

EI-366

ANDREE POLTURAK MARKS

BIRTH DATE: JULY 30, 1931

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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

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AGE 17

PASSAGE ON THE "MARINE JUMPER"

PORT OF EMBARCATION: OSLO

RESIDENCES: KATORWICE, POLAND; LITHUANIA; STOCKHOLM
RIVERSIDE DRIVE AND 96 ST, NEW YORK CITY

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, August 5, 1993. I'm at the Ellis Island Recording Studio with Andree Marks. Mrs. Marks was born in Austria of Polish parents, moved back and forth between Austria and Poland until 1938, when they moved to Poland on a full-time basis, spent six months in Lithuania, and then eventually moved to Sweden in 1940, and from Sweden came to the United States and ended up detained at Ellis Island in the process. Anyway, I'm very happy to have you here.

MARKS: Thank you.

SIGRIST: Let me begin by you having me give your birth date,

please.

MARKS: July 30, 1931.

SIGRIST: And your maiden name, please.

MARKS: Polturak.

SIGRIST: Spell it, please.

MARKS: And that's spelled P-O-L-T-U-R-A-K.

SIGRIST: Let's begin, since you were born in Austria of Polish parents, tell me a little bit how your parents got to Vienna.

MARKS: Well, the part of Poland in which my parents were born belonged to Austria until after the first World War. Therefore, both my parents were students in Vienna, and my father studied law, and my mother studied music, you know, after World War One, and met there. And Vienna in those days, I gather, my mother has told me, was very much the capital of that part of Central Europe. My father simply represented the Polish cement industry in Vienna, and he was what we would now call an ex-pat, as a Pole living in Vienna. However, you must remember that during World War One, when he was a very young man, he was eighteen, he was

a cadet in the Austrian Army. So the flow between Austria and that part of Poland was sort of ongoing, certainly. So, does that explain it?

SIGRIST: Yeah, a little bit. What was your dad's name?

MARKS: Marian, M-A-R-I-A-N, Poltura.

SIGRIST: And tell me a little bit about his background with his family.

MARKS: Well, he was born in Stryj, that's spelled S-T-R-Y-J, a part of Poland that is now considered the Ukraine, although he was Polish. And again, that part of southern Poland belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire. He studied, he finished secondary school in Lwow, L-W-O-W, and then immediately upon finishing, graduating, he, as a matter of fact, he was then sent by his parents on a graduation trip to Switzerland. And on top of the Jungfrau, which is one of the tallest mountains in Switzerland, he met my mother. He was then eighteen, and she was fourteen, and they fell in love. And very shortly, I mean, they spent their vacation together. My mother was there with her family, and he was there alone, having just graduated from gymnasium, or high school. And he asked, he said, "Sooner or later you're going to marry me." So,

anyway, it was very romantic. But he then went to, immediately upon graduating from high school he joined the Austrian Army as a cadet in the cavalry. And in those days you had to go, I gather, into the cavalry with your own horse, or you couldn't join the cavalry unless you had your own horse. So he brought a horse and went into the cavalry. He never was in any terrible battles. I think that the, he spent most of the war in the Austrian or Italian Alps, in that part where I don't think there were any ghastly, you know, it wasn't like being in France in 1918.

SIGRIST: And interesting that that stipulation that you had to bring your own horse would sort of dictate a certain economic level.

MARKS: Absolutely, sure, right.

SIGRIST: That's an interesting bit of information.

MARKS: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: So you don't think he saw a lot of action during the war.

MARKS: No, no, no, no. No, no, I don't think so. I think he had a rather nice war. (she laughs) I mean, relative to, you know, if there is such a thing as a

nice war. Interesting that he was in the Austrian Army in World War One, and then, of course, in the Polish Army in World War Two, and who knows which sniper killed him. Maybe it was somebody he had been with in the Army in the first World War. It's sort of ironic, but then that happens in central Europe.

SIGRIST: Sure, all the borders bouncing around.

MARKS: Exactly.

SIGRIST: What was your mom's name?

MARKS: Ilona, uh, Ilona Merz, M-E-R-Zed, Z.

SIGRIST: Can you spell her first name too, please?

MARKS: I-L-O-N-A.

SIGRIST: Thank you. And let me ask you the same question about your mom. Give me a little bit about her background.

MARKS: Okay. Her family lived in Krakow. She was born there. Do I need to spell that?

SIGRIST: No.

MARKS: Okay. And had a very privileged childhood, with a loving nanny and loving parents, etc., etc. And then when World War, she was born in 1900. So when the war

broke out in 1914, my grandfather, her father, moved the whole family to Vienna, because it was going to be safer, because I think the Russians were coming to that part of Poland. And so she, I don't believe, ever went back to Krakow because she was in, my grandfather was a big Polish patriot, so the minute that Krakow was safe, he moved everybody back. However, he wanted my mother to become a concert pianist. Now, she claims she never really had enough talent to do that. She was a perfectly adequate pianist but, you know, not brilliant. But, anyway, she went, she was good enough. And she went to the conservatory in Vienna and studied piano. And she was left in sort of a boarding, what am I trying to say, pension kind of thing, for young girls, while she attended the conservatory. And kept going back to Krakow to finish her gymnasium. You know, she had to go back to Krakow to take the exams, and then . . .

SIGRIST: Go back to . . .

MARKS: Her academic exams, so that she wouldn't flunk out. Anyway, she did that. And, of course, during the time she lived in Vienna, fairly independently, not under the watchful eye of her very victorian parents, she was seeing my father. (she laughs) And all kinds

of rumors were sent back to Krakow saying that she had been seen in a horse and buggy with this young officer and blah, blah, blah.

SIGRIST: Which is also romantic. (he laughs)

MARKS: Oh, very romantic. Oh, the whole thing was very romantic. And then she promised to marry him before she turned twenty, and she married him on the 18th of May 1920, which was two days before her twentieth birthday, and he was twenty-four, and he had just finished law school and taken his exams. So, and my grandparents were very opposed to this, my mother's parents, because my father didn't have enough money for them, but.

SIGRIST: What did your father intend to do at that time? You said he graduated law school. Did he intend to be a lawyer?

MARKS: No. (she laughs) An industrialist of some sort. You know, everybody studied law. I mean, it was sort of, you know. And everybody in Vienna and Poland is Herr Doctor. You know, everybody has a doctor, whether you have a PhD or not you're Herr Doctor, so.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about their personality traits.

Start with your mom. What was her personality like?

MARKS: Well, I can't tell you much about my father because, after all, I was not yet eight when he died. So, although I know, I heard about him. My mother just died in 1990 at age ninety. She was a very amazing woman. She was a very charming, very life-loving, very elastic person, if you know, by elastic I mean that she was able to withstand all kinds of blows. And didn't lose her joy of living. I mean, it was astounding. She, my sister and I used to call her, there is a toy. I forget what it's called in English. In German it's called Stehaufmannlein. It's a little man who you push down, and he bounces right back, and he has a round bottom. We used to call our mother that because no matter what life did, you know, she bounced right back. And, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Can you say that again in German, the term?

MARKS: Stehaufmannlein. You know, stand up, a little man. I mean, she probably had more highs and lows in her life, and I mean both economically and emotionally and every other way, than a lot of people, and she was strong. She was a tremendous influence on my children, who adored her, and my sister's children.

And, I mean, she was, my husband claimed one time that he married me in order to get her as a mother-in-law.

So she was quite a lady.

SIGRIST: A unique person.

MARKS: Quite unique.

SIGRIST: Did she ever tell you any stories about your birth, or do you know anything about your birth?

MARKS: Yeah, I do. I had only one sibling who, very sadly, died the year before my mother died, in '89.

SIGRIST: What was your sister's name?

