

EI-802

ANNA ZURA DURHAMER

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CROATIA (YUGOSLAVIA), 1930

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Today is September 17, 1996. I'm here in Cleveland with Anna Zora Durhamer, who came from Yugoslavia in 1930, when she was 15 years of age. Today Mrs. Durhamer is 81 years of age, a very fit 81 years of age, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I know you have a lot in your, in your, story to tell, [background noise] so lets start at the beginning, if you'd give your birthdate and where you were born.

DURHAMER: I was born December 16, 1914 in a small village in Yugoslavia called Prnjarovac.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

DURHAMER: P-R-N-J-A-R-O-V-A-C. Prnjarovac.

LEVINE: And were you in Penjarovatz?

DURHAMER: I lived there for . . .

LEVINE: Up until . . .

DURHAMER: Yes . . .

LEVINE: you left . . .

DURHAMER: Yes, yes I did.

LEVINE: Ok. When you remember your life in Penjarovich, what are the things that you think of most.

DURHAMER: I forgot to tell you one thing though, when I went to high school I still, well, I sort of lived in Prnjarovac, but I took a train every day to go to high school because we didn't have a high school where I lived and, uh, you, the name of that, uh, well it was a small city called Ivanić Grad, which grad means the city.

LEVINE: Ok. Ivanić, could you spell that one.

DURHAMER: I-V-A-N-I-C, and C again has the straight accent mark, which makes it a "ch".

LEVINE: Ok. So, um, in your early days, it, it was a small village

DURHAMER: Yes, it was.

LEVINE: Do you have any sense of, like, how many families or people . . .

DURHAMER: Maybe fifty houses (laughing)

LEVINE: Fifty houses

DURHAMER: Yes. (laughing)

LEVINE: And what else? Was there a church, was there a . . .

DURHAMER: Ah, no . . .

LEVINE: a (?) of any kind . . .

DURHAMER: No, we had a square and on this square every Sunday, all the fathers met and, ah, all the children, like me at that time, and ah, I was always asked to sing, the fathers always would say, 'Ankica let's sing', and I sat there singing away, my, I always loved to sing. And ah, they distributed our mail there, on this little square.

LEVINE: Every day?

DURHAMER: No, only Sundays because we didn't have a post office there. So the mail was brought from the post office, which was a quite ways away from our village and then at this square it would be distributed on Sundays . . . and that's how we got it.

LEVINE: What, um, your name was Ankich--?

DURHAMER: Ankica

LEVINE: Ankica

DURHAMER: uh huh

LEVINE: And your maiden name?

DURHAMER: Drađenović.

LEVINE: And your, ah, mother's name?

DURHAMER: Drađenović.

LEVINE: Was also your?

DURHAMER: oh, oh when she was, ah, her first name was Mary. Marica, actually.

LEVINE: And your, and your, um, her maiden name . . . do you remember that?
Your mother's maiden name?

DURHAMER: [very quietly] Do I have to tell?

LEVINE: Oh, you don't want to tell, ok. Ok. And your, um, father's first name.

DURHAMER: Jacob. Only we called him Jakob.

LEVINE: Jakob.

DURHAMER: um, huh.

LEVINE: How do you spell Jakob?

DURHAMER: J-A-K-O-B. Jakob.

LEVINE: Ok. And you say you always liked to sing.

DURHAMER: Yes.

LEVINE: Did you start singing as a little girl?

DURHAMER: ah, no no. I never took any singing until I was in Cleveland several years, and then I went to the Cleveland Institute of Music and studied Voice there.

LEVINE: Oh I see . . .

DURHAMER: And that's how I happened to go on my singing tour in Yugoslavia for two months.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And that was much later, after you . . .

DURHAMER: Oh yes.

LEVINE: Right. Ok, well um, do you remember any of the songs that you sang as a little girl? Could you . . .

DURHAMER: Yes.

LEVINE: possibly sing a little bit . . .

DURHAMER: Oh no. Your kidding me.

LEVINE: of any of those you remember?

[Unidentified man talking in the back]

LEVINE: It would be wonderful to have it on the tape.

[Unidentified man talking in the back]

DURHAMER: Oh, I don't sing anymore. *Lje . . . Ljepa na ša domovina. Da da da da da da di da. Di ja da da da da da di da. Di ja da da da di da di ja da.* Again. *Ljepa na ša domovina*, which means "beautiful land of ours". *Ljepa na ša domovina*.

LEVINE: Now would this be a song that you would have sung in, in school? Or . . .

DURHAMER: This was it. *Ljepa na ša domovina*, which is, ah, our beautiful homeland.

