

EI-214

THERESA GOUNARIS NAUM

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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ALBANIA, 1920

AGE 15

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

PORT OF EMBARKATION: PIRAEUS

RESIDENCES: ALBANIA: KORCHA

US: BOSTON, MA

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service,
and it's September 17, 1992. And I'm here with
Theresa Gounaris . . .

NAUM: Theresa Naum.

LEVINE: Naum.

NAUM: Naum.

NAUM: Yeah. I was saying your maiden name first.

NAUM: N-A-U-M.

LEVINE: N-A-U-M. And we're here in Watertown, Massachusetts,
at Mrs. Naum's home. And Mrs. Naum came from Albania

through Ellis Island when she was fifteen years old, in 1920. Well, I'm very happy to be here, and I'm looking forward to hearing about your experiences. So why don't we start by you telling me the town you were born in.

NAUM: I was born in Albania, and the name of the town is Korcha.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

NAUM: Well, Korcha. K-O-R, cha. It's one C with the . . .

LEVINE: An accent?

NAUM: An accent on the bottom. Korcha. And A, yeah.

LEVINE: And what year were you born? What was your birth date?

NAUM: My birth date is 1905, or '04. '04?

LEVINE: Do you remember the date, the month?

NAUM: April. April 22.

LEVINE: 1904 or 1905.

NAUM: Yeah, 1904, I think, yeah.

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

NAUM: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Can you tell me about the town? What do you remember about it from when you were a little girl?

NAUM: Well, when I grew up it was the best place for school and for churches and growing up. Nothing better.

LEVINE: What was, what church did you go to?

NAUM: Orthodox Church. Albanian Orthodox Church.

LEVINE: Was your family religious?

NAUM: Of course, of course.

LEVINE: Did you celebrate festivals, or did you go to church often?

NAUM: We used to go to church for Christmas, for Easter, every Sunday, Good Friday, Thursday, all that week, every night we used to go, the week that it was Easter on Sunday. But that week we used to go every night. Good Friday, Good Thursday, and those things.

LEVINE: And did you go to an Albanian Orthodox school, or was

it a public school?

NAUM: Uh, this was a public school, but it was, we were taking Greek, Greek, and Albanian, yeah.

LEVINE: Did you know any Greek before you went to school? You learned Greek when you went to school.

NAUM: When we went to school we learned Greek, yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about school, any experiences that you had in school that stick in your mind?

NAUM: What experiences?

LEVINE: When you were in school? Did you like school?

NAUM: Of course.

LEVINE: Were you a good student?

NAUM: I was a very good student, but I'm glad that I went and I took whenever I could take it Albanian and I took Greek all the years that I was there. And at least when I came to this country I knew more than one language. I learned those two at school, Albanian and Greek. And then Roumanian, these people, their village was burned and they came in Korcha to live,

because their homes, they left their homes. And they were coming to our house to a little conversation. My father was in America. He was in Boston. He was working on a fur shop on Chauncy Street. And he stayed three times, four years each time.

LEVINE: I see. So when you were a little girl, how old were you when your father first went to America?

NAUM: A few months old. I didn't know father then. When I came, I recognized the father, because I was at least four years. But when he left I was a few months old, and I didn't know. A few months old, they don't know.

LEVINE: Well, then, who was at home? What . . .

NAUM: Mama.

LEVINE: What was your mother's name and maiden name?

NAUM: Helen.

LEVINE: And do you remember her maiden name?

NAUM: Helen Abrazzi.

LEVINE: A-B . . .

NAUM: Adrazzi.

LEVINE: A-D.

NAUM: Yeah.

LEVINE: D-R-A-Z-Z.

NAUM: Yeah. Adrazzi, Adrazzi. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. And it's an I on the end, Adrazzi?

NAUM: I, yeah.

LEVINE: And did you have brothers and sisters at home?

NAUM: Well, at the beginning when my father left I did have,
but then when he came again we had my brother.

LEVINE: What's your brother's name?

NAUM: Bill.

LEVINE: Bill.

NAUM: The one I have now here. Bill Gounaris.

LEVINE: So that was just the two of you then?

