

EI-596

VERONICA TKACHEFF

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INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

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LITHUANIA, 1922

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SIGRIST: Good Morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is—and I didn't write it down. Today is April 24th, 1995 and it is Monday morning, about 10:30. I'm at the Wesley residence in Saratoga Springs, New York with Veronica Tkacheff. Mrs. Tkacheff was born in what was then Russian territory, but when she left to come to America in 1922, it had become Lithuania by that time. Mrs. Tkacheff was twenty-one when she came to the United States in 1922.

TKACHEFF: Twenty-two.

SIGRIST: You were twenty-two, okay. Present also in the room is Reverend Jane Borden, who is the Chaplin at Wesley. Anyway, good morning.

TKACHEFF: Good morning.

SIGRIST: Could we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

TKACHEFF: 1900, September 30th.

SIGRIST: September—

TKACHEFF: Thirtieth.

SIGRIST: 1900.

TKACHEFF: Hundred.

SIGRIST: And what was your name before you were married?

TKACHEFF: Veronica Sadowska.

SIGRIST: And I'll spell that, S-A-D-O-W-S-K-A, Sadowska

TKACHEFF: Sadowska.

SIGRIST: What town were you born in?

TKACHEFF: Kaunas.

SIGRIST: And we have the map here and that is spelled, C—I'm sorry, K-A-U-N-A-S, Kaunas.

TKACHEFF: Kaunas.

SIGRIST: Kaunas, and that is now in Lithuania, but at that time was Russia.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What is your earliest memory?

TKACHEFF: Oh, my.

SIGRIST: When you were three years old, four years old, what is the first thing you remember?

TKACHEFF: This going to be very hard to say. I been from now—forgot it.

SIGRIST: You want to stop?

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay, we're going to pause just for a moment.

TKACHEFF: [unclear] [tape off/on]

SIGRIST: Okay, we're now resuming. Can you tell me a little bit about the town that you were born in? What did it look like when you were growing up?

TKACHEFF: It's a nice city, but it was more military. The biggest, you know, military force.

SIGRIST: Was in Kaunas?

TKACHEFF: Kaunas, yeah. People, as I say, work in a factory and the ladies or women to help out for family support. They have housework. Take in laundry to their home, and that's the way parents support us.

SIGRIST: Now, did you live right in the city itself?

TKACHEFF: In the city. In the city.

SIGRIST: Was it a true city at that time or was it just a town really?

TKACHEFF: That time I don't know very much because we live in the city one place. We don't know what was different side.

SIGRIST: Is there a building that was in the city that sticks out in your mind that you remember?

TKACHEFF: There was buildings, brick buildings.

SIGRIST: Is there one building that you remember vividly for some reason?

TKACHEFF: That I remember. School. High School, American High School. There was a school, was churches, nice churches.

SIGRIST: Did you attend one of those churches?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the church?

TKACHEFF: That's kind of hard to remember. [Chuckles]

SIGRIST: It was a long time ago.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You were Catholic?

TKACHEFF: Catholic, yes.

SIGRIST: Were there—were most of the people in town Catholic or were there different religious groups?

TKACHEFF: Many different religious. People the town came from all over. For—how could I say? They have all kind people, different country.

SIGRIST: Did all the different groups of people get along with each other or was there tension?

TKACHEFF: Yes, they work. They work, everyone. You know, mind their own family, all living. And I could tell you much church, if I could spell for you.
[Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name?

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was the name?

TKACHEFF: Carmeliti.

SIGRIST: Carmeliti.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, Church Carmeliti.

SIGRIST: And was there something inside the church that sticks out in your mind?

TKACHEFF: Beautiful, beautiful.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it a little bit for me?

TKACHEFF: Beautiful. Very nice. Always very nice priests and—

SIGRIST: How often did you go to church?

TKACHEFF: We went every Sunday to church with family and then like May and June we had prayers. June would we pray to Mary—[unclear] Mary and June for Jesus. Two months, every day.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of the prayers you said?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, I know those prayers.

SIGRIST: Can you say one for us in your native language?

TKACHEFF: Now, on this record?

SIGRIST: Yeah, right now.

TKACHEFF: Polish prayers?

SIGRIST: Sure, just one that you happen to remember, if you can.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, uh-hum.

SIGRIST: Excuse me, we're going to pause the tape.

TKACHEFF: In Polish way?

SIGRIST: Yes, if you could say a prayer for us in your native language.

TKACHEFF: [starts in Polish]

SIGRIST: That's all right, take your time. [Chuckles]

TKACHEFF: [chuckles – speaks prayer in Polish]

SIGRIST: Thank you. Was Polish the language that you spoke on a daily basis when you were growing up?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, Polish.

SIGRIST: Polish.

TKACHEFF: Polish and Russian.

SIGRIST: Because that was a Russian territory at that time?

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did you practice your religion at home?

TKACHEFF: Mother every night each our prayers. We went to church every Sunday and then when we was seven year old, before Conformation, then used to come nun prepare us for Conformation.

SIGRIST: A nun would come to the house?

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That's interesting.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And did all children, regardless of sex, have to go through this religious education?

TKACHEFF: The Polish people, yes. The different country, different prayers.

SIGRIST: But girls didn't get a different education from the boys, religious education?

TKACHEFF: No different. There both boys and girls were taught by persons of church.

SIGRIST: Was there a place in your home, in the house that you lived in, that was a religious area?

TKACHEFF: Very big. We had very big like Jesus.

SEACREST Was it a statute or—

TKACHEFF: No, picture.

SIGRIST: A picture?

TKACHEFF: Picture. Statue we have cross like we got cross now I see in this country. Cross of Jesus and then cross, you know.

SIGRIST: But in those days it was a picture?

TKACHEFF: Picture, yeah.

SIGRIST: And then what did you do, did you use that like a little church? Did you pray in—

TKACHEFF: We pray every night before we go to bed. Every morning we pray. I was brought up in religious family.

SIGRIST: Who was more religious, your mother or your father?

TKACHEFF: They both was religious people.

SIGRIST: What was the most important religious holiday that you celebrated as a child?

TKACHEFF: Christmas.

SIGRIST: Can you explain for me how Christmas was celebrated at that time?

TKACHEFF: Oh, my goodness. This is big story.

SIGRIST: Oh, please.

TKACHEFF: I don't know if I want to put on the record when I tell you maybe then, you put.

SIGRIST: Please, go ahead and explain.

TKACHEFF: We lower class people Christmas time, we used to have big supper, and we put a hay on table.

SIGRIST: Hay?

TKACHEFF: Hay, and then cover up with white vesper tablecloth. Then what we prepare for Christmas supper was fish, [unclear] bread with--how you call those little seeds?

SIGRIST: Poppy seeds?

TKACHEFF: Poppy seeds, yeah.

SIGRIST: You're saying baked bread, right?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, my mother baked bread and then poppy seed and then what else we had?

SIGRIST: These were special foods that you had just for Christmas.

TKACHEFF: We could not afford to get [unclear]. Nice, [unclear] food, all kind of herrings. You know, herring? Lower class, but that was good, taste good.

SIGRIST: How did your mother prepare the herring?

TKACHEFF: With all kind of water, they full salty and then we when the herring was clean, put on a plate and put cut onions around the fish and put oil. I don't know how I recall the time, for us oil. American we got all kind oil, you know. Bread with oil, that was popular in this country.

SIGRIST: Oh, like olive oil?

TKACHEFF: Oh, olive. Olive oil. And then we used to make peiroggi. My mother used to make. It was filled with poppy seeds, some potatoes, mashed potatoes peeled. So that was peiroggi.

SIGRIST: And when did you eat this dinner? Was it Christmas Eve?

TKACHEFF: When sun set down.

SIGRIST: On Christmas—

TKACHEFF: Christmas Eve.

SIGRIST: Christmas Eve.

TKACHEFF: Christmas tree we never had. We couldn't afford it. When [unclear] people had Christmas tree, they don't decorate with toys. They decorate with food, apples, oranges, tangerines, pears, all kind cookies, and the tree would stay through Three Kings. That was 6th of January, I think, Three Kings, and after Three Kings holiday, then invite neighbor's children and what we got on the tree, we share for children.

SIGRIST: So all the children waited—

TKACHEFF: Every day we were waiting.

SIGRIST: --for everything off the tree.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: So let me just describe this to you, make sure I have it right. You had your table and on the table was the straw and the hay.

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: Covered with a piece of linen.

TKACHEFF: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: Why? What was the symbolic—

TKACHEFF: Jesus was born in manger and we had little cradle of Jesus we put in middle of table. That's the holiday, Christmas.

SIGRIST: Now, the people who ate this dinner, was it just your parents and your immediate family?

TKACHEFF: And just family.

SIGRIST: What about extended family, grandparents or—

TKACHEFF: Everybody that's private.

SIGRIST: they do it all them—

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: I see.

TKACHEFF: But next day six o'clock in the morning, we used to go t church and have a Mass. Then when we came home, the family and then if we thought we were able afford somebody to invite to come to have with us dinner. Children, they had the, you know, [unclear] and that was Christmas.

SIGRIST: Was there a gift that was given to the children?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Like what kind of a gift might you get?

TKACHEFF: As I say, what was on the tree.

SIGRIST: The food.

TKACHEFF: We had one thing. We had cookies. Some might get different things. So the children got what's there and what did they prepare, family? Whatever they prepare. They prepare dinner, invite neighbors and one day with my mother, and next 'nother house, 'nother people and that was—

SIGRIST: So Christmas Eve was really intensively private.

TKACHEFF: Very. Very.

