

EI-234

HELEN HORVATH HARBOVE

BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 3, 1914

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 7/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 2/1995

HUNGARY (born U.S.), 1921

AGE 7

KORMAND

PASSAGE ON "THE ADRIATIC"

ALLENTOWN, PA

PORT: CHERBOURG

RESIDENCES: HUNGARY:

US:

Oral Historian's Note: Mrs. Harbove is the sister of Mary Kuti, Interview EI-233. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 3/2/1994.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Helen Horvath Harbove, and Helen's sister Mary Kuti is here, too. And it's November 24, 1992. We're in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania at Mrs. Harbove's home. And, let's see. Helen Horvath, born Helen Horvath, was born here in the United States. She went to Hungary in 1920 when she was six years old, and stayed for one year and came back to the United States when she was seven years old in 1921. Well, I'm very happy to get your particular story, your version. Now we'll have your sister's and your story on tape. And let's start by you saying your actual birth date and where you were born.

HARBOVE: I was born November 3, 1914 in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: And did you live in Bethlehem right up until the time you went to Hungary?

HARBOVE: No. We moved to Allentown and lived in a very small apartment.

LEVINE: Can you remember that apartment?

HARBOVE: Well . . .

KUTI: I don't think so.

HARBOVE: I know it was near Fifth Street in Allentown.

LEVINE: Okay. And why was it that your family and you went to Hungary when you did in 1920?

KUTI: Because I was there.

HARBOVE: Well, when I was six years old my mother and father decided to go and bring Mary home from Hungary because they took her over at the age of two. But then the war broke out and they couldn't get over there. So

they were preparing to go back to Hungary to pick Mary up and they thought maybe if they liked it they might stay. So I cried. I didn't want to go. And my mother would say, "You have to go." And I know I had tantrums because I did not want to go to Hungary. I wanted to be an American. They tell me this. But we went, and it was a, not a very good trip because it was right after war, and lots of, when we got over to Europe to go from one borderline to the other in the countries, they wouldn't let us pass. So I don't know who suggested we go to the Red Cross, and the Red Cross took us in boxcars. Now, I don't know where we were because I was only six years old, but I remember it was at night time we traveled, and they put us in these boxcars that had like six bunks on top of each other, like four sets of six. There were a lot of people going back. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Where were these boxcars going to and from?

HARBOVE: From one country to the other. Well, I don't remember that, but I know we did end up in Hungary. They took us across borders, because the borders wouldn't accept us. Why, I don't know. I was too young, and it was never explained to me. But I remember getting into

Hungary. It was at night time, like Mary said. And we woke her up, and I must have been sleeping a lot because I was young. And I do remember meeting the whole family, everybody in night clothes. And there was quite a bunch of them in that room.

(she laughs)

LEVINE: Do you remember meeting your sister, particularly?

HARBOVE: I was very shy. I wasn't afraid, but I was very shy in talking. I always was. I still am, I think.

(she laughs) No, I'm kidding you. But, anyway, I don't remember that much. I do remember the roads. They were all dirt. (a clock chimes) Excuse me.

LEVINE: (break in tape) We're interrupted. We're resuming now after a telephone call. Before we go further maybe you could tell us what you remember about your first six years before you left to go to Hungary. Do you remember anything about being . . .

HARBOVE: Yes, I do. I, we had a very small apartment, and I remember this lady taking care of me in the same building, and my mother would be working, but she was at home because she had three children. And every time she thought I was naughty, she'd give me a spoon

full of castor oil and put me in my bed and lock the door. (she laughs) I remember that very well because I hated castor oil. So, uh, and then I got to tell you about my first Christmas that I remember. We had, our bedroom was rather large, and one morning I woke up and there was this two-foot high Christmas tree hanging from the ceiling decorated beautiful. And I opened my eyes and saw this Christmas tree, and I was just so happy. And my father said Santa Claus was here.

LEVINE: So how did they do that without you knowing?

HARBOVE: (she laughs) I probably fell asleep and they just tied it up there. But, and then I remember a very beautiful coat set that my mother, she dressed me very beautiful, she did. And I had this little red coat. It was just adorable. I remember that.

LEVINE: Was this a handmade one?

HARBOVE: No, we bought it. I think it was . . .

KUTI: And you had curls. She had long, blonde curls.

HARBOVE: Yeah. And . . .

KUTI: Mother made that every day.

