

KECK-129

ETTIE LEVITSKY GLASER

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AGE 15 (AS RECORDED IN THE INTERVIEW)

PASSAGE ON "THE ALLIANCE"

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb and I'm speaking with Mrs. Ettie Glaser on the 24th day of January, 1986. We're beginning this interview at eleven o'clock and we're about to interview Mrs. Glaser about her immigration experience from England in the year 1923. Okay Mrs. Glaser, to begin with, where and when were you born?

GLASER: I was born on November 8th, 1905 in London, England.

GUMB: Okay. And, uh, uh, what did you, uh father do for a living?

GLASER: My father was a tailor. And at, and he was in the, well, well I was little, I don't know, but when he was, uh, he was in World War One, he used to make. work in the officer's club, whatever they called it, as a tailor. He would make the uniforms, fix them, whatever.

GUMB: Uh, what, uh, part of London did you stay in?

GLASER: The West End of London. The West End of London. Holborn was the area.

GUMB: And, uh, what kind of, uh, apartment did you live in, or house?

GLASER: Awful. It was a building, because when you go back all those years (she laughs), I'll go back seventy years. Uh, there were no bathrooms, no toilets. You had to go into the hall. And so many people shared. And as far back as I can remember, the rooms were very, very tiny. Very tiny. But as a child, you grow up and you don't know any better. The house, the building is still there.

GUMB: Did you go to school there?

GLASER: Yes, yes. Public school. But I left, oh it was another thing, those years when your fourteen years old you could quit school. Not quit, leave school and go to work. Which I did. I worked in a dress shop in Leicester Square. As an apprentice, they called it an apprentice.

GUMB: Why did you quit school?

GLASER: Well I finished the, the grade that I was, there was no high school or college at that time and I wasn't smart enough, I guess.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, so at, how old were you when you decided to come to America?

GLASER: Well, I didn't decide to come, I have to tell you this, because, uh, my brother was a prize fighter and he made some money and sent for my sister and myself. I was fifteen and a half years old. And, uh, he sent us the money and, uh, we came to the United States. Hopefully.

GUMB: He, he was living here.

GLASER: Yeah, he was, he was, had been.

GUMB: Why had he come to America?

GLASER: Uh, he immigrated. He was the, as I say, was a prize fighter, got different fights that sent him to different parts of the world. And I guess his manager sent him to, uh, America.

GUMB: So, uh, you were fifteen and a half when, uh--

GLASER: When I got on that HMS Alliance.

GUMB: Uh, it seems kind of young.

GLASER: I was very young. I cried, I stood on the, on the docks and my mother and father were there and I cried. I was excited and I cried because I didn't know where I was going. I knew what I was leaving but I didn't know where I was going. But, uh, when you, nothing, when you're that age you get, talk to people and, uh, you forget very quickly. Like a little child, sometimes.

GUMB: Uh, I'm wondering, why did you want to come here? What, uh--

GLASER: I didn't want to, I had not intentions, I had no knowledge that I was coming here. That my brother had written and said here were the tickets and it's wonderful here and they'll take care of us girls, take care of us. And so we thought it would be a better world.

GUMB: Uh, uh, what did your parents think of you leaving?

GLASER: Well, they were sad, but not unhappy about it. They thought also it would be better for us growing girls. And that we would find a better place to live and do whatever we wanted to do.

GUMB: Do you remember a lot of hardship, uh, during your life in England? Before you came here.

GLASER: Well, not so much hardship, no. Uh, as a young child I was pretty happy. My mother had five children, well only my sister and myself are left. And, uh, my mother was

always a hard worker. In London you have fish and chips. And she always made fish and chips for all the neighbors. It was really, nothing to complain about. My mother was a sick lady all the time. Most of the time spent in the hospitals after certain, but she survived and eventually moved to California. She passed away in California. And, uh, and I remained with my sister in Manhattan, New York City. In Harlem, to be exact. If you know anything about Harlem, today, it's not what it used to be. Oh, everything changes.

GUMB: Okay, so what's, uh, uh, uh, you, the decision had been made to come to this country. What sort of procedures did you have to go through?

GLASER: Well, we had to go to the immigration department and get visas. Because at that time also, there was only a certain amount of subjects let in from every country. The British, I think the British subjects were, uh, allowed a little more than other countries. And, uh, nothing, got our picture taken, and that was it. Had to get ready to go.

GUMB: Did you have to. uh, go to, well you had to go to the American Consulate to get a visa?

