

EI-920

SOPHIA ANGELINA LIPOSHAK MATESIC

BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 29, 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 2, 1997

RUNNING TIME:

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: NONE

INTERVIEW LOCATION: MASSILLON, OHIO

ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: MICHELE NEVENKA LARIMER

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (CROATIAN) (PRESENTLY CROATIA), 1907

PORT:

RESIDENCES: BARTOLIĆ, AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (CROATIA)

WEST VIRGINIA

LITTLE WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

MASALON, OHIO

LEVINE: Today is August 2, 1997, and I'm here in Massillon, Ohio with Sophia Angelina . . . Li-po-shak Matesic. Ah, Mrs. Matesic, ah, came from Austria-Hungary when she was three years old in 1907. At the time of this interview she's a very vital looking ninety-three year old and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Well, I'm delighted, to be here and I, I'll start with asking you your birth date and where you were born. Ok? Go ahead.

MATESIC: I was born . . . 1904 in Austria-Hungary.

LEVINE: What was the date? The exact date.

MATESIC: The date was January 29.

LEVINE: Ok. And where in Austria-Hungary, if you could tell the village and its name.

MATESIC: The village went by, Bartolović.

LEVINE: Ok. And Bartolović was your mother's maiden name.

MATESIC: Yes, ma'am.

LEVINE: And that was because there were a lot of people . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: with that last name in that particular village.

MATESIC: That's right.

LEVINE: Ok. And After World War I, you're saying that the part that Austria-Hungary that you were born in became Yugoslavia, part of Yugoslavia.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Ok. Now, your memories, I-I know you were only three, the memory that you do have of, of when you were a little girl . . .

MATESIC: Um, huh. Um, huh.

LEVINE: little-little girl in Austria-Hungary, what, could you talk about that?

MATESIC: Well, I know one thing I remember my grandpa, went to America. You know, they obviously went, you know, to make money and come back. So, when he came back, and my grandma said, "Why'd you come home so quick, even the beans aren't cooked yet?" (laughing) She made fun of him in a joke. And, and he took me, and, and you know over there they have high ceilings, they hang their, because they have f-fire and they smoke their meat right above, ok. So, he swings me up. . . way up to the rafters and, he, I went and hit the rafters (laughing), and my (laughs), my grandma said, "Did you come here to kill my child?" (laughing)

LEVINE: Now what was your father's name?

MATESIC: My grandpa?

LEVINE: Your grandpa.

MATESIC: His name was Nikola. Nikola.

LEVINE: And your grandma's name?

MATESIC: Her name was Mantaljana[sic].

LEVINE: Ah, ha. That's pretty. And now this was your mother's. . .

MATESIC: My mother's mother, yeah.

LEVINE: Mother and father.

MATESIC: Hmm, hmm.

LEVINE: Ah, any other memories of your grandma or your grandpa?

MATESIC: No, I remember, you know they used to leave me (laughing) home with ah, by, by myself, you know. And they would go out in the field and work, and they had lot of little peep peeps and I'd drown on some of em. (laughing)

LEVINE: Ah, li-, little peepers?

MATESIC: Peep peeps, chicks. Little chicks.

LEVINE: Oh, peep peeps. (laughing)

MATESIC: (laughing)

LEVINE: How did you ha-, how did you, drown them?

MATESIC: I didn't . . .

LEVINE: You just put em the . . .

MATESIC: Well, there was no, you know where they drink, and I just kept on putting them in . . . (laughing)

LEVINE: Oh, dear. (laughing)

MATESIC: Oh, I think I was wretched, when I was, ah, one. (laughing)

LEVINE: Now how about your father?

MATESIC: My father. . . eh, he was born, my father was wealthy in Europe. He had, eh, ah. they call it . . . over there they call it an inn. He had a, like ah, like a café, you know. But he had . . . p-people to stay because this, the his town was na-named Trost Maria[sic].

LEVINE: Could you possibly spell that?

MATESIC: T-R-O-S-T. Trost. Maria, you know like Maria. And, ah, (clears throat) people when, eh, when they had a, ah. . . oh and I forget, but the ch-, like festivals, you know, there, because there was this big c-church, this church. Blessed Virgin was supposed to have seen there, then they build church here. So people used to

come. . .when it was festival, from all over, you know, and of course, they would (?) in my father's business place.

LEVINE: Do you remember that place? The inn?

MATESIC: Eh, no I don't remember it, but I know that. . .

LEVINE: That, that was the way it was.

MATESIC: That way it was.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: And ah, (clears throat) then ah, but my . . . my grandmother didn't like my mother. She didn't want him to marry. You know, they get, you have to have a dowry . . . like fifteen hundred, you have to have like silk pants and all kind of stuff before you could marry, you know like a great big, ah, chest. And ah, but my father and mother got married anyhow. So, they (pause), he took money from his father and he took my mother and they came to America.

LEVINE: Ah.

MATESIC: Then I came later. They came earlier, like 1906.

LEVINE: And then they went back?

MATESIC: No.

LEVINE: Well now you, oh I see,

MATESIC: They . . .

LEVINE: they had you . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: over there.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then you stayed when they first came over here?

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. Um, now what was your mother's name?

MATESIC: Mm- . . .

LEVINE: Her first name?

MATESIC: Her name's just like me, Sophia.

LEVINE: Sophia. And your father's first name?

MATESIC: Joseph.

LEVINE: Joseph. And, um, did you have brothers and sisters? Did you have any brothers or sisters?

MATESIC: Oh yeah, I-I had, over here, they were all born over here.

LEVINE: You were the only one born over there?

MATESIC: Ah, huh.

LEVINE: You were the oldest . . .

MATESIC: Ah, huh.

LEVINE: of the children.

MATESIC: I-I have ten, I had ten sisters. They all died except, three of us is left.

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: All younger than me.

LEVINE: Ah, huh. Now, um, was your, was your mother and father, were your mother and father Roman Catholic.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Ah, huh. And, ah, were they religious?

MATESIC: Oh yeah. But over here, my father got mad at the priest because, you know, we all used to go to church, we had a church across the street. Irish Church. But we bo-, but ah Croatian church was, you know, like in (?) from us, you know. So, so by the, by the, altar there was a big ah, candle holder, and you buy these great big candles, like five dollars at that time, I don't know if it'd cost a million now cause it's big, and my dad bought one for, like, for his St. Joseph Day, you know so his birth. And, ah . . . the priest he made a speech, eh, "Why does he buy ah, eh, wick cheap candle", but it wasn't cheap, it was wax, but he was jealous because he didn't give him money, you know.

LEVINE: Hmm, I see. So . . .

MATESIC: So, my dad quit the church.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: So he didn't want us to go to church either. Threw our rosaries away and everything.

LEVINE: Wow. How did you feel about that?

MATESIC: Well, we, we just went, I used to go to every other church I could, Sunday school, you know. And I went to this church up the hill too, the Catholic Church. But, he didn't stop us from going but he didn't want us to go to the Croatian Church.

LEVINE: I see. Now wha-, could you talk about that, that custom of, of lighting the candle for the saint that had your name? Is that, is that what your father was doing?

MATESIC: Yeah, ah huh.

LEVINE: Could you just say what, what, did you do that? Did you light a candle?

MATESIC: Ehhh . . .

LEVINE: For St. Sophia?

MATESIC: Noo.

LEVINE: No.

MATESIC: I didn't. No. No, I didn't. But he, in old fashion, you know, in Europe that's what they did, so he kept that tradition.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Yeah. But ah, when I came here, then I started going to church. Then I changed to . . . I'm a Baptist now.

LEVINE: Oh. Ah, huh.

MATESIC: I changed to Baptist.

LEVINE: I see. Now can you remember anything about the church, when you were in Austria-Hungary? Do you have any . . .

MATESIC: Ehh, no. I-I-I, I remember once in a while that they would take me to church, but, you know, it's, it's vaguely cause. . .

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

MATESIC: But I know that they took me. My grandma used to take me to church.

LEVINE: Do you ever think about ah, when you were a little, little girl in Austria-Hungary, I mean, when you do think about that, what is it that you remember or think about it or. . .

(long pause)

MATESIC: Oh . . .

LEVINE: Do you have any pictures in your mind of that place or . . .

MATESIC: No.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: No. No. But when I went there to visit, I cried because I went to visit three times over there. I was going to write a book myself about it, you know.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: But, um, everything was so different. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well do you know why, um, you say your mother and father came to this country a year before you did.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: And um, the reason, their reason for coming, did they ever tell you why. . .

