

EI-189

EMILIE PIKORA ADAMS

BIRTH DATE: JUNE 12, 1909

INTERVIEW DATE: 7/6/1992

RUNNING TIME: 1:02:32

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

INTERVIEW LOCATION: SANFORD, ME.

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1/1993

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 1/1993

FRANCE, 1914

AGE 4

PORT: COSNES SUR MER

RESIDENCES:

- **FRANCE: LYON**
- **THE US: LODI, NJ; SANFORD, ME**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Emilie Pikora Adams. And I'm at her home in Sanford, Maine. It's July 6, 1992. And Emilie Adams came from France in 1914 when she was just a little shy of five years old. So we can start here. I just want to say that I'm very happy that you agreed to be interviewed and it's a pleasure to be here.

EI-189/ADAMS

ADAMS: Oh, well I'm happy too. It's something great for myself, too.

LEVINE: Oh, good, good.

ADAMS: It's something very good. You know, it's, it seems as though it really isn't happening. You know, I never thought anything like this would happen to me.

LEVINE: Oh, really. Well, maybe you didn't think that your story was as important as it turns out to be.

ADAMS: Well, it could be that, yes. It could be that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, that's great. Okay. Well, why don't we start. Tell me your birthdate.

ADAMS: June the 12th, 1909.

LEVINE: Okay. And where were you born?

ADAMS: In Lyon, France.

LEVINE: And did you live there until you left for America?

ADAMS: Right. I lived in Lyon, France until I came to America.

LEVINE: And do you remember it at all?

ADAMS: I remember where I was living there. I was living with my grandmother. My father and mother were both working, and I lived with my grandmother.

LEVINE: Do you remember the house?

ADAMS: Yes.

LEVINE: Tell me everything you can remember about that.

ADAMS: Well, at that time we had started the war. And I remember we had a big wall in front of the house, and we had to take a flag and, a white flag, and if we wanted to come out we had to put that flag out before we could come out of the house.

LEVINE: Wow.

ADAMS: So that, you know, nothing would happen. Because they were, in front of our house there was a place where they was practicing to shoot the guns, how to use the guns and all that. And there was planes going over the house, and I always thought one of them sometime would hit the house. That was my idea. That's something I can remember from that time there.

LEVINE: Well, now, this was your grandmother's house?

ADAMS: That was my grand, my mother's mother.

LEVINE: And what was your grandmother's name?

ADAMS: Mary Moulin.

LEVINE: How do you spell her last name? Do you remember?

ADAMS: M-O . . . Wait a minute. Whoops, careful.

LEVINE: I'll tell you what. Why don't we get that later?

ADAMS: Okay, because . . .

LEVINE: . . . and we'll just keep going.

ADAMS: Well, you can probably get it. It's right there, that envelope.

LEVINE: Let me just stop this. (break in tape) Okay. We're resuming now after getting the name of Mrs. Adams' grandmother.

ADAMS: Mary Moulin. M-O-U-L-I-N was her last name.

LEVINE: Okay. So that was your mother's maiden name.

ADAMS: That was my mother's maiden name, right.

LEVINE: And what was your mother's first name?

ADAMS: Augustine.

LEVINE: Augustine.

ADAMS: Yeah. Augustine Mary.

LEVINE: Now, you were living in your grandmother's house. Who else was living there?

ADAMS: Well, there's just her and I that was living there.

LEVINE: Oh.

ADAMS: There was people living upstairs. It was a two-tenant house. There was people living upstairs. But at the point when I lived with her there was just the two of us.

LEVINE: Now how was it that you were living with your grandmother?

ADAMS: Because my mother and father was working and they put me with my grandmother so that she would keep me during the day. And she used to have a big garden, and when she used to go sell her vegetables the lady upstairs would take care of me.

LEVINE: I see. Do you remember the garden?

ADAMS: Yes. I remember it because I used to go in and eat radishes and different kinds of vegetables there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: She told me I could have all I wanted, so I used to go in and eat it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember that time when you were staying with your grandmother as an enjoyable period?

ADAMS: Oh, yes. Very enjoyable. I liked my grandmother very much.

LEVINE: And what else did you do that you remember when you were young?

ADAMS: That's about most of the things. I can't remember, I remember that my mother said that we had gone to places, but I can't, those are blank. They're all blank to me. I can't, I remember living with my grandmother, and I can't remember getting on the boat. But I can remember things that I did on the boat.

LEVINE: Well, before we get to the boat part, how about, is there anything else about your grandmother's house that you remember?

ADAMS: Well, I remember she had a rooster, and my father used to come over in the morning and have breakfast with my grandmother. And this rooster used to like to eat, to drink coffee, and he'd get on the table and drink my father's coffee. That I remember. And there was a little girl that lived upstairs, and we used to play together, the little girl and I.

LEVINE: Was she about your age?

ADAMS: Just about, yes. But I can't remember the name. Those things are all blank to me.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you played? What kind of games?

ADAMS: No. That's something I can't remember. You know, there's a lot of things that went blank in my mind. I don't know why, but I guess I was so young that nothing seemed to have stuck to me.

LEVINE: Well, how about your mother and father? What was your father's name?

ADAMS: Stanislas.

LEVINE: Stanislas.

ADAMS: Pikora.

LEVINE: Pikora.

ADAMS: Right.

LEVINE: And what kind of a person was your father?

ADAMS: He was very kind, and he worked in a silk printing factory. They printed on silk. It was stencil, stencil work. That was his job.

LEVINE: What was the stenciled silk used for? Do you know?

ADAMS: Well, the stencils were a frame, like. There was several frames, and they'd put it on the silk and they would print. They would put paint in it. They'd have a stick and they would go back and forth and put the paint right onto the silk. Like this tablecloth there, well, they would have, see four or five stencils. And they'd have to put them on so that they'd be in the right place. That was his job.

LEVINE: Do you remember seeing that at all?

ADAMS: No. I don't remember, but I remember my father telling me that.

