

KECK-103
RUTH (RICI) RUBIN METZGER
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RUSSIA, 1922
AGE 13
SHIP RECALLED AS "THE STARLINE"; PROBABLE PASSAGE ON A RED STAR OR WHITE STAR

LINE SHIP

DANE: This is Debby Dane, and I'm speaking with Ruth Metzger on Tuesday, December 17, 1985. We're beginning the interview at 2:20. We are about to interview Mrs. Ruth Metzger about her immigration experience from Russia in 1922. She was thirteen years old, and she's Interview Number 1033. Mrs. Metzger, would you tell me the name off the town that you were born in and describe it a little bit.

METZGER: Well, I, I was born in Russia in a village. It's a small, small village. And my father was a, uh, a keeper of a mill and where they catch fish, so he had many people working for him. And, uh, I had two brothers at that time. All my sisters were in the United States. So we lived there until, uh, the Bund, that's the Bund, came and killed my father. We moved to a small city, Rishan, and that's where we migrated from. We migrated from (?) to Ravena, Poland. And when we came to Poland our quota was closed. So they wanted to send my mother and my sister across. I had one sister, she was-- So they wanted to send them back, but I went to Warsaw and got visas for them at thirteen. And so we were staying in Ravena one year, and hen we went to Warsaw and to Germany. And we came to Antwerp, where we took the ship to the United States.

DANE: Okay. I'm going to ask you a bunch of questions about all of that. Um, when you were living in your small village when your father was still alive, were you going to school there also? Were you--

METZGER: No, we had private teachers. We had private teachers.

DANE: And I might have asked you this on the phone. Um, some people I talked to said the girls didn't get an education.

METZGER: No, they couldn't get an education in Russia. We had private tutors.

DANE: Uh-huh. But even as Jewish people, they said the boys got the training. Did you get training also?

METZGER: Yes, I did. Yes, I did get training. I went to school until I was twelve years old, just a year before we migrated. Sure. In Hebrew and in Russian.

DANE: In Russian also.

METZGER: Of course.

DANE: And were there peasants in your village?

METZGER: Our village was all peasants. We were just about four families, Jewish people. Yeah.

DANE: What kind of livelihood did, did everyone else-- Were the

peasants farmers, and--

METZGER: They were farmers. Most of them were farmers. And my father, uh, rented the mill from the higher ups that were Polish people, and so, he employed people and all that. We made flour for bread, and all the peasants used to come to the mill and, uh, for flour, you know, we call it the mill, for flour. And then he used to catch fish around the year and they sent it to Warsaw and to, and to Germany and all that. So that's how we made a living.

DANE: Hmm. Did your mom work also in the store?

METZGER: No. No, she was a housekeeper. No, my father, with a partner. He had a partner.

DANE: Your sisters, were they much older than you?

METZGER: Yes.

DANE: How did it come that they--

METZGER: They came in 1912. They came here to get an education and the war came, so they couldn't come back. There were three sisters here, and one sister was with us, a married sister with two children. That was Mrs. Davis and, her brother, Herman Davis.

DANE: Hmm. Did you get letters from them before the war? Do you remember ever having--

METZGER: Before the war we got letters, but during the war we didn't get any

letters. They sent money for us to come to the United States. That's how we came.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did you have a picture of what it was like in America? Would they describe how life was different here?

METZGER: No, no, we didn't have any picture at all. They just thought that it was freedom here and there was no use of living in Russia because they were killing people all the time, and all that sort of thing. Every day there was somebody else. One day there was Germans, one day there were Russians. There was Russian and all these kind of people, so. So we were afraid to stay there, and we had to leave.

DANE: The (?), I can't pronounce it very well, um--

METZGER: They were a Bund. And that's all. They just used to come and ring around the city and just demand so many things. And if they didn't, they didn't get their demands, so they just killed, that all. They just come into the house and kill anybody.

DANE: And as a child would you hide, did you have a special place where you would go?

METZGER: Sure. Yes. We went to the woods. They used to, we had a lookout, so they, as they rang the bell, the way you stayed, that's how you ran to the woods, and all that. And Mrs. (?) was about eighty years old, and she lost her shoe, and the heavy, we had heavy, you know, just when it rains, you know. So it was very hard. So she carried on, and a man came, and he said, "If you don't stop her crying we'll kill her." So we had to live through all that. Yeah. We lived through a lot.

