

KECK-13

ROSE KRAWETZ

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INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT

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POLAND, 1920

AGE 18

PASSAGE ON "THE NOORDAM"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Rose Krawetz. Today is Tuesday, August 6, 1985. We are going to begin this interview at 11:20 AM. We are going to interview Mrs. Krawetz about her immigration experience from Poland in the year 1920. This is the beginning of side A of tape one of interview number 013. Can you tell me where and when you were born?

KRAWETZ: I was born on an estate. My grandfather rented it. He didn't own it. Jews were not allowed to own. So he rented it and he ran it. And it must have been thousands and thousands of acres, such a large estate.

DALLETT: Where was the estate?

KRAWETZ: In Poland.

DALLETT: In Poland. And . . .

KRAWETZ: And he was raising beets for sugar. Hay for the army. IT was a very large business. They had five hundred cows, a hundred

horses, and the milk was going for butter and cheese. They had a centrifuge, a machine. So that's where I was born.

DALLETT: I'm sorry, this was your grandfather who ran . . .

KRAWETZ: My grandfather, and my grandfather had eight children. And they were all on the same place. Even those that were married and had children stayed on the estate. And this was going on, peasants were working the fields and the servants were for the house, this rich house. And all this, one year but I don't remember which year it was, I think maybe 1910, there was a hurricane just when everything was ready to take off from the fields, and destroyed everything that was on the estate. That was the time when my grandfather sent about five children. They were grown ups, families, to America. This is how my father landed here, too. And, ah, my father served in the Russian Army. There was not a Polish Army. It was a Russian Army. Five years. And that was the whole, most of the family was here.

DALLETT: What year were you born?

KRAWETZ: I was born in 1902.

DALLETT: So, do you remember that hurricane, do you remember that disastrous hurricane?

KRAWETZ: Yes.

DALLETT: You were about eight years old then.

KRAWETZ: That's right. And something else happened at that time when I was eight years old. The owner of the estate lived in Warsaw. And he came and he brought his wife to the estate. And she didn't want to go back to Warsaw. She came with her family and

stayed on the estate. They took away that house, the beautiful house where I was born. And they built another house for my grandfather. So there were four children that they had. And they were two little girls that were my age, one nine and one eight, and we were playing together there. And then one day the kids, two girls, came over to me and they called me Raizha and they said, "We cannot play with you any more because you're Jewish." That was my encounter with anti-semitism. The mother didn't want them to play with me. And so, from then on all the grown children went to America.

DALLETT: Your grandfather sent five, five children to America at that point.

KRAWETZ: One daughter and four sons. And they moved my mother and the children to a city, not any more on the estate, when my father came here, so they moved us to a city. So we were living in the city for just a while. Then the war broke out, so my grandfather sent two peasants with wagons to take our family back to the estate. That's where we stayed until, Jews were not allowed when the war broke out, so for a while they let my grandfather because he was a big, his name was all over that area known, so the police had this association with him and they let him stay with the family for the longest time then they let other Jews that lived in the villages. And, but then, at the end, they told him that he must leave. So he left all that, the cows, the horses, everything. And the commandant arranged a train for my grandfather with the family. And the house, my grandmother made the peasants, not the peasants, the servants, dig holes and all her goodies got in there and covered up. And everything was left. The milk, everything, to the servants. And, believe me,

we left the house. And we started traveling with a train to Brest Litovsk. The Germans were going after the Russians. So in Brest Litovsk they were held back. So after we left Brest Litovsk they were found a little village, not a village, a small town, where we settled there. And then we stayed there for a while because the Russians pushed back the Germans. But then the Germans came back and they started going forward. So we had to leave that town. And so . . .

DALLETT: Who were you with then?

KRAWETZ: My mother, my sister, my brother. While this thing was, yeah, when we came to Pinsk, when the Germans took over, so we stopped. We were supposed to go to Katerinaslav and, uh, the Germans came and they took over. So when the Germans came, so my grandfather died in Pinsk and my mother also became sick. But she survived that horrible sickness. There's a little incident I want to tell you about. The doctor that came to see my grandfather and saw my mother. So my grandfather died very soon. But my mother was very ill. And she was a beautiful woman. And she was lying on a bed and, uh, as i remember her at that time, the doctor sent from the Jewish shul, Jews, with beards, to massage her. And she was half naked. Are you acquainted with Rubens figures? She just looked like that. And two Jews, four Jews came, and they massaged her. This was the doctor's orders. And as she lay there, her naked body and the Jews with the beard were massaging her. When they got tired, the other two Jews took over. And when these four got tired, other four Jews came and they kept it up day and night. She got out of it. She became well. Then we started running back to where we came from. Not to the city but to a village where an uncle of mine lived there.

So we walked all from Pinsk, it must have been thousands of miles we walked. And we came to that area where we stood, where we started living there. At that time all the peasants in the area, they were frightened about the Germans. So they went to deep Russia, the peasants, so they left their villages, they left everything that they had. They only took with them the horses and the cows, and on the way they couldn't keep them so they used to leave them. The government took over the horses and the cows.