NAUM: Just the two of us. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And did you have a grandmother and grandfather?

NAUM: I have grandmother. Two grandmothers and one grandfather.

LEVINE: And what do . . .

NAUM: Because my father's father died before I knew him, you know.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your mother's mother and father?

NAUM: They were very good. And I have a picture of them, but I give it to my brother. I didn't bring it yet. I was going to show them to you. They were very, very good.

LEVINE: Do you remember them from when you were little?

NAUM: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I remember them very well. Her name was Telfania.

LEVINE: Oh, what a beautiful name.

NAUM: And my grandpa's was Anastas.

LEVINE: Now, what did you do? Did you visit them? Did they live near you?

NAUM: We were walking to their house, they were walking to

our house. In Korcha, they were.

LEVINE: And when you would visit them in their house, what kinds of things did you do there, when you were visiting them?

NAUM: We were talking, we were telling stories. The old folks telling us a story, and we would listen it with the eyes open (she whispers) like that.
(she laughs)

LEVINE: Do you remember any stories that your grandparents told you? Do you remember any of them?

NAUM: I don't know which one was from that, you know.

LEVINE: Would they be like fairy tales that they would tell?

NAUM: No. Stories, you know. They were good, good grandparents. Oh, it was nice. But my grandpa, he went to college to become a priest in Albania. And then he became a priest, all right. And he wasn't ordained yet. But you have to get married, and then get ordained that, if they lose the wife, the priest never gets married again. And, you know, they said, they heard that she was pregnant, you know. (?), like that, not that she was already, but after she got

married she was pregnant, and they said, "And now when you have the ordained day, that day you should baptize your baby." They told my grandpa and my grandma. And they said, "It's not a bad idea." Because in a few months, they were going to do it. All right. And when she had the baby the baby died and she died, and then the mother says, "Not my boy to become a priest."

Because if he becomes a priest now to be ordained, he's never going to get married, and me, it's all I have. And if I be alone alive, it might be not bad. But if I die tomorrow, my son is going to be in this house all by himself like that, and I don't want to do that." He should work something else. That's all right, he got the school. He told him, you know, he's got nothing to lose.

LEVINE: So he didn't become a priest.

NAUM: He didn't become a priest. But he had a first cousin that she was, her husband was a lawyer, and he became, what they call it?

LEVINE: A judge?

NAUM: A judge, yeah. He became, for the Korcha. And they took my grandpa. He was well-educated. And they put

him to go in the villages, and go in the villages and collect the taxes. But they say, "You shouldn't worry, because we put one, you know, like that, a man with him."

LEVINE: Like a bodyguard.

NAUM: A bodyguard, yeah, yeah. And then he was so sad. He went and did that, and he was paid good. Very, very good, you know.

LEVINE: Did people like him, or did people dislike him because he was the tax collector?

NAUM: No, for what, dislike him? Everybody said to him, "Don't you do it," to become a priest. "Work something else and get married, and you might have some children and this and that. You have one mother like this, and you're going to depend on her? You lost a mother quick, not a long, long time. You got nobody in your family. And you're going to stay like that? No." Because that's the way the Orthodox sees. They get married once, but if they lose it fast in life, no more. See?

LEVINE: So this was your father's father?

NAUM: No. My mother's.

LEVINE: Your mother's father.

NAUM: My mother's father. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: And then was it your father's father who was alive, or mother?

NAUM: Mother.

LEVINE: Mother. And what was that grandmother like?

NAUM: That grandmother, she was very sick, poor thing. You know, when I reached that I knew her. But she was in the house, nice, my mother. She used to take care of her all right. And me, I was growing up. She was happy seeing me, like that.

LEVINE: So she lived in your house?

NAUM: Oh, yeah, yeah. They keep them over there. And especially those years. They keep them nice, the best.

LEVINE: And did you have aunts and uncles around, or other family members? Cousins?

NAUM: My grandmother had a son and two daughters, my mother

and another daughter.

LEVINE: And they were in the village?

NAUM: In that place, in Korcha, they were, yeah.

LEVINE: So you had quite a big family, in a way.

NAUM: Yeah.

LEVINE: You had an extended family. Well, how long did you go to school?