GLASER: I truthfully don't remember where I went. I guess we did because, uh, uh, the passports are given at the consulate. The American Consulate, yeah.

GUMB: While you were living in England, uh, what sort of stories had you heard about America? What, from your--

GLASER: Well, when I was a little girl, I used to walk on the street, one of the main streets there, and there was a hotel there, and every time I saw a man with big eyeglasses I knew he was from America because nobody in London wore glasses like that. Tortoise shell glasses and we knew he was from, and it was very thrilling. Uh, and well what you hear from America when you're, when you're far away, far, far away, miles across the ocean. That America's the land of gold. Land of opportunity and the streets are paved with gold. Those were the words that we used to hear. But, of, course, it's not true. We all know that.

GUMB: Had, had you met anybody who had been here and had come back to England?

GLASER: Not at that age, no. No, not at that age.

GUMB: Uh, okay. So, uh, uh, what, uh, port did you leave from?

GLASER: Southampton. I think it stayed, the boats, uh, ships still leave from there because that's the only, uh, place that, the only port that ships depart from.

GUMB: Did you feel like you were leaving for good? Or, or that you were going to come back?

GLASER: Well what I hoped was that we were leaving for good, but that my mother and father would come. My father eventually passed away over there but my mother remained. And we wanted her to come here. Because it was, after we got off Ellis Island and we lived in New York City, uh, in Manhattan, no we lived in Harlem. But we knew all about Manhattan and all that stuff. We figured it would be much, the living, even if we thought, we found that the average working person in America at that time, was rich

according to English standards. Because if your poor in London you're poor. But here, when we saw, uh, uh, even, uh, flats, they called them flats or apartments, with their own bathroom, then you're rich. You know, that's very, that's marvelous. And a separate beautiful kitchen and what. Of course, this is really a palace to what we had then, but, uh, wherever we lived, we had very, very nice. Of course we didn't live alone, we lived with cousins certain removed number of times. Because they gave us a room.

GUMB: Well, uh, uh, do you remember what sort of possessions you brought? Do you remember any kind of special things that you brought with you?

GLASER: My father made us, as I say, he was a tailor. He made us the most beautiful suits. And, and dresses and all kinds of things. But, according to, to one of my relatives who I found, a new relative that I had found, was my mother's sister, but through us she was a new relative. And, uh, she said they didn't wear those kind of things here. But they did after a while. And everything, so we had to go and buy. But as far as, nothing personal if that's what

you mean. Nothing. Nothing personal except the belongings that we had.

GUMB: The suits that you were wearing, weren't in style here, was a different style?

GLASER: Oh, I thought they were beautiful, they were sort of, of like a riding habit. My father made the most beautiful, he was such a good tailor. I, I, but not as long as a riding habit, you know, flared. And, uh, and very pretty dresses. And yet, they, my aunt said, "They don't wear them here." So, we had to go out and buy different dresses. Was very disappointing.

GUMB: What do you remember of the voyage? Coming over.

GLASER: Yes, the voyage was very crowded. We were second class. Very crowded because, uh, those years also you had first, second, and third class. You could not go near the first class passengers. And, uh, as I say, it was very crowded, we had a small cabin, the two of us. And we had, as far as I can remember, we had a little fun on the ship. I remember winning something with guessing. Certain amount

in that was, but, wa in, was ten days, of course, today you, four or five days. And the sea was very rough and it took us ten days to get here.

GUMB: Uh, what was the difference, what's the difference between second class and third class? Do you have any--

GLASER: The accommodations. Third class is like steerage, if you know anything about steerage. You're, you don't, you're in, uh, like a dormitory as they could crowd as many people as they could in there. Second class , at least you had your own, if you're with somebody, you have your own cabin. Small as it is. Of course I don't know about first class, I was--. But the ship, according to the space, was very small. Although I remembered we had a lot of people on there, over seven hundred people on the ship. That's a lot of people for the size of the ship.

GUMB: Okay, uh, do you remember what kind of food they had on the vessel? Know anything about that?

GLASER: No, nothing, nothing outstanding, I mean you couldn't select, there was no menu. You just got what they served.

Like they did in Ellis Island. But, uh--

GUMB: All right. Once the, uh, uh, vessel approached New York harbor, do you remember what your first impressions were?

GLASER: Big. Everything was so big. We saw the tall buildings, we just, all we kept doing was skyscraper looking, my God, where's the end of the building, you know, it was so, so tall. Not even as tall as they are today, like the twin buildings.