LEVINE: um, huh.

DURHAMER: And, ah, I, I really don't remember any songs, let me see . . . well, I might, if I think a little bit.

[an unidentified man says, how about the young (?). . . .]

DURHAMER: Mosquito. But after all he is a man. Oh, that one I am forgetting. Huh. Can we come back to mosquito?

LEVINE: I was going to say why don't you, if it occurs to you, tell me, and we'll do it.

DURHAMER: Yes.

LEVINE: Ok. Good. Um, now did you have grandparents?

DURHAMER: Yes, they raised me. My grandparents raised me.

LEVINE: And their—their names.

DURHAMER: My, yeah, uh, Mary and Frank. Franz. His name was Franz.

LEVINE: And these were your father's, no your mother's

DURHAMER: Right. Drađenović

LEVINE: Uh, huh. And ah, what, what were they like? What was your grandfather doing?

DURHAMER: Ah, my grandfather was a house builder. He built houses. He was a little guy with pretty blue eyes that were dancing all the time (laughing) and he built houses. And my grandma stayed on the farm and she did the farming, while he was building houses.

LEVINE: So she actually worked in the fields?

DURHAMER: Yes she did. She worked very hard in the fields, uh huh, but she would never let me work in the fields. She said I wasn't going to be a peasant like she was (laughing). That she wanted me to go to high school and be somebody, that's exactly how she put it.

LEVINE: Are there any other things that you remember that your grandmother told you, about what she wanted for you.

DURHAMER: Yes, she told me when I, after I got a little bit older or old enough to date, 'never, never accept a drink from a man because if you do they take liberties that they should not and so you must not accept a drink from a man', and I did not. I listened to that.

LEVINE: And how about your grandfather, were there any things you remember he telling you?

DURHAMER: Yes. He, he and I used to go, on pay day. My grandpa for-- always forgot to come home on payday (laughing), so he kinda made a stop in a salon (laughing) and I went after him and, ah, he and I held hands walking home from the salon all the way. It was long walk and he was very happy and very sweet. My grandparents never spanked me, either one of them. I was never, never spanked.

LEVINE: Were you the only child?

DURHAMER: No, I had a sister, her name was Josephina, or Josephine. Ah . . .

LEVINE: Older than you or younger?

DURHAMER: She was two years older. She died--

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

[unidentified man says, "tb"]

LEVINE: Do you remember her illness and any problem. . .

DURHAMER: Oh, very much so. She died and I was fifteen years old in Yugoslavia when she died. She was seventeen.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Do you remember anything about the medical care that she, that she got . . .

DURHAMER: Yes.

LEVINE: or didn't get.

DURHAMER: Didn't get is more likely. We had one doctor in a town, where we went to school, as I said we had no school in our village. So, we would got to Križ, the name of that town, ah , or

LEVINE: how do you spell that?

DURHAMER: was Križ. K-R-I-Z, and z also had an accent mark on top of it. A round accent mark. That made a "dj" sound. Križ. And that doctor was there and we had a drug store—one, or they called it apoteka, which really was not a drugstore. Here in a drugstore you can buy anything and everything, but in this apoteka, you could only buy medicine . . . and not anything else. And let's see what else did we do.

LEVINE: Would, did she get medicine for tb? What did they . . . what did they do?

DURHAMER: She had the really not very good care at all. She didn't have very good care. I don't think she should have died at all. Ah, and uh. Who knows what he was doing.

[man talking in background . . .he sent a telegram to your mother]

DURHAMER: Yeah uh, I cabled my mother and told her to that Josephine was very ill and uh if she wanted to see her that she better hurry and I hope shell make it and she was five days too late. She didn't make it. My sister was dead five days.

[man in background says, "And the mother came over to take Josephine to this country.]

DURHAMER: Uh-huh, and instead, I was the one.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the funeral?

DURHAMER: Oh sure, absolutely, I arranged the funeral for my sister. We got a uh—I got a fire department orchestra, a band not an orchestra, you call it a band. And the fireman there always had a band and they would play at funerals. And so that’s what I did, and oh it was quite a walk, ya know. We marched naturally nobody was riding we all walked and it was a long walk to the cemetery. Where my sister was buried.

LEVINE: Is there anything else about ceremonies or rituals having to do with birth or marriage or death, that was different in Yugoslavia when you were a little girl compared with the way it is here?

DURHAMER: Well, I really don’t think so. Now the birth was always celebrated. It was a happy joyous time for everyone. Everybody celebrated it. And needless to say they all had to drink some...(laughs) when a child was born. And uh, but we did not get our second name immediately. In other words, I was named Ankitza, but I was not named Zora. Zora came twelve years later. Because that was when I was confirmed and I took Zora the name from our post office mistress, her name was Zora. And I admired her a lot and I asked her to stand for me- stand for me, and be my godmother, and she was.