And the peasants were afraid to come back because they didn't like the Germans. So, we were there. The potatoes were almost frozen. So my grandmother, my aunt, my brother and I, we all dug the potatoes because this was the only food that was there. And so we dug a thing, you know, places, and put the potatoes in and covered them with straw that they can stay over the winter. And this was supposed to be the food for the whole family. My aunt that was there she did not realize what she was doing. The Germans came to her. The Germans took all the food from the whole area where they occupied Poland and sent it to Germany. They came to her. She had the potatoes that we dug, and she sold the potatoes for sugar. They gave her sugar. But sugar we couldn't eat. So the whole family was starving all the time. There was no food at all. And that's what she did. So she didn't care about my grandmother that dug it, all of us that dug it, she just felt that she had a right to do it and she did it. And nobody could stop her. So it was a terrible, terrible time that we went through.

DALLETT: How long a period of time were you without food then?

KRAWETZ: Oh, this was after, this was, the war started in 1914. I think we stayed there for about a year and then we were on the way to

Pinsk, and going back from Pinsk, also maybe six months walking.

And, uh, when we came there we started digging potatoes and that's how we lived. I don't know, when I think about what happened, how did we survive? I don't know. Because there was no food at all. Just hunger all the time. I remember a tree that was, there was an apple. But when the apple started forming, then I tried, and I boiled it, and it was impossible to eat that but there was nothing else. And, uh, it was very hard to stay with my uncle. So my mother went to the city where we came from after my father left and she had long hair almost to the floor, hair was very valuable, and she thought that she'd go to the city, she'll sell it. And so she walked away, about twelve miles and maybe longer than twelve, much longer. And nobody wanted to buy it. So she couldn't sell it. But she stayed on there because her father, my grandfather lived there. So she stayed with him while he was sick. And we kids, we at that time were four, because one brother died there, all the four kids stayed with our uncle, with that aunt that sold the potatoes. And she came over when I stood there in one of the rooms and she said, she took a knife, and she said to my uncle, "I'm gonna kill myself, like this (she gestures by drawing a finger across her throat) if you don't throw them out."

DALLETT: Meaning you.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, me, the children. And he said, "Yentela, yentela."
(Yiddish) "Don't do it, don't do it." And I stood there and I listened. (she is moved) I have to compose myself.
(she pauses) Then my mother took a peasant hut and we moved into that place. And I was, I beautified it. I did everything to make it nice. So the Germans were in that village and they

came and they wanted to know who's doing this beautiful stuff. And my mother told them that I did that. So that was one thing.

Then they came and they wanted me to take me to Brest Litovsk to work on ammunition. So this uncle of mine tipped them, or whatever he did, so they didn't take me. And now I want to tell you a story, also what happened there. When my mother went away to have her hair sold we already moved into that little house. Next to that little house was a woman that had her brother, the Germans took him, he was a youngster, I don't know, fourteen, sixteen. And they took him to Brest Litovsk to work on ammunition, which he did. And when he came back he had ammunition in his pockets. All kinds of things. And he had nobody near his size to show off. So my brother was a little boy, five years old, and like other kids, so he took the ammunition. And he was showing it off, that when you strike it, it makes fire. Hers was also a peasant's house that was straw, the top was made of straw. So when he was doing this it got in.

And there was a fire. And it burned off twelve hours. And our house, too. But before that happened, this woman had a garden. And she had beans that you wind around on sticks. So she wanted that my brother, he was at that time I think twelve, that he should do it. So he did it. So she gave him a pot of sour milk.

We figured it out that just to eat sour milk wouldn't do anything for us, we were four kids. And so my grandfather was known by the peasants. When I mentioned the Buk, that was the water that he had to cross, and a German and an Austrian soldier was up on the bridge standing guard. And they didn't let anybody cross over. So he, my brother knew of a spot where he can cross over, you know, so they didn't see him. He used to go down and cross the river, not through the bridge, go to the peasants,

knowing that they all knew him, they used to work for my grandfather. They used to give him a piece of bread. So he knew that if he'll go and he'll get a piece of bread, he'll bring back the bread, so we'll have the sour milk with the bread, which was the biggest occasion. So my brother was five years old, the little one, he was a hungry child. He saw that pot with the sour milk. He went in about fifteen times and he ate some of it. When my brother came back with that piece of bread, I made the table, we put out the dishes, and I took that pot with the sour milk, supposed to be (she laughs) and I left it on the table, and everybody was supposed to have it and my brother sliced the bread and everybody got a slice of that bread and, uh, when I took the pot to get the sour milk there was nothing there! (she laughs) And my brother was sitting there like nothing happened. He didn't admit that he did it. It's a happening. Anyway, this was one of these things that you take it in stride, you know. Then the time when that house got burned out there was an office in that area in the village where the officials lived in it, and they, uh, what they did, that they officiated over other people, the peasants, the peasants, that lived there, you know, some of the Jews. So my mother took one of the rooms in that house and put in whatever she was able to get, a bed, everything, you know, and, uh, fixed it up. We stayed there, I don't remember, maybe three months or four months. The Pollacks, the Germans left that time, and the Poles took over. When they came in, officials, a commandant, all this, they looked around, they wouldn't go in to a peasant, there was a lot of peasant houses. They saw that house and they came into our room and it looked nice. My mother had somebody build a stove to be able to cook and, "Jiji, get out." "Jiji" was Jews, get out. So my

mother had to get out and there was a dark room in that area, place, so my mother got that dark room. In that same period, um, what I don't remember, but Hoover sent in food.