LEVINE: Well, would the cloth, the silk, be used for clothing?

ADAMS: It would be used for clothing and dresses, scarves and things like that.

LEVINE: And what kind of work did your mother do?

ADAMS: My mother worked in a, of what I can remember she worked in a hospital. Because I remember seeing a picture, and they were all in white uniforms, so that's what makes me think it was a hospital. I'm not positive, but I thought where there was all uniforms. See, there's a thing. I regretted, I never asked my mother questions on different things, so I never learned the things that I really should have learned about them, you know, and about myself.

LEVINE: Well, were you an only child?

ADAMS: Yes, I was the only child. I had a sister, but she died right off when she was born.

LEVINE: I see. And did you ever go to school when you were in France?

ADAMS: No. Not in France. I started my school when I came to the United States.

LEVINE: Do you remember, well, first let me ask you, did you have a grandfather?

ADAMS: No. My grandfather was dead at the time.

LEVINE: And what kind of a person, do you remember any experiences with your grandmother?

ADAMS: Well, my grandmother was very kind to me. She'd give in to me, you know,

and buy me things and spoil me, like every grandmother does. (they laugh)
I guess every grandmother does that.

LEVINE: Well, did you, do you remember any of your toys that you had?

ADAMS: I remember having a doll.

LEVINE: Do you remember what it looked like?

ADAMS: And it was a porcelain doll. At the time, you know, it was all dolls that was made of porcelain. They looked just like real, you know. But I can't remember bringing that doll with me when I came. That's something I cannot remember. I don't know if I left it there. That's something I cannot remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember kinds of food that your grandmother cooked?

ADAMS: Oh, my grandmother was a wonderful cook, especially at cookies and cakes and things like that. They were wonderful, both my mother and grandmother was very good at cooking delicious food. Rich, very rich.

LEVINE: Do you remember any particular thing that you liked?

ADAMS: Well, the ones I used to like the best was the, uh, cream puffs. I used to like those. And sometimes she'd make it with whipped cream, and then the other times she'd make it with the regular French cream. That's like the custard

that we have, only they called it the French cream. I remember that.

LEVINE: Did you have aunts and uncles that were nearby, or other family members?

ADAMS: No, no. Not that I, I had some cousins that remembered me because my children went to see them, but I don't remember them myself. I don't remember seeing any of my cousins. But still, they remembered me, because they used to write to me.

LEVINE: Well, maybe they were a little older.

ADAMS: Yeah. That's what the idea was. They were older.

LEVINE: Well, were you a religious family?

ADAMS: Yes.

LEVINE: What . . .

ADAMS: Well, uh, we was religion in one way, and no the other. My father, when he was young, he studied to be a priest, and he left after a while. He didn't complete his studies. And when I was born he didn't want me to be baptized. He says, "You leave her alone. When she grows older she'll take the religion she wants." That was his opinion on religion.

LEVINE: I see.

ADAMS: So the religion part stayed there. We never talked about it after that.

LEVINE: And how about your mother?

ADAMS: My mother had to go right along with it. She was Catholic, too, but she had to go along with what my Dad had said, you know. So it was one thing, not to make trouble, I guess that's why. It was a hard life one way.

LEVINE: Were both your mother and father born in Lyon, or in that area?

ADAMS: No. My father was born in Semily Bohene. That's where he was born, Semily Bohene.

LEVINE: That's S-E-M-I-L-Y.

ADAMS: Right. B-O-H-E-N-E.

LEVINE: Now, that's in France?

ADAMS: No. That's in Bohemia.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

ADAMS: And my mother was born in G-R-I-G-N-Y, R-O . . .

LEVINE: R-H-O.

ADAMS: R-H-O-N-E, France.

LEVINE: I see.

ADAMS: So I don't know, I can't tell you how they met. That I wouldn't know. I think they met when my father was working in France.

LEVINE: Do you know what he was doing in France?

ADAMS: That was the silk printer's.

LEVINE: Silk printers, stenciling, uh-huh.

ADAMS: And I think that's the way they met. I never, like I told you, I never asked questions, and that was a big thing that I should have. You know, what happened here, what happened there, and all those different things, but I never did. So all those things are blank to me.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember if you had any animals when you were a child?

ADAMS: No, not that I know of. No, I don't remember any animals in France.

LEVINE: How about your grandmother? Did she work at all?

ADAMS: All she did was sell her garden, the food, the vegetables from her garden. She had a little cart with a mule on it, and she'd go to market. And when she went to market she would leave me with the lady upstairs to take care of me.

LEVINE: Did you ever go to market with her?

ADAMS: No. I never went to market that I know of. I stayed with that woman there upstairs and her little girl.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the clothing you wore when you were young in France?

ADAMS: Oh, well, the clothing was not very nice. (she laughs) I can remember the dresses a little bit. They were, you know, kind of old fashioned to me, today.

LEVINE: Can you say what they looked like, or was there any kind of style they had?

ADAMS: Well, I've got a picture on the TV there. It's ordinary. My mother would dress me in white, or pink, or blue. And the dresses were long, you know, long, what would you . . .

LEVINE: Smock? Smock-like?

ADAMS: No, the long waist. And the waist was about to the elbow.

LEVINE: The sleeve.

ADAMS: Yeah, and they were all, you know, they'd have lace on it, and then the bottom would be lace. And the bottom would be, like I said, the waist would be very long, and the bottom would just be about that big, you know, about a two-to-five inch. You know what I mean? You could see . . .

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So the waist was dropped below your waist.

ADAMS: Yeah, right.

LEVINE: And then just a little bit further would be the lace, and the end of the dress.

ADAMS: Right. So, uh, I remember those. I can't remember all the dresses that I wore. That's something that's blank to me, too.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, is there anything else before we start talking about your leaving for America. Is there any, are there any other memories that when you think of Lyon what you think of or what you recall from that time?