MARKS: Renee. It was Renee Maria, and I'm Andree Maria. My sister was nine years older than I, and she was born in 1922. And my mother very much wanted another child and, for some reason, she couldn't seem to carry any babies to term. She kept having one miscarriage after another or, if not miscarriage, stillbirths, or some things. She, I believe, had five babies between my sister and I, all girls. Ultimately, nine years later, I was born. And she, I'm told, had to stay in bed something like three or four months before I was actually born. The gynecologist or obstetrician who delivered me who by that time had become a close

friend of my mother's, needless to say, having seen her uninterruptedly for nine years, supposedly allegedly said to the nurse that delivered me, he said, "You know, you've seen a lot of children born out of love. There are children that are conceived in hate. But this is the first child born out of sheer stubbornness that I've ever seen." (she laughs) What is interesting medically is that it later on became clear that both my sister and I are Rh negative. My mother was Rh negative. Presumably all those other babies were Rh positive, which is why they didn't make it. And in my own children there was difficulty because of the Rh factor. Luckily they recognized it and could do transfusions and all that kind of thing. But that's presumably what.

SIGRIST: Well, it's an enormous emotional burden for her to have carried at that time, all those children.

MARKS: All those children. So, anyway, there I was.

SIGRIST: Tell me, what's your earliest memory.

MARKS: Oh, earliest memory is an Easter, and I don't know whether that was '37 or '38, on a lake in Salzkammergut in Austria, picking flowers with my parents, being with my father. It was a holiday. Oh,

I was given a bicycle, my first two-wheeler, and my father had bought it much too tall, and I kept falling off and scraping my knee, and my mother was angry at my father for being so cheap, buying a bicycle for growth rather than one that I could pedal.

SIGRIST: And how old do you think you were at that time?

MARKS: Probably six, because I also remember first grade, going, which is six, so maybe that was that same . . .

SIGRIST: And those are the earliest memories that you have about age six . . .

MARKS: I think six, I think so. You know, they're, it's hard to tell what I remember and what has been told to me, but those are clear memories at age six.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you do remember about your dad, and what you remember about his death.

MARKS: He was a very busy person, obviously. He had a very active career. He was very ambitious. He was also very social, a big party person. I remember lying in bed and having my mother and my father coming in to say goodnight because they were going out to something fancy. He was in black tie and she was in an evening dress, and they said goodnight and left. I remember

clearly my father bringing me a puppy, and having it hidden in his overcoat when he came to the nursery where I was, and I was madly excited. I then remember, you see, my parents left in the spring, late, no, July of 1939. They went to England. My sister was, after we left Vienna my sister, instead of coming to Poland went to boarding school in England.

SIGRIST: Of course, she's so much older.

MARKS: She was, right. And in 1939 she was finishing boarding school. She was graduating, she was seventeen, and was supposed to go back to London University in September, and she never did, for obvious reasons. But my parents went in July to England to pick her up, and they decided to leave me behind in Poland with a nanny-type person.

SIGRIST: That's right. They're in Poland at this point.

MARKS: Right. And they drove across Europe to England. My father said, they said goodbye to me in July and sent me off to the mountains in Poland with this person, nanny-type. And I was also sort of to be supervised by my grandparents, my mother's parents. We, this nurse and I, this mademoiselle and I, were in Zacopane, which was in the Tatra mountains, not far

from Krakow, where my grandparents lived. Anyway, they said goodbye to me and took off for England. Now, the world events took over and they arrived back end of August, much against everybody's advice. Everybody told them that they were crazy to go back to Poland because the war was obviously about to start, and why didn't they stay in France or England or where they had friends. But for a variety of reasons, I think both in part because I was there, and in part because they had no money overseas, they came back. Also, my mother's father, who I had told you was a great patriot, when they called him and said, "Should we come back?" my grandfather said, "Of course you come back. I mean, this is your country." And blah, blah, blah, "You must defend it." Well, they returned home to where we had been living, which was Katowice. Shall I spell it?

SIGRIST: Please.

MARKS: K-A-T-O-W-I-C-E.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

MARKS: Which is a coal-mining town not far from Krakow, a big industrial center, and that's where we had been living. And they went back there, and I can't give

you the exact date, let's say the 27th of August. I was staying with my grandparents in Krakow, waiting for my parents to come pick me up. When they entered the house in Katowice, the telegram from my father was waiting inside the door, mobilizing him to join his regiment. So he immediately put on his uniform and drove to his regiment, passing through Krakow, where I was, in the middle of the night. I was told the next morning that my father had been there, and that he had tried to wake me up. Now, I was just seven, no, eight, sorry, just eight, because my birthday's the end of July. And I was hysterical the next morning when I was told that he couldn't wake me up. And I remember crying hysterically and saying, "I'm never going to see him again! I'm never going to see him again!" And I didn't. So . . .

SIGRIST: Tell me the circumstances around his death on tape for us.

MARKS: We are told by the two officers that were with him, he was attached to the general staff of the Polish Army. It was the 17th of September which, in fact, is the last day when Poland gave up, whatever that's called. What is it called when you give up to a victor?

SIGRIST: Oh, when you . . .

MARKS: Not resign.

SIGRIST: Well . . . Oh, my God, I can't believe it.

MARKS: Anyway, that's what the country did.

SIGRIST: By the time we get to Ellis Island, we'll . . .

MARKS: Anyway, they did, he did not know that in fact Poland was no longer fighting, and he and two other officers were in the country. Interestingly enough, very close to the place where he had been born, where he had never lived for the rest of his life. But the three officers were driven by a chauffeur through this little village of Janow, spelled J-A-N-O-W. They stopped in the middle of the village because there was a well and they were thirsty and they wanted to have some water. And the three of them got out. One was a doctor, army doctor, the other one was a chaplain, and the third was my father. And my father, and the other two have told us this, my father, you know, there's this ladle that you pull out, and my father pulled out the ladle and handed it to one of the two others, and they drank. And then he did it again and handed it to the second one. By the time he leaned over to drink

there was a sniper in the bushes, and he got him in the temple and he was dead right then. The other two were taken prisoners by the German Army that was already hidden in the bushes, and we did not know until four months later, when they came back to Poland from having been P.O.W.'s, that my father had been killed. My mother then went to the grave which was just on a hillside, exhumed the body, identified the body, and had it reburied in a churchyard in the little village of Janow, and that's where he's buried.

SIGRIST: Surrender is the word.

MARKS: Surrender is the word.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about your mother's emotional reaction to your father's death. Might she have anticipated something like this happening or did, do you think she didn't really understand the importance of all of this.

MARKS: No, she understood, she understood, and she was frightened, I'm sure, terribly.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about what life was like once you found out? You know, how was your life changed?

MARKS: Well, we were running at that point. You know, once the war broke out September 1st we actually, after this, after my sister and my mother and I got reunited, you know, they came to Krakow with my mother's parents, we all went to Warsaw because the Germans were attacking, or presumed to attack.

SIGRIST: Advanced.

MARKS: Advanced, well, it hadn't even started yet. This is like '29, '30 at the longest, but it was, obviously they were coming towards the German, they were massing right by the German border. So the idea was to go to Warsaw and that would be safe, because it's much further inland, away from the German border. And we drove to Warsaw, and we were there on September 1st, and I can vividly remember the radio said, you know, "Warnings, warnings, the German planes are coming." And the next day we rushed down to the basement of the building where, we were staying in an apartment that belonged to friends of ours, and the first bomb attack that I had ever experienced happened. And then it took us a couple of days to get out of Poland, out of Warsaw, with a car, and we drove east, toward the Russian border, because that would be so safe because

the Germans were attacking. Well, so that was pretty hairy. You know, the Germans would strafe the roads.

The roads were full of refugees going east. You've seen films of any war, and I've been interested to observe that it doesn't matter whether you look at Laotians or Serbians or Poles or whether it's World War One, Two, whatever, masses of people go along roads. I mean, that seems to be sort of the picture of war, the civilian war. And, so that's what we did, except instead of walking with a pushcart we drove. But every time a German plane would come overhead we'd stop the car and we'd run into the fields. And my mother, I would be on the bottom and my sister on top sandwiched, and my mother on top of that. And then they'd go, you know, shoot along the roads, and they'd pass, and go back in the car. The family story goes that we frequently hid in cornfields, and I allegedly said, "Why are we hiding . . ." I said, "Don't Germans shoot in cornfields?" And my mother said, "Never in cornfields. They are very respectful in cornfields." So I spent most of the war looking for cornfields, which was a good place to hide.

