KECK-124
MAX GROSSMAN
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RUSSIA, 1902
AGE 6
PASSAGE ON "THE POTSDAM"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Mr. Max Grossman, on Thursday, January 16, 1986. We are beginning this interview at 3:50 and we are about to interview Mr. Grossman about his immigration experience from Russia in 1902.

GROSSMAN: Correct.

DALLETT: This is Interview Number 124, beginning of side one. Uh, take me back to the beginning of your story, and can you tell me where and when you were born?

GROSSMAN: I was born January 14th, 1896. So that I am now, ninety years old. It was a, uh, period of, uh very severe winter, because I, I'm told by those were in, that it was very cold, and I was born and my mother was, this is a little side story. I was born in the caul, C-A-U-L. Do you know what that is?

DALLETT: No, I don't.

GROSSMAN: Caul is the, uh, the, skin covering a birth of a child. And most of the time the caul is broken. In this case, they didn't know anything about it and they just know what happened and all, and the story goes on they were all scared. They thought it was a little animal.

DALLETT: Oh, my goodness.

GROSSMAN: And my, my father had gone to see a, uh, midwife to be able to, but he had gone out in the snow and nobody was there and then, and those that were there got scared and, just ran out from the house and the story keeps on going. This is a very exciting story for me, at the time, not knowing what it was all about. But they, they, the story goes further

that the caul was supposed to be a, uh, a, a, special, uh, lucky wa for a child to be born. Because anyone who has the caul, never drowned. (They laugh.) So they use to sell the caul to sailors. Since they're not going to be drowned. So the caul was, was, at any rate, that was the story that I was born and, and everybody was so scared because they didn't know what it was.

DALLETT: Right, right. Where were you born?

GROSSMAN: Born in Koidanov. K-O-I-D-A-N-O-V. Koidanov is part of Minsk. And about the only thing one remembers, one has to know about Koidanov is the fact that it, it had a rabbi. So that the Koidanov rabbi was known to many people outside. And, uh, the term you probably hear as you get stories, is the word shtetl. Shtetl was the word used for a small town. It was usually made up of a center part of the city, where usually it's the synagogue or some major portion of the older community. So, I remember the shtetl. It was, uh, uh, it was obviously dirt. It was all mud. And I remember when I was two years old, three years old, walking through in the mud to be taken to a, uh, at that time they have the children went to a, uh, ABC. They,

uh, uh, learning the Aleph Beth. The beginning. Now as far as I can remember, I use, I was taken into a room. And that was where the rabbi was and his wife was there and the chickens were all around. This was the usual little hut where the, the rabbi and his wife lived and their chickens were all around you. And, uh, that's, uh, pretty much the same that you where, also in other places where you went to see. Uh, as I recall, the, uh, early years of Aleph Beth was just simply the rote form. The, uh, rabbi never knew very much more than what he was trying to teach. It was the beginning of the Aleph Beth.

DALLETT: How old would you be when that started?

GROSSMAN: I was. I was taking that when I was four years old. Now I stayed on in this town until six years of age. By that time my father did what, what so many Jewish immigrants did. They left the home in order to earn money in order to bring the rest of the family. So that 's what happened then was that when I was born, my father had already just gone back. Had been to the United States and was coming back when just about the

time I was born. So that, uh, all the other children had already been born. And I had brothers and sisters, but I had never seen them. My brothers and sisters were, I was too young to know the family. My father had gone to the United States in order to earn money. Came back just at that time and the part that was important is this, was that when I got to Ellis Island my father had never seen me, I had never seen my father. This was the first time that I was really seeing my father. And my mother pointed him out from the distance. And they said, "This was the man, with the little reddish beard, that's your father." And that's, uh, I took it for granted. I, I never got close to my father because of that, because as, after all, you're six years of age at the time. And I never was able to get a kind of close, I could say the Yiddish word Tatah. To say Tatah to him was strange to me. Because it was os, I didn't know the man. He was, he was a stranger. But little by little, uh, I, I, I skipped almost thirteen years before I was able, really, to know my father. But he, uh, one thing about the family, we were a family of eight boys, two girls. So I had, seven, six, I had five brothers and two sisters. And all of them were there at a time, and

only one brother went ahead of all the others in order to be with my father. In order to earn much more money to be able to bring the whole family over. He was much more of a studious, student type. Bernard Grossman, who afterwards was in the cloak and suit business and became part of real-estate. So he was a real supervisor of some of the family's doings.

