

**EI-196**

**ANIELA SZELIGA BOREK**

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**AGE 29**

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**RESIDENCES:**

- **POLAHEL/BAVARIA**
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SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, July 28th, 1992. I'm here in Clifton Park with Aniela Borek, who was born in Poland, left to come to America from Germany in 1949 when she was twenty-nine years old. Also present in the room is Genny Homiller, who was born in Germany and who accompanied her mother in 1949, when she was about two-and-a-half, and we are in Genny's home. I just want to

say good morning to you.

BOREK: Good morning.

SIGRIST: And can we begin by you giving me your full name, please.

BOREK: Whole thing? Oh.

SIGRIST: Go right ahead. Say the whole thing. And then you'll have to spell it.

BOREK: Okay. It's Aniela, A-N-I-E-L-A. S-Z-E-L-I-G-A.

SIGRIST: Can you say that, please, too?

BOREK: Szeliga.

SIGRIST: That's your maiden name?

BOREK: Yes. My first, my husband, is M-O-S-C-I-W-S-K-A, Mosciwska. B-O-R-E-K, Borek.

SIGRIST: So that is a first husband and a second husband.

BOREK: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: And what is your date of birth, please.

BOREK: Uh, July 30, 1919.

SIGRIST: So, my goodness, this week is your birthday. Well, happy birthday. ( they laugh ) What town were you born in, please.

BOREK: Letownaaia. It's L, with the thing above, L-E-T-O-W-N-A-A-I-A, Letownaaia.

SIGRIST: And that's in Poland.

BOREK: That's in Poland, yes.

SIGRIST: Where in Poland is that, about?

BOREK: It's Powiatinsko, Poland.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

BOREK: P-O-W-I-A-T-I-N-S-K-O, P-E-O-L-A-N-D.

SIGRIST: And is that a province or a county of some sort?

BOREK: It was county, yes.

SIGRIST: I see. Whereabouts in Poland is that, just in terms of the country.

BOREK: It's south, like from Sucha or Krakow, that way.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the town for me?

BOREK: The town was a farm. There was about five hundred farmers and small farms. And we worked on a farm, worked on a farm and at the same time we made some extra money. We made some baskets, see, like this ( she gestures to a basket in the room ).

SIGRIST: Was that a business making the baskets?

BOREK: Baskets, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how you made the baskets?

BOREK: Well, we got forms, like, and the wickets, and just, uh, see, like that one. And by hand we do everything.

SIGRIST: What kinds of baskets did you make? Can you describe some of the different shapes for me? ( she continues to point to baskets in the room )  
No, please describe them in words.

BOREK: Ah. Well, there were different kinds. All different kinds. ( they laugh and she continues to point to various baskets )

SIGRIST: That's okay. With handles.

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BOREK: Yes, yes, yes. Different kinds, yes. When you see some, like in the store, sometimes they're underneath, "Made in Poland."

SIGRIST: Now, to whom did you sell these baskets?

BOREK: To the sellers people, and they send to all over the world. I remember even in Japan. America and Japan was the best customers for us. And we were busy. We make extra money, because you have a small farm, you make a comfortable living. We were quite comfortable, and the standard of living for us wasn't bad at all.

SIGRIST: Was this a cottage industry for your family, or was this something a lot of people in town did?

BOREK: Almost everybody.

SIGRIST: Was there a factory where this was done?

BOREK: No, no. Everybody made home, their own home. We had room, a big room, and my father and my brothers and, my brother and my sisters and I, and . . .

SIGRIST: Where did you get the material to make this?

BOREK: Most of them, the wicket was from, the best one from America.

SIGRIST: So that's interesting. So the materials are imported . . .

BOREK: Yes, and then . . .

SIGRIST: And then it was sent out.

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much money you would get for a nice basket? How much they paid you, wholesale, I imagine.

BOREK: They were wholesale. Uh, compared like over here, about a dollar or so. At that time it was big money because I have three uncles. But after World War II they left Germany. They were in Germany and then went back to Poland. So they came over here, two of them. I mean, they are old. And I hear from my mother's side, two uncles. They were here too. And my mother was here for one year in Massachusetts somewheres. She was a young girl, but she was very sick and she came back to Poland.

SIGRIST: I want to talk a little bit more about the town itself. How long did you live there?

BOREK: About twenty years.

SIGRIST: I see. So you basically grew up in this town.

BOREK: Oh, yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Can you kind of describe for me what the town looked like. Was it a big town, a small town.

BOREK: There was about five hundred houses, farms. And they have straw roofs, and it wasn't too big. We had about three or four rooms, and it wasn't, the water wasn't running, the outhouse, you know, it wasn't comfortable. I don't want to live over there at all now because I'm spoiled.

SIGRIST: So the roof was straw . . .

BOREK: But, you know, really, because we don't know any different, we were happy. You have enough to eat and well-dressed, and it wasn't, it wasn't really too bad. I mean, but . . .

SIGRIST: What was the house made out of, because the roof was straw.

BOREK: Logs, logs. Heavy logs.

SIGRIST: And you said you had three or four rooms.

BOREK: Yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: Upstairs and downstairs?

BOREK: No, no. Just one floor.

SIGRIST: And how was the house heated?

BOREK: By the wooden stove.

SIGRIST: Where in the house was the stove?

BOREK: Like in the corner, yes. One corner.

SIGRIST: Can you describe where you did the cooking in the house

for me?

BOREK: Well, there was brick stove, like in a corner, on the bottom. We had to make fire. And then we cook on the top of some kind of iron, uh, not stone, but put in separately. And then behind it there was grey big long one, that probably was like this room, we baked bread there, about twelve, fourteen loaves. About four or five pounds one, and it lasts us, you know, about two weeks or so. And we, yes.

SIGRIST: Did you help make the bread?

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about what the process was like, where you got the grain, and . . .

BOREK: Oh, we got grain from the farm. Our own. Everything we have. Everything, what you raised, you have. We didn't buy, just salt and sugar and things like that, but not anything else. We have everything. Make like sauerkraut and we put like big, dig big holes in the ground because there was below zero, awful cold. I remember when my grandmother died, in 1928, there was 48 below zero, not like American, how they call, different?

SIGRIST: Celsius?

BOREK: Yes, yes. And people was freezing. So we dig the holes, big holes and cover it with straw and dirt, like, and then we dig the potatoes as we need it. And they were really nice and crisp.

SIGRIST: And that's how you kept things?

BOREK: That's how we kept things. And we had another, like, storage room, and we kept over there the grain and everything, and we have our own flours. I did myself, too. We went to the Cambridge, Massachusetts, I see the thing.

SIGRIST: Like a big mill.

BOREK: Yes, yes. By hand.

SIGRIST: You milled your own grain, then.

BOREK: That was a hard job. I was a young girl.

SIGRIST: How did you do it? How did you mill the grain? What was the process?

BOREK: There was, like, a small stool over here, and there was one stone, and then another in between, and a hole in the middle, and we put the grain there, and we just mill and do it. That I hated. It was so hard, oh.

SIGRIST: All right. Now, after the grain is milled, then what did you do with it to make the bread?

BOREK: Like, we put in a small, not in small, but, you know, for the, like barrel, wooden barrel, has to be. And then we didn't use no yeast because most of them was rye bread. Only for holidays you make wheat bread and things like that, sweet bread and with the raisins.

SIGRIST: So it's basically a heavy dark bread?

BOREK: Yes, yes. And we used to make, we don't use the yeast cake, just ourselves start it with sour milk and things like, and it raised by itself. And you should see the bread goes like that ( she gestures ) without yeast cake.