NAUM: I went to school. Ever since I started when I was a tyke, until I left for America. And I took French quite a few years. And when I came here in this country I wasn't bad. But when I came here and I was kind of mad that I knew French and I didn't know a word of English. (she laughs) And I said, "Don't mention French to me, because I don't want to keep my French in my mind. If I keep my French in my mind, I'm going to feel like I'm tangling the French with English, and I'm not going to be able to learn a good English. So I don't want to, I want to give up the French. And that's what I did, and now I'm sorry that I didn't keep a little bit of that French that I knew for so many years.

LEVINE: What was your favorite subject in school? What did you like?

NAUM: Me? Not what I liked, but what they liked me in school. If they have a play, they give me the leading part.

LEVINE: Oh!

NAUM: They liked the way I talked, the way I spelled things, you know, on my language. And they gave me the good part of the play. And I loved doing it.
(she laughs) The best.

LEVINE: Was your family a musical family at all? Did anyone play music?

NAUM: My father had a mandolin or something when he was young, when he was home, before he took America. And now my brother had Mandolin for all the time, and in school he used to take violin. And even today that he's eighty years old, he is with the music.

LEVINE: How about you? Did you ever take singing or music, or dancing?

NAUM: Singing, when we went to a wedding, when we went to

engagement party or name day party or whatever, we were singing.

LEVINE: What was the name day? Tell me about the name day. What happened on that day?

NAUM: On the name day? People, they come, "Happy name day." They visit you, and you're going to give them this and that, or, you know.

LEVINE: Like a birthday, every year?

NAUM: Uh-huh. So that's name day.

LEVINE: Do you remember any songs from Albania?

NAUM: Huh, plenty!

LEVINE: Could you sing one? (Mrs. Naum laughs) Even just part of one, if you can remember any.

NAUM: For me, I know the songs, but I don't know now that I'm kind of worried with my eyes.

LEVINE: It would be nice to have it on tape, if you could just remember part of one.

NAUM: Uh, oh, which one shall I say?

LEVINE: Pick one you like a lot.

NAUM: But I don't have my brother. We could . . .
(she laughs)

LEVINE: You could do a duet.

NAUM: A duet, or he usually tells me, "Start this one." You know. And then I go for that. But like this I don't know which one. I know now that, not to be in the middle, you know. To be in the middle, because I don't know the rest of it or something. I don't want to do it. If I had been prepared it was much better, but . . . (she speaks off mike) I don't like this. I know plenty, but . . . (she laughs)

LEVINE: Should we go on, and then if you think of one you could sing it later?

NAUM: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Let's see. So you must have had girlfriends and playmates.

NAUM: Oh, I had girlfriends over there. And some of them, we came in one summer in America. It happened. And then, oh, we were very, very, very happy.

LEVINE: How did this happen that you came when you did? What were the circumstances?

NAUM: My father came as usual. He did that road three times, four years each time. He used to leave . . .

LEVINE: Three times for four years.

NAUM: Four years, here. And he used to come home for a few months, in the summer months, that they don't have work so much, the furriers, and maybe took a little more to make it a little longer, and that's the way to do it. So this time he came with the intention not to come back to America. I'm going to stay, and I'm going to open up a store, a fur shop, a store, and I'll make a living like I used to make it before I came to America. All right. So he met one day, he met this fellow that they were very good boyfriends, you know, when he was in Albania. And he said, "I want to tell you something. And me, I feel very guilty to tell you, because I love to have you here. You know the good times we had when you were here, but now we had a small war and us, that we were here, we know what we went through. And now they say a couple of wars are coming back, and they are coming bigger

wars than the one we start. And I don't like to see you that you spend your time in America, and now to come here when they have a bad war, and you're going to feel terrible. I want you to take your wife and your children and go home, go to America, and don't stay here to see the wars like we do," he said. And my father came in the house and he started da, da, da, how to make the works for visa and this and that. And the next day we went and did it, and he came in no time, the visa to take the wife and the two children. See?

LEVINE: So did you see anything of the war?

NAUM: Of the first World War? We were there.

LEVINE: What do you remember personally? Do you remember seeing anything of fighting or, what were the conditions like. Do you remember?