ADAMS: No. Like I say, I can't remember leaving my grandmother's house to go to the boat. I don't know why, but that was blank.

LEVINE: Had your mother or father talked with you about America?

ADAMS: If they did, I don't remember. The only thing I remember, I remember my father coming one morning and saying to my grandmother that he had to

leave, that they were leaving.

LEVINE: But you don't know why.

ADAMS: Well, he said it was on account of the war. He would have been drafted to his country, and by coming over here he was exempt for that. That's the only thing I remember, him telling. But after that I can't remember us leaving there or anything of that.

LEVINE: Did your father or mother know people who had come to America?

ADAMS: Yes. These people, that's the people that met us in New York. Those are some of the people that he knew, and they took, they said they would take care of us, you know, to take, you know, wouldn't leave us . . .

LEVINE: Stranded. That they would make sure that they . . .

ADAMS: Uh-huh. Yeah.

LEVINE: And so your mother and father didn't tell you any stories about America that you can recall before you actually got here.

ADAMS: No. I can't remember anything like that.

LEVINE: Can you remember anything that you packed?

ADAMS: No. That's something like, it was a complete blank.

LEVINE: Well, how about after you got here? Do you remember any things that your mother had or your father had that they had brought with them?

ADAMS: No. Well, just our clothing. We didn't bring no furniture. There was just our clothing that we brought, that's all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were there any heirlooms or any . . .

ADAMS: No, not that I know of.

LEVINE: Household articles?

ADAMS: No. I can't remember anything like that that we had. Because as I grew older, if we'd had something, that's probably my mother would, like I say, I never asked questions, so I don't know whether we had anything, you know, like that. So it's . . .

LEVINE: Do you, I'm sorry.

ADAMS: Everything seemed to be blank, you know.

LEVINE: Well, you were very young. I mean, you weren't even five years old.

ADAMS: That's right.

LEVINE: Well, let's see. So what do you remember? Do you remember, you don't remember leaving your grandmother's. Do you remember where you left from?

ADAMS: No. The only time I remember was when I was on the boat. I don't remember getting on the boat. That's something I can't remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the boat?

ADAMS: Potsdam? Oh, I had it somewhere here.

LEVINE: Potsdam.

ADAMS: Potsdam.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: Potsdam. P-O-T-S-D-A-M. And we left the eleventh day of April, 1914 and got in New York on the 23rd of April, third class.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. Now here, on the form you filled out you said you left from Cagnes sur Mer, France. Was that . . .

ADAMS: That's where the boat left, I guess. I haven't got that part here. So that must have been the port where we left.

LEVINE: I haven't encountered that before, so I'm not sure.

ADAMS: Because I haven't go that there. And where I got these things was from different little papers that I had picked up, you know, from when my father had died I took all those papers and put them together and kept them. Otherwise I wouldn't have known any of these things. It would have been, everything would have been a blank there too. But I haven't, you know, get a hold of those papers. That's why I kept them.

LEVINE: Good. I'm glad that you did.

ADAMS: That's the only time that I, yes.

LEVINE: Well, what do you remember about the ship?

ADAMS: Well, the ship, that was really something. I was all over the ship. I wouldn't stay in one place at all. I'd go in the kitchen, I got friendly with the people in the kitchen. And I loved pickles. And, you know, they had those big, they were like a cucumber they were so big. And they had them in the wooden barrels, and I'd go down there and get one of those, you know, and eat them. I was eating pickles all the time. And then one time I was walking around with some of the little friends, you know, that was on the boat there, and I seen this ladder. And I was always curious to see what was on the other side of things. So I looked up there. I said, "I wonder what's up there." So I started climbing up the ladder. And the first thing I know, I hear somebody

grabbing me in the rear end and pulling me down. I looked, and it was one of the sailors, and he said, "Don't you ever try that again." Because on top of that, then they would have known, they would have turned that way, it was to go up on top of the boat. But if I'd have gone straight I would have dropped right in the ocean. So it was a good thing he saw me and grabbed a hold of me, because they would have never known where I had gone. So he took me and brought me over to my father right off and told him what I had done, and my father gave me a good spanking. And the sailor kind of felt guilty and didn't feel right, you know. So he asked me, he says, "Can I show your daughter around the boat?" He says, "Yeah, but she better mind. If she don't mind, you give her what she just got, a good spanking." And I didn't want that, huh? So I minded, behaved myself. So after that I was friendly. He took me all over around the boat showing me the big engines that made the boats go, and I was happy. And then on the boat we, when we ate we had these big tables. And everything was, there was round things, you know, to put the dishes in, so that when the boat went back and forth so that the dishes wouldn't go off the table. And they had brought me some milk, and I didn't like milk. So I took my glass of milk and I went and put it on another table, and I went and took a bottle of wine and I put it in my place. Because, see, my father brought me up on wine. French people drink a lot of wine, and they were bringing me up on that. So the people laughed when I did that. They were laughing, they thought it was so funny, you know. But I did it. Now, there's another thing I don't remember. I don't remember going to bed, how I was in bed, what kind of a bed it was, if it was a hammock or what. I've heard, you know, that these boats had hammocks.

LEVINE: Well, were you in a cabin with your mother and father?

ADAMS: Yes, I was.

LEVINE: Was it just the three of you that you remember?

ADAMS: Just the three of us, but I can't remember whether we was on beds. That's another thing that went blank on me.

LEVINE: Yeah. But was it a rough voyage?

ADAMS: It was. Very rough, yeah. We had very rough times.

LEVINE: Did you go up on deck much?

ADAMS: Not too much, no. Most of the people stayed down below because it was pretty cold and it was rough. The water was really rough.

LEVINE: Do you remember if the food was good?

ADAMS: Yes. The food was very, very good, yeah. I remember that. And they'd feed me cookies and cakes, you know, when I'd go in the kitchen there. Most of the time I was in the kitchen. My mother and father, when they wanted me, all they had to do was go look in the kitchen. I was there.

