Was it, did you feel like it was (she laughs) fair? In other words if you went to the company store, were the prices fair or did you get overcharged? Were the prices high?

PETRICK: Well, I think they were pretty nice some of them, you know, that had their own families that understood. They ah, kind of held back a little bit. But the others, they, well, let's get what we can out of 'em.

LEVINE: Do you remember those stores? Did they have like everything?

PETRICK: They handled everything.

LEVINE: That you would want...

PETRICK: Yeah, meat, and groceries and vegetables. Anything, you know, canned goods.

LEVINE: How about like fabric for sewing or tools?

PETRICK: Yeah. They had that. They had everything. Just like I said, like pioneers, you know, you go... (pause) Like in Oklahoma, when the train was goin' through -- the wagon train I mean -- we'd all holler, lock up everything! Because they'd steal the chickens, you know, they were hungry, just like we were so the next

best thing, they would try to steal some ah, food from, when they were passing by.

LEVINE: What was that like, the wagon trains? Could you describe what it was like when they came through?

PETRICK: Well, they all, just like we would get together, you know, and get into the wagons. And they had covered wagons and they'd go through....

LEVINE: Like how many would be in a train?

PETRICK: Well, there'd be maybe five or six teams of horses, you know, wagons, and they'd go on. And they were trailblazers. So, that was it. And I didn't realize what that was when I was younger, because nobody talked about those things, you know, they just said -- you're not a gypsy are you (she laughs)?

LEVINE: Lock up your chickens. They were gypsies?

PETRICK: They weren't, but we were callin' 'em gypsies because ah, they were stealing some of this stuff. But ah, people, the gypsies are just like us, they're human aren't they?

LEVINE: Yeah. They have a different way of life, I guess that's the thing.

PETRICK: Right, right.

LEVINE: So I guess the people from Europe knew about gypsies there.

PETRICK: Yes.

LEVINE: But these people were actually settlers.

PETRICK: Right.

LEVINE: And did they ever stop? Did you ever like talk with them or anything?

PETRICK: No. Because we were afraid of them, you know. They were afraid of (she laughs) us. We were afraid of them.

LEVINE: Wow. That must have been a hard life. Pioneer life.

PETRICK: It was. It was terrible. Like I said, when we were in Oklahoma, I grew up in the woods. I didn't, you know, do anything at home, I had to pick ah, whatever I could find, like that persimmons, those things, if they're not ripe and you eat it, your mouth puckers up (she laughs).

LEVINE: Did they grow wild?

PETRICK: Yeah. And then ah, berries and ah, what else? There was different kind a, crab apples, you know, so you could make something.

LEVINE: So you would find whatever was growing there wild and you would gather it and bring it home.

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Hm. So how did you meet your husband.

PETRICK: At work.

LEVINE: In the can factory?

PETRICK: No. At Addressograph/Multigraph.

LEVINE: Addressograph, uh, huh. So um, did you, was he Slovakian?

PETRICK: Czechoslovakian, yeah. I say we had to come all the way to Chicago to meet (she laughs): One from Czechoslovakia, one from Hungary.

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

PETRICK: Joe.

LEVINE: And ah, did um, did you then settle in Chicago once you got married?

PETRICK: Ahh, we weren't there very long after we got married because Addressograph-Multigraph moved to Cleveland, to Ohio.

LEVINE: Is that where you went?

PETRICK: Yeah. And that's where Bob was born, in Cleveland, Ohio.

LEVINE: I see. Is Bob your only child?

PETRICK: Only child.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Uh, huh. So roughly, when did you move to Cleveland? Do you remember?

PETRICK: In ah, '31 or 2.

LEVINE: I see. So that was during the Depression.

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And how did the Depression affect you and your husband and your family?

PETRICK: Well, I was working. We were both working at the Addressograph-Multigraph. And they were movin' to Cleveland. And they gave us the choice. You want to come along with us, the workers that they knew they could trust, you know, because there was so many of 'em and so they asked us and I figured, well, it's better to go over there than to set and tryin' do nothing out here. So we made the choice. We went with the company. So when we got there in about a month's time, they start cutting down the wages. And I was piece work.

LEVINE: What were you doing in the Addressograph?

