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ELIZABETH FECZKO MARTIN
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HUNGARY VIA CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1920
AGE 7
PASSAGE ON A WHITE STAR LINE SHIP, EXACT NAME NOT RECALLED

GUMB: This Dana Gumb and I'm speaking with Mrs. Elizabeth Martin on the 22nd day of January, 1986. We are beginning this interview at five minutes to ten, and we're about to interview Mrs. Martin about her immigration experience from Hungary in the year 1920. Okay, Mrs. Martin, if we could begin with where and when were you born?

MARTIN: I was born in Hungary in the little town of Ajak and we came here, well, 1920. I was just about seven years old. I have a sister older and two brothers. I was the youngest of four. And my father was already in this country working in the steel mills and he had sent for us and mother and the four of us came over. And we lived in Homestead. And after that we bought a home in Monhull which is a neighboring city, and we were there, I was married there, my children were all born in Monhull, went to Monhull school and it was, then we moved to Homestead Park. We had our own home. And outside of that, like I said, they were all, the two boys are married. My daughter is living in Chicago. She works for an accounting firm. And she come here for a nice vacation to

born here in this country and then they got a call from my grandma whether they would come to Hungary to live with Uncle John because he was ordained a priest and he needed a house keeper and he needed someone to drive the coach, the funeral wagon, and whatever. So that's what my parents were doing in Hungary.

GUMB: But you were born in Hungary?

MARTIN: We were all born in Hungary. My three brothers, two brothers and my sister. Four of us, I mean.

GUMB: So he decided to come back to this country.

MARTIN: Yes. He liked the idea of working in a mill with a steady pay coming in every week or every other week, whichever it was. And he said it would be nicer living and it would be nice to raise the children here. So he came, but then we had that war, you know. 1912, 1914. And I think it lasted until almost 1917. And there was no correspondence or anything so, of course, mom was in good hands because she was with her brother. But then when Uncle John died of a heart attack, then of course we were ready to come to this country. We went to Czechoslovakia where my grandparents lived. We visited with them and then we took the boat. We came on the White Star Line. The Cunard. C-U-N-A-R-D.

GUMB: What do you remember of the war?

MARTIN: Just wagons with soldiers coming through the town. Shooting and a lot of noise and of course my mother would rush us in to the house. We lived in a big red

brick home and had a big long porch and I remember we would run, play on this porch, but we would have to run into the house. There was a revolution between the Roumanians and the Hungarians. And they were parked in our, our courtyard like, it was. Cause we had the stable and the sheds for the chickens and for the cows and all. And they were parked in there for I don't know how long, but it was a while. And the Gypsies would come at night and they would play music to get money from the soldiers. So that was, you know, kind of interesting to a child.

GUMB: Do you remember life being hard during that period?

MARTIN: Well, like I say, not exactly for us because we weren't peasants, I think, had it hard, because they had to get their crop in. It was corn, wheat. I remember my brother, my younger brother Al. He would go out in the fields with the boys and they would pick the wheat stalks that were too small. Like the balance of what was left over. And they'd get a couple of coins for each bundle that they'd put together. But actually life wasn't too hard for us because we had good food and mom provided for us with everything, you know. Uncle John was the pastor and like I said, so we had a good life.

GUMB: Going back for a minute, you may have said it, but why did, your parents met in this country. They went as single people and they met here. Why did they go originally? What was the motivation?

MARTIN: Well, okay. If one person from that particular town had gone to America at that time that was fortunate enough to have the fare to go to America. And he would write back bragging, "Oh, it's great here. I get so much, I get a pay every weekend and I have running water and I have this and come to America." So the buddies pooled their money and they would come to America. So four, my father and three of his buddies, they came. And they were already like nineteen, eighteen, seventeen. And they said, "Well, we'll send for the girls." They probably knew the girls that they were going to marry. So

they were here a while until they accumulated enough money for passage and then would send. So the four girls, the girlfriends of these four buddies came. Now that was like 1903. No, 1901 my mother was married. And she was nineteen years old. That's the picture, she's nineteen. So she was nineteen years old and all her girlfriends. And then, like I said, they lived in these homes like you see in there. A one room with everything in it. A bed, a stove, a bureau and maybe a wash tub. And that was their whole thing. Then there was a pump out in the yard. They would go out and get their water and they were very happy. There were christenings and weddings and the way they tell the story is they were very happy. They were mill people.

GUMB: Do you remember them saying that they were disappointed to have to come back to Hungary to help your uncle?

MARTIN: Yes. My mother wasn't because it was her brother, but my father wanted to be independent. He wanted to work in the mill. But to satisfy his mother-in-law, my grandma, and his wife wanted to go back. So the two little children that were born in this country died. My brother Steven and my sister Mary. And then in Hungary, these four were born. Emery and Albert and my sister Mary and myself.

GUMB: So, you probably said it before, but how old were you when your father left again to go back?

MARTIN: Two. I was born in 1912 and he left just before 1914. I wasn't quite two years old. Mama always told me.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about, you probably wouldn't remember anything about him?