DALLETT: How did your mother support herself in Russia while your father and oldest brother were in America?

GROSSMAN: My mother was the baker of the town. There was a huge oven in which she baked. First of all you had a big place where you kneaded the dough. And I remember, when I would get up early in the morning, maybe two in the morning, I would see my mother kneading the dough. Making the bread for the community. For the little town that we were in. And she was known, her name was Basia. Basia da becker. Basia the baker. She was the baking, the baker for the township. And, one thing about my memory of my mother, completely ignorant, in so far as knowing, she didn't know how to speak English. She didn't speak Russian, she didn't speak, Yiddish, she spoke Yiddish. But she didn't know how to write. And as, I always marveled at a, a woman who has been so completely unable to get the community, but she knew all about her debts that she would, she was going to collect.

She'd sell the bread and knew everybody who, who was owing money and when she went to the United States, she went around and collected the money before she, before we left. The ones that were left, we had broken up, my brother, who was two years older than I was. My brother, Jack, who afterwards, also, was a lawyer. He and I remained in Koidanov for my mother to collect the debts, to sell the little house that we had, put all the things away as to, for the United States, and to get ready to go. She's the one that went ahead to get the one, remarkable woman that would be able to carry all this alone. Without anyone else, there was nobody else to help her. She had to do it all by herself. And I suppose the period of her getting things ready for going to America, was a, must have been a period of about, oh a couple of moths that she got things ready. And here was my brother and I left alone, I always pictured what, what left of us, without all the rest of the family already gone. And the only thing that kept us company was our dog. We had a name, a dog by the name of Bubbick. And he stood at the, at the door watching everything going by. A little sad, drooped heard, he was the one that remained with us until we left. Now what, the, the thing about going to, to the United States, I suppose all these people must have had some kind of passports. Among many of them might have been just, uh, bought, you never knew just what your name was. But these passports, we weren't going on and the, uh, ship that we was to be on was Potsdam. They, the ship was Potsdam. And, uh, uh, it stopped off at, uh, must have been Rotterdam. Or nearby Potsdam. Whatever. Potsdam was

not a town. Potsdam was just the name of the boat. And the, as I recall, what we had, these were mainly eggs. Because that was the easiest thing to have hard boiled eggs. And some every hard cheese. The cheese was usually in the form of triangles. And so they called them, gumblekaese. Gumblekaese, meaning some kind of triple form. Triangle. And, and because it was hard, it could last for years. And that was one of things on which we were able to continue eating. And, more important, we were able to use it for exchange. For, just as soon as we had gotten to the town near Potsdam. We had oranges. That was something that was really, very rare to have a, an orange to eat. But we got the oranges in exchange for the eggs that we were able to have. And, and eggs and that time that we were being served.

DALLETT: Do you remember actually leaving, uh, Koidanov and packing up, you mentioned your mother sold the house. Do you remember--

GROSSMAN: Yes, because of the fact that this was already a, a limited family. Because all the others had already gone. All my brothers had gone, all my sisters had gone. Ant the only ones that were left was my brother, jack, and myself. And we were waiting up until, oh, the necessary sale of the house. Oh, I don't suppose they ever had such a thing as lawyers or anything like that. They just simply moved in. And, uh, I, I knew the people that came in. They were part of the same Koidanov. And

they remained as the ones that were going to buy. And we were waiting for the time to go. When the ship was to go. And, and, so little is, would be part of my memory, because it's all vague--how I got there, to, on the ship. I suppose just because my mother was there. I just followed instructions to get on the ship. And one of the things that obviously, immediately very soon after I got there, was I became sick. I was the, uh, I suppose the rocking of the boat, getting seasick. And so practically, I think the trip took about two weeks, and practically most of the time, I was, down. We were, of course, down in the steerage. They, you didn't have enough money to get the real third class, or even second class. And one. one of the things I remember about being in, in steerage, in second class. The second class wasn't even first class. But the second class was wealthier and all I remember is that some woman saw me in the steerage and she called me and she had a lot of candies. And I had a cap at that time and she asked me to take the cap, and she filled it with all kinds of Tzikerkis Candies, and it was great, great marvel, to sudden;y get candies out in steerage. But hat was about the way the, that we had, uh, it took two weeks. And I was sick all the time. But little by little came the dawn. My father had been back, back from his trip so he was there to meet us. He came to Ellis Island together, and that's a little doubt. I don't, I have no clear memory. Whether my brother, who had also gone to America ahead of time, was also with him. I think, I think he must have come, because he was the, the Americanized one by that time. We were all greenhorns. That was a word for