GUMB: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

GLASER: Yes, we thought it was beautiful, but that was before we knew where we were going. That was before--

GUMB: You had heard of the Statue of Liberty? You knew what it was?

GLASER: Uh, well, not so much as, maybe in school, I don't remember exactly, but, they, we had lessons about America and, uh, the Statue of Liberty. (A doorbell rings in the background, who could come?)

GUMB: So, uh, when the vessel came into New York harbor, do you remember anything about where it docked?

GLASER: Pier 23. Pier 23 which is no more, I don't think. Cunard line, it was the Cunard line. Pier 23.

GUMB: Once the vessel had docked, what happened? What was the procedure?

GLASER: That's a sad story, do you want me tell it to you?

GUMB: Yes, please.

GLASER: Well as I came, my sister and I came to visit an uncle, and my, the aunt was my mother's sister and her husband whom I had never seen. My uncle was at, maybe he was anxious to see us because he was the one that, uh, you have to come to somebody, uh, you can't become a public charge. You have to come, somebody has to, uh, account for you. Anyway, he thought that he could get us off the ship before going through the immigration which was not possible. So, whatever he did, maybe gave the guards a

couple of dollars, I don't know, but because of that, they didn't let us off the ship. And they said they have to hold us for further investigation. And I remember we cried like babies. Because we didn't know where we were going or what they were going to do with us. So, anyway, they, he had to go home and, uh, they put us on, we, we, they put us on the side and we were watching other people.

Those that were going to other Ellis Island those that were not. Some sad cases, uh, I remember there were two sisters and their father was blind and they would not let him go through because of being, becoming a public charge.

Although they were going to a brother, but they wouldn't let him, we thought that, of course, we were so young and we didn't think a lot of serious things then. But we thought it was so sad. So, anyway, they put us on this, uh, whatever it was, steerage boat, like a, what do you call when that crosses the, uh--

GUMB: Ferry?

GLASER: A ferry, like a ferry, yes. And everybody was standing up. And they took us to this God forsaken place. Oh my God, when we saw that, we thought we were going to jail.

Because it was all fenced and everything. Really, really, you would think they would harbor criminals there instead of just immigrants. Because I don't think it was, should I say this?

GUMB: Sure.

GLASER: I don't think it was really, because in those days it was, the prejudice was bad, very bad.

GUMB: Prejudice for, about what?

GLASER: About different nationalities. And. I'll come to that. My, my name on my passport is Levitsky. That was my, before I got married. And so, when you came in they grouped you in different groups, by name. They don't look at your passport. They grouped you. And so they put us in a room, not a room, a dormitory on a cot that was as big as this table. No blanket, no pillow, nothing. And being young, you want to cover yourself. You want a pillow to lie on. It was the second, about a day and half we were there and they just treated us like we did not belong. And so I made a, my sister was always the

backward one. I was the one that went forward. And I said, "I want to speak to somebody." And I took my pass, our passports and I said, We are not British, we are British subjects, why are we in here?" Because we didn't know why, they never told us why we were sent to Ellis Island. So, as soon as we, as soon as I showed him the passports, they changed our room. That's what I mean about prejudice. They changed our room, they put us in a smaller dormitory and we got a blanket, we got a pillow. and the, the treatment was much better. So what's in a name? Wrong. See, name means everything.

GUMB: So who did you approach and, and--

GLASER: Uh, I approached, I asked for some kind of an official and they asked you why, when and wherefore, so I showed them my passport. I said, "I don't know where we're supposed to be, but this is terrible." And, uh, because I became very brave. I didn't think I could do it. But anyway, they did, they took it into consideration.

GUMB: Did this person you spoke, speak to, have a uniform?

GLASER: Yes, it was, uh, like a blue guard uniform, uh, official. Like a security guard. Yeah, he was one of the officials. I don't know who he was. I don't remember.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about his attitude, I mean how--

GLASER: No. When I showed him the passports he, his attitude seems to, like I'm sorry. I'm sorry that you had this inconvenience and we'll try to do the best we can to make the rest of your stay, however long, better.

GUMB: So, uh, well to go back, for a second, uh, uh, you said that your uncle had attempted to pay off--

GLASER: He bribed someone. Gave them maybe ten dollars. Maybe instead of going through immigrations, would try to get us off the boat, off the ship, or whatever you call it here.