HARBOVE: Yeah. And, uh, my mother used to love to read her newspaper, and they had coal oil lights then, you know. They didn't have electric. We had gas, but they had this coal oil light, and she'd stand by this lamp and read her newspaper. And she usually wore an apron, and the pocket on the apron was torn. Now, I must have been about five years old. And I saw this, and I ran and got the needle and thread and I sewed this up. And my mother, when she saw it she just thought this was out of the world, you know, and she just praised me, and I think that's how I remember. Otherwise, I wouldn't have remembered. That was a very nice, you know, memorable thing. And I remember going to school, and it was very nice. And when I was leaving for Europe my teacher gave me a book, Brier Rabbit, taking it along to Europe, but I was thrilled with it. And I remember the boat, getting on the boat. I got lost the first hour we were on, because I was always going out trying to discover everything. But my people always found me, thank God. And it was very nice. Then, too, there were a lot of movie stars on, too. And there was one cowboy on, and he taught

me how to do the lariat, you know, the jump through the hoops. And I ran all the time. I was very active, but shy.

LEVINE: Do you remember what ship you were on going over?

HARBOVE: Not really.

KUTI: Not that, no.

HARBOVE: At one time maybe I would have, but I don't today, no.

LEVINE: Were you also first class going over?

HARBOVE: Yes. We went first class by way of the north, I think they said. And coming back we came by the Mediterranean. In other words, they made a round trip. They, my father intended to do that, because he loved traveling, too.

LEVINE: Now, what did your father do when he was here in the United States before you went back, you went to Hungary?

HARBOVE: He worked for the American Wire and Steel Company, and they made barbed wire. Just about when he was supposed to retire, the place closed up, and they gave them no retirement. It was bad, whoever his is. And

he was a very big fellow, and he had a big job, and he made big money. So I guess they had enough money to go first class.

LEVINE: Now, your mother, you said she had three children? Was she taking care of two other children, or?

HARBOVE: No, that was the lady we lived above. You know, they were on the first floor and we were on the second, and she had three children and she stayed home. But my mother went to work.

LEVINE: So she left you with . . .

HARBOVE: This Mrs. Struhart, her name was. And she's the one that gave me castor oil every time she thought I was bad or she didn't want to take care of me, and then she'd plop me in bed. And, well, that was before we went on the trip. And I remembered the red coat and sewing the patch pocket up. And I cried. I didn't want to go to Europe. I cried very hard, and they kept talking to me, "You have to go because the family's going," you know. And everybody laughs about this, why I didn't want to go to Europe. They did. Did they ever tell you, Mary?

KUTI: No.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything your mother told you about Hungary before you ever went there?

HARBOVE: No, I don't think, I don't remember that. I think my father talked more to us than my mother. And he used to sing a lot. I remember him always whistling or singing, and I did like that. I remember him like that, whistling and singing.

KUTI: He was singing church songs, always.

HARBOVE: Yes, he loved his church songs, and the Hungarian songs.

KUTI: Yeah, the Hungarian.

LEVINE: Would you be able to sing a Hungarian song on tape?

HARBOVE: Of course! (they laugh)

KUTI: That's beautiful, yeah.

HARBOVE: I know several, not one or two.

LEVINE: Please, go ahead.

HARBOVE: Not now?

LEVINE: Yeah.

HARBOVE: Now?

KUTI: Sure. Why where do you want to go?

HARBOVE: (she laughs) Now, which one, Mary? I like this one. (she sings in Hungarian) My mother used to sing that all the time, too. And the translation of that is, "Whoever loves their baby, no matter how it's snowing or raining, he will find her. He'll even cross the bridges to find her." That's the whole thing. That's a lovely little song. And, let's see, you had asked me something.

LEVINE: Well, do you want to sing another one?

HARBOVE: Oh. (they laugh)

LEVINE: It's so nice to have these songs that you remember.

HARBOVE: Well, you know, my name is Horvath, maiden name is Horvath, and they also have a song about that name because it's a very popular Hungarian name, Horvath. So here's my ditty. (she laughs) (she sings in Hungarian) (she sings) "That's all I know! Da-da-da-da." That's that one. And, well, what else can

I sing? That's it.

LEVINE: That's it? No more?

HARBOVE: That's it. No more. I know a lot, but I'm not here to sing. I'm here to tell you about my experiences in Hungary.

LEVINE: Well, thanks. That was great. That was great. Okay. so then you, uh, you, do you remember when you got to Hungary?

HARBOVE: Not too much.

LEVINE: Getting off the ship, traveling to your grandmother's house?

HARBOVE: Not too much. But I do remember coming back. I think it's because I was with Mary and this other young lady. I think we talked more then, amongst the children. And that way I remember the trip coming back. And when we were in Hungary, my father built his own little house. It was nice, and we . . .

KUTI: He did at that time.