LEVINE: What was it that you admired so much about her?

DURHAMER: She was fat.(laughs)

LEVINE: That was a plus?

DURHAMER: Yeah, (laughs) those days it was. Can you believe that later on I told everybody not to get fat?(laughs)

[man in background says, “This is such a small village, that the name of the town is on the side of a house.”]

DURHAMER: Prnjarovac.

[man in background says, "Yeah."]

DURHAMER: But Cretan, but was not uh, a small...but Prnjarovac was very insignificant, it was small town. And people were rather cruel. Uh, when Bill and I went back. Uh, can I go backwards in '70? Um, a young, well young people, brother and his sister were- they were twins and they came to me and said Ankitza are father killed our mother. So they were cruel, and if they went to jail, six months and that's it. So life really wasn't respected over there, didn't mean very much evidently.

LEVINE: Do you remember instances up through the time you were fifteen where there were other instances of people doing some kind of a crime and not really-

DURHAMER: Oh sure! Sure.

LEVINE: really paying much for it?

DURHAMER: Uh, now this time that I'm going to mention is really minor but a young man was a chicken thief. And everywhere he went he stole chickens.(laughs) The dummy!(laughs) And so when they finally caught him they tied two chickens together and put them around his neck and he was made to say the entire way of going to jail, 'I promise I will never steal a chicken again.'(laughs) And that certainly would be humiliating, I think.(laughs)

LEVINE: Yes. And you remember that?

DURHAMER: Oh, very well, very well. Sure, uh-huh, yeah.

LEVINE: Did they have policeman as we...

DURHAMER: Yes, we had police and the school that I attended was in a park. And the police department was in the park also like our school. And uh, yeah they were busy. They did all kinds of things and also in the summer now that I am in the park they held dances. This was a big thing there. In the summer everybody- Every Sunday they didn't do things during the week like we do here, because they were all working in the fields and stuff. But on Sunday they all came to this park with a band and uh they had uh Sokole. Do you know what Sokole is? It's an exercise men's group at that time then later on women could join Sokole too. But men would give a exercise exhibitions in the park for all of us.

LEVINE: Like what would they do?

DURHAMER: Oh gosh they had the parallel bars and oh, then would just turn around ya know and one of these bars... They're parallel bars aren't they? They would hold on and swing, swing, swing, and throw their bodies over the bar. They were very good. They really were. And let's see and as I said the dancing, everybody seemed to love to dance over there.

LEVINE: What was the band- what were the instruments that were in the uh, typical band, that might have been playing?

DURHAMER: Uh, they had some horns. Uh, but, the little instruments- and by the way I was also in a band here in Cleveland but I uh- Croatian Orchestra I played tamburica, which is a string, string instrument, and you held it like this ya know, and you played it. And I did that every Sunday while I was in school and this helped me...that little Sunday money that I earned toward my tuition because I really didn't have money for education here either. So I

would... every Sunday I got permission from the school that I was really the only girl that could stay up on Sunday night(laughs) to earn this little money I needed.

LEVINE: What was the- can you spell that name of the instrument?

DURHAMER: Yes, T-A-M-B-U-R-I-C-A, tamburica. Or, tambura, without the “c”, but I like tamburica better. It has a better sound and you feel like dancing to it when you play it. And I really the only girl in an all male orchestra...playing tamurica.

LEVINE: So, um, when uh. Let’s see and- how about uh, you mentioned confirmation taking the name Zora. What was the church?

DURHAMER: Uh, roman catholic.

LEVINE: Roman catholic.

DURHAMER: We had uh, the orthodox church. Serviette church was on one corner, and our roman catholic was on the other. And of course they had their own services.

[man in background says, “Tell her about the priest.”]

DURHAMER: Oh yeah, the serviette priest went behind the alter and he would sing, Who can’t see me can’t see God!(laughs)

[man in background says, “(?)”]

DURHAMER: Oh no that’s later.

[man in background says, “awh c’mon.”]

DURHAMER: This priest we had, the catholic priest, was very good looking. And all the women were nuts about him and he- did he love them too. He was really a chaser. And finally some husbands had it with him and they tied him to a cow’s tail and marched him through the town. Embarrassing him of course for doing that. I’m sure he never did it again.

LEVINE: But he stayed as priest in the town anyway?

DURHAMER: No, no he got pushed out.

LEVINE: Yeah.

