

**EI-744**

**ANNA KRUCZEK**

**BIRTHDATE: SEPTEMBER 10, 1920**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

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**CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1927**

**AGE: 7**

**SHIP:**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES:**

LEVINE: It is May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1996 and I'm here in Summit Hill, Pennsylvania with Anna Kruczek, who came—did I pronounce that right?

KRUCZEK: [unclear]

LEVINE: Close enough? Kruczek, who came here from Czechoslovakia in 1927 when she was seven years of age. Today, Mrs. Kruczek is 75 years of age. And I want to say I'm very happy to get to talk with you and I will start at the beginning by where you were born. And we'll talk about your life in Czechoslovakia first. Will you give your birth date and where in Czechoslovakia you were born?

KRUCZEK: Well, I was born September the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1920. I was born in Ladich [PH].

LEVINE: Could you spell that, please?

KRUCZEK: No, I can't.

LEVINE: [laughs]

KRUCZEK: I'm sorry. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Okay, just say it real slow then.

KRUCZEK: Ladich.

LEVINE: Lavich.

KRUCZEK: Ladich.

LEVINE: Ladich. Okay, Ladich. And you—did you live in Ladich up until you left Czechoslovakia?

KRUCZEK: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you were living in Ladich, what—what—who were you living with? Who was in your family?

KRUCZEK: Well, my—my mother's—my grandmother and my grandfather and two uncles. When my dad—when my dad left to go to—to America, United States, we moved back in with my mother's parents. Before that, we were living—as much as I could remember, we were living with my father's parents. And then we were only there about a year or so and then my—I was a year old when my father left for U.S.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about your father's parents?

KRUCZEK: Very little. I remember my grandmother on my father's side. She was very nice. She was very, very pleasant. But my father's brother—older brother wasn't that nice to me. I think they were jealous of one another. And then we moved back to my mother's place and we stayed there—to my mother's family. We stayed there until we came to the U.S.

LEVINE: And what was your father's family's name?

KRUCZEK: John Churnega [PH]. My father was John Churnega.

LEVINE: Churnega.

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And that's your maiden name.

KRUCZEK: That's my maiden name.

LEVINE: And—and do you remember, like, your grandmother—you remember her as being very nice.

KRUCZEK: Y—

LEVINE: Do you remember what she looked like or anything—

KRUCZEK: Yeah, just like any grandmother. She wasn't too tall. Just like any grandmother would, because I remember my mo—when my dad used to send money to my mother and he used to send shoes or something for his mother. And I used to—my mom used to tell me, "Now, you go never there and take it to your Baba's. So that I remember very clearly. I used to walk it. Used to be maybe about half a mile or so. [knocking sound] And I used to walk it.

LEVINE: We're pausing here for a second. Someone's at the—[tape off/on] okay, we're resuming now after a visitor. You were saying that you took the shoes that your father sent for his mother—

KRUCZEK: That's right.

LEVINE: —from America.

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And when you would go, could you—like, can you—can you remember it? Can you remember taking the shoes and walking the half-mile?

KRUCZEK: Yes, I could.

LEVINE: Oh.

KRUCZEK: There was like a little crick and I remembered hardly anybody had shoes, but my dad send me, you know, shoes. I—I don't know—can't remember what kind. But I remember taking them off so I would walk barefoot across this little crick. And my grandmother lived, like, on the little hill. And going over there, again, she would give me bread or whatever. I forget what, but she always made me something to eat. And, you know, talk with her and I used—sometimes she used to put another piece of letter that he would send to my mother and I would give it to her, that it's from my dad. And she would read it—you know, the letter.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: I remember sitting—sitting around there.

LEVINE: Wow.

KRUCZEK: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything—did anybody ever read you letters that your father sent from America that you knew, like anything that he had [unclear]?

KRUCZEK: My mother. My uncles usually would do that too.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything your dad wrote when he was in America to—to the family back in Czechoslovakia?

KRUCZEK: I remember him—I remember my mother, not me—my mother telling me that my daddy wrote, you know. But it didn't interest me be—I didn't want to go to America.

LEVINE: Oh, you didn't?

KRUCZEK: No.

LEVINE: Why was that?

KRUCZEK: Well, you know, when you're seven you have friends and family. And I didn't know him. See, I didn't know him. And my mother used to always tell me, "Won't be long. We're going to go to America." And I said, "I'm not going. You could go yourself." And that's what I used to tell her. So in a way I was mad, because I didn't want to hear that because I had—my mother had a sister that was 18 months older than me. She was the baby. And we were real close. And I said, "I'm not leaving Julia. I'm not going with you. You can go yourself." See, I used to tell my mother because I didn't know anything about that. I wanted to stay there, because we used to be good friends and, you know, everything like that. So—

LEVINE: Hmm. Now, when your grandmother would give you something to eat, do you remember what was a special treat in Czechoslovakia to eat?