SIGRIST: What other foods did you raise on the farm that you grew?

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BOREK: You have all vegetables, all of them, and potatoes, and we made sour, we make sour . . .

SIGRIST: Green vegetables or root vegetables?

BOREK: Both, both. In wintertime we got only the root ones, but summer we got fresh ones, because we didn't have no storage to keep for, you know, for winter. So we raised everything like sweet peas and beans and potatoes and cabbage and cauliflower and different things like that. Everything.

SIGRIST: Did you eat a lot of meat?

BOREK: No meat.

SIGRIST: No meat. Why?

BOREK: Because there wasn't any meat. In the fall, they butcher one pig, a big one, before Christmas, and some they smoke, some they put salt, like salt pork, something like that. That's what we have. But there was no, not like over here, meat.

SIGRIST: Did you raise animals for food?

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did you have for animals?

BOREK: We have horses, and cows, and pigs, and chickens, and dogs and a goose and everything.

SIGRIST: Were any of the animals pets as opposed to just farm animals?

BOREK: Yes. Were pets only was cats.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of your cats' names?

BOREK: I used to remember, a dog was Burek. B-O, B-U-R-E-K, because she was brown. That's what they. But cats, I don't remember the names. No, not the cats, but I remember, and I still remember, because everybody has a big, like, protection dogs. Because there was stealing and things like that, you know. So I remember when the dog died, one dog died, you know, the whole house was crying, because we were attached to the animal.

SIGRIST: Did you grow flowers on the farm?

BOREK: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: What kinds of flowers did you grow?

BOREK: Oh, I can't explain too much. The pansy and all different kinds, but I can't, you know.

SIGRIST: Were the summers very short? Was it mostly cold and the summers were short?

BOREK: No, no. It was hot. In summer was hot. So, when I was seven years old I watched cows and horses in a pasture on a rope. I had about two or three cows, and one, always one little one calf. And they were so lovely, that I just hug him. But, you know, all day on a field watching those cows, it was really something, too.

SIGRIST: And you were seven, you said.

BOREK: Oh, yeah. There was something, you know. We just go in school and then come home and go, either work in a field. There were small children.

SIGRIST: Would you say that for a small child what you were expected to do was hard work? Was it tough for a seven-year-old to do all these chores?

BOREK: Well, see, we did, yes. Seven, eight, we went on the field and get some food for the cows. I mean, like, we go in between potatoes and wheat and dig the wheat, I mean, the different kind of wheat for the cows. And bring home a new bag. That was really hard, honest to God. That was.

SIGRIST: How did you bring it back? Did you have a little rack?

BOREK: No, we had, like, a blanket. We have our own lints, lintsen, they call. They are linen, everything our own we make.

SIGRIST: Linen, linen.

BOREK: Linen. And in clothes, for underwear.

SIGRIST: What did your clothes look like when you were a little girl. Describe what . . .

BOREK: Nah, nah. ( she laughs ) It's nothing to be proud of, believe me. At least I was lucky, I had shoes. But most children, only wintertime you go to school with the shoes on because it was cold, and came home, you had to put the shoes away, just walk barefoot. Because you have to save the shoes for, you know, for the whole season.

SIGRIST: Where did you get the shoes?

BOREK: Well, we, most of them was custom-made.

SIGRIST: There was a cobbler in town.

BOREK: Yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about school. How old were you when you started school?

BOREK: I was six years old, and I was finished when I was twelve, six years.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what going to school was like in that environment.

BOREK: It, well, we went like eight o'clock in the morning, and we have school, half a day, about five hours, anyway. And we didn't learn much because we were small, you know. Not, least. I mean, there was no high school where I was growing up. Just, you know, I was a sixth grade education. But since I came over here I didn't go to school either, except for my citizen papers. Because she was a little one ( referring to her daughter Genny ) and we didn't have no money for the babysitting, and you have to work during the day. And, but . . .

SIGRIST: Was the school in Poland just a single room?

BOREK: No. There was about four rooms. Nice.

SIGRIST: How did you get to the school?

BOREK: Well, I was, lived close, like almost across the street to this school so I walked to the school. And everybody, even, some of them, they lived about six, seven miles, and they walked. The snow was like that through the field, ( she gestures ) to the school. But it was just that way, and nobody was surprised or anything.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of your teachers?

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me about the teacher that you remember, the teachers that you remember.

BOREK: Oh, I had one teacher. Her name was Sophie Falujanka, and she was a mean one. She didn't, she was just, like, you know, strict. And then I had a principal. His name was Adolph. I can't, Kolvoshivsky, you know. And he was really, he was friends with my father, and he was really nice, and he tried to help us, too, you know, to get a better education.

SIGRIST: How would they punish you if you were bad in school.

BOREK: Oh, they punished you.

SIGRIST: How? What did they do?

BOREK: They got a big stick and they punished you over here, ( she gestures to her hand ) and sometimes you'd get it over here ( she gestures to her back ), too, especially boys.

SIGRIST: Did that ever happen to you? Were you ever punished?

BOREK: ( she laughs ) Not that way, no. I think I got some on my . . . ( she laughs and gestures to her hands ) But . . .

SIGRIST: What kind of games did you play as a little girl in Poland?

BOREK: We had all homemade, I mean our, ourselves, we made different kinds of dolls and things like that. We had hopscotch, and we play different things. But I can't really decide how was it, but we play. We play a lot, though, yes. We have lots of friends, and like I said, we growing up, especially in my home, we were well-off compared, but different kinds. But the friends I have, one friend was my best friend, like somebody who you have, best one. They were very poor and there were seven children. The mother died and the father very young. The oldest brother take care of them. So how many times I steal bread from my home and give it to her to give to the sisters because I feel sorry for them. They didn't have no shoes, they couldn't go to school. That was, or some, believe me, they was, how you call, poverty. Yes, the old people, they live so poorly that it was, when I see now, I think to myself, "My God, how the people went through, some of them." They were so old people, and still, they were alive. But they were, you know, undernourishment. And they haven't got even, for meat, forget it. But even, they have bread off and on, once or twice, some potatoes, but most of the time they were hungry. So my mother, she was heart, she was very good woman, and she feel sorry for them. So like Saturday morning or Sunday morning she give me some things, like cheese or butter or eggs or even flour and milk to bring to the poor people to help them to survive some. So when I'm over there I keep telling them many times, the old, the babushki, they said, "Oh, God bless you child, and give you luck in your life, and your mother, too, because she's such a good woman." That life was a real life.

SIGRIST: When you were a small girl, did you understand the difference between your life and how poor the other people were.

BOREK: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Was that noticeable even at that age?

BOREK: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Did your mother or father ever . . .

BOREK: Not my father. My father was stuck-up man, because he was a little bit better than the other ones, but my mother give it away.

SIGRIST: She understood.

BOREK: So she, he would, no. But that was the truth, yeah.

SIGRIST: What kind of religious mix was in this town? Was it all Catholics or all Jews?

BOREK: There was, it was, about 99 percent was Catholics. And every Sunday we had to go to church. There was no excuses.

SIGRIST: So you family was Catholic.

BOREK: Oh, yes. And we have friends, neighbors, Jewish. And they were really friendly with us. We were quite friendly. My sister, she got her age, Jewish girl, and she came to the house, and she went over there. But they were so strict about Kosher that they wouldn't eat in your house whatsoever.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any kind of a persecution of the small Jewish population?

