

KECK-149
INGE MATTHIES NASTKE
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GERMANY, 1922
AGE 9

APPLEBOME: This is Interview Number 149. This is Edward Applebome
and I'm speaking with Mrs. Inge Nastke on February 6, 1986.
We're about beginning this interview at about 11:45 in the
morning. We're about to interview Mrs. Nastke about her
immigration experience from Germany in 1922. Mrs. Nastke, can you
tell me a little bit about where and when you were born?

NASTKE: We were, I was born in Hamburg, Germany, 1912 and in 1922 my
grandparents had been in touch with relatives, in Montana--

APPLEBOME: No, why don't you first tell me a little bit about what
your family did in Germany and then we'll get to about coming
over to the United States.

NASTKE: Okay. Uh, I realize that I can only tell what I remembered, I was
too young to remember details. But, my grandparents actually raised me because my mother
was a widow. My father was killed during the war. And she had to go out and work and she

had a job, a very good job in Hamburg, in a telegraph office but there was no one to take care of me so my grandparents took over. They had retired and lived in a little suburb in the town of Pienaburg, near Hamburg, about twenty-five miles from Hamburg.

APPLEBOME: This was your mother's parents?

NASTKE: This is from my experience.

APPLEBOME: Right, and its your mother's parents, your maternal grandparents?

NASTKE: Yes, my mother's parents. And she was able to work and save some money and she had hoped that she could send me to college later on but my grandparents had different ideas. They absolutely wanted to go to America 'cause they had been corresponding with relatives on a Montana ranch and people warned the. "You should not be going because you are too old, you can't uproot older people, and we can't expect that you would be happy," but they wouldn't listen, they just wanted to go. So, everything-

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APPLEBOME: Did they know anything about ranching?

NASTKE: Not a thing. This would be an entirely new frontier for them.

APPLEBOME: What kind of work did he do in Hamburg, your grandfather?

NASTKE: My grandfather was very well known in the fish branch.

He had business with foreign lands, he imported and exported fish, he marinated them, canned them and, uh, barbecued them and he was very well known. But, he decided, after World War One, to retire, which he did. He had enough money saved to buy a property, a beautiful home. And, but my grandmother, she was adamant, she just wanted to leave everything behind her and go to the United States. She had been corresponding with her sister for years and years, before the War and after the War. So finally, after all, a lot of commotion and upheaval, we boarded the huge ocean liner from Hamburg and we were, we got ready to go in 1922, in October. This wasn't really the good time to travel because on account of terrible storms. We were tossed around like a nutshell.

APPLEBOME: If I can just back you up for a minute. It was just you and your grandparents? Your mother stayed in Germany?

NASTKE: My mother stayed in Germany. She said, "I am not going to be destitute when I step on the United States soil, I want some money." My grandparents had sold everything, their property, their house, everything, for one million Marks. Then, when we got to the United States, they told him, Mr. Shramm, we are sorry to tell you but that money is worthless, absolutely worthless, it's inflation money.

APPLEBOME: Again, let's back up for a minute. When you left Germany, how did you feel about that?

NASTKE: I was excited. I was so excited that I couldn't wait to get on

the boat and I was looking forward to the new land, learn a new language, learn the ways and means of the United States people.

APPLEBOME: What had you heard about the United States?

NASTKE: I heard many things. Some were conflicting and some were pleasant but I thought, "I am going to find out for myself." I was really looking forward to it.

APPLEBOME: Was it difficult to leave your mother?

NASTKE: Yes it was. I really was, felt terrible about that, but she said, "Don't worry, I was, as soon as I can get some English pounds, I will come over." And that's the way it happened, she was finally able to sell her apartment, furniture, everything, her whole estate for English pounds, 'cause they were, they still had value once you came over here. So then in October we boarded the ocean liner and it was anything but the "Good ship Lollipop."

APPLEBOME: You boarded in where?

NASTKE: Uh, we boarded the ship in Copenhagen.

APPLEBOME: Do you remember the name of the boat?

NASTKE: I believe it was the S.S. United States. I'm a little in doubt about it but I think I remembered the S.S. United States and it was a huge ship. I was dumbfounded when I saw it.

