

**EI-1362**

**FULL NAME: MARIE ZEMINA KODES**

**BIRTHDATE: MARCH 30<sup>TH</sup>, 1907**

**INTERVIEW DATE: JANUARY 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2005**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 98**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, Ph.D.**

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: DENNIS ZEVELOFF**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG**

**BOHEMIA, 1914**

**AGE: 6**

**SHIP: "THE ROCHENBEAU"**

**PORT: CHERBOURG**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **AUSTRIA: VIENNA.**
- **USA: CLEVELAND, OHIO**

LEVINE: This is January the third, the year 2005. I'm here in St. Petersburg, Florida and I'm with Marie Kodes who came here when she was seven years old from what was then Bohemia. Today you are ninety—

KODES: Eight.

LEVINE: Eight. And (laughs) this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And you are so wonderful about how you're telling things, I think you should just start. Why don't you start with your visit to Ellis Island and what that was like for you?

KODES: Well, this friend, Barbara, came to visit me and invited me to visit her in New Jersey. And I says-- you know—I said the thing I'd like most if I could from New Jersey: get to Ellis Island somehow. I've always wanted to see Ellis Island. And she said, "I'll take you there." So she did-- spend a whole day there, And because all I ever heard of it -- from my parents. I came with my mother and my father came here a year earlier. And so we did and we spent a whole day at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And what was that like for you?

KODES: Well. it was like a fairy tale, just like a fairy tale. Because I remember the entrance. They hadn't changed that and the part that we came in. But I can describe that from there we had to go through narrow [pause] lines to be examined. To see if we had vaccinations, if we were healthy. Because at the end of that line either you were separated left or right. Those that had to be reexamined--but I had a vaccination and so did my brother and then -- so we were put on the right side.

LEVINE: How about your mother?

KODES: And my mother too. Except my mother and the children didn't speak the same language. That sounds strange but you see my father was employed in the emperor's palace. He was a—well, that's at Ellis Island, I'd have to tell you the whole thing before that.

LEVINE: Okay-- well why don't we-- is there anything more about your visit to Ellis Island? Then we'll go back and start at the beginning and you can—

KODES: No. Wen-- went as far as we could get a bumper [ph] on the Statue of Liberty—took pictures of Statue of Liberty and um--. I've *already* said because we were all so excited when Statue of Liberty appeared and so I

covered every--every bit of it and to find our name on the wall—that was most exciting.

LEVINE: What was your maiden name? What was your name when you arrived here?

KODES: Z-E-M-I-N-A. Zemina.

LEVINE: Zemina. Okay. Well why don't we say your birth date and where in Bohemia you were born?

KODES: We were born in-in Vienna.

LEVINE: Oh, in Vienna.

KODES: That right. See. Vienna was a short—well—I'd have to start from the beginning.

LEVINE: Well, why don't you? Why don't you start from the beginning? Why don't you say your mother's name and your father's name?

(papers rustling)

KODES: My father's name was Frank. My mother's, Agnes.

LEVINE: And Agnes's maiden name?

KODES: Novotny.

LEVINE: Could you spell that one?

KODES: My mother was Novotny.

LEVINE: N-O-V—

KODES: N-O-V-O-T-N-Y.

LEVINE: (laughs) Okay, and did you have Grandparents that you knew, when you were a little girl?

KODES: Didn't know them.

LEVINE: Okay. And why don't—

KODES: [interposed] Wait. My parents—well, they grew up very poor and they were more or less hired by the landowners to w-work as--as maids and servants. And mother worked as a maid but they didn't feed them very well. And she only went to the fourth grade. And my father, although they didn't know each other then, was th-- practically in the same situation. He just did work out in the field and he had a fourth grade education. When he reached the fourth grade, there was no, uh, law that made him go to school any further. The fourth grade was it for both of them. So Mother found this housekeeping job and uh, they didn't feed her very well. So she used to, after milking the cows, then put the milk into the jugs into the cooler. She would sneak out there at night and slip off the top of the cream and that's the way she got her extra food. Otherwise they fed them very poorly.

LEVINE: Now as a young girl, did she live with the people she worked for?

KODES: Yes.