DURHAMER: Yeah, mmhmm. No he didn’t.

[man in background says, “And how about the guy who’s wife was going with this young guy and he had him killed..”]

DURHAMER: Oh yeah.(sighs) There was a beautiful um, wait. A family that uh, actually lived in Cleveland for a while and then the parents said they didn’t like it because they didn’t speak the English language and they went right back to Yugoslavia taking all their kids with them like really dummies. They should have left the kids here ya know and let them be something er, somebody. So their son was extremely handsome. But a woman in the- well in another town who’s husband had the brick, um, he laid bricks. How can I explain this?

[man in background says, “Well they made bricks. The brick yard.”]

DURHAMER: Brick yard. He had a brick yard. The wife took up with this handsome young man and of course the husband had him killed, and he had a butcher kill him and the butcher got only six months for killing him. That's all See they- life really- they didn't respect that, they didn't mean, it didn't mean much to them. But for my father I never knew him because he was a prisoner of war and I was four years old when he died somewhere as a prisoner of war, and I don't even know where.

LEVINE: So he was in the army?

DURHAMER: Yeah, um-hum. Yes he was, and as I said to my knowledge I never saw him.

LEVINE: Yeah. You mentioned that before we turned on the tape that it was really Austria-Hungary-

DURHAMER: Yes.

LEVINE: when you were born.

DURHAMER: Yes, it was

LEVINE: And what was the language that was being spoken.

DURHAMER: Oh we still spoke our Croatian. We spoke Croatian but we had lotta Hungarian people in our area, A LOT. And of course they spoke Hungarian which was certainly not for us 'cause we didn't understand Hungarian.

LEVINE: When you went to school what were you taught in?

DURHAMER: While we... Latin like you ya know same alphabet, latin alphabet.

LEVINE: But I mean were you-

DURHAMER: But we had cyrillica, cryllic. And the reason for that was because King Alexander was a Serb and we had to take cyrillic as we call it, cyrillica in school, and that's really how wed had it.

LEVINE: So you learned that?

DURHAMER: Oh yes...yeah.

LEVINE: And at home.

DURHAMER: In school not at home, I had to have it in school.

LEVINE: I see.

DURHAMER: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: So you- when you went to school was a lot of the russians taught in Croatian or just...?

DURHAMER: Uh, everything.

LEVINE: Everything?

DURHAMER: Everything.

LEVINE: Except for the language.

DURHAMER: Uh, well no- Cyrillica no- that was the sound just like Croatian it's the same language really.

LEVINE: Oh okay.

DURHAMER: Yeah. Only the writing was like the uh...Russians, have Cyrillic

[Man in background says, "Tell her about the school, about how you went to school."]

DURHAMER: What do you mean?

[man in background says, "Your grandmother with the land owner"]

DURHAMER: Oh yeah in the winter my grandma walked me to a town where I met other students and we walked in pitch black- well yeah she had to carry a lantern because we walked through the woods. Can you imagine that poor woman how she sacrificed for me so I could go to school? 'Cause she insisted that I go to school. Also can you imagine someone that was illiterate as she was to have such a desire for her granddaughter to learn, and be somebody. And that's exactly what she said, *I want you to be somebody. I don't want you to be like me.*

[man in background says, "And then you take the train to school."]

DURHAMER: Oh, then we would walk a long long ways to the railroad station and get a train, and go to school. To high school on that train everyday, five days a week.

LEVINE: Now was your sister going with you?

DURHAMER: No, she didn't go. She-

LEVINE: Why?

DURHAMER: Well, because they didn't want her to. They needed her to watch the cattle. Which was really awful. Poor girl never had a chance in life, she really never did.

[man in background says, "Remember your grandma told you about not going to Sagribe"]

DURHAMER: Oh,(laughs) Sagribe of course was a lovely city, still is. And all many girls in my school talked about being in Sagribe. And I was thinking that sounds so terrific, so interesting and my grandma said I must never go to Sagribe. If I go to sagribe and I got off the railroad station the train, uh, somebody would pick me up and make soap out of me. And I thought well I didn't wanna be soap so(laughs) I didn't go.(laughs) But one day I got brave and I went, and I was walking, I really was running. I'd look back all the time to see if anybody was chasing me cuz I didn't wanna be soap. But when I got to Sagribe downtown, where everything was I saw a beauty salon, which of course I had never seen before and we didn't have that in the village. And a woman came out and she said oh would you like me to cut your hair I had long hair and I go with my head yes I would so I went in and I got a hair cut and went home and I bought myself a tweet coat, it was hot I didn't need it let me tell you. A tweet coat and a hat, a maroon brim hat.(laughs) And I wore this and as I said it was hot and I had to wear it because I was so proud of it(laughs), and nobody recognized me as I walked through the village(laughs).