SIGRIST: But then all the socializing began Christmas Day.

TKACHEFF: Christmas Day, but we knew these people, you know, from way back.

SIGRIST: Now, did you go to church somewhere in there?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, we went in the morning, 6:00.

SIGRIST: Oh, 6:00 Christmas Day.

TKACHEFF: Then church, yeah.

SIGRIST: Was there anything different about that Christmas service that you attended, the Christmas Mass?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes, very nice in church. Very nice service and then we had good breakfast and we enjoy.

SIGRIST:
So eating is a very important part of celebrating the holiday.

TKACHEFF: That's once we have the luxury.

SIGRIST: You were mentioning oranges and tangerines, which of course in Eastern Europe at the turn of the century were very valuable.

TKACHEFF: That's what I mean. We couldn't have them but once on Christmas time when somehow manage.

SIGRIST: Tell me about Easter and celebrating Easter. Was there anything unusual?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes, Easter very holy. Easter. [unclear] sacrifice and we have Midnight Mass Easter time. Midnight Easter time and before Easter Sunday, Saturday we used to go any children, how many children in the town, they go to every church with prayers and then we come Easter breakfast. But Easter breakfast was not on hay, just tablecloth. We had to dye eggs. Usually they had a big ham. That was once a year. Nice home white bread.

SIGRIST: White bread?

TKACHEFF: White bread.

SIGRIST: Only for Easter did you have white bread?

TKACHEFF: And rye bread. Yeah, my mother bake, homemade.

SIGRIST: Was that a special thing to have, white bread?

TKACHEFF: Yes, luxury. We used to have rye bread.

SIGRIST: Usually rye bread.

TKACHEFF: All the time rye bread, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about dying the eggs. Tell me about the process of doing that, how you did it.

TKACHEFF: There had something, you know, with the egg colors. I don't think we had very many eggs to decorate by hands. Some kind of dye, and first time Easter we're talking about, and we come from church, how many in a family we are. We crack the egg, which was stronger, and the one from the family all the eggs, one is stronger, we don't know. Then that's when he's champion. Win. Strong egg. [Chuckles] This is, you know, very mysterious, but for us was very holiday.

SIGRIST: Something to look forward to.

TKACHEFF: Forward. My goodness, through the year we don't have any luxury.
[Laughs]

SIGRIST: Let me sort of get us away from religion for a minute—

TKACHEFF: Okay.

SEACREST And ask you to describe the house or the apartment, whatever the structure was that you lived in.

TKACHEFF: Oh, very poor.

SIGRIST: Did you live in the same building until you came to America?

TKACHEFF: No, no, no. No. We rent by months, month.

SIGRIST: Was it an apartment that you were renting?

TKACHEFF: No, no.

SIGRIST: House?

TKACHEFF: Little houses. Poor houses.

SIGRIST: What are they made out of?

TKACHEFF: Wood. Wood. Roof shingle.

SIGRIST: How many rooms?

TKACHEFF: We had one big room, and eight of us in one big room.

SIGRIST: What kind of a floor?

TKACHEFF: Wooden.

SIGRIST: Wooden floor.

TKACHEFF: Wooden.

SIGRIST: How did you heat that house?

TKACHEFF: With wood. Wood.

SIGRIST: And what did you burn the wood in?

TKACHEFF: In—[Laughs] Now, I can tell how—I could tell like brick stuff, and I think it's metal stuff because wooden burn. And we warm up the house with it. Wooden, brick stuff.

SIGRIST: And how did you light the house?

TKACHEFF: Kerosene.

SIGRIST: So you had lamps?

TKACHEFF: Lamp, yeah.

SIGRIST: Was it cold in this part of Europe where you lived?

TKACHEFF: Very cold.

SIGRIST: Is there a particular winter that you remember that was particularly hard or a winter that sticks out in you mind?

TKACHEFF: Very cold. Very cold. We children barely go outside because we don't the clothes to wear to go outside. Very poor. Very poor.

SIGRIST: How long did the winters last, do you remember? When would it first start to snow?

TKACHEFF: That's kind of hard to remember.

SIGRIST: It was different, probably.

TKACHEFF: We know when it Christmas time, big snow with ice. Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did people travel when it snowed? How did you get from one place to another?

TKACHEFF: From in the city they walk, you know. And main road, there every [unclear] who had the property. [unclear] they shovels the snow. Put sand on.

SIGRIST: Put sand down on the—

TKACHEFF: Yeah, slippery.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

TKACHEFF: Joseph.

SIGRIST: Joseph. What was his name in Polish? How would you say that?

TKACHEFF: Yuseff.

SIGRIST: Yuseff.

TKACHEFF: Yuseff, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me what your father's personality was like?

TKACHEFF: For personality hard working man. He knew just to go to factory, work his hour, and when he come home, that's it. He rest. Quiet man.

SIGRIST: Did he work in the factory as long as you can remember? That was his job.

TKACHEFF: Very long 'til he die.

SIGRIST: What kind of factory was it?

TKACHEFF: All kind metal. Very many, many things was produced, you know, for—all kind metal. Copper and wires. Locks. Very hot.

SIGRIST: Did the factory have anything to do with military installations in town?

TKACHEFF: Very lots. Lots of ammunition.

SIGRIST: So that's what this factory was producing.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, ammunition.

SIGRIST: Tell me what he looked like. Describe him in words.

TKACHEFF: The factory?

SIGRIST: No, your father.

TKACHEFF: My father very quiet, nice man.

SIGRIST: What color hair did he have?

TKACHEFF: Black, moustache.

SIGRIST: He had a moustache.

TKACHEFF: He smoked pipe.

SIGRIST: What were some of the things your father enjoyed doing when he wasn't working, other than resting? He was probably very tired.

TKACHEFF: Well, like family, you know, in a family. Prepare the wood. Saw the wood. Cutted the wood, and talk family. Just like family.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about your father's background and his family history?

TKACHEFF: His family came from big farm. Three brothers. Three brothers.

SIGRIST: And he grew up on a farm.

TKACHEFF: On a farm, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you know his parents?

TAKCHEFF: My father?

SIGRIST: Your father's parents. Did you ever know them?

TKACHEFF: Yeah. Yeah, I met them.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about—they'd be your grandparents?

TKACHEFF: Babushka. [Laughs] Russian Grandma. They used to come visit us. My husband's father had a big orchard. Fruit. Apples, pears, plums, cherry. Big orchard. But they was farmers. They used to bring, you know, in the season, to downtown by the horse and wagon. They used to leave all the way in the evening and by the time they reached city, it was already about ten o'clock in the morning. And then the city people would buy, which able to afford. And then what was left, the juice or smashed or something. Then my father, brother came to call on us. Sell what he had to sell.

Then my mother and father prepare with dinner to treat him, and there was little bottle whiskey. That has to be. And they ate and what was left from the market or any seconds, then he would give us. Big surprise.

SIGRIST: You said earlier when you were talking about the orchard, that it was your husband's parents, but did you mean your father's parents had the orchard?

TKACHEFF: Right. My father have three brothers.

SIGRIST: Right.

TKACHEFF: And then their mother, they had big orchard.

SIGRIST: They had the orchard, okay.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You sort of described your grandmother as a typical babushka.

TKACHEFF: That's a very long time, babushka [unclear].

SIGRIST: What kind of clothing did an adult person wear at that time?

TKACHEFF: Farmers, there make their own clothes. The [unclear] linen. You know, linen?

SIGRIST: Linen? Like a linen seed?

TKACHEFF: The seeds on a field, and then there [unclear] grows thin white flowers and when it's already flowers through blossom, then they go with [unclear] cut.

SIGRIST: Yeah, like a scythe?

TKACHEFF: [unclear] in the history maybe they got those things. And the women cut them and make them bunches and put on their field grass and stay until dry. And then this is very hard story to tell. Then in the fall time, they have—they don't have, you know, to loosen up the seeds. They have made from wood like a whip and then they pick the seeds and they somehow that was on a farm. I cannot tell you very much.

SIGRIST: So they're hitting the seeds with this wooden whip kind of thing?

TKACHEFF: Loosen up. Yeah. Loosen up. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Can't think of the name of when you—

TKACHEFF: Like a whip.

SIGRIST: I know what you mean exactly. Flail. Flailing wheat? I mean, you do it with wheat, too, I think.

TKACHEFF: Yeah. In my father's family, then they take those stumps of the seeds, some of—[phone rings]

SIGRIST: We're going to pause just for a moment. [tape off/on] Okay, we're now resuming. You were—

TKACHEFF: Those long, you know, where just is growing, stems? Stems?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

TKACHEFF: So that was men job. They tack to their barn and loosen the seeds.

SIGRIST: So the seeds fall out.

TKACHEFF: Fall out, yes. Seeds fall out, and the stump they used to take in the city they have a large vat to soften it up.

SIGRIST: With water in the vat?

TKACHEFF: No, when they dry.

SIGRIST: When they're dry.

TKACHEFF: But I just can't tell you exactly how they make to the thread. They had weave, homemade with the weaver.

SIGRIST: Like a loom?

TKACHEFF: Loom, and woman's job was—I'm sorry.

SIGRIST: That's okay.

TKACHEFF: And woman job was to put the thread through the loam and to weave.

SIGRIST: To make cloth that way.

TKACHEFF: Beautiful weaved thread and then they had—you saw this very easy. I think they got in museums here how they make thread wind.

SIGRIST: Winding it.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, winding and then there put in that, on that instrument and it had the women, beautiful women, and they use for their clothes. They sell and that was farmer's life.

SIGRIST: Did the farmers also do any kind of decorating work on the linen?