GUMB: Did you know that at the time?

GLASER: Oh, how could I know? We, we were, that's when they called our names after, we never even saw the man. I didn't see him until he came to pick us up afterwards at

Ellis Island. When they finally released us. I had never met them. Oh no, I didn't know anything about it.

GUMB: Did they never, while you were on Ellis Island, none of the officials ever told you that was--

GLASER: Oh no, I didn't think they knew. This had something to do with, uh, one of the officials on the boat, on the ship, you know. I don't think they had, they, something that they don't uh, I don't think they would say, "Well this guy tried to give me ten bucks to let these people off."

GUMB: Did they ever give you an explanation as to why you were being detained?

GLASER: No. Never found out why. Just that my uncle was not supposed, was not supposed to be where they found him there. I think it's some kind of gangplank or whatever it was. Where the passengers, disembarked, you know. And, uh--

GUMB: Well that, that, uh, barge that was, ferry, that went over to Ellis Island, uh, do you remember anything about that?

How big was it? And were there seats or anything--

GLASER: No, I think we stood. It wasn't that far. I think everybody stood. There were like rails and, I don't remember sitting down at all.

GUMB: Well, was it crowded?

GLASER: Very, very crowded. Lot of, lot of people.

GUMB: What sort of people?

GLASER: Of all nationalities. All nationalities.

GUMB: Do you remember anything what they looked like?

GLASER: Well, it's like you have your pictures, that's some of them with babushkas, some of them with, uh, collars turned up, some of them without. Wish I had my pictures here.

GUMB: Were they all carrying bags?

GLASER: Well, some of them were carrying, uh, like homemade things

that you wrapped up, and then you tie up with cord from Europe. And some of them had big, sort of big duffle bags with their belongings in. Some of them carried things on their shoulder.

GUMB: Were you carrying your bags?

GLASER: Yes. We had suitcases.

GUMB: Right. Okay. So you had to carry them to, to Ellis Island. Okay. Uh, all right. well, uh, what was the first thing that happened on, when you land, when you first landed on Ellis Island> What was the first thing?

GLASER: Well you stood in a long line and you had a, and they didn't check your passports. That I'm pretty sure of. Just asked, the, the name they asked. And then go here, you go there, you go here, you go here. Different lines, you know. According to the nationality that you were. If you're Russian you went this way. If you're Chinese you went that way or whatever country they thought you had to go. So they thought that we were Russian or Polish or something by the name. They never asked where we came

from. We spoke English. We never spoke any other language. We spoke a real good English.

GUMB: So, that, that first room you went to with the cot, with just the simple cot, was that a big room, or--

GLASER: Tremendous room. It must have been about fifty people in there. Women, women, the men were on the other side. And very, very uncomfortable, very uncomfortable. Hard floors, nothing, no, nothing to make you feel even the slightest, slightest bit happier. At, well, maybe it's not so bad, but it was terrible. It really was bad.

GUMB: What else, uh, was bad about it? There was a hard cot, some--

GLASER: Just the environment alone. Just when you looked out of, there was a window. And you saw those high fences. It was like somebody's trying to escape from prison. I mean, I didn't see any reason for that. Because as I say, when your young, you don't think of those things. Except that we sort of were closed in and, uh, why? Why were we there? Why were we there?

GUMB: Was there anything on the walls, did they--

GLASER: I don't remember. Signs, I think, different language signs, if I remember. I'm not sure. But different signs but in different languages.

GUMB: Did you see English?

GLASER: Oh, yes. That's the only thing we could read because the others, well, it's like you see something here in any country now, it's in different languages.

GUMB: Do you remember what it said?

GLASER: No. You're here not because you want to. (She laughs.)

GUMB: So, how long did you stay in--

GLASER: Three days.

GUMB: In this uncomfortable one.

GLASER: About a day and a half. And then we, then we, we were there altogether, three days in Ellis Island.

GUMB: But a day and a half in that uncomfortable one.

GLASER: Yeah, yeah.

GUMB: During that day and a half, uh, how about, how did they feed you?

GLASER: That's something I told already, also. I;m not quite, don't quite remember. I know we had to go into a long room and sit by the table and they, whatever they gave you, you ate it, if you wanted it, if you didn't want it, which I don't think we ate very much. Because English food is not like that slop that they gave you. And it was slop, I could remember. Something's coming back to me a little bit. Not good. Not good.

GUMB: Uh, uh, slop. Can you elaborate.