NAUM: It was bad, it was bad. We were kids in the house without a mother. Our grandparents, they used to come and see us. And my father's sisters, they used to come and see us, you know. Relatives, plenty, yeah.

LEVINE: But your family was fairly well-to-do. I mean, you

weren't poor.

NAUM: My father used to send the check, and we spent it to go in the market and buy things in the fall. We buy, you know, the grain, and we made it flour, you know, so we would have it for wintertime. All of those things like that, we had them in regular, yeah.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember the house you lived in?

NAUM: Of course.

LEVINE: Can you describe it?

NAUM: Uh, it was, the last house we stayed there, it was my nephew's, my father's nephew. He took his wife in Natick in America, and then my father was in America, and he said, "Why don't you tell your family to move in our house?" And we know that we have uncle's wife there, with the two children. And we couldn't be happy. We don't know, who knows, we stayed there, how they keep it, how they do it, you know, but we know who is there. "All right, I'm all right. I'll tell my wife if she does it, I'll tell you." And they were going to pay, he was going to pay the rent in America. And he wrote to my mother, and my mother says,

"Sure." So she moved with us over there.

LEVINE: Was it a nice house?

NAUM: It was a new house. They built it a few years before they made up their mind that it was going to take the family in America. And very nice, very nice. And good neighborhood, very good neighborhood. Yeah.

LEVINE: Did people have running water in your town at that time? Was there water, or did you have to go to the town, to the well?

NAUM: Not well. We had, we had faucets in the streets that they were running, yeah, this much, day and night. And you go there and you fill up the kettles, you know, like that. And you bring them home. And in the house we had pump, you know, in the yard. Water to wash, to wash clothes, to wash the, everything, standing water. But those, they were running day and night, we used to go and fill them up. And then we had them, like over here we buy the gallon of water, see. Because that water was very good that was running, running, day and night. Never finished. Yeah.

LEVINE: And what did most people in the town do for an occupation? What kind of work did they do?

NAUM: They were tailors. They were dressmakers. They were, you know, they made the bridal, bridal dresses, you know, everything. Yeah, like that.

LEVINE: What did your father do before he came to America?

NAUM: He had a fur shop.

LEVINE: Oh, he had a fur shop.

NAUM: He closed the fur shop and he went to America.

LEVINE: And then he had his, was he working for a furrier here?

NAUM: Yes, but in Albania he had a store for himself.

LEVINE: I see. And here he worked in Boston?

NAUM: In Boston. When we came here we found him that he was working in Chauncy Street for a fur shop. Very good father and son. They were very good people. My father was working for them, very good.

LEVINE: So, let's see. So when you, when your father decided to get the visa and bring his family here, do you

remember your mother packing things, or do you remember anything that you packed to take to America with you?

NAUM: Yeah, yeah. Oh, sure. I was old enough to know those things. My brother was a nine years old. But me, I was all there.

LEVINE: What did you take with you? Was there anything that you brought with you?

NAUM: I brought my clothes, everything I had. Coat, suit, and whatever I had, sure.

LEVINE: And how about your mother? Did she bring household things as well?

NAUM: The ones who can bring it, not the furniture like that. She didn't bring it. She bought here. But a blanket, a woolen blanket, you know, anything, yeah, like that. I have on the couch there. Anything like that we didn't give them, you know. We took them.

LEVINE: Was your mother excited about coming?

NAUM: Well, she didn't like to leave her mother there, but what could she do? You know, it was best for my

father because a furrier, they pay good pay here, instead of being in Albania, you know.

LEVINE: Did your mother work at all when she was in Albania?

NAUM: No. No, she was keeping house. She had a grandmother, uh, a mother-in-law, and she had me at the beginning, and then we had my brother, a baby, you know, and like that. She kept the house.

LEVINE: So what was, what, did you get examined before you got on the ship?

NAUM: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember that? Do you remember leaving the village, the town, rather?

NAUM: Of course, of course. I was old enough to remember everything.

LEVINE: What was, did you, was there a farewell party, or how did you leave the town? Did you go by horse and wagon, or . . .