DALLETT: President Hoover, from here, sent food?

KRAWETZ: Right. So he sent it to a city. And, uh, whoever had to go to get the food, there was a group, a few people that had a horse and wagon. They went to the city. Before they went to the city they took all the people that lived in that area, a lot of Jews came to the villages because they had no food. And they thought that in the village there they could dig something, and they'll find something. So they took the names, like my mother had four children, so they took her name and the four children. And so did the others. And they went away with that list and they gave it to authorities in the village, I mean in the city. And with the wagon that they had they gave them a lot of things. They gave them flour, cereals, all kinds, evaporated milk, a lot of things. They kept it for themselves and gave very little to the people. A token of that food. And, uh, then they decided that even that is too much, so they arranged a woman that she should cook a soup and all these people that needed the food they should go with a little pot for the soup. So my mother organized all the people and said, "It wouldn't do any good for you with that little bit of soup. We want back the little they gave us and not the soup." So nobody went and they had to throw out the soup. So this was one of the things. Then, there was something else. The very same people arrange with the city, whoever was in charge, that all the, um, orchards, they were ripe at that time, that all the orchards belongs to them. Nobody from outside would dare go in and pick an apple or a pear. So they put my brother,

he was a kid, I think he was thirteen or fourteen, that he should watch that nobody should do it. And for that they gave him some of that food. We already lived in that dark room where the Poles took over. And, uh, my brother came, became ill. HE ate something, maybe some of the fruit that was not right, and he became very ill. So this uncle of mine went to bring a doctor. And the city was twenty miles. He went for a doctor and he brought the doctor and the doctor realized that my brother's dying, that he couldn't do anything. But the formality was that he has a medicine. So my uncle had to bring him back. So I don't know what my uncle had in mind, but he said to me, "Rose, you come with me." And I went. When he came to the city, was about twenty miles, he made the medicine and he said to me, "I cannot go back with you. You go back yourself. Here's the medicine." That was twenty miles. And that road was, all the houses were burned out. All you see is burned trees, houses. And I was a young girl. I didn't say anything. I didn't say, uncle, I wouldn't go. I just went. And I ran because I felt I'll help my brother. By the time I came I heard my mother crying already and I knew that he was, he died. Cause I walked all the twenty miles. From then on, we already had the idea that we're gonna come here, which that was a great hope.

DALLETT: Had you lost contact with your other brothers and sisters and father who had already come here, or did you, were you still in contact?

KRAWETZ: No, there were uncles and aunts.

DALLETT: Oh, I'm sorry, right. Because of the war, no contact.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, during the war there was nothing. No money, nothing. And

that's the way we lived, like this, we survived. What happened that when we got the visas we had to go to Warsaw. So we stayed in Warsaw with our aunt in Warsaw. And from there we were going to Danzig. That was the procedure. On the way, at that time, the Poles were fighting the Russians, in the '20s. The trains were full of soldiers, Polish soldiers. On the way to Danzig they took us off from that train into a little park. We were supposed to wait for another train. And the train that we were on, the soldiers took over. But meantime they stood there, near that little park. Among us was an elderly Jew with a white beard, with his daughter. With their baggage, you know, sitting there. One of the soldiers jumps off from the train. Took out his sword. And all the other soldiers formed a line and each one took out a sword. And they went to that Jew and everyone needed a chance to do it. So the first one took a little bit, a piece of the Jew and he cut it (she gestures as if cutting off a lock of a long beard). And the whole line, each one he gave them a chance, all of them had a chance until the whole beard was gone. So the Jew, that old man and his daughter fell on their knees and they were kissing their knees not to do it. But they did it. A Jewish policeman that was in that area, he came over to them and he pleaded with them not to do it. A commandant jumped off the train and ran over to him because he interfered and he took off everything that he had on him as a policeman, you know, he had it all on (she gestures as if to tear off badges) and the man stood there like naked. And this was the anti-semitism in Poland. When President Reagan was praising so much the Poles you can understand how I felt, knowing what was going on there, living there. And, uh, so this is one of the incidents. Now, coming to Danzig. So we came to the city.

DALLETT: You had your visas already?

KRAWETZ: Yeah, in Warsaw.

DALLETT: Was it difficult to get the visas?

KRAWETZ: No.

DALLETT: No. That was just a formality?

KRAWETZ: But that time everybody was running to America, yeah.

DALLETT: So these trainloads that you were talking about, they were full of people who were making the same journey that you were beginning?

