

EI-803

ANTHONY TREPAL

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- **YUGOSLAVIA: ROVTE, SLOVENIA**
- **US: CLEVELAND, OH**

LEVINE: Okay, today is September 17th, 1996. I'm here in Cleveland, Ohio with Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Trepal. Mr. Trepal came from Yugoslavia in 1921 when he was eight years of age. Today Mr. Trepal is eighty-three years of age, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

Well, I'm delighted to be here and I want to say that I expect that you have a lot of interesting things to say, and if we could start at the beginning. If you would give your birth date for the tape.

TREPAL: All right, I was born in 1913 in a town called Rovte. At that time it was Austria and this town has about four hundred—had about four hundred people. There was very simple type of farm life and there was one blacksmith in

there. There was no electricity. No automobiles. No trucks. No police department. No fire department, and one part time store that was run by a— one of the farmers. And if you wanted something, you would have to call him out of the field and he would go to the store and give you something. It was mostly a few hardware items, oil because we used coal oil for lamps and nails, screws, wire. Not electrical wire, this was steel wire. And the pots and pans and some of those things. But everything else, the people would grow their own vegetables. They would have their cattle and meat and so none of that was for sale. They'd bake their own bread and so this guy would take orders, if you wanted something special and he would go down to the bigger city, about seven or eight miles away [static] and he'd get it for you.

LEVINE: Would you go into the field and find him? How would you get him?

TREPAL: Ah, yeah, usually it was somewhere within the vicinity and, ah, you know, he could see you. He always felt that somebody was probably looking for him, so he would keep an eye open, but you would have to go out into the field and wave and holler or—or whatever. Or if he would start coming right away, you would just wait. But these items, you know, were like -- candles were very important. Coal oil was absolutely important. You had to have it or you didn't have any light because everybody had these coal oil lamps. And I know we were—as kids we were doing our homework around the table and there was one oil lamp standing on the table.

LEVINE: (laughs)

TREPAL: So if somebody had to go to the bathroom, they would grab the lamp and go to the bathroom. The rest would sit there in the dark and quiet, you know, doing nothing like. So when he'd come back, why then we would go on with our homework. And so that was—that was the way it was with the store and it had one schoolhouse that had two rooms and most of the people would go

to school only until about the age of fourteen. And then they would quit, unless you wanted to become a priest or a teacher or, you know, whoever could afford that. Not very many did do that, but most of them would quit and they'd do farm work or forestry and—

LEVINE: Would you go until the age of fourteen in the same little town?

TREPAL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Of Rovot?

TREPAL: Rovte, yeah.

LEVINE: Rovte.

TREPAL: And they would—you see, what they did, they would juggle those. You would have a morning and afternoon shifts in school and they—as you got to be fourteen, you would only go part time. It would taper off. They felt that you already had quite a—an education, you know. But basically they were teaching language, you know, like reading, writing and arithmetic and a little bit of geography.

LEVINE: What were you speaking—?

TREPAL: Slov—

LEVINE: In your home and in your school?

TREPAL: Slovenian.

LEVINE: Slovenian.

TREPAL: This was a Slovenian area. Yeah. No other language was heard there because people didn't come through there. There was nothing attractive enough in that town. There were two roads going into it, but nobody would come through except gypsies and maybe some—once in a while some peddlers would come up to our church. So after church services, you know, they would just spread out these blankets and they unwrapped all the goods, such as little cheap knives and, oh, maybe pencils and a little bit of jewelry or some gloves. Whatever they felt would sell, but that was only maybe once or twice a year, you know, in the summertime.

LEVINE: What about gypsies what were—

TREPAL: Gypsies—

LEVINE: Did you have any experience with gypsies?

TREPAL: Ah, yeah, gypsies were a lot of trouble. You know, they would come to the farmers, the farmers' house and they would demand some produce or—

LEVINE: What would they do if they didn't get it?

TREPAL: They—they would threaten to set your house on fire and some of them did. You know, after they would leave, they would come back at night and—and start a fire. So most of the people gave them something just to shake off that threat.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: Because they were—they were—you know, they were used to that type of living and they would extract a lot of goods from the people, no matter where they were.

LEVINE: Did they always travel—?

TREPAL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Or did some live in the town?

TREPAL: Oh, no, they didn't live in the town. They moved. They had a wagon and horses and they would keep going. So you wouldn't see them all—you know, you wouldn't see a lot of them up where we were. Perhaps about three or four a year, but they were troublesome, you know, and they were—they had a very peculiar way of living.

LEVINE: Did they travel in large groups or small groups?

TREPAL: Ah, small. Sometimes only one wagon. You know, maybe five people. Other times you might have a couple of 'em -- wagons, but they were—they were not very welcome. I tell you everybody was afraid of them. But—in fact, some of the parents would say if the kid was giving them a lot of trouble, they say they're going to sell them to the gypsies, you know, and of course that was the end. [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs]

TREPAL: Oh, well.

LEVINE: What church was it that—that—that you—?

TREPAL: St. Michaels.

LEVINE: It was a Roman Catholic church?

TREPAL: Yes. Yes. See, that was—the church was supported by the government so—and it was the Catholic church throughout and—even though there were people there who did not want to belong, but they were so outnumbered, you know, that they kept going. But later on, after like World War II, that became altogether different, from what I heard. You know, that the others kind of took over a lot of that, and the church was no longer supported by—by the government and so it lost a lot of people. But at the time we were there, it was a hundred percent Catholic, and they would—once in a while, you know, they were invited—we would all be invited over to the next church, which was—it was kind of a hilly area and it would be way over, maybe like five, six miles away you could see a pretty high hill come up and there was a little church up on top. So we were invited over for a—serv--, you know, mass and—and people would—it was at night, so everybody had a candle and you could see people walking up that hill. It was just a long stream of lights, you know, that looked kind of interesting.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: So then sometimes they would come over to ours or some other place. There were many churches around. Now, this town, I wanted to say that my dad told me that at one time there was a—a rich man who was hunting through there and his name was Rovte. That was his last name. And he ran into a big storm, you know, there were trees knocked down. So he shelter—he found a little shelter somewhere there and he—he made a promise, if he could survive that, that he will build a church there and a town, and that's how it got started. But when this happened, I have no idea. He didn't know either.

Let me see what else the town had. Well, I wanted to say it had, like I said, no—no electricity. You know, no telephone. No theaters, movies. No periodical papers. So you didn't have a newspaper. You had nothing. It's just unbelievable how well you can get along without all those things because they are not life essential things actually, but it makes a lot of difference in your life. But now, you know, now they have everything. They electrified all the areas. They have—people have automobiles. They did away with those oxen and horses that used to do all the plowing and all the hauling of the lumber. So now they—they're modernized, you know, after all these wars.

But at the time we were there, you couldn't—I never saw an automobile until World War I, when the ambulance came through and every once in a while, you know, they would haul the soldiers through and you could—you could be a quarter of a mile away and smell the tires and the gasoline because we were not used to that. And hear, you know, and we'd run down to the road, the main road and look at the tracks and everything. You know, we thought it was so different.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: And also during the World War I, there would be soldiers marching through there, especially Italian and the Austrian. Sometimes even German, and we would go down to the main road and these soldiers would be marching by. We'd get down there maybe about three o'clock in the afternoon. Well, at eight o'clock at night, nine o'clock, they were still marching through. Four abreast. Three or four abreast, you know. They were on foot. Carried—carrying big loads and everything. And once in a while when it was suppertime, they would gather in little groups, wherever there was a little

opening there, and they would cook up, cook their supper. You know, for hundreds of men.