KRUCZEK: A piece of bread. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: You know, with homemade bread and, I guess, butter or something. See, I was young. I couldn't—I don't know what they were. I remember getting—it wasn't like a loaf of bread. It was like a—you know, now, pizza pies; they make them. But they used to put cheese on there and—and with flat dough. And they used to put cheese and bacon in the oven. And see, that was—we called it pogach [PH].

LEVINE: Pogach?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, and that was delicious. Then you'd put butter on it a little bit. But when—when my mother and—my mother and her mother baked bread, they—it would be regular bread.

LEVINE: Like a loaf?

KRUCZEK: Like—yeah, used to be round; I remember that. And even when it was warm, my—that Julia I'm talking about—well, she would be my aunt, you know. But she was only 18 months older. I remember we used to cut the ends off and put butter on it and then we used to rub garlic on, and then go up on the tree and we'd eat it. And my grandmother and my mother would holler, "Who did that?" And we wouldn't answer. They—we used to have a big tree in front of the house. And that's when we used to climb there up that tree. And we—well, I could still taste it; it was so delicious.

LEVINE: Do you remember your mother and grandmother baking the bread?

KRUCZEK: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

KRUCZEK: Well, regular baking, which I didn't pay much attention because they were baking. But I—Julia and I played—paid a lot of attention when it was done.

LEVINE: [laughs]

KRUCZEK: I remember, like, they used to have such a big oven. God Almighty! I'll bet you from here to there in the house. It was in the house and on top of that oven the people used to sleep. It was—in the winter, it was so warm.

LEVINE: W—would there be shelves over the oven?

KRUCZEK: It was like a plaster or something, was like, oh, I guess—

LEVINE: A stucco?

KRUCZEK: I guess, or something. It was white, anyway. And inside they used to have these—just like the pizza guys have now, them big things—you know, with the wooden things.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: And they used to shove the bread in there.

LEVINE: Well, your mother must have baked a lot of bread—

KRUCZEK: Yeah, she even—

LEVINE: —to have such a big oven.

KRUCZEK: Well, that was my grandmother's house.

LEVINE: Oh, right.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, you see. And then you used to sle—well, I don't remember how deep it was, but I remember being—it was a one-room thing, you know. And we used to climb up there in the winter because it used to be warm. It looks like it was a white cement around it, you know. [coughs] And we used to sleep up there. And then the other boys—and then, I think they slept, like, in another room in the straw. I think that's what they did, you know. There wasn't too many rooms. I just remember about two rooms.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, what was your mother's family's name? Your mother.

KRUCZEK: Sims.

LEVINE: What?

KRUCZEK: S-I-M-S.

LEVINE: Sims.

KRUCZEK: They shortened it.

LEVINE: Oh. What was it originally? Do you know?

KRUCZEK: Simshik—something like that. But even when they came here and all, they shortened everything, so it would be Sims.

LEVINE: I see. So when you—when your father left for America and your mother moved in with her mother and father—

KRUCZEK: Yeah—

LEVINE: —and her brothers?

KRUCZEK: Yes. Like, there was Harry, Alec and John. And then there was Mary and Julia. There was five and then us too. And then Mom and Pop.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your grandmother and father? That grandmother and father?

KRUCZEK: Oh, I remember her better because I was there much longer. Oh, I remember she was short and chubby. And I remember she was sickly a lot and we couldn't figure out—I remember my mom trying to figure out what was wrong with her and all.

LEVINE: What—what was—what were her symptoms? What—

KRUCZEK: Oh, I don't remember but then when we came to America and all and we found that she had diabetes. See, and we—when we came here and I guess my mom writing letters or something, and she told me that her mother had diabetes. And she died real young, 56. I think it was 56 years—she was 56 [unclear].

LEVINE: Do you remember what people did in—in Ladich for—for—for medical care when you were a little girl? Do you remember any—anything like a doctor [unclear]?

KRUCZEK: Oh, like a—no, they would herbs or some—if you cut yourself, they would take leaves. What do you call them leaves? You and I don't know. If I got a cut or a scrape my mom used to put, like, a big leaf—leaf on—leaf on my fing—on my scratch or something. And if you had a cold, they used to put some kind of plaster on your chest. But I—I can't remember what it was made of, but usually herb stuff, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: Like that.

LEVINE: Do you remember any instances of births—

KRUCZEK: N—

LEVINE: —or ceremonies around births or deaths or any of that in—in that little town?

KRUCZEK: No, [unclear] were all living when I was there. But I remember going to church. But [coughs]—pardon me. But, like, we didn't have church every Sunday because there was one priest for a lot of little farms. So when we had church, we had church anytime during the week when the priest could come to—to have church. That's why. That's the way—I remember that. But I don't remember because they were all living, my family—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: —when I left.