TKACHEFF: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What kind of—how did they decorate the linen?

TKACHEFF: Beautiful. That's very tricky.

SIGRIST: Is there a name for what they did?

TKACHEFF: I can't tell the names, but they could make beautiful designs.

SIGRIST: Did they do it with different.

TKACHEFF: They make designs like this, weaver, and woman sits. They got pedals. They work tension. When the pedal goes this way, then they went second. That was wintertime woman job to make those clothes, and then we had beautiful linen white. Nice wool from sheeps. We had sheeps there on the farm. And that's from chickens and ducks, feathers make pillowcases. Pillow.

[End of Tape One, Side A/Start of Tape One, Side B]

SIGRIST: How about mattresses to sleep on?

TKACHEFF: From the straw.

SIGRIST: You slept on straw.

TKACHEFF: From the straw.

SIGRIST: Did you have—did you have a bed frame?

TKACHEFF: Frame. Frame beds, yeah. And like big family, we had—we were eight people. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: In one bed. [Laughs] Well, it was warm that way I guess. Tell me about—we started talking about clothes and then you described this beautiful description of how they—

TKACHEFF: Yeah, description how they make homemade.

SIGRIST: Yeah, you have a wonderful memory.

TKACHEFF: Those I remember, but today I don't remember anything. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Tell me what the clothing looked like.

TKACHEFF: Beautiful wearing clothes. Beautiful linen. Sheets, bedspreads, pillow cases.

SIGRIST: But remember when you were maybe fifteen years old.

TKACHEFF: Okay.

SIGRIST: What did your clothes look like? What kind of clothes did you wear as a young lady?

TKACHEFF: Well, when I was fifteen, already we live in the city. We had material, if able to afford, and mother used to sew for us clothes.

SIGRIST: So your clothes are more stylish, am I to believe, rather than the simple farm garments that you were talking about before?

TKACHEFF: We were talking were used where they got farms. We live in the city. When they get for us, you know, material, my mother used to make, you know, pillow cases, mattress cover. You know, straw you have to put in a bag because the straw would fly all around the floor. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Sure, with eight people sleeping on it. [Laughs] You know, we've been talking actually quite a bit about your mother. What was your mother's name?

TKACHEFF: Ludwiga.

SIGRIST: Ludwiga.

TKACHEFF: Ludwiga.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name before she was married?

TKACHEFF: Now I have to think. Father Sadowska. Her name I don't think I could think.

SIGRIST: You always just remember her as having your name.

TKACHEFF: Way back.

SIGRIST: Right. What do you know about your mother's background?

TKACHEFF: That's my mother, babushka.

SIGRIST: She came from a farm background?

TKACHEFF: Farmer, too. Yeah, and my father and my mother met in the city. My father family brought the fruit.

SIGRIST: They brought the fruits to the city.

TKACHEFF: From the orchard and in fall time, beets, potatoes, pears and my mother family, father was carpenter. No, not carpenter. Home made wooden pail, wooden barrel.

SIGRIST: Wooden implements.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, there was trade.

SIGRIST: So did they—

TKACHEFF: Then—then my mother father and my father father, father's side, they came to big market. They came for the fruit for sale, and my mother came with these wooden things. Pails, basin. He make beautiful carpentering and they met and after the sale, they went, you know, they was hungry all day. There was a big, you know, like restaurant. All the farmers go in there and they have and go have something to eat, and it happened my father family and my mother family, they met, and one say, "I got a son," and the other say, "I got a daughter." [Laughs] In that time, you don't meet what you want. You get what they give you. So they usually have a little drink and they shake the hands and they say, "Well, you got son. You got the daughter. Marry." And they marry and after the wedding, the brother live on the farm and my father live in the city. So that's the way.

SIGRIST: Do you know, and you may not know, but do you know did your mother's family have to give your father's family some kind of a dowry?

TKACHEFF: If they get engaged and getting serious married, they have to give my mother family all the best things they got, linen. Sheets, towels. Whatever they got on the farm, through the winter, you know, they're not throwing away. Geese feather was very good. The nicest feather is the geese. Do you know geese? Then when they kill the geese, they flog the feather and then you save them and then when winter come, in the spare time, they quill, you know, father from the stump.

SIGRIST: Clip them?

TKACHEFF: No, they flog them. Flog them. [unclear]. Then from the feather they pick the soft one from the stem, and they make beautiful pillows, beautiful quilts, nice and warm and light and that's the way was the [unclear].

SIGRIST: And that was part of this dowry they had to give.

TKACHEFF: Yes, so that's men, and I don't know what men have to have—what kind of trade there, I don't know, but that's woman. And then before they get married, family and there came father to father and they marry by church, very nice weddings. Then when they go on their own, the woman always has to have big wooden trunk with all the goodies that her mother did, that she did. That mean her rich. I don't know what the men gave. Maybe horse?

SIGRIST: I see, so both families are giving the other family something.

TKACHEFF: Family.

SIGRIST: I see, so it's not just the woman's family giving the men's family.

TKACHEFF: No, no, no. It's family.

SIGRIST: That's interesting.

TKACHEFF: That's very interesting.

SIGRIST: Do you know what year your parents married?

TKACHEFF: My parents?

SIGRIST: Yeah, what year did they get married, do you know?

TKACHEFF: Oh, that would be too far. I'm already pretty near a hundred.

SIGRIST: Well, let's see—how did you—you had seven brothers and sisters? Yes?

TKACHEFF: Six.

SIGRIST: Six. Where did you fall in that six? Are you the youngest? The oldest?

TKACHEFF: Together, the family.

SIGRIST: Well, how many—can you name your brothers and sisters for me?

TKACHEFF: Oh, dear, dear, dear. The oldest one, Josephine. [unclear] Second brother, Felix [unclear] Felix. [unclear] Then is where I come. Veronica. Then we have Natasha. Katie, because we Kasha. Then we have name of Helen, sister, and brother Stanislaus, Stacey. That's my family already.

SIGRIST: Two brothers. Four sisters.

TKACHEFF: Two brothers, four sisters.

SIGRIST: Mom and dad.

TKACHEFF: Mom and dad.

SIGRIST: So you're third? How much older is Josephine than you are?

TKACHEFF: My Josephine dear sister, now she pass a hundred December 7.

SIGRIST: Oh, she's living still?

TKACHEFF: She's living.

SIGRIST: Oh, wow.

TKACHEFF: She's living in this country.

SIGRIST: So she's how older—how much older is she? Five years older than you are? Do you remember how much older she is than you are? How many years between you?

TKACHEFF: Five years.

SIGRIST: Five years?

TKACHEFF: Five years, because between [unclear] and me, we had brother.

SIGRIST: Did he—

TKACHEFF: He died.

SIGRIST: Felix you're talking about.

TKACHEFF: Felix, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your mother have any children that didn't live?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes, she had two that die.

SIGRIST: She had two that—did they die as infants or did they live an amount of time?

TKACHEFF: My dears, that's so many years back. Maybe they die infants because we don't know them.

SIGRIST: You don't remember any of them?

TKACHEFF: Oh, no, no, no.

SIGRIST: Tell me some of the other responsibilities your mother had around the house. You talked about baking bread.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You talked about making cloth.

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: What were some of the other things that she did t keep the household going?

TKACHEFF: She didn't have a chance, six children. She very low class. Poor class.

SIGRIST: So just the raising of the children was—

TKACHEFF: Yes, raising children and then the side work for rich people. As I say, she was a very, very nice laundress.

SIGRIST: She worked as a laundress.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did she work as a laundress when you were little kids, too?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Oh, so she always did that?

TKACHEFF: When she went to work one older take cares of children. Father work in the factory. Mother work as a laundress, and the oldest one in the family take care of children. And you know, children like children. Some was good; some was too active. So—[Laughs] Now, you see this tragedy. So the oldest one take care each us. And then which one not obey, when

parents come home, “She did this. She did that. She was there.” So punish us. Listen to her.

SIGRIST: How did your parents punish you?

TKACHEFF: Well, good slap. Good slap and a good talk.

SIGRIST: So Josephine is sort of watching out for everybody?

TKACHEFF: Oh, Josephine—

SIGRIST: And then tattling on you.

TKACHEFF: [unclear] [unclear] And Josephine took me to this country. She came to this country 1913.

SIGRIST: So she was the first of your family to come over.

TKACHEFF: The oldest, yeah.

SIGRIST: Which—which—which brother or sister were you the closest to when you were growing up?

TKACHEFF: My dear, it's very hard to say children. We all was close. [laugh] We didn't have no choice and between us, then if mother saw, mother slapped. If not, that was forgotten. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you remember an incident when you were growing up where either you or one of your siblings got hurt in some way? You know, hurt an arm or a leg or something? Can you talk about that, please?

TKACHEFF: Yes, many, many. Well, if they're not broken, then parents take care because we couldn't afford doctor. So they used to wash. I don't know what kind of grease they used to put.

SIGRIST: Grease?

TKACHEFF: Grease, from the pig. Grease, because pig grease is good healthy, and put on the sore and it's over to you. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you remember any other kind of home remedies that your parents used for other ailments, like if you had a headache or some kind of an herbal—herbs that they used?

TKACHEFF: We had what this herb tea. I cannot think American way.

SIGRIST: Some kind of a tea made with herbs?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, been some kind of flowers.

SIGRIST: And what would that do? How would that help you?

TKACHEFF: Well, if you got the chest full, they give you a nice cup tea. They rub you with the grease from what—I don't know. Animals, must be. And keep you warm and if you pull through, you pull through and if it's not, that's when they bury you. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you remember when you were in Europe an instance where there was an epidemic in town, where there was a certain sickness that everybody had?