DANE: And often, would they, would they come through often?

METZGER: Different, different Bunds used to be coming often, yeah. That was in 1917, when the czar was thrown, and then there was free for everyone, and that's, that's what they did. And every day we had somebody else.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And the Germans, did the Germans ever come during the war, in that time?

METZGER: Germans, Germans did not come through, no.

DANE: When it was time to leave your village, oh, I know, before, I leave the Revolution, do you remember the, hearing the news that the czar had been killed and that the Bolsheviks had won, and they were the ones who--

METZGER: Yes, of course we were. We were paraded in the, in a parade, that, that was freedom, that the czar was killed. We were very happy because during his time, during the czar time, used to Cossacks that used to go through and kill people and just murder them and all that. So, uh, uh, when, when the Revolution came we thought it would be very fine, bit it was miserable. It was just miserable to live through.

DANE: Even with the Bolsheviks it didn't improve?

METZGER: Because the Bolsheviks too change every day. One day they were, there was Trotsky, and one day there was Lenin, and then it also was changes and all that. But we left Russia, we really left in 1920, but we were on the way to the United States two years. So we got here just before Christmas of 1922.

DANE: Hmm. When you left your town, and you knew you weren't coming back, can you describe what that felt like? Were you--

METZGER: We just wanted to run away. It didn't matter. We just wanted to run because there was nothing to live for or anything like that.

DANE: Did you bring many things with you?

METZGER: We couldn't take a thing with us. We took, mother had gold with her, so we were held up on the way to Ravenna, to Poland, and they took everything away. Just as we were. That's how I came to the United States, in one dress.

DANE: No other--

METZGER: No other things. No belongings or anything.

DANE: Hmm. Some people have told me that, things that their grandparents had told them, was that it was a tradition when you left your home to leave a key over the doorstep. Did you ever hear of that?

METZGER: No, we didn't. No, I didn't hear.

DANE: And you left in the winter, I believe.

METZGER: Yes. We, we were eight days in the woods and we lived on snow and water. We couldn't get to another village because we were afraid, so we stayed in the woods until things passed and then we went on.

DANE: Were you on foot, or in a wagon?

METZGER: On a wagon. Uh-huh.

DANE: And would you travel during the night, or during the day?

METZGER: During the night, and during the day we stayed in the woods.

DANE: And at this point had you gotten your visas and tickets?

METZGER: No, we didn't. When we came to Ravenna we applied for it, and our sisters sent us the visas and all of that. And there was a man that was in charge, there were quite a few people traveling, so was in charge, that he came from the United States, and he gave us the visas and all that.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did they give you medical exams in Europe?

METZGER: Of course.

DANE: Do you remember?

METZGER: Sure, I remember.

DANE: Can you describe what it--

METZGER: Yes. I, uh, was in, when we came to Warsaw, so they had doctors examine our eyes and all that. And, uh, they, I guess it was a racket that they, that they find that the, your hair wasn't right, so they took the hair off with something like that, I don't know what kind of technique, and all that. And then the hair grew back. But they didn't have t, because my mother kept us very clean. But they, just it was a racket, that

was the thing. Took advantage of the immigrants. And in Poland they took advantage of the immigrants. When they know that we didn't talk Polish, we talked Russian and, of course, they could recognize the immigrants, so if bread was half a dollar it came up to a dollar because they knew that we got United States money, so they took advantage of that too. We had a very hard trip.

DANE: How long were you in Ravenna?

METZGER: One year.

DANE: One year. And what did you do there? Where did you stay?

METZGER: Nothing. We stayed in a home, in a private home.

DANE: Were they friends? How did you make contact?

METZGER: They were not friends. People just put up people at that time. They just rented the, uh, facilities to us.

DANE: Did you try and get work, even as a temporary?

METZGER: No, no. Couldn't get work, no.

DANE: And just waited.

METZGER: And just waited. We just waited when our, and when our next came, it was that the, our, uh, our visas were no good, that it was already, that the Polish border was closed and the Russian border was closed, and we couldn't get, so we had to wait again. And that's when I went to Warsaw and got visas for them so my mother and sister

could come back. So we lived all that through.