LEVINE: Did—was—did you have an actual church that the—

KRUCZEK: Yes.

LEVINE: —that the priest came to?

KRUCZEK: Yes, yes. Very little—very little thing.

LEVINE: Can you describe it?

KRUCZEK: It was just like a—oh, God. Like you would go—front door. I know it had a peak. I'm trying—closing my eyes to see it. Maybe it was as big as this or, you know, my house.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: Like a—it had seats. I remember walking up the steps to get into the church. But the—the front of the church was in the peak.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: And—and then when the—when the priest could make it, we would go to church. He used to go from town to town but he was from far away, you know, so he didn't make it—sometimes he didn't make it for a month or two months.

LEVINE: And what religion was that?

KRUCZEK: Ah, like, Greek Catholic.

LEVINE: Greek Catholic, uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: But there was some Jewish people living there.

LEVINE: And did they—did they have any kind of [unclear]?

KRUCZEK: The only thing I remember about the Jewish is on a Saturday they would ask my aunt or me to take bread—some kind of a bread to another town and drop it off in a house.

LEVINE: Oh.

KRUCZEK: On a Saturday. But I don't re—I don't know what it was about. But my mom said that was—Saturday was their holy day or something. But I just had to take it to somebody, but I don't know what they do with it. And then they would treat us for doing that so we loved to do that.

LEVINE: Like what would they do? What would—how would they treat you?

KRUCZEK: Oh, they'd give us some money, sometimes candy, you know?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: So we used to take it from one town to the other town.

LEVINE: [unclear].

KRUCZEK: But they were very nice.

LEVINE: Everyone got along with [unclear]?

KRUCZEK: Very nice, yes. But I'll tell you, as far as I can remember, ah, there wasn't many people there, many homes there.

LEVINE: Like, just a rough idea. How many, do you think?

KRUCZEK: I'm trying to count the houses. [chuckles] If I could close my eyes [unclear]—

LEVINE: Yeah, close your eyes and remember anything you can about the town.

KRUCZEK: Oh, God. It wasn't even a town. I swore, I could only remember maybe 10, 15 houses.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: So there wasn't that many.

LEVINE: Was there a school?

KRUCZEK: We used to have to go to another bigger town to go to school.

LEVINE: I see, uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Now—

KRUCZEK: And one thing I remember about the house that I lived in is we had no roof. We had a star—a star—you know, not a star. A roof made out of hay.

LEVINE: Oh, thatched? Like a thatched roof?

KRUCZEK: I guess they used to—like, when they—I remember with straw sometimes used to fall off and they would tie it up somehow. And that was our roof. Somehow, on top of something. But I remembered that st—I used to tell my grandchildren—I'd tell—that stands out in me.

LEVINE: Yes.

KRUCZEK: You know.

LEVINE: Now, in this—well, both sets of your grandparents lived in Ladich?

KRUCZEK: No. My other lived maybe half a mile in Hawi [PH] or something like that. But see, it was just, like, Lansford [PH] and somebody else, was very close.

LEVINE: I see. So your mother and father were—grew up there—

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: —as well.

KRUCZEK: My daddy was there but he went to the army. He was, I guess, drafted or whatever in 1917, that first—World War II.

LEVINE: World War I.

KRUCZEK: World War I, yeah. Well, he was captured by the Russians. [coughs] And he was captured for seven years. He was—but he said they treated him very good. And when he came home after—I guess, well, see, I don't know too much about that. But when he came home he met my mother at a dance. She—that's what she tells—she tell me.

LEVINE: Did she tell you?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, that's what she used to tell me. And then they got married in, I guess, another year or so. But he was 10 years older than her. And her mother and father thought that he was too old for her. [chuckles] but they got married and she was only 20 when she got married. That—that's the story that my mom and dad used to tell me.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, what do you remember about your uncles who lived in the house with you and your mother? How did they treat you when—

KRUCZEK: Very good. Very nice. Very nice.

LEVINE: And what did they do? What did they do for work?

KRUCZEK: They farmed, or cutting trees or—some [unclear] used to go cut trees or something. Sometimes go away for a little while to work on—on somebody else's farm, I guess. That's what I'm trying to figure out now. Well, but they were good; they were nice. We had horses and used to go—they used take Julia and I on horse—horse riding, you know. We used to love it. They would be going to a—another town, say, maybe 10 miles with the horse, and we used to beg them to take us with. We used to sit on the back of the horse with them. Uh-hmm. Or they would hook the horse up to a—a wagon. And in that wagon there was a lot of straw or hay, whatever. We used to sit there and go. But then they used to farm right there when my grandfather and grandmother had the farm.

LEVINE: What kind of a farm did they have?

KRUCZEK: I guess they used to grow everything because I never remember seeing them going shopping for anything.

LEVINE: Were there any shops in the town?