BOREK: Absolutely not. They have every right, because every Saturday they went to the synagogue. Because there was, in the family where I was brought up, there was about maybe ten or eleven families only, and they have small, like not the synagogue, but, I mean, big house. And they worship, but only men, and boys after thirteen. But the women, they didn't go to it. Because it was like, you know, they had those things, how they call, Orthodox?

SIGRIST: Yes.

BOREK: Yes. So, I mean, they were, they was completely different than a different religion. But there was no persecution whatsoever. Sometimes they complain, but when I was growing up, on Saturday they go to the synagogue and nobody bothered them or anything.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your religious life. Tell me about what you remember about church life in this town.

BOREK: Well, I was a little girl. I want to remember. They take you to church to get probably used to, to sound like that when you're small. So once I

remember, I don't know how old I was. I was probably very young, but my sisters, they were with me, and they told me that I was fighting with them, and they took me out from the church. And I was brought up you have to go to church no matter what. Either, you know, wintertime some people didn't go because they didn't have no shoes. But summertime, all older women, they go barefooted. They walk about six, seven miles to church. And church lasts about, the high Mass, about three hours. And there was no pew for anybody and there was like a cement floor.

SIGRIST: Did you just stand or sit?

BOREK: Stand. Stand, stand, and kneel, or stand. Only there was a few pews, was for, like, teachers and older people in the middle, but not too many. Very few.

SIGRIST: Did they have a choir in the church?

BOREK: Yes, yes. Choirs and organ. There were big churches in Europe, awful big churches, big ones.

SIGRIST: So this was a big church, then.

BOREK: This was a big church.

SIGRIST: Was this the only Catholic church in the town?

BOREK: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the church?

BOREK: St. Catherine, yes. And there was, the name was St. Catherine because one lady, her name was Catherine, and she sent them money to start the church. St. Catherine, yes.

SIGRIST: Let's talk about your parents. What was your Dad's name?

BOREK: The name of my parent was Jan, Jan. J-A-N.

SIGRIST: And what was his profession?

BOREK: Oh, excuse me. I'm going to tell you first about the family. My mother married twice, brothers. World War I my uncle, my mother's first husband was hanged right over by the church. There was about eight men. By . . .

SIGRIST: He was hanged.

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: Why was he hanged?

BOREK: Because they, some thought it was queer on them that they did something, but it wasn't so. But there was Hungarians that hanged them. And every Sunday we'd go by to church, where they were hanged. It was quite a few

men. So my mother, she remarried his brother. I was the first child of the second husband. Yes. And my father, I'm going to tell you the truth, I don't even want to talk about it, with my granddaughter. He was a very strict and mean man. I have two sisters, half-sisters, by the first husband, and he was, he didn't respect us at all, and the mother either. But my mother, she was an angel.

SIGRIST: What was her name?

BOREK: Maria, Mary. Maria.

SIGRIST: What was her maiden name?

BOREK: Chowanic.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

BOREK: C-H-O-W-A-N-I-C. Chowanic.

SIGRIST: Was she from this town in Poland?

BOREK: No.

SIGRIST: Where was she from?

BOREK: She was from the next town only, the next town.

SIGRIST: Can you describe in words what your mother looked like?

BOREK: Uh, she was a nice looking woman but, when she was younger, but after she was worn out, because, like I said, her husband, my father, he wasn't . . .

SIGRIST: It was difficult for her.

BOREK: Difficult. She was, she had a tough life, and after she was worn out, and she lost all her teeth, and there was no way to get teeth, and her life was really tough.

SIGRIST: What was her personality like? You said she was an angel. What . . .

BOREK: She wouldn't hurt anybody. She was very friendly and she talked to everybody, and she respect everybody, and she was a very good mother. She give us things which she could have, but she give it to us, too, because we were young, and she said, "You girls, you need it." You know, there was five of us in the family. Two half-sisters, cousins and sisters, to the oldest one, by her first husband. And then the second, I was the oldest, and then I have brother, he was younger, and then the youngest was the sister. But between us children there was no difference that we were not, uh, you know, there wasn't any difference that they were different than us. Between mothers either, but the father, he respect us better than the oldest one, and that was really tough.

SIGRIST: Were there grandparents around?

BOREK: My father's father died very young. I wasn't even born. My grandmother, she died. My father's mother, she lived with us. She died when she was about seventy-eight years old. I still remember. She wasn't sick. She just lay down and died. She was another woman, she was, when my mother, I mean she went on the fields to work, she watched us, when we were small children, and she was very good with us.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandmother?

BOREK: She, the woman, she got big pockets in their skirts, and she always has something for us. And she said, "When you're going to be good, you're going to get something." So she get things for us. And she was really a good woman. And my mother's parents, I remember, you know, the grandfather, I remember, the grandmother. And she lived with my aunt, where my mother came from.

SIGRIST: The other town.

BOREK: Yeah. The other town, about three or four miles. So every time she came, I mean it was poor, but she always have something for us to treat us. So we look forward when she comes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your mother's father, your grandfather on

your mother's side? What memory sticks out in your mind about him?

BOREK: Well, he was very jolly and quick. He was an old man, but he walks about three or four miles to come over to us. And he got grey hair and the long one. That was, even, most man. And he talk so quick, and he wasn't like the grandmother. He was more like outsider. So when he comes, he stay for a little while only, and he went back. "I'm not going to bother you, because you got so much work to do," he told my mother.

END OF SIDE A, TAPE ONE

BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Now, was your mother sort of in charge of running the farm, would you say, or did your father take an active part in that?

BOREK: Was the men, most of the men. They take care on the field with the horses and plows and things like that, heavy job. But the women, they do much more than the men. They work on the field, come home, take care of the livestock like milking the cows and feed every animal and then cook for us

when we were small. And I don't know how they did it, though. Believe me they work about twenty hours a day, summertime anyway.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite food that your mother made or was there something that you remember very much?

BOREK: Yes, yeah. I liked Cream of Wheat. I loved it and, uh, I have buckwheat. Did you ever have buckwheat? Yes? That I . . .

SIGRIST: Now did you grow all that stuff?

BOREK: Oh, yes, everything. Sometimes it was left over so my father would sell the things. Oh yeah. We were growing everything. It was a hard job, believe me.

SIGRIST: What did your dad look like, in words? Like you?

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: How would you describe that?

BOREK: He got a long nose like mine, and exactly like, really, like me. But I had my mother's legs. Big knuckles. But otherwise I look like, I look like my father but I act like my mother. Because even Genny said how good mother I was, and I still am, yes.

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SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what you would do for fun on the farm. You worked hard a lot, but what would you do that was fun?

BOREK: Not really much, though. No, because even on Sunday we have to go in the field and watch the cows, or horses, or, you know, the live food. Like I said, chickens, things like that. And it wasn't much fun, no. And you have to go, like summertime. We go to church like in the morning, and we go in the afternoon, too, for the service.

SIGRIST: Did you have any household chores that were yours, specifically? Like, did you have to do something specific in the house?

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was your job?

BOREK: Well, when I was smaller I peeled potatoes, because you have to, for seven of us, we share a great big pot to cook potatoes, so I peeled them. And I get ready vegetables, too, when I was a little bit bigger. But when I was big, from, in the morning till night, that what I make. ( she gestures to a basket in the room )

SIGRIST: You were making the baskets.

BOREK: Baskets. And, where is Elizabeth, over there? ( she refers to her granddaughter in the next room ) And then my father, he went to the city

with the baskets, and he didn't bring much money because he wasn't . . .  
That was really tough, really.