HARBOVE: Yes, he built this home, and we had a horse, and this horse's name was Munsey. And I loved that horse! I

used to take my dinner out there and feed him with my fork. (she laughs) Do you remember that?

KUTI: And we had five chickens.

HARBOVE: Yeah. And you had, Mary had the chickens, and I had the horse. And we'd go for a ride, like Saturdays or whenever.

KUTI: Sunday afternoon my father would take us all.

HARBOVE: And whoever sold my father this horse didn't tell him that there was something the matter with this horse. It was a gorgeous horse. And every time it saw another horse coming towards it it would get so excited that it would go on its hind two legs and, uh, sprinkle us. (she laughs) And my father was so mad, because he paid a lot of money for this horse. But we put up with it. And then he had to sell it without telling the next guy what happens with this horse, but it was a beautiful horse. Munsey. And, let's see, what else do I know?

KUTI: And you had a cat, remember?

HARBOVE: Yeah, I had a cat. It used to come in every morning and sit, lay right on my chest. And it was during the

summer, and if there were flies it would chase the flies off of my face.

KUTI: We would watch this.

HARBOVE: Chase the flies off of my face. And it was very nice. I played. And then I went to school over there, too. They sent me to school.

LEVINE: How did that school compare with the school you'd been to?

HARBOVE: Oh, no comparison. And she was a lovely teacher, she really was. Do you remember her, Mary?

KUTI: She used to come and visit us.

HARBOVE: Yes, she was very nice. But I don't remember too much about that. But we went to church on Sundays. And over there they don't have pews for the children. You have to kneel on the ground floors.

KUTI: All the time.

HARBOVE: And this one time I must have been tired, and I sat down. And after the Mass the teacher, or whoever, came up to my father and said, "I want her to get ink for lunch because she sat down, she didn't stay

kneeling." And they made me stay after. They punished me because I sat down instead of kept kneeling during Mass. I remember that and, well, my people didn't do that, though. They took me home. Of course, they told me not to do it any more. And we'd go into the big town. What town did we . . .

KUTI: Kormand.

HARBOVE: Kormand. It's another, it's a small . . .

KUTI: Town.

HARBOVE: Town, yeah. A big town.

LEVINE: How do you spell it?

HARBOVE: K-O-R-M-A-N-D. Kormand.

KUTI: Kormand. And it was pretty far.

HARBOVE: Yeah. And that's when we'd go with the horse, and the horse would dance all the way, you know. And, uh, oh, every time we'd see a horse coming we'd all duck.
(she laughs)

KUTI: And we had a beautiful wagon, and you and I would take pillows and lay back there.

HARBOVE: Lay in the wagon in the back. And my mother had a mink coat. Would you believe it? And we'd cover with this, yeah.

KUTI: A beautiful, long one.

HARBOVE: Yeah. And, well, I don't . . .

LEVINE: Were you happy, then, that you had gone to Hungary?

HARBOVE: Well, I was a child. You know, you forget. You forget very fast. And, well, I remember my grandmother's home, though. I loved it. It had a . . .

KUTI: Describe it.

HARBOVE: It was lovely. You went in through the fence and to the left of you was this long terrace. It reminds me of the homes in California. And it was a terrace, and you went into a room. To get into the next one you had to come out on the terrace and go up to the next room. And I think it was four rooms.

KUTI: They were private, the rooms.

HARBOVE: Yeah. And I loved it. You know, I'd run in and out, go out on the terrace and go to the next one.

KUTI: The walls were this wide. (she gestures)

HARBOVE: Thick.

LEVINE: Three feet thick.

HARBOVE: Oh, yes. It was a sturdy home. And then I remember the haystack in the front. It actually wasn't the haystack. It was . . .

KUTI: Straw.

HARBOVE: You know, where the . . .

LEVINE: Hemp? No.

HARBOVE: Where they put the dung, the horse dung and the cow dung. And that's where they went to the bathroom. Would you believe it? (she laughs)

KUTI: They had outhouses.

HARBOVE: Oh, did they? I don't remember that, Mary.

KUTI: Yes, they did.

HARBOVE: So, what did you say?

LEVINE: Was the house made out of stone?

KUTI: No, moss. Straw and mud.

LEVINE: Straw and mud.

KUTI: That's why it was so wide. And, oh, in olden times they'd make of mud and straw and they'd just pack it like bricks, you know.

LEVINE: And how about the roof?

BOTH: Straw.

HARBOVE: They'd change it every so many years, right.

KUTI: You had to, yeah. It was thick straw on it, and you had an attic, it was beautiful.