KRUCZEK: Not that I remember. Only, I think that Jewish—them Jewish people on the corner, they might have had a—something. They used to live on the corner with a pretty big house. They didn't have no straw on their roof but everybody else did. I—that I remember.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And do you remember any—anything, like what you played? Like when you played with Julia, what—what kind of games you played or—

KRUCZEK: Climbed the trees or—I know we used to climb the trees. I [unclear].

LEVINE: Do you remember what you or anybody else did for—for enjoyment, for fun?

KRUCZEK: They used to have, maybe—now, that's when my mom—to tell. I mean, they used to have dances once in awhile. But in a bigger town and these little towns used to go, you know—or Christmas Day we have celebrations or something like that.

LEVINE: Can you remember any Christmases there?

KRUCZEK: No, I can't. I can't. It's funny, I can't.

LEVINE: And you were probably too young to go to the dances.

KRUCZEK: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

LEVINE: Right. [chuckles]

KRUCZEK: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Are there any other memories you have of—of life there when you think back on it? Things that come to your mind about the place?

KRUCZEK: All I know is I loved it. I didn't want to leave. That sticks in my head a lot.

LEVINE: Did you go to school at all?

KRUCZEK: Yes, I did go. Now, you know, I can't even place where I went to school. Oh, maybe it was at the bottom—on the bottom of the church or on—in church they had school. But I didn't go too long because I was, well, seven when I left there. But I did go to school.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, how was it—what were the circumstances that determined that your mother and you would—would leave and come to America?

KRUCZEK: [chuckles] That was—that was their plan all along, my mother and father's. He came here to find a job and get a citizen paper and then send for us, soon as he could. I think he took five years.

LEVINE: And he became citizen in that time?

KRUCZEK: Yes, yes. And I became a citizen through him, but not my mother. So then when we came, I remember—now that's—my mom—and I have papers to show that I was a citizen.

LEVINE: I see. He sent you those?

KRUCZEK: Huh?

LEVINE: He probably sent you those?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you remember leaving the town?

KRUCZEK: Yes, I do.

LEVINE: Saying goodbye to everybody?

KRUCZEK: Yes, I do. That—I—they dragged—they—they had a—oh, God. They actually made me go there. They had ice cream! My—my grandmother—they—they just tried to tell me I had to go where my daddy was. They didn't say daddy; they said nanyu [PH]. That's what we called him.

LEVINE: Nanya?

KRUCZEK: Nanyu. We called my, you know, daddy.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: And I didn't want to go. I hung onto everything and I didn't want to go. And then I remembered my uncles taking my mother and me through some kind of highways. They actually were holding me down because I was screaming, and through some kind of a highways. I think we went to Prague. That was a long way off.

LEVINE: How did you go? What kind of—

KRUCZEK: On—on—with the horses and a wagon. [coughs] We didn't have much suitcases because we didn't have much. Then next thing I

remember when they left us, my mother promised me the world, I guess, because I remember her, you know, promising me everything. If I don't like it here, she's going to take me back. And in the meantime she was telling my dad that I didn't want to go. So he said that he's going to buy lots of land there and we'll go back. So somehow I got there. Then I remember I—we got on the train and people were saying—see, we had big tags on. And every place we went, somebody—my dad had to get—somebody would meet us when we would get off that train. And I remember people were—they would look at you—at your tags. And I think it was in Belgium. I'm almost sure it was—I—that [unclear] Belgium. Then they would—then—I don't know where, if we went to Germany or wherever. But every time we would—we would get off one transportation, somebody was waiting for us. And they would look for our name. And then we went on the boat but, oh, boy, that was rough.

LEVINE: Why was that rough?

KRUCZEK: Oh, God. That was rough. My mom was sick from the first minute that she got on that boat. She was so sick. I don't know how long we were on there, maybe seven days or eight, nine. I don't know. But she never went down to eat. She couldn't. And I used to go down there and I used to try, bring something up to her and she couldn't eat—you know, eat. And yet, we couldn't tell anybody, "My mother's sick. Go up and take care of her," you know. Be—I—so I was trying to go down and I even—I got sick and I fell down the steps. But I didn't get hurt. But then I—it was so bad. And then when I was on the deck—it was—it was big. And I used to—I used to see big guys. They—now, I don't know how true it is but they said that when somebody died, they would throw them overboard. I don't know how true it is. But it was a couple of people that died. And I used to see them, was like orange or yellow or—or something bags. And they'd throw them overboard. And I used to be so scared that if my mother dies they're going to throw her. So to this day, I will not go on a ship. Never. Never. So—

LEVINE: So in other words, you couldn't speak to anyone—

KRUCZEK: No.

LEVINE: —on the ship.

KRUCZEK: No.