MARTIN: My first thing that I remember was the lilacs were in bloom. It had

to be April. And we had this little dog, little Princey we used to call him. I remember because the name was repeated to me by my mother I guess and she said that little dog and I would get into trouble in the garden. We would pull the branches down and break the flowers and things like that. And that was the first thing that I really remember being scolded. That I was tearing the blossoms off the flowers. They probably needed them for church. And I was tearing them down. And another thing that I remember, like I said, the days when we used to go to pick the watermelons. The Watermelons there are yellow in the center with the black seeds and the green stripes. And they would put them in the wheelbarrow. So, the loaded wheelbarrow would go to the wagon but coming back we got in the wheelbarrow and we would get a ride and that was a thrill for a five year old, a four year old, I don't know how old I was then.

GUMB: Do you remember when your father was gone and you were growing up with your mother, do you remember her talking about America and what it was like there?

MARTIN: Oh yes. She told us that when daddy sends for us we're going to eat bananas, which are very good. She'd explain the yellow fruit and she said oranges smelled so good. So we couldn't wait till we came to America to buy some oranges. Because we didn't have any oranges in Hungary. And also, see, we wore regular clothes. We didn't wear the peasant skirts and the vests and the scarves like the peasants wore because I guess it was more of an elite class that lived at the parish house. And then my Uncle John had a lot of friends from the army and they were captains and a lot of lieutenants and they would come and they would go hunting. And then they would bring the things home and the men would prepare, like skin them and take off the hides. And mom and the women at the parish would fix that. And we had a big party, like a festival in the fall, you know, with fruit and nuts and things. We raised our own walnuts and everything in the yard that is, in the orchard. And, those were the nice days.

GUMB: So, after the war, your father sent word for you to come?

MARTIN: As soon as mail was able to go. And my Uncle John died in 1917, see.

GUMB: The priest.

MARTIN: The priest. So then that meant that we had to make provisions because there would be somebody new coming there. So then we went to stay with my grandma. We stayed in Czechoslovakia and then as soon as we were able to come, which was 1919, then we were crossing over and coming to this country. We came by way of Liverpool. I'll never forget that.

GUMB: Your father, he sent you a letter?

MARTIN: Oh yes, by that time there was mail, see?

GUMB: Do you remember what did he include money in the letter, what sort of arrangements they had to make?

MARTIN: They called it a telegram, like a telegraph, actually. They said, "When the telegraph comes the money is going to come with the telegraph." And I guess that's the way they wired the money. And we had relatives here that if he didn't have enough they would help him. They were in the beer business. And so they had no trouble. And then, like I said, we were detained all those weeks in New York. That was hard on my mother. And it was hard on daddy because he was ready to come everyday to pick up his family, to New York. And we went to Homestead by train and we were at the station, the little station that I think is still in that book, a picture of it. And we sat there on kind of a porch and then along comes this truck chugging. And they put us in that truck to

take us to our home and that was about the first time I really rode in an automobile.

GUMB: Okay, going back though. You mentioned that your mother had talked about America. Do you remember anybody else talking about America? Do you remember what other stories there were about what it was like here and what sort of expectations you had?

MARTIN: Um, over in Czechoslovakia, now okay, by that time, like I say, I was just about seven and a half. And I remember that my uncle who was living in Hungary in Budapest, he was a furniture upholstery man. And he used to say that if his wife didn't love Budapest as much as she does and her family, they would also come with us to America as soon as they could. So that Andrew, my mother's brother and Mary, and my father, George, could be friends and neighbors, you know. They always wanted somebody there to be clannish or to have a family, you know. Some relatives. Because America was the land of everything. Like they say, honey. That's what it was.

GUMB: So, uh, you lived in Czechoslovakia with your grandmother.

MARTIN: With my grandmother. Andrew (?) and my grandmother's name was Anna. Anna (?) was her maiden name.

GUMB: Do you remember, you were young, you were only seven, seven and a half, but do you remember any of the kind of arrangements that your mother had to make to come to this country?

MARTIN: I remember Uncle Carl, that's the fellow that lived with my grandparents in Czechoslovakia, her older brother. He would put, they would get in the

wagon and they said they had to go to the station because they had to either take letters or they had to wait for letters. Like somebody would come and say, the master said, "There's mail for you." They had to go to the post office. It was never delivered. So they would get in the wagon and go all this distance, I don't know exactly how long. And they would pick up the mail and of course when they came home, "Hey, I had a letter from America." You know, and, "So and so is doing real good and everything is fine." So it was always nice to hear something from America.

GUMB: Do you remember if you had to go to the, to an American Consulate or something?

MARTIN: Well, see, I was too young. But I remember Uncle Carl would say to Mary, my mother, he'd say, "Come on Mary, we have to go." And before they would go out in the field or before they would have to bring in the wheat or vegetables, the cabbage and whatever potatoes that they were raising, they had to get this in so that they could still go to work on the fields because my grandparents were regular peasant people. They lived off their fields and then the men would go and cut trees down for wood. That was their income. And they had cows and horses and chickens and every house had that, you know.