HARBOVE: And in the attic on the chimneys storks would nestle up there in the winter, was it?

KUTI: Summer, spring.

HARBOVE: Summer, spring. And that was amazing to me, these big, long-legged birds. They'd go up into the chimneys and nestle in there. I remember that. Yeah. And, well, I remember going to little fairs where they sold these hearts out of cakes. That was always nice. A buchu, they'd call that a buchu, which is a

fair in Hungary. And they, then if you liked someone you bought them one of these Hungarian cakes and gave it to them like a valentine. That was their Valentine's Day, wasn't it, Mary?

KUTI: Yeah, for lovers.

HARBOVE: Yes. And, let's see what else?

LEVINE: You mean, once a year that's what they would have.

HARBOVE: Yes. Or on a saint's day. Like certain saint's days they had a buchu, which is a fair.

KUTI: Oh, it was beautiful. And then, of course, Gypsy music, Gypsy music.

HARBOVE: Lots of Gypsies.

LEVINE: What was that like?

KUTI: Violins, they played, you know. Oh! It was beautiful.

HARBOVE: I remember the trains over there, too, when we went to visit my aunt. What was her name?

KUTI: Vilma, and she lived in Kormand. And you had to go on a train to visit her.

HARBOVE: Yes, I remember her visit.

LEVINE: What do you remember about her, or about the visit?

HARBOVE: She was very . . .

KUTI: Lovely.

HARBOVE: Yeah, a lovely person, but she was huge. Her husband was a tailor, and he'd make a lot of things for us, too. And, but she was a great baker, huh?

KUTI: Yes.

HARBOVE: And she reminded you of that one story where this big fat lady with a little, her head was in braids, you know. (she laughs)

KUTI: Like the mommy on the (??) (they laugh)

HARBOVE: And she was very nice. They had no children. And she was very happy to see us when we'd come visiting. And what else did we do over there? Well, my father used to go out for rides with his wagon and take us along. My mother always said, "You go along." And then we'd go along.

LEVINE: Did your father work when he was there, or was he, he

was busy building his house?

HARBOVE: Yes, yes. That's all he did. And my mother said,
"This is it. We're going back." And we did.

LEVINE: Your mother was the one who really wanted to go.

HARBOVE: Yes, she did. Yes, she did.

LEVINE: Do you know why she said she wanted you to go back?

HARBOVE: Well, my father enjoyed going to the tavern and
sitting there and just talking and having a wine or
two, and my mother was at home alone, see. So she
figured that's for the birds, and then she said, "I'm
not staying." At least in America, you know, you were
together more. That's what I think.

KUTI: Yeah.

HARBOVE: So she said, "We're coming back to America." And we
got set, and then I remember that trip to Cherbourg on
the train. Well, first we stopped in, uh . . .

KUTI: Budapest.

HARBOVE: And my aunt, Vilma, brought us that bread. I'll never
forget it. It was huge. And, oh, it was so lovely.

LEVINE: This was your heavy, your big aunt?

HARBOVE: Yeah, the big, fat lady. She brought a bread like this. (she gestures and laughs) I'll never forget it. It was, and then we went on, and I remember staying in Cherbourg, and there was a fort there, a fort, F-O-R-T-E [sic]. And my father would take us for a walk on it, and it was laid out in brick, and you went up in a circle all the way up high, and then you could look out over the ocean. And then one night, or, it was late in the afternoon, we went for this walk. And they have a lot of fruit stands along there, I guess for the people, you know, like a lot of vendors.

KUTI: Yeah.

HARBOVE: And I saw these brown, whatever they were, I didn't know. We didn't know what they were, on the fruit stand, and I wanted some. I guess I was spoiled. And my father said, "No, I'm not buying you any." So we went back to the hotel, and I kept saying, "I've got to have those. I want those." We didn't even know, I didn't even know what it was but I had to have it. Remember, Mary? I just kept on, and on and on and on.

And finally he ran out and bought some, and guess what they were? Dates.

LEVINE: Oh, yes.

HARBOVE: And we all loved them, and we ate them after that, bought more. (they laugh) That's the first time I had dates, yes. And then I remember . . .

KUTI: Bananas there.

HARBOVE: Oh, yeah. But I loved those dates. And then we got on the boat. And the boat, it was lovely. Like Mary said, it was very nice. And we, I ran around a lot. See, I was a lot younger than the two girls. And I got lice from one of these kids, because I used to go down. You asked what you thought of when you looked down into steerage. Well, you see, the top of the boat was smaller, and you could look down on the steerage and you saw they were like ants, loaded with people. And then I used to, oh, I went down, I got all over. And then I used to watch the bakers a lot. They were behind glass, the bakers, up in our section. And he was so nice, this baker, and he'd always give me an armful of bread, this French bread. (she laughs) And I'd run it home and, oh, they

thought it was wonderful. But then I played with this little girl. And when it was time to get off, I think it was, wasn't it, they discovered I had lice. And I shouldn't even be telling you, but what an experience!