LEVINE: And that was hard, yeah.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, yeah. See, that was hard. I couldn't—they wouldn't—they couldn't speak to me or they—you know, I don't remember talking to anybody. But I remember going down, getting some food to eat. [coughs] Then when we landed—

LEVINE: Do you remember what kind of accommodations you had [unclear]?

KRUCZEK: Oh, were like bunk beds.

LEVINE: A big room?

KRUCZEK: No.

LEVINE: Cabin?

KRUCZEK: Cabin.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: And bunk—bunk beds; that I remember.

LEVINE: And were—were there other people in your cabin besides you—

KRUCZEK: No.

LEVINE: —and your mother?

KRUCZEK: No.

LEVINE: No.

KRUCZEK: No, just my mother and I, because I re—pardon me, I remember climbing up on top of her because she was on the bottom. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And then when you landed, what—

KRUCZEK: [chuckles] When I landed we had to wait there and another guy met us. We couldn't talk with him, you know, so he read [unclear]. This nice man came and put me and my mother on the bench and a couple little [unclear] we had there, gave me a banana. I'll never forget that. Gave me a banana and I thought, "Well, that was"—I didn't know what it was so I started biting it. I couldn't bite it. So I couldn't wait till that guy went away someplace. He went, I guess, for our papers or whatever; I don't know. And I threw it under the bench. He didn't tell—nobody told me—he could have showed me to peel it, you know. He just handed me the banana and I try to bite it and I says to my mother,

“This is terrible. That’s the kind of food they eat here?” You know, “He’s Slovak,” I was telling her. She says, “Don’t worry. Don’t worry. Your Nanyus will—will give you what you like.” So we waited there; I forget how long. And then when he made the arrangements, he put us on the train and we ended up in Much Chunk—Jim Thorpe [PH] now—on the railroad. And my father met us there in Chunk.

LEVINE: Now, it’s—it’s—Jim Thorpe is the name of the town now. And what was its old name?

KRUCZEK: Much Chunk.

LEVINE: How do—do you know how to spell that one?

KRUCZEK: M-U-C-H—Chunk—C-H-U-C-K, I guess. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: Uh-huh. They be—changed it. So he met us at the train there in Chunk. Well, I call it Chunk now. I—Jim Thorpe or whatever.

LEVINE: And what was it like seeing your father?

KRUCZEK: Well, I didn’t actually care to see him [unclear] because he made me come here. See, I had that against him. And I always tell my mom, “Look it. Look it. All these mountains. There’s nothing, no house—only mountains here,” when we were riding in. I was complaining from the minute I got—got off the ship, complaining about it, you know. When we were coming from, I guess, New York, all I seen is mountains, I was telling her. And when I got to Jim Thorpe, “Mother, you know”—we passed Jim Thorpe, all them mountains. And we had mountains in Ladich but not mountains like that. I kept telling my mother about that. And I was—I remember hiding behind my mother, you know. She recognized him. They recognized each other but I didn’t. He tried to get a hold of me, you know, to hug me. In fact, he was telling me that—how I grew and stuff like that. But I didn’t want to have anything much to do with him. I was hiding.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: And—and do you remember any other things besides the banana that struck you as new and different those first few days and weeks in this country?

KRUCZEK: Oh, yes. There was lots of stuff that struck me. The kids—the kids used to call me greenhorn. And I had big pigtails and when I went to school I—at that time, we had inkwells, you know, in school. And they took my pigtail and stuck them in the ink—inkwell. And my hair was such a mess that my mother had to cut it. That used to hurt me but, you know, that was it. Some kids were nice and when I went to school it was hard for me. But my dad—he learned English pretty good so he used to study with me every night, every day. And he picked it up good.

LEVINE: Now, did—were there other children in your—in your class that had also come from Europe?

KRUCZEK: No, not that I know of. Hmm-uh.

LEVINE: So what did it mean to you to be called a greenhorn? What—what—

KRUCZEK: Well, it didn't mean anything to me because I didn't know what they were—what it meant. But after a couple months, I knew what it was, you know. But I still—I used to tell my dad—I used to say, "Don't bother. That's okay." You know. He said, "You're American. You tell them that you're a citizen." But I couldn't tell them. I couldn't speak English that good. But in about a year I could—you know, I was real good at it. And I started school in—well, I came here in November and I was seven in September. So I remember my dad said, "Well, I'm not going to send you to school until January." Because he wanted me—he was going to teach me stuff, you know. And I passed every year. In fact, I got better marks than the ones—but my father was very smart. He used to even typewrite—got a typewriter and he used to teach me stuff like that.

LEVINE: Can you remember when you started to change your mind about wanting to go back?

KRUCZEK: Oh, I think about a year or so—about a year or so when I became more friendly with, you know, different kids around the neighborhood and stuff like that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, and then I remember my daddy was buying land there. And then one day I says to him, "I'm not going back. If you want to go back, you could go back yourself."

LEVINE: He was buying land back there?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, because he thought I wanted to go back.