SIGRIST: Your story about your mother exhuming your father's body makes me want to ask a question about, was your

mother a religious person?

MARKS: No.

SIGRIST: No.

MARKS: Pragmatic. Catholic.

SIGRIST: Catholic.

MARKS: But very sort of pragmatic, central European.

SIGRIST: So it's not that she wanted the body . . .

MARKS: Well, the body was not in a coffin, it was not, it was in a hill. We would have totally lost, yeah, I mean, it's, it was just tradition that you buried a body in the cemetery. I mean, you don't leave it in a hillside. And also she wanted to make sure it was my father. And I believe, I wasn't out there. My sister did go. I, you know, they left me behind. But they identified him by thumbnail. He, as a teenager, had been reading under the bedcovers because his mother wouldn't allow him with a candle, and the candle was on some kind of plastic bottom. Anyway, she, I don't quite know the story whether my grandmother, my father's mother, walked in on him or whatever, but he burned himself with this plastic, and so he had one

thumbnail slightly flatter, shorter than the others, and that's how my mother identified him. It got very hairy, those years. I mean, my mother, when I told you before what an elastic, joyful person she was, she wasn't right then. I mean, that year she was pretty, as you can imagine, at the end of her rope. My sister was my safety net.

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about your relationship with your sister when you were kids in Europe.

MARKS: That feels fairly emotional to me, because my sister died, and she's my only sibling and, you know, everybody expects their parents to die. I didn't expect my sister to die so early.

SIGRIST: And how old were you when that happened?

MARKS: Actually, if you look chronologically, I wasn't that young. This is three years, four years ago, so it was '58.

SIGRIST: Oh, recently.

MARKS: But, you know, you expect people to live a long time, and I expected to grow old with her.

SIGRIST: Tell me a good memory you have of during this time, if

you have one, with your sister.

MARKS: You mean, during the war?

SIGRIST: Yeah, when you were that age. I mean, obviously you're sort of maybe each others' emotional support during something like this.

MARKS: I, you know, I was, I guess I acted the toughie those years, you know. I remember when somebody, when my grandparents came to tell us that my father had been found and that he was dead, I remember I couldn't cry. I was called into the room and I was told this, and everybody else was sobbing. Bear in mind, I was eight, and I couldn't cry. And I remember feeling terribly guilty because I couldn't cry. I thought, "Oh, my God, they're going to think I don't care." And I, you know, it's almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. I played the role and was the tomboy, the toughie, the devil-may-care, the climbing every tree. Every time we were in an air raid shelter I played bomb attack. It drove everybody crazy, I'm sure. No one really had time to deal with my emotional state. I mean, I was not coddled at that point, but no one had time to coddle, cuddle.

SIGRIST: Would you say that your sister was more of an

emotional . . .

MARKS: My sister, no. Well, I think we were equally emotional but, I mean, my sister at that point stopped being an adolescent. Very much, she was seventeen. She was an adult. And she was my mother's support, and she was my mother's best friend, and I felt I had two mothers, which had its pluses and its minuses. But Renee was not a kid. Many, many, many years later when we were both very middle-aged she talked about how she resented that, that she could never be foolish, she could never be crazy, never be silly, because it was sort of washed out of her very early.

SIGRIST: Sure. She had to sort of play a role, right?

MARKS: She played a role, and she, you know, I mean, I remember when we were in Lithuania, there was no money at all. And my mother, we had nothing to eat, and my mother decided to talk to Renee about committing suicide and killing me, because she wasn't going to let me starve to death. And my sister said, "Look, you can't do that. You can, you have a right to take your own life, and I'm old enough to make a decision for myself, but you cannot do this to a child." Whether my mother would have done that or not is, you

know, questionable, but, I mean, she was that desperate. We went to a soup kitchen. (she laughs) It's funny, because only recently have I been able to eat kasha again. You know what kasha is? It's a grain. It's very eastern European. I forget what grain, but we were just, Charles and I was just in Poland two weeks ago. We had kasha for the first, I had kasha for the first time since that soup kitchen experience. Kasha on tin plates, it was ghastly.

SIGRIST: But, of course, your situation is not that dissimilar from lots of people. You know, there are lots of people who were in this.

MARKS: No question. Of course, of course, of course. And, listen, I was reasonably lucky. We got out of, we got to Sweden fairly early. You know, I was nine years old when I got to Sweden.

SIGRIST: When you left Warsaw is that, you were on your way to Lithuania at that point?

MARKS: No, no. We were on our way to the Russian border where my father's family had some land, and my father's cousins had land in a large estate, and they took in a whole bunch of people. And we were there, it was a village, you know, country, and we were the

first village that the Russians occupied. If you recall, the Russians, Stalin and Hitler made a pact to divide Poland. So one morning, and it was on the 17th of September, the same day my father died, that the Russians, very unexpectedly, started pulling in the tanks, so they just came by the hundreds. And, again, this is a memory I have very clearly of standing on the side of the road watching the tanks coming in, and seeing my first non-Caucasian faces, because the tank commanders were from central Asia, and they were brown-skinned. I had never, you know, that was my first experience. Because they were standing on the gun turrets. I remember hundreds of them rolling in.

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a second.

MARKS: Yeah, good.

SIGRIST: Peter's going to flip the tapes, and we'll get you on to Lithuania.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Okay. We're now resuming, the second side. How long did you stay in Russia?

MARKS: You mean, under, in Poland, under Russian occupation?

That all got very exciting, because the minute the Russians occupied the village they took all men and shipped them off to Siberia because, first of all, all, this was a huge manor house, with lots of servants. The servants disappeared instantly the minute the Russians came, obviously went back to their villages and didn't want to be associated with landowners. And so we stayed in, some Russian officers used billeted there in this big manor house, and there was lots of stories about, the old man that owned the manor house, now, bear in mind this is not a close relative, this is my father's third cousin or something, didn't believe in banks, and he had a fair amount of money in gold coins, all of which he had in gun barrels in the gun room. So his daughter, he, I guess, was shipped off to Siberia too, but his daughter was there. And she, together with my mother, slaughtered a pig, and it squealed for many hours because neither of them are very good at butchering, and melted down the fat into barrels, and then poured gold coins into these barrels to get it out of there, otherwise the Russians would have confiscated it. Anyway, we stayed there about a week and then, you know, dressed up as peasants with babushkas and all that kind of thing, we made our way to Lwow, which is

the major city in that area of the Ukraine. And there we lived from about, well, from September to December.

And I was sent to school. This is a Polish school, but under Russian occupation, and I learned to sing the Internationale in Russian. And then, as I told you earlier, in December somebody came and said that they knew that my father had been killed and that my mother had exhumed the body, and then they made arrangements for us to cross the border legally on New Year's Eve between '39 and '40 into then still-free Lithuania.

SIGRIST: What do you remember of that crossing?

MARKS: I remember it very clearly.

SIGRIST: Can you tell us about that?

MARKS: That was a scary time. My sister and I were sent with, you know, there were lots of people that were paid to be guides and helpers and whatever. And so this young farmer or peasant came, and my sister and he and I went by train to the nearest spot, to no-man's land, to the border. My sister dressed up as his wife, and I was their child in sort of peasant garb. My mother and her parents were hidden in a hay wagon, because you weren't allowed to move.

(she laughs)

SIGRIST: That's right, I've forgotten, your grandparents are with you on this.

MARKS: Yes, yes, my mother's parents.

SIGRIST: Right.