NAUM: No, no, automobile, yeah, '20, 1920.

LEVINE: You went by automobile. And where did you go?

NAUM: We went to Greece. Little by little we went to Athens.

LEVINE: Was it a long, did it take along time?

NAUM: No, a couple of days, like.

LEVINE: And then you, did you leave from Athens? Where was the port that the ship left from? Do you remember?

NAUM: I thought it was in Athens, and we came to New York.

LEVINE: And do you remember the name of the ship?

NAUM: No.

LEVINE: And was it a long journey? Do you remember how long it took for you to come?

NAUM: Quite a few days, I don't know exactly.

LEVINE: And in the ship were you in a cabin or were you down in the bottom of the ship with a lot of people?

NAUM: No, no. Rooms, I said.

LEVINE: Just your family in the rooms? And did you go to a dining hall for meals, or did you bring your own food?

NAUM: No. We used to go to eat. They give us the meals,

yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the voyage, anything that happened aboard ship? Do you remember?

NAUM: Aboard ship?

LEVINE: Anything that happened while you were crossing the ocean?

NAUM: Yeah. I don't remember anything bad, no.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember what you knew about America before you came here?

NAUM: America, America, that's all. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Did you hear, had you heard good things about it?

NAUM: Good things, we heard very good things. My father had, in Natick two nephews, the sons of a sister. Two brothers, they were in Natick, see. And we knew them. They used to come, because they used to come, like my father used to come every four years. They had exactly the same thing. They didn't stay ten years, no. Three, four years, and they used to come home, yeah.

LEVINE: So do you remember coming into the New York Harbor on the ship? Remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

NAUM: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: And what was that like? Did you know what it was, when you came?

NAUM: It was liberty, you know, from America, from the first ones that they came.

LEVINE: And did you, and did people come up on deck to see the statue?

NAUM: Of course. Everybody was surprised like that.

LEVINE: And then how about Ellis Island? What do you remember about that?

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

NAUM: Ellis Island was after, after that, yeah. I don't know anything extra, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember there was a great, big building and you went in? They examined you again? Do you remember that at all?

NAUM: No.

LEVINE: Okay. So then after you went through Ellis Island and you were in New York, then did you go straight to Boston?

NAUM: We didn't go straight to Boston because my father wasn't in Boston when we came to him. He brought us. So we went to Hudson. In Hudson we had my mother's brother. See? If you want me to show it to you in a picture, I can do it.

LEVINE: Okay. After we've talked and you can show me. Wait. So did you stay in Hudson very long?

NAUM: Oh, well, my father left us in Hudson to my uncle's house. My uncle was a bachelor. His wife, his mother and our grandmother, they were in Albania. But like my father was working in Boston, my uncle was working in Hudson. And he was well-educated and well (?) looking. You've got to see the picture.

LEVINE: And was he a furrier as well?

NAUM: No, no, no. He was working in the factory.

LEVINE: And so your father went to Boston, and your mother and

your brother and you stayed in Hudson for a while.

NAUM: Not for a while, until my father got a house, and then he came and took us over there, and we were helping him. And we put up a house, you know, to stay there.

Yeah. No, while I was in Hudson, my father was going to stay alone in Boston.

LEVINE: So did you go to school at all once you came here?

NAUM: Me, I wasn't likely, I was at that age that I didn't feel right to go daytime. My brother was nine years old and he went daytime. And he skipped a few years like that, and when he reached high school, when, the year that he was going to graduate, he was the same age as the others in high school, because he skipped a few years at the beginning, and then he became like the others. As much as the others was in the years to that class, that much my brother was.

LEVINE: And do you remember learning English?

NAUM: Yes.

LEVINE: How did you learn it?

NAUM: I learned it, you know. I learned the ABC's and this

and that, and it wasn't bad. Because Albanian ABC's are like English, but Greek it's different. Greek is harder. And to know Greek and to learn English. It's not alike, you know. But Albanian is Latin (?), so it's not bad, see?

LEVINE: So did you go to night school, or did you pick it up on your own?