TKACHEFF: There no sickness, children sick [unclear]. Cough. Whooping cough they had a lot. Whooping cough. My older sister already, when my parents work, so she has to take care of us and you know, to rule so many children, that's not easy job. So my sister told us, "You do this. You do that, and you scrub the floor," for me. I was doing all this. So I scrub the floor on my knees with well water and a brush and when I was scrubbing, I got big—I never forget that finger, sliver. Big sliver, wooden. So I was already crying with pain. Mother and father came and I say, "Usiah"—Josephine. "Usiah told me to scrub the floor. I scrubbed the floor. I got a sliver," and I say, "So pain, I can't stand it." They tried to pull out. There was no doctor. They tried to pull the sliver out. They took out what there was left, and then the finger swollen, very painful, but little by little when the sliver rot—

SIGRIST: Decomposing in your hand.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, then I lost nail and the nail grow up. I don't know. This must be. Now I got paint American way. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: How old were you when that happened?

TKACHEFF: Maybe ten year old. Maybe seven year old.

SIGRIST: And you never forgot that sliver?

TKACHEFF: Never, and when I work on this paper and that finger, I never forget. It's still not sore, but damaged. There was no doctor.

SIGRIST: So in a way, I mean, it was sort of your responsibility then to stay healthy, since it was hard for them to—

TKACHEFF: Yes, yes. Little cold, that's [unclear] medicine their own.

SIGRIST: Did you eat in a healthy way?

TKACHEFF: Hmm. Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

SIGRIST: No? Tell me a little bit about your every day food. You talked about your Christmas food. What did you eat on an every day basis?

TKACHEFF: [unclear] with toast.

SIGRIST: What with toast?

TKACHEFF: Breakfast.

SIGRIST: Breakfast?

TKACHEFF: Bread.

SIGRIST: Bread with—

TKACHEFF: Homemade bread.

SIGRIST: Which your mother made.

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah, my mother. Well, we live in the city. Rye bread. Nice taste bread. We don't have no butter, no jelly. I have to think how did they make—oh. My mother used to go where they kill cattle, to that place.

SIGRIST: Slaughterhouse.

TKACHEFF: Slaughterhouse and she used to buy very cheap fat, you know, the fat under the skin between—then she used to come home, bring the fat and cut in very small pieces, and she fry all that, you know, wherever there is. Long time takes, and then when it's clear and nice, then they drain it. The grease, whatever there, drain and make nice grill, like oil but that would be thick. Then they make butter, oil. No butter. No oil, but that was something that they freeze and you take a slice of bread and put like a butter. Tastes good.

SIGRIST: Almost like a lard that you're putting on.

TKACHEFF: And cup of tea. And cup of tea. Was good. For dinner she made big pot soup.

SIGRIST: How would she do that?

TKACHEFF: As I say, where they was killing cattle, then they which one already legs, feet, cattle feet and what else they use to take. And they cleaned, washed them and put a big bone in a pot and put whatever they got. Barley, potatoes, vegetable. Big pot. Taste good and with great piece of bread and that soup, that's all we want. We had coffee only once a week and poured milk.

SIGRIST: And of course you'd have to buy the coffee.

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah, buy coffee. So mother used to make a big pot, not in a nice, you know, a regular pot. Coffee and like poured the milk, put in there, and from that we have cup of coffee and that was Sunday breakfast.

SIGRIST: So that was sort of a treat.

TKACHEFF: Treat. Treat, yeah.

SIGRIST: Where did your water come from? Did you have—

TKACHEFF: Wells.

SIGRIST: Where was the well?

TKACHEFF: Sometime two neighbors for where we live. Two neighbors, you know, I live here toward the house. They got the well, so we used to get there.

SIGRIST: And whose job was it to get the water?

TKACHEFF: It was a job. It was a job.

SIGRIST: Who did that?

TKACHEFF: Well, parents. Poor parents.

SIGRIST: That's not something children did?

TKACHEFF: No, no, no, parents. This is heavy job.

SIGRIST: And what did you get the water in?

TKACHEFF: Wooden pail.

SIGRIST: A wooden pail.

TKACHEFF: Wooden pail. Wooden pail already heavy, then you fill up. But when we wash clothes, we used to go to the lake or river to rinse. That what we call [unclear]. I don't know if it that or not, [unclear].

SIGRIST: The river.

TKACHEFF: Because the city act around the water. Lake, big lake. One lake big with ship, boat. Was going that big lake. Then everyone have there, who goes there to prepare, takes some little wooden block or something to kneel and go kneel and used to wash. Nice. Bring back. We don't have no line. We had wooden fences and put on the wooden fences. Dry. Mother iron. It's beautiful.

SIGRIST: What did you use for soap?

TKACHEFF: For soap we used to buy.

SIGRIST: You bought the soap?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, we bought the soap.

SIGRIST: Just lost my train of thought. Sorry. We were talking about the food. Oh, I know. How many times a day did you eat?

TKACHEFF: Well, three times.

SIGRIST: You did, you had three meals a day.

TKACHEFF: Three meals a day but in between sometime maybe crackers. Sometime, if mother able to afford.

SIGRIST: So the middle meal was the lightest meal.

TKACHEFF: Breakfast, dinner and supper.

SIGRIST: And supper would be the heaviest meal?

TKACHEFF: Well, it's maybe good soup again.

SIGRIST: The most substantial?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what time of the day would you eat supper?

TKACHEFF: About five o'clock.

SIGRIST: Five o'clock. What time did your father get home from the factory?

TKACHEFF: Four o'clock.

SIGRIST: What time did he go into the factory?

TKACHEFF: Six o'clock.

SIGRIST: That's a long day for him.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did he bring his lunch?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah. Mother gave him piece of bread with that grease. [Laughs]
And bottle tea.

SIGRIST: Did he have something that he carried that in?

TKACHEFF: In a paper bag. No such a things that time.

SIGRIST: You mentioned to me before we started that going to school was not a possibility for you.

TKACHEFF: No.

SIGRIST: But you said that the building you remembered in town was the high school that stuck out.

TKACHEFF: [unclear] high school in the center and was cadet school because our city fort and the high rank generals, officers, middle and higher, they have children and they was growed up not dummy like we. [Laughs] They went to school. They went to high school and the boys went to cadet. High rank.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing—

TKACHEFF: We see them go and come, but they're not much with us mixed up. We poor people.

SIGRIST: So really, there was a very distinctive military presence.

TKACHEFF: Very nice. Very nice city.

SIGRIST: That leads me to ask you, since this was such a military type place.

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about World War I and what happened to you and your family during that time, 1914 to 1918?

TKACHEFF: 1914 happened, we have first World War and German and Russia fight, and Russia, German win the place and we was in the middle, the city where there was bombing. So when we hear plane go, and then I remember my father and mother, take all the children. We had very, very big military hospital in the city and they have big basements and they allowed us to hide ourself until the shooting stopped. And then time when the shooting stop, then who's brave, going to go out and look if it's quiet? Then they take the family and go home. And when we was going home, there was block in the street. Soldiers killed. [unclear] killed. And then I remember when start very bad already, city bombing. You know, they bomb from air. That's very bad. No escape. Then one time was very bad already with them there very much. So my mother, what we had clothes, whatever other things, we had a big, big trunk and my father dig a big hole to bury the trunk, and us when we see already war bombing, then we used to run to those cellar for hiding. And when it stopped, again, we come to the house and go and you have to step, not to step on the killed soldiers. So one time it was very bombing, very, very hard for Russian German. Very fight hard. So we went down there. Lots of people to those—I forget. Lots of people to those basements. My dear Mrs., are you tired?

??: No, I'm thinking his tape's about to run out.

SIGRIST: I have my eye on it. Pop in another one.

TKACHEFF: Another one quick. Then stop, everything quiet. My father and other fathers come out of the basement and look big river, and German came from other side. And he came back to where we—the cellar was so many people, and he say, "Germans coming." See, they put water bridge on the water. You know what I mean?

SIGRIST: So they can go over.

TKACHEFF: And by the time he went to tell us be careful, not to get out, and the German already come in. And then the German tell civilian people "Go to your own homes where you belong," and we went there, and that was tragedy. There guard. We was prisoners already. Would go every some minutes to see if all in the place with the big lights under your face. That I never forget and that begins starvation. That's the big tragedy.

SIGRIST: Then how did you feed yourself at that point?

TKACHEFF: Very bad. Very bad. If we had bread and water, that's it.

SIGRIST: Was your food—were you reliant on the Germans to give you your food?

TKACHEFF: No, they don't give food. What was left.

SIGRIST: Already in the city.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, yeah. Then was tragedy. Tragedy.

SIGRIST: How long was the German occupation of Kaunus?

TKACHEFF: From 1914 to 19—1919, already. Between 1914 and 1919. Already was war—peace, and [unclear] in there. So poor we poor people, we were starving and when German took us prisoners, then my mother, she was laundress, you know, woman, and people [unclear] people. So my mother was taught to serve, to wash their clothes. Mother took. She wash soldier's, higher rank people, higher and then when was ready washed, fixed, I remember my mother gave me soldier stocking mending. Then they don't pay money, but they brought loaf of bread, little sugar. They don't have any money, either, and that's the way we been living from 1914-1919.

SIGRIST: Was your father still working in the factory?

TKACHEFF: Father already dead. Father die.

SIGRIST: He died before—

TKACHEFF: Germany, [unclear] prisoner when he died, and my mother died and we children, there was tragedy.

SIGRIST: So both your parents died while the Germans were in the city, or did your father die before?