SIGRIST: So really the, uh . . . I'm going to just pause for a moment. ( break in tape )  
We're now resuming the interview. Tell me, as a little girl in Poland, did you  
know anything about America? What did you know about this country,  
because your mother was here briefly?

BOREK: Yes. I know, because my uncles, he write to my grandmother. They sent  
them dollars once in a while. That's why she was such a good with us, that  
she gets something for us when we're going to be good. So she buy them,  
you know, one dollar was nine, ten Zlotys. You can buy an awful lot. There  
was all silvers, and you can, for one dollar, was really a lot of money at that  
time. So she gets the dollars once in a while, and she was, especially with  
us, you know, with her grandchildren. She was very good.

SIGRIST: Are these your Dad's brothers or your mother's brothers who were in  
America?

BOREK: Two of them was my mother's brothers and three my father's.

SIGRIST: Do you know when they went to America?

BOREK: Yes, three of them, two I don't remember went, not remember, but I didn't, I  
don't remember what's happened. But two of them, they were, like, slave  
labor, like we were, in World War I in Germany? And then they don't want

to come back to Poland, like I did, and they came to this country.

SIGRIST: Where did they come when they came to this country?

BOREK: One was in New York and one I heard was in Massachusetts. But then when my grandmother died, they stopped to write.

SIGRIST: Do you know what they were doing when they got here, what kind of jobs they had?

BOREK: No, I don't know.

SIGRIST: So when you were growing up, what, when you thought about America, if you ever thought about America, what did it mean to you?

BOREK: You know, what it mean, not just to me, but to my friends and to my family, about that America is like Paradise. Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me how your mother ended up here for one year, whatever, the short amount of time she was here in Massachusetts.

BOREK: I remember she brought quite a bit of things. A great big, not suitcase, but like hope chest, and things like that, and full of everything, like clothes and things like that. So I still don't, I mean, there was, quite a few years after, she still got the clothes and everything, and she described how the people work over here and how they live and everything. And . . .

SIGRIST: And why did she come here?

BOREK: Because she said something was about her health, the water and the air and everything that she couldn't, she was sick all the time she was here.

SIGRIST: What year did she come? Do you remember? Were you alive when she came, or was this before you were born?

BOREK: Oh, no. She was young girl, single.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see.

BOREK: Uh-uh. I wasn't . . . ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: What inspired her to come here? Was there a family member here already?

BOREK: No. There was immigration. I mean, that's why she, lots of people came over here, and they stayed. Like interview, you know, and they stayed here.

SIGRIST: But she went back.

BOREK: She went back, after one year, that's what I remember.

SIGRIST: I didn't ask you, and I should before we get too far along, to name your brothers and sisters.

BOREK: Well, all of them?

SIGRIST: Yes, all of them.

BOREK: The first one, the oldest one was Catherine.

SIGRIST: And that was from the first marriage?

BOREK: Yes. And the second was Agnes.

SIGRIST: Also from the first marriage?

BOREK: Oh, yes. But then I was the first one, and then my brother was Stanley, like Stanislav, they call. And my, the younger sister, she's Amelia.

SIGRIST: Amelia. How old were you when your brother was born?

BOREK: Well, they were, we were, I was born in July 1919, my brother was born in February 1922, and my sister, the youngest one, in July 192 . . . ( she pauses ) Five. Yes.

SIGRIST: Good. Then maybe you can answer this question: What do you remember about your mother being pregnant and the whole, that whole experience, in a town like this in Poland?

BOREK: You know, the youngest one, even the youngest one, I couldn't remember much. I just remember that somebody, some lady came over, and then I see the baby, but nothing else. I was, you know, about six, seven years.

SIGRIST: But your mother, of course, was probably still working out in the fields even though she was pregnant.

BOREK: Of course, of course!

SIGRIST: And I was just wondering how, what it was like to be a pregnant woman at that time, under those circumstances, and what you might remember of that experience.

BOREK: Not just that time, but even after. The woman worked to the last minute in the field, or here and there, and they said that was the best thing for the woman, to have exercise, and then they got, like, you know, like no trouble with the birth. I don't remember when she was pregnant, but I remember something. Some lady came over in the house, and then we have baby. That's all I remember. Many times I was thinking about why I don't remember.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl what frightened you? What were you frightened of as a little girl?

BOREK: Bogeyman. That's what they was all, that was something about the bogeyman, and burglars, because they came, you know, sometime. And

drunkards, because that was really something, the men.

SIGRIST: Was there a tavern in town?

BOREK: Oh, yes, yes. But the women, they didn't drink, they didn't smoke. They just work and bear the babies. But the men, they go to the bar and they get drunk and they get nasty, mean and beat up the women, the wives, and children.

SIGRIST: Really, it's a hard life all across the board.

BOREK: Oh, God, believe me. Yes. Awful hard life.

SIGRIST: Did any of your, perhaps your grandparents, or maybe your mother and father ever tell you folk stories or local stories, you know, something that was very specific to that part of the world, like fairy tales, perhaps.

BOREK: Uh, they didn't say much about that, but I remember my father, he was in World War I in Russia and he said that was very tough, and they were talking about, with the friends and everything. And they said the food was good in Germany, I mean, in Russia, and everything, and they were almost freezed to death, and they said they were going to pray to God that there would be never war again. And then when World War II came, I always remember his words, that it was worst war yet.

SIGRIST: So he liked to talk about war stories.

BOREK: Yes, yes. Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: That's interesting. Well, let's speed you along in your life here. So you were in this town until you were about twenty, you said.

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: Now, why did you leave this town? What happened when you were a young adult that . . .

BOREK: Why I left? Because there was World War II, 1939 start the war, in 1940.

SIGRIST: So you were, what, twenty?

BOREK: Twenty, yes. So now, so in, everything was shut down and they, people was very afraid because the Germans came over here, and they can do anything. When the Germans came over with the tanks and everything and the bombs, the people, they got wild and crazy. They don't know what to do with themselves. They're running around, but they don't know where to go to. There was . . .

SIGRIST: They were just kind of blindly following.

BOREK: Yes. It was so sudden, too. So in 1940, February 7, the Germans came over. Not just over my house, but there were millions of young people they

pick up. And yes, drag us to Germany and we work on a farm in Germany. I just say "we" because there was, you know, many, many people. And like summertime there was three tough, not tough, it was yet, because you're a slave, you don't know if you're going to be alive the next day or not because they might pick you up and put you in a concentration camp and kill you for nothing.

SIGRIST: How did they take you? Describe how they Germans came into the town for me.

BOREK: Well, they were there anyway.

SIGRIST: They were already there.

BOREK: Oh, yeah. Because . . .

SIGRIST: When did they first get?

BOREK: In Feb, in 1939, in the war start.

SIGRIST: And in your town, exactly what happened?

BOREK: They was always right away with the bomb.

SIGRIST: They bombed part of the town.

BOREK: They bomb, yes. And people was killed already. And after there was really chaos because they have police soldiers in the fields, and the Germans, they came, you know, with the big tanks. They were bad. I can't even describe how were they. And then they, right now they take the people to the, to Germany, and work, or . . .

SIGRIST: How did they bring you to Germany?

BOREK: On the train.

SIGRIST: And what was that like? What was the train ride like?