GUMB: Okay. So you traveled from Czechoslovakia to--

MARTIN: Liverpool. We came by way of Liverpool.

GUMB: How did you get from Czechoslovakia to Liverpool? Do you remember?

MARTIN: I do remember a wagon. My mother was frightened because a lady with four children and although my brothers, my one brother probably was about ten years old, my oldest brother, and she always

said, "Well, I had my boys." In other words, the woman was afraid to travel, especially like in the evenings from one place to another because of the soldiers. They were afraid of being taken or something, you know.

GUMB: So the group traveling was just your mother and four children?

MARTIN: And the children. But wherever we were, before we got on the boat, there were four families that we were friends with in Homestead that came to Homestead. But we didn't know them before. We only met before we went on the boat. And while we were on that ship I remember playing with these girls and these two boys and these boys did good, they went in the floral business and they lived in Homestead. So they were the people that were traveling with us.

GUMB: You met them on the boat?

MARTIN: Well, there, before we went on the boat. I remember all these wagons and somebody said, "I'm Hungarian, and I'm Slovak," and so they stuck together.

GUMB: Oh, it was when they traveled to Liverpool, traveled as a group to Liverpool.

MARTIN: Right.

GUMB: I see, all right. Let's see. Um, how did you feel about leaving? Did you have any remorse?

MARTIN: Well, no, because they painted America as such a beautiful

place, you know, they were making money here. And money, making money, to us children was, you're making money, not that you're working for it. But I mean in child's mind it was, "Well, my father is making money so we're gonna be all right when we get to America."

And of course the thing was that it was their payday that the money was. But we were all thrilled. Everybody was looking forward to going. There was no sorrow about I'm leaving Hungary or, in other words, we thought it was going to be good living here.

GUMB: Did you ever feel like you were going to come back or was it a one way trip?

MARTIN: I don't think, you see, my mother had crossed the ocean five times. Because, like I say, came here as a single girl, married in 1901, and then she had her first child and she and her cousin both had babies and they said, "Let's go home and show our mothers the babies." So they traveled. In the meantime her other two friends of these four group, would take care of the men. Cook and wash. And then when these two girls came back from Europe after their trip, then the other two girls would take their one or two babies and go home to Czechoslovakia and show their parents or their friends or family their babies. And then they would come back. And then again, like I said, mom and dad, now my brother Steven died in this country and Mary died in Europe. So my mother crossed the ocean to go back and then crossed back over. So that meant five times she crossed.

GUMB: Okay, well, we're on the ship at Liverpool. What do you remember about the voyage?

MARTIN: The ship in Liverpool was very exciting. I mean the trip right there before we boarded the big boat, which we had to wait. It was drizzling rain. And the boys, naturally they always get in mischief and the peanuts were being loaded on this boat,

on the same boat that we were going to go on. And as they were going up on these little conveyor bins like, well, the peanuts would be falling so the kids wanted to get some to eat. They weren't roasted or anything. But anyway, that was exciting because they'd come with handfuls and we'd hold our little apron and they'd put the peanuts in the apron. I don't know how we ate them, but anyway it was thrilling to get the peanuts. And another thing, there was, like a stand, with candy bars. Chocolate and stuff. And that was kind of rare. We didn't really, we had good food but we didn't have chocolate bars in packages or tin foil packages. And that was very nice, you know. So mom would get the boys some coins and they would go and buy this and we would eat this chocolate and it was very nice. And then on the boat, well, we would feed the seagulls, like I said, they gave us maybe a roll or something for breakfast and the children, we would rush up to the deck, up the flight of steps, go up to the deck, up the flight of steps, go up to the deck and then throw little bits to the seagulls that would come and eat them. And then the next thing I remember was, like I said, it was Christmas and New York, we must have come in like five, somewhere around dinner time. Maybe four or five o'clock. And it was just getting kind of dark. The sky was still, but all these beautiful lights were on. And we just didn't have electric lights on big poles and all of this. And, oh, we were so thrilled. It was going to be so nice. And we went into this big building which was Ellis Island. Now, we used to call that "Castle Guarda". The castle that was guarded, see. And there is some literature on that in the Slovak magazines about Castle Guarda.

GUMB: Could you spell that?

MARTIN: It's like C-A-S-T-L-E, Castle, and G-A-R-D-A-, Garda.

GUMB: And in Hungary that means guarded castle?