LEVINE: And did she ever, did she see her parents much?

KODES: She—we don't know anything of her parents. Don't know anything of her relatives.

LEVINE: I see. So she probably was, in a sense, orphaned. I mean, she was put out to work—

KODES: Yes.

LEVINE: And she stayed there. Uh-huh.

KODES: And so -- where was I? You know, it's so hard to think back.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well maybe you want to talk about your father? He was working in the fields, also?

KODES: My father was working in the field. And when he got to be sixteen, he joined the army. And of course, that brought him into Vienna. And um, he was tall, handsome, and very strong. And eventually after being in Vienna in the army for a while he became the Emperor's coachman. And he was a coachman for over a year. And when—in—and he knew—he got acquainted with my mother by going on a leave of absence from the army. He, um, and he met my mother and my mother was pretty. And so they visited back and forth.

LEVINE: So did he go, was your mother in Bohemia?

KODES: She was in Bohemia.

LEVINE: And so he took a leave and went there.

KODES: He went there. And she was in Kolin. And so, that's where they got acquainted and—and uh—

LEVINE: This is the town?

KODES: Town whe---

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

KODES: K-O-L-I-N.

LEVINE: So they had a courtship when he was the Emperor's coachman. Did your father ever talk about being a coachman for the Emperor? Did he ever say things about that?

KODES: My parents never talked very much. Everything was very tight. And the only time we got to know that—what we—what I do know (that I put into this book) is what I— would listen through the keyhole or a crack and take in whatever they were talking about. But they never discussed anything with us. They were a very close-mouthed people.

LEVINE: I see. Were there any other things that you heard through the keyhole, either about their courtship, or when they got married?

KODES: Oh yes. And every time he was on leave he would go to Kolin, spend time with his girl. Then they decided to get married. And so he brought her to Vienna, got her a job at the palace as a maid. And they got married. And uh, that is a picture in Vienna.

LEVINE: Oh! Oh, that's lovely. Uh-huh.

KODES: And then—

LEVINE: And the little girl is you, in that picture?

KODES: Yeah, that's me. I was two months old. And so, they decided to—to go to Vienna and just -- decide to get married.

LEVINE: And then did they stay in Vienna?

KODES: They stayed in Vienna and it was during that—the year before the 1913— there was a mobilization going on at the Balkans and Father being in a [not understood] important position--he was able to get some of this information to him. And um, he knew just about when the war was going to be so he just merely quit his job.

LEVINE: Was he still the coachman? Uh huh.

KODES: He just left his job, left with only the clothes that he had on. In the meantime, he— he ke-- kept com-- communication with my uncle here in the States. And when things were going on so, he kept communication about what's going on. So my uncle sent him money for passage but he didn't tell my mother anything. He'd have – to work. And when they found that he didn't come to work, he—they searched—questioned my mother. And of course she had to admit that he'd left. So she was fired. But they weren't allowed to have us children in the palace. My brother and I were put into a *day n*— a children's—

VOICE: A nursery

KODES: -- children's Home

LEVINE: Oh, home

KODES: in Hungary.

LEVINE: Oh.

KODES: And uh, so I—he was just two and I was s-six when we were sent to Hungary. [loud voices in background] So we learned Hungary—Hungarian. We didn't never learn to Czech and never learned anything else. My mother knew German; she didn't know Hungarian. She was Czech. [loud voices continue]

LEVINE: Do you think I could close that door? [pause] Okay, we're resuming here.

KODES: That'll – that'll probably be the lousiest interview you ever made.

LEVINE: No, are you kidding? This is wonderful.

KODES: And um anyway, so she had to get the children together. She didn't want to leave us behind.

LEVINE: Do you have memories of the home in Hungary?

KODES: No.

LEVINE: What about your birth date? What is your birth date?

KODES: March 30<sup>th</sup>.

LEVINE: And what year?

KODES: '07.

LEVINE: So, she didn't want to leave you there, and she was fired.

KODES: She was fired. So they brought us to Bohemia. And to some relatives. They gave us a temporary home, but there was not any—very good relationship ship there. So the—they gave us housing until we got passage.

LEVINE: Now your mother and father were in communication?

