

**EI-1418**

**DAVID GUSS**

**BIRTHDATE: MARCH 2, 1911**

**INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 22, 2006**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 95**

**RUNNING TIME: 00:20:06**

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

**RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: TAMARAC, FL**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: STEVEN MICKLOVIC**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: JANET LEVINE**

**RUSSIA, 1921**

**AGE: 10**

**SHIP: KROONLAND**

**PORT: IN GERMANY**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **Russia;**
- **US: TAMARAC, FL**

LEVINE: Today is May the 22, the Year 2006. I'm here in The Heartland of Tamarac and I'm with David Guss, who came through Ellis Island, we think about 1916.

GUSS: Around there.

LEVINE: Yeah, and he came here with his mother and his sister, who was two Years older than he was. He was ten Years old when he came

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GUSS: Yeah.

LEVINE to this country and they were coming from Russia. And they came from a German port, they left from Germany.

GUSS: Yeah.

LEVINE: And he was on the KR0– the name of your ship?

GUSS: Kroonland

LEVINE: Kroonland and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. OK, Mr. Guss, you mentioned your birthday was March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1911, and that makes you 95 Years old. Ok, do you have memories of Russia?

GUSS: Yes, lots of memories [Laughs].

LEVINE: Oh, good, that's great. Now what kind of memories do you have?

GUSS: Pardon?

LEVINE: Do you remember any happy times in Russia?

GUSS: I didn't hear what you said.

LEVINE: Do you remember any happy times – when you were a little boy, do you remember any happy times?

GUSS: I don't know.

LEVINE: What do you remember?

GUSS: When I was a little boy, in Russia?

LEVINE: Yes.

GUSS: I remember – oh I can remember – I remember **a lot** of things.

LEVINE: Tell me; tell me everything you can remember.

GUSS: Oh, I remember a lot of things. I remember we didn't have no food, we were sleeping in the cold. We didn't have any money and things – things were pretty bad all over. We didn't know if we'll wake up and we'll – we'll be living the next morning. But we weren't – at that time – we weren't the only ones, because there were a lot of people just like us, that was traveling – traveling just like we were. We didn't know if we would wake up tomorrow and - and see a face. We didn't know the --it was – things -things are so bad. One time, a soldier got up with a gun and pointed it at my mother. She was German ---Ger--- [Deep breaths, trying to catch his breath and in pain]. [Long pause] When I talk - when I talk too long, my head starts to hurt and I don't know what I'm saying.

LEVINE: What you're saying, uh huh. Well lets, how about the village? Remember the village, the little village?

GUSS: I can't hear.

LEVINE: Remember the little village that you lived in - the little village?

GUSS: Do I remember when I was a little boy?

LEVINE: In the village.

GUSS: In the village?

LEVINE: In the village - in Russia.

GUSS: In the village in Russia, Yeah. Do I remember anything when I was a little boy in a village in Russia, do I remember anything? Like for instance, what?

LEVINE: What did it look like? What did you do?

GUSS: Well – well, we did [Laughs]. [Long pause]

LEVINE: Is it too.....

GUSS: My head, my head.

LEVINE: Is it too painful to talk about?

GUSS: I can't hear you.

LEVINE: Ok, I'm gonna try to adjust your hearing aid, ok? We're going to stop ---- You can hear me a lot better?

GUSS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Good, ok, the village, when you were a little boy – what did it look like? What did you see, what did you do?

GUSS: I lived in a little log cabin house with my mother, my sister, and my grandmother and I don't know – some oth – some other people who lived over there. I can't talk.

LEVINE: Ok, we're going to pause it. Ok, Mr. Guss' head hurts when he speaks. It's not the subject matter –

GUSS: I can't hear you.

LEVINE ...ok, but it's his condition. So you were a Jewish family - were you persecuted because you were Jewish?

GUSS: No.

LEVINE: No. Your father wasn't there.

GUSS: We didn't know where my father.

LEVINE: You didn't know where he was?

GUSS: No.

LEVINE: Did you have relatives in America?

GUSS: In the market?

LEVINE: In America, in the United States.

GUSS: Yes.

LEVINE: You had relatives, family?

GUSS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh huh, and you were coming to them. You were coming to this country ----

GUSS: Yes.

LEVINE: -- And you had relatives here.

GUSS: Yes.

LEVINE: Ok, and what – how did your mother support you? How did you live?