MARTIN: That means "the castle is guarded." You know why, so that
 the immigrants are held back until they are screened and until

they're processed. They had to delouse them. And all of this. So it was guarded. That's what it meant. And then too, we were being told about the "liberty lady". And that was something beautiful to us because we thought she represented the free life. I mean this is what our parents told us, my mother and the fathers of the others that were there with them, you know, they'd say, "There's the lady, that's the Liberty Lady." So, like in my memory the liberty lady to me was the first close thing of America that I really felt was, "I'm with it, it's mine." So, and then, like I said, Ellis Island was okay. So we came in this big building and the lights were all on, there was a big staircase and it was all decorated with red and green and everything. And there was this man in a red uniform, Santa Claus, with a big white beard. You see, in Hungary we only had St. Nicholas who was a man from the village. But he didn't, he wasn't dressed up. He was just in his clothes. And he would carry a wand with something on it, ribbons or something on it. And a wreath, I think. So Santa Claus was something very nice to a child and then when they let us in there he was sitting by this big bin and it had presents in there. And little girls would get baby dolls. Most of the girls got baby dolls and the boys got teddy bears. Or little cars or a truck. Some sort of a toy. Well, I wanted a teddy bear because I always had baby dolls and I never had a teddy bear. But they were for boys. I didn't get one. Anyway, that's why I love teddy bears. So then we went in and of course they sat us at big long tables in the dining room and fed us food. Whatever it was. But the nicest thing was usually that you would go from there back into this auditorium where you were seated or stood and they would show you movies in the evening after dinner. We were shown Charlie Chaplin who was funny. And we did see movies in Hungary sometimes,

like on rare occasions. Maybe Uncle John and my mother would take us someplace and we saw this "mozie house". "Mozie" is movie house in Hungarian. And anyway, then we would have, oh, and you might put down "mokus" is a bear. M-O-K-U-S, mokus, that's a bear. So anyway, we would, after we saw these movies, all the women and girls would be ushered in to certain quarters which were the dormitories. They were metal racks like, bunk beds. It was like bars. And they had a mattress on it and then you had your blanket. And all the children, before they would be sent to bed, the mothers stayed with the girls, we would get these little waxed, folded paper cups. I don't know if you ever saw them or not, but they were paper cups and they were pretty heavily waxed and we would have milk and a graham cracker. Now I never had a graham cracker before, but that's what we had. And then we would play with these cups. We'd take them all apart and make little hats out of them and different things. And then, well, the morning, everyday was the same. You'd go, after you'd gotten yourself dressed, you would go into the dining room. You'd get your breakfast. From the breakfast room you'd go back to the auditorium and you would just walk or sit or talk or whatever. You's spend hours in that big room. And mostly people were walking, just to keep active. And of course we never had too much money to buy a lot of the goodies but they did have the stands where you could buy magazines and things. And um, anyway then it would be lunchtime. You'd go back to the dining room and if you got there first you were lucky because the rolls or the buns, you know, would be plentiful. But if you got there k\late then you didn't get any. So everybody rushed to get in there. And then back to the auditorium. That was your routine the whole week. In and out. In and out all the time. But as for the children, until we got the measles, the trouble was

there must have been an epidemic of measles that January of 1920. And it just seemed like with four children one would go down, be taken to the hospital, to the infirmary, like they called it. So when my turn came to go to this hospital, I was probably very sick and I'm laying there and as I was laying on this, we were still in bunks at the hospital. As I was laying there , there was a little window and I looked through the window. I was thinking I would see my mother. And I see a black face on the pillow. Like the pillow was straight down and I see this black face. And I thought, "Oh, that chimney sweep didn't even wash his face before he went to lay down on that nice white pillow." That was bothering me that he was going to get that pillow all dirty. Well, then the next day he was still all dirty. Still had this black face. So then when my mother came to visit I told her, I said, "Mama, they don't even wash here. He's laying on a nice white pillow." And she started to tell me that no, that he was a black person. Well, that stayed with me. I didn't know what a black person was. She said no matter how many times he wash his face he wouldn't get clean. Because our chimney sweeps in Budapest, when they would walk, coming from their job, naturally they were black, they were sooty. But then once they got cleaned up they were us, you now, regular people. So that was an experience. And so then, like I said, it was a happy day when the last one of us came out of the hospital. In the meantime my sister, when she had her measles, she had an infection in the ear. And that held us up another ten days till they cured her. They would never let you out amongst the people, you know, with any infection or anything. So that was it.

GUMB: We'll fill in some details there, but just to go back, back to the

voyage. What class were you traveling? Do you remember what class you were traveling?

MARTIN: Okay, now first class was the ritzy. Third class is what we were. So we were probably three down below. Because I remember we climbed steps and steps to get to the deck. It wasn't just one flight.

GUMB: What were the accommodations like?

MARTIN: Okay, the y were bunks. Also in the cabins. And I had developed some sort of a boil or something on my shoulder and I remember my mother used to go down and get warm cloth from the kitchen or somewhere and they would put those applications on because that hurt when I would move, you know. So my brothers and my sister would go up to the deck and I had to be down in bed and naturally I cried, you know. So that kept my mother in too.

GUMB: Okay. Was it clean?

MARTIN: Yes. We had, I really can't tell you what kind of blankets or anything. The only thing I remember that, at the dormitory there were no sheets. The blanket was right next to you. And we didn't like the wool next to our body, you know, next to our arms and that. But outside of that--

GUMB: That was at Ellis Island?

MARTIN: Ellis Isle. Outside of that it was nice. Like I say, we had gotten fresh milk and graham crackers and after a meal you would get some kind of cookies or something.

GUMB: This is the end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is the beginning of side two. Mrs. Martin, what possessions did you bring with you, do you remember what kind of things your family brought?