LEVINE: And how did people feel about...how'd your grandmother feel about you cutting your hair.

DURHAMER: Fine, she thought I looked good, yeah, uh-huh.

LEVINE: Let's see how about food are there any particular foods that you remember having?

DURHAMER: Oh yeah for example, we had shaganza every morning and this is made out of corn meal and you wait ya know til the water is boiling and then you put it in and you make it hard and then you spoon it with a spoon and melt butter and put a spoonful in this butter and course there were a lot of spoonfuls there cuz there were quite a few of us eating. But we all ate out of a same dish. Very unsanitary, no wonder my sister died poor thing. Uh, terrible, conditions.

LEVINE: It must have been contagious was contatgious was it?

DURHAMER: Oh, very. I had it when I was twelve. There. And uh, my doctor was able to check, ya know I didn't continue having it but he and his wife both died from it, from TB.

LEVINE: Really?

DURHAMER: Oh, there was an epidemic.

LEVINE: Oh so you were seeing people die of TB...

DURHAMER: Oh constantly! Constantly! Young people, always young people you just see them ya know it was pathetic like when we went to the cemetery with my sister a beautiful young was looking out of the window ya know hanging out really crying she said, "I'm next.", and of course she was.

LEVINE: Oh my goodness. Why do you suppose...how did you recover?

DURHAMER: Unsanitary conditions there, there was no sanitation of any kind absolutely

none.

[man in background says something]

DURHAMER: Nothing, nothing.

LEVINE: How do you suppose you survived it, having had it?

DURHAMER: (sighs) I think God loved me, (laughs) especially. That's the reason I survived that- was very lucky believe me. And then when I went to high school in this city. This was very- a lot- my luck I stayed with one family and the woman had no children and she wanted me like her own child well ya know somebody else had me for a child and the house next to her was a bookshop where they sold our books and the man later became the vice president of Yugoslavia and I lived with them while I was in school there.

LEVINE: I see, so when you went to high school you moved to...

DURHAMER: I had to, I finally had to move because I wasn't able to study ya know in this lil village I got home in the dark and they had no electricity and they had the lanterns and stuff ya know. Kerosine lights. I just couldn't make it and I could not-

[mans says something in the background]

DURHAMER: Oh yeah she said to me uh his name was Phillip. And he was in Belgrab and she said oh Ankica Phillip is coming from Belgrab now. I want you to hide. I don't want him to see you immediately and then when he comes in you come around the corner. I came around the corner and he went, (gasps) "Ankica muoiya!!". He was so thrilled to see me ya know and they love me and they just hug me and kiss and they were wonderful people to me

TAPE 2

LEVINE: Ok, we are starting here with tape two, apparently the counter and the tape were not in sync, so that um, we didn't realize that the tape had ended . . .

DURHAMER: Um, huh.

LEVINE: because the counter was on a lesser number, so anyway, we're gonna just review um, leaving Ellis Island.

DURHAMER: Um, huh.

LEVINE: And, could you talk about that? Leaving Ellis Island and what you did from there.

DURHAMER: Well, of course ah, yeah, alright, I-I came . . .

(Unidentified man says, "In a bell.")

DURHAMER: here, to New York City, naturally, to get, under the trains, and a, I heard more bells ringing, and I thought they were church bells and here they were train bells. "Ding a ling a ling", go constantly. So I asked my mother in law, how come the American people are so religious that they have bells ringing all the time.
(laughing)

(Inidentified man says, "Never answered")

DURHAMER She of course never answered, so I didn't find out. It was til much later,
(laughing) they, train bells, not church bells. (laughing)

LEVINE: Ok, so and then you got to Cleveland. . .

DURHAMER: Um, huh.

LEVINE: And can you (?) the first things that happened to you here.

DURHAMER: I was miserable, I wish I were back. (laughing) Cause, as I said again, I didn't know anyone, and ah, I, my mother didn't understand children naturally, since she didn't raise them. And ah . . .

LEVINE: You missed your grandmother.

DURHAMER: Oh, very much. My grandparents were everything to me. I missed them very much. Eh, when we went in 1930, when my mother came, I wanted to take my grandma to Zagreb, to the city I had been talking about, because she had never been in the city. My mother didn't want me to because she was a peasant, she wore a peasant outfit. I said I don't care what she wears, I am taking her. And I did. (Tape scratchy) And ah, she enjoyed it. She thought it was very nice.

LEVINE: What was a peasant