GLASER: Well, something that doesn't look appetizing. You'd say, "Ooh no, I don't want it. Take it away. Take it away."

You know, something that, even to this day I'm very skeptical of the food I eat. If it doesn't look good I wouldn't touch it. I wouldn't try and eat it. But, uh, whatever they served, they didn't give you, uh, uh, nice toasted bread or sliced anything, or whatever.

GUMB: How about, did the other people eat it?

GLASER: I guess if, maybe because if you're English, your used to better food. I wouldn't say the best, but better food. Where as the other people, maybe to them it was good. Maybe they didn't have it as well where they came from. So I really can't speak for them, but I imagine that they, the food was good to them because they were hungry people. They were all hungry people.

GUMB: That, that short time, that you were there, uh, on Ellis Island, aside from mealtime, how did you occupy the time?

GLASER: There was no way. You just had to sit around, you could walk up and down between the crowded people and waited for the man to come with the chewing gum so that we could buy a stick of gum and learn how to chew gum. Uh, or an

apple. That I remember very well. But there was no, you couldn't go anyplace. You couldn't go out into the yard like the prisoners do. Even prisoners go out in the yard.

No way, it was all enclosed. I could walk up and down, back and forth, and up and down, and back and forth. And that was, that would be extent of the exercise. Good thing I was nice and skinny then.

GUMB: Why do you say that?

GLASER: Well because I was very young and I weighed about ninety-five pounds. (She laughs.) Maybe I had more energy then.

GUMB: Uh, this man, that sold things, uh--

GLASER: He was like a, a vendor and he had, like they do at the ball parks the thing in front of him, you know, a tray. And he sold probably candies and stuff. Which we didn't buy, I think we only bought gum. And we asked why do you do, we saw somebody chewing. What are they chewing? Said, "Gum, spearmint chewing gum." And then another guy would come with, uh, fruit. And we'd buy an apple because they looked so nice. Because we didn't eat the food, very

little of the food, and so we had, uh, fruit. and they came a couple of time a day, I think.

GUMB: Just out of curiosity, what was the, how was the gum packaged?

GLASER: Like today. Yeah. Like today. Five packages to a pack of gum. Five sticks to a package, yeah. I remember it was Wrigley's Spearmint Gum. Wrigley's.

GUMB: Uh, uh, okay. How did you pay for it?

GLASER: We had money, we had, uh, oh I think they took English money, if I'm not mistaken. I'm pretty sure. I think they took English because they exchanged, there was, uh, uh, exchange bank there.

GUMB: Oh, uh, uh, the vendor exchanged your money.

GLASER: Yeah, he took the money.

GUMB: Yeah, okay. Uh, out of curiosity, how did you know what the price was and whether you were paying a different

price?

GLASER: Well he hadn't, I, I think I remember right, he was an honest man. And we gave him what they called a ten cent piece which was like a dime. In those years it was a, five cents a package of gum. So he would give me change and say, "This is a nickel." He'd tell me this is a nickel. Five cents, he collected five cents, a nickel.

GUMB: Did you speak English with him?

GLASER: Oh yes, oh they were English, I mean they were Americans but they would, (clears throat) excuse me, but they were, English, that's the only way we could talk to them.

GUMB: I wondered how they communicated with you.

GLASER: Oh no, they were not foreigners, the vendors were not, they were from the outside, they were allowed to come in and sell. They were not, uh, Ellis Island people.

GUMB: Okay, uh, so when you finally decided that you couldn't take this hard cot and this big room and you got your

courage up to do something about it, how did you know where to go or who to see?

GLASER: I asked somebody, I think, I would ask somebody, uh, I wasn't see, I had my passports in my hand like they were gold, it was a gold mine. And, uh, I wanted to know if there was nay, well I didn't know how too much about the prejudices about the names but I said, "Why would they put us over there?" And I said, "We are British." The minute I said British, the whole attitude changed, but I asked other officials, I mean they were not, they didn't jump down your throat, the officials that were standing around. I asked where I could find some bigger official. And they told me where to go and they allowed me in there.

GUMB: Where did you go?

GLASER: In the same area because it's all on one floor. And through there, through there and I guess I went to an office or something. I guess they were watching me also.

GUMB: Were you, I mean only fifteen and half, uh, you know, a young girl, I would imagine you would be a little scared.