MARTIN: Well, we had a big trunk. It was a big, what do they call it, it wasn't a foot locker. It was actually a trunk. A big box about the size of this and then tall, you know, it had a hump on it. And everything, our possessions were in there. Which was a bottle of cognac for my daddy, wrapped in a pillow. And I think there was two feather pillows in there. And probably a, what we used to call a perinia, P-E-R-I-N-I-A. Perinia was a down comforter. Made by my mother from the goose that we had, the geese that we had at home. She would take the feathers and clean them up. So that was, and then we had golden earrings because I've had pierced ears since I've been a child. And they had little coral beads and my mother had a necklace, probably from her wedding. Maybe daddy gave that to her. And the boot. I want to show you the boot after a while. That was from Hungary. And really, outside of that, the clothes we had on us. I seem to remember my brothers traveling with a back pack. Some sort of a bag on their back. A pack. But I just came as I was. I don't remember carrying anything.

GUMB: It was just one boot?

MARTIN: No, no. This is a, if you open that you'll see it in there.
It's just an ornament.

GUMB: Oh, it's a ceramic, decorative boot.

MARTIN: Green glass. And it has the Queen of Hungary on there. A silver thing.

GUMB: Okay. How long was the voyage? Do you remember?

MARTIN: I'm afraid I really can't answer that in full detail because, okay, they said something about, so it was cold, but I really don't remember. All I know is it was Christmas week, Christmas day when we came to New York, to Ellis Island. And then we landed in Pennsylvania, Homestead, Pennsylvania, the 20th of January.

GUMB: You mentioned a little bit about the Statue of Liberty.
Do you remember seeing it when you first came in?

MARTIN: Oh yes. Because probably from the big boat we were put on smaller launches or ferries or something. Because those came close. And naturally as we were getting close mother would take us and say, "That's the Lady. See, that's the Liberty Lady." So we were all thrilled that we saw the statue.

GUMB: So the vessel, ocean liner came into the harbor and then what happened?

MARTIN: And then we came down the gangplank or the whatever, onto these smaller things. Now the baggage didn't come. I don't know what happened to the baggage.

But the people. We were just like coming out of a theater. You know, just people and people. And we got into these boats and it was seats like benches. And when it was loaded they would go and turn back and come. Now I don't know how many of them went to unload a ship. But that's what we did.

GUMB: Do you remember the first thing that happened on Ellis Island, when you first arrived? What was the thing that first happened?

MARTIN: Really, just this big beautiful room, I'll never forget that staircase, now what that staircase meant, I don't know. But it was like a big winding staircase and Santa was sitting at the bottom with this big bin or box or whatever he had, with all these toys. And he was, "Ho, ho, ho." That was the first thing that I learned. Santa Claus says, Ho, ho, ho." And the gifts were given out.

GUMB: Santa was in the big room, the auditorium?

MARTIN: Santa was at the foot of this big staircase. And the staircase had like a round bannister all the way up. So whether it was going to another ballroom, I don't know.

GUMB: When you first arrived, were there any kind of examinations? Medical examinations or something?

MARTIN: Oh yes. Like I said, whatever they called delousing, the children cried. I remember crying. My mother had to push me to go there with this nurse and they sprayed us or whatever. All our clothes were off and the clothes were steamed. The clothes were put into some sort of an oven or a bin or a washer or whatever. It was steamed. And then they would shake them. The nurse would shake them and we'd put them on. And then we went into this area, this big um, auditorium, that's all I can say it was.

And then from there they would lead us through to the dining room, to the dormitories or wherever. But I never remember being allowed out where we could see the water. We were just in the building.

GUMB: So um, uh, do you remember anything else about the medical examinations? What else they looked at or what they looked for?

MARTIN: Well, like I say, the nurses would take care of the women and the girls and the boys had probably men. We were separated. The men and the boys and the ladies and the girls. And we got our clothes back. They were still warm when we were putting them on. I remember that because I kind of resented that I had to take my clothes off and I didn't like the way they threw my clothes into this big thing to be steamed. But anyway, that's what it was. And outside of the, like I said, the meals and the, you know, going in to the dorms--

GUMB: Do you remember what else they looked at, what were the other?

MARTIN: Oh, the heads. Yeah, they looked for lice. Well, of course, some had it, some didn't. I mean we probably didn't have any because we weren't held back for that. I don't remember, you know, them saying that we had to go on another lone. We went with my mother and went right through. My sister and I. And ah, and then that's about it. And while we were there they would take you every now and then, before you went to bed, and they would run you through a line and they gave us these long sort of flannel soft gowns. They were white. Before we would go to bed. And with these gowns on, these nurses took us through a room that was all white and had instruments. So that was probably where they were checking us. They looked at our throats and our ears. So they did check us.

GUMB: So why were you held back? What was the problem?

MARTIN: Measles. That was the only thing.