LEVINE: Oh.

KRUCZEK: Then I told him, uh-hmm, that I'm not going to go back no more. Then it reversed. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And he wanted to go back?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, he was thinking of going back because my—I think my mom was a little homesick for her brothers and, you know, mother and stuff. But then when she died and his mother died, and they changed.

LEVINE: Hmm.

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how was it getting used to your father af—when—

KRUCZEK: Oh, was—we got around—oh, my God! I was so thrilled. God.

LEVINE: What kind of a man was he?

KRUCZEK: Wonderful. He was just wrapped around education [unclear], you know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

KRUCZEK: But he died very young so—from the coal dust.

LEVINE: He worked in the coal mines [unclear]?

KRUCZEK: Uh-huh, in the rock. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you—

KRUCZEK: He worked there just so he could make a little bit more money for—so he could fend for us.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Do you remember anything he ever said about working in the coal mines?

KRUCZEK: He always said if he had a son, he would never let him work in the coal mines. So he had a son. He—I have a sister that's 65. I have a brother that's 62—going to be. He was 62 in—in March.

LEVINE: And what are their names?

KRUCZEK: Churnega. My brother's Churnega and my sister's a Hilock [PH].

LEVINE: What are their first names?

KRUCZEK: Julia and John.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: They—my mom [unclear] but my brother was only a year old when my dad died.

LEVINE: Oh.

KRUCZEK: So he don't remember but he's he one that gathers up everything, you know, about him. And my sister was three.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So your brother's the family historian.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, he's—

LEVINE: He gets all the information—

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: —on the family.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, so all he says to me is to go—go to school, go to school. He wanted us to go to school. So I didn't get the chance. I didn't even graduate because it was hard. You couldn't get welfare. You couldn't get nothing. [coughs] Whenever my mom maybe had a couple dollars—death benefits, I remember—I was 12 years old when my daddy died. And she went to get some kind of food or something. And somebody came in the house and my mother had a head of lettuce. That head of lettuce was 10 cents. And she told my mother, "You can't buy lettuce and ask for help" Yeah. So we never got nothing. And then my mother married another man. Oh, I don't know how long. It was about three years or so—three years after that because she said she has to have some help to raise us. But then I worked and I made sure my sister graduated. Then she worked to make sure my brother graduated. And we pushed him. He was the first one of the two to go to college. And he's doing real well up there. He went to Penn State and he stayed there. He has a big electronic business. He was electrical engineer. And his kids—two are doctors. One's a lawyer and one is them guys that dive underneath the oceans. [chuckles]

LEVINE: I'm sorry. Say it again.

KRUCZEK: They dive. You know. What do you call them—

LEVINE: Oh.

KRUCZEK: —in the ocean to pick up some kind of stuff and all?

LEVINE: Oh.

KRUCZEK: Biology—something like—

LEVINE: Marine biologist?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, now, tell me about you. When you stopped school, how old were you?

KRUCZEK: Here?

LEVINE: Yeah.

KRUCZEK: I was 16.

LEVINE: And then what did you do?

KRUCZEK: I worked before that. I used to go clean the houses for—and set here for a quarter, just to help my mother and that with these two little kids we had. And I've been—I went—before I was 16—like, my birthday was in September. Well, the year before I went to work in a knitting mill in Jim Thorpe. And I worked there and then I got a job as a sewing machine operator in Mansford [PH]. We had a big fac—Rosemall [PH] Brothers, it was called. That's—that's where I worked. And then my sister worked there too. And my brother went to the Merchant—first, he volunteered for the Army. What was going on? Was it Korean War or something? I guess it was.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: And he volunteered and he served his two years. But he was very bright and he got into school. Then he went on a G.I. Yeah, that's what it was. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And when did you meet your husband?

KRUCZEK: 19—I guess '43 because I was married in 1944.

LEVINE: And how did you meet him?

KRUCZEK: At a dance.

LEVINE: A dance?

KRUCZEK: A football game first. I love sports. At a football game and then at a dance, because he worked in Jersey and he'd come home on the weekend.

LEVINE: So he grew up around here?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, right—a couple doors down.

LEVINE: And did you know him before?

KRUCZEK: No, no. Hmm-uh. See, he w—he used to work in Jersey so I guess when he came on—on the weekend he went to a football game. And I knew—I knew his—the guy he was with. And we said hi. You know, that's about all. Then I—we had a—we used to have a Fireman's Ball and then I met him again. There and then we starting dating.

LEVINE: Now, what—do you know what it was about him that you liked?

KRUCZEK: Oh, I guess everything. He was very nice. He didn't—he didn't drink. He didn't smoke. He was—he was very polite. He was—was a nice man.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was your husband's name?

KRUCZEK: Walter.

LEVINE: Walter.

KRUCZEK: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And—and it's Kruczek.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, Kruczek, Kruczek.