KODES: Uh, after—not-- not during that time. Because it-- it was so dangerous that leaving a job as he had, so abruptly—

[Knocking]

LEVINE: Yeah. Someone's knocking on the door so we're going to stop here again. [Pauses]. We're continuing here after Fred caught us. Came in and saw his mother.

KODES: Yeah it was Fred that finally got me to write my memoirs. And I was already eighty.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, good, that's great.

KODES: So that was pretty old.

LEVINE: Good for you. Ok, now where we? We were talking about the languages, and why the family spoke so different languages.

KODES: We were trained in Hungarian school. Spoke only Hungarian. My mother didn't know Hungarian, just German. Czech. So the three of us got together

and united and passages were arranged. And we traveled the cheapest possible way, which was way down at the bottom. And—

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the ship, by any chance? Do you remember the name of the ship?

KODES: Cherbourg.

LEVINE: Cherbourg was the port.

KODES: "Rochambeau."

LEVINE: "Rochambeau." Okay, great, good for you, yeah. So do you remember the passage? Do you remember being in steerage and—

KODES: I remember the passage—being pushed here and pushed there. We couldn't talk any language if they—they were cross with the—. So (laughs) it was—now that I think of it—it was—must've been a horrible situation. So my mother was just, just would speak German for us. And while my father was traveling-- he traveled like-- . He was then a very handsome looking man, very well dressed, has a certain amount of money with him. But he was a heavy sleeper and somebody robbed him of his money. And so he didn't have any money. But being a handsome man and—and very fluent in German, he just managed to get through until he got to New York. My uncle was waiting for him there. And um, now during all this time that he was traveling, we were with our relatives who were not very kind.

LEVINE: Can you remember any experiences during that time that you would want to mention?

KODES: Yeah, I remember beatings and things like that. Well, uh, pushed around here and pushed around there, that I remember. And my brother go—didn't, he was too little. And so after my uncle got him to Cleveland, they had to look and had to get him some kind of a job. He wasn't used to working. He had glove hands. He was really a—a refined person. And so they did get him a job.

LEVINE: Do your remember your uncle, what he was doing in Cleveland?

KODES: My uncle was a tailor.

LEVINE: A tailor. Uh-huh.

KODES: He worked for Richmond Brothers, in Cleveland. And naturally they'd enquire around—they finally found a job that they could give my father. But the job happened to be in a foundry. And my father didn't have foundry hands. But they started him in the foundry anyway. And in the meantime they were working on getting his wife and his kids over. So about nine months after he was here, they got—arranged--passage for us. And we all stayed at my uncle's. Their house was very small. They had no beds, so they would just put s--blankets on the floor. We slept on the floor until they found us a place to live.

LEVINE: Did your uncle have—was he married, did he have children?

KODES: He had—he was married, he didn't have children yet. And uh—oh yes , he did. He had two daughters.

LEVINE: Oh, and were they around your age?

KODES: They were around -- small. And um, so—

LEVINE: So you stayed with your uncle until I suppose your father then found a place for you?

KODES: This is so. They--they were trying to find a place for us. So in the meantime we slept as we did. Then my uncle found a place for us, and um we had—they had to get mattresses or whatever bed. I can't even remember. I-I only know that they were stuffed with straw or something like that. Just from some farmer. And we just had a place to put our heads. My mother cried and—and we got pushed around because she was unhappy. And that took quite a little while before we got other people—no, not relatives—but friends that came to help. We were, I guess we were in a pretty bad mess.

LEVINE: Well, did your father keep the job at the foundry?

KODES: He did. Until he got hurt. Then he quit. Then what is he going to do? So he got himself a wagon and he was going to peddle—whatever he could peddle. In those days if—I don't remember much of it myself—but in those days they would have these paper-rags men. You know, You'd get—pick like paper, rags and everything else. And then they would dump them somewheres which I don't know where.

LEVINE: So they'd take the metal someplace—

KODES: Yeah.

LEVINE: -- and the rags someplace, and yeah.

KODES: And uh, well, then my uncle then found a place for us that we could make it our home. That was in Cleveland and it was a house. It was behind another house. There was two houses on the lot. And it had no porch—nothing—

just—just four walls. And they let us have a very reasonable price. I don't even know what the price was. And—

LEVINE: Do you remember the section of Cleveland that it was in?