KRAWETZ: Yeah. Everybody was coming to America, yeah. And we were going to, coming to Danzig, when we came to Danzig to the city, they told us that we cannot stay there, we were not allowed to stay. They had a rule, and that we had to go to barracks. So they took us to the barracks. There was a river there that we had to cross over the river to the barracks and we stayed at the barracks. And we were only supposed to stay a while there. But, you know, people when they have money, they can do many things. What they were doing is buying off, certain American people wanted their families to come, you know, sooner, they paid off certain people, they went to Danzig and they had the boats and the families going faster than we could. We stayed there maybe ten weeks. And the money that my mother had was gone. So we had, my mother had to write for more money. And finally a little boat came that was going to Rotterdam.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of interview number 013.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, that they were on the other side of the river where they were also in barracks. That lady's son was coming with us because he was about to be drafted. So we were going earlier and so he attached himself to us. And he came at the same time with us. That was his mother and sisters were staying on the other side. So he wanted to see them before we go. So he took me along to the other side. And he stayed there maybe a half hour. But I enjoyed it with the kids and I wanted to stay longer because we, our boat was still coming many hours later. So I stayed on and I was with the kids. All of a sudden when I felt that I ought to go to policeman in the barrack didn't let me out. All the people went to him begging him, pleading with him that my boat is waiting. And he said, "She can't go." There was no way to appeal to anybody at all and no matter how many hundreds of people there were begging him he says he wouldn't let me out. The anxiety, I mean the feelings that my family, the boat is there, all that, and he wouldn't let me out. A wagon with hay had to come through. It was a big thing. And I didn't care whether he'll shoot me or whatever will happened, you know. And as the wagon was coming in. I ran out, and I had to take a boat, a small boat, to go across that river. So I waited for that little boat but I saw the boat that had to take me, I saw it, it was already making the sounds, you know, like a boat, and I knew the trouble that I am in. So, anyway, I got out from that boat and I started running and there were police, so they held onto each other like that not knowing why am I running, you know. I broke through and my mother and the whole, my grandmother, the

daughters, they all stood and waited and they were taking away already the, uh, the boat was going to leave. But when they saw me running, coming, they put it back. And I got on and they came and they took all the baggage and everything on. So when I got on the boat I ran downstairs and I stayed there all day. I was so embarrassed. (she laughs) That boat that we got on was a very tiny one and this boat was supposed to be just to go to Rotterdam. And, uh, it was a storm for three days, from Danzig to Rotterdam was a storm on that sea. And everybody that was there went down, down at the bottom, and all, most of them, were Jewish people and they put on their talus and they were laying on the floor and they were praying. Everybody thought that they'll not survive. Every one of them that this will not, because the boat was laying down this way and that way, you know. The storm was just tremendous. But it took three days like that and we came to Rotterdam. We stayed in Rotterdam until we took the Noordam, but that's where that picture (she gestures) is that I met all these people.

DALLETT: That's just before you're about to board? The name of the ship is the Noordam?

KRAWETZ: The Noordam, yeah. And on the Noordam we traveled I don't remember how many days, but when we came to Ellis Island we were not allowed to get off because somebody died on the boat. So, uh . . .

DALLETT: On the crossing somebody had died?

KRAWETZ: Yeah. So this was the procedure there. Something happened, you know. And this is what we were told, that somebody died, that's why we had to be two weeks in Ellis Island. And all the families

came to pick us up, and they had to go back, they couldn't take us off. So that's where they, we used to, used to form lines whether it was for food or for some other reason. And a black man kept on saying, "Get back, get back, get back." That's what I remember, you know. So this is how it worked out. So, coming to America, my father was not a big macher. He made about \$25 a week. He worked for the brothers that were here before. He came a little later. And, uh, so we didn't have much money. So, uh, I had to start, instead of going to school, I went to night school, but I had to work. So a cousin of mine had a shop, a dress shop. So he took me in. And he was teaching me how to sew. But what he was teaching me wasn't much, not to make like a garment. It was just stitching. And then I had an uncle here that he helped to bring us out here. My mother's brother. And he didn't know anything about sewing, but he kept on saying you know enough already, you can go into a better place. And I knew that I can't but I couldn't defy him. He arranged with somebody else to take me in and that was torture. And the boss was very nice. After I'd been there he gave me this beautiful garment [to make] that was sold for hundreds of dollars. I didn't know anything about it. So the boss came over and he said you have to do it in a different place, in this place it will be difficult for you. So I left. What I'm trying to say is that I knew that I don't know. There were signs "Operators Wanted" and I was supposed to be an operator. So I walked over to that place and I didn't dare go up. I knew I don't know. So I just walked back. But I knew that I have to work. How do you go up to a place and say, "I am and I'm not?" And this is really torture, to learn, you know. And then finally somebody told me about this place, that she went up with me. And that factory there was also only