Sometimes spaghetti, especially the Italian people—soldiers, they had spaghetti and they would—they would just get ready to eat. The soldiers were lined up with their little tin pans and stuff and the orders would come through 'move on', and they would have to dump that into a pile. They'd have a pile of spaghetti two, three feet high and then they saw that we were watching. We were, the kids standing around, and they didn't want us to have any because, you know, they were—they were our enemies, actually. They—they were fighting against Austria. But they would take dirt and cow manure and all kinds of stuff and throw it all over that spaghetti, so that you couldn't—you couldn't eat it.

LEVINE: Wow. Did you ever have any other experiences yourself with the soldiers?

TREPAL: Well, you see, in our house, ours was a big farmhouse. We didn't own it. We rented a part of it and so when the armies came through, they saw a lot of space. There were three---three suites in there and we had one great big room that served as living room, bedroom, dining room. You did everything in that one room. It had four beds.

LEVINE: Kitchen, too?

TREPAL: No, the kitchen was on—it came in from the back because you had to build a fire on the other side, in order to heat the home. They had a great big tile home about six-foot cube like that was sticking out into the living room or this big room. But you had to build a fire from the other little kitchen and you do it with wood, you know. It was just wood. You had to constantly keep track of your fire because it would—it would—

LEVINE: Fire.

TREPAL: But it would heat the—the house. You know, you could get right on top of that stove, that tiled part inside and lay down on it. It was cement and it would be very warm.

LEVINE: Now, was the tile on the floor or on the walls or—

TREPAL: Ah, it would be like a big cube, about six-foot cube sticking out from the wall. From the wall and from the floor up, but not to the ceiling. It would go up about seven feet and then it had benches around where people would sit and they'd lean back against that warm tile, you know. Then, of course, as you got further away, it would be colder and colder and so everybody stuck around that—that like a furnace, you know.

LEVINE: Furnace, yeah.

TREPAL: But—but then my mother would use the--that stove for baking bread and she knew just how to—how many splinters to put in and how big of a fire and— and then you'd take these long ladles, you know, and put in maybe about four loaves of bread.

LEVINE: Oh.

TREPAL: And then she would have to watch it, but she got experienced on it and so she could bake bread -- because that was our lifeline, you know. Bread, sauerkraut, turnips, that was about it. But you know, many times in your—in your food you'd get bread. You know, you'd get a slice of bread. Maybe one slice of bread, nothing on it. No butter, jelly, none of that, and—but that was good, if you could get a whole big slice of bread. That was sometimes your meal. Now, many times my mother had to go and work down by the landlord

to pay for her rent, see, because my dad was not there. He left Europe in 1912, so she was alone during the war, World War I, with the five kids and she was—well, she was between twenty-six and thirty-five years of age, you know. And so these—so the food part was a constant struggle for people who didn't own a farm. See, we didn't have any garden. We didn't have—mother didn't have time to do anything anyway, even if there was land around. But sauerkraut was a very big factor. They would make barrels of it, you know, in great big, open barrel, maybe six foot -- five foot, six foot high and they would cut this up and it would stay. You know, it would hold up until the following year.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: When a new crop would come on. But that was a real—now, sauerkraut is something that you can eat every day and not get tired of it. Bread is something else you can eat every day and not get tired of it. In the summertime we could pick blueberries. They were all over the place. So we could go out and supplement our dinner with blueberries. You could get nearly all you wanted, and—but the people who owned the farms, you know, they had pigs and stuff so they would have meat. But you would—you know, we didn't ever get it. Maybe not even a once a year would you have a taste or meat or maybe goulash or soup or something like that.

It was generally bread and sauerkraut and something else my mother made was water and flour and she'd mix it up in a big pot and heat it up. Now, it's pretty crummy, as far as a food goes, (laughs) but it's better than nothing, you know. But she—she would bake bread, you know. A table—she had a table that would open up and it had about an eight inch deep container inside there and she'd mix up the dough and everything, get it ready. And then put it in the oven, you know, we'd have it the next day.

All right, now, let me see. The soldiers. Oh, school. I just wanted to say that the Slovenian language does not require spelling. There are no double letters. No silent Es. No one letter changing the pronunciation from—if it's an A, it's going to be an A, and if it's a D, it's a D. You know, it doesn't change, and so it doesn't take any time at all to learn how to write because you write the way it is pronounced. So that was pretty easy and then arithmetic, of course, is just like over here. And—and we—we—we kind got a kick out of it, you know. It was the usual way, the same thing that's done now. School, homework, you know, and then you go back and you have tests and—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: Very—very standard procedure. All right, now. The soldiers. Like I was saying, they—they came through—they came through, you know, and they would look the house—the house over and the barn. We had a big barn there right near us across the street that had room for several hundred soldiers. So the officers would come and say, "Okay, two hundred will go in here." The captain will go up and live right with us, same room. He brought his bed in and stayed right there. Now, he would get cookies. Soldiers never got cookies. He would get oranges, things like that, you know, special. But he had his little corner like a little office there and once in a while we would even go and steal a cookie which we had hoped that he wouldn't know, but then somebody else would go and take a little more, you know, and pretty soon it was down to almost nothing. [Laughs] But—

LEVINE: Did you ever have contact with any of these people who were living in your house?

TREPAL: Oh, sure, he lived there. He slept there.

LEVINE: Did you—could you talk to him?

TREPAL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. He—he wasn't so bad. You know, he was on the level. He was on the level and the only thing is that he had to have that—that private corner, and the soldiers were in the barn. But now, one time—one time my sister was very sick. My sister was just about a year older than I was and she got very sick, so he noticed that. The captain noticed that and he called the army doctor who was stationed maybe seven or eight miles away, and he came by mule back over here about three times over to our house, and took care of her. This was Italian, and a tailor, who was a soldier in the army, somehow took a little liking to me and he made me a suit out of an army blanket. And I remember he picked me up, put me on the table, took measurements, you know, and he made a beautiful suit.

LEVINE: Oh.

TREPAL: Yeah, everything. Jacket.

LEVINE: How old were you then?

TREPAL: Well, maybe like four and a half, something like that, you know. But he probably had a son, who knows. He might have had a son like that—about that age at home and he figured—

LEVINE: Yeah.

TREPAL: All right, so, we—and—and of course, you know, the soldiers were. If they stayed a long time, they were beginning to sometimes be troublesome. They would trap birds because they also had—had shortage of food. They would come up on our porch, like we had a porch upstairs and they would trap birds that were about the size of a blue jay or a robin and eat them. They

also would trap rabbits. They were very clever with wire traps and they knew where the rabbits would be walking and they set this loop in a way that the rabbit running through there would get caught, and then they would eat that.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: So it was a constant struggle, both in the army and as well as the people, you know, in every day life. Also, the officers would come to the farmers who had livestock. See, we didn't have any livestock but—but they—they who had them would—he would look them over. If you had twenty heads of cattle, he would say, "Okay, three of them go to the army." They would just take them and they would go to the church where they were short on—this was getting near the end of the war when they were short of metal, and take the bells. They would go up to the church tower, and just push them out, and they would fall down on the cement, you know, and break up. And they would take the metal. It took years and years afterwards before they got new bells.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: But—

LEVINE: What did they use—what did they do with the—with the metal from the bells, do you know?

TREPAL: Oh, made canons, bullets, you know, different machinery. Army equipment. Yeah, it was because they were—you know, they were—Germany and Austria were getting closed in by the allies, you know, Italy, England, France, Spain. You know, they were really getting squeezed. Russia on the other side, and so these people couldn't order anything. They couldn't import anything, and—and they were finally squeezed out where they had to

surrender because of it. And another thing pertaining to the war was my dad came—he left there in 1912 and so he worked here in the coalmines for about the first year. I mean, for the first year he could send some money over there to my mother, but after World War I started, that closed down. No mail. No money. Nothing, and that's where my mother began to get really stuck, you know. She had to work for nothing almost. Pay the rent. So it was—it was kind of—kind of rough, but some of it was man-made, you know, wars and all that stuff.