TKACHEFF: Before.

SIGRIST: He died before. What did your father die of?

TKACHEFF: He'd been hurt in the factory when they were stacking wood. Those big lots and that was very, very cold and slippery. I don't know how high they stacked that wood. That was for sale, and the last one, they wanted two men or four men, [unclear], you know, and the wood slide and my father under. So he was very hurt. He was sick not very long. Smashed his chest. And mother die after him, three months after him.

SIGRIST: What did she die of?

TKACHEFF: She die—my mother had a gall bladder. We didn't know that. We don't understand, and she was very sick and we were children around the hall. She was in bed and German soldier came, found her sick and they took her to hospital. They operate but she die. [crying]

SIGRIST: She died. We're going to pause now because we need to get you to America yet.

TKACHEFF: To America.

SIGRIST: So I'll put in another tape.

TKACHEFF: That's enough the terrible tragedy. [Laughs]

[End of Tape One, Side B/Start of Tape Two, Side A]

SIGRIST: Okay, this is Paul Sigrist and we're beginning Tape 2 with Veronica Tkacheff.

TKACHEFF: Tkacheff.

SIGRIST: Who came from then what was Lithuania when she came in 1922. We left off, we were talking about World War I.

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: You had told me how your parents had died. Your father died just before the war.

TKACHEFF: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Your mother died during the war.

TKACHEFF: The war, yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about—you said the Germans took you, captured—

TKACHEFF: Capture us. Prisoners.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your experience being captured by the Germans.

TKACHEFF: There was, you know, people, all nationality people. We was their prisoners. We have to obey their orders and like I was saying, there was nice. My mother, she was laundry woman and she know that the young people, they have to be washed. German very clean people. Wash and mend for them. Sew for friendship, or exchange. They used to give us a loaf of bread or a little sugar, like that.

SIGRIST: Did they take you to a different place or were you allowed to live-

TKACHEFF: No, in the city. In the city. Where they took over.

SIGRIST: But were you allowed to live in your apartment?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Or did they take you to barracks somewhere?

TKACHEFF: No, no, we live in our houses, apartment.

SIGRIST: What was the experience of your brothers and sisters during this time period?

TKACHEFF: The children, we don't know very much. We listen to mother.

SIGRIST: What about after your mother died, though? Then what happened?

TKACHEFF: After my mother die, then happen—this is under Germany yet. My brother and sister. I was already sixteen year old, so they put me on labor. You know, in the group for hiring. They cook them own food, you know, their own people. They don't trust prisoners to do anything. And there was about five hundred, the highest officers, generals, like that. They had their own cooks from Germany, and they had which one maid or anything from Germany. But we was prisoners. We prepare. We peel potatoes. We wash vegetables for them. Whatever has to be prepare. And I work from six o'clock in the morning to four o'clock afternoon, ten of us. Prisoners.

SIGRIST: Ten of you doing this kind of work.

TKACHEFF: Yes, ten. And then lunchtime what was left food, they not use, then they gave us little bit. We have little food to there. And then to next morning.

SIGRIST: Then you were allowed to go home.

TKACHEFF: Go home, yeah.

SIGRIST: Did they offer you anything in exchange?

TKACHEFF: No, no, no. We was prisoners and we obey because, you know, the strict. There is no freedom. No speech, nothing. We work but we been told. No conversation, no anything. Do your work and then when time go home, and behave. If not, if they found you in the wrong place, they arrest you. Then they go to camp.

SIGRIST: Did that ever happen in your family? Did any of you, you or your brothers or sisters do something wrong?

TKACHEFF: I was the oldest and they put my sister and brother to orphanage.

SIGRIST: Josephine, your oldest sister, was in America now?

TKACHEFF: In America, yes, and until you know, through the wartime I was sister. I was mother. I was father. I was sister and what else?

SIGRIST: Which sister did you lose?

TKACHEFF: The youngest one, Helen. Helena.

SIGRIST: Helen. How did that happen?

TKACHEFF: Germany put them under control because they was orphans. They don't run around streets, and in the orphanage was very, very strict. Whatever they gave, whatever they're told, that's the rule.

SIGRIST: So how did she die? How did Helen die?

TKACHEFF: Helen die—well, you know, all the things went through, and scared of everything. She wasn't too strong and she die, and the same my brother.

SIGRIST: Which brother was it?

TKACHEFF: The youngest, Stosh. Stanislaus, the youngest. Then when 1913 [sic] open transportation, Europe with America and my sister was already from 1913 in America, and through all those years, wartime, she was anxious to see who's alive, and she found me alive and those brother and sister.

SIGRIST: This is in 1919?

TKACHEFF: 1919, yeah.

SIGRIST: After the war was over. When World War I was going on, was it not possible for Europe to communicate with America?

TKACHEFF: Oh, no, no, was closed. You know, transportation. No transportation.

SIGRIST: So she had no idea what was going on.

TKACHEFF: But she wrote where we used to live? Do you know, I remember where we live the address? I never forget.

SIGRIST: What was it?

TKACHEFF: I'm going to say in Russian. The time was Russian. [Russian] [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Do you remember, was it a letter that you got from Josephine?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, we coming back. So Josephine wrote letter from America to Red Cross and she ask if possible to locate where we are, and that's what happen. She found us three. But she couldn't take three, you know, cost lots of money and they just how many from 1913 to 1922, how many years in this country?

SIGRIST: Yeah, nine years.

TKACHEFF: They work. They able to take one and they say, my sister Josephine, she say when I come, then I'm already twenty-two years old. I'm going to go work and try to [unclear] American there, and we're going to take them to America. But steady, they're growing all ready. Nineteen, already my sister bigger and my brother already was growing up. Growing. So by the time we decide to take them, then already was too late. My sister met somebody. She went to Paris. That time French, Paris, they look for laborers like farmers from different country. So my sister, they took her. She signed. She went to Paris. That's what I mean, French or whatever. And my brother already was time for him to go to the Army, service.

SIGRIST: Is that Felix? Is this—

TKACHEFF: No, no. Stosh.

SIGRIST: Stosh.

TKACHEFF: Stosh, Stosh, and me in America and that was Lithuania left family.

SIGRIST: So by the end of the war, it's just you and Stosh—

TKACHEFF: And Helen.

SIGRIST: Well, Helen had died in the orphanage, yes?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, and Stosh was in orphanage.

SIGRIST: He was in orphanage.

TKACHEFF: Yes, both of them.

SIGRIST: But they both died in the orphanage?

TKACHEFF: I don't know. When I left already was different life.

SIGRIST: Oh, they were still in the orphanage when you left?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. So when the war ended, you didn't get the kids back?

TKACHEFF: No, no.

SIGRIST: They were still in the orphanage.

TKACHEFF: They was in control, yeah.

SIGRIST: During World War I, or maybe even before, can you tell me just a little bit about the relationship between the different religious groups in the city?

TKACHEFF: Well, it's because many religious groups. We belong to Catholic group, church.

SIGRIST: How did the Catholics get on with the Jews?

TKACHEFF: The Jews got their own synagogue. Synagogue, yeah. Their own church, temple.

SIGRIST: Did your family have any interaction with Jewish families?

TKACHEFF: We live neighbors. You know, Jewish and Polish. The [unclear] you know place, all kind nationality. Arabian, Turkish. From all around the world they used to come. To maybe to make living there or maybe they look for something. They all kind nationality. Germans were what were left after the war. They left there.

SIGRIST: The Germans left.

TKACHEFF: Who was taken prisoners from the place. When they left, they left those Germans behind. They don't need them to take to Germany.

SIGRIST: I see. When the Germans withdrew, was the town in a bad state of condition by that time?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, yeah. That was bad. Very bad. That was hunger everywhere because when they took from the country, they took over, they took everything. They left nothing. So that's what was life.

SIGRIST: When you were in Europe, what did you know about America before you came here?

TKACHEFF: We know want to live with my sister in America and my aunt and uncle.

SIGRIST: On what side of the family was the aunt and uncle?

TKACHEFF: My mother.

SIGRIST: They were your mother's—

TKACHEFF: My mother's sister.

SIGRIST: Sister and her husband.

TKACHEFF: Her husband, and they have three children. Small children, but they grow in America already.

SIGRIST: Did you have any ideas about what America must be like? I mean, how did you think about it, if you thought about it?

TKACHEFF: I don't remember. That's young days, young children. I remember my aunt from America. She sent us five—every year holiday, five dollars gold and when we exchange, we got double, and she say, "That's for your holiday dinner," whatever we want to do. That would be ten Rubles, Russians. So then my mother bought, you know, any food we never had. Then we bought, we enjoyed holidays.

SIGRIST: That's when you were buying the oranges and the tangerines for the tree.

TKACHEFF: That's right. That's right. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: So when Josephine contacted you, were you surprised when that happened?

TKACHEFF: Very much. Very much.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about the process of getting your paper together and preparing yourself to leave for America.

TKACHEFF: Well, they sent all information from America and Lithuanian [unclear] government, the time.

SIGRIST: It was called Lithuania by this time.

TKACHEFF: Lithuania. Then we was under Lithuanian government, and she sent, you know, all the papers and she sent twenty-five dollars because she wrote to them and explained for us the same. But we got twenty-five dollars, not to spend. If you even die, not to spend because you going to reach America, Staten Island, they going to ask you what we got. Twenty-five dollars. So we miss many food because we want to come to America. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: I'm just curious. Where did you keep that twenty-five dollars when you came over here?

TKACHEFF: On a string on my chest. Day and night because I want to come to America. I rather be hungry than spend the money.