stitching. So I made seventy-five dollars. It was my first week. Which was something that never I expected because it was only the stitching, you know. From there, he got in very special work. This was just summer work. So he said, "You people cannot work this work." So a woman, a Hungarian woman, she was a very slow worker and she said that i was very fast, so she wanted me as a partner. So we walked the streets and, uh, we went up to a place where it said, "Operators Wanted." So we went up and we were supposed to be partners. And the work, so she was doing the very fancy work and I was just doing the other work. In her mind was so we became union people, we belonged already to the shop, so in her mind was that she's already faster than I am, that I don't know enough, so she said, "You know, Rose, I don't want to work partners with you." I knew I cannot do it on my own, you know. What do I do? So I went over to the employer and I said, he was a nice man. I said to him, she went over to him not to give me a partner of work, so he knew already. So, uh, I went over to him and I said, "I just want to tell you. On the garment that we both worked I think that lithe by little I can make it. If you'll just give me a chance. Because," I said, "if I can't, I'll leave." I already belonged to the union, but the union would not do anything if you don't know how to work. He says, "Sit down." He gave me a garment. I worked a long time. The other people helped me a little bit and everybody was very angry with that woman that she did this. I worked at that place about five years. On that picture (she gestures) my mother didn't let me cut my hair. So there, she only wanted me in braids. I can't go to business with braids on, so I used to pick them up like this and, uh, I didn't like it, the way I looked. So I used to argue with my mother to let me cut my hair. Finally an aunt

came over and she helped, she talked to my mother and I ran down and I had my hair cut. When I came to the shop where I worked with my hair cut instead of this thing, the boss called the whole shop over. "Look how that girl looks with cut hair." It looked very nice. So I remained there I think about five years in that shop. And I made a lot of money.

DALLETT: You were speaking English then, you had learned English?

KRAWETZ: Yeah, I went to night school, I finished night school. I went to high school for about two terms and then I started up going out with boys. There was no time for high school.

DALLETT: Let's go back a little bit. I want to hear again about the first words you learned in English, the guy saying, "Get back, get back." This is when you've come off the boat now, you came into the harbor, right.

KRAWETZ: You mean after.

DALLETT: At Ellis Island. They, they let you come off the boat right away, right?

KRAWETZ: After two weeks.

DALLETT: They kept you on the boat?

KRAWETZ: Oh, not on the boat.

DALLETT: Okay.

KRAWETZ: No, the boat was there, we slept on the boat.

DALLETT: So they wouldn't let you come onto Ellis Island because someone had died?

KRAWETZ: Yeah, so that's the way it was.

DALLETT: So your family kept coming to try to pick you up, and they'd find.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, they knew, they were here and they were already like Americans. And they knew what's happening, so this was one situation. Many families . . .

DALLETT: So the family members that came to meet you had already been in this country for ten years? They had come in 1910 and you came in 1920.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, that's right, yeah. But another little thing that happened. While we were in the barracks in Danzig there was a woman that was with us. Not related. But she wore a big hat. A high red hat that when she walked around everybody noticed her. And she never took off that hat. She put it on in the morning because it was a free area and she had that red hat. So everybody knew that woman with the red hat. We watched her, her husband came to take pick her off from Ellis Island. The first thing he did he took the hat. (she laughs) You know, these little things that you remember.

DALLETT: You remember, yeah, yeah. I'm a little confused about how long you spent on the boat and how long you were on the Island.

KRAWETZ: I think it was on and off they let us off the boat and we kept on going out of the boat and on the area.

DALLETT: Onto Ellis Island.

KRAWETZ: Yeah.

DALLETT: Did you go through a medical examination at Ellis Island, do you remember that?

KRAWETZ: Yeah.

DALLETT: Do you remember coming into the building and, and walking up the staircase?

KRAWETZ: I don't remember every little thing, but this was it, we had to go through all that. And, uh . . .

DALLETT: Do you remember anything about the building?

KRAWETZ: Little.

DALLETT: Where would you eat, would they feed you on the boat?

KRAWETZ: They fed us on the boat.

DALLETT: On the boat.

KRAWETZ: Yeah. The whole thing took place the way it was. We were free to go off and on, back.

DALLETT: You were free to come off and on the island and the boat.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, all we knew was that we cannot get off the island, the family cannot take us off. And the reason, they told us the reason, that somebody died, they didn't know what it was.

DALLETT: So do you remember what you, what you would have done for those two weeks, would you have spent time, you were free to wander around the island . . .

KRAWETZ: That's right.

DALLETT: But you don't remember as much about what the building . . .

KRAWETZ: And the families, they were not allowed, I think, to come here.
The families came and . . .

DALLETT: You couldn't come to them.

KRAWETZ: No.

DALLETT: Could you see them, could you see them come over in the boat and wave?

KRAWETZ: That's right.

DALLETT: So you knew that someone would be there to pick you up.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, yes. And then when we came here we had so many relatives that I said to my mother, "We can make a little city out of it."

All the family that came to see us. And I just want to tell you, my father took me to a cousin, that they were wealthy people, so she wanted to see me. So he took me there. So she had a feeling that she had to buy me something. So she took me into a place where they had the pushcarts with shoes. And she picked up a pair of shoes. You see what I wore. The shoes that she picked up for me were the points with buttons all the way up there. And I couldn't say no. (she laughs) The things that you go through when you're a greenhorn and you come in. They're relatives, but at the same time, they were here, they were already, they didn't go through what we went through. And you don't say no to anybody. You accept all that they do to you. And they looked down on you, although they were greenhorns themselves. But they looked down on you, you're a greenhorn, what do you know, you know nothing.