MARKS: And we got to the border, and my sister and I and the other three met, and I can remember this, in this hovel of a farmhouse, which I had never seen before, with dirt floor and animals. I mean, in a really, animals inside the living area, goats and chickens and things. (she laughs) Pigs, I don't know what. But I remember being blown away by this. And then night came, and we started to walk. And there was a, we had a guide with us, and there was a four kilometer no-man's land. And it was New Year's Eve, bright moonlight, and absolutely no vegetation, flat, snow, field. And we knew, I mean, I didn't know so well, but, I mean, afterwards I was told that the Russians were supposed to shoot on sight because they didn't want refugees to cross the border. So, anyway, I, the story goes that, and I can remember this, too, that the guide and I marched first. I mean, I walked right with the guide. This is me, the toughie. Carrying,

everybody carried something, because the only belongings we had is what we carried. And also my clothes, all of those years, I remember being terribly heavy, because we had money sewn, you know, coins sewn into every bit of hem. Anyway, I marched with the guide, and then came my sister, then my mother, and then my grandparents. And supposedly every two seconds I turned around and said, "Is Mummy here?" And my sister said, "Yes, yes, she's coming." And then I'd march on. Well, when we got to about halfway we heard soldiers shouting, "Halt!" And two soldiers with a dog came out, I can see them coming toward us, with guns. And they had the same helmets as the Russians, sort of peaked helmets. But, in fact, they were Lithuanian. And they pointed the guns and told us to lie down, and we did, except my grandfather, who was an arrogant old lawyer who said, (she mimics her grandfather's deep voice) "If I am to die, I will die standing up." And this is the first time I'd heard my mother be rude to her father. She cursed at him, and said, "Get down!" And then they negotiated, and my mother always said she knew what her life was worth, because they paid a gold Parker pen, a couple of watches, I don't know how many dollars. Dollars, gold dollars, was the currency of choice, and they let us

go. And we then marched on to the pre-arranged farmhouse in Lithuania, where we were expected, and spent the night there, during which night the farmers with whom we were staying stole every piece of jewelry that we had on. And there was no way of reporting them, because we were there. So, anyway, from there we got to Vilnius, which is now the capital of Lithuania, but in fact was a Polish city, and it was one of those that kept going back and forth. And so we stayed there until September of 1940, during which time I was sent to school again, except this time I'm Lithuanian. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: It shows, the story about crossing the border and the farmer stealing your money, just shows how everybody was desperate at that time. Everyone was out for themselves.

MARKS: Oh, of course, of course.

SIGRIST: So you were in Vilnius how long? I'm sorry.

MARKS: From about January 1st till about September 10th.

SIGRIST: Oh, so a chunk of time you were there. And you went to school.

MARKS: I went to school, and . . .

SIGRIST: Where were you staying?

MARKS: That's when we were really desperate about money. My mother had no money at all, and she didn't want to take money from her parents. We were staying in a, we rented a large room in a Polish officer's widow's large house and a garden. I remember playing in that garden with other children playing at crossing borders illegally, my favorite game.

SIGRIST: Second only to air raids. (they laugh)

MARKS: Yeah, right. Called the green border.

SIGRIST: At the time, in Lithuania, did you feel safe? I mean, was this sort of like a relief to get there? This was not a good . . .

MARKS: No, no, it was terrible. My mother was in terrible emotional shape.

SIGRIST: What was your mother thinking would be the next step?
I mean . . .

MARKS: To get to Sweden.

SIGRIST: And that was always your intention.

MARKS: Well, my father had spent some time in Sweden as a

businessman. And my father, both my father and my mother's father were staunch Rotarians, and he had many friends in the Rotary in Sweden. The Swedish king was a Rotarian. And so that always, and it was the neutral place. I mean, it was either Switzerland or Sweden, and we were in the north, and that seemed the place to go. So my mother made several forays to the Baltic coast, because Vilnius is inland, to make arrangements with fishermen to take us across. But by the time she managed to get somebody who was willing to do it, it was sort of ironic, the next day the Germans forbade any fishing to go on, and so that ended that. But no, it was a terrible time. I was constantly, you know, the grown-ups were constantly having confabs about how to get out of here. And I was constantly sent out of the room, because I wasn't allowed to be in on, you know, any serious discussion that concerned everything. Of course, that's interesting, because I forget whether you know this Paul, but I'm a social worker. And knowing what I know now about children and their emotional state, they did terrible things to me. I mean, that was a lousy way to handle a situation like that. They should have included me. They should have, you know, explained things to me, instead of just saying, "Oh,

the child should go out and play."

SIGRIST: Oh, of course, that was the practice.

MARKS: That's right, that's right. You're absolutely right. I mean, yes, "Send the child out to play," while the bombs are falling and her father gets killed and, you know. And, of course, she covers by showing no emotional at all, so it's interesting.

SIGRIST: While you were in Vilnius, did your mother work at all?

MARKS: No, there was no work.

SIGRIST: What about your sister?

MARKS: Well, actually my sister, you know, who's, by now she was eighteen, I guess, uh, no, seventeen still, seventeen-and-a-half, did get some money teaching English to Poles, or to people there.

SIGRIST: Which she had learned in England, or before?

MARKS: Well, she had been in boarding school in England for two years, but we had always spoken English. We had an English nanny when we were little. No, we grew up in a family where you had to speak French, English and German, otherwise you, it just wasn't, that's the way

that part of the world, on that level operated. I mean, that was just a must, you know. So . . .

SIGRIST: Well, and it could explain your complete lack of an accent of any sort.

MARKS: I'm a mimic, too, you know. I speak languages without an accent.

SIGRIST: So she taught, made a little money teaching English.

MARKS: Yeah, right. I mean, really little. And, you know, they sold jewel, pieces of jewelry. My mother, that was one of the reasons she got so frantic is that day that she went to exhume my father's body, she had taken with her, and this is sort of, you know, right out of Tolstoy, you know. They went in a horse and buggy to wherever my father's grave was. She had taken with her a soft jewelry case with all her jewelry. And in those days women of that ilk have a fair amount of jewelry. Well, in her distraction, needless to say, after my mother, she left a jewelry case in the horse and buggy, and people lived off jewelry. And that was the only kind, you know. So my grandmother still had her jewelry, that which hadn't been stolen by the Lithuanian peasants, and they kept selling off brooches. But my mother had very little

left, because she had lost her case. So, anyway, it was very nip and tuck and very emotional. I mean, she was very stressed. And I remember her being so angry with me that she took a leather strap, which is not her wont, and my sister defending me and ripping, taking the strap away from her and saying, "You can't do that."

SIGRIST: Her nerves were just frazzled.

MARKS: Just frazzled, just shot.

SIGRIST: Before we get you on to Sweden, I have a question about your grandparents actually, because they're a little older and . . .

MARKS: The age I am now. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Well, and certainly maybe of a different kind of generation than you and your mother. You spoke of your grandfather being such a staunch national.

MARKS: Right.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about having to travel this way with grandparents like this, because this must have been just as hard on them as it is for you.

MARKS: Oh, absolutely.

SIGRIST: Is there a story that your remember? Of course, the story about your grandfather, you know, not wanting to lie down.

MARKS: I really don't. I can't, I mean, I remember them vividly in Sweden when we got there, but I don't remember them on this . . .

SIGRIST: Of course, this must have been an awful (?) for your grandfather to watch his beloved country violated the way it was.

MARKS: Oh, then to lose, to be a refugee, to lose everything, that would just be, oh, terrible, terrible. He really never, I mean, it broke his heart, and he never adjusted. It was tough on him from then on. He had a very sad. I mean, he lived, anyway, ultimately they came to Sweden with us, lived in Sweden until my mother remarried here, which is the next step of the story. And my mother's brother was in Brazil, and brought my grandparents there.

SIGRIST: To Brazil?

MARKS: Yeah. So they lived and died in Brazil. They were there from about 1948 until 1965 when they died, '66.

SIGRIST: Well, good. Well, get us to Sweden. How did you go about . . .

MARKS: Well, we got to Sweden through circuitous ways.

SIGRIST: Why Sweden?

MARKS: Well, neutral. There were only two countries in Europe, three. Portugal was another, it was way off. But there was only Switzerland, Sweden and Portugal that were good places to be, and England was too far away. So arrangements were made, and I don't exactly know how. I think through the Rotary or through contacts, through business guys, who knows. My mother wrote to people. In September or August of 1940, Russia annexed, is that the word, uh, Lithuania. Because of that, there was no longer a need for the Swedes to have their separate embassy or other legation, which is what they had, in Lithuania, because they had one in Moscow. Therefore that legation closed and we're sent back to Sweden in a sealed diplomatic trade, meaning that nobody, no border passport control or nothing. We were supposed to get diplomatic immunity to go from Lithuania via Berlin up to the north to Sasnitz, where the ferry took the train to Filabore in Sweden. Mother arranged

to get permission to us to go on that train, and my grandparents. And we went as far as Berlin, that in 1940 even the German trains didn't all run on time, and we missed the connection to go on to Sasnitz, and had to spend three days in Berlin.