NAUM: No, no, no, night school. I went to night school in Boston. And my father said, "Oh, how nice, I wanted to go to night school, but I didn't feel like going alone, You know. Now that I have you that you're going to go, why should I leave you to go at night by yourself and to come home by yourself? We'll go together, and it's good for me. Because I'll learn some English there.

LEVINE: So you went with your father?

NAUM: Yeah, yeah. My father and I, we went together. In the neighborhood, we were walking to go to school.

LEVINE: Then did your father become a citizen?

NAUM: Oh, yes, yes.

LEVINE: And did the whole family become citizens?

NAUM: We come, we became after. I got married, and then I became a citizen.

LEVINE: So did you get a job when you came here?

NAUM: Well, my father kept me a little bit in that work over there on Chauncy Street in the fur shop, finishing. Because I was very handy in Albania growing up. We used to take handwork in school, and our mothers used to teach us handwork. Our aunt used to teach us handwork. And the neighbors, you know, stayed together, and talked and laugh, and we'd learn. Each work, if you knew something else, you didn't know it, you were going to learn it from her, next door neighbor, you know. Very good, very good. And when I came I was ready for handwork, you know. Yeah.

LEVINE: So you stayed working with your father?

NAUM: I worked sometimes with him, yeah.

LEVINE: And then what did you do for entertainment, or for enjoyment?

NAUM: We used to go to church. We didn't have a church when

we came, but they had the fifth floor on Claremont Street, and that we, weekdays it was like a hall for meeting, for the business. And when they metted for Sunday morning for church, they used to come, and they had all kinds of icons in one big closet there. And they opened up the closet, two or three fellows working, fixing it up like a church, that hall. And we said, "Ah, the churches we left in Albania, now to come and have the church in a hall like this. Huh, we're going to run, and we're going to do the best things to make a church in Boston." And we did.

LEVINE: And where was the church that you did, that you did make?

NAUM: It was on, uh, you know, in Boston, not south Boston, but Boston. Anyway, we bought the church, it was South Boston. Yeah. And still we had that church, very good church.

LEVINE: Now, did you live in, did you and your family live in Boston at that time?

NAUM: We were living in Boston, and then little by little they were looking to find somebody to get married with me.

LEVINE: Oh, your mother and father were looking?

NAUM: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And how did that work out?

NAUM: It worked. And me, I didn't say anything, because me I came from Albania. And in Albania is, as educated they were people, and as the last, to the last point of styles we were, but that, it wasn't any different style. They get married, the girls with the, with the . . .

LEVINE: Dowry?

NAUM: No, no. With somebody that makes the matchmaking.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

NAUM: And it wasn't bad for me. I didn't want to get married that young, but the parents, they wanted me to have it easy for them to see me getting married, and then they don't have to worry about anything, you know.

LEVINE: So did they actually choose the person?

NAUM: They choose the person. My mother and father, they

liked this fellow, because this fellow was staying in Worcester with two of my mother's cousins. My father and my mother, they went to see the cousins, and over there, instead of finding only the two cousins, they found another boy from Korcha. Me, with my husband over there in the picture. Not the corner, but the middle, with me.

LEVINE: I see. (she looks at the picture) Oh, yeah.

NAUM: You see it?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you know him from Korcha?

NAUM: No, no, no. I knew his brother because in the baker shop that we used to go, he was working there, and I knew him. And I knew his uncle where my husband was working because they had a store, a dry goods store. And we used to go and buy, if we made, you know, any handwork, and we used to go and buy the bread there. We used to buy everything. Even as kids we used to go there. And, see, I knew his family like that. But not him.

LEVINE: And what was your husband's name?

NAUM: Banagel.

LEVINE: D-A-N?

NAUM: B-A-N-A-G-E-L.

LEVINE: And did you like him when you first met him?

NAUM: It was wonderful. He was light, you know, like light hair, like reddish hair, you know. And, but these two farmers, what they say to my mother and to my father, "You didn't need another diploma for that person." Because they knew him for years and years, and who was made to cook, and my father said to those two brothers, "I wasn't there. I was in Boston with my brother." They went to Worcester, but by themselves, so they could talk free. I wasn't there to hear it. Huh! (she laughs) And me, it wasn't anything different, because I wasn't going to get married to meet somebody over there, you know, like that. I was going to get married to my parents where they fixed me. You know, that was the style for us there so it was all right with me. But one thing that I wanted to stay a little longer, but they don't want to keep me, because they said, "If she goes to school by herself, we're going to worry. She might meet somebody to get married over there which we don't like. And if she

this, if she that. So that's why I said let them do the best they can.