all greenhorns, all, all, strangers to the world. Strangers to America. So I think, I think my brother was with him. But mainly that my father and, of course, my mother and my brother Jack. We were the little coterie that came to Ellis Island. Now Ellis Island, as I recall it, had a boat, but, it was not, it was also part of Hoboken. And what happened was, I recall, since my brother and I were the ones that were left. Those who had already gone there, all my other brothers, my sisters, rented a row boat, a very large row boat. And they were, came to meet us as we came in on the, on the, to Ellis Island. And the thing that was still in my memory, they brought along with them a lot of different fruits. And the things that, (he laughs) were striking of the fruit, the bananas that was, especially out of this world, I couldn't possibly eat. It had no taste. And tomatoes, tomatoes impossible to eat. So the tomatoes and bananas. But they had sent it, sent up all, all of these, and of course some oranges were always a delight. And they, I don't remember what other fruits. I think it was watermelon that must have been there because that was especially pleasant. It was, it was good.

DALLETT: And they were all new to you. New fruits?

GROSSMAN: I recall there was some other kind of fruit that I was eating. And I think it was watermelon. And, and, uh, of course, this was a, a great event, not only for my, uh, own little family. But for the whole boat. When they heard other, the Americans that came to visit the, uh,

children. And to see all these people. So that, it was big doing for the whole boat. And the result of it was, they was so excited about having some of the Americans come with their boat. I had a cap that was immediately thrown into the water and my shoes, I don't know why, I, they must have taken my shoes off. And I was left with rubbers. When I, when we came to the United States, leaving Ellis Island, I only had rubbers to wear. And, and my cap. But the--

DALLETT: Did you see the Statue of Liberty when you first came into the harbor? Or did you know what that was?

GROSSMAN: All, all you, all you knew was, look, I didn't know what I was looking at. This was America. Whatever one could see and the Statue of Liberty, I didn't know what it was. The Statue of Liberty or not. It was only later on that I began to know. I had seen this Statue of Liberty. So as, as far as getting into the United States, it was very much of a welcome, because I had all these greetings from my family. Who had been there, I don't know how long they were there already, I think they must have been there about three months. But it didn't, it doesn't take very long for assimilation. So they were all ready to welcome us. And, of course, it

was a great excitement to get to see them from the shore. And then when we got off the Ellis Island itself was not very difficult for us to pass. The, the usual things they look for are the eyes, trachoma. Or louse, the de-licing that they wanted to have. And, uh, I suppose a general checkup, physically.

DALLETT: Do you remember that? Do you remember going through any of those things?

GROSSMAN: What I remember is, and this is where my brother, Jack, comes in. We held on to each other, he was eight, I was six, and we were going through. We had to go through the baths. And we had to be alone, because my mother couldn't be with us. So she went to her own group and my brother and I stayed behind. And, uh, everything seemed to be okay. We had no difficulty passing insofar as my eyes or otherwise is concerned. And all, all I can, can imagine, it's kind of a strange vision of a lot of people. And I see my father and my brother and then getting ready to go and I don't know how we went. It was undoubtedly, they had the cars, the horse cars. You couldn't, there was no other way of going. You couldn't, no, there were no, uh, automobiles. That was not yet invented at that time. You only had horse cars.

DALLETT: before we leave Ellis Island, I just want to see if there is any more detail there we can get. Uh, do you know how long you spent at Ellis Island, was it, an afternoon--

GROSSMAN: I don't think it was longer than the, more than one, than a day.

DALLETT: Did they feed you there? Do you remember that?