SIGRIST: A scary time to be in Berlin.

MARKS: A scary time to be in Berlin, on Polish passports. At that point, my mother and my sister and I were all in mourning clothes. I mean, like M, mourning after somebody who died. My mother and my sister were totally in black. You know, Europeans did that, and I was wearing gray, because I was too young to be in black. My mother also wore a veil and a hat that had a white strip here, which indicated that she was a widow. I mean, that was tradition. When we got to Berlin, checked into a hotel, nobody checked the passports because it was a diplomatic. Remember that we all spoke fluent Austrian, so much, totally without an accent, and sounded like Viennese. So everybody assumed we were Viennese, and my mother decided that she wanted to look up an old friend of hers and my father's who was an actor and lived in Berlin. And the only place to, that kept everybody's addresses up to the minute, was the S.S. headquarters, so she took

us there, the three of us. My sister and my mother and I went to S.S. headquarters. And I had a doll in my hand, and I was told by my mother, "Don't speak, just say yes, no, thank you, 'bitte,'" you know, in German, "but be polite, but don't say anything." So we went there, and I remember seeing a lot of men dressed in black, and my mother asked for Hans Tigleu's address, and they gave it to her, and then they very, they were very polite, and asked her how things were in Vienna, and we said, "Fine." And then they said, "Which front was your husband killed on?" And she said, "The Eastern front." And they said, "Okay, good." You know, "Sorry, goodbye." And we left. Many years later I said to mother, I said, "How, why did you do that, are you crazy?" And she said, "Yes." She said, "I really didn't care." She said, "It just all didn't matter." And, uh . . .

SIGRIST: It's true in retrospect. It seems like a horrible thing to do.

MARKS: Mandess, mandess.

SIGRIST: Mandess, you're right.

MARKS: You know, I mean, so many horrible things had happened to her. Anyway, she did see Hans Tigleu, the actor.

He came to visit us in the hotel. Two days later we got back from the train and got to Sweden. But, when you say, you know, I was probably, and I don't mean to use psycho-babble at this point, but I was probably so flat and dull, defunded, you know. Yes, I was scared all the time, but I, you just sort of . . .

SIGRIST: You don't even know it.

MARKS: You don't even know it, you know, particularly not if you're eight or nine. You just march on.

SIGRIST: Your mother probably just figured she'd been through so much already, what does, all she's doing is getting an address. (he laughs)

MARKS: Right, right. No, I meant in general the whole experience was sort of upsetting. Anyway, we got to Sweden, we had, I remember clearly we had bananas and white bread on the train to Stockholm, and it was exciting because I hadn't seen that for a couple of years.

SIGRIST: Did your, did you have any contacts in Sweden at all? Did your mother know people, or your grandparents?

MARKS: No, but the Rotary, the Rotary gave my mother carte blanche. You know what that means, right? To

establish herself. They could, she could, she had unlimited credit. She could educate herself. Bear in mind, she spoke French and played the piano. That's what, you know, you don't earn a living on that. My sister had finished boarding school in England but had no skills to work, and I was little. So they, the Rotary was fantastic. They established us in a very attractive part of town, gave us money for furniture, sent my mother to a fashion design school. My sister went to secretarial school. And I went to the most snobby French Sacred Heart Convent School in Stockholm where the entire royal family went. I went for free, which the nuns reminded me of daily. It was wonderful for my faith, but, and so there we were in Sweden. And, in time, my sister got a job in the American embassy, because she had security clearance being the daughter of a Polish officer, and she spoke all those languages, and she took shorthand in all those languages. And she used to go at night and listen to the secret transmissions from Britain, you know, and take notes. And I remember limos would pick her up and take her to the embassy. She worked for the American embassy for years.

SIGRIST: Did you stay in Stockholm all that time?

MARKS: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit, through your eyes and through maybe your mother's eyes, what it was like to be sort of safely ensconced in Sweden while pandemonium is going on in Europe, during the war?

MARKS: Yeah. I'm not sure I can speak for my mother. I can imagine, but I spent my energy becoming Swedish. I mean, I really didn't want to be a refugee.

SIGRIST: And your intention was to stay in Sweden.

MARKS: I didn't know any, I mean, I didn't know any better.

SIGRIST: But that was your mom's intention was . . .

MARKS: Probably, probably. My sister married in Sweden, a Swede, and I was totally at home. You know, because of our facility for languages, and this facility, my mother and my sister have that as well. I mean, we, particularly my sister and I. Mother had, you know, she spoke French fluently, and Polish and German. Her English, she spoke it fluently, but she had a slight accent, but my sister and I didn't. After being in Sweden I think less than, well, six months, I appeared on the cover of a Swedish health magazine as the

classic Swedish child. You know, with blonde braids, and looking very Swedish. So I was at home there, and I didn't want to leave. And I was very happy there. I had friends, I, it was a little tough being in this snobby environment and being the only one whose mother worked, but somehow it was okay, it was never grim because it was sort of being the daughter of a hero, a fallen hero, made it okay to be poor.

SIGRIST: It was a certain mythology.

MARKS: Right, right. You know what I mean, it was just grim. It was okay.

SIGRIST: Would you say that school was perhaps the most difficult of the experience because of that?

MARKS: In the beginning, in the beginning, yes. And I switched from that school. After about three years I said, you know, enough of this, please may I go to a non-convent school.

SIGRIST: You said that the nuns often reminded you. Do you have any nun stories for us?

MARKS: (she laughs) You want some nun-sense? Uh, yeah. I can tell you a nun story. It was, my favorite author in Polish was James Fenimore Cooper. And I loved

American Indians. I mean, I thought that was very exciting. And there was a young woman, a girl, I would have called her, but nowadays, you know, she was twelve or ten or something, in my class, who was the daughter of the Yugoslav ambassador in Sweden. And she had beautiful straight, black hair, and a rather strong eagle nose. Her name was, Olivera was her first name, or Olivia, or something like that.

Anyway, I was ten, eleven, and I was fascinated by her. And I told her that I probably thought she wasn't all Yugoslav, but she undoubtedly had American Indian blended in. Which, to me, was a great compliment. Well, she went screaming, or her father went screaming or her mother, to the Mother Superior, who called me in and gave me hell for being so awful.

I also, I was visiting Mother Superior very frequently, because my handwork was never quite as neat and clean as it should have been. It was always sort of grubby and sweaty and black and dirty. I also had to go to Mass every morning which, of course, none of the non-Catholic children had to go, only we were punished. And I would appear running late, because Mass was an hour before school at eight o'clock, and I came running into the chapel, which is on top of the school, out of breath, without my coat, you know, hair

flying, and I remember the nuns sitting all in the row saying, "Chapeau Andree, chapeau." So I had to run back down and put my woolen cap on and run back upstairs. And also the last thing I'm going to tell you about the nuns, because it's sort of interesting, they came to Sweden in the, oh, in the '20s or '30s, I can't guarantee, but at a time when Swedes didn't permit convents to be opened in Sweden. It was a very anti-Catholic country. And they were allowed to open the school with the agreement that they not wear the habits. And so they all wore habits for, these black dresses down to the, you know, ankles. And they had wigs because, of course, nuns cut their hair. And whenever they'd get upset the wigs would go sort of slightly askew, and a few tufts of hair would be, so we all thought it was very funny.

SIGRIST: Hard to keep a straight face.

MARKS: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me just a little bit about your mother in Sweden, and how she adjusted to this new, of course, she'd been a lot of places.