LEVINE: Now, was the boat, were most of the people aboard the ship from France?

ADAMS: That is something I could not tell you. I do not remember. I don't think so, but I think that's where the boat left. But I think there was people from right around there, but it was tough.

LEVINE: Well, now, um, do you remember first seeing New York City or seeing the Statue of Liberty?

ADAMS: See, my daughter asked me that, and I says I cannot remember seeing the Statue of Liberty. It's all a blank.

LEVINE: Well, you were probably tired, and who knows what time you arrived.

ADAMS: I might have arrived, too, during the night, or something like that. I don't know, but I, it seems to me a big thing like that would have stayed in my mind if I had seen it, you know what I mean? But I can't remember seeing it.

LEVINE: Yeah. And you don't remember Ellis Island?

ADAMS: No. I don't remember it at all.

LEVINE: Do you remember the people meeting you?

ADAMS: That's another thing I don't remember that's all blank. The first thing I knew, like I told you, I was sitting in the porch and they were rocking me. And I says, "Why are you rocking me?" And they says, "The doctor says you have

to be rocked because you wasn't sick on the boat, but you're land sick." So they had to rock me for a whole week like that. Then I got out of it.

LEVINE: So you probably were sick then, when you first arrived.

ADAMS: Right. When I first arrived I was sick. I couldn't keep no food at all in my stomach. No food at all.

LEVINE: Were you sick aboard ship at all?

ADAMS: No. I wasn't sick at all aboard ship. I ate very good.

LEVINE: Well, you may have been sick when you arrived, too.

ADAMS: Yeah, that's it, you know.

LEVINE: Okay. So where was this porch that you were being rocked on?

ADAMS: This porch was where the man and his wife came, the ones that came to meet us. It was Mr. and Mrs. Henry Flory. They lived in Jersey, Lodi, New Jersey, and they're the ones that found the house for us. I think it took a little while because we stayed at their place for a while. I remember staying there. But I can't remember what room we lived in, or anything like that. But I remember one day my father says, "We'll get our own house. Our own house with our own rent now." And it was a big cement house, a huge one. And I said, "Oh, my goodness, it's big." And I can't remember moving our

things in it. Isn't that funny? I can't remember that.

LEVINE: Well, this family, you knew them? Your mother and father knew them from France?

ADAMS: Yes. Uh, I think so. They must have, because they're the ones that met us. Unless my father knew them through work. They probably came over before us, long before us. And I know it was them that spoke up for us.

LEVINE: Now, did your father, what kind of work did your father do once he got here?

ADAMS: He did the printing, too.

LEVINE: The same thing.

ADAMS: But it wasn't the silk printing. He was doing printing on different kinds of material. That was his work, a printer. And when he was in New York, no, that was after New York. He got a place for himself.

LEVINE: Well, in Lodi, though, he was doing printing?

ADAMS: He was working on printing.

LEVINE: And how about your mother? Was she nursing?

ADAMS: No. My mother stayed home and had boarders.

LEVINE: Oh. Do you remember any of those?

ADAMS: I remember, I can see their face, you know what I mean? I can see them. And one of them was Dr. Lucas, and then another one, the other one, I can't remember his name, but he was a tall, blonde guy. I remember him. And there was two others, but the other two, I can't remember them.

LEVINE: Well, the two that you do remember, had they come from Europe, or . . .

ADAMS: No, they were people that were living in Lodi, and my mother started making an announcement that she was taking boarders in. I'm quite sure she had four of them.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. So you had a big house with lots of extra rooms.

ADAMS: Yeah, a very big house. And she took those boarders in, and then it was too much for her, so my father sent away for my, her mother.

LEVINE: Oh, your grandmother.

ADAMS: So my grandmother came. I don't know if I got the year. I don't think we had been living here more than a year or so when she came. I haven't got the year here in my book.

LEVINE: Do you remember your reunion with your grandmother?

ADAMS: No. Isn't that something? I can't say I did, because I don't.

LEVINE: But you remember her being here?

ADAMS: Yeah. I remember her being there, and I remember one night, the first night. I can't remember her coming in the house, or anything like that. But I remember when we went to bed she was going to sleep in the same room as I was, and I said, "I'm glad you're here, Mamade." I remember saying that to her. But coming into the house, I can't remember that. There's so many things, you know, that I wish I could have remembered.

LEVINE: Well, everything you can remember is important, and if you can't, that's just fine.

ADAMS: You know, it's very hard to think, you know. And, like my children said, "God, you ask me something when I was that age, I wouldn't remember either, myself."

LEVINE: Exactly. Me either. Um, what about . . . (dog barks)

ADAMS: (addressing dog) Tiny, stop that!

LEVINE: What about your grandmother, once she got here? Did she retain her old ways, the way from France?

ADAMS: Oh, yes, yes. And, you know, mostly those, the women in those times, they wore a jumper with a blouse or a skirt and blouse. I've never seen my mother in a dress, and I've never seen my grandmother in a dress. It was a blouse and skirt or a jumper. And always an apron, a white apron. It was always white. That I remember.

LEVINE: How about their hair? Do you remember their hairstyles?

ADAMS: My mother had very long hair. She sat on her hair. And at that time their hair, you know, they'd put it in, like, a bun on top of their head. And a lot of the womens didn't have much hair, so they had to have an artificial piece to put under. Well, my mother didn't have to have that. She had enough hair. She could make her bun. And my grandmother had quite a lot of hair, too, for her age. But I remember that.

LEVINE: So your grandmother and mother both worked . . .

ADAMS: In the house.

LEVINE: In the house, with keeping the boarders.

ADAMS: Keeping the boarders going, because my father wasn't making enough money to be able to support, you know, this building that we had. Because I guess the rent was pretty, it was high for what the wages were. Because I don't remember what the wages were. But according to what I, you know, I think back now, I think, well, it was because my father couldn't make ends

meet that my mother did that.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember this house? Can you describe it?