KODES: Yes. Near Broadway. Broadway. it was the street with McBride, and um— and um that through friends, they got us bed—beds to sleep on. Table and chairs to sit on and just enough to start housekeeping, whatever he could. And of course my mother, she under br—was accustomed to—to luxury. So she comes from a hardworking background. So they just made it a home. So we lived there for quite a while. We had a Jewish family living in the—the front house. And they were so wonderful to us. They brought us food. And they had children, bigger than we were, and they were trying to teach us English. And we lived there for quite a while as I remember.

LEVINE: Did you go to school when you lived there?

KODES: They got—they started me in school. Um, the first school I went to was Fall River [ph]. And since I was already seven. And they asked me to write. And I could write pretty well. And so they stepped me up to the -- still the seven—seven—still the first grade. But to a little higher, because of my handwriting. And my brother was too little yet.

END SIDE A      BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: How was learning English for you?

KODES: Well, I learned pretty fast because I had nobody else to talk to Hungarian with. So in order to be with the kids, we'd go to the playground--where the playground goes by. We'd go to the playground and you just learned pretty

fast. Sometimes you said things wrong, they'd say, "No you don't say it like that. You say it like this."

LEVINE: Were the kids nice to you? Or did—

KODES: Very nice.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KODES: Very nice. And um, no they were all very good because-- of course they called us "greenies"—

LEVINE: Oh, they did?

KODES: Yeah, well you have to. You know, "We got greenies here." And that—that meaning, you better show her how to do this. That we remained for a long time. And um—

LEVINE: Were there other children who had come from Europe as well?

KODES: Mmhmm. And that's why we got—we were able to sort of congregate together and eventually make friends with those that we could get along with.

LEVINE: Yeah. So was there a bond? There was a bond then that formed between the children who had come from another country. Uh-huh.

KODES: [interposed] Yes. Yes. And um—but the house that we—actually, my uncle bought it for five hundred dollars. And—and that was supposed to be like a loan that when my father started making money to pay it back. But the house was infested with vermin. And he was very, very allergic to bug bites. And they discovered that it had bed bugs. So they stripped the walls,

scrubbed them down, put new paper up-- but the bed bugs never left. So that--they put up for t--two years. For two years we kept it up. Then after two years again, Czechs. Czech people. When they get to know you, they bind. Especially during that time. It was just prior to the beginning of the war and the Czech people were very clannish.

So we, um--he found out that there's a house for sale and it's very cheap. And the man said that he would sell it to us and he won't press for the money. The house was co-- cost twenty seven hundred dollars. And he said that--that he--that this is the first he built himself. So he says. So we lived at that house over there except there was many things wrong with it. Uh, when it rained the basement got full of water. And he had something in there--I think they called it a siphon where they pumped the water out. There was a creek alongside the house. But the basement walls---I remember today-- were as white as that bed, all around the basement. But with the foundation and, uh, so soon we became very unhappy with the house.

In the meantime, my father left the foundry, started his own little peddling business that didn't bring any money in. And so, again another friend come along and he says, "I'll--I'll get you a job." So what kind of a job it was I can't even remember. But it was something that brought in a few dollars here, a few dollars there. But nothing to be able to bring a family in. But the ladies found a job for my mother. And she used to go to the (in Cleveland) to the Hannah [ph] Building to scrub the floors--mop the floors. And she worked nights.

LEVINE: This was an office building?

KODES: Yeah. And--but she didn't want to leave us alone so she took the night job and be with us during the day. And it was a very difficult job. And--

LEVINE: Did your father ever find something that he could do that was--

KODES: My father was always searching to do something to--to make a little bit more money. Actually, money was the utmost thing that everybody looked for. And so somebody sold him on the idea that if he got himself a--a transportation--a truck or something like that--that he could make a business out of it and make some money. So he did. He bought this truck. it was called an Arm leader [ph]

LEVINE: An Arm leader?

KODES: Arm leader. I'll never forget that name. And--but you had to--

LEVINE: Crank it.