MARKS: She was, she was amazing. She got through this design school, and then became something that no longer

exists, but there was a fashion salon where women of a certain economic status went to have clothes made to order. And she ran the place. The term was Directrice. And she was known as Madame Milona. And the, most of the diplomatic corps went there and, you know, it was sort of the place. It was called La Couture, and she ran it, and I think she really quite enjoyed it. I should back up. Prior to that, before she sort of established herself, things were quite tight momentarily, and we would, I can remember mother making, she was very chic and very clever with her hands, which I'm not at all. She was a very creative, and she would make little hats out of ribbons and things with veils, something women wore in the forties. And she would sort of peddle them in, there weren't drugstores, they're like drugstores, places that sold that kind of thing, in order to get a little bit of cash. And the saddest story is when she was really short of money at the end of the month one year, at one time, and had just sold some of these things, these ribbony hair things, and had some cash and had gone and bought dinner for us, bought fish. In Sweden you had a lot of fish. And on her way home, she was walking. She stopped by a flower shop, a florist, who had a beautiful flower arrangement in the

window, and she stood admiring them but, of course, couldn't afford to buy it. And while looking at the flowers the packet of fish fell between her hands into the grill. She was going into, whatever, the basement. She was desperate. I mean, this was dinner. She couldn't speak Swedish very well yet. Ran into the florist, saw the owner of the flower shop, hysterical, you know, very upset. She said, in Swedish, "My fish is in your hole!" (Swedish) And he stared at her as though she was loony. And she said, she kept repeating the phrase over, "My fish is in your hole!" Finally she grabbed him by the hand and pulled him and showed him. And, of course, he went down and got the fish up.

SIGRIST: Oh, my. So she had her difficulties then at first.

MARKS: It was very rough. It was very tough, yeah. But then after a while, then it got better. Also, she got a pension from the Polish government in exile in England for my father.

SIGRIST: So that made things a little . . .

MARKS: So that made things a little easier. And my sister got a good job. And ultimately my sister married and had a little boy. And then my stepfather came.

SIGRIST: Well, let's hold on that, because we're going to pause just for a couple of minutes so that Peter can put the tapes back on, and we'll get you to America.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: We're now beginning Tape Two with Andree Marks, and it is Thursday, August 5th. This is Paul Sigrist. Mrs. Marks, tell me a little bit about, why America? When did the whole subject of America come up while you were in Sweden?

MARKS: (she clears her throat) Excuse me. My mother met a man by the name of Fred Kasler, K-A-S-L-E-R, in 1947. He was a Polish architect who had spent the war in Poland, and was in Sweden awaiting his American immigration visa because his daughter and son-in-law were living here, and were trying to get him to come to America. My mother and he met and fell in love, and despite the fact that he was seventeen years older than my mother, and he felt that he was much too old and too poor and too everything to start a life anew. My mother being persevering, visited him in the summer of 1947, and then in early Spring of '48 came over and married him, leaving me in Sweden with my

sister. And then in the summer of '48 I was supposed to join her, rather she had made arrangements for me to get a Scandinavian-American fellowship scholarship to Upsala College in East Orange, New Jersey. And said if only I would come, all I had to do was finish college, and then I could go back to Europe. Because I really did not want to come.

SIGRIST: You liked it in Sweden.

MARKS: I was at home in Sweden. That's where all my friends were, that was my home. My sister was there, my nephew. I mean, I didn't want to move again.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything that your mother may have written to you soon after she got here about what things were like here, what she liked, what she didn't like?

MARKS: No.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that.

MARKS: No. Bear in mind that I, I was opposed to her getting married anyway.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Well, that was my next question is how you and your sister felt about . . .

MARKS: Well, my sister was obviously more sympathetic. I was a teenager, and my step-father was, as far as I was concerned, an old fogie, very stuffy, very old-fashioned. He wanted young people to be seen and not heard. And I had led a very free life. I mean, my mother and my sister and I were three friends. I had not been treated, you know, in my later years. As a small child I had a lot of independence. I spoke to my mother the way I would speak to an equal. And he was a Victorian man who wasn't used to having young people around. So, I mean, it was a bad match. But, so my mother didn't write. After she arrived here, she didn't write euphoric letters. I think she more or less wrote pleading letters saying, "Please come."

SIGRIST: And where did they go to when she came here?

MARKS: New York City.

SIGRIST: They went to New York City.

MARKS: Yeah, yeah. And she got a job, well, after a while, working at Bloomingdales. You know, part of her fashion thing. Anyway, she, I mean, I had no choice. I was seventeen, and she said, "You're coming." And, so, "Okay." I was going unhappily. I remember

clearly the day before I was leaving for America one of my friends in Sweden, you know, in those years, among the young intellectuals, there was an anti-American feeling. Not anti-American in the political sense, but all, this is the post-war years, and all we saw as American was sort of the Texas sergeant who, you know, had no culture, no . . .

SIGRIST: Kind of disdain for . . .

MARKS: Absolutely! Yeah, right. Hollywood and Betty Grable. So this friend of mine, I remember, read me a Dorothy Parker short story on the phone before I left for America. I said, "How can you go there? It's uncivilized." This was a story called Cocktail Party. I don't know whether you've ever read it, but it was very disdainful of American socialites and, you know. So I'm, I really didn't want to come. But anyway, I came.

SIGRIST: Your sister had made her life there.

MARKS: Right. She was married, had a child, married to, into a very large Swedish, very Swedish old family.

SIGRIST: And she liked it there, obviously.

MARKS: Oh, absolutely! Sweden is wonderful.

SIGRIST: Can you remember saying goodbye to your sister?

MARKS: Oh, vividly.

SIGRIST: Did she take you to wherever it was you had . . .

MARKS: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Did you go to Goteburg? Is that where you left from?

MARKS: No, no, we went to Oslo.

SIGRIST: To Oslo.

MARKS: Because that's where the ship was sailing from. It was a funny ship. It was called the Marine Jumper. And it was a troop transport ship that had been converted into a student ship. In those years there were student ships going back and forth in the summer, and it had three hundred and fifty students on board. A lot of Quakers. You know, the American Field Service went over to pick apples in Europe and help rebuild agriculture. And my sister and I went by train to Oslo, spent the night in Oslo. And I remember saying goodbye to her, weeping hysterically, and Renee weeping too. Because she didn't, she really didn't want us to leave. Needless to say, she was sort of being left behind. And . . .

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you, what you were carrying for luggage?

MARKS: No, I really don't.

SIGRIST: Do you remember taking something with you as a memento of your life in Sweden, or some kind of . . .

MARKS: Paul, I didn't see it as a permanent move.

SIGRIST: That's true, that's true. You were planning to go to school.

MARKS: You know, this was not, this was not an immigration kind of thing. I was coming here as a student, and then going to go back. And I wasn't even going to, I wasn't even sure I was going to last out the student's years here. I mean, I really came. Anyway, it was called a Marine Jumper. There were three hundred fifty students on board. I think probably I might have been the only foreign student on there. I had the best time. It was eleven days, and it was party time. This is not steerage of the 1890's.

(she laughs) This was, everybody was, I was, what, seventeen? Anything between seventeen and twenty-seven, and we just had a wonderful time. Breakfast date, lunch date, evening date, dancing. Wonderful.

SIGRIST: Can you describe where you slept?

MARKS: Yes. Remember I told you it was a troop transport. So there were, it was dormitory-style, bunks, four high. And I think I was on top. And every, you know, kids from all over the states. I remember a couple from Princeton, which is where I now live. And I, of course, got a boyfriend,

SIGRIST: Shipboard romance.

MARKS: Oh, yeah, who I went with for years, Swedish-American, from Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, who went to Syracuse, who had been in Sweden.

SIGRIST: Were students the only passengers on the ships?

MARKS: Students and their leaders, some adults. And particularly the American Field Service. I remember, it was interesting. I had never attended a Quaker meeting. And because this was a troop transport they still had the gun turrets aboard, but no guns. But the Quakers held their meetings in the gun turrets, which is sort of ironic for Quakers. (she laughs) So it was wonderful, it was great fun. And we ate cafeteria style, but nobody cared, and at night everybody was on top deck playing guitars and singing

songs and, you know. Just, it was great fun. And then we arrived in New York Harbor.