ADAMS: Oh, yes. It was a big cement house, and there was a big fence around it. It was a high fence, and on top it was pointy, very, very pointy. I remember that because there was a little girl that used to play with me there, and one time she climbed up there and she got caught. She almost got it right in her throat. It's a good thing her dress got caught first, otherwise she'd have got it right in the throat and she'd have been done. I remember that. And I went and hollered to my mother, "Hurry up, hurry up." But I can't remember the name of the little girl, see.

LEVINE: Was this a house that was fenced in and it had a gate and everything?

ADAMS: It was all fenced in. Yes. It was all fenced in. And it was all cement.

END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: And it had a lot of rooms.

ADAMS: A lot of room. And outside there was a big, oh, well, they used to play French bowling in the yard there in the back. There was a big, I don't know if you'd call it an arch. It was built outside there, and there was grapes all that was growing . . .

LEVINE: Oh, an arbor. A grape arbor, huh?

ADAMS: Yeah. And underneath that they would play French bowling. French bowling is a ball, balls, they put them, and they'd take one ball and hit it, and they'd score some way on it, but I don't know how they scored. But they used to call it French bowling. But there is a name. Somebody told me there was another name for that.

LEVINE: Do they kind of roll the ball, like in bowling?

ADAMS: Yeah. Just like you was bowling. Only instead of hitting the pins you'd hit the ball.

LEVINE: I see.

ADAMS: That was the pastime, and horseshoe. I remember them playing horseshoe. And I remember on one end I had a hammock. I used to swing in the hammock. And we had a garden, and we had chickens, and we had a

geese. And the geese was very mean. (she laughs) She used to pick all the time.

LEVINE: And then would you kill, like, a goose, for some special occasion?

ADAMS: It was more like a pet.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

ADAMS: Then after that my father got me a dog. I called her Leon. Leanne, Leanne, not Leon, Leanne. And see, I can't remember, when we left there, she wasn't with us, but I don't know what we did with her.

LEVINE: Well, how long did you stay in this house in Lodi?

ADAMS: Oh, we stayed in Lodi about, my father was a mover. He had to keep going, going, going all the time. We stayed there probably, oh, I'd say probably, oh, let's see, four years.

LEVINE: So you were in school there then?

ADAMS: Well, I'd come to the point of the school there, before we'd leave Lodi. They wouldn't take me in school because I couldn't talk English. And here I was going on seven, they wouldn't take me. And one of my little friends I had made friends with, her mother asked me, she said, "Would you like to go to school?" I says, "Yes." And she talked in French with me, because she

could talk French. Well, she says, "I'm going to go talk to your mother." So she went and talked to my mother, and asked my mother if she'd give me, give her permission to take me to school. So the next morning my mother dressed me all up cute with a bow and everything, a white dress. But the idea, what I didn't like was we always had black stockings and black shoes, and I didn't like that.

LEVINE: Did the other children have that, or were you . . .

ADAMS: No, all the childrens had those. And they were high shoes, and they'd buckle with a hook, there. That's the kind of shoes we used to wear. And so that morning, the next morning I went to school, and I remember, well, I don't remember hearing her saying that to, but later on they told me that. That the lady says to the teacher, "If you don't give her a chance to learn she'll never learn. Give her a seat in the back and see what the others are doing, and she'll hear the others talk, and she'll see what they're doing. Give her a paper and, you know, try to make her understand she's got to do this, make her letters there and try to make her do that." Well, the first thing I knew I was caught on, I was starting to talk English. But I learned some bad words first. (they laugh) It was terrible.

LEVINE: Do you remember the kids that you played with in Lodi?

ADAMS: No, I do not remember them, see. I can see them, I can see us going to school. My mother would give me some money to buy some, you know, some sweets there from the store. I'd buy a pickle instead. That's what I'd

need. A pickle. I'd buy a pickle. And when it, my grandmother in the winter wanted me to wear woolen stockings. She had made me woolen stockings. And I couldn't stand them.

LEVINE: Did the other children wear woolen stockings?

ADAMS: No.

LEVINE: Did you feel in any way that you stood out because you had come from another place?

ADAMS: For me, I felt that I wasn't welcome. I felt that way, that I wasn't wanted, in other words.

LEVINE: Do you think that the other children . . .

ADAMS: The other children used me good, but they laughed at me, you know, once in a while if I tried to say something and I didn't say it right they would laugh at me. And then I'd get mad, and I'd start to cry.

LEVINE: Were you the only child that had immigrated in your class in school?

ADAMS: Yes. Yes, I was the only one. Yes. And I imagine the other people went different places there, but there was none that came to Lodi, I don't think, because I don't remember that anyway. But I got along pretty good in school after a while.

LEVINE: Good. You kind of naturally picked it up. Did the teacher give you special attention?

ADAMS: Yes, she did. She would come to me and make letters and, you know, little animals and things. You know, try to make me understand, you know. And of course it put me back. It was like a baby room, you know. And I started picking up, that I went to the first grade. And then we moved. We stayed about, in Lodi, we stayed about, let's see if I can figure that out now. Because after Passaic we moved to New York. I was about eight years old.

LEVINE: And you moved to New York City?

ADAMS: No, we moved to Passaic.

LEVINE: Passaic.

ADAMS: And then to that point my mother didn't take our things out of the boxes any more, because my father was a mover. She just took out the things she needed and left everything in boxes. So when we wanted anything we had to go in the box and get them. So there, my father put me in a private school. He thought probably I'd do better. But I didn't stay there very long, and then we moved to New York. And we were there about a year in New York. Because my father's job was in New York at that time. He had moved his work to New York because he was getting more money there. And we moved to New York and we lived on the fifth floor of this apartment house

where we lived.

LEVINE: Do you remember where in New York you lived?

ADAMS: Broadway and 125th Avenue. But it's all changed today. Gissie said you wouldn't know yourself. It's all changed. Gissie is my oldest daughter. It's Augustine.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Well, it would be Harlem then. It would be considered Harlem? 125th Street and Broadway probably.