BOREK: Oh, there was, well, February, there was a long time, too. A long practice, because they took me on February 7 and I got in Germany February 14th. So we were here and there in a train, and then we stopped. We were there for a few days in Krakow. I remember it was high school, we stayed there, we slept on the floor for about four or five days or even more, and then we came to, they took us to Germany. And on a farm, they're waiting for us already. And we come to the, I came to the farm and the next day they wake me up and I just go to, they told me, I didn't understand German, but it didn't take me a long time to learn. And when you're young, especially when you're with them all the time, they show me that I'm going to milking cows and clean them, and I'm going to clean the barn and everything. I said, "Oh, God, I can't." So summertime was really bad. We get up about three o'clock in the morning and go on the field, get the food for the cows, come back, feed them, milking them, and clean the barn, and have

something to eat, coffee and bread, and go on the field, work until about 12 noon. And we came home, we come back, on the farm, and clean the barn again and milking cows, and we have dinner. There was, I mean, I couldn't say that I was really hungry. I tell me God punished me. We did have bread in Germany, thanks God. And then we finish up and ready to go on the field and work about eleven o'clock at night. I was the strongest one, or the foolish one, or something like that. I got the men's job. We, I don't know how they say. We have the big, you know, ( she gestures ) we cut . . .

SIGRIST: The scythe.

BOREK: Yes, yes. Just like a man. All day, and I don't know how we did it, though. And then the next day, two o'clock in the morning, the knock on the wall, and to get up already. It was about a quarter of three, three o'clock again.

SIGRIST: I'm still curious how the Germans got you out of the town in Poland. Did they just come knocking on the door? How did they take you?

BOREK: Just like, uh, came over, and we go, and that's it.

SIGRIST: And they threatened force, I assume.

BOREK: No, no. Because we know that we're not going to resist, you know what I mean? And the war, maybe even, I don't know if it is important, because when they either take you or you have to hide yourself in someplace, they, my sisters told me that they dig the hole under some kind of barn, but they

destroy it. They had to keep digging. So every night they sleep like under the ground, because during the night they come and look for them people to get them and take them away. So she told me, they told, sister of mine, she said, "Maybe you are lucky that you went over there. At least you sleep in bed." And we did for five, over five years.

SIGRIST: Now, are you the only one from your family who was taken?

BOREK: I was to Germany, and my brother was in Austria.

SIGRIST: I see. Where in Germany? Do you know where this farm was?

BOREK: Yes, Bavarian.

SIGRIST: It was in Bavarius.

BOREK: Bavarius. Bavarius, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe where you slept on this farm?

BOREK: Uh, we have, I mean, that wasn't too bad, except there was no heater. When you got up in the morning, you got ice on your featherbed because there was no heat. There was like, it was awful how cold the bed, too. Like in Poland. We had about this much snow on the window, maybe like in December. And then maybe we can stay light, like end of March or something. Because there was this much snow on the windows ( she

gestures ). But we have heavy, the featherbeds and everything. And the Germans people, they have like special hot bottles, with hot water, and they keep on the stove, and they put in before they went to bed they put in, so at least they get something warm. But we didn't have any, and you couldn't get any. So once, I mean, there was quite a few times, but once I put, they have one liter of bottle from beer, and I put hot water in it, and you know what happened? It broke. And I have ice. That is this.

SIGRIST: So actually you weren't, you were fairly well-maintained. I mean, they wanted their work out of you, so they kept you as healthy as they could.

BOREK: Yes, yes. I mean, they tried to feed us, you know, as best they can, really. I cannot complain. We can't eat what we want, but at least you've got enough bread.

SIGRIST: Where's your mother during all this? Is she still back in the town?

BOREK: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: They left her there.

BOREK: Oh, yes, father and my two sisters.

SIGRIST: Why didn't they take your sisters.

BOREK: Because they were hiding then. They knew already.

SIGRIST: So you were working on this farm for five years, you said. What did you know of what was going on around you?

BOREK: Not much. Not much. They wouldn't tell you. But we knew that something is going to happen very soon. And my, where I was working on the farm, there a farmer has seven sons in the war. And one was, when we came over, when I came over there, he was kind of like a friendly person because the German people, somehow, they are cold. They don't, even for their own, they are not, like the grandmothers, you know, some they call, they hug you, and things like that. Not. But one son, he, when he came there, he wasn't at the war yet, so then after he went in the war. And when he came over, he said, "I should . . ." I mean, we asked him, "What's going to happen?" He said, "I shouldn't say that, because they're going to find out that I told you. They're going to hang me up." But we didn't say anything. He said, "You know, we're going to lose the war." But we were, I mean, I said, "I bet you you're going to win the war." And he said, "If we were, to won the war, you'll never get out from this barn for your life." That's what he told us. But he said, "If somebody else find out that I told you, I'm going to be hanged, and you, too." Because they were hanging people.

SIGRIST: Were you allowed to write out? I mean, was there any communication with your family during that time?

BOREK: Uh, for a while, yes. A very, very short time. And after they start the war with the Russians, and then everything stopped. You can't.

SIGRIST: Where do you suppose the produce that's being grown and the milk, where is it going?

BOREK: From Germany?

SIGRIST: Yes.

BOREK: Oh, they took everything, almost.

SIGRIST: Was this being cultivated for use by the troops? The milk and the vegetables?

BOREK: Oh, yes, the potatoes. All especially for the troops during the war, yes. Oh, they were very strict with the food. We were lucky that we have, on the farm. Because you got, like, they call becksewczai (?), or, you know, let you kill one pig. But there was, you know, like black market, too. They have about maybe fifteen, twenty pigs to raise. And when they got permission to kill one, then somehow they know when they're going to come to check up what you got, how many cows, and they hide the pig somewheres. They took him away. So after, when they got the becksewczai (?) for one, they killed two or three. So we have, during the winter we have more meat than in Poland. Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Did you have to wear a uniform? Did they give you clothes of some sort?

BOREK: Wooden shoes. This wintertime we went, wintertime wasn't much for work on the farm, so we went to the forest and cut, hand, you know, with the big saw, the heavy one. Right from the barn, the snow was this high, so we dig the hole by the tree and we cut the woods and cut to small pieces. With the wooden shoes. The wooden shoes was this high, and the snow go underneath this high. And I don't know how we were safe that we walk. And we got some food to bring with us, but it was below zero. The food was frozen. But we ate because we were hungry. And we came home, there was no heat whatsoever, nowheres except the barn, so we were lucky to come in the barn and warm up a little bit.

SIGRIST: Were there Jewish women there also, but were they all Catholics.

BOREK: No. There was, where I was working, there was eleven people. French, P.O.W., how they call? There was two of them, P.O.W. And Serbian, and Greeks, and Polish and Byelorussian. They were there, too. Oh, Crimean. There was eleven of us, different kinds of nationalities. Not just, I heard that there were Jews somewheres, but there was some kind of coverup that there were not.

SIGRIST: And all of these people were in similar situations as you were. The Germans had come in there and plucked them out specifically to work in this . . .

BOREK: Oh, yes. Because the German people was either in the office or, you know, most men was in the war, so who were going to do the job, and they needed

the produce.

SIGRIST: Towards the end of that five years, had you just kind of given up hope of ever getting out again.

BOREK: No, because some people, I don't know, that was really something, but they had, like, short wave from somewheres, and they said, "They are losing." "They are losing," or "They're going to lose." Another thing, the people know that their sons, or husband or fathers, they were, like, most in Russian, and they said that many, many killed and they got some kind of signal, some kind of numbers from them, that they're going to be dead. And they were, most of them. You should have seen the people, the mothers and brothers and sisters and grandmothers, how they cried for the grandsons. Do you think they were happy that there was the war? They hate Hitler, but what you going to do? They really.

SIGRIST: So it seems like to me, one thing that really kept everyone's hope up and energy up was the fact that you were all doing these kind of sneaky things. You've got the short-wave radio, and you're hiding the pigs.