And my mother was sick, because we were very clean. And they took me to this hairdressing salon, and they applied this real hot vinegar with a steel comb. Oh, I was in there about two hours, and I was crying and carrying on, but I got rid of them. I guess they wanted to get them out.

LEVINE: On the boat you went to the hair salon.

HARBOVE: Was it on the boat, or . . .

KUTI: In France, where the . . .

HARBOVE: No, it had to be after the boat trip, because I got it from the kids down in the steerage.

LEVINE: You got it from the steerage.

HARBOVE: Yes, because, you see, I'd run all over. And they combed it out. I got out, I got rid of it. And then we landed in New York, and somehow we had difficulty with our luggage. This girl that was coming with us, Mary, I think my father put her luggage with ours.

And when they started to question this, he must have said, "This is Mary Kovach's." And I don't know if her name wasn't on the books or what, so that's how I remember we were pushed back into Ellis Island. But it was Christmas week, before, yeah. And I enjoyed Ellis Island. I ran. (she laughs) I ran.

KUTI: I did, too. It was beautiful.

LEVINE: What was your impression of it?

HARBOVE: Oh, it's such a big, beautiful hall, and it was so tall, you know. Oh, and it was . . .

KUTI: It was nice, very beautiful.

HARBOVE: And the people treated you really grand, they did. And, well, everything was so very clean. And I used to love to watch them when they'd set up for a meal. Like Mary said, too. They'd get this big butcher paper or what, and they'd, oh, well, the kids love this. And you know how long that hallway is. They'd roll it I don't know how many feet, huh? A couple of hundred feet, I guess. And I'd think that's going to fall off of there, but no, they went straight, and then they'd set the table and we'd eat. We had lots

of milk and bananas. And, well, of course, I ran again, then. And the bathrooms were so clean. We used to run in there and play, too. And I don't remember much about where we slept. Now, Mary remembers more. And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Did you know English?

KUTI: Oh, sure.

HARBOVE: Yeah, I spoke English, yes. Well, but like I told you, I was shy. They had to pay me to talk.
(she laughs) One of those deals. And I talked when I had to, but I did run. I remember running a lot. And, well, the Christmas, when we all went into this beautiful auditorium, rows and rows of seats, you know, all the way up. And this stage. And my father would say, "Now, you listen to this man, because he is very famous." Don't ask me how he knew, but he knew. Well, he knew stuff like that. He loved music. And he said, "That's Caruso. You'll never forget it." And we never did. We were very elated with that. Yes, we listened. And after that they came along like Santa Clauses with bags and they'd throw something in your lap, huh?

KUTI: All the time.

HARBOVE: Toys, candy.

KUTI: We had arms full.

HARBOVE: Arms full of stuff. They were very good to us, yes.
Now, how we got out of there, I don't recall. Do you,
Mary? You knew more than I did.

KUTI: Aunts, uncles.

HARBOVE: Yeah. Chablas. They called him up. They telephoned
him, or telegraphed him. I don't know which one. And
he came for us. And he had a sign that he would take
care of us. And that's how they released us. Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Well, I'm wondering why, the reason you probably went
to Ellis Island was because of the luggage mix-up.

HARBOVE: That's what I understood. But Mary says differently,
don't you? I understood that this, there was
something the matter, and they had to write back or
send back to verify this. And when that verification
came through they released us to Uncle Steve, yeah.
So that's . . .

LEVINE: How would you describe your father? How was he in

relation to you?

KUTI: Oh, he loved her.

HARBOVE: I was his favorite. (she laughs) I must say. But not after Anne was born. We had a younger sister. She was born in '22 when they landed, then the first thing they got . . .

KUTI: You were always his daughter.

HARBOVE: Well, I was supposed to look like him, too. But he, I was his favorite, I think.

KUTI: Yes, you were.

LEVINE: And do you remember experiences with him when you were little?

HARBOVE: Well, he used to pick us up, and there's a theater in Allentown, the Colonial. See, my mother was a homebody, and my father, he had to go out and go to town, pay the bills. And always, when he'd come home I'd say, "What did you bring me?" "Nothing. I didn't remember this time." And I'd go in his pocket, and he always had a bag of green leaves or something like that. I remember very well. Yes, I do. I love him

for that.