GLASER: No, well, as I say, my sister was the backward one. I was the one, the pushy one. I was the treasurer and everything. No, if I had to say something I would say it. More so now, of course, I married an American and he taught me how.

GUMB: Uh, okay, uh, so, uh, uh, then there was the other room very far away from that big dormitory?

GLASER: Well, it was a different section, it was like sections, C and A, alphabetical order, you know. And I, I don't remember which section I was, but they told us, or somebody took us to this area. And, uh, I mean the difference was like night, being in a place like that, difference was like night to, night and day. Because, "Why, why, I want to know why? Why did this happen?" Because the name you get in the worse place you could be. And if you are, just come from England, you can go to a better place. That should not be. That should never have been. Should never have been. A person's a person, no matter what you are, where you come from. I, as young as we were, we thought that was very wrong. We cried for

other people. We cried for other people because it was so sad. Because if your name was so and so and so and so, well you go over there you belong over there with the dogs, so to speak. Very sad.

GUMB: This is the end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is the beginning of side two. Uh, so, uh, when you moved into this new room, you described a little bit of how it was different from the original space.

GLASER: Well it wasn't so crowded in the first place. We had much, much less women. There was about twenty. And, uh, the bed, the cot had little headboards. Little headboards, so it looked more like a bed. And a pillow and a blanket and it even had a, the mattress even had a sheet over it. Which wasn't in the other room. Just slept on a bare mattress. So it made, gave me a little better feeling. But as feeling is always behind, why,

why?

GUMB: How about the people in this other room. The other people in the new room.

GLASER: Nobody, well nobody was, I think, interested in anybody else. They all kept to themselves, they were all anxious to get to America, to the land of America, not to Ellis Island. Everybody wanted to get off that place.

GUMB: But, do you remember what they looked like? If they were different, if there was a different group of people in the smaller room?

GLASER: No, no, it's the same thing. I think a lot of them wore shawls and long skirts and a lot of skirts. Like Italian ladies used to wear with the, uh, and, uh, lot of, different dress like you, uh, see on a, uh, on a television program. All the different outfits, costumes. Of course they weren't costumes, they were their clothing. But, uh, this is the way it looked. And somehow by looking at them you could tell some of the nationalities. You wore a kerchief here they were

Italian, if the wore kerchiefs here they were Russian.

(Indicating different points on her head, she laughs.)

GUMB: Okay, uh, uh, let's see. Oh yeah, was the food, uh, in the new room, did you eat in the same dining hall?

GLASER: Yes, we had to go to the same dining room. Same slop. Sorry about that.

GUMB: Uh, how did you finally get the news that you were to be released?

GLASER: Well, they called us, they called us, you know, oh, somebody came and called us and said, "You've got to go to an office." And there was my uncle who I, first time I saw him was there. And my aunt and, uh, he never said a word, never said even, and they released us to them. To them, to them. So that we, and they said they would take care of us, which they didn't. And, uh--

GUMB: What happened in this meeting where it was an office with your uncle?

GLASER: Nothing to much, we just had to show our passports again and my uncle had to show he was a citizen of, uh, an American citizen. And my aunt, his wife, had to show also. And where they lived and, uh--

GUMB: Did they ask you any questions?

GLASER: No. Not that I remember. Just said, "Well, your free to go." Just like that, free to go.

GUMB: Was there any, "Sorry for the inconvenience" or--

GLASER: No way. No way. They're not sorry they just did, well maybe they didn't feel like doing it, but this was a thing they had to do. This was a daily thing. Don't forget we were not the only ship coming in. There were other ships coming in with people that had to go to Ellis Island. So, but they never said sorry.

GUMB: Well you never got any explanation from any of the officials.

GLASER: Never. I always said, "Why did they send us there, why?"

Well, actually I did know why because of my uncle. But they never said it was, nothing, no way.

GUMB: When did you learn about what your uncle had done? How much later?

GLASER: He didn't tell me. I never found out. Oh, yes we did. I think one of the officials told us. I say us, my sister and I. That, uh, when things like that happen, it has to be investigated. Because, uh, uh, maybe something might be wrong, you know.

GUMB: One of the officials on Ellis Island told you that?

GLASER: Yeah, as we, in the office, as we were going out. So, and they gave my uncle a good warning also, don't try to do that again. Don't be a smart Alec. His name was Alex. Don't be a smart Alec.

GUMB: How did your uncle explain it to you?