LEVINE: Well, did you have grandparents who were anywhere near you?

TREPAL: Yeah, I know. That's—we talk—we talked about that every once in a while already. You know, they had a farm even, but they had sixteen children. My mother was one of them and these—they were not real young kids anymore at that time, but anyway, it was a huge—a huge family and I guess they didn't want to get started on taking in. But that would have been probably the best way to go, if—if the grandmother would have taken us all in.

LEVINE: Did you have any contact with them at all?

TREPAL: Oh, yeah. Oh, we visited each other. They'd come up. It wasn't so far. It was only about a half a mile away.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: The nearest houses were like about a half a mile away. That was one of them.

LEVINE: I see.

TREPAL: And the landlord was in the other direction, but he was also about a half a mile away.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences with your grandmother or you grandfather?

TREPAL: Ah. Well, my grandfather lived much longer than my grandmother, so he came to visit us and he would eat by us, sometimes. You know, some of those simple meals and I remember him very well, but my grandmother just barely. I can just barely remember. She died a little—a lot earlier and I can remember a tall woman in a dark dress and always busy, you know. But—but not much of anything else. There wasn't anything personal, you know, where she would be very super friendly or anything like that.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything with your grandfather? Any—what are your memories of him?

TREPAL: Oh, the grandfather—grandfather would come walking up. I thought he was very old. He wasn't so horribly old, but I thought he was old. I would look at his boney hands, I thought, and the skin was wrinkled. Boy, I figured he must be way up there, but he was only in his seventies. And—but he was—he was always full of energy.

LEVINE: How did he treat you?

TREPAL: Oh, fine. Not real close. He—he wasn't one to pick you up or, you know, take you for a walk or anything like that, but I guess there were so many kids there, you know, that he—he didn't have time for that. But he was—he was pretty good. However, one of my mother's brothers—in fact, two of my mother's brothers would come up and visit and they were—they were very friendly, you know, and they were a little bit younger than my mother and

single. So, in fact, one of the brothers was named Antoine, also, and he married the girl that lived downstairs by—in that house, and so it was a pretty close contact with—with them. They were—the two brothers were very nice. They were both in the army and they had been shot but you know, not killed. They recovered and then when they came back from the army, they got married and—

LEVINE: Do you remember a wedding at all in that little town?

TREPAL: Oh, yeah. A wedding. A wedding was always held—you know, there was no hall. We didn't have any hall, but it was always held at one of these saloons.

LEVINE: Oh.

TREPAL: The saloons had a big—like a big living room. It could—it could have—it could have maybe thirty people, thirty-five people in there and they would have an accordion player and a clarinet player. A button box accordion and they would come down and get up on that stove like I was talking about before and play. But people would dance like, and the rest of us would just hang around, you know, and grab a little bite to eat. Usually we could get something a little bit more than just a simple slice of bread. But that's the way it was, you know. They would—they would get married in church and then in the evening they would come to this place, this saloon and they would have—and of course, the—the guy that owned it, you know, he would sell wine and some food. So he made out pretty well. Yeah, they would—but there was no honeymoon type of a thing, you know. After the wedding day they just settled wherever they had—wherever they had decided to live and they would start in with their regular every day type of work and making a living.

LEVINE: Was the—was it traditional for the bride and groom to go and live with another family member or did they—did they set up their own house?

TREPAL: Ah, it was a kind of a mixed affair with that. They would try to set up their own place, but it wasn't always possible.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: There weren't that many places available. So I would say maybe in about—maybe about sixty percent of the cases they would be on their own, but many other times they would just try to—since the houses were so huge, they would just try to fix up a—a room or so in some corner of the house. See, like our house, where we lived—it wasn't our house, but where we lived, it was about two hundred years old. Thatched roof, you know, and built real solid, but old timber and—and it—it's still there. It's still being used.

LEVINE: Wow.

TREPAL: And it was built like in the seventeen hundreds, you know.

[END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 2]

LEVINE: What was the floor made out of? Do you remember?

TREPAL: Wood.

LEVINE: Wood.

TREPAL: Yeah, wood. Had big beams and wood.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: But it was—it was really huge. One thing I wanted to—wanted to mention before, you know, my brother was—he was six years older than I was, so he was farmed out to work on—and live by some of these farms. Like an apprenticeship. They were great for this stuff over there because it was cheap labor. And he would—he would work for this landlord that we had, same one that my mother worked for, but he had twenty-six cattle and they required watching. So every day he would take them out, you know, and stay with them out in the field all day so that they didn't get into the clover or into the corn field or—clover was bad because it would create a lot of trouble for the cattle. You know, they—they—they—

LEVINE: What do they do when they eat clover, the cattle?

TREPAL: Ah, they—it forms a lot of gas inside of them and they just keep bloating up. It—it—it's very difficult to save them. So they—so he would have to watch and we kids, we used to go over there and stay with him a lot of times. You know, we had—in the summer time, if we had nothing to do. And the strange about the cattle that impressed me was that they'd take them out in the morning and they would eat all day long. Then at about six in the evening, you know, you wanted them to go home, so all you'd have to do is yell, "Hey, go home," and they understood that. They would go wild.

They would run down. Sometimes some of them would tumble over, even. They would run down to the road, you know, and then walk in to the barn, which wasn't so horribly far, but—but they loved to go back in there. So in there they had about ten or twelve stalls on each side and each cattle knew its own place. Now, once in a while one of them would come in and they were all empty. So it would go right into a stall, the wrong stall. Well, when the real owner came up, oh, my gosh, that thing would get so mad. It would start, you know, using the horns on him, and well, the other one knew right

away that he was in the wrong stall, so out he would go and maybe try the next one. Usually he was off by one, but it was funny that they would know each one belonged to that particular one. Boy, you couldn't—you couldn't switch it.

LEVINE: Hmm. Maybe it would be good—what was your mother's name?

TREPAL: Antonia.

LEVINE: Antonia, and what was her maiden name?

TREPAL: Ah, Bradesvka.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

TREPAL: Bradesvka, B-R-A-D-E-S with a V on there, K-A.

LEVINE: And how—your father's name.

TREPAL: Oh, my father was Frank.

LEVINE: All right, and can you list the children from the oldest down that were—that were in—

TREPAL: Our—in our family?

LEVINE: Yes.

TREPAL: Oh, yeah. Frank was the oldest. Antonia, one of the—my sisters was next. Then came Mary. Then Christina. Then me and of course we had Francis and Henry who were born here after.

LEVINE: Oh, so you were the baby until the family moved here.

TREPAL: Right, right, I was the one. And, of course, my dad left a year—not a year before I was born, but about a half a—

LEVINE: Before you were born.

TREPAL: Oh, about three months before I was born. So I never knew him and he never knew me, but we met at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Ah-ha. Well, let's wait for that part.

TREPAL: All right.

LEVINE: Until you finish with you in—

TREPAL: All right, that was something.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TREPAL: And let me see, over there. Now, one thing else that I have to bring out here is the fact that over in the area that we lived, I never saw any huge bodies of water except a pond or a creek, and some of them were used to run water mills where they would grind grain, you know. You'd take wheat over there and they'd grind it. But I never—never in my mind did I believe that there were such huge bodies of water in the world. So, when we started out for Trieste, we went from our town to Trieste. It was the first time we came to the ocean and the train came around a curve and there was the Adriatic Sea and I couldn't—my mind refused to accept the fact that this was all water. I had never seen, never imagined that it could be possible, but here it was, as

far as the eye could see. Well, I found out later when we crossed the ocean how much more water there is. [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs]

TREPAL: Ah, so anyway, we—we went from Trieste. I think we stayed there about a day and then we caught a train that went through Italy up to Switzerland. Well, at the borderline you would change. You had to go on a Swiss train and those were all electrified. Yeah, Swiss has a lot of electricity from those mountain streams, so everything is electrified, and we went through Switzerland to Fran—until we came to France, where we had to take another French train to Paris. Stopped in Paris for a day or so.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything along that trip that struck you?