KODES: And he did that -- broke his arm (laughs). So he got rid of that. There for awhile--we were just--. I must tell you we were very, very poor. I know what it is to be poor.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember your mother and father--I mean, by now the war was going on in Europe, and they were here, but were they sorry they had come? I guess not, because--

KODES: No they didn't--he didn't want the war. He didn't want -- he didn't want to go to war.

LEVINE: Yeah.

KODES: And--and if it wouldn't be for my mother's earnings as a charwoman we wouldn't have had anything to eat. But we were lucky--we were very lucky to always be involved with Jewish people. And they were very kind to us. They

would see that we had clothes--they got us clothes for a long time-- I remember. I don't remember having anything new until I was sixteen years old. We had hand-me-down clothes and these people did everything they could. I was growing a--a little bit grown so I could understand better. And during the time that we had to have those--get rid of those bedbugs--so they invited us into their house. Made us--made room for--excuse me--for us to sleep. And we had to have the house completely closed up and uh, what'd they call that--

LEVINE: Fumigate it?

KODES: Sulfur. They burned sulfur. And--but every —the crack had to be--listen, I don't--I think there's a lot of cracks. And it took several days for that sulfur to penetrate and kill all the vermin. Well, after that was done--. In the meantime--a friend of this Jewish family says, "I think I could find you a better place to live." But it was a little far away at that time. It's called--was called Mount Pleasant. And it was probably-- today I would say five or six miles. And so my father says, "Okay, anything better than what we've got." So they put -- introduce us to this man. And he said that he's got this house where I told you that they had those big walls. And the creek that overflowed and the price on the house I remember--it was mentioned too many times-- twenty seven hundred dollars. But he never pressed us for money. He says he never build a house and so-- whether he gets the money or not, it didn't matter. You didn't deal with a bank. And--

LEVINE: Did the Czech people help you in some way when you were struggling so much as a family?

KODES: Yes.

LEVINE: How did they help you?

KODES: They tried to help with clothes, not money. Money was always a tight thing among people. Because the thing with that was -- you loan the money, you'll never get it back. So that's the way our beginnings were. And--well eventually we got that house fixed. We lived in it for thirty-five years after getting it fixed. Then my father bought a little truck and this eventually got himself into moving things for people. So he became a small mover.

LEVINE: And this truck you didn't have to crank?

KODES: No.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

KODES: And--but my mother still worked at the--as a charwoman. And well by that time I was about twelve years old. Twelve--thirteen. And I would go ahead and watch children—baby sit. Or go and wash somebody's dishes. And I--in other words, I had to work. (Sighs) [pause] Now, let's see.

LEVINE: Did your mother and father want you to become Americanized? Or were they more interested that you hold on to your roots?

KODES: [interposed] They--they became citizens the--the minute they were five years in this country.

LEVINE: And were you religious at all?

KODES: Catholic.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KODES: But we didn't practice the Catholic religion. My mother had, um, a peculiar situation with a priest there when she was a little girl. And they decided--between the two of them--that's it. They would just stop being Catholic. And--well then--then my father went into the moving--

LEVINE: Right.

KODES: -- business, as you would call it. Well, that's struggling along. I can't even--I can't even tell you how--how difficult it was.

LEVINE: Well, meanwhile you were getting to be a young woman. Did you stay in school? When did you leave school?

KODES: [interposed] I stayed in school. I stayed in school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KODES: And uh, I happened to be a good student. And I think I skipped two grades. I think for my third--from the third grade, I think I went to the fourth. Then I skipped once more because I could--I was a fast learner. And let's see--

LEVINE: So when did you--when you stopped school, what did you do?

KODES: When we had vacation I had to go out for find me a job. And when I graduated--I graduated school when I was almost thirteen. I graduated grammar school, then I went to several schools: Burkell [ph], Fowler [ph], but I pass--seemed to pass all the questions they would give me and so they just passed me. And of course--in my mind--I always wanted to be something special. I wanted to be a secretary. Or a teacher. What else? I had three different things. But this secretary I always thought, "Oh that would be a

wonderful job to have." So when I got to be sixteen--not sixteen yet, I was fifteen. I got to be fifteen.