PETRICK: I was makin' dog tags for the soldiers. And I was piece work. So ah, like I said, we were there about a week, maybe month, when they start cuttin' down the prices. So ah, I was piece work and my husband was a time keeper then. He was takin' care of everybody's, how much time they spent workin'. How many pieces they made. And so they cut his wages in half. So he was makin' seventeen dollars a week. I was makin' thirty five, because I was piece work,

yet. And they were adding more and more on me, you know, it was getting' so hard.

LEVINE: You had to make more and more in order to get paid.

PETRICK: Right. To make more. So we were ah, livin' on my husband's salary, the two of us, and my salary was divided between my folks and his folks.

LEVINE: His folks were in Cleveland?

PETRICK: No. They were in Iowa.

LEVINE: Oh, in Iowa. They had moved. Oh, I see. He had come to Chicago himself?

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: But his family was in Iowa.

PETRICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So, well I guess that was the Depression where everybody's salary was getting... So then, did you stay in Cleveland?

PETRICK: Yes.

LEVINE: And where in Cleveland were you?

PETRICK: Euclid.

LEVINE: Euclid.

PETRICK: Near the factory.

LEVINE: And were there other people from either the Czechoslovakia or from Hungary, were there other people in Cleveland that you and your husband associated with outside of work who were from the old country?

PETRICK: No. Not that I know of. But we met people there, you know, that were Czechs. And one was a priest and his brother, what was his brother? One was a priest. Can't think of what he was doin'. I think he was, can't think of it now. (laughs)

LEVINE: That's okay. When you were in Euclid, in Cleveland, did you stay there for a long time?

PETRICK: Ah, I think about seven years.

LEVINE: Oh.

PETRICK: 'Til Bob was, you know, start takin' lessons in, on his accordion and piano.

LEVINE: And where did you go from there?

PETRICK: From there we came here.

LEVINE: Oh, you came to Hollywood, Florida?

PETRICK: Because I couldn't shovel snow no more, it was getting' too much. So I says, either you come... And so we came and settled here in '66.

LEVINE: When you look back on your life, what are the things that give you most satisfaction?

PETRICK: Mmm. (pause) That I enjoyed some of the things that I looked forward to, you know.

LEVINE: What were some of the highlights, the things that you enjoyed doing and feel good about having done. Anything in particular?

PETRICK: Nothing that I can think of right now.

LEVINE: How do you feel about your Slovakian heritage and being an American? I mean, how do you think about yourself in those terms? Do you feel more American?

PETRIC:K American, all the way. I don't know why, but I do. Like I said, I never wanted to hear anything about the old countries. They used to say because it was, they would make it worse than it was here, but I don't think so. They thought that the money was growing on trees here.

LEVINE: Well, your mother and father must have questioned why they came, because it was so hard for them.

PETRICK: Right.

LEVINE: Do you think they ever regretted coming?

PETRICK: I don't think so.

LEVINE: Well, didn't you say you offered to take you mother back?

PETRICK: Yes.

LEVINE: And she didn't want to go.

PETRICK: No. She had a sister living yet over there. She wouldn't go.

LEVINE: Well, how is this time in your life, now that you're not working and your child is grown?

PETRICK: Well, it's kind of lonesome. Because you don't have nobody to talk to but the four walls. But I get out three times a week. I bowl. So that's the enjoyment that I get out of now.

LEVINE: Do you think all the hardship that you had coming to this country and then your mother and father in the coal mine district and then in Oklahoma, do you think that had an influence, an effect on you and your personality, on your character? How do you think it affected you? In what ways do you think all that hardship (she laughs) changed you?

PETRICK: Well, I always think that I was doin' so much for everybody but myself.

LEVINE: Did you ever change that? Did you get so you were doing some things for yourself?

PETRICK: I never think of doing anything... I was so brought up that I wasn't thinkin' 'bout anything else but tryin' to help everybody. So.. That's it.

LEVINE: Okay. Well we're at the end of the tape and I want to thank you for a lovely interview.

PETRICK: Well, thank you.

LEVINE: It's been a pleasure talking with you, and this interview will be part of the Ellis Island collection and I thank you very much for doing it.

PETRICK: Well, thank you. I enjoyed it. And I hope to see ya (she laughs) again.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I'm speaking with Mary Petrick who came at the age of five, probably in 1913, from Hungary, of Slovakian parents. And this is Janet Levine, on March 8, the year 2000, and I'm here in Hollywood, Florida, and I'm signing off.

END INTERVIEW

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