TREPAL: Yeah. Well, in Switzerland it was beautiful country and full of tunnels. You know, the train would shoot through maybe a ten, fifteen-mile tunnel and then shoot out into the open for about a minute and back into another one. And in the evening when you would—when you—when the lights began to—I mean when the sun began to go down, you would see little lights all over these mountainsides where there were cabins and, you know, people living and they looked like little jewels, you know. And finally the train, of course, went through there and we got into France. France wasn't that hilly, and we stopped at Paris and it was Sunday, so we wanted to go to church.

Well, we went to church, to a huge cathedral, you know. They—they go in for big, beautiful churches, and we came in, of course, we were dressed, you know, like peasants and everybody noticed, you know, that we were from some other area. But anyway, some—some nuns helped us to a chair. They were pretty nice, but all the people were looking back at us, instead of looking at the altar. They were looking back at us and I was so glad when

that mass was finished, you know, because we finally got out of there and got on to a horse drawn taxi. Kind of a beautiful coach like, but it was horse drawn and he took us over to another railroad station where we caught a train to go to La Havre, France, which is on the seacoast and that's where we got our boat.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, just do you remember packing up to leave? Do you remember the preparations to leave?

TREPAL: Oh, at home?

LEVINE: Right.

TREPAL: Oh, sure. We—first of all, my mother brought out a tub, a low tub and everybody took a bath in that living room there, you know, and we were supposed to leave at night about eleven ----to time it with the train, which was in the nearest city, you know. And so we—we got our possessions together that we could take with us, which was just some clothing, a few books and my mother took whatever money she—she got, you know, that she felt that she would have to have, which was very little. She—she surprises us all today because how little she took and went—wanted to go on that trip. She had no idea how long that trip was going to be, you know.

But anyway, the—the rest, the furniture and all that, you know, she gave away and that was it. We just closed our—nobody ever locked the doors there, so you know, we didn't. Even the lock didn't work because you trust anybody. They could come in and you could leave a thousand dollars on the table, no fear of anybody taking it. However, after World War I, different people began to come through and then you could no longer trust them like that. Before that, it was so great. In fact, sometimes they'd leave a—a loaf

of bread out there in the night and if anybody did come in, they could slice off some bread, eat it, you know, and leave the rest there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TREPAL: And walk out. Well, you knew everybody, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything you particularly brought or do you remember how you—

TREPAL: Yeah, I brought my report card, which I still have. I was in the second grade, you know, when we left and so the teacher—the teacher wrote a note on there like saying like “don’t forget your saint,” you know, Saint Anthony, and “you should have good luck for the rest of your life.” Something like that she put down, and that was the only thing that I took. We had some—a little bit of jewelry I think that the women took, my sisters. Like earrings and my mother—my mother did the same. There was very little, very little that we owned, actually. You know, just kind of on the minimum. So it wasn’t that we carried a lot of luggage.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Do you remember how your mother talked about coming to the United States?

TREPAL: No.

LEVINE: Her attitudes of what you thought about coming here before you actually got here?

TREPAL: Well, I’ll tell you, we did not know much about the United States. I was too young and my mother probably didn’t know a lot about it either, you know, because of the fact that we didn’t have newspapers or there was very little in

geography in school on it. So we didn't know much about it. We had no idea how big it was and we heard from some people, you know, that it was a very good place to make money. That was one thing that really caught on. We found out later on it wasn't quite such an easy place, but they did think that, you know, even my dad figured that he could go over here and in about a year he would make enough that he could go back. He never wanted to stay here at that time, but things changed. The war, the financial circumstance and the poor conditions over there.

If he had come back and we would try to make a go of it there, it would have been a poor, poor situation. It was much better that we came here because here you still had the opportunity to do something. Much more of an opportunity. Over there at the time the rich farmers wanted to stay that way. They wanted to have a pool of cheap labor, the peasants and he would get them over there every spring to plant, every fall to harvest for pennies and it worked. And while—they had a kind of organizations among themselves and they would keep it that way. You couldn't buy a piece of land. They wouldn't sell it to you because they didn't want you to become one, and so it—it was better that we came here, even though we did not realize it at the time.

LEVINE: Did your father send actual tickets to your mother?

TREPAL: Yes.

LEVINE: Or money and tickets?

TREPAL: Yes. Oh, yeah. She—she wouldn't have—couldn't have even left Rovte without that. Yeah, he had to do that. It was supposed to be, you know, where the entire trip was paid from—from Rovte to Cleveland. That would be transportation, food and shelter, if you had to stay somewhere.

Sometimes you had to wait a few days somewhere. They usually had a place. And so it was paid all the way. So we had food, but at the end—maybe I should wait a little while until we get to—

LEVINE: Okay.

TREPAL: Because that was kind of funny. But—but they would—they would—they would have a place, you know. It wasn't always the best. Neither was your passage. In the ship, you know, we were at the bottom of the ship, way down, the cheapest. They had hammocks strung up on bars, you know, for beds and hundreds of people living all in together there.

LEVINE: The men and the women were separated in the—on the ship?

TREPAL: Somewhat, yeah. [Laughs] But they weren't too worried about that. However, nobody was—nobody was used to, you know, ocean travel and when you get seasick, boy, you stay seasick. And so you can't eat. They bring the food. You can't smell the food. You know, all of a sudden somebody's going to have an—you know, upheaval. They try to—they have buckets all over, you know, and people would do that. So it was a mess.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: And my sister and I, the one that was just a little bit older, Christina, we—we caught measles about a day and a half after we got on ship because we never had that over in Rovte. Nobody ever had measles that I ever remember, but as soon as you got in with other people, just like wildfire. So they put us in a hospital. Well, the hospital part of the ship was right up in the back, right over the propellers, you know, and the floor would slant upwards. So when you walked, you know, you'd run downhill or you'd be going uphill. And every time the ship would roll enough so that the prop

would be nearly out of the water, you could hear that real loud rumbly sound. You know, then when it would dip down, the sound would die out, you know, and it kept going. Took almost thirteen days to cross the ocean.

LEVINE: And the name of the ship?

TREPAL: S.S. Chicago. It was an old, large ship. It took, you know, several thousand people. It was pokey, but there was—okay, now I understand that they have a history of these ships. Even today you can get some history on them, what happened to them, when it was scrapped and stuff like that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: So, I don't know where that one ended up, but it was pretty old even then, you know. It was probably built about 1890 or so.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

TREPAL: Yes, it was up there.

LEVINE: So do you remember anything else about the ship, the crossing?

TREPAL: Ah, well, one thing is that in the hospital, when we were in the hospital where my sister and I stayed almost—oh, most of the trip in there, but we were getting better food. They gave us milk and a little better treatment. You know, we had some medical treatment. So were a little bit ahead on that one, but then when we came to New York, they—a medium sized boat pulled up along side and they had stretchers on there and they came and picked us up and wheeled us out there and put us on those smaller boats and they took us to Ellis Island, where we went into the hospital immediately because of measles.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember the New York Harbor when you first came into it?

TREPAL: Yes. Oh, yeah, when—when we got off that big ship and went into that smaller ship we saw the harbor, you know, and you saw this huge mountain of buildings, you know, which—well, we had seen some bigger buildings like in Paris and—and La Havre, but not like New York. Oh. Over there they were more spread out. Here they were high and—and all over such a huge area, you know, that it was hard to imagine. But we never got into those streets or anything where we would really see more like what a big city is like. But from the island, you could see all this, you know, every day.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

TREPAL: So it was kind of—it was a different world. It was just like a—a dream, a fairyland type of a thing. We used to dream of sidewalks in Europe, you know, because we always walked in that mud and you had to clean the shoes off, and we just dreamt about sidewalks. Over here they had them. We thought, “Is this something!” It was just so wonderful, you know.
[Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah. [Laughs]

TREPAL: So—

LEVINE: How were you treated in the hospital at Ellis Island?