DANE: And then from Warsaw--

METZGER: We went to, to Germany, to Berlin. And in Berlin we just
were not very long because we went to Antwerp for about a week in,
in Germany.

DANE: Did you have your boat tickets by then, at this point?

METZGER: Yes, of course.

DANE: Were they helping, the steamship companies helping you,
in these cities, get to the next place?

METZGER: No, we just, to the next place, yes, yes. We were put on
trains, and we went to the next place.

DANE: Uh-huh. Had you heard of HIAS?

METZGER: Sure. The HIAS met us in Ellis Island.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And then when you came to Antwerp, was
the boat--

METZGER: The boat was waiting for us, yes.

DANE: Do you remember the name of the boat?

METZGER: It was the, uh, Starline.

DANE: Uh-huh. Your impression when you saw this big boat, I mean, had you ever seen anything like that?

METZGER: No, we hadn't seen anything like it, and we thought that it was taking us to freedom, and we were just very jolly till we got sick on the boat. Mother was very sick, and I was sick. But my brother wasn't sick. My brother was about seventeen years old, I was thirteen years old. And so he wasn't sick. My mother was, and myself. And then, when we came and when we saw the Statue of Liberty we all fell on the floor. It was such a, it was such a good feeling that we are in the United States. And then we went to Ellis Island, you know. But Ellis Island was not so nice. We were like prisoners. We were all put tags on, the names. And we were all driven every morning to breakfast and to, and to lunch, and to dinner. And it was a dismal place. It was rat infested and it was just terrible. It, it just, I wrote a piece, when I went to Northwestern, about, uh, Ellis Island, and it won first prize. It was just the most miserable place. So our quotas was closed, so we had to have a trial. So I had a very rich cousin in Cincinnati, and he came and put up a bond. It was a regular, there was a regular, uh, jury and trial that, uh, that he posted the bond, that we will not fall on charity. And I have a cousin that was in the Army, so he came to the, to the, uh, rescue also. And then they allowed us to go through, and we went to Detroit, Michigan. That's where we came, to Detroit.

DANE: Now, how did it, did they single you and your family out on Ellis Island?

METZGER: There were quite a few families that the quota, the Russian quota was closed and the Polish quota was closed. So there were quite a few Poles where we traveled in steerage. And I used to look up on the first and second class and they were all so jolly and so nice and we were just in steerage. It was, couldn't look out our

window, either. No, it was a hard trip. And we were thirty days on a boat.

DANE: Thirty days.

METZGER: Yes.

DANE: Storms?

METZGER: Storms, yes.

DANE: That's a lot longer than-- Most of them traveled for about two weeks. That's a very long time.

METZGER: Yes, right. It was two weeks, or three weeks, but we were thirty days on the, on the water.

DANE: Can you describe what it looked like down in the, in the hold of the boat?

METZGER: Inside?

DANE: Yeah.

METZGER: Well, there were people all over and we were very crowded. And it was not nice at all. And we were just treated like prisoners. I can't forgive them. I thought that was wrong of the United States, because when the immigrants saw, as I told you, the Statue, we all fell to the floor, and we kissed the floor that we are here in the United States. And then to take you into such a dismal place. And that was third class, you know. And so it was, it was just hell on earth. I can't forgive them, and I'm glad

they don't have it again, and they shouldn't have it. And I, if I was, if I was able to I would write to anybody that they shouldn't give them credit for a thing. It was the most appalling place to the immigrants. And we stayed there about eight weeks. And my sister, with two children, that was Mrs. Case and Herman, was delayed because he had pneumonia. The boy had pneumonia.

DANE: Was he put in the hospital there?

METZGER: Yes. Yes.

DANE: Uh-huh. Had you ever heard of it at that point called the Island of Tears? Referred to--

METZGER: No, well, it's that they were crying every day because some were turned back, you know, because they couldn't get here.

DANE: And where did you sleep? Did the give you, because it changed so often, did they give you--

METZGER: We slept on cots that was nothing. There wasn't a pillow, there wasn't anything, just on cots. Because I say that a jail is much nicer. I saw a jail here in Chicago that is much nicer than Ellis Island was. I just, I wanted to forget that place.

DANE: And did they put you through medical exams again on Ellis Island?

METZGER: Yes, of course.