GROSSMAN: I don't recall a single item of food. I think what we had, was what we brought with us on the ship. The cheese, the hard cheese, and then, and then because of the exchange of fruits with eggs, so we must have had some hard boiled eggs and hard bread. There was, easy to hold. We even though, I suppose, since we were Jewish children, they must have had all kinds of, you must not eat this or you must not eat this. But I don't recall anything of that because we didn't have any kind of food that we had to be worried about. It came because of eggs or fruit or, uh, a piece of bread or, so it was okay, I don't remember being hungry, or anything like that.

DALLETT; So you stayed with your brother the whole time. And together you went through the medical examination?

GROSSMAN: You call it a medical examination, but I wouldn't have know it was a medical. They just simply, you passed through lines. And I take it for granted, I suppose, that it was a doctor that was examining you. And most of the time, it was--

DALLETT: How did you understand which way to go, or, what line to stand in? Do you remember? What language would you have been speaking? As a young boy then.

GROSSMAN: Yiddish is all that I knew. There was no other language that I was know.

DALLETT: And the officials, was there a translator there?

GROSSMAN: The officials, the officials, or there were a lot of interpreters and they simply guided you as to where to go. There was no, no difficulty about because you just followed the huge lines. At that time it was a tremendous number of people that came through, uh, that period. This was the immigration period.

DALLETT: Were there other people on that boat coming through Ellis Island that day with you, that had come from your village?

GROSSMAN: Yes. Quite a number. Somehow we always stuck together. There was a, one of my aunts. That's my mother's sister, with her daughter and son. Their name was Klumoc. Which I suppose, in Yiddish means a bundle. And they were also in the same kind of meeting place as we did. And, uh, I remember them there. Because this was my first cousin, a young girl, I was eight and she was six. She, she was six and I was four. We used to play together. I remember seeing a, a,a toy, of toy soldiers. We were playing together. So it, she, afterwards, Dr. Sarah Grey, she married the Professor Grey of the NYU Labor Department. And there she was, she was the one that was, that other party, other family that we knew, and that we came with. The other members of the town, you know, it was a, a, a great thing to be having landsleit. You came together with your own group. Somehow or other, they stuck together and they were always helpful. So you, where would you get your, where would you start living? You have your landsleit. They, they find a place for you to live. They also find a place for you to work. My, my father was a presser. Cloak and suit presser. And immediately he found work because some other landsleit, some other man

from Koidanov, had started a little factory for cloaks and suits. And he was working there for them. And my, the brother who came here, became a cutter. And that was supposed to be a more dignified part of a cloak and suit industry. The cutter, and so it was my father doing the cutting. my father was doing the pressing, and my brother was dong the cutting. And then, all of us came into, and we lived on Madison Street.

DALLETT: Hold on, just before we get in, into life here in New York, I just want to ask you a couple more details about Ellis Island. Uh, we need to, just turn over the tape. That is the end of side one of Interview Number 124 with Max Grossman.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 124 with Max Grossman. Uh, just one other thing about Ellis Island, I'm just curious. When, when you first saw your father he was, was he in the rowboat then? Your family was in the rowboat?

GROSSMAN: No, the family was in the rowboat to visit us.

DALLETT: Your father wasn't at Ellis Island.

GROSSMAN: But he came to Ellis Island in order to bring us back to the shore. To bring us back to the United States. And he, I, I somehow or other I, I missed seeing my brother there. Whether he was not allowed, I don't know. So I suppose at that time, it was enough to have one person call for you. And he might have stayed behind. But my father came.

DALLETT: And it was after you had gone through your examination and processing? Then you saw your father. You were back with your mother.

GROSSMAN: All through the examination, and then I saw my father. And, and he was pointed out to me in the distance that this is your father. And I suppose I must have seen some photographs of him, but he was completely a stranger as far as I was concerned. And, uh, but my mother was there. That was the important part. So my father and mother took me, together with Jack, my brother, to come to the United States. Now how did we travel, how we traveled, I think the only way we could have, would be a, a horse car. There were no, no, electricity. so we couldn't drive any,

there was no other way. We just, and this was, this must have been the summertime. So it was pretty easy to have horse cars. They used to have four, four horses to pull the car. Sometimes they were able to exchange the horses. But that was the, the way we did travel. I remember, I remember the pictures of the horse cars coming along. And we used to climb aboard.