TREPAL: Oh, hospital was—was good. They were—they were good. Now, we had some unusual experiences. When my sister and I were there, there was a little boy about six years old who they took his—they were taking his temperature and he bit through a thermometer. So the mercury went down

and they took that kid and wanted to pump that out. So they would pump water into him and then tip him and—and that fluid would run out. And when they got—when he got rid of one, they put him up again, filled him up again and—and tipped him again. And—and out it would come again. Why, they wanted to get that mercury out, which they did. He didn't die, but we saw the treatment free.

LEVINE: Was it like a hose? How did they do it? They just—

TREPAL: Yeah. Yeah, they put a little hose down in there and they—and they poured water in there. And then they took that out and—and that thing, you know. It would -- I imagine it brought most of it out because—well, they got after that one right away. And one other thing was that my brother had told me that electricity and magnetism were kind of interconnected, you know. So here on the walls they had sockets coming out, you know, like brass tubing and—and most of those sockets did not have bulbs in there. So I figured, boy, this is great. So I found a hairpin and went up there. Where I stood on the bed, I could reach the socket. Stuck that in there. Boom! It blew the fuses. Very big spark over the hand, you know, and that begin to—I got a burn out of it, you know. So they came running over and—and finally they put bulbs in those things, you know.

LEVINE: Why do you think you had the idea to put the hairpin in?

TREPAL: I thought it would hold it. I thought the magnetism and electricity, you know, I had heard that they were used together, you know. So I figured, well, I'm going to see how that hairpin is going to be held up in there. [Laughs] But anyway, that was something a little different for that—that one day.

LEVINE: So did you—well, did you get good food also in the hospital?

TREPAL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. They were good. In—in Ellis Island in there that was no problem with food. In fact, it was the first time in my life that I could eat as much as I wanted, where in Europe I never had a full meal. I was always on the hungry side. But over there, even when I was not in the hospital. The hospital stay was for, I don't know, a week or so and then I was released, but some of my other sisters got it and they were in. So we kept this back and forth business and we couldn't leave the island because somebody was always sick. That's why we stayed there two months.

LEVINE: Was your mother ever sick?

TREPAL: No.

LEVINE: No.

TREPAL: My mother never got it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what was Ellis Island after you got out of the hospital and you were simply staying there because your sisters and brothers were sick?

TREPAL: Oh, it was quite interesting and—and, of course, the food was a great item because you'd go—you know, they'd load up the table. You could get fried eggs. You could get scrambled eggs, you know. You could get fruit. You could get oranges. You could get bananas. You could get grapes and pears, apples.

LEVINE: These were all new to you? These foods?

TREPAL: No, not—no, they weren't all new. We had apples, pears and plums over there, but not oranges or bananas or—well, we had grapes, but—but a lot of the other foods were new, you know, such as jelly. And then of course we

had white bread, which we thought was only fit for a king. It's funny, the whole wheat bread that we'd bake was probably better for us, but we thought white, so soft and so easy to chew, you know, and always fresh, and it was just wonderful. And you could get as much as you wanted, you know, which—which was a rare thing over there. Here you could get some meat. You could get goulash. They mixed the variety from day to day, so it was very good, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and how about the sleeping accommodation?

TREPAL: Well, the sleeping was kind of funny. I happened to be at the age over there when I could go either with the women or I could go with the men. My brother was too old to go with the—the women's quarters, so he always went with the men. So some nights I would go with him and some nights I would go with the women, but I liked to go with Frank, my brother. And they had these tiers made out of pipes, you know, that would go pretty high up and they had like something like a hammock. It was made out of springs. Springs.

LEVINE: Cloth.

TREPAL: Yeah, or cloth.

LEVINE: It was stretched across.

TREPAL: Yes, and you—and we'd climb up, you know, high. The guys, the older guys didn't want to go up high, so we went up high and we could always find a place. But as you went in, like I was young enough, I would get a cup of milk every night, which the adults did not get. But children got it. So I liked that, you know, and then you'd—as you went in line, hundreds of guys would go to bed and hundreds of women would go the other way. And so there was a

guy there with a stack of blankets, you know, huge stack and as you came by, they'd give you two blankets, one for underneath and one for over the top. So then, you know, you'd wash up.

They had many sinks there and—and we would climb into bed. This was maybe like about ten o'clock at night, but in the morning—well, they had guards, you know. The guy would sit at the door all night and made sure that there was no problem, no trouble and we—we didn't have any, but in the morning he wanted to wake up everybody about six o'clock. So he had a great, big garbage can and a—and a small bat like, you know, and he would start pounding on that thing, and boy, anybody that wasn't sleeping, he'd wake them up. And then we'd go, you know, and wash up and—and have breakfast and that would start the day. That would.

LEVINE: Now what would we a day be like? [unclear]

TREPAL: Well, sometimes they had movies. You know, that was something new to us, movies. You know, comedies and stuff, and we enjoyed that. Then in the summer—well, when things got a little bit warmer—at first it was a little bit on the cold side, but we would get out. Since there's quite a bit of property around, and you could walk around and play. Maybe we'd make little boats out of paper and if there was a puddle of water, you know, we would sail them and there were also some books available. There were some books available for some adults in different languages. You know, sometimes you would get something that you could read or not, but I didn't do any of that. But we—we played outside and, you know, meet other kids who were the same age, but most of them didn't stay that long. You know, you'd get acquainted with some and the next day they'd be gone because they didn't—they didn't really keep them if they didn't have to.

LEVINE: So you must have seen a lot of people come and go.

TREPAL: Yes, we saw a lot of them. [Laughs] Come and go. Different languages. That was the big problem, language. Try to communicate. Some of them would be close enough. You know, Croatian, for example, or Romanian. A lot of words are similar to Slovenian and you could communicate, but a lot of them, boy, nothing. You could maybe, you know, show or express yourself some way a bit how it was. But—but a lot of them would go. We'd see those lines every day, come and go. You know, they would take off and that would be the end. But when—

LEVINE: So you would see the boatloads come in.

TREPAL: Oh, sure. You could—you could see them come in. You could see them leave.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TREPAL: Unless it was later on at night, you know. Some of them had to leave at night to catch a train, like we did ourselves, when we finally left. But they went—when—when it was finally time, when all of us, all six of us were healthy enough, they would tell my mother, you know, "You're ready to go." And so they would get us over to this desk, you know, and they'd start pinning tags on you. Oh, you were just loaded with tags. Identification tags, numbers on there.

[END OF SIDE B, TAPE 1] [BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE 2]

LEVINE: More than one?

TREPAL: More than one.

LEVINE: What—what were they all about, those tags?

TREPAL: Well, you see, there were many people leaving and kind of a mid-sized boat would come over there that could hold about three hundred people, maybe even four hundred people.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: And you would go to different—these people went to different parts of the United States and they had to get on different trains. Now, there was one section over there in New York somewhere where these trains would back in and they were waiting there. Well, they weren't side by side, you know. They were a distance apart, so when they would—supposing somebody wanted to go to Kentucky, they would have to get on a certain train over here. So the boat would pull up to the dock and these numbers, whichever they were numbered on your coat, you'd get on. Those people all went on the train.

Then the boat would—the boat would continue on, maybe you'd go another half a mile or so, stop again. These people would go to Colorado. Okay, get numbers a hundred and fifty or whatever, get off. Well, our turn came. We were the last ones. It was about eleven o'clock at night and we came over to this New York Central Railroad, New York Central Railroad Station. Train was waiting and, you know, we showed all those passports and everything that was there, and they understood. So one item that was still missing was food. They had to furnish us food to Cleveland. So they gave us a loaf of bread and one salami. Well, we had knives, so that's—that's what they gave us. Well, we finished that bread in no time, but nobody liked salami. So we tasted it, but we didn't eat it. We were not used to that type of meat.