My father, he didn't care, but my mother cared. Said--I'm going to--I want you to be a dressmaker. I want you to learn how to sew. Because my mother had all her clothes made. She knows what good clothes were. When she was in the palace, and--but I said I don't want to sew. I want to be a schoolteacher, or a secretary, or something like that. To me, those were important jobs. But after reaching that point, it was a constant hassle. What are they gonna do with me? But in 1919, when they were diddle [not understood] at all the young men in Europe, those that were eligible, the government gave them a stipendium to come to America to learn. (knocking on door) and then--yes?

VOICE: Hello?

LEVINE: Of course, in here.

KODES: Oh my husband--he came in, he was sixteen.

LEVINE: And how did you know him--how did you meet?

KODES: We--he was Bohemian school teacher. Bohemian school teaching—teacher was across--school was across the street. Very dashing young man.

LEVINE: Now, a Bohemian School, what did that mean?

KODES: Teach Czech to American. So I went to Czech school for eight years. Yes I did.

LEVINE: So he was the--was he the only teacher in that school or was it?--

KODES: This is my husband when he came into this country.

LEVINE: Oh my goodness.

KODES: He was sixteen.

LEVINE: That's a beautiful picture. Well is--

KODES: Except to give a young man a--a bunch of money, to go to school--he found coming to America was a picnic. He spent his money for good times. And--so he never learned a trade--never learned anything for the money. He was supposed to go back to his home country--home country with American education. And they were looking for him for five years. And finally after five years, he decided to become American citizen. And that means they couldn't touch him anymore. But he still didn't have the education he needed. But he was extremely, extremely fine-looking. And my mother just--we lived across the street from school and my mother thought something came from Heaven. So she started treating him very well-- feeding him, and uh being--

LEVINE: Meanwhile, did you like him?

KODES: No. (both laugh) I didn't--I didn't because he didn't pay any attention to me.

LEVINE: Mmhmm.

KODES: I was just a kind of common kid. But he liked my mother because he would come in and kiss her hand--she invited him for coffee, and it was dinner. And my father says ,(Czech, not understood) . I can tell you how that is in English--like a show-off.

LEVINE: Oh.

KODES: Father didn't like him.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KODES: And um--but--but during -- here I was--I was sixteen and I wanted an education. My father wanted me to get an education. But here come this man and education seemed to go out of my mother's mind. She made up her mind. Somehow that I'm gonna be a--a seamstress. So they sent me to--they did send me to a sewing school. Cleveland Sewing. Cleveland--Cleveland Sewing School, where I did learn to sew. And I hated it. I just hated it, but I graduated. Then when I graduated (on my sixteenth birthday) and then I used my mother (my mother was a hefty woman) I used my mother as a model. And I would--I would make dresses for her. She would bring other heavy women. So I--all of a sudden. I was a dressmaker for heavy women.

LEVINE: Were you--were you a heavy girl?

KODES: No.

LEVINE: You were a thin girl.

KODES: No. I never was real heavy. I'm heavy now. And uh--

LEVINE: So you had a specialty of heavy women's clothing. And--and when did you do that? Did you do it at home?

KODES: At home. And all the neighborhood women would come in.

LEVINE: So were you able to make a good living doing that?

KODES: Oh. I don't know whether you would call that good living. They didn't pay very much. But it satisfied my mother that I was doing it. Because I lived at home all this time. And uh--well anyway.

END TAPE ONE  
BEGIN TAPE TWO

KODES: Well anyway, the relationship between my father and my husband was not very good. He called him a 'proud showoff 'cause he was so good looking and my mother thought he was something dropped from Heaven. And so. Came Christmas time and as most Christmases are-- but beer and wine and other (sighs) -- and that was D-Day for me. My father says to him, after he got a little tipsy, he says, "Are you going to marry this girl or aren't you?" Here I was only sixteen years old. And—that is I became seventeen in March, this is Christmas. And one, he had it good because my mother--she idolized him. She fed him well. And so I got married.

LEVINE: Oh my goodness. Let's pause here we're at the end of this --(pause).

KODES: So, this was the Christmas Eve and he says, "Yes." I was shocked beyond words. I--I didn't even expect anything like that.