KUTI: And every Saturday he took us . . .

HARBOVE: He'd gather us, and he'd take us to the Colonial Theater where they had vaudeville and a movie. Oh! And how about when we'd go to The Victor, the theater?

KUTI: Yeah.

HARBOVE: And this theater was so old, it's not there any more, that you had to go in and turn around and look at the picture. And it was mostly cowboys, you know. And when the horses would come, Mary was there.

KUTI: I would go like this. (she demonstrates) I thought it was real. And, you know, I'd do it again. (they laugh) And my father would say, "What the heck are you doing?" "No, they're real. They're going to come here soon."

HARBOVE: (she laughs) Oh, I tell you, that was funny. And I would be so crying when it was a love scene that my mother would always say, "Take a hanky along." This thing would be sopping wet from crying. My father said, "I'm not taking her any more. She's sobbing in the movie." (she laughs)

KUTI: She'd come home with red eyes, you know.
(they laugh)

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Do you think you learned, do you think you got ideas about, I don't know, life, or the world, from the movies? Was that an important teacher, in a way, for you?

KUTI: Oh, yes.

HARBOVE: Well, yes.

KUTI: When that movie star went in the water, she loved him and she killed herself. We always talk about that, who was that movie star?

HARBOVE: Janet Gaynor. (she laughs)

KUTI: Yes.

HARBOVE: Yes, she walks into, no, it was Frederick March.

KUTI: The man.

HARBOVE: Frederick March and Janet Gaynor, wasn't it? And does

he or she walk? I thought it was he that walked into the water.

KUTI: The girl.

HARBOVE: The girl walks in and she dies.

KUTI: You know, she went into the ocean on her walk. And I said, "She's going to die. She's going to kill herself." She said, "Don't say that." (Mrs. Harbove laughs) The water was bubbling and there, she died. And I started whooping, crying like crazy.

HARBOVE: (she laughs) Oh, we're enjoying this. I hope you are, too. But I know when the cowboys would come running, my sister Mary would get excited. (she laughs) And my father said, "Now, sit down."

KUTI: He'd say, "What are you doing here?" I says, "The horses are going to get here in a hurry!"

HARBOVE: So we laughed about it.

KUTI: My father says, "Well, where are they?" (they laugh)

HARBOVE: But he enjoyed the vaudeville, which the kids did, too. And he took us every week. Remember that. That

was nice. My mother sat at home, getting the clothes ready, you know, for the next day or so. Baking, she was quite a baker.

KUTI: They washed by hand in those days.

HARBOVE: Yeah, and she was quite a baker.

LEVINE: What do you remember her baking that you particularly liked?

HARBOVE: She made the most delicious raised cakes. Flaky.

KUTI: She was the best cook in the world.

HARBOVE: Flaky. She was a wonderful cook. Chicken, veal. We ate a lot of veal. Huh? And pork.

KUTI: And pork. She rolled it up, you know.

HARBOVE: With a filling. Oh, it was delicious.

KUTI: And crispy when it was done, and slice it. Oh!

HARBOVE: And my cousin would come over and say, "I'll never, never forget Aunt Agnes' flaky dough cake," whatever. Remember, Charlie said that. It was good. She was a wonderful cook.

LEVINE: Did she cook Hungarian cooking?

HARBOVE: Oh, yes.

KUTI: All the time. Nothing else but Hungarian. She baked bread like that. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Like a big bread, the big, round bread.

HARBOVE: (she laughs) Yeah, she did.

KUTI: In the week she made it.

HARBOVE: No, that was white bread, Mary.

KUTI: Well, whatever. And then she made like pizza they have now, called the langosh, remember?

HARBOVE: Yes. And then when it comes out the, you know, before they put it in they put their finger in like this (she gestures) and they put a coarse salt on there. That's before the big bread rises. They take a chunk off of the dough and they make this and then the coarse salt. And when it comes out they put garlic on with, uh, butter.

KUTI: Fresh.

HARBOVE: Huh?

KUTI: Fresh garlic.

HARBOVE: Oh, delicious.

LEVINE: And what is that called?

HARBOVE: Langosh.

LEVINE: Could you write it?

KUTI: And, you know, they didn't put butter on at that time,
lard. (Mrs. Harbove laughs)

LEVINE: Really.

KUTI: They used lard.

LEVINE: Before anybody was worried about cholesterol.

HARBOVE: And she lived to be ninety-seven years old, and loved
bacon. What else did she do that you're not supposed
to do? She ate everything and anything. Loved her
wine.

KUTI: Yes.

HARBOVE: She had a glass of wine every day, and then she stayed
with me thirteen years and every day I gave her a
glass of wine which she enjoyed, and she lived to

ninety-seven.