And then, you know, it was a twelve-hour trip from New York to Cleveland. So we came here to Cleveland. There was a terminal down—down by the lake that's gone now, but anyway, the train pulled in there about noon the following day, and we came down there, you know, and sat down. They had benches, but no dad. You know, there was nobody there and mother thought it was kind of odd, but we figured, I don't know, maybe he's going to come in a while. We waited about forty-five minutes. Nobody came. Finally, a truck pulls up. We saw a truck pull up and two men came out, came into the station. They looked around. They saw us, they came over and they spoke Slovenian. Talked to my mother. They said, "You know, we came to pick you up to take you home," and she wouldn't go. You know, she was afraid. She figured, boy, whatever. You know, "I don't want any other trouble here," and then they talked to her but they—they knew a lot about my dad.

It happened to be the grocer in the Collinwood area here, you know, an area that we lived in. He lived in. And so they—they talked to her and she could tell that they knew everything about him, you know. But here, a couple of days before we came, he got into a accident. He worked on the railroad and he was pushing locomotive wheels on the track. He was supposed to move them a certain distance, just the wheels, you know, because the—the wheel and then an axle in between and you could push it. Well, they're heavy. They're about up to your chin high and it had a burr on the rim and the burr caught his overalls, picked him up, went over the top and down on the track right in the—where the wheel was rolling toward.

LEVINE: Oh.

TREPAL: So he—he wanted to save himself, so he grabbed the track and pushed himself off. Well, he got himself off, but the wheel ran over his palm and it chewed that up. So they took him to the hospital and they were going to cut

his hand off, you know. But then the surgeon figured that maybe he'll take a chance and he fixed it up. So he—he fixed it up where my dad didn't lose it, but he couldn't make a fist. However, he could still use it a little bit and that was great. And then he was home for one year to recuperate and then they gave him the job back. They gave him a job over New York Central where he was working.

LEVINE: Was he able to do that kind of labor after that?

TREPAL: Well, he—he could do pretty well, yeah. He was slightly limited, you know, so they would have to allow for that. That's right, he was slightly limited, but not bad. He—it was much better than if he had lost his hand. But anyway, these two men that came to pick us up, they didn't want to come right out and say right away that, "Your husband got hurt, you know, his hand is in pretty bad shape." So little by little they did come through with it, but my—my mother finally began to believe them, you know, because they were so convincing and they knew what they were talking about. So we got in the truck. You know, they had apple crate boxes for seats. It was about a medium size truck that he used for picking up groceries and delivering groceries and we came.

Now, the impression we got here of Cleveland and—and USA houses, we thought they were chicken coops. You know, they were so small compared to what we were used to and, of course, they were mostly newer houses comparatively. But we thought, boy, how close together. Over there we had a half a mile of space to the next house. Over here it was twenty-five feet or fifty feet, you know, and we just—we were a little bit disappointed in—in that part, you know. You live so close that you could just hear the neighbors and everything, you know, where over there it was the other way. But you get used to that. You know, you begin to kind of like it after awhile.

And, of course, the truck ride, that was something different and we came home and over to the place where he had rented. My dad had rented a place and the landlady said, "Hey, you people must be pretty hungry." We said, "Yeah." "Well, what do you want? Do you want eggs?" "Eggs? Boy, excellent!" So she was frying eggs for about an hour. We just thought that was a real treat, you know, so she kept going and you could order them again and again. Oh, just wonderful. We found out that that was a very easy item to get, actually. But in Europe you couldn't do that. You know, you couldn't just get eggs. They would sell them or they would use them themselves, you know. So it was different, but then we went to see my dad, you know, and—

LEVINE: What was that like, to see your dad for the first time?

TREPAL: Well, now, the first time I saw him when I was in the hospital in Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Oh, he had come down there?

TREPAL: Yeah, he came down there a couple of times. So the first time he came, he came in there and, of course, we were both new to each other and it isn't like a—a friend or a relative that you had maybe not seen for a few years. You had never seen this party. They could have brought in anybody from the street. So you didn't have that feeling of, "Boy, you know, this is real exciting." No feeling. It's just—you were just eying each other. You're trying to get a little bit acquainted and it didn't thrill you. You didn't—there was no great, big emotional feeling, you know. You had to grow with that. You had to get to know him after when we were at home, you know. Over here, rather.

LEVINE: Do you remember your first impression of him when you first saw him?

TREPAL: Well, I remember he had a big—he had a winter coat on, you know. So it was—it looked like it was real—that time they used to wear real big, heavy coats and I thought he was pretty husky and he looked fairly young. You know, he was in his thirties. So that—that impressed me, but I couldn't find an easy flow of conversation. You know, it was—we didn't have anything very much to talk about, actually.

LEVINE: How about your brother, Frank?

TREPAL: Oh, well, he knew him. You know, he remembered him because in 1912 he was about six or so, you know. Five or six years old and so he remembered him. My older sister remembers him a bit, but my younger sister and I, you know, we—we never remembered him. So it was kind of a cold get-together, actually.

LEVINE: How—do you remember your mother getting reunited with him?

TREPAL: Ah, no, I never saw it. You see, I was in the hospital.

LEVINE: Oh, right.

TREPAL: And they met over in the waiting room or, you know, one of those rooms over in Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: But, oh, I imagine that, you know, it was a little different there.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TREPAL: But they were not the type of people who would get real, you know—you know, kissing and—

LEVINE: Demonstrative.

TREPAL: Yeah. No, no, they were pretty much kind of on the shy side, you know, and so I don't think it was exactly an explosion but they were glad to—to finally get together after all those years.

LEVINE: Hmm. Right. Well, let's see. So then when you got to Cleveland, did you start school soon after or—

TREPAL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, we—we did. We had to go to school and when—at first we went to a Catholic school at the church and they were very sorry to see us come in because there were five of us and there were two other kids that—German kids that—one was a Croatian, one was a German, who also had just come and they were in there. So they had—you know, they had seven kids there that they didn't know what to do with. The nuns could not speak Slovenian and we couldn't speak English. So it was quite a little bit of a problem. So they would usually get the eighth grade girls who could speak Slovenian and English and the girls would be teaching us.

So we weren't getting anywhere very fast, and the teachers didn't have the time to spend as much time as was needed, actually. So they—we decided that perhaps we better go to a public school, which was not too far away from our house. So we went to the public school. Well, when we went up there, one of the—one of the neighbors took—took us up there and the principal asked me how much is three times—five times seven? Well, that was easy. I knew and she says, "Oh," she says, "put him in the third grade on trial." So I went to the third grade and happened to get a wonderful Italian teacher. Every night after school she would stay with me for about an hour

and coach me and tutor me and I made the grade from about April, you know, May and June on a trial basis again. But I did go to the fourth grade, but from then on it was no trouble. It was—I could flow right along, you know, with the rest of them. I learned a little bit of English and it was—it was not bad at all.

LEVINE: How about your father, was he speaking English when you came?

TREPAL: My mother and father never learned English, even as long as they stayed here. It was very disappointing. We tried to get them to do it, but they were—I think they were a little bit too shy to go through that. You know, you have to go through the mill. When you come here or to any other country, it's actually a very difficult thing to go through. You have to take ribbing. You have to take—you know, your pronunciation is bad and people will laugh and if you're a little bit sensitive to that, you are going to retreat. But you can't—you can't escape. You got to go through that in order to pass that test.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: Now, one time I remember my sister was in—this was in the public school. She—she was supposed to have something in the—something written and she didn't quite understand what the teacher meant. The teacher—the teacher says, “Mary,” she says, “Do you know about the word stomach?” And Mary says, “Yes,” but she did not know what it meant. And the teacher says, “Where is your stomach?” and Mary says, “Oh, I think I've got it in my desk,” you know, that opened up. So she opened up the desk, of course, the kids just roared, you know, and then she looks through the pile of books and she says, “No.” She says, “I believe I left it at home.” Well, that blew another one. [Laughs] Another explosion, you know, which was great for the kids. [Laughs] But you know, you learn.