DANE: And do your eyes?

METZGER: Our eyes, mostly the eyes and the head and the nails. They looked on the nails, because if there is a fungus on the nails. So they, they detained people, a lot of them.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And what would you do every day for eight weeks? Did they, did they just make you sit on the bench in the Great Hall?

METZGER: Nothing, just walk around there and all that sort of thing. Very mistreated. The people that waited on you were mistreating people.

DANE: Can you think of examples of, um, what they said or how?

METZGER: Well, of course, they spoke English, so we didn't understand. That's another thing. The language was a barrier. They did not have interpreters. The only interpreters that had was during the trial. So that's the only thing.

DANE: Did you understand why you were being detained? Did they explain to you?

METZGER: Why, of course. Our quota was closed. That was it.

DANE: And did you think you were going to be sent back?

METZGER: Of course. We weren't, we weren't told that we would be sent back till our cousin came to Ellis Island and we stood on trial. So he won because he put up a very big bond that we would not fall on charity. Sure.

DANE: When you got the okay to leave, oh, I know, before, you had mentioned a number that they pinned on you.

METZGER: Yes.

DANE: Did they also, did you ever see them put chalk marks on people's back as the examination--

METZGER: No, I had not. No. They examined you practically every week that you were there, your eyes and your head and your nails. I said the nails on your feet, and the nails on the hands.

DANE: Continually. Were you allowed to walk around on the Island? Do you remember being able to go outside?

METZGER: Just, no, no. We were just inside. No, we were not allowed to go outside.

DANE: Your cousin came and took you to Detroit.

METZGER: Our cousin came and took us to New York, to his place. From there we went to Detroit, Michigan. Put us on a, on a train, and all that.

DANE: Once you got to Detroit, was, is that where your mother--

METZGER: That's where my sisters were. Uh-huh.

DANE: And did they have a house for you, an apartment? Did you find a place?

METZGER: No. They, my sister lived in a very small apartment. She was a single girl. So we moved in with her. And I had a brother in Detroit. That's who we came to. Dave Rubin. So, we came to him and we stayed with them about a week and then I had two sisters in Chicago, so we migrated to Chicago.

DANE: School, did you go to school right away?

METZGER: Yes. That's, they took me to, we lived on, uh, we lived on Christiana and 12th, above a meat market, when we came here. My sisters had an apartment with a stove heat, with a stove in the middle. So, uh, we lived there. And across the way there was the Lawson School, grammar school. I went to a foreign room. I was in the foreign room about, uh, six months. And then we moved to 1555 Turner, and there I went to Holland School., and from there I went to Herzal, a junior high. And from there we moved up North, so I went to Sanit High School, and from Saint I got a scholarship to Northwestern. I went to Northwestern, night school.

DANE: Educated woman.

METZGER: (She laughs.) Thank you.

DANE: That's unusual for that--

METZGER: Yes. I went through all the schools. My friends didn't go, that came with me. They went to factories to work, and millinery. Of course, they were older. They went to millinery schools, and all that. My brother went to night school. That's how he educated himself.

DANE: Did you learn English in school, or were there other, other ways that you--

METZGER: No, I just learned. There was the dean of the girl's high school that she stayed a half an hour later and she taught me English.

DANE: No kidding. So the teachers were--

METZGER: Very nice. The schools were very nice.

DANE: When you first came, I mean, Russia was a place that you had to leave for the value of your life, but did you miss anything about the old country?

METZGER: No. I just wanted to forget about it. I didn't even want to speak Russian. Anybody that spoke Russian to me, I says, "Don't speak Russian to me." We lost eighteen people of our family, uncles, cousins, my father. So I had a hatred for Russians. I can't forgive them for that, to take life just for nothing. No, I didn't want to have anything to do with-- My brother spoke Russian, and he was in Russian circle. So I wanted to speak English and I had, that I went to Lawson School, to grammar school. I had a little girl that lived across the way. She used to come in every, every day, and give me a lesson. She said, "I'll just speak to you and you answer." And that's how I learned English. Some people say that I don't have an accent, and some people say I have a New York accent. I guess that remains with you, because, when you come thirteen years old. No, I, I still speak Russian, but I don't want to speak. I don't care for it.

DANE: But you still remember.

METZGER: Oh, yeah. Sure. I remember everything.