GLASER: He didn't say much about it at all. Because we, as I say, we didn't understand too much about bribing people or

trying to get in this way or getting over that way. We took, took it for granted that. that's what happened and that's what happened. And we were just glad to get off the darn thing.

GUMB: You didn't feel--

GLASER: Well we couldn't say anything to him because he was taking us to his house, so to speak, you know.

GUMB: So, uh, where was his house? Where did you go?

GLASER: Harlem. On 111th Street in Harlem.

GUMB: What avenue?

GLASER: Uh, between Park and Madison. That's where I lived on Madison Avenue.

GUMB: East Harlem. Uh, well, uh, first, do you remember, so your uncle came to Ellis Island and he met you on Ellis Island in that office.

GLASER: Yes. People who came to get somebody, a passenger or immigrant, had to go to a certain office and I don't remember, but I guess they asked him questions and, uh, and are these your nieces? And yes, and you know all that and the other. And he came to the office, of course, it was a great big office, too. Very large. It was, I don't know about now.

GUMB: So, then, how did you get off Ellis Island and where did you go?

GLASER: I think, I think it was like a little ferry that took us back to the shore.

GUMB: Do you remember where? Where it dropped you off?

GLASER: Not too far from the Statue of Liberty. That I remember. It was around that area. Because that's where it all was.

GUMB: So what were your first impressions of this new place?

GLASER: Then I said, "Free at last." That was my first, "Free at last," I said to my sister. "Now we're going to live

here." "What are you going to do?" I said, "We'll see. As long as we're in America we're free, thank God for that. Out Ellis Island behind us, no more Ellis Island."

GUMB: How old was your sister?

GLASER: Seventeen.

GUMB: So, uh, uh, you settled in the, uh, your uncle's home in Harlem, East Harlem.

GLASER: Well, just for a few days. And he, then we went to, I had a lot of relatives in, uh, in the States. Cousins mostly, no close family except this, we had a grandmother, she lived there too. Uh, we couldn't stay at my uncle's house, although he was, supposed to be taking care of us. We went to stay at a cousins. He lived on, uh, Madison Avenue and 116th Street. And we stayed, we had a nice room there, and we stayed, they were a very nice family. And we used to eat there and, and I got myself a, that's my daughter, sorry, I got myself a job the second week I was here. Will that interfere?

GUMB: So, uh, how was the adjustment to the new country? Do you remember any particular problems?

GLASER: Oh we loved it. We loved it very much. All the different shops and the beautiful things and the nice people that we went to visit and my aunt. As I say, I have no relatives here, uncles, and, and, even though he was a poor working man, to us he was a rich man. Because he had such a nice home and his own bathroom. And his own toilet because in London, some of the houses, you have to go out to the next door to the toilet, not, the next house. But out in the landing. Anyway, and, it was very nice and we lived in Harlem near Central Park. It was beautiful there in those years it was lovely. You could walk in the park without being anything.

GUMB: Did you start working?

GLASER: Two weeks after I got here I got a job as a milliner. On 38th Street and Fifth Avenue.

GUMB: How did you get your first job?

GLASER: It was through another relative who was, he was in the millinery line. Was an eight cousin of my mother's and Is said, "I want to get a job." And he said, "Come down." And I got a job right away.

GUMB: So, uh, how, how did the way you found America, how did it compare to what you were expecting? How did it--

GLASER: Oh it came up to my expectations. It was just, just the best of everything. The best of everything. You could go in and buy everything. And everything was so beautiful and all those different stores. And, uh, it was just, and of course, when you look up at all those beautiful buildings, my God, how could they make them so big? So tall. I think that time, of course, the Empire State Building wasn't even finished. I don't think. The Woolworth Building, on Sixth Avenue, was the tallest building at that time. And, oh, it was tremendous. Even the apartment houses was so trem, so big. And I still go back because, not like today, today they build them thirty stories and all apartment buildings. But I mean, eight or nine stories was tall in those days. Just wonderful, just wonderful. We were very happy, we became very happy after

we, trying to forget everything that was behind us. It was a sad experience but we got over it.

GUMB: Uh, how long did it take for you to feel like an American?

GLASER: The day I got married and my husband says you've got the citizenship papers, otherwise they'll send you back to England. Ah, he was just kidding. But, uh, no, but when World War Two came out and they said all people that were not naturalized would have to, uh, inform the immigration social, uh, authorities to become. either to become an American citizen or you have the probability of being sent back to wherever you came from. So I went to school, I went to, uh, took the test and became an American citizen.