MATESIC: No.

LEVINE: they decided to come?

MATESIC: No. They just decided to come because . . . the grandma and grandpa didn't like em to.

LEVINE: Oh, cause y-your father's family. . .

MATESIC: because they usually stayed, they usually stayed with ah, father, you know when you get married.

LEVINE: Your mother would have moved in

MATESIC: Um, huh. Um, huh.

LEVINE: with your father's family . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: but, do you know what it was you-your, your grandmother had against your mother?

MATESIC: Mm, because she was poor.

LEVINE: Oh, ah huh.

MATESIC: You know, then he could've married a lady that had money or . . .

LEVINE: a big dowry . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: and all that. Ok, so, so then your mother and father left because of that.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then why didn't they take you right away? Do you know?

MATESIC: Well, they didn't. . . know how they were gonna, you know, how the situation was, I guess.

LEVINE: So who did you stay with for that year?

MATESIC: Well, I stayed with my . . . grandma and my grandpa, and of course there was my, um, (long pause) what do you call my uncle, you know, he was a little boy.

LEVINE: That's your . . .

MATESIC: my . . .

LEVINE: father's brother. Your father's--

MATESIC: My mother's, my mother's brother.

LEVINE: Oh, your mother's brother, ah huh.

MATESIC: Yeah, I remember him, yeah.

LEVINE: What do you remember about him?

MATESIC: Well (pause), well he was about, maybe ten or twelve years old and, he'd just play with me. He used to carry me, you know. I remember that.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

MATESIC: And I, when I went to Europe, I wanted so badly to . . . see his grave but, he didn't, during the war, everything was . . .

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: ruined, you know. Tombstones were knocked over.

LEVINE: So, are there any other memories that you can think of, having to do with your life there, before you came to this country?

MATESIC: No, I just remember when I came here. I . . .

LEVINE: Oh, you remember coming?

MATESIC: I remember coming to, w-we landed in (?), West Virginia.

LEVINE: Oh, ok, well first, do you remember, ah, the ship you came on?

MATESIC: No I don't.

LEVINE: And do you remember, ah, anything about, being on the ship, Ellis Island, arriving in New York, any of that.

MATESIC: N--, I don't because I was too sick.

LEVINE: Oh you were sick on the ship.

MATESIC: I was sick, I was sick with fever. That's why they wanted to send me back. And uh, my uncle said, he was just a young f-fella, bringing his girl here to get married in America.

LEVINE: This was, this was your mother's brother?

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: The one that you liked?

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Your uncle?

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: And then the, you came with them.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

MATESIC: Him and his girl when they got married, in West Virginia.

LEVINE: I see, so you were sick with a fever. Do you, was it, was there, did, was it a disease that you had?

MATESIC: It-It was typhoid fever. They was going to send me back.

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: Yeah, and my hair was falling out, you know, and I had, I was real sick. Then when I came to (?) I was, you know, I was getting better but, you know, I-I-I'd, they had these back street cars I remember and a policeman, my uncle Pete, who lived here already and his wife. They met us at the streetcar with the policeman and I-I got deadly scared because he put a flash light on me, you know, and I was deadly scared of policeman for a long time and that man tried to be so nice to me afterwards, but (pause) and ah, my mother was . . .

LEVINE: Pregnant.

MATESIC: with my sister. I-I forgot when, what year, I know it wasn't long after that she had the baby, I forgot what month I came. But anyway, when she had the baby, over there everybody had a fireplace, but they had a grate in every room. You

know grates, you just put coal, coal in it. Not wood, you know, coal. And uh, she had this baby, and she said, ah, "Take a dipper, put some milk in it, and go over the grate and warm it and bring it, so I can feed the baby," you know. And I went in and here I got soot in it (laughs).

LEVINE: You got soot in the milk?

MATESIC: I remember that because my mother hollered on me. (laughing) And I was crying.

LEVINE: Ahh. Now, um. . .

MATESIC: I didn't know how to.

LEVINE: Do you know when you had the typhoid fever, do you know if you were detained at Ellis Island? Did they, did they keep you at Ellis Island?

MATESIC: Yeah they kept me there for a while, til they found out, you know, if I could really go back or not, you know.

LEVINE: So you were in the hospital there, then.

MATESIC: I don't know. I-

LEVINE: You must have been.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. I see. Now, um, what relatives did you have in West Virginia? When you. . .

MATESIC: My uncle Pete, that's the oldest, my mother's oldest brother, he was . . .

LEVINE: And then your, her younger brother and his girlfriend . . .

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: and you went to join them.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And, and so he must have been the one in the family, do you know why he settled in West Virginia?

MATESIC: Well, usually, you know, where there's our people, from our village, they'd go there. That's how, you know. Community again, (laughing) together. Like the (?). Just, the street is different. (laughs) And ah . . .

LEVINE: Wh-, did they do, ah, what did they do for work, these people that had come from . . .

MATESIC: Coal mines, mostly coal mines. I know because my father worked in a coal mine and ah, he worked in steel mills also, but he worked in a coal mine, and he got black lung. He died at forty-two years old and there was eleven kids left.

LEVINE: Oh wow.

MATESIC: Eleven.

LEVINE: So he worked in the coal mine in West Virginia . . .

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: for, for all those years? But when did he go to the steel mill?

MATESIC: Oh, he went to the steel mill . . . oh I don't know, maybe (pause) I was, I was, I know I was big enough to carry, you know they used to carry baskets for lunch, you know a little basket and then you had a little bucket for tea or coffee, and I used always make em, they had this little shed where you'd put em down and people would come up the steps, you know, and bring em.

LEVINE: This was when he was in the steel mill, you brought him that lunch or when he was in the coal mine?

MATESIC: When he was in the steel mill.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

MATESIC: Oh, in the coal mine they had big buckets. And ah, I remember (pause and clears throat) that there was an explosion in the mine, and ah, my uncle Pete was there in the mine, he was in it, and my other cousin (pause), he got killed in it. And my aunt, she, I don't know what was trouble with her, they, she always cursed at my uncle Pete. She'd always say, "I hope the mine explodes and kills you (laughing)."

LEVINE: Oh no.

MATESIC: She was (laughs). . .

LEVINE: Oh. (laughs)

MATESIC: she, we talk about it with my, with her kids and I said, "Your mother was mean." But he was good to her, you know, he always had a cut of meat for her, you know,

wait on her. And, ah, I don't know, and one time she, he got a, (pause) (mumbles: what do you call it), I can't think about what you . . .

LEVINE: Maybe I can help you.

MATESIC: Do-, I'll think about. They sell em now.

LEVINE: Um.

MATESIC: Lottery.

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: He bought a lottery ticket, he was supposed to win . . .fifty thousand dollars, and my, she tore it and she threw it away.

LEVINE: Oh my.

MATESIC: Yeah. She, she . . .

LEVINE: Now was she also from Austria-Hungary?

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: So, um, (clears throat). When you ah, when you got to West Virginia, you, and you were three years old, do you remember, ah, anything about, ah, where you lived or . . .

MATESIC: Well, we lived in Bellaire after a while. Bellaire, Ohio, you know, no I'm, I'm sorry. Ah, t-there used to be a, you know, a rive-, r-river runs, you know, Ohio River, and the ship, and I want to go back, I cried, "I want to go back to my

grandma". I didn't like this bread, I wanted that black bread, you know, with homemade. And I didn't want nothing but, I wanted just eat eggs. I didn't want, I didn't like none of this food that is cooked in here. And my daddy would take me on a . . .boat. He pretend like we were going, he says, "Oh grandma's not home." You know. And he'd bring me right back. And then people would give me, you know everybody, there's hardly paper money, you know, but ah, they always paid in gold or silver, you know. And, if somebody gave me a dollar, you know, paper money, I'd, under the step I'd dig a hole and I'd bury it. I didn't want to, (laughing) I must have (laughing), I-I, but ah, and ah, you know, they used to have these socks, they were like, (pause) they were blue and white or . . .or red and white, and ah, and the heal was white, so I put that on top of a, pint whisky bottle and I had that for my baby doll. (laughs)

LEVINE: Awww.

MATESIC: (laughing) I've . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else that you played when you were a little girl?

MATESIC: Well, yeah I used to . . . you know I used to play, and I remember you know there's a man that came on a little donkey, he ground horseradish.

LEVINE: Ohh.

MATESIC: And I said, "Is that hren" you know, that means horseradish. And ah, that women said, when he was over this lady's house, she says, "Yes my child." You know, and I says, "Could I eat some, because I-I didn't have no appetite. After I ate, I almost ate that horseradish, my mother said, but tears were coming and I was sneezing. I ate that hot horseradish and after a while I'd eat a hog. It just . . .

LEVINE: It changed your appetite.

MATESIC: It changed my stomach or something, you know, I just ate like a pig (laughing).

LEVINE: Well, now, did the man have the horseradish or did people give him horseradish .

..

MATESIC: No, he . . .

LEVINE: and he'd ground it.

MATESIC: No, he just has his own and he ground it. I-I remember I used to stand there and watch him ground it and I said, "Is that, you know, hren".

LEVINE: Wow.

MATESIC: He said, "Yes that's", so I ate it, so I (?) (laughing).

LEVINE: Now do you remember any other kind of people who came around when you were a little girl in West Virginia besides the horseradish grinder?

MATESIC: Oh yeah, there was, I remember when ah, (pause) we lived on (pause) I don't know what the devil they. What this man had, but he also had a donkey and eh, the little, this girl, this was the only girl in the family and I forgot what was her name and her ah, her mother hollered, "Don't go there" and yet she went, she wanted to cross the street and here this donkey grabbed her by the h-hair (laughs) and threw her down and he had been (?) those things in front like the trains. Those catchers, you know.

LEVINE: Oh, ah, huh.

MATESIC: Just like the engines used, now they don't have em of course, but the engines used to have em. Here got there, she got, but she wasn't killed but she, you know, picked her on that thing. And , I remember that and her mother was screaming.

LEVINE: Wow. Well . . .

MATESIC: Oh, her name was Tonica. I-I

LEVINE: Tonica.

MATESIC: Tonica, Tonica!

LEVINE: So, um, where there like a breadmen and milkmen, and ah . . .

MATESIC: Oh . . .

LEVINE: people going around maybe selling groce-, ah, produce or?

MATESIC: Oh yeah, they used . . . come on, on a wagon. They'd sell grapes, you know. Like as if you buy it in a store. There's four baskets, you know, in a . . . in a cart. In a box.

LEVINE: Like a flat, of grapes

MATESIC: Like a flat.

LEVINE: Ah, uh.

MATESIC: Yeah and people would ge-, come with buckets and they'd . . . buy this, buy that. Yeah. My mother would buy a little bit of every kind of fruit, you know.

LEVINE: Ah, uh.

MATESIC: And I liked to eat it.

LEVINE: How did your mother like being in West Virginia?

MATESIC: She liked it.

LEVINE: Um, huh. And did she . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: well she was, ah, she was obviously busy being a mother . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: She didn't have time, did, did the family grow anything, ah, any kind of a food?

MATESIC: Oh yeah. They. . .

LEVINE: or any kind, animals?

MATESIC: They had, yeah, everybody had a cow and a garden. Oh yeah, everybody had a . .

.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: almost every f-family had a cow and they'd take it out to the pasture, you know. Somebody else's land, you know, farm, right.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Was there a market day? Do you remember anything like that, when people went . . . someplace and bought whatever everybody else had grown.

MATESIC: No, no. They just ah, . . .

LEVINE: For themselves.

MATESIC: They just bought, like I said, man would come with a wagon with all kind of stuff on it.

LEVINE: Ah, huh. I see.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember starting school?

(long pause)

MATESIC: I-I, I don't.

LEVINE: Do you remember being in school?

MATESIC: Oh yeah, I started going to Catholic school and we had quite a walk to . . . go. I, now I just think how spoiled these kids are nowadays. Everybody has to have a car. Gosh I didn't, m-my mother never t-took us to the store to buy shoes. You know they used to have shoes hanging on line, god knows how long they'd been hanging (laughs). You just take a pair of shoes and, try em on and never took me to try shoes on. She just buy me shoes, whether they were small or big (laughs) and ah, then the, we used ah, they used to make a school was down and the highland was up and I could see one of those wagons coming and in the back they have a big . . . wide like a seat, you know how you, step up to going into the

wagon and that's how I say, "I'm gonna, I see the wagon, I'm going to get that seat," you know. And ah, so we didn't have far to run up the hill you know, to get to, and ah, I got up there and here another girl comes. She tried to push me off and ah, so I grabbed her by her hair, and I-I-I was mean. (laughing) I never, you know, I never let anybody put . . . put anything on me. I fought for my rights all the time.

LEVINE: Even when you were a little girl.

MATESIC: Yeah. That's right.

LEVINE: And that's a trait that you

MATESIC: Yeah

LEVINE: kept with you.

MATESIC: And I'm, now I fight with ah, I write letters to the Republicans to the Democrats, and I raise (?) with em. Yeah.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: So I'm fluttered with this junk, now. (laughing) They sold my name to everybody and I just,

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: I just, I just said that's what you get. Like I sent fifteen dollars, they're having a Roosevelt Memorial, I sent fifteen dollars, now they think I'm gonna, keep on sending. I said, "My God, if I sent to everybody only a dollar, I would have no, nothing to eat."

LEVINE: Um, huh. Um, huh.

MATESIC: So, I just, I wrote to them so they ignore me, so I just sling it all. They keep on reminding me to do (?)

LEVINE: You just throw it away.

MATESIC: Throw it away. Cause I see it where, you know, this corruption there. They're all like that. You know, I get this, and they, this one's got so much money, extra money, this one. They're all the same. Then they scream on each other. Why didn't they get together and work for the people like they're supposed to, you know?

LEVINE: Ummm.

MATESIC: Like, they's (?) on that ah, that girl that claims he had affairs with her. Why the devil she'd go with him. I'm sure he didn't rape her. So I wrote the letter, I says, "I don't care who he sleeps with, as long as he does his job." I'm sure he didn't do it in a office.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MATESIC: So I got a thank you letter.

LEVINE: (laughing) Good. Ok, well, um, getting back to West Virginia, when you were little, you must have learned English, cause . . .

MATESIC: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: you easily, so you could probably speak English before your . . .

MATESIC: Oh.

LEVINE: mother and father

MATESIC: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: could speak it.

MATESIC: You know my dad was a great reader. He used to read us all these, you know, like the forties, (pause) Forty Thieves and . . .

LEVINE: Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

MATESIC: Ah, huh. And the Cinderella, he in Croatian though, you know.

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: And he'd have expressions, he'd you know. He had a beautiful handwriting. And he'd make those expressions and I'd just, you know, not just for me, for the other little kids too, you know. And ah, then I'd go to school and I'd try to tell em he needed (?) (laughing).

LEVINE: So in other words, your mother and father continued to speak Croatian at home.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And your chil-, you and your brothers

MATESIC: Yeah we . . .

LEVINE: and sisters learned . . .

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: it through it.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: But you knew English, also.

MATESIC: Yeah, and but, I was the only one that could speak fluently in Croatian. The other kids . . .

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: they didn't care. You know, but later when they grew up they wanted me to teach em Croatian songs, you know.

LEVINE: Oh. Do you happen to know any Croatian songs?

MATESIC: Oh, I know lotta Croatian songs.

LEVINE: Could you, could you possibly sing a little. . .

MATESIC: (laughing)

LEVINE: Of a Croatian song in a Croatian. That would be wonderful to have on the tape. If you, I mean . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: It doesn't have to be perfect, but just, whatever you can remember.

MATESIC: Oh, I know so darn many of em, I don't know which one to sing. (laughing)

LEVINE: Well pick one you like, whatever.

(long pause)

MATESIC: See I forgot now.

LEVINE: You can't remember that one, maybe you can remember another one?

(long pause)

MATESIC: Now I'm trying to sing, La (?) in Croatian. I got em all written down, um, eh-h. *Ja sam . . . Ja sam majko cura fina. Ja sam majko cura fina* (mumbling . . .) I get mixed up.

Translation: I am . . . I am, mama, a nice girl. I am, mama, a nice girl.

LEVINE: Well, maybe when we finish could you maybe find where you have them written down, and you could do, like at the end . . .one? Would, would that be alright?

MATESIC: Maybe I could do that. Yeah I got lot of em.

LEVINE: Oh, that would be really nice, to have, w-w with the tape. Ok, w-w, we'll go through the interview and then at the end we'll see . . .

MATESIC: Ok.

LEVINE: if we can. Ok, um. Let's see. So, ah, y-, what was it like being the one in the family who knew English best and being just a little girl.

MATESIC: Ohh.

LEVINE: Was that a position that you, you held, right?

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: In the family.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was that like for you? To be able to, you, I mean you must have had to speak for your parents sometimes.

MATESIC: Oh yeah because my mom didn't hardly, yeah, she'd get mixed up with, we'd laugh about it. Ehh, I always, eh, helped her to say what's right, you know.

LEVINE: Ohh, you . . .

MATESIC: It's not like that long, five, six.

TAPE 1: SIDE 2

LEVINE: Would you do things for her that required English? I mean in other words, like shopping or a, a-anything else. Did you have to sort of . . .

MATESIC: Oh no because ah . . .

LEVINE: be the spokesperson?

MATESIC: No because there was Croatians stores. There was a Jewish store, but he could speak Croatian, you know, and ah. I used to go to store and I'd just say, put it on

the book, you know they used to have a book. And my mother said, “But you have to pay the book” and after you know, when I get paid, I turn around, my father should put it on the book. (laughing)

LEVINE: (laughing) That’s all you had to do, huh.

MATESIC: She said, oh, it’s (?), you know (?). You have to pay, every two weeks the book. So, this man that this godfather to my, sister that was born, him and his wife, and they had boarders, they kept my sister all day instead of bringing her home to, you know, give her milk. Til she was done with her boarders, well anyhow so we used to deal from him, you know he had a store, and ah, (clears throat) here, ah, the shops stopped. They was, you know, they shut down over there, there was no strikes. When they shut down, they just shut down and let it rust. That’s when my dad went to the mine then, see. And, h-he s-said you put an X on the book no more, credit. So my mother goes to the Jewish man and he gives her credit.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Was he from Croatia as well. Was he from Austria-Hungary, the, the Jewish man who had the store . . .

MATESIC: I don’t know.

LEVINE: was from Croatia?

MATESIC: I don’t know, I don’t know if he was, but he spoke . . .

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

MATESIC: in Croatian. Usually all Jews, they could . . . talk any language and he, after a while we'd, so when my dad went to work, then my sister's godfather wanted us to go back to him, my mother says, "Oh no, when I was down, you left me. This man, this stranger (pause). . ."

LEVINE: Gave you the credit . . .

MATESIC: I'm gonna sti-, I'm gonna stick with him. So that's what we stuck with him.

LEVINE: Now were most of the people in the community, Croatian.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: So it was a big community of . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Croats. And, ah, when you said the, the mine closed, w-w, you mean like the mining company just closed the mine?

MATESIC: N-no. I mean the, shops, the steel mills closed.

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: The steel mill, where they made steel, you know. That closed, then my dad went to Bellaire. He'd go on a, on a horse and buggy, you know, to Bellaire to . . .

LEVINE: Bellaire, West Virginia. Is that in West Virginia?

MATESIC: No, it's Ohio. Across the river.

LEVINE: Oh, Bellaire, Ohio. I see.

MATESIC: Yeah, it's across the river. So that's where the mines, then he worked in a mine there.

LEVINE: I see. Now how did your father happen to leave the coal mine, the first time, when he went to the steel mill. Do you remember that? Why he stopped in the coal mine?

MATESIC: No, he, he worked in the steel mill for a long time.

LEVINE: First.

MATESIC: First.

LEVINE: Oh, first. I see.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: First in the steel mill.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then in the coal.

MATESIC: Then he went, then he, we moved to Little Washington, Pennsylvania from West Virginia. Then, he had to go work in the coal mines and ah, my dad said, The coal mines were so, you just could never stand up. That's how low they were. People had to work like that, on their knees and he said, that big, big rats, but when the rats start running round, they know that there's gonna be a cave in and peoples follows them. Big rats, you know.

LEVINE: Umm.

MATESIC: Th-,th-they knew a warning when its gonna be, like I said, it did happen and.

LEVINE: Hmmm.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, um, how old were you when you moved to Pennsylvania from West Virginia? Do you remember?

MATESIC: Oh I was about, bout five or six years old.

LEVINE: Um, ok so you were in West Virginia a couple of years.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then, y-you, and your father was working in the steel mine. I mean the ah, in the steel . . .

MATESIC: In, in the coal mill. In a . . .

LEVINE: In a coal mine in West Virginia.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then he went to the coal mine in Pennsylvania.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And, um, w-, did, did a coal mine ever cave in?

MATESIC: Yes, it did cave in.

LEVINE: When your, when your father was in it?

MATESIC: Yeah, but he didn't get hurt, so other people, you know, he was in the next, they had a way to, they get him out, you know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, um, how long did he stay working in that coal mine in, in Pennsylvania?

MATESIC: Oh, I don't know how long he stayed. I know w-, then from there, we went ah, Linbur[sic], then we stayed in Linbur[sic]. That was also Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: Coal mine country.

MATESIC: Um, huh. And, ah, then from there we went to Johnstown, Pennsylvania. And that, ah, whole town was run by the mine. They didn't give ya cash. They gave you a (?)

LEVINE: And what was that?

MATESIC: It's a piece a paper, this once, um, guy that died, he said, "I own my s-soul to the company because," yeah. And ah, you couldn't get out of there because you never, no money. So my uncle Pete, came at night and he, we got out.

LEVINE: Oh. You ran away.

MATESIC: We ran away from the coal mines.

LEVINE: And, and what coal mine was that? Do you recall the name of the mine?

MATESIC: N-no. God knows, it was just, I guess Johnstown Coal Mine.

LEVINE: Johnstown Coal Mine. So you, so do you remember running away at night?

MATESIC: Yeah, I remember we had s-shawls around us, and another thing before this happened, ah, we lived in a twin house, you know, double house. And there's Polish people in the, see the little girl was my age, and our boarder was chopping, ch-, wood outside. Splitting it, you know, on ah, on one of those big . . . wooden, what do you call it. Like a stump, but between, you know.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: And ah, we was, you know, how kids go, go and grab the wood and here, his ah, axe fell off the and hit that girl and just opened her, nose was and her father was working nights. Here he got up and he was running around the house screaming, in his underwear. Poor man, because his little girl, they took her to the hospital in Johnstown, in, in, in town, you know.

LEVINE: Hmmm.

MATESIC: And ah, I remember that. And I remember my sister Mary was born, the next one after Katie, she was born in Johnstown. And . . . here, m-my dad went for the midwife in, in town, in Johnstown, m-, in the meantime my mother had the baby and I was home alone with her.

LEVINE: What was that like . . . for you?

MATESIC: And eh, she, I remember how . . . my sister slid clear across the room, how she was born, and my mother said, “Take a rag, diaper, and bring the little baby to me.”

LEVINE: And you did that?

MATESIC: And I took that thing and I grabbed my little sister. She just died not so long ago (starting to cry).

LEVINE: Ohh.

MATESIC: Yeah. Then my mother cut the navel off. And when the midwife came everything was ok, you know.

LEVINE: How old were you when this happened?

MATESIC: Well, she was born in 1908, so that’s the difference.

LEVINE: So you actually had only, hmmm, let’s see. If you came in 1907, then you were in Johnston

MATESIC: Yeah we moved.

LEVINE: about a year later.

MATESIC: Yeah

LEVINE: You went quickly from one place to another.

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah, we had, yeah . . .

LEVINE: Yeah, so it was sooner then we thought before.

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah. Yeah it's, it was so fast all the time, I don't know why. I guess the mines closed and . . .

LEVINE: Because it was you, then Katie, then Mary.

MATESIC: Yeah, Mary.

LEVINE: Ok. And Mary was born about a year after you got here.

MATESIC: Yeah, all kids were born eleven months . . .

LEVINE: apart, ah huh.

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah, you know.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

MATESIC: I'm the only one that was further apart. (laughs)

LEVINE: Right. Because they moved to America (laughing) in the mean time.

MATESIC: Yeah. (laughing)

LEVINE: Ok, well. Um, well, gee that must have been, eh, eh, frightening . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: for a little girl . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: to have all that responsibility . . .

MATESIC: Sure, sure.

LEVINE: and your father having (?).

MATESIC: You know, eh, it seems like I always, it seems like I, was always raising those kids. Every time I see my mother like that I'd cry, cause I know that I'm gonna have another kid to take care of (laughs).

LEVINE: (laughing) Well you, you must have had a lot of responsibility . . .

MATESIC: I did.

LEVINE: What were your responsibilities when you were a little girl growing up? W-what did you have to do, I mean?

MATESIC: Oh, I used to take the cow to pasture.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: And I, ah, feed the chickens and we had a big garden. We all worked. But we didn't think this work, we thought everybody did that. You know, it was fun for us.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: Like nowadays, kids don't, "I'm tired, I'm tired." I said, "I don't want tired is."
Like my granddaughter, she wants to put me in a . . . nursing home. "Grandma
you should go, your, your too old." I said, "I can run you ten times around the
thing and I'm gonna go in a nursing home."

LEVINE: You don't look like you need a nursing home.

MATESIC: Gosh.

LEVINE: No.

MATESIC: I'll go to jail first. (laughing)

LEVINE: (laughing) Um, ok. So, um, so you had to bring the, put the cow out to pasture?
Now did you do this when you were going to school?

MATESIC: Wha, eh?

LEVINE: Did you do it before you went to school?

MATESIC: Yeah we had to, do it before we went to school.

LEVINE: And then what else did you have to do?

MATESIC: Ohh. Like I said, work in the garden, wash the dishes.

LEVINE: Take care of your sisters.

MATESIC: Yeah. And eh, I'd get up early in the morning, help my mother to make lunch for
them, boarders. We always had to keep boarders because otherwise we wouldn't
be able to feed kids, just on my father's. Everybody had boarders.

LEVINE: How many boarders did you have?

MATESIC: Oh, sometimes five, six, you know.

LEVINE: And how, how big was the big. Like how many rooms were . . .

MATESIC: Oh . . .

LEVINE: were there in the house?

MATESIC: We had, we had, we always had . . . big house, and you know, guys would work, like, some would work nights and . . .

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: You know.

LEVINE: And they were working in the mines? The boarders?

MATESIC: No they'd be working in . . . in ah. (pause) This was when we's older, when we's, when we lived in (?) West Virginia, you know. That's where I come to Youngstown, from (?) to Youngstown.

LEVINE: Ok, so in Johnstown . . .

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: you, you took in boarders there too, right?

MATESIC: No, we didn't have no boarders, yeah we had boarders, we had couple boarders there, yeah, because that one boarder I even, oh, wanted to go and tell him that m-my mother's having a baby and my mother said, "Don't go on, you bring me the baby here", I wanna, he was out in the toilet. (laughing)

LEVINE: Oh you were gonna go to him but she said no, just bring me the baby

MATESIC: (laughing)

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Uh, huh. So when the, when you had boarders, did your mother feed them?

MATESIC: Um, huh. We had to cook for em, yeah. Yeah, they took their lunch, you know to go to, they took buckets, you know.

LEVINE: And were these boarders mostly from Austria-Hungary?

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Were they Croatians?

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Somebody that you, you knew, you know, from your village or . . . from the next village, you know.

LEVINE: Do you have any recollection of what your mother charged them per what, week? Is that how they paid or how did they pay? Do you remember?

MATESIC: No. I don't know. I, I think they all had a, pay, you know, so much, how much, eh, was on the book, you know. Anybody had to pay so much and then the kids would be free, you know.

LEVINE: Ah . . .

MATESIC: Whatever the, eh, but every, eh, was on the book, what they paid, what my mother bought to cook.

LEVINE: Oh, what your mother bought from the, from the company store. . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: was what they had to pay.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

MATESIC: Divided between them, you know.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

MATESIC: And then some of em would be, h-hardly didn't want to take more than their chair, you know, cause my mother would always cut it so everybody would always have, like meat, you know. But you know, somebody, they don't care and just . . .

LEVINE: Take a big piece.

MATESIC: just take somebody else's . .

LEVINE: or two pieces.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Uh, huh.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now would everybody sit around one table . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: at the meal.

MATESIC: Yeah they had a table then bench. Benches around.

LEVINE: And you would eat with them as well?

MATESIC: No. We . . .

LEVINE: No.

MATESIC: My mother had a big mixing bowl, she'd, my mother made only bread, you know, she made bread. And she had this mixing bowl, and she'd put coffee, we didn't have cereal and stuff. The only time we got oranges when we were sick. (laughs)

And for Christmas, that was our present. Oranges and one or other of something.
But we had good food. My mother never was stingy for food.

LEVINE: So the boarders would sit around the table at one time . . .

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: and then the children, you—

MATESIC: We'd sit on the floor and we'd eat out of this bowl, and you know, my sister
Mary, she always would . . . s-suck on her, she'd take a spoon and (makes noise)
and she'd be (?) with the spoon, you know. But when we had meat, then she'd
just (laughing) . . .

LEVINE: She liked meat. (laughing)

MATESIC: (laughing) Oh, we used to laugh over that when we grew up.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

MATESIC: (laughing) Oh Lord, God.

LEVINE: Well, ah, then what about school? Did you like school?

MATESIC: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Did you like going to school.

MATESIC: Yeah I liked school.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. Do you have any memories about teachers, or school, or . . .

MATESIC: Ohh. Yeah a lot a time I'd be s-s-, sent up in the (?) to kneel on corn. (laughing)

LEVINE: Kneel on corn?

MATESIC: Yeah, they'd make you kneel on corn.

LEVINE: Oh, that was like a punishment.

MATESIC: Yeah. So, I-I from there I'd run home. (laughing)

LEVINE: What would you do . . .

MATESIC: My mother . . .

LEVINE: to be punished like that?

MATESIC: Oh, make, cause I'd talk, you know. (laughing) And my mother said, "Why you coming home?" I says, "There's no school." You know, I'd tell a lie, there's no school, eh. Because my mother would beat the dickens out of me. (laughs)

LEVINE: What Croatian customs were continued in, in the communities that you were living in when you were a little girl here in this country?

MATESIC: Oh, they would have dances, you know. Because that's when they organized this Croatian Fraternal Union. And that's . . .

LEVINE: What was that? Th-, Croatian Fraternal Union?

MATESIC: Well that, that . . .

LEVINE: What did they do?

MATESIC: that's the, Well that's like a big . . . organization, you know, you did . . .

LEVINE: Like a society for Croats.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, what was some . . .

MATESIC: It was like an insurance company, you know. It's worth million, millions of dollars now. It's grewed up, it's a hundred some years old.

LEVINE: I see, so, so families would put some money into it and then. . .

MATESIC: Yeah and there would even be, like, you'd get like eight hundred dollars if you died, you know.

LEVINE: And what else did they do besides, say . . .

MATESIC: Ohh.

LEVINE: insurance?

MATESIC: Well, they'd, get together. They'd have, ah, dances, picnics, and you know, when a person died, they had a band playing, you know, like I remember with, when they come back, they play a march for seventy five dollars. That was in with the insurance . . . band.

LEVINE: Sodescribe what happened at a funeral, that you remember, eh, that was a Croatian funeral.

MATESIC: Oh. Well, when they came back they had all kind of eats. They had a good time. You know, like now, when you, eh. They have eats.

LEVINE: You come back from the . . . mass.

MATESIC: Eats. Everybody brings something to eat.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. But they would play music? When? When would the music be, being played. During the, during the procession of the coffin? Or?

MATESIC: Yeah, when they, yeah, when they'd be going out. The band would follow and we'd follow the band, you know. And eh, (clears throat) like they had these nice carriages, you know, to ride in.

LEVINE: With a horse drawn?

MATESIC: Yeah, t-the, you know, two people this side, and I know when there was a, (clears throat) ah, (clears throat) scarlet fever came and everybody, you know, they used to have a, hang a thing on your door that you have scarlet fever.

LEVINE: Ohh.

MATESIC: You know.

LEVINE: When was this? When you remember the scarlet fever being . . .

MATESIC: Ohh, that was (pause) maybe 1912 or maybe 13, someplace around there.

LEVINE: Uh, huh.

MATESIC: And ah, you know kids were dying, you know and ah, I know I was a pallbearer in . . . ah, they take this little ah, spaghetti (pause) But spaghetti come in box, you know.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: They put the little baby in there, wrap it in nice little blanket.

LEVINE: Aww.

MATESIC: They didn't buy a coffin. Then, we would sit-. We'd be sitting like that, and the little coffin would be on our knees.

LEVINE: You, where would you be sitting?

MATESIC: Well, ah, ehh, like I said the carriage has . . .

LEVINE: Oh in the carriage.

MATESIC: people on this side and is on this side, you know.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Then our knees, there we'd have em, the baby.

LEVINE: The baby.

MATESIC: And then we'd buy all kind a, you know, all kind a holy pictures and we'd put it around the, babies.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: What else do you remember about that scarlet fever plague, . . .

MATESIC: Well ah.

LEVINE: the um . . .

MATESIC: You know people was scared. Everybody was scared that there little . . . kid, mostly the little babies were dying. I don't know why.

LEVINE: Hmmm.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: So every, do, would you say that most families had somebody who died in that?

MATESIC: Well almost every other family.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: There was, it was just awful. Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: But were there any p-, do you know what kind of precautions or treatment, people got if they, if they ever got the disease?

MATESIC: Ehh, no. No, I don't remember what, eh, nobody ever went to hospital or anything.

LEVINE: Were there any folk medicines, or did people have, I mean, you, you mentioned a midwife.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were there other kind of, um . . .

MATESIC: No, I . . .

LEVINE: not traditional medicine as we know it now.

MATESIC: Ah, huh.

LEVINE: But other, other kinds of remedies or treatments that you remember?

MATESIC: Well, well they would, I remember my mother would give us, you know what, she would make her own cough syrup, she'd cut onions real thin and put sugar on it. Let that stay, then give us that sh-sh, she'd ward off our cough.

LEVINE: Huh, and it worked?

MATESIC: And honey, put honey on it and that was for, yeah. Yeah. And then if you had a headache, they'd slice potatoes and tie it in a rag and put it, and it helps your headache, things like that. Yeah. And ah, then I'll, of course, of course I have, I was vaccinated in Europe or, you know, for that. Not to get . . . what do you call (pause), but ah.

(long pause)

LEVINE: Did you um, have other dis-, did you have any diseases as a little girl? .! Any . . .

MATESIC: Ehh.

LEVINE: like measles and mumps. Those kinds of, chicken pox.

MATESIC: No, you know, I got mumps when I was on the farm, I was fifty years old.

LEVINE: Ohh.

MATESIC: No, I got whopping cough.

LEVINE: Whopping cough.

MATESIC: My sister brought her two kids over and I caught it, and I, I almost died. I had a beautiful voice to sing and I never could sing anymore because when I sing it shuts my, and when I went to the doctor, and I says, ah, "I don't want to stay here, I got whopping cough, there's kids in here." He says, "You're crazy. Lady at your age, whopping cough." So, when they took me to the hospital, came to him, "Who's crazy now." To (laughs).

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: I told him.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MATESIC: Yeah. I, I had a hang on the door, how I coughed so hard. It just was, I thought .
..

LEVINE: Well you mean, you would, you would hold on to the top of the door.

MATESIC: Yeah, because . . . ah, it would just, tear me to, you know just, so hard on me.

LEVINE: Oh my.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Hmm. Um. Did you, eh, become ah, American citizen at some point?

MATESIC: Yeah, I came American citizen, Roosevelt was my first guy, eh. That's why I loved him.

LEVINE: Why did you like him so much? Do you think?

MATESIC: Because I think he was for the poor people.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: Like he gave us social security, and look what they're doing now to it. They're given it to everybody. Yeah. And that was meant, just for that one purpose and they're given it to everybody.

LEVINE: So, w-what, do you remember, did you, did you have to go to night school? Or how did you, you'd have to take a little test?

MATESIC: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: Eh, how, t-tell me about that.

MATESIC: Oh, when I went to the, he said ah, he asked me, "Do you want to change your name?" I says, "No, why should I change my name, I'm proud of my name." He says, the man, he says, "Anybody that's not shame . . . of their name, that makes em good American citizen."

LEVINE: Aww.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And of course your name was Li-Lip-o-shak.

MATESIC: Liposhak.

LEVINE: Liposhak, then.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: So then how did you meet your husband?

MATESIC: Oh, he used, g-g, when we lived in West Virginia, he used to come. My mother used to make homemade brew. You know, bottled it, cause West Virginia was dry, and ten cents a bottle would be, and I'd say, y-you know, cause, eh they used to call shows, "Nickelodeon". I said, "Give me a nickel." And my mother never wanted us to be, you know, give me a nickel for ah, Nickelodeon. He says, here's a little gift, he says, "I'm gonna marry you one." I says, "Marry you." Because he was ten years older than me. (laughing)

LEVINE: Now how did you s-, m-meet him originally?

MATESIC: Wha-, I made him, come in, to my mother's place to drink all of his beer.

LEVINE: Oh. (laughing) I see.

MATESIC: (laughing)

LEVINE: So you're mother made the brew? She made beer?

MATESIC: Um, huh. Um, huh.

LEVINE: And, and, did she make hard liquor too?

MATESIC: Pardon?

LEVINE: Did she make hard liquor? Or just beer?

MATESIC: No, no, just beer.

LEVINE: Just beer.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then she would sell it? Would she . .

MATESIC: Ah, huh.

LEVINE: And, and, how would she sell it? Would people come to her or she would go . . .

MATESIC: No, no, no. They'd come to the house and.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Ah, huh. So he came to the house to, to buy your beer.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: And you were there.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: To b-.

MATESIC: So he came to Youngstown, and by golly, I did marry him. Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. So he had . . .

MATESIC: My mother always said, “Oh, he’s rich in old country, he’s got”, you know, he used to have, lotta, cattle, then he’d lend em, like oh, they’d work their farms with oxen, you know. And he would loan em to people that don’t have ox to work their farm.

LEVINE: Ohh.

MATESIC: That’s how they knew.

LEVINE: They would come and lease them . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: so they would pay him . . .

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: so they could use his oxen.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh, huh. I see.

MATESIC: So he was supposed to be . . .

LEVINE: So he was from the same area . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: that you were from.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how old were you when he said, "I'm going to marry you?" Wha-, were you
..

MATESIC: I was only about twelve years old.

LEVINE: Ah, huh. Ah, huh.

MATESIC: I don't know.

LEVINE: So, ok. So let's just say now, you were in, when you, by the time you got to
Johnstown, you moved around a little bit. Now where did you go from
Johnstown?

(long pause)

MATESIC: Well from Johnstown we went back to, then West Virginia, from where I came.

LEVINE: Ok.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you stay there?

MATESIC: Then we stayed there a while, then we moved to Youngs-, I was twelve when we moved to Youngstown, Ohio.

LEVINE: Ah, huh. And what was the reason the family moved to Youngstown?

MATESIC: Like I said, the shop stopped again, you know.

LEVINE: Was it because there was a cave in or eh?

MATESIC: I, eh, I don't know why but . . . I know that . . .

LEVINE: There was no work.

MATESIC: There's no work.

LEVINE: And what was in Youngstown, that drew your father to, to go there?

MATESIC: Well, then my father got in a, steel mill, and we stayed there. And he died there.

LEVINE: I see. He died when he was working in the steel mill, but he died of black lung disease . . .

MATESIC: Yeah, he had that.

LEVINE: from the coal mines.

MATESIC: And then smoke, and fire bothers. His hands were all coppery, like from you know. . . .

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: Smoking and.

LEVINE: Um, huh. So how long did you stay in school? How, how far or long did you . . .

MATESIC: Ehh, I didn't go to school very long cause I was taking care of the kids.

LEVINE: Kids. Um, huh.

MATESIC: I, I learned how to read more as I, grew . . .

LEVINE: As an adult.

MATESIC: As an adult.

LEVINE: Older.

MATESIC: like my, ehh, the man that owned the house that we lived in. He says, "You worldly wise."

LEVINE: Um, huh. Um, huh.

MATESIC: He says, "You don't have to go to school." (laughing)

LEVINE: Ah, huh. Ah, huh. So . . .

MATESIC: Lincoln didn't go to school much, but he became a president. (laughing)

LEVINE: That's true. That's true.

MATESIC: And he was a darn good president.

LEVINE: Ah, huh. Did you have other heroes in your life? Like you mentioned Roosevelt and Lincoln. I mean, were there other people that you knew about or maybe people you actually knew, personally, that you looked up to, that you thought, were, were worthy of . . . of your admiration?

MATESIC: Ohh.

(long pause)

LEVINE: Any people you can think of, that you looked up to.

MATESIC: Hm. Hm. No I used to, ehh, I used to like Theda Bara, the, she was a siren, in my days, you know.

LEVINE: You like to what? Say again.

MATESIC: She was a, Theda Bara.

LEVINE: Oh.

MATESIC: She was a, actress.

LEVINE: Oh, Theda Bara.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: What, what, what do you remember about her that you liked?

MATESIC: Oh, because she was so . . . s-, chic and . . .

LEVINE: Sophisticated, was she.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: And ah, my sister's all got fat and I was thin and they would say, "Oh you Theda Bara." (laughing)

LEVINE: Ohh.

MATESIC: (laughing) They'd call me.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: And I used to, ah, I had my bedroom and I'd, order from Sears & Roebuck, order a rug and I would have, fancy curtains, and my father said, why don't you, make our room like that. I says, "You've got money, make your own." (laughing) He never, you know, they used to come over in our house and they would gamble, you know, the . . .

LEVINE: Your father's friends.

MATESIC: My father's friends. Then I would put a thing in ah, you have to call it peek saw [sic]. You have to put money every time, they'd put money in there. And I'd sit there and I'd . . .

LEVINE: You'd play with them?

MATESIC: No, I would take the money, every time they would (laughing)

LEVINE: (laughing)

MATESIC: That's how I got my money.

LEVINE: That's how you got your rug and your, your curtains. (laughing)

MATESIC: (laughing) Oh dear. And this one guy, one time he said, eh, then one time gypsies moved, you know, th-there's a flat and if it's empty, and here gypsies moved in the front. And we was there neighbors, see. They, she, this lady came, brought a great big fish and she would put rice in it, and she would bake it, because they didn't have no oven they just had one of those grate. And um, (clears throat) so she would give me some, and I, she'd say, "You want some of that?" My mother would say, "She didn't even wash her hands." I said, "But it's, baked out." (laughing)

LEVINE: (laughing)

MATESIC: I always had an answer. (laughing)

LEVINE: Well now, what, what did you and your family think of gypsies?

MATESIC: Well, we didn't, we didn't know (?),but you gotta do.

LEVINE: Where did they come from?

MATESIC: I don't know, they, they just, and this one girl, she was about my age, she was a blond, and ah. I was well, you know, everybody was my aunt. I respect all

people. They like me. Everybody was my godmother, you know, I respected older people all the time. And, I always got treated.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: And this girl said, "Oh," she says, "Everybody likes you." I says, "Well, I call everybody, I like that I call them either my aunt or you know, respect my elders." And ah, (clears throat), so she said, eh, to me, "Aren't you ashamed, ah, going with me, you know, the way she's dressed." I says, "Why." I said, "You're blond. If I put your clothes on, I'd look more like a gypsy (laughing) then you." And she laughed about it. (laughing)

LEVINE: Now did these gypsies come from Europe?

MATESIC: I don't know where they come from but I know they moved from town to town.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MATESIC: Yeah. And ah, they even had a wedding there, beautiful wedding. People . . .

LEVINE: What was that like?

MATESIC: Oh, god. They was dressed beautiful wedding.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Oh, God, there was wagons all over, you know.

LEVINE: Wow.

MATESIC: Yeah, they, they're rich, you know.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: But eh, then we had this boarder, I was kind a sweet on him myself, and he had this girl, I told her that he was a gypsy. I was a darnest.

LEVINE: (laughes)

MATESIC: Conniver, you know. (laughing) You know she took to him, you know and (laughing), and he, he would show all kind a tricks, you know in cards he, and then he made a little, he called it his junglo, like a little puppet. He, he was a devil. He knew everything, and he'd, you know, make it work and she really thought he was a gypsy. We laughed about it. My mother said, "You're nuts."
(laughs)

LEVINE: Well now, when you're father had his friends over to play cards, um, did they ever talk about doing something about the conditions in the mines . . .

MATESIC: Oh yeah.

LEVINE: that were so bad.

MATESIC: Yeah, they organized. I know they organized a union and my father went to jail and says, "Not guilty (laughs)," you know. (laughs)

LEVINE: Oh. Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Yeah. Because after that, mine explosion they organized IWW, I won't work mean while it's ah, yeah, they organized a union.

LEVINE: And they actually got a union . . .

MATESIC: Yeah, um, huh.

LEVINE: together.

MATESIC: Um.

LEVINE: Did it, did, conditions get a little better

MATESIC: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: So your father was um, was involved in that.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Involved in that organizing.

MATESIC: Um, huh.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESTIC: Umm, yeah. Cause see he, he was educated, he went to . . .

LEVINE: Oh that's right and he was from a, eh, a more wealthy family . . .

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: that probably certain . . .

MATESIC: Yeah

LEVINE: ah, education.

MATESIC: Like, he went to guy and he said, "How you spell your name?" My father said, "What's your name?" And he told him, and my father wrote it down, he says, "That's how you spell it. Just write it down." (laughing)

LEVINE: Ok, well we're gonna pause here. I'm putting in another tape. Um.

TAPE 2

LEVINE: Ok, this is tape two we're starting and I'm st-, talking with Sophia Matesic, and we were just, you just gonna say, but you remembered when you went to the prison, when you were about ten years old.

MATESIC: Umm. Yeah.

LEVINE: Why don't you tell about that.

MATESIC: Well, we just ah, you know, they took us from place to place, show us, show us things. They even showed us the, electric chair.

LEVINE: Who was they? Who, who showed you this?

MATESIC: Eh, people that took us. I don't know, some, I don't know, there was like, not only us, everybody else was going that, was time to go, who wanted to go to see the jail, you know the.

LEVINE: Would it be with a school kids, you mean? You went or . . .

MATESIC: Ehh, I don't remember with who it was but. . .

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: I know our parents went with us too. You know, and ah, my sister was the one, she was asking, "Why do you have to sit in that chair?" (laughing) Because you was bad. (laughing) Yeah, but there wasn't so much murders and stuff like now. God, we kept our doors open all the time.

LEVINE: How about your mother and father? Did they try to, did they try to teach your certain kinds of things, ehh, I mean, how, what did they try to instill in you about being a good person or . . .

MATESIC: Oh, they'd always say, ah, "Always respect another person, just like you'd want them to respect you." "Don't hate anybody."

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were there things that they taught you that you passed along to your own children.

MATESIC: Ehh. (laughs)

LEVINE: Were you, do you think you were, do you think as a mother, you were like your own mother or do you think you were different from her?

MATESIC: No. I'm old fashioned, I'm like my mother.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: I didn't change a bit. I'm, they call me a hunky mother. (laughing)

LEVINE: A hunky mother? What's that mean?

MATESIC: I don't know. (laughing)

LEVINE: (laughing) Well, well, um, what do you feel very satisfied about that you did in your lifetime? Or proud of?

MATESIC: Well, I'll tell you, I don't, I don't want, like I said I don't want to go back to my childhood because I don't think I had a childhood, like I said, I had a take care of those kids. I didn't go out on dates. Yeah. But I was a flower girl, all the time in weddings and I always made the most . . . money, then I did that dinner, used to pin flowers on the guests as they come in, and I used to get money, then I'd give it to the bride. And I'd, I would make most money because people would, want me to give em a flower. And, then they would s-, I had beautiful hair, my hair was so. . .

LEVINE: It's beautiful now.

MATESIC: I-I, and ah, the players would always sing about my hair, you know, how beautiful it is. And ah, (clears throat) the other girls would get jealous because ah, they always wanted me to be on the stage.

LEVINE: Now was there something different about a Croatian wedding, then there is about, you know, any other kind of wedding you might see?

MATESIC: Well, that was an . . . old fashioned wedding, you know. Everybody was, everybody took pictures, you know, whoever wanted to be on a picture now, they pick certain guys . . . you know.

LEVINE: It wasn't they got, hired a photographer, it was just that everybody brought their own cameras and took pictures.

MATESIC: No. They had a photographer.

LEVINE: Oh, they did.

MATESIC: Yeah, but I mean whoever wanted to go, and everybody got a picture. I don't know, nowadays you have to pray to get a picture. I don't know.

LEVINE: Hmm. Ok, well . . .

MATESIC: Yeah. People, orchestra used to come, sing around Christmas, from house to house you know, under your window.

LEVINE: Ohh.

MATESIC: I was nice. Serenade ya.

LEVINE: Was this from the church or?

MATESIC: No, just regular, you know.

LEVINE: Just the social events of Croatians.

MATESIC: People would get to-, make an orchestra, you know or like music. Then they would, then play dances and weddings and like I said, go house to house. They even did that here while I was in mass, one year when I lived on the south.

LEVINE: Oh. Ah, huh.

MATESIC: They'd come and . . .