DANE: And you said, when you came over, did you end up associating and moving in a gang of Russian people?

METZGER: No. No, I didn't associate with any Russians. I tried to associate with Americans.

DANE: When you came in the dress that you had, you obviously had to get new clothes. Were the clothes different over here?

METZGER: The clothes was just a skirt and a midi-blouse, and that's the way I went to high school. Some boy asked me to go to the, uh, prom. And I said, "I'm sorry I don't have a dress." So that's, with two midi-blouses. Wash one out, one or the other. And then my sister said, "You know, in America, everybody has to work. Thursday you have to make a general--" And I said, "Well, I don't wash windows." At that time (?)> But, uh, I took care, mother was, at fifty she was an old woman. See, they were old at that time, so I did the work in the house. Every Thursday we had a general cleaning. She says, "Everybody has to work." So they worked and provided for us, for our living. And I met my husband at Northwestern.

DANE: And was he American born?

METZGER: He was American born.

DANE: That must have been, I read a lot of people that wanted to marry an American born.

METZGER: No, I married him, he was, I married an American born. His mother was kind of against that I was a foreigner.

DANE: No kidding.

METZGER: Yeah.

DANE: Did you win her over?

METZGER: Yes. And I was the best daughter-in-law that she ever had.

DANE: That's great. What about songs? Did you ever bring, because when you said about a lot of the women went into millinery work and learned how to do that. There's one song that two women have sung about a young girl. It's in Yiddish. I don't know the exact translation. Did you bring any music, or--

METZGER: I, I did sing. I used to have a nice voice, but not any more. My brother had a nice voice, so we used to sing together. And we sang Yiddish songs, or Russian songs.

DANE: Citizenship. Did it occur to you at what point to become-

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METZGER: Very late I became a citizen. It just didn't seem to work out. I don't know, I was afraid to go to (?). I think I got my citizenship in 1957.

DANE: Oh. Did you have to take a test and--

METZGER: Sure. Yes.

DANE: And was that a proud day, or just like any other?

METZGER: It was a very nice day, because I thought that I can vote for a president, and that was a very big thing for me. And I could travel all over with the citizenship and all that. Yes, I was very proud. We were about a hundred and three people that became citizens that day, and they gave us a party, coffee and cake and all that, yeah. It was very nice.

DANE: Something else I remember asking you earlier, about your name. When you first--

METZGER: When I came, my sister brought me to school, to the grammar school, she says, "Our Russian name, our Jewish name is Rici. It's R-I-C-I. Rici. And what name should we give?" "Oh," the teacher said, "Well that name, I think we can give her Ruth." So that's how I, that's my name.

DANE: And did you like Ruth or did you--

METZGER: Yes. I thought that it's a short name, and I liked Ruth. And that's a biblical name, so I kind of liked it.

DANE: Did it make you feel more American?

METZGER: Yes, yes, sure. But they called us greenhorns, you know. In school, too, they called us greenhorns.

DANE: Even kids?

METZGER: Because we were in a foreign room. At that time a lot of immigrants came, so they put us in a foreign room because, and after they, I passed from there to seventh grade, so. Because I had my math in Russia and I had my schooling in Russia. But it was a hard time for us here. And then I went to work for, after school I went to work for Sears Roebuck, because I didn't take any minors, I didn't take any music or gymnasium. I just took the regular school. So I worked for Sears after school, and I worked for Peter Pan ladies' garments, so.

DANE: What did you do for Sears?

METZGER: For Sears, wherever they had to put somebody to wash up the floor, almost. Wherever they had to sell shoes, or infants things, or ladies things, they put me there. That's what I did.

DANE: So you were working--

METZGER: But I always thought it was temporary, see. And then in high school I was doing bookkeeping. When I went to Northwestern I took accounting. So from there I worked for a wholesale place on Madison Street. Oh, and that's the way, and in 19, 1929 I went to work for an automobile dealer after school. I did bookkeeping. I always, my philosophy was it's only temporary. And that 's what I lived on, only temporary, wherever I was. So then I went and I did some bookkeeping and accounting, and I did accounting for General Motors. And in 1933 I went into business for myself. I had a garage.