SIGRIST: Did, what was your reaction to the Americans? You know, you have a sort of bad opinion of Americans.

MARKS: No, that changed. I mean, on board. It was wonderful, because these were all college kids and it was, it was fun. No, the arrogance of European snobbism went right out the window, and I just had a blast.

SIGRIST: You didn't get sick or anything like that.

MARKS: No.

SIGRIST: No. What time of the year is this?

MARKS: August.

SIGRIST: August. August of 1948.

MARKS: Yeah. That's exactly forty-five years ago.

SIGRIST: Time flies. (they laugh)

MARKS: That's right. I'm just the same person.

SIGRIST: So you arrived in New York Harbor.

MARKS: We all got up at dawn, because everybody said, "You've

got to get up and see the Statue of Liberty." And all the Americans who had been gone for three months got very emotional. I thought it was interesting. They're all very weepy, sort of. You know, here we are. And I had a date that night. This was, Paul, and that's why I was, I believe Friday night, Friday morning, possibly Saturday, but I think it was Friday, of Labor Day weekend, 1948. And that's important (she laughs) to the rest of the story. Anyway, we pulled into the pier, and everybody started going through their, going through immigration, etc., etc. And I had a Polish passport, a Polish passport issued by the Communist Polish consulate in Sweden, which was the only document I had. I wasn't a Swedish citizen, despite the fact taht we had been there for nine years. Because, I don't know why, but anyway, I didn't. So I arrived here and went through immigration and was told I couldn't go through. Oh, I was arriving on a student visa. And they asked me who my nearest relative was, and I said my nearest relative was my mother. "And where did she live?" "She lived in New York City." "Oh, and you're coming on a temporary student visa?" "Yes." "Well, we don't believe you're going to leave." I said, "But I plan to. I don't want to stay here. I want to go back to

Sweden." Anyway, to make a long story short, they wouldn't let me off. My mother had made arrangements to meet me and gotten permission to come to the dock side. So she was standing right at the dock, and they detained me on the sun deck. And let me tell you, as my kids would have said when they were younger, I lost it. I was hysterical. Three hundred and forty-nine people got off that ship, and they held me back. And I didn't want to be here anyway, and it was terribly hot, and I had not been exposed to New York summers, and the whole thing was a nightmare. And I was screaming at my mother saying, you know, "Why did you bring me here?" And, "You should have left me in Sweden. I was happy." And, "Why did you force me to come?" And, "Look what you've done. Now I'm in jail." And my mother's standing on the bottom saying, "Please keep quiet or I'll never get you out."

Anyway, it was bad. It was, it was very traumatic, and I was very angry and very upset. And, you know, I felt rejected, you know. So, anyway, I had to wait for a uniformed guard to come and take me to Ellis Island, because what they wanted was a five hundred dollar bond. And there wasn't going to be a hearing until Tuesday because of Labor Day Weekend. And so I had to be detained until Tuesday. And so I waited for

the uniformed guard. We waited, my mother downstairs, I'm sure she, too, hysterically, undoubtedly. And the uniformed guard came, and as we walked off the ship my mother charmed the uniformed guard, Burns Guard, and she said, "Please, I haven't seen my daughter since March." This is now August. "Can I at least take both of you out for lunch?" And he agreed, and so my first meal in the United States was somewhere near South Street Seaport in some deli, my guard, my mother, and I. And then she said goodbye to me and promised me she'd get me out soon, and then I, in quite a state, got on the Ellis Island ferry and was brought here.

SIGRIST: Did you know what Ellis Island was?

MARKS: No idea!

SIGRIST: Did your mother know?

MARKS: No! Nothing.

SIGRIST: So for all you know they're just hauling you away . . .

MARKS: To jail. Which, in fact, it was. Anyway, I arrived here, by that time very stubborn, very angry teenager.

SIGRIST: Is it evening by now, late afternoon?

MARKS: Late afternoon. No, it was definitely afternoon because I remember the dinner. In a rage. Angry at my mother, America and everything. And I remember, I told Peter downstairs, we did not come through the main gates. I was the only one on that boat. But we came through a side gate. Maybe where the cafeteria is, I remember going up the steps and a single door. And there was this enormous matron. And I was probably somewhat weepy, and she clutched me to her bosom. (they laugh) The woman was a very large matron. And, at which point I stated that I refused to speak English. I wasn't going to make life easy for them. I don't know what I, what I was proving but, you know. And that if they wanted to speak to me they had to get a Swedish interpreter, because that was the only language I was going to communicate. So this matron said, "No problem, dearie. We've got just the roommate for you." And I was taken to one of these wonderful rooms up here, and there was only one other bed occupied, and it was occupied by a Swedish woman, a Swedish woman. Well, to me she seemed old. She was probably thirty. Very attractive, blonde. And she told me her story. She had been here for

about three or four months, and she was fighting deportation. She had arrived on the Swedish-American line, and she was en route to Hollywood to make it in the movies, where she had all kinds of contacts. But the ship's doctor on the ship had made a pass at her, and she had rejected him. And because he was so upset at her rejection, he wrote a document stating that she was mentally unstable. And, because of that, they would not allow her into the country. I was very sympathetic, of course. And we spent the rest of the afternoon amusing ourselves, having a competition who could kill the most cockroaches. Because we had, we had wooden clogs, Swedish wooden clogs, long before they became chic, and we were killing them with the clogs in our room. And that was that, until there was a dinner bell that rang to go down to the cafeteria, and my roommate disappeared briefly. And then we entered the room, ready to go for dinner, in an evening dress. And when I looked somewhat surprised, she stated that she always dressed for dinner, and she wasn't about to lower her standards just because she was in jail. So that's when I decided that maybe the ship's doctor wasn't quite wrong. (she laughs) Anyway, and then I spent the next three days here.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the dinner that first night?

MARKS: Well, I don't remember the dinner so much as I remember I flaunted and befriended a young Polish sailor who had jumped ship who was working in the kitchen. And he gave me extra things, you know. There was a hole through which the food was passed, and he was probably eighteen when I was seventeen, and he gave me extra goodies, whatever meal I attended. But I remember the people vividly.

SIGRIST: Well, good. Well, talk about some of the people that you remember and their stories.

MARKS: Amazing, just astounding. I mean, in some ways, whores. I remember young Canadian whores who had been picked up for prostituting.

SIGRIST: Did you actually speak to these people, or do you just remember their presence?

MARKS: Yes, no, no, no. I spoke to lots. Because I was, you know, friendly and bouncy.

SIGRIST: And not much to do probably.

MARKS: Nothing, except stare at that huge flag. There was

only one, as I recall, at one end of the room, not two the way they are at the long end. At the short end there was one enormous American flag. And the other thing, of course, the symbolic thing I remember is that when you went out to that little square where you could walk, which was covered with barbed wire, you could see the Statue of Liberty. However, as I recall, mostly her rear end, which I found extremely symbolic at age seventeen. (she laughs) As a matter of fact, I wrote a short story for my, which I turned in at college and got an A on, and it was called The Rear End of the Statue of Liberty. Anyway, the people that I got very friendly with some Estonians, who had sailed across, come without papers, who had been here for eons. I knew but was not friendly with a whole bunch of Germans who had been detained, I think, during the war, as being members of the Bund, and fighting deportation. I don't, I don't know that they were American citizens, but they had been here for years. Do you know about them? I mean, is that, this is what I remember. Have you heard anything else about them?

SIGRIST: Not specifically.

MARKS: Okay. Well, anyway.

SIGRIST: Were they older, adult? I mean, definitely adults?

MARKS: Adults, and they had had children here, and.

SIGRIST: Were there lots of kids here?

MARKS: Not lots, but some. There was one child that I can remember, uh, Lebanese, with his mother. He was Down's Syndrome. And because of that wasn't allowed in. And the father was a taxi driver in New York, and had come here first, saved a little money to bring his family over. And the immigration, of course, stopped them when they saw the child. She was in a room, this Lebanese mother, in a room with a great, big, tall Jamaican woman, who kept harassing the little boy, teasing the little boy. And the two women had a physical fight rolling on the floor. I had never seen two women fight before. I mean, that was scary. There were people with VD, people with TB, you know, because they had . . .