DALLETT: Do you remember them coming to pick you up on the day you were released from Ellis Island. Do you remember how you got to their house?

KRAWETZ: Yeah. What happened is, an uncle, the uncle I have him on the other picture, um, he sold his beautiful house that we knew about and he moved in in Houston Street to a railroad apartment. So for a while we had to stay with him. You know, the feeling where I was born, living on the estate, knowing a little bit of nicer things, you know. And America stood out like a golden house in the country. And all of a sudden he takes us in, such a dilapidated place. So the whole vision of America, what is this, is this America?

DALLETT: What had been your vision, what did you expect you would find? What did you think America would be like?

KRAWETZ: I felt like the whole world will open up for me, you know. I felt I'll go to school, I'll become something. That's the expectation that you went through all the horrible stuff, when you come here, America stood out like something very beautiful and then all of a sudden you find that it isn't. Like we lived on the, my father got an apartment on the fifth floor and, uh, we lived there. And men that came from the city that we knew, they carried ice on their back up on the fifth floor. They carried coal on their back. It was hard times there at that time. Now it's different. Now there is relief, there's all kinds of things. At that time there was nothing like that. So it was a hard time.

DALLETT: You were surrounded by a lot of people from, people that you

knew. Did they settle pretty much in the same . . .

KRAWETZ: Yeah, relatives. Some of them were rich by the time we came and some of them were not. So when I saw those landsmen coming up on the fifth floor with bags of ice, bags of coal, it was doing something to me. I said it's nice, not what I thought it would be.

DALLETT: How about when you were first coming in to the harbor when you were first coming in on the boat and you didn't know you were going to have the trouble, can you remember what that was like and how you felt when you first approached.

KRAWETZ: A great disappointment. But there was no way like people would say, they'd like to go back, but there was no place to go back. There was no way, so you had to take whatever it was.

DALLETT: Were you afraid that, that you would be rejected when you came through? Did you have that fear that you might have to go back on the boat, when you couldn't come through?

KRAWETZ: No, no, there was no fear, it just a situation.

DALLETT: Just a matter of time.

KRAWETZ: Yeah, there was no fear at all.

DALLETT: Did you see other boats come in and go through Ellis Island, did you see other people approach and be let through?

KRAWETZ: Yeah, you know, the disappointment came after we landed, not at Ellis Island. (she laughs) When things were happening here. So that was a disappointment. And as a young person with expectations you feel it and my first problem was that I couldn't

go to school at that time.

DALLETT: Because you had to work.

KRAWETZ: I had to work.

DALLETT: So you started to go to night school.

KRAWETZ: In night school you meet young people that came over. You make a lot of friends, so that's interesting. But I made the decision not to go to high school, I mean, quit high school. I was sorry for a long time that I did.

DALLETT: So you pretty much started working right away then, you were eighteen at that point.

KRAWETZ: That's right, right away.

DALLETT: So no time for school, but night school. That must have been a very difficult period. Working and studying at night.

KRAWETZ: That's right.

DALLETT: Did you pick up the language quickly?

KRAWETZ: In a way, yeah. I remember my employer, not immediately, but after a few years, put in my name, that I had to pay tax. I didn't know what it's all about, so I was called to the tax bureau. When I told them I was making money at that time, you know, why I didn't pay before, was my father was killed. He went to shul and he was killed, so I became the sole supporter of the family. So another thing that hit me. When I look back I'm thinking of why my mother was only about thirty-eight or forty when she came, why didn't she go to work? I don't know. She never worked, but she could have.

DALLETT: She could have.

KRAWETZ: She could have, but she didn't.

DALLETT: So you took over.

KRAWETZ: I took over all the years. And over here, too. I had a wonderful husband. He was Jewish writer. I went to school and I became a sculptress and I made these things. (she gestures) I worked with jewelry. I picked up so many things. But something was wrong. I didn't stick to one thing. So I didn't get the way I wanted to get. That was a hindrance. I don't know the reason. I should have gone to a psychiatrist.

DALLETT: You met your husband in this country then?

KRAWETZ: Yeah, sure.

DALLETT: When was that? At what point in your life was that?

KRAWETZ: I think it was in '32, yeah. Oh, I didn't tell you something important. When I became supporter of the family I was very unhappy. I also went through a very serious love affair that I thought I'll die if I don't marry that guy. And he was supposed to study for a doctor. And his parents were supporting, his father was supporting him. And they said that if he'll marry me they will not support him and he will not be able to go to school. So that was break. I suffered terribly. So a girlfriend of mine and I decided to hitchhike to California. So we did. And we were four months on the road. I saw America, about three quarters of America. Every National Park I was. Everywhere. Just certain places we omitted, otherwise four months and that was a very interesting beautiful time. And,

uh . . .

DALLETT: Did people do that a lot then, they would hitchhike, that's how they would travel at that time?