DANE: Hold on just a second, because this is, I want to get this, we need to switch this tape. This is the end of side one of Ruth Metzger, Interview Number 103. It's 2:58.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DANE: This is the beginning of side two of Ruth Metzger, Interview Number 103. It is 2:58. You were just saying, you were an accounting, an accountant for General Motors.

METZGER: For, it was Oldsmobile, Buick and Pontiac, and I worked for a dealer and I went in business in 1933 for myself. I had a garage at Halstead and Addison, and I did very well. And from there I started to brokerage cars.

DANE: Tell me the story though, um, about the guy that came in and said--

METZGER: Yeah. This fellow, Mr, Cohen, came in and said, "You're a smart girl. Why are you pushing a pencil? You can shop for me for a car. I have no time to shop." And I said, "What kind of car would you like?" He said, "An Oldsmobile." So I contacted the dealer and I sold him an Oldsmobile. And from there on it was just from mouth to mouth. Never advertised. I sent out one card. I want to show it you. (Break in tape.)

DANE: Okay. So tell me about these.

METZGER: Yes. That was our advertising that we sent to customers.
Every year we's send out a card. And I have names I probably will sell one day to some young man who wants to go into the business.
But in the business I went under the name Ruth Rubin, Rubin Metzger

Auto Brokers.

DANE: Where did the Rubin come from?

METZGER: Well, Rubin is my maiden name.

DANE: You were a lady before your time.

METZGER: That's right. I told you, I was liberated. I was liberated a long time, but never talked about it. My husband and I worked very hard. My husband was in, uh, the tailoring business. They, uh, they made, uh, for conductors, uniforms, and for, uh, firemen, for policemen. It was a mail order house. So he was with his father in the business. Although he graduated Northwestern in accounting, but his eyes were bad. And then, as I got so busy that I had to take him in to my business. I was very busy.

DANE: So you had your own business.

METZGER: Yes.

DANE: You used your own name.

METZGER: That['s right.

DANE: This is in the 1930's you were doing all this.

METZGER: Yes, in 1933.

DANE: And you had a college education.

METZGER: Yes.

DANE: That's unusual. And you came over with absolutely nothing.

METZGER: Nothing. Right. With one dress.

DANE: With one dress. I'd say you pretty much fulfilled the American dream.

METZGER: Yes. I was, I loved the United States and I love Chicago and I have traveled quite a bit, too, with my husband. He died in 1976. He was, he had a stroke and he was paralyzed from the left side, on the left side. And that was very bad for me. I had him in rehabilitation for six months, and then I had him home for six months with nurses around. And you don't know what it is to wait for a nurse when you have an appointment to go out on business. I was called on business all the time. But no matter where I was I used to go to the patient to feed him the evening meal. It was a very hard time for me.

DANE: Did you think that you would end up having your own business. I mean, successful?

METZGER: When I started out, no, I always thought I'd be working for the rest of my life for dealers as a, as an accountant. No, I didn't. But that's how he started me, and from then on he just, from mouth to mouth, just by recommendation. And I decided that I should tell him in front everything very honestly, which car is good and which car isn't good and which has got a nice service, and I decided that I'd be honest, and this the deal

to tell him everything in front, finance and insurance and all that. And that's, that's why people recommend me because I was very honest.

DANE: Explain to me exactly how it worked.

METZGER: Well, if you call me for a car, you want a Buick, so I take you to a Buick agency and I show you the cars and you pick out a car, what you like, you know. Years ago they had many inventories. Now they don't have so many inventories. You pick out a car and I tell you all about the car and what it has and all that, and I go down, downstairs, to the general manager, and if you're ready, tell you the price, and if you're satisfied or, or if you didn't like the price you said you'd let me know I'd follow up with a call, and sure enough I'd get the business.

DANE: Hmm. Now, would you be able to, I mean, this is the inside scoop, but would you be able to work out a deal with the dealer? Being able to--

METZGER: The dealer paid me a commission, yes. They paid me so much a car.

DANE: So instead of buying--

METZGER: It all depends on what car. If it's a Cadillac they paid more. For an Oldsmobile they paid less. But the average car was fifty dollars a car.

DANE: And you, so you must have turned over a lot of cars.

METZGER: Yes. Kupcinet had me. You know Kupcinet?

DANE: Uh-uh.