LEVINE: You didn't expect your father to ask the question, or you didn't--

KODES: [interposed] I didn't--I didn't know--I didn't know anything about married life. I didn't know anything about what's going on. But he says, "Yes." And a month later we were married. We just went to the Justice of the Peace, Zole

[ph] in Cleveland. He signed the papers and we were married. And then -- so now what. Well, "You can live with us."

LEVINE: Your mother said.

KODES: And we lived there for twenty five years. Had two children. Until the children got old enough, and they says, "Mother, can't we get of this house?" She said, "I'm sick and tired of Grandpa picking at his toes. I'm--I don't like it here." I have a son and daughter. That's my baby. And well--we finally (again with borrowed money) found a house so that we can be alone. So we finally moved out and my mother always says that I was ungrateful. That I never appreciated what she did for me. But she always put him at a very high level because he's such a fine man. So we managed to buy a house. She borrowed money for it from friends that she's made.

LEVINE: Your mother?

KODES: And we lived in that house for thirty five years.

LEVINE: How did your husband feel about living for twenty two years in your--with your mother?

KODES: Oh he didn't like it. He didn't like it but--he--my husband--he had a will of his own. He'd--he'd found his good times. There's nobody to control him. And my mother always used to say, "He's a man, you've gotta give a man his freedom." But I says, "But he's married, he's not free." "Oh, that's--you don't understand that." Of course, I don't understand that. I was a sixteen year old kid, didn't understand anything.

LEVINE: So did your husband continue teaching in the Bohemian School?

KODES: He--by that time Bohemian School teaching ceased.

LEVINE: Oh.

KODES: There was not enough children going and he--he and my dad went into a moving business.

LEVINE: Oh.

KODES: And Dad paid me. He--he eventually being smart--he--he-he became the boss. My father hated him. It was not a very--it was not a very good situation at all. And--

LEVINE: And did you continue making clothes for heavy women?

KODES: In-in the-in the meantime. I took further lessons for making better dresses. And I went into my own little dress making. I had my own little dressmaking shop in the house. And I made--I had some very good clientele. And again. I'm not--I'm not Jewish, never have been connected with Jewish but my greatest praise goes out to all my Jewish friends. They were just angels sent from Heaven.

LEVINE: And what--why do you say that?

KODES: They got me more customers. Paid well--and--I was told if I didn't charge enough that I should charge more. "Don't be foolish." They taught me how to be a good businesswoman. Well, I did that for thirty-five years.

LEVINE: And was your--did your husband learn? He did the moving business during that time?

KODES: He was in the moving business. And uh, they had a falling out. And uh, the moving business ceased. They just--they just couldn't get along.

LEVINE: Yeah.

KODES: Well then, shortly after, my husband became ill. And he died when he was seventy-six. He's contacted cancer. But in the meantime, he's gone through other jobs. He worked for Allison Division in--where Allison Division was I don't know.

LEVINE: What is that, Allison Divison?

KODES: Allison Aircraft.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

KODES: And he took up flying. And um, that -- that's about where my--

LEVINE: So, you had a daughter first? And what was her name?

KODES: Norma.

LEVINE: Norma. And--

KODES: Norma Rither [ph].

LEVINE: Ah. Uh-huh.

KODES: She married a doctor.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So your children went through--through high school?

KODES: And uh--no. Children went through high school and college.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And that was mainly on your earnings, I would imagine.

KODES: And um--I always want to go to college. And I always says, "If I have children, they're gonna go to college." So Norma went. She graduated with a Valedictorian. Very smart girl. Freddy went to college for the first year-- had too good a time. And he says, "I'm not going back." And I says, "I'll break your neck if you don't." So he went back. And he did his failure of the first year in three years. And then he was ready to go to war. He went to Korea.

LEVINE: Oh.

KODES: And my daughter adopted three children and my son has two children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, when the Depression came, your family was struggling at that time. Can you say anything about the depression and how it affected you personally?

KODES: Oh. Oh. Those were--. I tell you--it's very hard describing the Depression. Very hard. Because there was no money. And we'd go—we'd picking up gum wrappers that had foil on and string. We would--every piece of string that we'd see we--we'd tie them in big rolls to sell them.