GUMB: Who, who first had them, one of your--

MARTIN: My oldest brother Emery went down first. And he didn't have it too bad. And my mother was very happy that she was going to be able to come. Now, the only thing I don't remember, did my mother have the money with her, on her at this time? Because she was so disappointed that the next one came down with measles which meant that we couldn't leave. And then it came all down the line. Because we were all together. All the kids were playing together and it was one bog place so naturally if one had it the others would get it. And if it hadn't been for my sister's infection, the ear infection, I think we would have been out of there maybe in ten days.

GUMB: So, you've really described the routine, the daily routine. Something about the meals. Do you remember any details about the food? What sort of food they gave you?

MARTIN: Mostly because, well, they gave us vegetables. Because I remember eating carrots and green beans. And, see, we had that, that's what we raised. So that's what we used to eat. The food was good and the only thing was that everyone tried to get a roll because they didn't seem to have enough rolls on the tables. Or maybe some were greedy and took more than their share. So if you came last to that particular table you didn't have any rolls. And bread was life.

GUMB: You mentioned that the boys and girls were separated. They were in different places on the Island. How did you meet up? How did families, how did your family meet?

MARTIN: This was all in Ellis Island. All in this building. I mean like

this dormitory, this auditorium must have been the center. And then all the passages. So you would go in line up until you get to the quarters. And then the men's quarters must have been like one side and the ladies on the other. So that's where we were separated. But then, to eat we all ate together in the dinning room. In the auditorium everybody was together.

GUMB: Was there, you were there on Christmas Day, right, when Santa was giving out presents?

MARTIN: Yes, when he was giving out gifts.

GUMB: Was there a Christmas Dinner? Do you remember?

MARTIN: There was a big Christmas tree and we had a lot of goodies. We had good food. Everybody was happy. So probably that was our Christmas dinner. I can't really sat, see, we always had a lot of chicken and everything at home. Geese, chicken, ducks. So I guess, you know, if they did have it, it wasn't any different to me. It was a Sunday meal.

GUMB: Do you remember the attitude of the officials, the people that handled you?

MARTIN: The nurses were very, the ladies in white, we used to call them. They were very nice. I mean, they talked to the children. They stroked their hair, and they touched their cheeks and held our hands. They were nice. Like when they gave us our milk. Sometimes maybe if there was a pretty child some nurse would kiss the child on the cheek. They were really very nice.

GUMB: How about the men? Those officials, did you have any contact with them?

MARTIN: I can't say because, like I said, it was usually separated, you know. But they had guards walking around in uniform. I thought they were policemen. And all around this auditorium they would walk. Sometimes there were two together. It was either dark blue or black uniforms. And we saw them come we used to call them gendarmes. Because we thought they were police, you know. And my mother said no, they were just helping us, they were guarding us.

GUMB: What kind of uniforms did they have?

MARTIN: It was dark and they had a cap like the cabbies or like a, even like a red cap at the airport, you know, had a peak on it.

GUMB: You mentioned that you spoke to the nurses. What language did you use?

MARTIN: Well, the only thing that would be, they always had an interpreter. Every floor or every whatever, where the people were gathering. So that person would come over and talk to your mother and she would relate to you. And otherwise, I mean we didn't, because even with children we would play but we didn't understand them and they didn't understand us. But children get along, you know.

GUMB: Okay, um, you mentioned something about there were stands, sort of food stands in the auditorium?

MARTIN: On the walls. It was like, almost like any newsstand. Say, like on a corner sometimes in a big city, you have magazines hanging and someone behind there would

hand you what you wanted. And that's what I'm referring to. And there were chocolate bars. There was candy wrapped in tin foil. That's what I remember.

GUMB: How did you pay for it?

MARTIN: Well, mama always gave us these little coins, dimes or nickels or whatever they were. Because evidently when you got into, I was going to say Castle Garda, you would change your money, see. If you had Hungarian money you would change it because this was New York. This was already America.

GUMB: And your mother did change money?

MARTIN: Oh yes, because she gave us, she would give the boys the money because she never liked to let us out of her sight unless my two brothers were with the two girls, because, well, a mother is afraid for girls. So if the boys were there they would get the money and we would go and buy whatever we were going to buy and we had to come back to her.

GUMB: Right. And there was the story about your brother and you going to the stand.

MARTIN: Well, that was it, see. They had these coins and I remember just my youngest brother and myself. Now he said that we were going to get oranges and I said, "Well, I have money, (?)," and I said, "I'm gonna go too." And he didn't want to take me because I was a girl. But anyway, finally he said okay. So he had this little thing and when I saw he had the little one I thought I'm gonna get more than he because mine was bigger. Well, I was very disappointed when she handed me one orange. It was a lady with a babushka. I don't know what nationality she was but she was working. And I'm looking at her and she gives my brother two oranges and I just couldn't understand. So then I come

back in tears to my mother and she said, "Well, that was more money." And, you know, you get double for that value. That was the story of the orange. And of course they smelled so good to us, the oranges, we loved them.

GUMB: What was the, you know, why did your brother?

MARTIN: He had a dime and I had a nickel.

GUMB: Right.