METZGER: You don't know him? You know who he is. Kupcinet had me in his column that if they put the cars together they'd reach all over the world and it's true. And it's true because I send a lot of cars to Florida and to Los Angeles and everywhere, in every city, people used to come to me from other cities to buy cars because they've heard of me. And then when it was very hard to get cars I got cars for them. In 19, when the boys came back in 1946 it was very hard to get cars, but I got them.

DANE: Hmm. And you would, so, at this point, were there lots and things? Did people shop for cars they way they do now that they would go--

METZGER: From place to place. Yeah. They shop that time, too. But I was cheaper than anybody else because the dealers gave me a car so much over cost. So I was usually cheaper. That's why people came to me.

DANE: So you, you put them both together.

METZGER: That's right.

DANE: Savvy. Really savvy. Now, I'm looking on your wall, above your head at these beautiful framed documents.

METZGER: That's all, that's all for my hard work that I worked for them, so they gave me citations.

DANE: It says, "From the golden book of the Jewish Fund."

METZGER: Yeah. That's in Israel, there's a golden book, and they inscribe you in that book and they give you a plaque here, so, I have many in my bedroom.

DANE: And each year, is it a yearly thing, or--

METZGER: Well, it was a yearly thing, yeah.

DANE: So is it important to you, contributing to, to Israel and to--

METZGER: Yes. I work for Israel. I raise money for them. Now I work for a home. I'm President of an Auxiliary, the Lieberman Home, and I bring in a lot of money. I raise about, six, seven thousand dollars a year for it.

DANE: Hmm. And also the Labor Zionist Alliance.

METZGER: That's part of the, uh, the Jewish National Fund. I'm Chairman, citywide, of Jewish National Fund.

DANE: Hmm. Amazing. You've been a busy--

METZGER: Yes. I keep myself very busy. I'm never home. I'm home in the evenings. They're very lonely.

DANE: It sounds like you fill your time.

METZGER: Yes, I do. I work till ten o'clock, then I come in, get myself ready for bed. And I go to plays and I go to the opera and I go to concerts. (Break in tape.)

DANE: Huh. I have two questions, and then I think we're almost finished. One is a detailed question, going back to the immigrant crisis. You said that there was, um--

METZGER: A foreign room.

DANE: A foreign room. What other nationalities of children were there?

METZGER: Well, they were from Poland and from Russia. Mostly was, were from Russia and Poland at that time because the Polish quota was open, and so was the Russian, so they came in, in '19, most of the immigrants came in, in '21, '22, '23. And by '25 it was closed already. So they were, we were in a foreign room just learning English. That's what it was.

DANE: And there would be one teacher. Could she speak different languages, or just English?

METZGER: No, she-- Just English. She spoke to us in English.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did she give you pronunciation lessons also?

METZGER: Yes. Yes. How to pronounce words and all that. Yes.

DANE: And one thing that you had mentioned about being called greenhorn and things like that. Did you feel like--

METZGER: We felt bad because we felt that we were in a free land and we shouldn't be called names. We children, children are cruel, you know that. Not by grown ups, you know, grown ups had respect for us and they were teaching us and they were teaching us the American way and all that.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did you find that you were ever discriminated against as you went along through school and up through--

METZGER: No. Not at all. No, I was very well liked. My dean of the, uh, girls high school, she just was, she was so nice to me. And she really told me that I should take bookkeeping up, so that's, I can be a bookkeeper. And I don't have to speak the language, but I can be a bookkeeper in figures. She was very much, she was an advisor to me. And then I went to night school and I studied accounting.

DANE: So she was sort of a guiding light for you.

METZGER: That's right. That's right.

DANE: A lot of people say that. Say that the teachers, someone in their life, when they came here, took them under their wing and--
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METZGER: Yes. They were very nice. All the teachers were very nice to me.

DANE: This is sort of a final wrap up question I always ask and you may not have, I think you do, some thoughts about it. You got your citizenship rather late, but you joined the American society

straight away. What does it mean to you to be American and to have lived here?

METZGER: Well, it means that for freedom, we're not afraid and we love the country because that's the only country that really has a melting pot, that you come with nothing and you can become, you have a lot of opportunities. I think this country offers you the most opportunity. If you want to you can be anything. My, my brother could have been a doctor. They were in the laundry business. Both brothers were in the laundry business. And my sisters worked in a factory because they came, they had to work for a living. But I was the youngest, so I didn't have to work.