But my dad and mother failed to learn it. It—it would have—it should have been easy. My dad should have had it by the time we came here. He did not. He—he was kind of, you know, not putting enough effort into it and also when you live in a community where there's a lot of Slovenians, the grocery store, the furniture store man, everybody, the priest, you know, they were Slovenian, you're just going to speak Slovenian. And they had lodges and organizations, you know.

LEVINE: How about at work? Did he work with a—a lot of people who were also speaking Slovenian?

TREPAL: Yup, but he—he had trouble. That—that even stopped him from making better wages because he didn't—he couldn't write English. He couldn't speak English. That—that was bad, but you couldn't—couldn't push him to cross that line. And my mother could read and write English. She—she did it herself, but she—she couldn't speak it.

LEVINE: I see. What—what was it like for the children to really progress in a way past the parents?

TREPAL: Oh, doesn't take long.

LEVINE: How was that in your family, having—

TREPAL: Doesn't take long. In—in about a year and a half, you know, you—you go do fairly well. You know, you still might have a little—a little accent and some trouble, but you progress very rapidly and—and we—we did without too much effort. Of course, we were very anxious to learn. You know, we would work with spelling and talking among ourselves so that we would progress. And—and it worked very well.

LEVINE: Did you feel embarrassed that your mother and father couldn't speak it at any point?

TREPAL: Ah, later on, yeah.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: Later on, because they were here, you know, twenty-five years and I know how—I know what people were thinking. You know, there was no excuse anymore. But we could have taught them English. The kids, all—if they would have only wanted to come across, but my dad was always a little bit fearsome of that and he would always say, "Oh, " you know, "don't speak only English." He figured, you know, the fatherland tongue and all that. What a waste.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: If you come here, well, you better learn. Even if you hang onto the other one, you better learn English. You know, it's just a—

LEVINE: And what was it like for you, getting used to having a father?

TREPAL: Well, some of it was good. Some of it was not so good. He was—you know, it was an authority there that I had not had and of course he would get—some things would bother him that no—that didn't bother my mother or anybody else. I remember I used to—I used to slam the door a little bit more than I should have, you know, and that finally got him. He was mad. He was always telling me, "Don't slam the door," and I guess, you know, I slammed the door a little bit too hard. So one day he comes over, you know, and he slaps me on the back of the head. Hah! I felt that it was unnecessary. It

took a long time to get back on the—on the track again. I just—I just lost everything when that happened. You know, I thought it was not a big enough of a—of a crime, you know, to really deserve that. Although—

LEVINE: How long were you here when that happened?

TREPAL: Well, maybe about two or three years.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: Yeah. So.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TREPAL: But anyway, this was some of the—but—but during the Depression, you know, he was out of a job. My brother was out of a job most of the time and he was out of a job a good bit of the time, but he made a wagon that could haul logs. We could go out and get a, you know, a tree and—and bring it home. Pretty thick. You know, maybe about a foot and a half in diameter and about twenty-five feet long. And then we'd cut it up and chop it up and use it for firewood. We had tons of firewood around. We couldn't afford to buy coal, so we would use the wood. But anyway, we went out together, including him. He would take the wagon, my brothers and I.

Sometimes my brothers-in-law, also, and we'd go out in the morning to the park, talk to the ranger and he would say, "All right, you can cut that one out. That's dead," or "This one is down, you can haul it out," and that's what we would do. But my dad went along, and that's where we got much better acquainted. You know, we were more like comrades. We were working together and he knew—he knew that type of a thing very well, so we got along real well.

I know one time we cut one down and it fell a little different than we had figured, and as soon as we got through cutting it, we stepped back a little bit but not far enough and this tree fell over a little roll in the ground. And also it had branches on there yet, you know, and they acted like a spring. So when it came down and hit the ground, it—it sprung back and it knocked him over, knocked my dad over and lucky there was a kind of a little—little dip there. That little thing saved him, but it ripped his pants off. We had a heck of a time finding some of a—a wire or something around to—to kind of sew that up so he could go home with this—without his pants. [Laughs] Oh, boy.

LEVINE: [Laughs] So—

TREPAL: So that's where we got much better acquainted. From then on it was pretty good.

LEVINE: Yeah, good. Now, you—during the Depression you—you were in school?

TREPAL: I had just—yeah, two years of high school and then I got out and couldn't get a job. I—I graduated in 1931, you know, during some of the worst parts.

LEVINE: Hmm.

TREPAL: And I couldn't get a job. I went every day. Every day. There were thousands of people out there looking for work and they wouldn't pick on a young fellow because they could get experienced people for, you know, pennies. And so it was just a waste of time. You finally begin to give up. One time there was an ad in there where Lincoln Electric needed somebody to unload a box, a car, coal car, you know, gondola of coal. So I went down and the guy—I happened to be the only guy in there at the time, so he says, "Come on in." So while I was writing the application, another guy comes in, big, huge husky guy. He got it.

So I lost out on that one, but you know, in those years, high schools were open for postgraduate students. So after I graduated, I went back. You could take any course you wanted, but you didn't get any credit for it. So I took like chemistry, you know, and machine shop, and some other things. English, you know. And one day a telephone call comes to the machine shop and here some—GE was the one called in. They said, "Send a couple of the boys down here. We will hire somebody." So two of us went down there to GE and I got the job. After the interview, the guy took me. That's how I got the job.

LEVINE: Wow.

TREPAL: So it turned out pretty good but that was, you know, you were making forty-five cents an hour, which was—well, you could live with that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Would you—did the family ever feel during the height of the Depression that they were sorry they had come to this country?

TREPAL: Oh, no. You see. The Depression was not very much different than what the normal conditions were over there for us because we did not own anything. So it wasn't really. No, they never felt that—that they would want to go back. Even my dad, you know, began to look at it differently. He knew that that dream of going back was gone and he wouldn't have—he wouldn't have been able to succeed very much in anything over there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: But here at least, you know, we—we did fairly well. You know, it wasn't—wasn't so bad. But during the Depression—but if you had a job during the Depression, boy, you were in good shape.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did you stay at GE then?

TREPAL: Oh, I stayed at GE for about a year and a half and then they moved to Detroit and they never asked me to go along because I was inexperienced and they—most of their customers were in Detroit. Automobile factories, what we were making. We were making a tool, they called carbolite tool, which is a new very hard metal that would out perform anything else that was in the market. So the automobile people had big production, you know, a lot of pieces that they were always making, so they needed carbolite. And GE would ship out a load every night by airplane. This one guy lived—he worked here on the east side, but he lived on the west side by the airport and he would carry about as much as he could carry in two hands every night and drop it off at the airport, and it would get to Detroit the next morning.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: So then they figured why should we do that? We can move over there, and they did, and that's what—that why I left GE.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And then what did you do then?

TREPAL: I went to Cleveland Trade School after that for seven months and got a job with other machine shops, Foote Bert and National Acme, where I thought I was going to stay only a little while. Stayed there forty years and retired from there.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, when—when you think back on your whole life, coming here as an eight year old, how do you think about that? How do you think about the fact that you immigrate and your family immigrated and changed—changed everything?