BOREK: Some did that, because, but I'm going to tell you, since 1940 about two, the English people came at night. There were so many airplanes that go, you know, that we can't even see. And we were working on the field, you can't even see the sun, there were so many airplanes. And the noise, the earth was shaking. And then during the night English came over. So the day and night was bombarded, "Boom, boom, boom. Boom, boom, boom." The

German people were scared, and they know this is the end of it. But us, you know, I was (?), we were happy that some thing, some time we're going to be free. So they told us, when they come, when the airplane came. So they probably see us, I don't know. Probably they did, because it was very, very low. So when Germans was not there, so we just waved to them, and they know that we are there. I mean, of course they know. But when the German was there we couldn't do it. We had to lay down in the ground. And, uh, you know what? Toward the end, you know, the bombs go back and forth, back and forth. "Boom, boom, boom. Boom, boom, boom." So we were afraid that might something happen because there was very close to us, but I figure if I'm still alive I'm going to be free someday. And 1945, and April 27th they came over to the town where we're working. The first time in my life I see Negro, in the big tanks. Big guys, big hands. I said to him, "What happened?" But we were free, and they were not, I don't know, they feel us that we are already free and some speak German. Some of them, I mean, from the military men. And some speak Polish, and some speak, I mean, most of them English, of course. And they said that we no have to work any more, and we're going to be free, and they're going to take us soon somewheres. And they evacuated our, not us but, you know, the farmers, wherever they went, and they told us not to go and work, like, in the barn. But the cows was, you know, making noise because they were hungry. They got to be milked. And we did, because for the sake of, for the cows or for just, you know. So then we were there until May, I think June, and then they come over and they take us to the military barracks. And so they came over, and they took us on a truck, and we went over there. And we were there until about four years, and then we come over here. And . . .

SIGRIST: Now, the group, when you were liberated, if you want to use that term, was it still that core group of people that had been there from the beginning, or had there been an influx of other people brought into the farm to work?

BOREK: No, no. Just, after that. Not, no, no. When they came over, some, slowly. But we were still working, because they said to us, "Stay here." And how you're going to eat and live with them four or five years and not to work. You feel guilty somehow. Because it wasn't their fault that we were there. It was the big shots, you know? And another thing, my, the landlord, one son was S.S.

SIGRIST: The man who owned the farm.

BOREK: The man. His son, yeah. And he was a pilot, a military pilot. And the mother of the sons, she was really afraid that something was going to happen to them. But I don't know where they were. They didn't come back from the war. They didn't, some of them. And the mother, she got some kind of black things, you know, to put something on the S.S., and things like that. So she shredded everything piece by piece and we dig under the heavy, they used to keep like potatoes, things like this, so when the American comes they won't find pieces like that. She burned things like that. And she was really, I feel sorry for the ordinary people, the German people, because they try to, they took everything from the church and everything. And over there they were Catholics, too. The bells and everything. They, and they were really, you can have no light at night. You

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had to have some black things to cover up everything because they was afraid. It wasn't easy for them either. Just, you know, they were free, but still they suffered as we are. They were afraid that a bomb going to come over and kill everybody, and that's it.

END OF SIDE B, TAPE ONE

BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: How did you feel when the farm was liberated, when you were told everything was all right?

BOREK: Happy. Everybody was so happy. They hug, they say, "Yeah, we are free. We are free. We're going to go home. We're going to go home." But after we find out the Communists is there, we say, "We don't want to go home."

SIGRIST: The Communists in Poland, you mean.

BOREK: Oh, yes, yeah.

SIGRIST: Now, why didn't you want to go to a Communist environment?

BOREK: Oh, God, because . . .

SIGRIST: What did you know about Communist environments?

BOREK: We knew about that, you know why? Because there was Russian people, when the German people go right through the Russian or Poland or Ukrainian, they get the young people to come to the German, to working. And the Russian people told us how bad it is under the Communists. But they force, they don't want to go over here. But they sometimes Yalta, Roosevelt and Stalin, and was Churchill. They make the arrangement that when the war is over the Russian people has to come back. But we didn't have to, because you were like under the Russian Communists. So they came over to get us, the Polish military.

SIGRIST: But you didn't want to go.

BOREK: Oh, no. They even, a man, they turn over their cars and they burned them, and they chased them out, and they never came back after us again. I said, "Oh, my God, please don't take us over there."

SIGRIST: Did you want to see your family?

BOREK: Oh, yes, but it was impossible until 1979, I went over there to see them. But my father and my parents was already dead. But she see them. I mean, my father, anyway.

SIGRIST: You stayed in Germany for four more years.

BOREK: Four more years, yes.

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SIGRIST: Where? Do you remember the name of the town, or . . .

BOREK: Yeah. They call Bierdflaken. Bierdflaken.

SIGRIST: That's okay. We'll look it up on the map.

BOREK: I think she got, ( to her daughter Genny ) you got one here? Well anyway, it's something over here.

SIGRIST: Where did you stay in this town?

BOREK: In military . . .

SIGRIST: You were still in the military installment for four years.

BOREK: Yes, but under American. We were free.

SIGRIST: Oh, so what was that like?

BOREK: It wasn't too good either. There was no food. When she was born, ( she refers to her daughter Genny ) I got half a pint of milk a day, skim milk, for her. There were no juices. Really, we just survived.

SIGRIST: Had you married in the interim somewhere? When . . .

BOREK: I don't understand.

SIGRIST: When did you get married?

BOREK: In, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Before this all happened?

BOREK: No, no, no. No. I was married in 1945, in September.

SIGRIST: Oh. So in Germany.

BOREK: Yes. Displaced person. That's what they called it, D.P., Displaced Person.

SIGRIST: What was your husband's name?

BOREK: Jacob.

SIGRIST: And, um, so that's, the first husband, right. So that's, could you say his name, please? Could you just say the name, please. ( Mrs. Borek picks up some papers )

BOREK: Jacob Mosciwska.

SIGRIST: Right. And how did you meet him?

BOREK: Ah, he worked in the next town where I was working. So I meet him . . .

SIGRIST: So this is after, you're in the military installation at this point. Were you still in the camp?

BOREK: No. We were on a farm when I met him, yes. As a matter of fact we came at the same, uh, train, but I don't know him. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: So how did you, if you were busy working in the farm all day, how did you have a chance to meet someone.

BOREK: Once a month we can go to church. Not the regular church, but to, there was hospital, and by the hospital was chapel. So we went, once a month they allow us to go to church. So we just, you know.

SIGRIST: That's how you met him.

BOREK: That's how I met him.

SIGRIST: Was he Polish also?

BOREK: Yes. Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: So, and then Genny was born at the military installation.

BOREK: Oh, yes. She was born February, I mean, November 5, 1946.

SIGRIST: What was it like being with child at the military installation?

BOREK: That's what I was going to say. Believe me, there was no place to go. We were not sure if you were going to go over here, I mean to Poland, and we can stay for a while in Germany. Because even some people from now they stay. They have to. They complain that they lost their health and they can't immigrate. They only bring over here really healthy people. We went to the, through hell, to the commission and everything, to the doctors and everything. So they are still there, and Germany has to support them, yes. And some of them, they really, even myself, I was so tense and everything. I got problems, emotional. I go to doctors, take medicine, but still, I'm not all that.

SIGRIST: Why did you decide to come to America as opposed to a different country, perhaps?

BOREK: Yes, we could. This was in our minds, even from my childhood, the best country in the whole world, and indeed it is. It is. Believe me. Because this is my third country I live, but God bless America.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about the process of getting the papers and going through the physicals in Germany so that you could be allowed to leave. Tell me what some of those . . .