ADAMS: Yeah. We was near the Hudson River. We lived real near the Hudson River because we used to go down there and see the boats come in, the Red Cross boats that were coming in from the war there, that were transporting the people that got hurt and everything. There used to be a big red cross on the boat. I remember that. And there was big rats down by the, I remember that, too. We used to go see the rats. Then in New York I went to a regular school.

LEVINE: And what was that like? What was the school like in New York?

ADAMS: It was all right. Then I knew quite a lot of English that I got around, you know, to be able to make my rounds and talk the way I wanted to.

LEVINE: How about your mother and father? Were they learning English?

ADAMS: No. My father was not learning English and my mother wasn't learning the English, and my grandmother either. So we hadn't been living more than a year in New York when my mother died.

LEVINE: What did she die of?

ADAMS: She died of that epidemic of influenza that they had from the war there. People were dropping dead in the streets. And, you know, Catholic people at that time could not be cremated. It was against their law. But the government put a law that all people that died during that time they had to be cremated because they didn't want to bury them. There was too many of them. And the fume, you know. Of course, at that time they didn't embalm them like they did after a while. And they had to be cremated whether they liked it or not. The government law. And my mother was cremated. And then . . .

LEVINE: So your grandmother was left with your father and you.

ADAMS: And me. And my father and my grandmother didn't get along together at all, so that didn't make it too pleasant. And my grandmother liked her wine. They had prohibition, which she could not get the wine. So she went back to France. We was living, then we moved, after my mother died, we moved to Rutherford, New Jersey.

LEVINE: Now, when your mother died, how old were you?

ADAMS: Nine years old.

LEVINE: Okay.

ADAMS: Yeah. I was nine years old when my mother died. And then my father, because the apartment was too big, and it was too expensive. We couldn't afford it. By then we only had one boarder left. So he moved to Rutherford with us. And he didn't live there very long. He went back to Switzerland.

LEVINE: So in other words you were taking in boarders also in New York City?

ADAMS: Right. We had three of them there.

LEVINE: Oh. And one was from Switzerland?

ADAMS: One was from Switzerland, and the other one was from, I don't know where they were from, but . . .

LEVINE: They had just come to this country from somewhere.

ADAMS: Yeah. Somehow. And Dr. Lucas there, he stayed, oh, I don't think he stayed more than two or three months. He left before my grandmother left. He left before.

LEVINE: This was the one who went to Switzerland?

ADAMS: Yeah. He's the one that went to Switzerland.

LEVINE: Now, was he the same boarder that your mother had in . . .

ADAMS: In Lodi, yes, and in Passaic.

LEVINE: So he travelled with you?

ADAMS: Yeah, he travelled with us.

LEVINE: Was he a medical doctor?

ADAMS: No. Uh, oh, I can't say it.

LEVINE: What kind of thing did he deal with?

ADAMS: Not paint. Uh, he mixed the paints, different kind of paints.

LEVINE: Was he a chemist?

ADAMS: A chemical doctor, that's it. You've got it. That's what he was, a chemical doctor.

LEVINE: So he took different jobs, and he just travelled with your mother and the family.

ADAMS: Right, right.

LEVINE: How did your father take your mother's death?

ADAMS: Well, pretty bad. Very bad. So, it was one of those things that . . .

LEVINE: Well, then what happened? Your grandmother went back? How soon after your mother's death did your grandmother leave?

ADAMS: After my father, my mother died, we went and lived in Rutherford, New Jersey, and I don't think she stayed more than six months with us and she went out. Then my father boarded me with the people that had taken us in at the beginning. And they had a little boy.

LEVINE: Oh. And how old was their little boy?

ADAMS: Their little boy was five years younger than me.

LEVINE: This was the Flory family?

ADAMS: The Flory family. Yeah. Henry and, I don't remember her name, but his name was Henry. And I stayed there, let's see, I went there, I was about ten years old by that time. I was born on, I didn't stay there too. I was about going on eleven.

LEVINE: And how did you feel about that family?

ADAMS: Well, I wasn't home. I was lonely, and I was lonely for my father, and my father was in New York. And I used to go in Rutherford every weekend, though. All I had to do was take the bus and go to Rutherford from Lodi. So I used to stay every weekend with him. And one weekend we had a fire at the house. And when he got home he thought I was still there, and he was very worried. And when he went to the neighbor's, he says, "No, she had left before the fire started." And they thought it was probably something I had forgot to, you know, that stuff, the gas, or anything like that. But it wasn't. It started in the attic. He had a lot of chemistry upstairs, and it was very hot. And the chemistry all got together and the heat, and it made it like a combustion. And that's where the fire started.

LEVINE: So was the family hurt?

ADAMS: No, there was nobody hurt downstairs. There was a family downstairs, but they had a lot of damage from the water. There was a two-tenant house, and the people downstairs had a lot of damage.

LEVINE: So this was now in your father's house, or in the Flory family's house?

ADAMS: No, no. This is in Rutherford, where my father was living. He was living and travelling back and forth to New York, and on weekends I would come and stay with him. Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and I'd go back Monday morning to Lodi.

LEVINE: Would you travel by yourself?

ADAMS: Yeah. It was just a few, I'd get on the bus. The bus was about, oh, like if I'd go to the next street here, take the bus there, and I'd get, it was close to the house and everything where they lived.

LEVINE: You mentioned earlier that your father's attitude towards religion was to wait until you were old enough and let you choose what you wanted. Do you remember any other attitudes of your father, that he had, that he taught you, or . . .

ADAMS: No, well, I know he liked fishing. And pool, he liked to play pool. And there was a club there. He used to go to the club and he used to bring me to his club. I remember that. He used to bring me . . . (phone rings) (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. We're resuming after a pause for a telephone call. And you were saying that your father took you to his club.

ADAMS: Right.