TREPAL: Well, I was never sorry we came, and I thought the experience was just wonderful. It—it showed so much of the different life, different part of the world that we would have never known by staying over there. Never. That was a very narrow little channel, you know, that you'd stay in. But this way it was very interesting. It seemed like from 1921, you were—in 1921 you were living in the 18th century type of.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: In some ways, and then you moved up into the 20th century in months, you know. It was just a huge change and very interesting. Some of it fairyland stuff. Electricity, wow, what a—what a blessing that was. Lights, you could just flip them on. You know, when you have candles or lanterns, boy, it doesn't compare and then inside toilets and running water. It was just great. Of course, they had farms here, too, that had some of that, but we were in the city and what a wonderful experience. I thought it was just great and the schools, you know, were huge and, you know, had all kinds of modern things. A lot of books.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: Over there we had a little slate tablet, you know. Everybody—every kid had a little slate tablet, about an eight by twelve and you would write on there or you would draw, whatever. Then erase and, you know, you'd put it back in there and you'd use that every day. You'd only take home maybe one book or so, but it was, you know, regular rural area and probably for that particular time and place it was okay. But—but it wasn't top of the pile by any means.

LEVINE: When you think back on your life, what—what do you feel proud of or what makes you feel very satisfied that you did?

TREPAL: Well, I think that perhaps, you know, learning a different language. I consider that quite a—quite an accomplishment and it was very satisfying, you know, when you finally—when you finally are able to learn to speak it, you know the meaning and all that. And I still have trouble with spelling, though. My wife gets so mad at me, you know, but I always have to carry a little dictionary or something because of spelling. Everybody doesn't have that trouble. I happen to have it, but—but to speak it, you know, is—is great.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: And also you had more of an opportunity to learn a trade or maybe, you know, if you had a chance to go to school, college and all that, why, naturally you would—you could get just about what you wanted.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: But I was—I probably would not have even finished high school if it weren't for the Depression. It just shows how it works. In a way it hurt, but on the other hand, it gave me a chance to go further to school and it was just a plus, you know, even though you didn't have any money or anything, but later on. You know, it was a long-range type of a plan that—where it worked best for when you looked at it for five, ten years ahead.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: And it turned out pretty good.

[END OF SIDE A, TAPE 2] [BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE 2]

LEVINE: How did you meet your wife?

TREPAL: My wife? Well, I'll tell you what happened. I happen to—happened to get acquainted with her brother. She had—she had an older brother and also a sister and a younger brother. But anyway, this fellow was very easy type of a guy to get along with. He—he knew how to do it, and so one day he invites me over to the house. He says, “Why don't you come over?” He says, “I'm going to have about a half a dozen guys.” He says, “And we'll play cards or chess or whatever,” and so I came over there. Well, we were sitting around the table, you know, talking and Mary comes home from somewhere. I don't know where, but anyway, she comes in and walks around the back like this, you know, and goes into the other room. But he stopped her and he introduced her to all of us, you know. That's how I met her, and then I—I always thought she was, you know, very nice. Somehow she was able to understand my ways and everything, and then we finally after, oh, I don't know how long. I think it was about two years before I asked her for a date, but—but that kind of started it, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TREPAL: And then one day—you know, she went to night school to finish her high school, which was quite a ways from our house or her house to. So I knew what time she would get out of school. Something like about nine o'clock at night, you know, and so I went down by streetcar and I waited out there. Well, when she came out, you know, I was waiting there and she was kind of surprised. I hadn't mentioned it. So I said, “Hey, it's a nice night.” I said, “Let's walk home.” So we walked. It took until about eleven thirty or so. So we came home and then her brother was still up and he says, “Hey,” he said, “I'll take you home, it's getting kind of late,” you know. So he did. But that's how we got acquainted, you know.

LEVINE: And what was your wife's—your wife's name was Mary, and maiden name?

TREPAL: Yeah, Hajban.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

TREPAL: Hajban, H-A-J-B-A, A-N. A-N. H-A-J-B-A-N, Hajban.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MARY: Habjan, H-A-B-J-A-N.

TREPAL: That's what—

LEVINE: Habjan, J-A-N. And what kind of a name is that?

TREPAL: That's Slovenian, also.

LEVINE: Oh, that's Slovenian?

TREPAL: Yeah, that's Slovenian.

LEVINE: So you—so you—your parents came to this country?

TREPAL: Sure.

LEVINE: And you were born here?

TREPAL: Right.

MARY: I was. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

TREPAL: And her—her mother actually did not live very far from where we lived, although it was maybe fifty miles away.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

TREPAL: But anyway, it was—you know, it's kind of a small thing there and that's where she came from, and—and her dad, I don't know exactly where the heck he lived. He was a baker, so he traveled around a little bit. You know, he tried different places.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TREPAL: But then over here they—they opened up a bakery.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TREPAL: You know, he died in his forties, so the mother carried on the bakery. She—she learned all that from him and she would bake all his cakes and everything and—but again, the Depression hurt. You know you could—you couldn't make much money. Your donuts were like a penny a piece and bread was a nickel a loaf.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: But it got them through there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and how—did you have children?

TREPAL: We—we have children.

LEVINE: What are their names?

TREPAL: Ah, the oldest one is Terry and then comes Lad, Laddy, and then Gil, Gilbert and Norman. Four boys.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, and how is this time in your life, now that you're retired and your children are grown?

TREPAL: Oh, not so bad. The children are all married and, you know, they—one lives in Washington, DC. One lives in Cincinnati and two of them live around here within about twenty-five miles.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

TREPAL: But—but everything is—is pretty good actually. You know, we—we—at first we bought a little, tiny house about a year after we got married and then, of course, we had four children and just a couple of bedrooms. So we decided that we better move into a bigger place, so that's when we bought this and here it's served very well. You know, we had room, bigger yard. So it's been—it's been all right.

LEVINE: So you've had a good life, it sounds.

TREPAL: Pretty good. Yeah, pretty good.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you can think of that you'd like to say before we close? Anything maybe we haven't covered enough or—

TREPAL: Just hold on for one second. Let's see. This is pretty good. Um [pause]. Yeah, that's—I think that—

LEVINE: We covered everything?

TREPAL: Pretty well, yeah.

LEVINE: What was it like for you to see Ellis Island after all this time?

TREPAL: Oh, a big thrill. A big thrill. I—you know, it comes back so strong as you are approaching this, as the boat is going toward it. Oh, boy, because the building is still pretty much the same and—but inside, you know, they're beginning to change it a bit. That is, they have some displays. They have little rooms where they didn't have that then. You know, like where the sleeping quarters were, you know, huge, and here they just have a little tiny room, a sample of what the people had to sleep on and all that. So it—that part is a little bit different, as you come in there, but I think they're doing a good job. Many, many people are very interested in it, even those that didn't come over. Even like their children, you know, and—but I would say that that brings on some very strong feelings when you go back in there after, you know, that many years. You know, it was really like seventy-five years almost, and it's quite a thrill, and you see things now that you didn't see at that time.

I—I never really paid much attention to the Statue of Liberty then. Didn't know anything about it, you know, and so we didn't—we didn't think anything. We didn't know the history of it and all that, so it was just a statue. But now, when you go there and you know, you see how close it is and how big it is, it—it's very fascinating, and the history of it even is I think really very nice. I—I love that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Okay, well, I think a good place to stop. I want to thank you so much for such a wonderful interview.

TREPAL: Okay. [Laughs]

LEVINE: It's really been a pleasure.

TREPAL: Okay, I am glad to meet you, also. You know, it's a pleasure.

LEVINE: Good.

TREPAL: Very great.

LEVINE: Okay, let me just say that I've been speaking with Anthony Trepal, who came from Czech—oh, Yugoslavia at eight years of age in 1921. He's now eighty-three at the time of this interview, which is September 17th, 1996 and this is Janet Levine. I'm in Cleveland, Ohio, and I'm signing off for the National Park Service.

[END OF INTERVIEW]