KRAWETZ: At that time. Now it would be, if she would go (she gestures) hitchhiking now, I would die, what's happening now. But at that time a lot of people went. And being four months on the road, at that time the sales people didn't fly like they do now. They traveled with cars and they were so eager to take you in their car to travel. And we went from one place to another, which was points of interest. So we kept on going and going. And I stayed in Yellowstone Park, we stayed there in Yellowstone Park, and in Glacier Park, and Mount Ranier, all. And while I was in California, I was there two years, I saw a lot. I slept in Grand Canyon, and I did a lot of . . .

DALLETT: Were you tempted to stay in any particular places along the journey, were you thinking of moving?

KRAWETZ: No, no. We stayed in areas that we looked where there, where we felt was okay. But in Grand Canyon we slept there because the man that took care of the animals told us that we came in too late, it would be nightfall, so he let us stay in his place, he gave us dinner. It was nice. Now I hear it's different. But at that time . . .

DALLETT: And, did you say you lived in California for a while?

KRAWETZ: Two years. And I worked there and I sent my mother money to support her. But I liked it there.

DALLETT: Was that part of the trip? You hitchhiked to California, and you

stayed there for two years?

KRAWETZ: Right, and I worked there. I got a job and I worked and whatever I earned, I didn't need much for myself. Because there was a life you don't have to dress or go to the theater or concerts, you just go to the canyons. So, that was okay.

DALLETT: And then you came back to New York.

KRAWETZ: Then I came back to New York. I have a sister that is mentally sick. And this is why I had to come back. My mother wanted me to come back. But my sister is still sick and I am her guardian. I take care of her. She lives in the Bronx. And he doesn't want to move out from that area where she and my mother used to live. So that's the worst thing in my life. Somehow, also my mother also didn't let her see a doctor. There was something, a fear to be alone or something like that. That's how it remains. That's the saddest story of my life.

DALLETT: Do you have any of the letters, do you remember when you were still living in Poland and some of your family had come here, do you have any of the letters that they sent to you or could you tell me anything about what you had heard about what America might be like through them?

KRAWETZ: You mean the time where we were in Europe, in Europe.

DALLETT: Yes, when you were here and they were already here.

KRAWETZ: Um, my grandfather, he talked of America, too. That all his sons that are here became millionaires. But they didn't. One so had a pushcart, fruit. Another son was working on hats. And they were all not wealthy. But he kept on asking them for money. So

my, one of my uncles wrote him a letter and he said to him, "In America they don't," uh, what do you call, a thing that you, a broom, let's say, "with a broom gold is not there on the street, that you do it with a broom and pick it up." So that was the answer to my grandfather. And because to think of America, some of them came and they went back. Some relatives that didn't want to stay here . . .

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE Two

DALLETT: This is Nancy Dallett. Today is August, Tuesday August 6th, 1985, and this is interview number 013, the second tape of that, we're interviewing Mrs. Krawetz. This is the beginning of what would be the third side of the interview. Now, I had asked you about if you got letters, what were we just talking about.

KRAWETZ: Whether we got letters in Europe.

DALLETT: Oh, yeah.

KRAWETZ: Just the letters came.

DALLETT: I know what I was going to ask you about, anti-semitism. Once you got to this country did you feel that anti-semitism was behind you or did you, you didn't really experience it in this country in any sense?

KRAWETZ: No. In the shop you did.

DALLETT: Pardon?

KRAWETZ: In the shop.

DALLETT: In the shop?

KRAWETZ: Right.

DALLETT: Did you experience it or you didn't?

KRAWETZ: Yes.

DALLETT: You did. Yeah, in what form, how did that happen?

KRAWETZ: There was a, I worked in a shop and there was an Italian woman. She was a forelady. And she used to talk about it, and so I used to fight with her. I used to fight about the Jews. She was an anti-semite.

DALLETT: That must have been very hard for you to encounter.

KRAWETZ: Somehow I took it in stride. Somehow like I'm used to it, you know. And it's not supposed to happen here. So I fought back. Um, I worked in a place where there was a woman that her father, she was Italian, and her father was, she went for a visit, and her father worked for Mussolini. And she came back and in the shop she stood in the middle of the shop and she told all about Mussolini, the great things, you know, and the people from shop workers, they stood and they listened, you know. And I felt that it isn't right, you know. So I told her, "Your father works for Mussolini so he gets all the goodies. In Sicily, you know the areas, they're poor, they're starving. You didn't see that. You just went for a visit. And your father provided you with all these beautiful things." I said, "Don't tell me that this is what is going on for everybody in Italy under Mussolini." So I had to put her down. I fight back. There's somebody on the radio talked about Poland, all the beautiful things that's going on in Poland. And not a mention of anything that was bad. So I

called up while they were talking. I called up and I said, "It's not so. There's a lot of anti-Semitism." And, um, you know when Reagan was speaking about what's going on there, that it's so wonderful. I said it's not so.

DALLETT: A few other things I wanted to ask you. Uh, I'm not sure how you responded to this when I asked whether you had any letters now, whether you still have them or any of the documents, or visas or anything with a stamp that says you came through any of the ports, or any kind of documentation like that. The people at Ellis Island are very interested in preserving that kind of thing.

KRAWETZ: Yeah. I have all these things. Is that what you're asking?