LEVINE: So were there people who were matchmakers, and that's what they did for a job? Were there people who did that?

NAUM: But they did, mostly not with money. You know, they did it for friendship, you know. Yeah, yeah. They knew that this family had a good girl, and that family had a good boy, and they matchmaked. And, it was like that.

LEVINE: Did you have a big wedding?

NAUM: Not too big. We were new in this country, you know, like three years or something.

LEVINE: So then you got married, and where did you live then?

NAUM: My husband was a boy from Worcester, see? And, but before we got the engagement, and before we got engaged, they brought my husband, these two fellows, the cousins, that he was living with them, they brought him one Sunday, and my mother had prepared a good dinner, and she had the three of them for dinner, and me over there helping my mother to serve.

LEVINE: And that's when you met him?

NAUM: Yeah. That's when I met him, you know, first time.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you thought when you first met him, what you thought about him?

NAUM: I liked him. He was light, light complexion, you know, nice, nice. And when he talked he talked with people, They laugh. Something like that. Yeah, like that. And I knew in Albania the family, you know. I knew the uncle that was rich, and he was in the church somebody, you know. And, like this, you know.

LEVINE: So then you went to Worcester, did you, after you were married?

NAUM: I went to Worcester for a few months, but he didn't have a good job in the factory. He had a good job, but now it spoiled for him, and it wasn't such a good job, and he wanted, he was looking to buy a store, see. And then he bought a store here in Watertown, and then we got married like that.

LEVINE: Then you lived in Watertown.

NAUM: Watertown. I'm in Watertown since 1922, and I'm in

this house since 1924.

LEVINE: It's a long time.

NAUM: Huh.

LEVINE: So after you got married did you work any more? Were you still working?

NAUM: I didn't work because my husband had a store, and he had a fellow, that that store was near the theater, and he needed too many hours a week, too many, like that. And I had to go and help my husband.

LEVINE: Was it a grocery store?

NAUM: You could keep groceries, but mostly it was next door to the theater, they were coming for intermission to buy a Coke or a cup of coffee or a bar of candy or a bar of gum, you know, like that. (she laughs)

LEVINE: And then did you have children?

NAUM: No, no. Children, we never had any. And, just like that.

LEVINE: So when, did he keep the store?

NAUM: He kept the store thirty-six years. And we were

living in Watertown, but I used to go an awful lot that I didn't have any children, and I used to go an awful lot and work for the church, for the society of the ladies. I used to work a lot. Yeah, because I had time. I was coming here when he needed me. It wasn't that I was working so many hours a day, no.

LEVINE: Were there, was there an Albanian community in Watertown at that time?

NAUM: We were more Albanians than we are now, because when they died they left the houses to the School Street and all that, to the children, and the children, they didn't stay there. But they sold it, they divided the money and they went places. Who knows where they were there. So that's why we don't have very many now in Watertown.

LEVINE: Was your mother and father happy that they had made the decision to come to America?

NAUM: Of course. Yeah, and my father, he said to my mother, "Let's go and take a picture, take the children, a picture, because I feel guilty that I took you people, and we left your mama there." We left her where they, she had only one son. With the son's daughter, not

daughter, with the son's wife, and she, she had two children, a boy and a girl, and she became my grandmother. And my grandmother was . . .

(referring to something in room) I took it up. My grandmother was . . . (referring to something in room) Good, thank you. And my grandmother was, what I was going to say? Was well enough, you know, that she was baking the bread, she was doing this and she was doing that, and she kept her daughter-in-law to do the cleaning in the house and this and that, when somebody comes, you know, she was serving the sweets, the coffee, and stuff like that. Yeah.

LEVINE: So your father had a picture taken of your family, your mother and your brother and you, and he sent it to you.