MARTIN: I mean that was explained to me later.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, so um, let's see, um, did you remember where your mother exchanged the money on Ellis Island? Do you remember anything about that?

MARTIN: No, I really can't say. All I know is that every now and then mother would say, "You stay with these people." Either the Holishaks or the Causes. Because the ladies had to go to do something. So probably they had to get either money or change money or maybe they were being questioned or whatever. So that person would look out for us four while our mother left. And it had to be business, you know.

GUMB: When you came down with the measles, they took you to another place on Ellis Island?

MARTIN: No, just into the infirmary.

GUMB: Oh, to the infirmary.

MARTIN: It was just another hallway. Everything was hallways, you

know,

GUMB: You don't remember going to a hospital?

MARTIN: Well, it was a hospital because the ladies were in white, had the little nurses caps on. And there was a man in white, the doctors, with the stethoscope. But I know that I was so sick and I was crying because I didn't want to leave my mother and they couldn't take my mother with me. So when this lady in white took me, you know, I probably was a crying little girl.

GUMB: Okay, um, okay so you finally, how did you get the word that you were going to be released, that your time was over?

MARTIN: Well, okay, after the last one, after my sister was released from the hospital, naturally my mother went to this stand or station, wherever it was that she was supposed to go to, and gave them the word that we were ready, you know, that all the children are treated, had their measles and that Mary's infection was gone. And then we prepared to board a train because we came from there to wherever we had to go.

GUMB: Your father didn't meet you on Ellis Island?

MARTIN: My father met us in New York at one of the stations. But it wasn't, it wasn't in the building. It had to be somewhere at one of the railroad stations. Because I remember seeing him. Mother said, "Her comes your father, your daddy." Like she called him, we used to call him "Papa." And she said, "And Aunt Mary." Who was her aunt, my mother's aunt. She had, she was the one in the beer business here, by the name of Gris.

GUMB: How long had it been since your mother and father had seen each other?

MARTIN: Oh, okay, so he left before the war, which was like 1912, and this was 1919. Six years, seven years.

GUMB: What was, when you saw this man, what was your feeling?

MARTIN: My mother always told me that he had whiskers. Bausi. And I went over and I touched him. Well, we had pictures. We had a wedding picture of mother and dad. So that, you know, was my father. And he had the moustache. And I remember touching it, you know, and I said to mom, "Daddy's got a moustache." That was a very happy occasion.

GUMB: Okay. When you first came into New York to go to that railway station where you met your father, do you remember your initial impression of this new place?

MARTIN: Well, it was very noisy and very cold. It was January. It was really very cold and I remember my mother was just trying to hold me close to her with the shawl that she had and all. And grandma, this cousin of mine, she had, we called her Grandma Gris later in years, anyway, Like I said, she was my mother's aunt. She had a big coat with a big fur collar. And I was running my hand on that fur collar because I thought it was so pretty. But it was really cold and I don't think, all we thought of was getting home to wherever we were going.

GUMB: So once you arrived in Homestead, what struck you? Were you struck by anything as being particularly new?

MARTIN: The whole thing was, see, right after the station, after we got off

that porch, the railroad station, we got into this truck which was noisy. It was an old Ford truck. Had roll away sides that they would drop down and they dropped them to keep the wind from coming on us. And we got to this house because this cousin of my mother's was, one of her sons had a butcher shop. And next to the butcher shop was a house. A wooden house. And it had people living in front and people living in the back. And we had the back part of this house which was three or four rooms. And we stayed there for about four years. We lived at this house and it was only a walking, about three blocks from the mill gate where my father worked. So it was very close to the mill.

GUMB: Were there any difficulties in adjusting to the new country?

MARTIN: Oh yes. There was a lot of fights because the boys would call my brothers "greeny" and "honky" and naturally they fought. But the girls didn't have any trouble. I mean, you know, we played. We brought our little dolls out or our toys or whatever we had and we used to play on the steps. There was three steps going up to the house and we would sit there. Or if you were going to the, drinking water we got from a pump which was four doors down. My mother would take two buckets and she would go for drinking water. So we would accompany her. And we had a spigot for, I guess it was river water, for washing.

GUMB: How was it to, did you start school right away?

MARTIN: Okay. This was January so they put my two brothers into the first ward, which was a public school. About four blocks down our street. It was the Homestead School. It was called the first ward. And the girls, the family that is, the cousins said to my mother, "Mary, you should put the girls in a Catholic school." So the only Catholic school was St. Michael's, and it was a Slovak school. So we had to learn the Slovak language, the English language, because we only knew Hungarian.

GUMB: So you had two new languages to learn?

MARTIN: Yes, but it wasn't too bad. The Sister at the school was, spoke both languages. And like at lunchtime she would take all these Hungarian children into her office and she would translate or have us repeat or read or whatever. She was very helpful. Sister Alberta.

GUMB: How did this new life that you found here compare to with your expectations of it?

MARTIN: Well, it was wonderful because we were with my father and we were in America. And, I mean the poverty that we had here, which we had a better house there, and probably had better food because things were tough here. And like I said, daddy was just a mill worker. But we always had enough to eat and we had nice clean clothes and we had my mother and father and that was the main thing.