SIGRIST: Right after the war, were you able to visit your brother and sister in the orphanage?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, until they was alive. Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: I see. Where were you living at that time? Were you still in the same house that you—

TKACHEFF: In the same house and I met another girl. She was orphan and we had one room house. And she was very—she was older than me. She control me. I was sixteen. [Laughs] She watch me like mother and we lived there until they send for me to this country.

SIGRIST: Now, did you have to go to Villmas or to one of the big cities to get any kind of papers?

TKACHEFF: No. We have to go to Latvia.

SIGRIST: To where?

TKACHEFF: Latvia.

SIGRIST: Oh, to Latvia.

TKACHEFF: Latvia because this is Baltic Sea. That section other side Europe. I went to Latvia to get my visa and then when time came, already they let me

know that I pass and I come from Baltic Sea. Baltic Sea. It's a very big sea. I think the biggest in the world.

SIGRIST: Did you have to be photographed in order to come?

TKACHEFF: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Had you ever been photographed before?

TKACHEFF: Before, yeah.

SIGRIST: You had?

TKACHEFF: But that was special taken for the papers. Photograph and red stamp, everything. Then they wrote [Laughs].

SIGRIST: Excuse me. We're just going to pause from resuming now. So you had been photographed before?

TKACHEFF: It's a very, very big ship and for transportation, only two hundred people let go from Lithuania, whatever they came, from Latvia. Was transportation already cows, horses. I don't know how to call that kind of—

SIGRIST: Livestock.

TKACHEFF: Live. Live [unclear] like enough from [unclear] and from maybe from Russia already. They send their [unclear] and America send them the business already. We was only two hundred people on that big ship.

SIGRIST: Do you know what the name of the ship was?

TKACHEFF: That I don't know, and I don't have money to buy postcard.

SIGRIST: Oh, they were selling them.

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah, they were, but I don't have money. My twenty-five dollars.

SIGRIST: That you're holding. Before you left your town, do you remember packing? What did you take with you when you left?

TKACHEFF: Very little because we don't have nothing. Couple, you know, dresses, old dresses. But shoes we have, with no shoes we came. I came March 18, 1922.

SIGRIST: Did you bring any food with you?

TKACHEFF: No, no. We got on the ship. They gave us food.

SIGRIST: How did you get from Kaunus—

TKACHEFF: By train, yeah. I remember we took the train twelve o'clock at night and when we reach border, block the border.

SIGRIST: Border.

TKACHEFF: Then was already some sun coming up already. Maybe six o'clock in the morning, the distance by train.

SIGRIST: What did the inside of that train look like because that's a long trip?

TKACHEFF: Yes, a long train. I was only from my place from Kaunus. Only one traveled. They pick two hundred people all around [unclear].

SIGRIST: How did you feel when you left Kaunus?

TKACHEFF: Scared. Scared. Scared. But when, you know that time already agents work. Where to put us until we were aboard ship and where we going to stay. There was very big building and before we came to America, we have to go so many all kind tests.

SIGRIST: Even in Europe before you came?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, yeah. Before.

SIGRIST: What sorts of tests?

TKACHEFF: Everything. Everything.

SIGRIST: Like what?

TKACHEFF: Eyes. Eyes. Your condition, any rash or any sores. Very strict.

SIGRIST: Had you ever been examined by a doctor before?

TKACHEFF: When I came to Libow, then examination. And then all the papers and back and forth. I don't remember how many weeks we been waiting until ship come. Should they let us go on the ship. That I do not remember. Couple.

SIGRIST: And the ship is leaving from?

TKACHEFF: Libow.

SIGRIST: From Libow.

TKACHEFF: Libow.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you thought when you saw the ship?

TKACHEFF: Scare. Scare. But was not so bad. We just came to the—how you say? Land? Libow and then to the ship.

SIGRIST: To the port.

TKACHEFF: And maybe two days after, when ship start to go deeper then was scary. Yes.

SIGRIST: Where did you sleep on the ship?

TKACHEFF: They have bunks.

SIGRIST: Was it one big room or were you in cabins?

TKACHEFF: No, cabins and two bunks. Up and down. Two beds, bed up and down. Just to get in and then when time come out, I don't know what time they let us out from the cabins, it was breakfast.

SIGRIST: Oh, you had to stay in your cabins and then they told you to come out?

TKACHEFF: Yes. Yes. We had breakfast. I was eighteen days on water.

SIGRIST: Eighteen days, that's a long time.

TKACHEFF: Cargo. No express. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what the ocean voyage was like? What was your typical day on the—

TKACHEFF: Oh, scary, scary, scary. We met all kind, you know. We pass iceberg. Ship pass that at night. That was very scary because you know better than I do, iceberg is a mountain. And the ship started to go close and I was second on the bunk and those round windows. The water cover half those windows and when the ship reached the iceberg, iceberg started to scratch and then everybody started to get scared it might damage ship. Sink. So the ship give signals. Give signals for wherever they can reach to let know that there's ship going by. And another was scary thing was

scared because, you know, a lot of time they put—I don't know who put, the German or what, those bump under.

SIGRIST: The mines.

TKACHEFF: Mines. That was scary. The ship was going very careful because if you reach the mine, that's it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember having to undergo safety drills on the ship? Did they instruct you what to do in case of an emergency?

TKACHEFF: Well, nothing. Sit quiet.

SIGRIST: What about lifeboat drills?

TKACHEFF: No, no. No, lifeboats. No, no. This is deep, deep water. You don't see nothing. Water, waves and skies. Nothing. Eighteen days.

SIGRIST: Whom did you share your cabin with?

TKACHEFF: With another young girl.

SIGRIST: Where she was from?

TKACHEFF: Some parts, maybe different state. Not from Lithuania.

SIGRIST: Was it mostly people from Poland and Lithuania and Russia?

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That were on the ship?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, yeah. We talk Polish, the people. They talk Russian, people. Different nationality.

SIGRIST: Where did they feed you on the ship?

TKACHEFF: Wherever—there was three meals. Breakfast, lunch and supper. I don't remember what food was we eat, they feed us.

SIGRIST: Was there a place you had to go to?

TKACHEFF: Dining room, yes.

SIGRIST: There was a dining room?

TKACHEFF: Tables, yeah, and when the big waves, that was scary. When the waves going and back and forth, time come to eat, whatever the food put on table, the food was sliding back and forth. [Laughs] And then if you reached, you fall in. [Laughs] Scary, scary, scary.

SIGRIST: You were allowed on deck?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes. In times.

SIGRIST: What would you do on deck?

TKACHEFF: Sit and watch skies and waves and water. And talk, gossip. Some sing, you know, young people. Some meeting those people, different states, you know, talking about their life. We talking about ours. Where do you come? Where do you come? And this and that.

SIGRIST: And of course this is just after the war, a few years after the war, so people have—

TKACHEFF: I think the World War end 1919.

SIGRIST: Yeah, 1918, 1919 the Germans were pulling out.

TKACHEFF: Already German gave back to Russia.

SIGRIST: Did the ship make any stops along the way? You left from Libow—

TKACHEFF: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: None that you remember.

TKACHEFF: I know ship was three big chimney. You call different. I call chimney.

SIGRIST: Stacks. Smoke stacks.

TKACHEFF: Yes, big ship. Big ship. And people working who work there. We're not allowed to run around. We just, when time came, they told us to go out and many people was afraid to go out—

SIGRIST: Out on the deck?

TKACHEFF: Out of the cabins.

SIGRIST: Oh, out of the cabins.

TKACHEFF: How you say deck?

SIGRIST: The deck. Out on the deck.

TKACHEFF: Deck and benches, and you sit and watch skies and waves and you talk, or you think or you sleep. And you rock. You rock.

SIGRIST: Did you get sick?

TKACHEFF: No, I wasn't sick.

SIGRIST: Did your roommate get sick?

TKACHEFF: The other people was very sick. Other people, when they got to the cabin, then they come out when they reach the end, and very sick. God gave me strength.

SIGRIST: Do you know how much your voyage cost? Do you remember?

TKACHEFF: No, that I don't remember because already agent.

SIGRIST: He took care of all of that.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, the agent.

SIGRIST: Did you have your luggage with you in your cabin?

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Or was it somewhere else?

TKACHEFF: With us, yeah. Little suitcase, broken. Couple broken dresses. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: So it took you eighteen days from the time you left Libow?

TKACHEFF: Eighteen days, yeah.

SIGRIST: To get to New York. Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

TKACHEFF: When I came to America.

SIGRIST: Did you know what that was?

TKACHEFF: We been told that there's going to be. You know, people used to come from America in the quiet time, changing. European people. Some go and stay for two, three years and then they go back to their own country.

And then when they use the money they have anymore, they go to America to make money.

SIGRIST: So you had seen these people in Europe, then, who had gone back and forth?

TKACHEFF: Yeah. Yeah, so when my—when we came, we came under control, agents. So those people who came before, many years back and they used to say how's America. So we learn about Statue of Liberty, but we never saw. But when ship came, then we saw Statue of Liberty.

SIGRIST: And what did you think when you saw it? Did it mean anything to you?

TKACHEFF: Statue of Liberty and [unclear] New York buildings, that attack us. We never high buildings in old country. The highest building was two flights, and in America up to sky. [knock on door]

SIGRIST: We're going to pause for a sec. Resuming now. The boat comes into New York Harbor, you see the Statue.

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then they take you to Ellis Island?

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: What took you?

TKACHEFF: Small boat.

SIGRIST: On a small boat. So the big boat docked.

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah. That can't go because no—no water. Small boat.

SIGRIST: So the big boat docks.