DANE: Would you have done anything differently?

METZGER: No. I liked everything that I did here, and I'm very happy here. I, I would fight. If I could be in the Army I would fight for the United States. I think this is the most beautiful country of all countries.

DANE: Even though it had its Ellis Island?

METZGER: Well, Ellis Island, that was, that was the bad eye for the American people. I think that really set, that was a terrible thing. They shouldn't have that. But if they had it, they should have had it more, more dignified. It was not dignified at all. We, just like cattle, we were treated. Just pushed around. And the way we'd sit down at the table, and the way they'd throw food at you and all that, it was appalling, I would call that. As I say, I wrote a thesis for Northwestern that won first prize because I couldn't forgive them. I just couldn't. I couldn't forgive the trial, that's a thing that we, with all this trouble that we had, three years on the road, and to come here and then be sent back. That was a terrible thing to us.

DANE: And you could see the Statue of Liberty right from Ellis Island.

METZGER: Yes. Yes, as I told you, that, that was freedom for us. We were just so happy. And then you get into like, to a dungeon. People were not nice at all. We couldn't understand their language. That was number one. And they didn't have interpreters or anything like that, and they just treated us like, like animals. They really, I, I don't, I have no words for them.

DANE: When, when you would, did you have showers? Were there places to shower?

METZGER: Yes.

DANE: Did you go into those, I've visited, just recently, in the rooms there are bedrooms where they'd be bunks.

METZGER: Yes.

DANE: And one shower. And then there was sort of a mass shower.

METZGER: I went to the mass shower. Yes. That was all right. I mean, but otherwise they just mistreated us. And I can't forgive the government that they should have something like that. For human beings that are so mistreated, that come from, from beaten up countries and went through so much. It took us three years to get to the United States with all that, and to live in Ravenna with people and then Warsaw with people, you know, that you didn't know. And they took advantage of us because we were immigrants and we had American dollars. And then to come into this very, it's not becoming the United

States at all and I'm glad that they discontinued.

DANE: Uh-huh. And one final thought about being an immigrant.

Did you think, for a long time it's had a real perjorative sound to it. People have been wanting to hide it, their immigrant past. Did you ever feel that way?

METZGER: Oh, I just wanted to learn the English language. I didn't think about anything. I thought, I told you that my philosophy was temporary. Everything was temporary.

DANE: Was it going to get better?

METZGER: That's right. It's going to get better. Like I worked for Sears & Roebuck, so whenever they needed an extra person, "Ruth, you're working here today." Or there. Well, it's temporary. I'm not going to work at Sears, I should have worked at Sears. I should have remained there. They give you a wonderful pension. (They laugh.) I should have remained there. But I did all right otherwise. Meeting the public and the most, that hardest people to sell were doctors. They're very hard to sell.

DANE: Why is that?

METZGER: I don't know. They just, they just don't trust you, or something like that. They just don't.

DANE: Who's the easiest?

METZGER: The easiest is the working man, the Italian people, Polish people, the worker man. He knows that he has to pay for a car so much. But people that are, that buy Oldsmobiles and Buicks, they, they think twice before they, but I was pretty

good. The dealers said I'm the best salesman, saleswoman that they ever, the best salesman. Oh, I have credentials from Buick and Olds and all that. I have a lot of literature.

DANE: Hmm. Hmm. And what do you think of this women's movement?

METZGER: I am not very happy with it because they are so independent and they, uh, think so much of themselves. I don't, I don't like their independence, the way they're handling it, you know. So what, if a woman makes more money than a man, so why throw it p to them? I always made more money than my husband, and he worked very hard. He worked for a company. He worked for Keystone Motor Sales. He was a salesman.

DANE: But there's no need to throw it up.

METZGER: Exactly.

DANE: Just do it.

METZGER: That's right. That's right. That's the way is was. And my reputation is that I'm a very honest person in the business.

DANE: That's amazing. I think, can you think of anything else?

METZGER: No, I don't think of anything else. What else can I tell you?

DANE: I thin we've covered just about everything. Why don't I slate it. This is the end of side two with Ruth Metzger, Interview Number 103. It is 3:15.