DALLETT: Were they different from how you would have travelled in Russia? Or would it have been the same way.

GROSSMAN: In Russia, we have no such thing as--

DALLETT: No horse cars.

GROSSMAN: My family, if they had to travel to, say, Minsk, would hire a balagula, a driver who would take his place and drive us . Minsk was about, I should imagine seven hours from Koidanov. That's quite a trip.

DALLETT: What would he drive?

GROSSMAN: Drive? A horse and wagon. The word was a balagula. Bolagula meant driver in a horse, horse wagon. The balagula would simply charge you for making the trip. And that was a long trip, but, uh, Minsk was a big city at that time. And my oldest brother, Isaac, stayed, in

Minsk, and got married in Minsk, so that was easier for them to come along. We came to the United States but they stayed on a little, and came afterwards. My oldest brother, who was married, and I suppose, two children, who were born in Russia. But that, that was a, their own little group. As far as we were concerned, that's how we traveled, by horse and buggy and wagon. And that's how we, I recall all the travels that we did do.

DALLETT: And your father, once he was, once he picked you up did, had, did he already have an apartment for you to come to?

GROSSMAN: I suppose, it was something that I never questioned, but I took it for granted. We were on, we were having a tenement house. Tenement, and we had four rooms. And the four rooms together with a toilet in the, on the same floor. They also had something down in the basement, where they had some kinds of gatherings together of some stuff, but enough in, in, this, I remember the number of the street. Two ninety seven and a half, Madison Street. And it was a place for, I can't imagine where we found, uh, my father and mother, my sisters, two sisters, my brothers, there were five

brothers, we were all in four rooms. I'm trying to figure our where we were. But I suppose that you just went, whether you slept on the floor and a roof. The roof was very a important thing in the summertime. Because it used to get very hot on Madison Street. And we would go up on the roof. And there we had a chance to see some of the Koidanov that were there, some friends, and somehow or other we all lived--

DALLETT: Were you enrolled in the public school shortly after that?

GROSSMAN: This is what happened. At that time, Baron de Hirsch, a wealthy Jew, had wanted to help the immigrants that came to the United States. And so he had the Baron de Hirsch School in New York City. Which was a school for immigrants. And I went to this Baron de Hirsch school. And I had, that's where the memories, I was given a medal for merit. I must have learned English pretty quickly. Because without going too long in the Baron de Hirsch school, which was I think on Jefferson Street, they immediately transferred me to public school. Public School 147, that's Scammel and Gouvenor.

And this was big school. And there was I learning English. It was a very, it was a great world. The, I think of, how it must have been, I suddenly found myself able to talk English very quickly.

DALLETT: Uh, like how long, how long would it have taken?

GROSSMAN: How I did, I don't know, because of the Baron de Hirsch school which was--

DALLETT: Within a few years, you mean?

GROSSMAN: I suppose they spoke Yiddish and English. And so I learned to speak English very, and, and, I must have been fairly bright, because within, uh, this was 1-A, when I started. I was already going into 2-A, because I must have been learning English very rapidly. And I was, uh, 2-B, 2-A, I began, I began going to school with a great deal of, of, love. Because of all of these that, that, the teachers, I still remember their names. There was a Miss Jacobs, they were so good. They, they themselves were part and parcel of the immigrant group. And to be able to, W. Langenbaum. I still remember the name, because he was such a beautiful, handsome man, and we little, felt, the little children.

DALLETT: What would he do, how, how was he so special? In the way that he would teach?

GROSSMAN: He taught 4-B. Was a, a public school teacher. And, of course, at that time teachers were Gods. You looked upon a teacher with tremendous respect. How, how they, uh, took it for granted that they were the ones that were teaching us how to live. And, and bring us into the United States. It was great. Marvelous things to remember that these were people that gave themselves with all the fervor of bringing us to citizenship. We didn't know very much about citizenship, but we knew that we had to become citizens. Was a, a wonderful period of time. And, and didn't, my brother Joe, when I was two, my other brother was four, and then there was a lapse of five years, because my father had come back from America at that time so that was. He was born five years after, so I had a brother who was, if I were, lets see, if I was, uh, ten years, fourteen, he was already , must have been about fourteen years of age. And he also went to Public School 147. And because he was, even though he might not have known the English, he was already quite a grown boy. And he began studying and I