TKACHEFF: Small boat came to the ship and took people across to—

SIGRIST: To Ellis Island.

TKACHEFF: Ellis Island and from Ellis Island, leave boat. Reach Staten Island, but from Staten Island is over water to go to America to land. New York. Staten Island this way and New York this way. So the small boat came to pick up from the big ship us and brought to New York and 42nd Street. No, not Street. Yeah, 42nd.

SIGRIST: Yeah, well, there's a dock on the street. Yeah, sure.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, and the depot. New York Depot, I think. Trains going by. And agent as guide. Every—I came to Waterbury, Connecticut, only one, and from six o'clock in the morning, I barely got to Connecticut nine o'clock night. All the examination, passport, numbers. All that, you know, questions. Took all day.

SIGRIST: And that was at Ellis Island that all that happened?

TKACHEFF: That's from—yeah, yeah, from Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Right.

[End of Tape Two, Side A/Start of Tape Two, Side B]

SIGRIST: So you were at Ellis Island all day.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, all day.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things happened then? What kinds of questions did they ask you?

TKACHEFF: Oh, go for examination, doctors. And I don't remember already everything, but they make sure that we people who come in from across, not to bring any disease. Needles, shoots them, all kind. And then when they brought—we came to 42nd, New York station, and agents from every place was people was going to the agent, and then the agents say "You going to go to Waterbury. You going to go to New York," or any, and Philadelphia and different states. So I was going only one on the train, the passenger train from 42nd Street Station to Connecticut, Waterbury, Connecticut. At nine o'clock my brother in-law came to pick me up. They put name, who you are, where you going and who going to meet you and my brother came. He called me my name and I answer and he—see, Waterbury, Connecticut small place, city. But I'm from such a big place coming I was worn out, so he took taxi. They brought us to his home and that was Saturday night, late, and that night I know that night no sleep. They ask questions. We talk and we cry and remembering.

SIGRIST: Well, you hadn't seen Josephine for years.

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Almost ten years.

TKACHEFF: Yes, and then Sunday morning Josephine took me to church, French church. Catholic French in Connecticut, and she gave me three months vacation. Stay with her. She feed me. She dress me. She watch me. She took me to moving pictures to learn American way. Silent pictures. I want to know what the talking. I don't understand, you know, writing. Picture go on the bottom what they doing. I sit with my sister and I say, "What they say? What they say?" and people back of us, they say, "why don't you shut up?" [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Well, it's one way to learn English, I guess. [Laughs]

TKACHEFF: That I never forget and my sister say, "Sh...." I don't know what they meant, "Shut up," but my sister already eight, nine years in this country. She was American. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: You said they put a tag on you with your name and—

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: Who is they? Who put that tag on you?

TKACHEFF: The agents.

SIGRIST: The agent did that.

TKACHEFF: Agents, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what about your twenty-five dollars, did you have to show that to anyone?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah. On Staten Island. When we come out.

SIGRIST: On Ellis Island.

TKACHEFF: Island, yeah.

SIGRIST: Ellis Island.

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember having to pull that out of your dress or however you had—

TKACHEFF: Well, they told me and I pulled the string out and I gave them twenty-five dollars. That's it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you were wearing when you got off—

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What were—

TKACHEFF: Shabby, shabby.

SIGRIST: What did it look like?

TKACHEFF: Shoes with the holes. Dress is very worn out, but I came Saturday. Sunday, whatever I had, my sister gave me go to church her clothes. Sunday the time stores closed. No business in Connecticut and Monday they took me to store and they buy me things. Whole outfit.

SIGRIST: What did they buy you? Do you remember what it looked like?

TKACHEFF: Everything.

SIGRIST: Can you describe like one of the dresses?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, nice dresses. Nice.

SIGRIST: What color was—

TKACHEFF: Was nice browns, but the material satin, and trimming maroon. Nice dress. Nice shoes. That time wear lots of shoes, the shiny. How bout that called?

SIGRIST: Patent leather. Shiny?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, patent leather.

SIGRIST: How did you wear your hair back then?

TKACHEFF: My long hair, I had big ball on the back of my head. And my sister give me everything Sunday morning, [unclear]. We went to church and that was quiet. With Monday morning, it was very already very business. Then I stayed three months. My sister gave me vacation. She don't say nothing. She feed me. She give me room. She took my like a mother, and my brother in-law, he had a big mouth. [Laughs] [unclear] and he came from work and after supper then he start to explain me. He say, "You know, people are coming from old country, they think you pick up money from the sidewalks, streets." But he say, "If you want to make dollar, you got to work."

So I was already growing up and I understood and I see what I see, came to this country. So I say, "Anytime you're ready, tell me what to do." So how they're going to tell me what to do? No speech, no writing, no nothing. In a factory I couldn't get job. Then they look newspaper. American paper. Then rich people is looking for a maid. Then my brother in-law say, "I take you over there and we see." If they accept me or not, because I don't know nothing American. From old country. And my brother already was in this country from 1913 and he was educated from Europe. His father was lawyer, so the children was educated. Then he talks—he sold me, like slave. He talked with those people and explained and the lady, very nice lady, just like reverend lady. Nice gray hair, shaped like you, complexion like you. Nice lady. I don't understand what they was talking. Nothing. And then the lady say, "Well, you know, she don't talk English. She know nothing. I take a chance." He sold me, like a slave. And pay wasn't set how much they going to pay me. She say, "I keep her for a month. If she able, you know, already, then we keep her. If not, that's too bad for some people," and I work for a month like a slave.

They don't make how much they're going to pay me, my brother in-law and the lady. And when month came, the lady gave me twenty-five dollars and I worked from six o'clock in the morning until eleven o'clock night. Maid. She had eight sons and that time Arrow shirts has to be ironed, starch and iron. I used to iron until I got blisters on my hands. My sister knew. My brother in-law knew how I'm working, but they gave me chance to get more used to. Then when she gave me twenty-five dollars, to me big money and she said, "Now," she said, "Go to your sister and show them money and see what she thinks." My sister, very quick temper. She took me back and she said her piece to the lady. She said, "You took young girl without nothing. She work for you like a slave, so many hours. She did everything." Only think I don't wash. Woman came wash because top and [unclear] washing, the stairways. I was supposed to take from the line and iron and put whatever there has to be. I wax floors. Three flights, the house she had. Those years we don't have shining—how you call that, shining? Like vacuum—

SIGRIST: Polish.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, polish. Vacuum cleaner we have to push. Not electric. I clean. I polish 'til I drop and then when my sister go to her and tell her what kind nerve she had to keep me like a slave for twenty-five dollars, she say "No more." Then she let the lady know already. I'm good worker. She like me. She give me thirty-five dollars. I worked for nearly three years and when I worked the third year, she gave me fifty dollars.

SIGRIST: So you stayed with her for three years then?

TKACHEFF: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That first month that you worked for her—

TKACHEFF: Twenty-five dollars.

SIGRIST: The twenty-five dollars month, what was the hardest thing to learn how to do?

TKACHEFF: Speak. Understand, but my sister was very good. I have Thursdays, so she took me to silent moving picture. She start to educate, get familiar.

SIGRIST: Were there other immigrant servants in this house?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes. Waterbury, Connecticut town, it's I could say a revival state.

SIGRIST: But I'm wondering, was there someone in the house of the rich lady who taught you how to do this?

TKACHEFF: The lady.

SIGRIST: She did herself?

TKACHEFF: She did, yeah.

SIGRIST: But did she have other servants? Were there other people?

TKACHEFF: No, no. She had a jewelry store business. The children, her children was one doctor, one lawyer. They were very big American people. One went to school, grammar school, the smallest one. He told me how to pronounce Chicago. I have cousins in Chicago and I was telling her, when I make money to go to Chicago, I'm going to go there, not in Waterbury. My cousin's there. The family there and other families. I told her that I'm going to go. Then she give me fifty dollars and I was telling Chicago, Chicago and that boy, twelve years, he says, "Not Chicago, Chicago. Shicago." First word I learn from the little boy. Then from moving pictures and my sister.

SIGRIST: Did Josephine speak English well?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah, she speaks well.

SIGRIST: Did she work?

TKACHEFF: She worked when she came.

SIGRIST: When she first came?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah, she came, but she got good life. She met nice husband, educated husband. Her husband was working in the factory office job. He was educated.

SIGRIST: What was your relationship with the brother in-law? I mean, was it a friendly relationship or did you feel—were you resentful of what he was doing?

TKACHEFF: Well, the time, you know, I was very quiet. Whatever between them, I was stranger. But they treat me good. They took me to moving picture. I stay over night there, and six o'clock in the morning, I went to my work.

SIGRIST: Did you—that first month, the twenty-five dollar month, did you live with that family or did you go back and forth from the family and Josephine's house?

TKACHEFF: I think they give me to keep them because I need to buy things. For twenty-five dollars I buy lots of things.

SIGRIST: What was your relationship like with the lady of the house, the woman you were working for? How did she treat you?

TKACHEFF: Well, she treat me like a maid. Not [unclear]. Now I say I was a slave. Now I know what it mean. I work. I make my job. She told me "Do this. Do this. Do this," and I work.

SIGRIST: Was she patient with you as you were trying to learn?

TKACHEFF: She [unclear] was appreciate what I was doing because she gave me twenty-five dollars for month. But then second month when my sister told her what I did to her, where her nerve was to take advantage of me. So the next month they gave me thirty-five dollars and then from thirty-five dollars, she gave me fifty dollars. But I already was living. I was American already. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: If you did something wrong in the house, how did she handle that?

TKACHEFF: She wasn't happy.