LEVINE: But now who would be in his club? What kind of a club was it?

ADAMS: Well, it was a club where they played pools, you know, and different games. Horseshoe, and they'd get together and go fishing.

LEVINE: Would there be other people of French extraction, or not?

ADAMS: Oh, yes. French. There was a lot of French people there.

LEVINE: Oh, in Rutherford was there a big French population, of people who had come from France?

ADAMS: No. I mean, it's a club that the people around town did.

LEVINE: But the people who belonged to it were not necessarily people who had come from France?

ADAMS: No. No, no, no. It was people of the town. Yeah. It was people of the town.

LEVINE: I see. Well, your father must have gotten along well . . .

ADAMS: But they were all, they were all French people that he knew, you know. He got friendly with French people.

LEVINE: I see.

ADAMS: So that he didn't have the chance to learn the English language. He was always with French people.

LEVINE: I see. And they were speaking French.

ADAMS: Yes, all the time. And instead of talking English to him so he would learn, well, they were talking French so he didn't have the chance to learn.

LEVINE: Did you meet other French children, or children whose family also spoke French?

ADAMS: Oh, yes. I met some children that spoke French and English both. They spoke both the language. And they tried, you know, when they were friendly with me they tried to make me talk English, you know, show me different words and everything. But I couldn't seem to get it into my head.

LEVINE: Well, I'm glad you did, finally, it's good.

ADAMS: Oh, yes. I finally learned in school there.

LEVINE: How about your mother? Can you remember any . . .

ADAMS: Yes, my mother was a pretty stout person there. She was pretty. She was five-feet-four, I think, her height was. And she was very gentle. She never wanted me to do anything in the house. She was ahead. Some time I say, "Well, let me go dust," or something like that, but she didn't want me to do nothing. "Go out and play, go out and play. You'll be old. There will come a time you'll have to do it." She never wanted me to do nothing. I wanted to learn how to cook. She wouldn't let me learn. "I want to do that, I want to do that." But she wouldn't. "You go out. You'll have plenty of time to learn that."

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Can you think of any sayings that she had, things that she might have said to you? You know how people have sort of favorite sayings, or anything like that?

ADAMS: There's one day which, that was in, when we lived in Lodi she told me this. She said, in French, "Mon petit fille," my little girl, "I won't always be with you." So I don't know if she had a feeling that she was going to leave me, but I remember that. I'll always remember she told me that, that I won't always be with you. So I don't know if she had that feeling. That was quite a few years before she died, but she says, "I won't be very long with you."

LEVINE: And how about your grandmother? Did she talk to you, before she went back to France? Did she say anything to you?

ADAMS: She hated, well, she said it to me in French, she said she hated to leave me. Because she says, "I don't know what's going to happen to you with your father." (she coughs) Excuse me. She says, "He's alone now." And she was afraid he was going to get remarried, and they didn't know, you know, what kind of a woman he'd marry. They didn't know. But he didn't until quite a few years after that. We was in Sanford before he ever get married.

LEVINE: So you stayed for a few years with the Flory family, and then what?

ADAMS: I left the Florys, I was thirteen years old. Well, I got the diphtheria while I was with them. And the doctor says, "Do you have your father's address?" I

said, "No, but I can get it for you." So I asked Mama Flory to, I used to call her Mama Flory. I used to say, "Can you give me the address for my father? I'd like to have it. I want to write to him." And she gave it to me, so I gave it to the doctor. And the doctor wrote to my father and told him, "If you want to keep your daughter, you'd better come and get her." Not only the diphtheria, I was going down all the time. I was in a depressed feeling. I didn't care whether I lived or died, and he told him, he says, "You'd better come and get your daughter if you want her to live."

LEVINE: Now, had your father stopped coming every weekend?

ADAMS: Well, now, that, he was in Sanford by now.

LEVINE: Oh. Your father . . .

ADAMS: He left Rutherford to come to Sanford. Somebody had mentioned to one of the big bosses around here that he did this kind of work. They didn't have that kind of work here, and they wanted to start up on that. So they sent for him.

LEVINE: So how long after he boarded you out to the Florys did he leave for Sanford, Maine?

ADAMS: He left almost right off. I remember him coming and he says, "You know," he says, "I got to leave you." I says, "What do you mean you got to leave me?" "Well," he says, "I've been offered a job, but it's far away, and I won't be able

to see you for a long time. It's far away." And I started crying, naturally, and, well, I says, "We'll write, huh?" And he says, "Yeah, we'll write." And he came to Sanford. First of all, we had to store all his furniture. So we stored all his furniture that he had, and then he came to Sanford. And when I was thirteen there, the doctor told him to come and get me, he come and get me right off. He come by train there. At that time there was trains there. He come and got me, and I got here in Sanford. And, of course, I had to be boarded out again in Sanford, because we didn't know nobody. So there's a man that he knew, he says, "I'll take your daughter, because my son's gone to college, so she can use his room until June. I can take her until June. And in June, when my son comes back, well, you'll have to find another place for her." So in June they found another place, another family. I stayed there for a while. And then he got a house. Before he was in the boarding house.

LEVINE: Your father.

ADAMS: My father. He was in the boarding house, so he couldn't keep me. And then he got a place in Ridgewood, uh, in Ridgeway. And he got five rooms, and then he sent for his furniture, and when all his furniture was here, I went to live with him.

LEVINE: Were you now in school here?

ADAMS: Yes. I was in school here, but I was thirteen and I was only in the fourth grade. Because, you know, I'd been transferred so much that, and I learned

good, but it didn't do me much good. When I got to a certain age I didn't want to go to school no more.

LEVINE: Were there other children who spoke French here?

ADAMS: Oh, yes. This is a Canadian, uh, you know, there's a lot of people, a lot of children that speak French. A lot of people. Well, the first time I came here I made a friend with a little girl. And when I stayed, with the Tarbucks. It was Tarbucks I stayed with.

LEVINE: It was what?