BOREK: Well, first of all we got, like, cards. And, oh, but you have to have a sponsor, so we got sponsor.

SIGRIST: Who was your sponsor?

BOREK: My husband, my first husband's family, they lived in Carnegie, Pennsylvania. And then they are sending our invitation. But meanwhile the uncle die, and we didn't want that they afraid we were going to be burden on them. So they transfer us to my husband's distant cousin on a farm in Richfield Springs, in New York.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the town?

BOREK: Richfield Springs.

SIGRIST: Richfield . . .

BOREK: Springs, yeah. And we came over here on a farm. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: So you've got a sponsor, then. You've got this person on a farm.

BOREK: You have to get, yeah.

SIGRIST: And then what papers did you have to get?

BOREK: We got, like a birth certificate, we got the marriage, and go to doctors quite a few times.

SIGRIST: What do you they do?

BOREK: They took your, took your blood and different kinds of tests. And you have to be really, they don't want to bring sick people over here. So we were, that was in German and English, but we didn't understand English, so we did all the papers in German.

SIGRIST: Did, because Genny was a baby, was there anything specific for a baby that they had to go through? Was her blood tested?

BOREK: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: They figured if you're all right, she's all right.

BOREK: Yes. They didn't do anything for the babies.

SIGRIST: Were you communicating with your mother and father by letter while you were living in Germany?

BOREK: After the war?

SIGRIST: After the war.

BOREK: No, you couldn't. I didn't until I came over here.

SIGRIST: It wasn't until you were over here. What port did you leave from?

BOREK: Um, Bremenhaven, Germany.

SIGRIST: And what was the name of the boat?

BOREK: General Harry Taylor.

SIGRIST: General Harry Taylor. I've interviewed other people who have been on that boat.

BOREK: Oh, did you? Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: They were on that boat.

BOREK: That was a nice boat, especially with the children. We had the officers cabinets. So we were lucky. But the men, they had to stay, you know, with the privates and soldiers, you know, upstairs, and they sleep on quarters on there. But we were, and the food, my God in my life, the first time I see the food, but I couldn't eat too much because I was afraid I was going to be sick. But the children, they were not sick at all. They were . . .

SIGRIST: Was your fear well-founded? Did you get sick while you were on the boat?

BOREK: Not, I wasn't. I wasn't, uh, I don't feel well. One night was really, before we came over here just one night was really, you know, the boat was going up and down and here and there. That was kind of scary, but . . .

SIGRIST: Was this the first time you've been on a big boat?

BOREK: On a big boat, yes.

SIGRIST: What was it like the first time you saw the boat before you got on it? What ran through your mind when you saw this huge boat?

BOREK: Believe me, I was so happy that I didn't even think too much about it. And we stop over from Bremenhaven to Cherbourg by England. They pick up the mail. And then we just drove like, when you see that food over there and everything. And especially with the children, they got, you know, a special privilege. So they . . .

SIGRIST: How long was the boat ride?

BOREK: About ten days.

SIGRIST: That's not bad. And . . .

BOREK: I mean, we were here one o'clock in the morning by the Statue of Liberty, but we stay until eight o'clock. By eight o'clock we were over by the bridge. They started to do process, another process, again. Oh, this much of papers and everything. So you hate to overdo your body because you got your child, you got your food. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: What did you take with you? What did you have to take with you?

BOREK: Not much. Because we didn't get, some things, not much at all, no.  
Because where would we get it, you know?

SIGRIST: When did you, do you remember feeling safe? When the boat was leaving Europe and you were across, was there a point when you suddenly just felt, how do I explain this? Just felt safe now. You put Europe behind you.

BOREK: Yes. We were very safe and very happy and, that we went to America. Because we hear so much goodness about America, and America is good, and free, and opportunity to, for the people who care, who work and save. Because some people they think the dollars grow on the trees, but I wasn't. I knew that you have to work and you have to save, otherwise you'll be poor again.

SIGRIST: What did you think when you saw, well, let's see, you said you pulled in by the Statue of Liberty at one o'clock in the morning.

BOREK: In the morning, but we just stayed there for a while.

SIGRIST: Did you see the statue? I mean, were you brought up on deck to see the statue?

BOREK: Yes. Especially, I mean, like, in the morning. I can't go on the deck, because she was with me now. But in the morning it was already light, and

then we stayed. I said, "Oh, boy, oh, boy." Then if something, I said, I'm going to come see. And I went over there to see, about, what? How many? About eight years ago or so.

SIGRIST: And then they took you from the Statue of Liberty in the morning, they took you to Ellis Island?

BOREK: Yes, yes. Eight o'clock we started the process. In the morning.

SIGRIST: Describe all that to me. What was Ellis Island like, and what did they do there?

BOREK: First of all, we went to the next, like bridge, or things like that, and there were, uh, you know, inspectors again, with the papers and everything. If you were the ones, and things like that. They got to be careful. And then we went on already, and they told us where to go because the sponsors were there to meet you. And they serve you, like, food, donuts and ( she laughs ) different things to eat. And then they introduced us here, and then we were walking around. And then we were there all day until seven o'clock at night, and a mini-boat, mini-boats came over and take us to the train station and they put us over on the train, and then told us the conductor to keep an eye on us because we didn't understand English. We got just only, you know, some tag. So we went . . .

SIGRIST: So how long were you at Ellis Island, then?

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BOREK: About all day, yes. And then we came on the train to Utica, New York, you've heard, over there, at twelve o'clock at night, and a farmer was there already waiting for us, and brought us on a farm.

SIGRIST: You must have been exhausted after all of this going from place to place.

BOREK: You know, when you're young and you look forward for something, you're not. But when we came on a farm, and sleep in an attic, that wasn't my dream. Believe me, I cry all night like a baby. I, somehow I was shocked. I expected it to be different. It was hot, and somehow that May was awfully hot. And they even spray more there, they spray the water over the roof because we slept. It was really hot. Just, but we were grateful that they were good enough to bring us over here, so we didn't have no, you know. So after a while we work and we got our own place. It took a while, but, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Did you stay in that town?

BOREK: There was no town. This farm.

SIGRIST: The farm, but I mean, in that part of upstate New York?

BOREK: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: How long did you stay, did you actually stay with the farmer?

BOREK: Oh, we stayed from May till the following February. Then we moved to Herkimer, New York, and we worked in a factory.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what it was like getting adjusted to this country? What was the hardest thing for you to get adjusted to?

BOREK: You know one thing it was, that I couldn't talk open about two Polish people which understand. They were all immigration, or some that was born here they speak Polish, too. Somehow they don't like us. And I talk to them about, you know, things, and then there was one girl, she was Slavish, she speaks Slavish, but I could understand. She said, "Don't talk to them. Don't say anything about your business, because they are, somehow they don't like, they are jealous about you. Well, same thing happened with her. They call her the pig, she come home, she cry, and even they send her, the farmers, the lady, she wasn't pleasant at all, God bless her that she help us to bring over, but she send her, she said, "You better go back to Hitler." You know, it hurts, though. Your own people. But the English, I mean, the American, English no like our Slavish, they were different. They welcome us, different than the other ones.

SIGRIST: Was there a big Polish population in Herkimer?

BOREK: Yes, quite a bit. Yes.

SIGRIST: What work did you husband get?

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BOREK: He worked in a furniture factory. So did I.

SIGRIST: Doing what? Tell me about the first job you got when you got here?

BOREK: The first thing we work on a farm, yes.