LEVINE: Kruczek, Kruczek.

KRUCZEK: Yeah. Yeah, anyway.

LEVINE: Kruczek. And let's see. So then you ha—did you have children?

KRUCZEK: Yes, I have a son and I have a daughter. The two of them went to college. I worked two jobs. My husband did too. And we send them.

LEVINE: And what are your children's names?

KRUCZEK: Walter and Joanne.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: Joanne is married. She lives in Quakertown [PH]. She's the high school teacher. And my son was a high school teacher. But his mother-in-law had a pretty good business, insurance. So when she died, she made him come back here and he took it over. And he's doing very well.

LEVINE: Good.

KRUCZEK: Uh-hmm. Then I have four grandchildren. One's at John Hopkins College. He's going to be a lawyer. I think that's—next year is his last year. And my granddaughter's up at Penn State. Next year's going to be her last year. She's a chemical engineering and she's g—she wants a—her something—whatever they call them—and biology. She want to—she says to me, "Baba, I'm going to discover something for Alzheimer's Disease," because her father's mother, her other grandmother died from that. And—and for heart. My husband had three heart operations. And she says she's going to figure out that stuff [several words unclear].

LEVINE: Tell me what you—when you look back on your life here in this country, what makes you feel satisfied about it?

KRUCZEK: Oh, God. There is so much. There is so much that, if you work—I remember working when I was, say—after my dad died, I was 12. Then I remember people—I used to be—be pretty good at [unclear] making them waves. And when I would make 25 cents, I thought it was great. And then when I was a little older I'd baby sit and scrub the floors for the people well—you know, more well to do in the—in place. And then I said, "Well, I'm going to work because I know I don't have a chance to go to college. But I'm going to—I'm not getting married." I told my boyfriend—my husband—"I'm not getting married until my sister graduates from school, because I had to quit and go to work." And then just, I guess if you work hard, if you—you know, you—you have a chance. I didn't have the chance but I—now, my grandchildren

have ch—and my kids had a chance, because I worked in a factory and I just—and my husband worked in the mines. And when there was not much work here he went to Bethlehem Steel and worked there too. And I used to work eight hours in one factory and sometimes at night somebody would call me for a night shift. And I worked there too.

LEVINE: Hmm.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, and then my son, he worked. He used to pick balls up from bowling or whatever you call them. And my daughter went in the factory to work. And she says, “Mom, I’ll never work in the factory, all that noise.” So there that showed them what hard work would do. Yeah, there’s so many things that a person could do here. I—I couldn’t do—I would never, you know, accomplish that. Of course, [unclear] and they’re modern too. I got some pictures couple years ago that my Julia, you know—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: Her sons were there with long hair with the guitars. And she had a nice little home but she died, because my brother [unclear] from Penn State went down—over there. And he heard she died.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Let me just pause for one—we’re resuming now. Can you think of anything else that you would say about having come to this country as a—as a young girl and having lived out your life here, how you think about your childhood and becoming American?

KRUCZEK: How I feel? Well, I still think of that—that tree. That’s about all I could remember in Czechoslovakia and little things. But when I came here after awhile, and now as I—I mean, as I got older, I just felt there’s no place like, you know, America.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: I—I don’t know—

LEVINE: How—how was it for you? Well, you didn’t actually visit the Ellis Island—

KRUCZEK: No, I didn’t—

LEVINE: Yeah, that was your—

KRUCZEK: I was sick at that—I have [unclear] arthritis. Sometimes I could hardly walk. So my brother went there. But I didn't. But my sister say, "I feel better now that we're going to go this summer." [chuckles]

LEVINE: Oh, good.

KRUCZEK: On a bus or something.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: But as far as—there's no place like America. No matter if you're poor or if you're rich, you still could, you know, do something about it, unless, I guess when you're really down and out. There is help now. When I was growing up as an [unclear], there was no help.

LEVINE: Can you remember any other changes in this country that you, yourself, have experienced?

KRUCZEK: Well—

LEVINE: Ways that things have changed?

KRUCZEK: Well—since I came here?

LEVINE: Yeah.

KRUCZEK: Well, I guess being [unclear] when my husband was sick. He had rheumatic fever and they didn't know it. We had good insurance but I—I—I—there's help now. I mean, before—before, there was no help. Before, we used to have a doctor come in.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: And now you can't get no doctors to come in. But you could always get there. There's more cars around. When I got married there wasn't—you know, when we bought a car we thought we were millionaires. [chuckles] But I guess don't want to be—be millionaire. All I wanted out of life is I don't want to owe anybody and I want my kids educated and my grandchildren.