GUMB: Uh, so you didn't become a citizen--

GLASER: No, it all changed because when I married my husband the law had changed that year. And if you married an American, you automatically did not become a citizen. So I had to become one on my own. I was always a foreigner.

GUMB: So you had to go to school, and--

GLASER: I didn't go to school, my children taught me, my husband taught me, he was an American boy.

GUMB: But you had to take a little class or something--

GLASER: No I had just, when I was ready, I had to study. Had to study. And then when I went to take the, uh, the, uh, test for the citizenship, that when the best thing happened.

GUMB: What was the test like?

GLASER: Oh, you think I remember now? Not from 1940. I think it's from 1942. Uh, the different presidents, how many people run. I don't know now either. Shame, shame. Uh, how many people run, how many congressmen, how many this?

GUMB: Once you finally, was there some kind of a ceremony to become a citizen?

GLASER: No, just a large, large group of people. Uh, oh, I would say a couple of hundred people. And the judge, whoever is

there, and several judges. But the judge asked, everybody says, swears in at the same time, so it's like a chorus. You know, and said, "You are now become American citizen of the United States of America." And everybody said, cried and they laughed and they clapped hands and they were so happy that they were, that they were, there were people that could not, that were here fifty years in the States, and could not speak a word of English. And had American born children. Now that's a shame. See I could talk Jewish, but I always, my mother always spoke English to me. But I can't, I, I, if you come from another country, you speak the foreign language but you should, you should, talk to your parents in English, so they would know. I think that's the, well--

GUMB: Well, did, did it feel different becoming a citizen?

GLASER: No, I felt I belonged to America. Now when I hear the National Anthem, I cry. The tears come to my eyes because I'm very sentimental. Very sentimental.

GUMB: Were there any customs that you brought, Mrs. Glaser, from England that you continued to practice here?

GLASER: No. When I came from England I used to say, "Well I cahn't' do this and 'tomahto'." And different things that I didn't know was American. Like when I, the gentleman that got me the job, his daughter was from France, but she was a third cousin removed. And my sister and I went for a walk in, in, uh, to Central Park on Fifth avenue. and she was walking with her mother. Now in England, when you buy an ice cream sandwich, it's called wafers. and she said to us, and there was something like a Good Humor man, and then she said to us, "Would you like to have a sandwich?" And we said, "No, thank you we just ate." Which was really, and she looked at her mother and they both started to laugh. So we said, "What are you laughing at?" They said, no, they explained to us that in America you don't say sandwich, you say, no, you don't say wafer, this is what we call an ice cream sandwich. Oh. We felt kind of foolish. Little things. When I, when I started to work, I worked with a lot of young people because I was very young, I was only about, not even sixteen, yet. But, uh, they said, "Don't say it like this, say it like that." And like I said, "Don't say 'cahn't this'." Well I "cahn't" help it. You know they say can't, I can't help it. I can't help it. So you have to get out of it. But, and my

husband use to say he married me because I had such a nice English accent. So, any, eventually I lost most of it. But as far as customs, the only thing, the only custom I, is my fish and chips, which you can't get here anyway, not in Florida.

GUMB: Did you try to loose your accent?

GLASER: No. Automatically, little things, like I still say, my daughter laughs at me, "golf socks," instead of "golf socks." Some words I still--

GUMB: So you just naturally lost it.

GLASER: Yeah, little by little, yeah. But there's maybe a couple of words here and there. Except I drink a lot of coffee instead of tea. That's one of the customs. I like tea, but, very strong tea, like coffee, not very weak tea, and no lemon, milk. Tea and milk is English tea.

GUMB: Do you have any idea what would have happened if you hadn't left England, what your life would have been like?

GLASER: I probably would have gone to work and got a job and maybe met some guy and married him I guess. That's the normal thing for a girl. I happened to have a good looking little girl. (She laughs.) So, uh, well I meant, that's the normal thing for a girl. When your fifteen you don't think, you don't even think of babies or anything or boyfriends or, oh, I had a lot of boyfriends then. They used to sit on the, on the wheel, of the front of the bicycle and used to take me for a ride. And my mother would say, "Don't do that you're gonna fall off, don't do that." No, I think that's a normal thought of a young girl. Eventually, if you work and save money, and make money and you meet a fellow and say, "Let's get married," and that's it. Then life starts all over again.

GUMB: This is the end of the interview with Mrs. Ettie Glaser.