GUMB: Um, Wendy? Mrs. Martin, were there any customs that you brought from the native county that you continued to practice here, your family?

MARTIN: Well, okay. As far as going to church we had to walk. We had to cross two railroad tracks to get to St. Michael's Church. Which was a twenty minute walk from where our house was. That is, our home where we lived at the time. We rented from this cousin of mine. And we would walk to church. And then you met different people at church almost every Sunday when we would go somebody was there that we didn't know that was there. And that was a happy thing, you know. It was nice to see them. And then they would come

to visit or somebody would bake something American, like maybe a layer cake. Chocolate cake, which was rarity in Hungary. We didn't have cocoa. I don't remember cocoa in Hungary. And hot chocolate and cake was a treat here. And as far as the clothes, see we had the same kind of clothes like people wore here because it wasn't peasant costume. It wasn't the big flared skirts with the scarves and that.

So that was no different. But the boys had a little harder adjustment, I think, because they just didn't fit in. I mean they couldn't speak the language and my younger brother was very ambitious. He was, they used to call him, "the little Jew" because he could get a job selling papers or washing cars or anything. He would work his way with a buddy. And it seemed like he didn't have a hard adjustment like my older brother did. My older brother, this family had a drug store, somebody in the family had married a druggist. And Emory worked in the drug store delivering prescriptions to the homes. To the sick people. So we were pretty well adjusted.

And then we moved. Okay we lived there till 1923 and then in November of '23 we bought a house. This cousin helped. She gave us the money. Mom and daddy bought a house in Monhull and that was close to my father's mill again. Because he could go in under the tunnel and still get into the mill within a few minutes from the house. And that was always the most important thing was to be close to the man's job or whatever, so that he could go to work. Because the father was the only wage earner in those days, mostly.

GUMB: As far as the customs, were there any things that you did, let's say at Christmas time, that came from the old country?

MARTIN: Well, we made our, what we called vilia, that's Christmas Eve. The family would gather and even like maybe our uncles or like maybe eight people instead of the four or five that lived in that house. Somebody would always come. That was the custom. You had to have visitors. Family coming. And we had the sauerkraut juice was boiled with onions and butter and that, and then they put mushrooms into it. You got fresh mushrooms, you dried them, saved them for Christmas, and you boiled them till they were tender, you chopped them and put them into this sauerkraut juice. Also the kraut was kept because you made raw potato dumplings in boiled water. And you would put the sauerkraut on them. And then the sweet part was poppy seed ground, boiled with honey or sugar, and you baked long strips, like pretzel dough. Cut them up in little tiny pieces and you baked them in the oven. And then you poured this diluted honey and poppy seed over them. And you ate that like a pudding. It was cold. So that was the custom. And then if course you had the paska, the bread, which a big round loaf. P-A-S-K-A, that was the paska. And then we cracked nuts. We played cards in the evening, Christmas Eve. And the children would use the little filberts and the big people used the walnuts. So you always had nuts at home to play cards with in the evening. Now I don't remember what kind of cards we played but the winner always got the pot.

GUMB: When did you become a U.S. citizen?

MARTIN: Okay. We moved in our house in 1924. And my father was already a citizen, but my mother and he and this aunt that came to New York to pick us up, they went to Pittsburgh somewhere. And my mother became the citizen. And automatically, if your father was a citizen all his children were citizens. This was before 1926, I think the law ended somewhere in 1926.

GUMB: Did you use the same name in this country as in the old country?

MARTIN: F-E-C-Z-K-O. My father's name was George Feczko. And that was spelled the same and used the same. Except when we went to this school, my sister and I went to this Catholic Slovak school and that pastor had written down F-E-C-K-O and that sort of angered my mother because she wanted a Z in it. That was her name, you know, her husband's name. My mother's maiden name was Husoszky. Maria Husoszky.

GUMB: Why don't you spell that.

MARTIN: H-U-S-O-S-Z-K-Y. Husoszky.

GUMB: Do you have any idea what would have happened to you. what your life would have been like if you had stayed in Hungary?

MARTIN: Well, it probably wouldn't have been bad because there was doctor family in Hungary that had taken to my brother and they didn't have any children. And this doctor wanted my brother to go and live with them, run errands for him and help him. He was getting to be an older man. And they, in other words, wanted to adopt him. He would have been a doctor. My younger brother. My older brother who was running errands for the man that had this store, there was only one store, like a, you know, what was it, a general store, in this place where we lived. And he would deliver things that people bought, like to the rich, to the mayor and to those people. So evidently if we had stayed we, I guess they were hard working people and they would have made end meet. But my father seemed to think that America would have been the better place to raise the children. So he said, "Mary, I'm going. And I'll send for you." But then the war broke out while he was on the ocean and it was the war of what, 1914, was that a German queen or somebody was assassinated or

something. Had to do something with a German I think. And that was the conflict. That was the reason for the war. So that's why we were separated so long.

GUMB: This is the end of the interview with Mrs. Elizabeth Martin.