LEVINE: Are there any attitudes that you have that you feel came from your mother and father? Ways that you think about things or what—what's good or bad or—

KRUCZEK: Oh, sure. Sure, sure. My dad was a guy that if somebody came to our house and wanted to—he got a car. He bought a car. [unclear] or I or

take him someplace, he would be the first one to go. And my mother, she would help anybody. And that's—I guess that—you know, I'm—if I have—if I could do it, I'll do it. That's the way it is. Yeah. My mother used to love to sew. The picture over there, that's my first dress she made me when I came here.

LEVINE: Do you remember? Can you describe it?

KRUCZEK: It's just that little green velvet, whatever it is, on that picture. And my dad bought her a sewing machine and she was so thrilled. And I used to be looking at it. It's still—we still have it. We—one of them pedal things.

LEVINE: Your dad bought it for her after she got to this country?

KRUCZEK: When she got here, yeah. Yeah, because she—no, and she try—she ruined lots of material, but she started sewing. She thought it was so great.

LEVINE: And are you a sewer?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, I was a pretty good sewer. I used to make my daughter's clothes for college, housecoats and everything, just to save money. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how is this time in your life, now that you're not working and—and [unclear]?

KRUCZEK: Well, I miss my husband very much. He's going to be dead four years this month on the 14<sup>th</sup>, because we went every—we went together. Penn State football games. We have—I still have the season tickets since my two children were up there, oh, in the '60s. And I still—my son goes up almost every game and my daughter, because she has her daughter there, you know. And she graduated from there and my son. So I—when I feel happy and I go up.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: And I have a brother living there so it's just like home to me, you know. And I miss him there. I'll never forget the first game I went there. I couldn't sit because I missed him. You know, we went together. We

went together all over. So now I—I—I just—I just don't feel like going anyplace.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: I go when I have to, you know, to my daughter's or—my son makes me go down at the John Hopkins once in awhile to see his son. And—but I just don't—they want me to go every place but I say I was there. You know, it's different.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, you must feel proud of your family.

KRUCZEK: Oh, yeah. Very proud. I worked. You know, in Jim Thorpe there was a—about two miles to walk. The bus fare was 10 cents to where I started working. We used to walk it, my girlfriend and I, so we could save that 10 cents and walked back on the highway to save—now, when I tell my children that, "Oh, Baba. You didn't do that." I said, "Yes.

LEVINE: And what was it like working in the sewing factory?

KRUCZEK: Well, when I started you had to work two weeks for nothing to learn. They'd train you. And then I got a dollar and a half a week.

LEVINE: What year was that, roughly?

KRUCZEK: Oh, well. Let's figure out.

LEVINE: Must be—

KRUCZEK: I was 16.

LEVINE: Sixteen. You were seven in 1927. So around 1936.

KRUCZEK: I guess. Yeah. I worked there till they—when I quit there, it was three dollars a week. Then I went to work here in Lansford. And down there we used to make knit—like, it was a knitting mill. We used to make something out of that. [unclear] little clothes. But then when I came up here to Lansford we used to make children's clothes—cotton. And I liked that sewing stuff, like that.

LEVINE: Now, what did you do for the children's clothes? What—

KRUCZEK: Well, I was a—I used to work on samples. You know, we used to make our own samples and send them out. Mostly that, or if it wasn't those samples, I used to work on bonus. Machine—that's the bonus that would make them—I don't have any—fancy designs, like they write on baseball jackets, you know. We used to put fancy designs on the kid's clothes. Yeah. Then I used to make collars and stuff like that. Every—

LEVINE: [unclear]—

KRUCZEK: Every girl had, like, different work. You didn't finish the dress. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, when you made the samples, did you just make one part of them?

KRUCZEK: One part and the other girl made the other part.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And you enjoyed your—your work down there?

KRUCZEK: Yeah, I loved it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: I loved it. Yes, I did. I loved it.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did your husband ever talk much about work in the coal mines?

KRUCZEK: No. Nobody liked it. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KRUCZEK: No, hmm-uh. He would always say he wouldn't want his children to go there, you know, but—see, he worked in Jersey. He—he [unclear] worked. And then when—then he came back. I guess—because I didn't want to go to Jersey. And he got a job in the mines and then we got married. So, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think we've pretty much covered everything. Is there anything else you can think of about life in the Old Country, or coming

here, or getting settled here, or then the way you lived out your life here?

KRUCZEK: Well, I only thank God that—that I came here. And I—not going to—I worked hard but I'm not going to complain about that. I thank God for that and for raising my children. I know my grandchildren will be well taken care of because my children are doing real good. So that makes me happy. I'm ready to go.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Okay. We're going to stop here.

KRUCZEK: Okay.

LEVINE: I want to thank you so much for a really—

KRUCZEK: Yeah.

LEVINE: —interesting interview.

KRUCZEK: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm speaking with Anna Kruczek, who came from Czechoslovakia in 1927 when she was seven years old and is 75 today, which is May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1996. And we're here in Summit Hill, Pennsylvania and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]