SIGRIST: Would you say it was crowded? I mean, was, were there lots of people?

MARKS: Lots of people. I mean, not crowded. I don't know what crowded, compared to 1820, I don't know, or 1920, I don't know how crowded, but there were lots of

people. I mean, lots of sailors that had jumped ship, Poles, and others. And then those Baltic people, you know. Then a lot of Jamaicans who had come here under various and sundry. . . . The Germans. It seems to me I can visualize talking to a guy, I think he was a Yugoslav. I don't know. A displaced person of some sort. Anyway, it was very traumatic.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any Asians being here?

MARKS: No, no.

SIGRIST: Mostly Eastern Europeans and Jamaicans.

MARKS: Mostly, and Germans.

SIGRIST: And Germans.

MARKS: And Canadians, lots of Canadian prostitutes, young girls. I mean, like ten, maybe.

SIGRIST: Do you think they were plying their trade here?

MARKS: Oh, they were. They had been picked up.

SIGRIST: But, I mean, at Ellis Island.

MARKS: Oh, no. No, no, no, no. No, I mean, I don't know.

SIGRIST: We have had stories. (he laughs) That's why I

asked.

MARKS: Yeah. Oh, I have no idea. I have no idea. If they did, I wouldn't know. I was just, I mean, they weren't that far from my age, is the point. I guess, you know, I have a feeling this Yugoslav man, who sort of took me under his wing, when we'd been here for quite a while. I mean, I was one of the short termers, the fact that I was only here three or four days was, most of the people had been here months, if not years. And he's the one that told me who all these people were. You know, sort of introduced me to the scene. But . . .

SIGRIST: What did you do? What did they, what did they allow people to do during the day? You have to bide your time somehow.

MARKS: Well, I spent a lot of time chatting with this guy, and with my Polish sailor friend, and we read, we played cards, a lot of patience, you know. (French), it's called. Solitaire.

SIGRIST: Solitaire.

MARKS: Right. Games, checkers, that kind of thing.

SIGRIST: Did they offer movies or anything like that?

MARKS: No way.

SIGRIST: You said there was some kind of exterior place where you could go outside.

MARKS: Yes. Very small square. When I was visiting here, my husband and I were here about a year ago or something, or maybe less. I tried to find it, and it was hard for me to find the exact place. I remember we walked out of the main hall onto a restricted area, which led you all the way to the water. But, as I said, there was mesh wires, and then barbed wire on top. But I don't know.

SIGRIST: Now, was this very formalized? Did you have to go out on a line, or anything like that?

MARKS: No. You see, it was so hot. There was no air conditioning. It was just hot, and it was August, Labor Day weekend. I'd never experienced such heat. You know, Scandinavia doesn't have that frequently.

SIGRIST: Did you have all your luggage with you here?

MARKS: Uh-huh.

SIGRIST: Talk to me a little bit about the staff. You mentioned the matron. What do, do you have any

recollection of guards, or . . .

MARKS: No. I certainly don't have any negative memories. I don't think anybody was mean.

SIGRIST: Were you questioned it all while you were here?

MARKS: No.

SIGRIST: You were simply just being held through the holiday weekend.

MARKS: I think that's what it was. I think everybody knew that I was here, they wanted a bond, and my mother had to come with a check with five hundred dollars, and they waited until Tuesday when the first hearing could be held, and I was brought into the hearing. It must have been at Columbus Circus, Columbus . . .

SIGRIST: Circle?

MARKS: Circle. I had been in London recently.
(she laughs)

SIGRIST: So you were actually taken off the island for the hearing.

MARKS: With all my stuff, because I never came back. And my mother met me there.

SIGRIST: So was she ever allowed onto the island?

MARKS: No.

SIGRIST: So you had no visitors.

MARKS: I was, no, and I didn't talk to her. I mean, there was no telephone conversation. It was, I was really in isolation. It really was scary.

SIGRIST: Do you have any other recollections of your roommate?

MARKS: No, except she stayed after I left. I mean, she felt badly. Everybody had these awful stories about their immigration lawyers who were, you know, both Estonians, or Latvians, whatever they were. And the Swedish woman, even the Germans had immigration lawyers who would represent them for years and months. I always wondered afterwards if, in 1954, when they closed it, what did they do with the leftovers? Just let them go?

SIGRIST: They may have just dealt with it all in some way.
(they laugh)

MARKS: Yeah, right. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: It was a rather hasty retreat.

MARKS: Right. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, anyway, you've got all your luggage, you go to Columbus Circle. Tell me a little bit about the hearing.

MARKS: Well, I'm, it was very, it was very brief, and I don't really recall much except a large desk with a judge sitting there. And I think my mother brought a lawyer with her, in fact. And my mother depositing a check, and then going out with my mother and going to Schraft and having an ice cream sundae. And the Schraft counterman calling my mother "honey", which was a total shock to me, the informality, or something.

SIGRIST: Tell me where your mother lived and . . .

MARKS: She lived on Riverside Drive and 96th Street. And the Schraft was 95th and Broadway or so. We went up there.

SIGRIST: And what were your first impressions of where she lived and the neighborhood, that sort of thing?

MARKS: Well, I hated the place where she lived, and I wasn't happy with my stepfather, and he wasn't happy with me. I think he would have been happy if I had stayed on

Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: That was a terrible way to start off, you know, not getting on with half of your family.

MARKS: No, it was terrible, and it didn't get better. I mean, that was a bad scene. But, no, I remember it was a building where you had very small apartments, studio apartments, one room with a bathroom. And my mother, so they had one room, large but one room with a tiny kitchenette in the bathroom, and she had rented me a separate room in this big building which, it's a beautiful building. I'm sure it's now been revamped and it is very chic, but it wasn't then. And there was no air conditioning, and it was hot, and I hated it. Except that I think the second night I had a date with my friend from Bay Ridge, so that made it all right. And we went to, not Radio City, but the other big movie theater, you know, in Times Square. Then I felt it was all exciting. And very shortly thereafter I went off to college.

SIGRIST: And this is the college in West Orange?

MARKS: East Orange.

SIGRIST: East Orange.

MARKS: Yeah. It was a Swedish-American college called Upsala, where I was for three years, and got a baccalaureate's degree.

SIGRIST: What was there about New York you didn't like that you really just didn't like at first?

MARKS: Just the heat and the dirt. No, I found New York very exciting.

SIGRIST: Because it's got to be dirtier than Sweden in terms of the city.

MARKS: Oh, very much. (she laughs) Yeah, even though it was cleaner than it is now. No, but I found New York exciting. I loved the electricity of it. I had been to London, so I, you know, I had seen big cities of that kind.

SIGRIST: I'm sure you've been around.

MARKS: But, no. I thought New York was exciting. I just didn't like where I lived. Once I got to college and was able to establish my own life and such, it was fine. And it was, sadly, you know, by that, by the time I finished college I couldn't go back any more to Sweden. I mean, I was uprooted from there.

SIGRIST: Yeah. So your whole life changed dramatically.

MARKS: Right.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you one final question.

MARKS: Okay.

SIGRIST: Are you glad that you made that decision? Are you glad that you finally gave in and came?

MARKS: Well, I had no choice, Paul. That's a funny question to ask. Surely my life would have been different. Yes, I'm very happily married here. I have American children, you know. If I had never come, I probably would have married a Swede and had, probably been happily married there and had Swedish children. The one thing that I regret is that it's always split up our family.

SIGRIST: Sister stayed in Sweden.

MARKS: Sister stayed in Sweden. And when my stepfather died eleven years later, my mother went back to Sweden. So, you know, that wasn't so great. I mean, so I, now they're both gone, and I'm the only one here. I mean, it always separated us, and there was no need for that. However who, you know, who can turn the clock

back.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Marks, I want to thank you very much. We've been talking for an hour-and-a-half now, and I want to thank you. It's been most interesting, and a great addition to the project. Thank you. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Andree Marks on Thursday, August 5, 1993 at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Thank you.