GUSS: I don't know. I don't know. It was-It was me – it was me and my sister.

LEVINE: And your grandmother – do you remember her?

GUSS: I remember my grandmother.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your grandmother?

GUSS: What do I remember? Oh, [Laughs] I used – in Russia?

LEVINE: Yeah.

GUSS: We had a one-room log cabin house and there was two – two beds. One for my mother and my sister. One for anybody, I slept there with my grandmother – I slept with my grandmother most of the

time. I used to suck on her ears; and in the wintertime, I used to sleep on the top of the oven. You know what I'm talking about? You know what a – oven. Oven was like this, like this, and like this. Here was the hot; here was nice and warm. I used to sleep there. I used to sleep with my grandmother and - could I stop?

LEVINE: Yeah, take a little break. [Break]

LEVINE: Ok, were going to stop here because Mr. Guss has a terrible headache and he would like to lie down.

GUSS: I can't hear anything you say.

LEVINE: Yeah, I was saying we are going to stop because you have a headache.

[Break] [Interrupt tape]

LEVINE: Ok, we're continuing now [Oral Historian's note: There has been a three hour pause] and I want you to tell me anything you can remember about Russia. Anything you can remember those first ten years, when you were in Russia. What was your life like? Tell me anything you remember.

GUSS: Ok.

LEVINE: Ok, go ahead.

GUSS: My first ten years I was a young boy so – so hard to remember because I remember we didn't have any, any food and we never stayed – [tiny belch] pardon me. We never stayed in one place

very long. Always on the move. Things were very, very bad. Now – that's how it goes on.

LEVINE: Were you religious - were you religious?

GUSS: My religion? I'm Jewish.

LEVINE: Were you observant; was your family observant in Russia?

GUSS: I don't understand you.

LEVINE: When you were in Russia, did you practice your religion?

GUSS: No, no.

LEVINE: No, ok, and can you think of anything you did in Russia.

GUSS: Huh?

LEVINE: Can you think of anything that was enjoyable?

GUSS: That was enjoyable? Yes, there was – there was things that was enjoyable.

LEVINE: What were they – what?

GUSS: Well, in the summertime the weather was beautiful and in the wintertime it was horrible. In the wintertime, you were afraid to stick out your nose because it'll get frozen off. And it's like anyplace else. Even here in America, I think there's – [long pause] Oh, my head hurts. If I talk –

LEVINE: Ok don't talk for a while.

GUSS: Oh, oh my head hurts. [Pause] Oyyy

LEVINE: What would you say about coming to this country? What would you want to say about immigrating to the United States?

GUSS: Well, we didn't know anything about this country but what we heard from people – oh, my God! This is something that is unbelievable. So when you hear voices like that, you can't wait to get here. And we did get here, and when we got here, we couldn't believe it – and it's true. Look, I was –

LEVINE: Take your time.

GUSS: [Pause] And I was in different countries and I can't – I couldn't understand how they could live after I lived through what I did. But therefore it was -- when I was living, I couldn't understand how I got through it. But I'll tell ya, America is unbelievable. Even the people have hard times, even if the people are not working - but America . . . I was in England and of course, I was there during the wartime so, well you can imagine what I saw.

LEVINE: So you –

GUSS: I don't know, you can't - you can't - what they say, America, its America.

LEVINE: Maybe that's a good place to stop.

GUSS: Huh?

LEVINE: A good place to stop?

GUSS: Yes.

LEVINE: Yes, ok, I want to thank you. I'm speaking with David Guss, who came to America when he was ten years old.

GUSS: Yeah.

LEVINE: From Russia and is 95 and he has a lot of good things to say, I'm just sorry that your head hurts when you speak.

GUSS: When I talk a little bit too long, my head – I don't know, it just clouds up the whole th - -.

LEVINE: Ok, we're going to stop here. I want to thank you very much.

GUSS: I want to thank you.

LEVINE: You're welcome.

GUSS: You are so sweet.

LEVINE: [Laughs] Thank you. Ok, this is Janet Levine signing off for the National Park Service.

[Break, Interrupt tape]

GUSS: But I was through so much was unbelievable. There were days when I didn't eat – I know this, as I was a kid. Just I didn't eat probably for a day, or a day and a half, but I survived. People survived so much. Oy, oy Well I better stop.

LEVINE: Ok.

GUSS: Could I give you a kiss?

LEVINE: Yes. [Laughs]

GUSS: Thank you.