SIGRIST: You were used to that. ( they laugh )

BOREK: I didn't want to do that any more, but I have to, to living. So when we came here, we make twenty-five dollars, in the first hundred dollars, and then hundred twenty-five, for both of us.

SIGRIST: This is in the factory?

BOREK: No, no. On the farm.

SIGRIST: Oh, on the farm.

BOREK: But they would give us milk, and things like that, and a roof over our head. And then we moved to Herkimer. So we went to the, maybe you heard of the Standard Furniture Company.

SIGRIST: Standard Furniture? Yes.

BOREK: Yes. We were there. I am working, my husband was a finisher, like, and I was assembler. So I put furniture together with the hammer and electric drill

and hand drill, and pulled the big trucks and everything. But somehow I was happy that I make some money. I got my big first check, I said, "Oh, I kiss him." I said, "I'm going to put frame." But I couldn't, because I needed money. It was, you know, American people worked there. We were not welcome. You can see. They don't say much, but we were not welcome. Some people, they were already jealous of you, or something. I really don't know. They were not, our own people.

SIGRIST: That's interesting.

BOREK: Yes.

SIGRIST: What did you do with your daughter while you were working?

BOREK: We got babysitter. I mean, babysitting. She was four years old when I start work. So she stay with, we live upstairs and a lady live downstairs so she take care of her. Then she go to school, and there was, school was right there, and we were right there, so there wasn't any problems to, just to have babysitting.

SIGRIST: How did you learn English?

BOREK: Uh, I should, I should speak better English. One thing, I didn't go to school because I couldn't, because you've got to go to work and she, you know. So I went just a few, fifty, I mean, quite a bit. But with her, to get citizen paper. And after she don't want to speak Polish to us, because otherwise

she pick up, you know, young child picks so quick. And there's that, I said, "Genny," when she talked to me in English, I didn't say anything. So she knew that I wanted her to speak Polish to me. Because, not because I was against it, but I figure she never forget English because she's going to go to school and she would now learn. But Polish she will, and that's why we speak Polish a lot home. I should speak better, but now she's appreciate it, because she speak Polish.

SIGRIST: Was it hard for you to learn English? Was it hard to pick up the language?

BOREK: Not the language, but the writing, spelling, because we never, I mean, people don't spell in Europe. So that spelling was really hard. I can read quite a bit. You know, like now. But spelling is really . . .

SIGRIST: What about your husband?

BOREK: He, uh, he was somehow, can't exposed to himself. He was, like, embarrassed the way he talks, and he didn't, he write better, and things like that. But speaking, he got a hard time, too. He was afraid that they going to laugh at him, or things like that. But for me now, if I don't know anybody, I keep quiet, like at a party, things like that. But if I know now people, the friends, what the heck, I said. ( she laughs ) I'm worrying the way I talk. But everybody, but people who don't know who I was, and that I had an accent, they look at me, and they know that I got a big accent. But I said, well, that's just the way I talk, that's all.

SIGRIST: Well, now, if there was a large Polish population in Herkimer, you probably didn't actually have to speak English that much. Did you tend to speak Polish with your friends? Certainly in the home.

BOREK: Yeah, in the home we speak all the time Polish, on account of her. But different people, some, they were Polish, they didn't speak Polish either. Or just broken, like, you know, because that maybe was four generations already. So they speak, but not much. So I tried to speak Polish, you know. The co-workers, they were English, and things like that. So I speak, I try, anyway.

SIGRIST: What was it about America that you really loved? What aspect of America that you just thought was the most wonderful thing?

BOREK: Well, one thing, we didn't have freedom, I mean, in Germany. So the freedom was the thing, that you can go to church, and you can speak, and you can write, and you can talk about, like even in Poland, we were free, we were all only one national, like only Polish people, 99 percent, anyway, but, you know, like teachers, or even priests, or a little bit higher than the ordinary people, you have to pick you hat, like, for the men, and you have to bow and you have to kiss their hands, and things like that. They were, they didn't respect the ordinary people, from the city or, like, you know, even priests. He think he was the Almighty. Not like over here, you can go to him, shake your hands, talk to him freely like I talk to you or to her. But in Poland you couldn't, and it was free Poland. So the freedom, and like, to teacher, you have to call by "mister" or "missus". Even older people, or to

priests, kiss the hand, or things like that. And they think that you are nothing. Like, I live over here. My next door neighbor, who was a highly educated man, he works for G.E. They really respect me. Another, on the other side, is vice-president of the bank. And they talk to me like I talk to my family. And the next one is a lawyer. He comes over by my house. People walk over here a lot. And he introduce himself, and I don't even know which it was, and he's, now I find out that he's lawyer, and in Poland you think they would talk to me?

SIGRIST: So this was very hard to get used to, when you got here? Was it, or . . .

BOREK: Not, yeah, to talk to them, by, yeah, by the name. Call the lawyer by the name, in Europe, God forbid. Or even to teacher, or to, and she's a teacher. ( she refers to her daughter Genny ) She do her housework, she does everything. In Europe they have one teacher, one house, a man, I mean, a maid. It's amazing, believe me. What a difference.

SIGRIST: So that really struck you.

BOREK: Yes. That struck me, still, yet. Yes.

SIGRIST: Did you want to bring your parents over?

BOREK: They don't even, they . . .

SIGRIST: But you did re-establish contact with them once you got here?

BOREK: Oh, yes. First thing, you know what I did? I got something from Germany, I know I'm not going to work here. First thing, we got the checks, we send them packages. We were poor, ( she laughs ), but, so they were amazed, though.

SIGRIST: Did, what was your mother's reaction to you coming to America?

BOREK: I didn't, I mean, I didn't talk to my mother after, but when I came, one visit, my sister, my younger sister, she said that my mother and her and the family talk how lucky I am to come to America, yes.

SIGRIST: Were they sad, though, that you didn't make the decision to go back to Poland?

BOREK: Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Of course, you know. But she went, after. ( she refers to her daughter Genny ) Tour, when she was in college, and they went, like, tour. And then she went to see grand. She's the only one.

SIGRIST: You're talking about your daughter, Genny.

BOREK: Yes. Grandfather, one grandfather in the family. And she said they treated her like a queen because she was from America.

SIGRIST: Did you ever regret making the decision to come to America?

BOREK: Never, never, never. Even, because my first husband died, just dropped dead. He was only forty-five. That was a shock to me.

SIGRIST: What year was that? Do you remember?

BOREK: 1965. It's going to be twenty-six years, twenty-seven, already.

SIGRIST: And when did you re-marry?

BOREK: Six years later. 1971. Yeah.

SIGRIST: But you never, you were always happy you made that decision.

BOREK: Oh, yes. I would never, no. When I was there visiting, and my sister said my mother had to go back over there for a whole month, and she said, "Aren't you sad to go back to America?" I said, "Amelia, no, I'm not sad. This was my, and still is, I know I was born here, brought up, but that is my country over there now, adopted country. And now America is first and Poland is second, because that is my bread and butter and I was happy." And I still, I never regret, and I, like, oh, many times I said to people. People are some, you know, complaining about this country because they never know any different. I said, "Don't complain. Just say, 'God bless America.'" That's all I said.

SIGRIST: I think this is probably a good place to end, actually. I think we've brought your immigration experience full circle. I want to thank you very much for

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letting me come up to Clifton Park.

BOREK: You're welcome, you're welcome, yeah.

SIGRIST: And it was a wonderful story. You've certainly been through a lot.

BOREK: Thank you.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off in Clifton Park.

BOREK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW