

EI-958/LUSKO

EI-958
JOHN S. LUSKO
BIRTH DATE: JANUARY 2, 1918
INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 29, 1997
RUNNING TIME: 55:49
INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.
RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED AND REVIEWED BY: PAUL SIGRIST, JR., 11/1998

POLAND (BORN U.S.), 1926
AGE 8
SHIP NAME NOT RECORDED

SIGRIST: Good morning, this is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Monday, September 29, 1997. I'm in Bayonne, New Jersey, with Mr. John Lusko. Mr. Lusko was born in the United States, went back to Poland with his mother and they returned in March of 1926 to the United States at which time Mr. Lusko was detained for two weeks at Ellis Island with the measles. Present also in the room in Henry Baywick [ph], who is the next door neighbor, an old friend of Mr. Lusko's. And we may hear traffic because we are near a street. Mr. Lusko, can we begin by you giving me your birth date?

LUSKO: January 2, 1918.

SIGRIST: And where in the United States were you born?

LUSKO: Bayonne.

SIGRIST: Bayonne. You were born right here in Bayonne.

LUSKO: Right.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about the day you were born? Did anyone ever tell you a story about the day that you were born, your mother or...?

(skip ahead approximately thirty five minutes into the interview)

SIGRIST: And then what happened? When the ship came into New York Harbor, what happened?

LUSKO: Well, I think they put us on a ferry to go to Ellis Island. And, as you know, they had a big, big room there with everybody sitting down. And, fortunate for us, my mother didn't have stay long because she was an American citizen but I had to stay behind.

SIGRIST: She had become a citizen when she was here?

LUSKO: No, well, she was married to my father.

SIGRIST: Who had become a citizen earlier on.

LUSKO: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me, tell me what you remember about them looking you over and deciding that you had to stay at Ellis Island.

LUSKO: Yeah, well, we were going to the doctor and he put me on the side. So my mother grabbed me back and she put a towel over my head so they wouldn't see the blotches. But we didn't go very far. (he laughs) They pulled me right back into the hospital.

SIGRIST: Where do you think you got the measles?

LUSKO: I don't know if I got the aboard ship or where I got them but I know I had them.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anybody on the ship having measles?

LUSKO: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what you remember about being at Ellis Island. You're eight years old. This is March of 1926. You were there for two weeks. What are the things that made the biggest impressions?

LUSKO: Well, I think I was in the, (accidently hitting his microphone) there I go again, isolated, we were in an isolated ward. There was one guy with me. He must have been maybe nineteen or twenty and he, I don't know what his ailment was. But anyways, he wanted to teach me English but he, he spoke Polish. And I remember when the nurse brought over the banana and I didn't know you had to peel it. (he laughs) So about half way through the guy says, "No, no. You got to peel it." Geez, you know, he come over to peel it for me.

SIGRIST: This is the other patient?

LUSKO: Right, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how he went about trying to teach you English?

LUSKO: Well, no, not exactly but he said words up there. He says (Polish), means "how do you do?" (Polish) means "what's your name?" you know,

and that stuff. But it didn't do too much good because I had, but it don't take you long for a kid to go to school and learn English.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, when you were held at Ellis Island, do you remember how you felt? How, how, you know, how did this make you feel to be taken away from your parents, or your mothers, and...

LUSKO: Well, well, bad but in there was the first time I slept on a mattress and a sheet. I know that. And there was only two of us in the room. And I don't remember too much after that because most of time I was in the room, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, do you remember any kind of examination or the doctors looking at you in any way?

LUSKO: Yeah, well, they come around, look at you. If you were laying in bed they looked you over and all that stuff. The nurse was there all the time. The treatment was good. I can't complain.

SIGRIST: Were you allowed to have any visitors?

LUSKO: Well, I had nobody there to visit me.

SIGRIST: Well, didn't, but I mean, could, could your mother have come and visited you somehow?

LUSKO: Oh, I don't know. I couldn't tell you that because she never, she never came down.

SIGRIST: And you said they were released from Ellis Island? They didn't

EI-958/LUSKO

stay there while you were there?

LUSKO: No, no. They were released, released right away.

SIGRIST: Did you see your father before you were put in the hospital at Ellis Island?

LUSKO: No, no.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, when you were at Ellis Island, do you remember receiving a toy or something like that?

LUSKO: No, no, nothing.

SIGRIST: What about food?

LUSKO: Food was good, food was good.

SIGRIST: Anything stick out in your mind?

LUSKO: No, no, outside of the banana.

SIGRIST: You said you were in one room. There was just you and this...

LUSKO: Two of us.

SIGRIST: ...and this older gentleman.

LUSKO: Right, yeah.

EI-958/LUSKO

SIGRIST: And, uh, I was going to ask you, oh, did they supply any kind of, did anyone come into the room to entertain you?

LUSKO: No, no, no. You were just there. They just go around. They bring the food and that's it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how they treated the measles? What kind of medicine you were given or anything like that?

LUSKO: No, no medicine. No, no medicine. Well, you don't need no medicine for the measles.

SIGRIST: They just need to run their course, I guess.

LUSKO: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, tell me what you remember about being released from Ellis Island. Who came to get you?

LUSKO: My mother came to get me. I remember the ferry boat ride and then I think we were, take a bus? I think we took a bus from New York. Then we, they had a ferry at that time, you know, from the, from New York? And then we went on a train and we got off, I think it was on 21st Street...

SIGRIST: Here in Bayonne [NJ]?

LUSKO: Yeah, and then we walked over the five blocks to where they lived on 16th Street.

(end of transcript, approximately ten minutes left until end of interview)