DALLETT: Yeah, what kind of things do you have. You showed me the one photograph. Just before you were about to . . .

KRAWETZ: I have many things, many things.

DALLETT: Documents?

KRAWETZ: Yeah.

DALLETT: Photographs, passports?

KRAWETZ: Yeah. I have it for my mother, my brother, my sister, everybody, mine.

DALLETT: Okay. Can you tell me, just one more question really, can you tell me, uh, anything that happened on the boat or any feelings you might have had when you came into the harbor? Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty and coming into Ellis Island?

KRAWETZ: Oh, that was so exciting. We finally reached America. It was a terrific thing. With all that we went through. Such a period, the wars, everything that was going on there, anti-Semitism, and finally we're in America. It, it was just . . . The other part, the disappointments, came in later. (she laughs) But the arrival, even the disappointment of the two weeks, we didn't take it bad. We accepted it, that's the way it is. But, uh . . .

DALLETT: Did you know that the Statue of Liberty was there, were you expecting to see it, had you heard about it in Poland or was it a sight that surprised you?

KRAWETZ: No, we didn't know. It was a surprise. It was beautiful. And, uh, the poem, you know, that we always have, was just terrific. The Statue of Liberty goes in with this, uh, museum, it's combined.

DALLETT: Yes, it's a combined renovation for both the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

KRAWETZ: That's beautiful. There were so many prospects, different things, disappointment things where they thought they were going to do it. And when I heard about the museum, it's just beautiful.

DALLETT: Have you returned to Ellis Island since, since you came through? Did you take a trip out?

KRAWETZ: Sure. That's where I heard, somebody interviewed me there.

DALLETT: Someone interviewed you at the Island?

KRAWETZ: Yeah.

DALLETT: And you went out with your daughter?

KRAWETZ: I went with my daughter.

DALLETT: And did you tell her what happened when you came through, did you remember it as you came through?

KRAWETZ: I didn't tell too much with the person that interviewed me. I told her about, "Get back, get back," my first English words.

DALLETT: But there wasn't anything about the island at that point when you saw it that sparked off memories of what it was like when you came through.

KRAWETZ: All that expectation that you finally came to America. So what's two weeks? Nothing. You finally are here. And as far as I was concerned, you know, I expected so much to make of myself that I thought that here's the place. Because I was in Europe they didn't let Jews go to school. You had to do it on your own. And my father used to send not much money. But my mother paid teachers. I was a good student, and my brother that died, too, a very good student. And I had teachers that they went to America also. So that was a struggle there. The idea there that a Jew cannot go to school where we were. Only the gentiles. I had girlfriends. They went to school, but I couldn't go.

DALLETT: Once you were here and you were established here in New York did other relatives who hadn't come on your journey come later?

KRAWETZ: I know what you're asking, yeah. Uh, I have a picture here of my aunt that she wrote to my mother that she had a daughter and her husband, her daughter and her husband that they would like, they

were very poor, that they would like to come to America, would there be any possibility. So my uncle was rich, my mother's brother. And, uh, my mother went to him and asked him that he could bring them out. So his wife said, "Don't bother." And Hitler killed them. Things are happening. Hitler killed our families, about one hundred and fifty families that he killed. In one city where we lived a couple of years, the Germans put up the peasants that lived around the city and the Germans didn't like the peasants. And they told the peasants you can go to the city and do with the Jews whatever you want. So they thought they'll engrace themselves with the Germans if they'll do it instead of the Germans. So they killed the whole city. There's nothing there.

DALLETT: So after you had come, it was really too late for others to follow behind you.

KRAWETZ: That's right. There was also a time in the United States that they didn't let people come in, immigration stopped. And then they opened up again and they rationed areas where they come.

DALLETT: Yeah, right, after 1924. I think that's all I need to ask you unless there's anything else you want to add to this.

KRAWETZ: What happened in Rotterdam that I have a picture of. On that picture that you saw (pointing to it) so there was one young man that liked me, we made up and we made up that when we come here, because they went on a different boat, and I went on a different boat, that we see each other. He was a very nice kid.
(she laughs) And so they gave me, they had a telephone of, no, they had the address of where we lived, so they wrote to me. HE had a brother there and a sister. And they wanted me to come

visit them. And, uh, I remember this uncle of mine picked me up because I couldn't reach the telephone, and I talked on the phone and I made up that I will go to visit them. They lived in the Bronx. So when I visited them I went into one of the rooms. There was a mirror, and I fixed my hair, so he got in, this fellow, my first kiss.

DALLETT: So he had come on a different ship. Not everyone in this picture came on the Noordam.

KRAWETZ: No.

DALLETT: Anyone else there's still around that you're in touch with?

KRAWETZ: Over here, this was a cousin, that he came with us. And these people we met in Rotterdam. Yeah. But I wasn't in touch with any, only that family. He, when he came here he organized a club and he became the president and I was his girlfriend, so it was a nice experience.

DALLETT: That's wonderful. Okay. I think that's it. I'll just want you to talk to me about some of the documents that you have. But that concludes the interview 013 and it's 12:50.