LEVINE: Now how many children did you have?

MATESIC: Well, I had ah, I got, I had three children and I miscarried one.

LEVINE: Ah, huh.

MATESIC: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what are your children's names?

MATESIC: Well, the oldest one is Josephine, Francis, and Victor.

LEVINE: Is Francis a girl or a boy?

MATESIC: Yeah, girl.

LEVINE: Girl. Ah, huh.

MATESIC: She lives in western Ohio. Yeah.

LEVINE: Ok. Um, do you think, do you think, ah, being an immigrant, even though you were only three years old, do you think that made a difference to you? Do you think like, coming, and being part of an immigrant community and, do you think

that had something to do with the kind of person you became? The fact that you came here and a lot of other people that you knew came and were Croatians here in America.

MATESIC: Um, huh. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you think that somehow made a difference in the kind of person you, you were and are?

MATESIC: Well, I don't know, I was well liked. I, with neighbors and, you know, we always got along beautifully.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: So I don't know. I . . . like I said, I was a good friend, if you was honest and true, but if you tried to pull a fast one on me, run away from me (laughs).

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: I was different, you know. I didn't want, no shenanigans, going around.

LEVINE: Did you want to become American or did you want to hold on to the Croatian ah, customs and ways?

MATESIC: Oh no, I want to be American. I-I love my country, you know. But I'm, but I, I'm not ashamed of being a Croatian. I don't care. Why should I be. I came from there. Yeah. So.

LEVINE: Ok, is there anything else you can think of that deals with coming to this country? How about this time in your life? What is this time in your life, like, for you? When your ninety-three years old, you look wonderful . . .

MATESIC: Well, I don't know. I had lotta happiness and lotta sadness, too, you know. Yeah. L-like I always said, I said, "I hope that I die first." I said, then I said, "You make a big wheel, then one spoke will be left, you know, out." And here, my sister next to me died first. My brother died first, no he died first, then my sister died. And then, the other one died, two or three years later, then these other ones died, real close together, in, in two years I lost four of em, I, and that was a hard.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: You know, when I say my prays at night, and I cry, I can't understand. Like my sister Mary, that's the one, the third one, she said, "Sell your house and move with me. When you want to move." I said, "Mary, what if you die first." And I said, "They're gonna throw me out and I won't have no place to go, no furniture, no nothing." That's just what happened.

LEVINE: Wow.

MATESIC: That's just what happened. And you know, when she was in the hospital, and I couldn't go see her because I don't drive and my daughter didn't like to drive over there, and ah, I talked to her on the telephone and I was crying, she said, "Don't cry you damn fool." She says, (laughs) "Come to see me and stay with me three months." Next, couple days she died. You know that was a . . .

LEVINE: Hard, hard to take.

MATESISC: That was very hard.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

MATESIC: I can . . . I can, awful.

LEVINE: Um, huh. Well is there anything else, before we, close, eh, about coming to this country, being in this country or anything else you can think of maybe we didn't talk about?

MATESIC: Well, no, well it was nice, we used to have, when we was younger, we all had, always got together. Fourth of July, at my sister Katie's house because we lived, she lived in Youngstown, ok, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Mother's Day, ah, every, and in between, and Italian family lived next door and they'd cry because there was, they think it's a wedding you know because everybody had kids, you know, and everybody, we roasted the lamb.

LEVINE: Would these be mostly Croatian people or would other people come?

MATESIC: Well we was, no, me and my younger sister the only one that married a Croatian. They was all, we only didn't have a Greek in our, we have every other, even a racketeer. (laughing)

LEVINE: Oh. (laughing)

MATESIC: But ah, . . . we had such a wonderful time, you know.

LEVINE: So you stayed close to your family.

MATESIC: Yeah, and I, I says, I says, "Katie when you die, this is going to die with you." And my sister Mary's daughter, "Oh no, I'm gonna take over." And you know, one time she had, she quit. She didn't do a thing. My poor Annie did it. We have to put, put the lamb on the rod, you know, and then you have to, of course they had a spicket turns electric, but you have to put stuff on it all the time, you know, to keep it (clears throat). And ah, that was dead, that was the end. And then when they hired somebody, they paid him hundred dollars, and my poor

sister Annie did it all them years for nothing. That's what burned me up. Then this man puts deer on it, I said, "Who in the devil, puts deer on the lamb?" You know, he try and make it like a drunk. Oh Lord, so, you know, it was nice, we always got together.

LEVINE: Um, huh. Hmmm.

MATESIC: And then th-that all died.

LEVINE: Yeah. Ok. I'm sorry, go ahead.

MATESIC: Nothing, I-I just said now these younger generations they don't care to get together, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, it's different.

MATESIC: They, they like this loud music . . .yeah. Then they say, oh you're, what in the world am I? Great grand children call me. "You're gross." I say, "What is gross? What in the devil is that. Explain it to me." "You're gross." I say, "Why don't you love that beautiful music, in the morning, they sing?" And I say, "You guys dance, you just don't like you're a zombie." I said, "There's beautiful waltzes" and oh, I used to love to dance.

LEVINE: Ok, well let's close here and then maybe, you can find some of the music so you can sing us a song?

MATESIC: Well I'll go downstairs, I'll go down.

LEVINE: Ok, wait. Let me ah, unhook you, let me just say that we're, we're closing this part of the interview and um, I've been speaking with Sophia Matesic and she

came at three years old in 1907 from Austria-Hungary and this is Janet Levine and now we're going to see if Sophie can get some music and sing a little Croatian.

MATESIC: Sjećaš se Anđelina, ako li Boga zna. Sjećaš se naših stana i prvi danova. U prvi . . . u prvi (?) znaš. Jasi ti tužan (?) nosio pozdrav moj. Tamo na Balkani kraj mora, tamo je Anđelina. I can't sing it. Tamo je lađica obala . . . obala polok jadrana. Ona je moj sjedila i moja draga jedina. Proletna bila noć i zora misli da će doć. Pokraj-, Pokrenit krasan čas. Goreći vitak njezin staš. More je duboko nebo je visoko. A bleđi mjesec sja, take je ljubija.

LEVINE: Wow. Maybe you could just say a few words, that's beautiful, about what part these songs played . . .

MATESIC: Oh this is beautiful. If I . . .

LEVINE: in your family, with your father and mother, and then with your husband.

MATESIC: Oh, this was just ah, later on, this song was and I loved it because it was, my name was in it. It's beautiful, but I can't sing it.

LEVINE: Ah . .

MATESIC: Ehh, you know, I-I, not long ago, couple years ago our organization (clears throat), gave a . . . great big dinner, in one of those great big places in (?) and it was beautiful, and players, I ask the musicians to play and they didn't have the words, so I went up there and I was singing em to em and I could still sing them, and I was so, I cried because they all stood up and clapped for me. But I can't, it's just eh. I'm all . .

LEVINE: It's difficult for you to sing now.

MATESIC: Yeah, but this is beautiful.

LEVINE: And this is one that your husband used to.

MATESIC: Yeah, almost every time we went to dance he always went to the, gave em five dollars so they'd play this song for me.

LEVINE: Aww, and then would you dance with, to it? Do you dance to this song?

MATESIC: Oh yeah you could dance, waltz to it.

LEVINE: Ah, ha. Well you want to sing one little verse?

MATESIC: (Humming the song)

LEVINE: And what does this song say? I mean what is the song, eh, what's the sort of story of the song?

MATESIC: It's, it's . . . the girl was . . . she was sitt-, she was on a balcony. And, s-she'd be singing this, she'd be singing this song.

LEVINE: Um, huh.

MATESIC: And ah, then she was meeting her lover, in under, the night was beautiful and the moon was bright, you know. But ah, when it was time to, to part, then the moon was sad, because he has to say goodbye, you know.

LEVINE: Hmmm.

MATESIC: And uh . . . then he says ah, on the balcan by the sea, that's where my Angelina is.

LEVINE: Awww.

MATESIC: It's a, it's a real pretty words and pretty song, but I can not. . .

LEVINE: Well you did well and I'm very happy, thank you. We'll have that on the tape now. Ok.

MATESIC: It's a laughing matter. (laughing) But I'm ninety-three years old, so.

LEVINE: (laughing) You don't have to make excuses, no excuses necessary. Thank you very much, Sophia. . . .

MATESIC: Ok. I'm, I'm glad.

LEVINE: Matesic and uh, this is Janet Levine signing off.

MATESIC: I'm glad.