remember how certain things remind. He used to go around studying memory gems, and, aloud. So I use, the things still in my memory. When I behold the rainbow in the sky, my heart leaps up and I behold, I, I still hear him saying, keeps on memorizing the, a rain, I when I behold a rainbow in the sky my heart leaps up for it. And then, I use to see, heaven is not reached by a single bound but is walked the steps round and round. These things is kept going as they, as my older brother began studying these memory gems. It's kept part of me.

DALLETT: How long was it before you felt comfortable in public school and more Americanized and more accepted by your classmates?

GROSSMAN: Immediately. Strangely enough. Because I suppose, because of the fact that I was among my other brothers and they were, and I was able to talk. I suppose, also, I must have been a, a bright little boy that was, that was accepted by the teachers. As something that I, I felt a part of the school very quickly. And, and going into the, one of the sad things about it was, I skipped, my brother did not. My brother was older, two years older. But in, but he wasn't able to do the same things that I was. So in addition to the fact that I used to be very happy I skipped, instead, of 1-A, 1-B, 2-B. I was quickly going ahead but my brother was

staying behind. And that was the sad part. Until, finally, I think an older brother came to the school and told them, that we were to far apart by that time. And they put us together again. So, from that time on we kept going in a very same class. At any rate, I, I didn't, I don't recall any period when I was, uh, very unhappy about the fact that I wasn't Americanized. Books. Reading the books. I remember we used to have the library on Fridays. And we would get books to read. And the teacher, at that time, was a Mrs. Berghan. And this was a lovely girl. And we reading books of all kinds. And it was something, something, you opened up a world of information, and, and, I, I can't understand it, but I don't, I never find difficulty in becoming a part of the United States. I, I suppose the fact that I was the youngest child, I could always look to my brothers for help. And, and the fact is, that I learned English very quickly.

DALLETT: How about your father. Did he become a citizen?

GROSSMAN: He became a citizen quite late. Uh, he was, he was a Republican. Now I didn't know anything about Republican or not. But at that time, say Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt was the great president at that time. And my father was a, was a Republican. So it was quite easy for him, he became a citizen and he voted. And I, of course, the years went by when, when, uh Woodrow Wilson ran for president. He was a Democrat. But my father was still holding on to his Republican. And my, and I remember that

we kept on saying to my father, "But Woodrow Wilson kept us out of war. So you've got to vote for him." But by, by the time he voted for him, Woodrow Wilson had declared war. But I remember that was still part of my father's background. He was still, he was a citizen, but he became, he was very anxious to be a Republican.

DALLETT: And did your mother adjust well? Did she find that, that she had neighbors that she could relate to as she had in the old country?

GROSSMAN: My mother is a, is a mystery to me. How she was able without being able to read or write. To be able to come to the United States and be able to adjust. I suppose because everybody was green. And, and her job was to make a home. And, and, uh, we had two daught, two sisters, and my mother used my two sisters, of course, for all cooking and cleaning and my sisters also began to work. One sister used to make cigarettes in Russia. She started selling cigarettes in the United States when she came here. My other sister was sewing machine. In, they oh, sewing machine. It was a very big, everybody that came to New York City was able to work at the machines. And you have your, uh, dresses, your shirts. Every, everything that you could think of. They were already doing a great deal of building for themselves. Out of little things that they were able to make. I, I don't recall very much of the difficulties in, in, uh, having

my suits. I suppose that came a little later when you had to buy pants. I imagine the fact that we were a family. And at different stages, so that some would begin to learn faster than others, it was easy for me, as the youngest to get the benefit of all there, everyone older than I was, was contributing to my education, to my learning, to, to the ease of which I could participate .

DALLETT; And then you went on, did you say you went on to City College?