KUTI: Her picture was in the paper, that she was so healthy.

HARBOVE: Yes, she was very healthy.

KUTI: God bless her.

HARBOVE: But my father, he was a drinker.

KUTI: Well, like men, he liked drinking.

HARBOVE: He was.

LEVINE: What traits do you think you have that take after some parent?

KUTI: Drinking wine and eating food. (they laugh) And good worker. We were all good worker.

HARBOVE: Yes, yes, we were.

KUTI: We looked ahead what's going to come, you know, and do something with what you have at the time.

HARBOVE: Yes. Did we praise ourselves enough? (she laughs)

KUTI: Well, that's the truth.

HARBOVE: It's the truth, yeah, yeah.

KUTI: We had good eating.

HARBOVE: Yeah. My mother cooked very good. I think that's what I . . .

KUTI: And she's a wonderful cook. So am I, you know. But we still love eating good.

HARBOVE: It shows, doesn't it? Yes, it does. We know it.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you think that there were, there are Hungarian, besides the cooking, are there any other ways that you've kept that you feel come from your Hungarian background?

KUTI: Sewing and knitting, she would knitting suits and coats. I used to sew, knit . . .

HARBOVE: Well, you do, too.

KUTI: When she went to learn to sew, you were sewing.

HARBOVE: I took sewing class. After sewing that pocket on I thought, "I'm going to be a designer." (she laughs)

KUTI: And she did sew.

HARBOVE: I used to make all my clothes, but not any more.

KUTI: Knitted, and coats, and everything. In winter, you know, when it's locked in . . .

HARBOVE: And summer, too, Mary.

LEVINE: So, let's see. When you, when you, was your, when you look back at your mother and father's attitudes, was it to become Americanized, or was it to hold on to the Hungarian tradition.

HARBOVE: Americanized all the way for me.

KUTI: But they were (?) in the home.

HARBOVE: No, but she's talking about us. We're true Americans. Yes, we are. I love to know about that, but, like, even when I was a little girl I didn't want to go to Hungary, but we respected our parents and their background. My great-grandfather was a professor, and he played the organ in the cathedral, you know what I mean? And they, it was a nice background, wasn't it, Mary? Yes, it was. And like my grammy, she upheld all that stuff, she did. Yes, she did, Grammy.

LEVINE: What was your impression of your grandmother?

HARBOVE: I just loved her. She was such a sweet little thing.
She was only about five feet, huh? Quick as a, just quick.

KUTI: How about the fortune teller tells her that Grandma was watching over her all the time?

LEVINE: Really?

HARBOVE: And she didn't know me. I went to a fortune teller and we opened the Bible. Did you ever go to a fortune teller? Yeah?

LEVINE: Here, in this country?

HARBOVE: Oh, yeah. I was a young lady. And I opened this Bible, and the first thing she says to me, "You have someone by the initial A, Agnes." I said, "Yeah?" She said, "Is it your grandmother?" I said, "Yes." She said, "She's watching over you all the time." How about that? Isn't that lovely?

KUTI: That's her, this one. (pointing to a photograph)

HARBOVE: So do you think there's something else we should tell?

LEVINE: Let's see. Well, you went to school when you came back here, and then how long did you stay in school?

HARBOVE: Well, I quit when I was in ninth grade, and then my mother said, "No, no, no." But I had a friend that quit. But then I went back and I went back to business college and I graduated from business college. And I'm so happy that I did, and I'm sorry I didn't go further, but you know how you have friends. I think friends are very influential, you know what I mean?

KUTI: But you worked for the government.

HARBOVE: Yeah, then I took a test, you know, civil service, and I went to Philadelphia and I worked for the Signal Corps. I was in the general's office. So it was nice. America was good to me, and I love it.

LEVINE: And when did you meet your husband?

HARBOVE: I met him, he was in the service five years. He had five medals for, uh . . .

KUTI: Bravery.

HARBOVE: Bravery. What is it, bronze stars. And the first day he came out it was fair week. In Allentown we have a big Allentown Fair. And he came to the bar room. It

was his first day home, and I was there entertaining some friends from Philadelphia, my girlfriends, and we met him there at the bar and we started to date, and I married him, yes, a year later. And he was a very good man. I had a very good husband.

LEVINE: What was his name?

HARBOVE: John Harbove. And he died in '86 of Alzheimer's, which is a very sad sickness, yes, it is. But he was a very good man.

LEVINE: And did you have children?

HARBOVE: Three. One son, John, that took me to Ellis Island, and two daughters. And they're all doing well. My daughter, oldest daughter, works for AT&T.