SIGRIST: Would she yell at you? Would she—

TKACHEFF: No, she don't yell. No, she don't. She nice lady. As I say, remind me very nice lady. She told me what to do this, what to do this and I, after few months already I learn what she wants me to do, then I know what to do. I don't have—she don't have to tell me.

SIGRIST: How did you feel that first year in America? I mean, were you happy you were here? Did you want to go back?

TKACHEFF: No, no, back. No, no, back. No. I don't say nothing because I was happy she took me. I learn lots of things nice. If I been old country, I would never have leather shoes. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Did you have to wear a uniform when you worked?

TKACHEFF: No, no, whatever. Housecoat. House dress. No.

SIGRIST: How would you describe your relationship with Josephine?

TKACHEFF: We Polish, my sister.

SIGRIST: But you had been apart for so many years. How did you relate to your sister? Was it a warm relationship? Was it a more standoffish relationship?

TKACHEFF: I can't express. Tears. Crying tears. We both cried tears.

SIGRIST: When you first saw each other.

TKACHEFF: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about things that you saw in America that you had never seen before.

TKACHEFF: Very nearly everything I never see that I found in America. We never had nice houses, nice buildings, and freedom. You don't have—we don't scare—I don't scare. I was talking to my sister free. It's very altogether new world came.

SIGRIST: Was there anything in America that frightened you? Were you frightened by anything in America?

TKACHEFF: No.

SIGRIST: Did anything remind you of bad things you had seen in Europe?

TKACHEFF: All the time. All the time. You will never forget until you die, before I came to America. So that was my story.

SIGRIST: Tell me about—you worked for the woman for three years.

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: Were you interested in becoming an American citizen?

TKACHEFF: Oh, yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: When did that happen?

TKACHEFF: I become American citizens—I met my husband before I marry.

SIGRIST: When did you—

TKACHEFF: He was already citizen and when we marry, when he was citizen, I become citizen. But now few years after rule change. Make no difference. I have to get citizenship myself. I don't remember how many years. Do you remember when this happened in this country?

SIGRIST: The rules change so often.

TKACHEFF: Change, yeah. I can just tell. So when we find out, my husband am citizen, but then we find out I have to become citizen. So then I went from grammar school. I never been. I never been to school, but I went to high school and there was teachers to teach us Constitution, American. I went for one season to learn American many answers. And my sister help me and my brother in-law help me.

SIGRIST: Was it difficult for you to do that?

TKACHEFF: Yeah, it's hard. Hard, but things I supposed to learn, I was thinking very hard to not forget. Then when time came, judge gave his, you know, it's City Hall, whatever. There is a judge and then when you want to become to the citizen, you go to that, maybe court. But I don't understand very well yet, and we have—I don't know, many people one time question you. So before anything, when I have to become to citizen, I have to go to school to learn the Constitution. To learn Constitution. So I went all the year for Constitution and I learn already one thing and another thing. What judge ask, I knew. And this judge was very nice man because all become citizen, European people. He wasn't hard and he gave me citizen paper. So then I become, instead of citizen by my husband, I become on my own.

SIGRIST: How did that feel? How did you feel about that?

TKACHEFF: Free. Free. Free. And then my son got married and he has two boys and they know that we from old country and the children used to come from school and the same but in school, you know, they learn this, learn that.

And me smart. I was very smart. They listen, we talk and I say to my older grandson, I say to him, "Grandma never went to school and she went to high school," and that was question. Maybe he was five year old. He nothing. He don't say nothing, but father and mother, they know what I've been talking. Then when they went home, he asked his father—he was going already to school, my grandson. He said, "Grandma never went to school and how she graduate from high school?"

SIGRIST: Tell me did you experience any kind of prejudice or persecution in this country because you were an immigrant?

TKACHEFF: This country was heaven to us. We don't know the difference. We all European people live, you know, close to each other all time. Neighbors. Work hard. There is no time, you know, anything to have against or—

SIGRIST: But in this country did anyone ever make fun of you because you spoke funny or something along those lines?

TKACHEFF: That was very easy to have fun. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: But nothing serious. Nothing that you remember.

TKACHEFF: Nothing serious. Even now making fun. Even my talk now, not—[Laughs]

SIGRIST: What year did you marry your husband?

TKACHEFF: What year?

SIGRIST: Yeah, what year did you get married?

TKACHEFF: 1924, beginning 1955—25.

SIGRIST: 1925.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, I met my husband.

SIGRIST: And what was his name?

TKACHEFF: Joseph Tkacheff.

SIGRIST: And you met him in Waterbury?

TKACHEFF: In Waterbury, yes.

SIGRIST: Was he from Lithuania?

TKACHEFF: He's from Russia.

SIGRIST: From Russia?

TKACHEFF: Yes.

SIGRIST: How did you meet him?

TKACHEFF: Well, you know, those days people, European people, they have groups, you know.

SIGRIST: Like social clubs?

TKACHEFF: Social. Yeah. They work hard, long hours, but Saturday and Sundays they, you know, groups, making some kind of dance, some kind of gathering and young people. My husband met me, but he wait two or three years until he—[Laughs] After I marry him, I say, "Why you wait so long?" He said, "What, you still marry a European don't know nothing?" He left me just to learn something.

SIGRIST: He wanted you to learn something before.

TKACHEFF: So that was—and then we have wonderful life.

SIGRIST: What attracted you to him? What did you find appealing about him?

TKACHEFF: Nice clean man.

SIGRIST: Nice, clean man.

TKACHEFF: Quiet. No smoke. No drink. Sociable. He had little bit—he had three years school in Russia. Three years school. He help my son, high school, through fourth year with his lessons. Homework. For all those years and then in fourth year high school, he wrote—in Russia teach difference way arithmetic or those things different. In America they teach different. So he came from high school one day and he say, "Papa, you teach me, helping me with school work." My husband could help him through three years high school. He had education and he said, "When I go to school, they teach me different and in math, I don't know now." He say, "To listen to you or to listen to school?" So Papa say, "Sonny, go to school. Learn in school." That was question. But I never went to school and I never—I went one year for paper citizen to understand and Bible read few from Bible, few words. And I was [unclear].

SIGRIST: How many children did you have?

TKACHEFF: Only one son.

SIGRIST: And what his name?

TKACHEFF: Joseph Tkacheff, Junior. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Tell me, how do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Lithuania?

TKACHEFF: I would be dead. Dead. No life. After war was very poor people. Already different change. Already maybe German cut transportation with Russian factory or anything like that. I would be dead long time. But God give me long life. I have good home when I come to this country and I learn beautiful language. I speak very nice. [Laughs]

SIGRIST: Indeed you do.

TKACHEFF: In my young days when I get married, I stay home like a housewife bring up my son and I went to really educate myself to moving pictures. More people, and I heard in one picture singing, "God Bless America," and I like so much that song and when I get a little bit already see the paper, a little the magazines, pictures just looking and I find out that picture, I crochet, "God Bless America."

SIGRIST: The picture on the wall. We're looking at a crocheted, sort of an eagle over a branch of laurels.

TKACHEFF: Yeah, and it says, "God Bless America."

SIGRIST: And you did that?

TKACHEFF: And did that crocheting. I don't know how to copy. That was in a magazine. I count every stitch. Evenings, when my husband used to come from work. Baby was baby yet and I wasn't very much to go to school or anything. To me was nothing. I marry already. I got support. Keep my house. What for I go to school? [Laughs]

[End of Tape Two, Side B/Start of Tape Three, Side A]

SIGRIST: What advice do you have for young people nowadays. Now, you've lived—you're going to be ninety-five this September. What advice do you have—

TKACHEFF: It's very, very, very—no advice. I can give nothing because now the world difference. In my younger world, when my son was growing, we live different. Together. There was no television. There was no radio. Go to

school. Play in the yard with neighbors. Come home. Have your supper. Do your homework. Go to sleep. In the morning go to school and that's what happened, and I don't want to be very, how to say? Show off. My son was very—in that grammar school, he graduate valedictorian. He went to high school and on high honors. End of high school—[coughs] and was war, America. 1950. Then my son was already graduated high school and we work, we save and we saw that his interest in school, and he pick up that he wants to be pharmacist. And my husband side family in the Rhode Island state live. So with no telephone or anything, with writing letters and meeting them. They meet us. Visiting them and then we decide that he wants to be pharmacist, then he went to Rhode Island and lived with my husband family there. And he graduate Rhode Island pharmacist. He come after graduation home. Look around. See small city, little stores. By the time he wasn't twenty-one, he don't get license yet. And by the time he get twenty, the license as a pharmacist, then he went to drugstore, sells ice cream soda on the counter. They don't give him, you know, for prescriptions. And he work a year and he was discouraged. He say, "I don't go to all the trouble for working on the counter." He wants to higher, and he came another year for Master Degree. Then he met a girl. He married and he got two children growing up. One is a pharmacist. My son was pharmacist, and the third one want to be pharmacist. He went one year for pharmacist and then in one year he decide three people in the family pharmacist. He don't want to be pharmacy. He want something else.

??: Ladies and gentlemen. It is 5:08. Time to start down for dinner. Tonight we're having—[announcement continues]

SIGRIST: Well, we're just about done anyway. We not only got your whole history—

TKACHEFF: Suppertime.

SIGRIST: Some one might want to [unclear]. We not only got your whole history, but now we've got your son's history and—

TKACHEFF: And we send him and he marry and the youngest computer scientist working in Virginia, and the oldest one pharmacist, working in [unclear] factory. Where is that? Here, not too far.

SIGRIST: I don't know.

TKACHEFF: I can't remember the name. And my son work in the—

[End of Interview]