ADAMS: Tarbucks. Their name was Tarbucks. And they made me get a little friend, you know, so I got somebody to play with and go around town and all that. We came up the street and I says, "Gee, what kind of language they talk here?" Well she says, "You ought to know. That's French." And I says, "Oh, no, that isn't French. I don't understand a word they say." It seems that it was all put together. I couldn't make anything out. But after a while, you know, you'd listen, then you could see. But it wasn't a real French, you know, like I spoke the real French. But it didn't take long for me to lose it, though. (she laughs) Oh, no. It didn't take long for me to lose it.

LEVINE: So then what happened? You stayed in school a little while here?

ADAMS: Yeah. I stayed in school until I was fifteen. And at fifteen there, I was disgusted. I was going into the seventh grade, and other kids were going in

high school at that age. And I said, "No." And I told my father, I says, "I want to leave school." And he says, "You're not leaving school. I'm not signing no paper." So I went to the boarder school there, and I told the woman, I said, "I'd like to leave school." "Well," she says, "the only way that you can leave school is to find a job." "Well," I says, "that's going to be hard at my age, fifteen, to find a job." "No," she says, "I've got a job for you." I says, "What do you mean?" "Well," she says, "you can keep my little girl that's eighteen months old. All you have to do is take care of her, for three dollars a week."

LEVINE: Did that appeal to you?

ADAMS: It appealed to me because I was getting out of school. I wanted it.

LEVINE: And how was it, what was it like living with your father at that time?

ADAMS: Oh, it was miserable. Because by that time he was married. He remarried in, oh, now I can't remember just what year.

LEVINE: You were fourteen, or so.

ADAMS: I was, yeah, I was going on fourteen. He came and got me in April, I think, in New Jersey, and he got married in December. So I was going on fourteen.

LEVINE: What was she like? What was your . . . ?

ADAMS: She was a Bohemian. She didn't speak French and she didn't speak English. So what did you want me to do?

LEVINE: But your father spoke the Bohemian language, whatever.

ADAMS: Yeah, he had to speak. See, what we had to do, we had to translate each other. She got to learn a little bit of English because she was a schoolteacher, so it didn't take her too long to pick up the English language, but she didn't pick it up too much.

LEVINE: Did your father ever become a citizen?

ADAMS: Oh, yes. He become a citizen when we was in New Jersey. I think we was living in Rutherford when he become a citizen. And he become a citizen just two months in time to make me a citizen, too. After that they changed the law that everybody had to take their own papers. So when he become a citizen, I become a citizen, too. So that made it nice.

LEVINE: So did you get along with his new wife?

ADAMS: Oh, no, no. I didn't get along at all.

LEVINE: So that's why you wanted to get a job.

ADAMS: And work. And so my father says, "Do you want to stay home?" He says, "I'll give you five dollars a week." I says, "No." I says, "I want to earn my

own living out of the house."

LEVINE: Meanwhile, were you getting along well with your father?

ADAMS: Well, in one way yes, and no. Because he didn't want to take either one of us, you know what I mean?

LEVINE: He didn't want to take sides, and you didn't, yeah.

ADAMS: And when he came to me, he says, "What do you think about me getting married?" Well, I says, "Listen, Papa." I always called him Papa. "You're old enough to know what you want. If you want to get married, go ahead. Get married. But I'll tell you one thing. She'll never boss me. She'll never touch me. My mother never touched me. My mother never made me do nothing, and she's not going to make me do nothing neither. When you want anything done, you tell me, and I'll do it. But I don't want her to tell me to do anything." So that went on for a while, and one day she started telling me what to do, "And you've got to do that." I says, "No, I'm not going to do it." So she slapped me across the face, so I turned around and I slapped her across the face. I says, "My mother never touched me, and you're never going to touch me either." It made me feel very miserable. And I told my father. She went and told my father. He says, "Fight it out between yous." He wouldn't take. You see, the trouble was he wouldn't take for either one of us. And I thought he should take for me, you know. My idea was I was before her. But it wasn't like that. That was one of the miserable things, that's all.

LEVINE: Well, we don't have too much time left, but tell me how you met your husband.

ADAMS: Well, I met him where my father was working.

LEVINE: He worked with your father?

ADAMS: He worked with my father. And when he first saw me he says, "God, isn't she the homeliest thing." He says, "I wouldn't marry her for anything." And I looked at him, and he had two teeth falling out, and I said, "Gee, I wouldn't marry that thing." We both had the same idea. And so then we got married.
(they laugh)

LEVINE: And then just tell me the names of your children.

ADAMS: My children is Augustine, David, Rita -- Rita Kaye, and Wilbrud. That's their names. Wilbrud.

LEVINE: Wilburg?

ADAMS: But today they call him Will. But it's Wilbrud, his name. That's his name.

LEVINE: And do you have grandchildren?

ADAMS: Oh, yes, I've got thirteen of them.

LEVINE: And how about great? Any great grandchildren at this point?

ADAMS: Not yet. (she laughs)

LEVINE: And how about your husband? What did he do for work?

ADAMS: He worked in the shoe shop. He was a cleaner. He cleaned the shoes just before they packed them. Took everything, you know, if there was any gum on the soles or any gum anywhere he'd clean that all up and then it went to the packing room. He worked on the shoes before they were packed. That was his job.

LEVINE: I see, I see. And were you glad that you had moved to Sanford?

ADAMS: Yes. I liked it in one way, excuse me, but I was very lonely. Because in Jersey there was quite a few movies. Here there was one movie that you could go to. There was no choice.

LEVINE: Did you have favorite movie stars along the way?

ADAMS: Oh, you know, I can't remember. I can remember way back. It seems I can see them, but I can't name them.

LEVINE: But that was your, that was your biggest recreation.

EI-189/ADAMS

ADAMS: Yes. Charlie Chaplin was one of them, Pearl White, and I can't remember the others. I can't remember at all the others. (tape ends)

END OF INTERVIEW