LEVINE: And what's her name?

HARBOVE: Rosemary Hummel. She married a Hummel.

KUTI: Has two children.

HARBOVE: Uh-huh. And then my daughter Susan, she's a real special, she works for Hess Brothers. Did you ever hear of Hess Brothers, a department store? She's a manager of a Hess Brothers, and her husband is vice

president of Hess Brothers, so we got that sewed up. And my son is a vocational school teacher in Bucks County.

LEVINE: Great. And your son's name?

HARBOVE: John Harbove. John Charles Harbove, Jr.

KUTI: He has two children.

HARBOVE: He has two children, a boy and a girl, and my daughter Rosemary has a boy and a girl, so I have four grandchildren. And the oldest one is ten. She's going to be eleven in December, December 26th, the day after Christmas.

LEVINE: Well, what are you proudest of that you've done in your life?

HARBOVE: Well, I'm proud that I brought all my children up to be good citizens. They are good children. And they made something of themselves. And they're very good to me. I miss my husband very much. I get very lonely. And, well, I look back on my life and I think it was good, too. I had a good life.

LEVINE: What do you think of the values that you took from

your mother and father, or that they tried to pass along to you?

HARBOVE: To be good citizens. They always read the newspaper, remember, Mary?

KUTI: Just be good!

HARBOVE: Yes, and you won't get into trouble, and they, I tried to pass that on to my children, too. And they're trying to do it, and they are doing it. I think they're good kids, all good kids.

LEVINE: Now, did your mother and father become citizens?

HARBOVE: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Yes. And my father spoke three languages. He spoke German, Hungarian, and he spoke English.

KUTI: And Slovak.

HARBOVE: And Slovak, too. I didn't know that. But he wanted to go further, don't you think, Mary? But my mother was content the way things were. She just went along with the wave, huh? She, but my father was, wanted to try everything. He'd go to town, look around. And at that time we had the trolley cars, remember? And my

one uncle was in Center Valley. He'd hop on the trolley, go visit them. He'd go visit (?). He'd go visit all the relatives and come home with the news to my mother. And he kept, you know, active. While Mom was at home cooking, cleaning, taking care of us.

LEVINE: And who was the disciplinarian of the parents?

HARBOVE: I don't think they ever did.

KUTI: They didn't have to.

HARBOVE: They didn't have to, I don't think. They talked to us, didn't they?

KUTI: And the one thing, they always talked Hungarian, so we all three of us learned, and even I teach my son, and he's so proud of that language. Because that's one of the hardest languages . . .

HARBOVE: That he can speak the language.

KUTI: And not one of her . . .

HARBOVE: No. My son wanted to in the worst way.

KUTI: Oh, I wanted . . .

HARBOVE: Yeah. I wish I would have taught them. But, see, my

husband was Ukrainian. That's another story.

(she laughs) And because of that we didn't speak it at home, see. But Mary did.

KUTI: Oh, yeah. Reading and writing, I taught them.

HARBOVE: Yeah. I can read and write Hungarian, too. My parents sent me to Hungarian school here in America.

KUTI: Summer time.

HARBOVE: Yes. Summer time we used to go to school, church school. I could read, write and swear. (they laugh) And sing. Oh, yeah. It was nice, yeah.

LEVINE: So is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to say, looking back on your life, or talking about your life now.

KUTI: They were in business, a beautiful business. That was nice, too.

HARBOVE: My husband John and I. It was like a sweet shop with stationary and cards in Easton, Pennsylvania. Near Lafayette College. I don't know if you're familiar with that, yeah. And we had a very nice clientele, and I thought it was nice. I enjoyed that. John did,

too. And we used to take a lot of trips to New York.

That's why I'm so familiar with the roads. Every Monday we'd close the shop and then we'd run. Even up to Milford. Yeah. And we went to Canada a couple of times, to the World's Fair. We never missed the World's Fair, or when the Pope came to town, to New York, we ran to New York to see the Pope. And we ran around pretty much. He was a very good husband. So I have wonderful memories of him. He left me too soon, yeah. So, I wish you well with yours.

LEVINE: Well, thank you. (she laughs) Okay. Well, I think maybe this is a good place to stop.

HARBOVE: I think so.

LEVINE: And I thank you very much.

HARBOVE: And thank you, Janet.

LEVINE: You're welcome.

HARBOVE: It was lovely.

LEVINE: Good. And this is Janet Levine, it's November 24, 1992. I've been with Helen Harbove and her sister Mary Kuti, and we're here in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,

EI-234/HARBOVE

and I am signing off.