LEVINE: And why would people buy such a thing? Why would they--why would they-- why were you able to sell them, do you know?

KODES: I don't know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KODES: They must've had a reason.

LEVINE: Yeah. I remember that--those tinfoil balls--yeah.

KODES: But uh, oh we would be very careful. Our eyes are on the ground all the time--picking up tin foils. And um--no--that was—th--those were very hard times. And I had my children at that time. And--but somehow you make it through. S-- sometimes I wonder myself how did I do it. I, um, I don't know. it's just--my life was a mixed-up life.

LEVINE: Yeah. What--what do you feel gave you a lot of satisfaction in your life? When you think back on it, what made you proud or satisfied that you did?

KODES: My children. My children, when I could proudly say, they have a college education. Something I always wanted. And uh, my son-in-law. He's the greatest. He turned out to be a successful doctor. And um, he is--has always been good to me. And um, both of them have. Both children have been very good.

LEVINE: What do you think the impact on you and your personality and the way you think about things--what impact do you think coming here, and, you know, leaving Europe and coming to this country and starting again--what difference do you think that made in you as a person?

KODES: I--I really don't know. Being s-so small and I had never ever had anything really good in Europe. But I--I have a c--a cousin in Europe that came up to my knowledge--oh after we were married for quite awhile--related to my husband, a Kodes. And, Jan, he is an excellent, professional tennis player. He's well known in New York. Well-known in Europe. He won the --at

Wimbledon in '73. And he was the one that paid my way to Europe to see if I could see some of the old part of the country. But none of that was there anymore. No relatives. I don't know any of my relatives.

LEVINE: When did you go back?

KODES: I went back um--

LEVINE: Your children were grown--were they grown?

KODES: Mmm. He did that--he did that specifically for my husband. It was in 19--  
um--[pause]

LEVINE: Um, you went back with your husband?

KODES: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KODES: Yes, he wanted to--he wanted to--[papers rustling] we got there and he wanted to meet his parents--but [not understood] his parents died.

LEVINE: Oh.

KODES: So we were late.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KODES: And uh--in trying to figure out--

LEVINE: So he didn't know that when he--when you --when you left for the trip? Uh-huh.

KODES: What I know--he--Jan wanted us to know what Europe was like. Well Jan is a professional and to him his country is his country. He is a big wheel in that country.

LEVINE: I see, I see.

KODES: And uh--

LEVINE: How do you feel about being American and being Czech? How do you put that together for yourself?

KODES: Oh, I'm proud of being American, of course. And I'm proud of my Czech heritage. But other than that, we have no contact at all with any other relatives. It was just a tough--it was tough going.

LEVINE: Mmhmm. Well then after your husband died, and your children were already grown, what did you do then?

KODES: Move to Florida.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And was that good for you to come here?

KODES: [interposed] And uh, here I continued my business.

LEVINE: Oh.

KODES: And uh--oh--well I uh, I just continued, even up to now.

LEVINE: I see the sewing machine, yeah. (laughs). Yeah. And so, what's life like for you now? I know you're having trouble with your arms, but in general?

KODES: Well, I'm having trouble with my eyes because I don't know whether they got a good doctor for me or not. That's why I'm in a nursing home.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

KODES: Uh, I'm going to a eye institute tomorrow. I can't see on that one eye.

LEVINE: Oh. Yeah.

KODES: It's very annoying. And uh, but all in all, the end result is I do have a good life.

LEVINE: Mmhmm. I guess you chose a Jewish nursing home because of your fondness for Jewish people.

KODES: Because of fondness for my Jew--for Jewish people.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything you can think of that maybe we didn't cover, that I might not have known enough to ask?

KODES: If I--if I had a copy of this.

LEVINE: I wish I had a copy of it for Ellis Island.

KODES: Because--it would tell you--

LEVINE: Yeah

KODES: -- lot more probably that I've even forgotten. (knocking on door).

LEVINE: We're gonna pause here (pause). Okay, we had an interruption here but we're going to conclude. Tape two, this is the conclusion of tape two of Marie Kodes. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.