NAUM: After we were here two, three months, and he said to my mother, "I want you to prepare the children and ask to take a picture to send it to your mother and make her happy." He goes, "I feel very guilty that I took my family here, and we left her there." But we didn't left her in the street. We left her in the house with a daughter-in-law. And then my uncle came. He took us to Hudson, and he came so many times here, but the

same year he went home. Because he had the wife, and the two children, and Mama there. And he didn't come any more to America. He stayed home.

LEVINE: So in other words the wars that your father . . .
(referring to the microphone) Be careful of the microphone.

NAUM: Which microphone?

LEVINE: This.

NAUM: Oh, oh, oh, I'm sorry.

LEVINE: So the wars that your father . . .

NAUM: I was going to take that picture there.

LEVINE: I think it's better if we look at them after, because it's hard when the tape's on.

NAUM: Yeah, you're right. You know the business. Me, I don't know. I have it here, but still I'm going to do something else. (she laughs)

LEVINE: The wars that your father's friend warned him about, and told him not to open the fur store in Albania, they never happened.

NAUM: I never knew him, who it was, but even today when he comes a day that I can thank him that he advised my father to go. I was there because the country was good and we were growing up very good and all that, but no. They had wars. They had this, they had that. We had enough. No. I'm glad. I'm glad that we came here.

LEVINE: Can you remember any differences between Albania and the United States? Things that struck you as very different when you came here at fifteen?

NAUM: Oh, well, what was different? We used to do whatever we did at home in the house. The cooking, and everything.

LEVINE: Do you remember any kinds of meals, of cooking, that your mother did, that she did in Albania, that she kept doing once she got to this country?

NAUM: When we were here, she used to do everything, like in Europe.

LEVINE: And do you remember any dishes, I mean, particularly dishes that are Albanian?

NAUM: Yeah, yeah. She used to make a stew with meat, with

vegetables, you know. Like we make lamb meat with cabbage, lamb meat with leek, and with tomato, and with onion. We saute and saute and saute the meat. And then we put red tomato paste, and all that, and then we put cabbage on the leeks, or whatever we do, see? Green beans, everything, we make a stew with the lamb, yeah.

LEVINE: Were there any desserts that your mother made?

NAUM: They make baklava. They make, what they don't make? And when they make baklava, they make it with open fillo. You open the fillo, make it like a paper, with your hands, you see? And you make a baklava, and that's a baklava, not to anything else. They make a lot of good, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else that you could think of that you'd like to say, I mean, about your life, about starting out in Albania and coming here when you were fifteen and living out the rest of your life here? Is there anything else that you'd like to mention?

NAUM: Well, what shall I say, I don't know. But when we came here, and after we left Albania, as I said that we were for church, you know, so much. And we had

good churches at the time we were going to leave Albania, we had very good churches. And then they became Communist. They became Communist, and they didn't want the churches any more. And one church, that it was a beautiful church, and I was growing up, and I was so little to know that they were building this new church. But little by little I grew up and I knew it, that they were building new church. That church, it came that it was very expensive church the way they made it, and they put it out. Okay, some Turkish people, you know, Mohammadans, not Christians. And they took the church down, and all those things. If I was there I was going to be very heartbroken that the country became Communist and they don't have churches. So I was happy that my father brought us here and when we didn't have a church, we built a church. You see? Yeah. I was happy.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think maybe this is a good place to stop. Unless you'd like to sing, if you can think of any of the songs.

NAUM: I don't know which one to start, and to be right, that I'm not going to . . .

LEVINE: It doesn't matter, if you forget it. But just whatever you remember.

NAUM: Me that I know all the songs, and now I don't know which one to start. (she laughs) Too bad that I don't have another one, you know, with me. My eyes broke, I think it. Uh . . . Yeah. (she sings in Albanian)

LEVINE: Wonderful. Maybe this is a good place to stop. I thank you for so much for talking with me.

NAUM: This is like this. You took my heart. (Albanian) You are a girl, popular and, but if you didn't have this, you have it now, yeah. I could say it a little more clear, you know. It's just like that.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I've been talking to Theresa Naum here in her home in Watertown, Massachusetts, and it's September 17, 1992, and I'm signing off.