GROSSMAN: I went first, of course, to public school. And the public schools, the one that I, I went to, the one that was started was the, was the, uh, Baron de Hirsch school. Immediately from there I went into 1-A, 1-b, 1-C, whatever. And, and that was easy. So it was in Public School 147 that I got my early public school training. As I recall, everybody took us for granted, that I was going to go to high school. And that time it wasn't, it was Tulson Harris. Tulson Harris was the high school division of City College. And it was seven years, high school and college was seven years. And I took it for granted because it was a, it was a free college. So I was going to go to Tulson Harris and that was from, I graduated public school when I was thirteen. So I went on to City College and high school for seven more years until I was a teacher. Everyone that went to City College that, took it for granted, you became teachers. And I was a

teacher, the public schools. And, uh, it was great, tremendous step forward, as the time went on, of course, you begin to think in terms of other things.

DALLETT: When you were a teacher wasn't, was, uh, there was another wave of immigration, I would imagine, by then. Were you teaching young children who had just come?

GROSSMAN: By that time I was teaching an public schools. The schools, I, I was teaching by that time, my first classes were all of the younger children. 4-A, 4-B, and--

DALLETT; Were these children new to this country, as you had been?

GROSSMAN: No, they, they were, they could be all, they were a mixture, they were those who already been here, those that were coming in. But, uh, I was teaching regular classes and getting regular schools certificate. And, of course, it was, by that time, to, the East Side was a, a very, very rich community. It, it had all this group that had come. But you were also having some of the social movements. The Socialists were there. We lived on Madison Street, which is not very far from where the Forwards used to have, Forwards was a big Socialist newspaper. And we used to over to the newspaper, get all the kinds of information and it was to, it

was a new kind of, uh, of a dream. You had some congressman. (He coughs.) I remember Meyer London. Because he use, I use, we use to have parades when Hearst was running for congressman. Hearst, Hearst, Hearst everybody going. And the East Side, and at that time Meyer London was a congressman and everybody was having tremendous dreams of, of, because the unions were just beginning. You didn't have unions, you just had workers. And it only took a little time thereafter before the sweat shops came in. And they were all working so hard they began to rebel. And the sweat shops began to be unionized. And, uh, I, then, then, of course, some of my brothers and sisters began to be part of the union. Part of the workers group and from then on it's a part of the whole story of the Lower East Side with all these types of people that you, you listen, you remember, Eddie Cantor and types of that sort.

DALLETT: Uh, we could, we could go on and on, I'd love to hear more about the Lower East Side, but just for the purpose of this interview do you have any of the original papers from when you came to this country? Uh, original passports or anything like that? Just the museum is interested to know who has what kind of papers.

GROSSMAN: The only thing that I have is my father's citizenship papers. And, I, I still have it here, I can get it.

DALLETT: Not the passport that you might have come in on.

GROSSMAN: His name was Wolf. Wolf Grossman except we weren't called Grossman. We were called Grosser. I suppose my father or my grandfather were big people, tall people, so they called, I suppose they, I just. The Grosser, means the big one. And I suppose as we came into Ellis Island, and they wanted to know my name, we said Grosser, they said then it's Grossman. They created the name Grossman. Because--

DALLETT: Right on Ellis Island. At that time?

GROSSMAN: Because Grosser means big man. So Grossman was the translation. And we became Grossman. And all the names we had Jacob Grossman, Max Grossman, Jack Grossman, all, suddenly became Grossmans. And that's about the only paper that I can think of is the citizenship papers that my father has, Wolf Grossman.

DALLETT: Okay. Okay, I think that's all I really need to ask you, and ,uh, I thank you very much for telling me all this.

GROSSMAN: Okay. You're welcome. All, all the attempt to reminisce, it's so difficult to, to see the changes. What a tremendous change there was in one's life.

DALLETT: The transition from--

GROSSMAN: From a little town, dirt, took it for granted that, that was the way you lived. And then to move to the United States and suddenly find yourself into a complete, completely new life. But it, it was not difficult. The transition to, as I look back was so, so simple. So good. And I, but the main thing I, I could imagine was the fact that I had my mother and all my brothers and sisters, a family of eight, it was, was, so that it was easy for each one to help the other. It didn't take very long before we were a real community. And, of course, when you begin to get such things as City College free. Free college and you can study, and I became a teacher. Marvelous.

DALLETT: This is the end of side two, and the end of Interview Number 124 with Mr. Max Grossman and the time is four o'clock. 4:52? 4:52.