APPLEBOME: What had you packed for the trip?

NASTKE: I beg your pardon?

APPLEBOME: What had you packed for the trip, to come over?

NASTKE: We took all our clothing, and this was cold, it was a very cold month. Most of our clothing. We had ample things to wear. And the boat really struggled against the terrible storms we had. Everything, the water was going constantly over the deck, nobody could possibly be up on deck. And it was filled to capacity with immigrants from every land you can imagine. But nobody had any kind of ambition to walk around, we were too sick. We were absolutely sick, seasickness.

APPLEBOME: Your grandparents also?

NASTKE: All of us, all of us, we were all green faced. And. so
all we could do was stay in our bunks and pray for survival.

APPLEBOME: Were you in steerage?

NASTKE: Yes. And I could really say I was among every nation in the world. We had, it was really wall-to-wall immigrants.

APPLEBOME: What were some of the countries that those people were from?

NASTKE: Poles, Italians, most of them Italians, uh, Russians and germany and, uh, what else?

APPLEBOME: Had you ever seen people from other countries before?

NASTKE: No, never. And what it very interesting, they were all dressed in their national costumes. I'd, at first I asked my grandfather, "Why do they dress like that?" I'd never seen these costumes before. He said, "They are still in their national outfits, the way people, Roumanians, Hungarians, Italians and I think a few Irish people too. And they all had different dresses, uh, a different way of dressing. And this I found very interesting. Then it took almost two weeks to cross because we were fighting against the terrible gales and I remember the ship was really shaking and tossing this way and that way. Finally, I woke up one morning and I didn't hear a thing and I thought, well, nobody's rocking the boat anymore. And it was early. I quickly got dressed and I sneaked upstairs and I was met face to face, practically with the Statue of Liberty and I had never seen anything like that before/ I was just, oh, I, speechless. And I thought it was the most beautiful statue I had ever seen and I have never, ever forgotten it. This first impression, this deep impression and it was long before the sun rose. Well, by and by, a lot of passengers came up and they, we all stood at the railing and just kept looking at the Statue of Liberty.

APPLEBOME: Your grandparents were still down asleep?

NASTKE: Well, after awhile, they came up too.

APPLEBOME: But you were allowed to wander around, on the boat, by yourself?

NASTKE: Yes, I was.

APPLEBOME: You were a nine year old girl?

NASTKE: I was none and a half, yes. And pretty soon, all the other passengers came up and they were, they were just flabbergasted and nobody had ever seen

anything like this before, in their homeland.

APPLEBOME: Had you heard about the Statue of Liberty?

NASTKE: Yes, all during the trip, they were talking about, "We're going to meet a beautiful lady with a lamp." And I couldn't visualize it, just from what they told me, I couldn't visualize it at all and then, well then, I finally, that last morning, there she was. And we had, the ship was in quarantine. It was between Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty and it took practically all morning, the quarantine procedure. And finally we left, the ship went off.

APPLEBOME: What was the procedure?

NASTKE: Well, we were all interviewed, we were examined.

APPLEBOME: On board the boat?

NASTKE: On board the boat. We were, there were doctors, officials and each one of us had to prove that we were healthy. I'm afraid a lot of them couldn't stand the test. And--

APPLEBOME: Did you see people who were rejected?

NASTKE: Yes. But that was on the Island. The ship stopped at the Island and we walked down a gangplank.

APPLEBOME: What was the disease you were quarantined for, do you know?

NASTKE: Well, when they were going to the, into the interview procedure and the interviews, I wasn't ill at that time. I was on the Island two weeks.

APPLEBOME: No but then, I'm sorry, we can move back then, so you can tell me about getting off the boat.

NASTKE: There was one gentleman, he said, "Well, so this is it, the infamous Island of Tears?" And I thought, what does he mean by that? Well, he said to my grandfather, "Well, good luck, I'm sure we all need it." And, once inside, we were dispersed in all different directions and I remember my grandfather had to show paper after paper. Sign here and sign there and to keep going and we had long lines, we had to just follow and finally there was a door I remember, it spelled "release". And I didn't know what it meant but I asked one of the officials, I said, "Was is das?" in German and he explained to me, in German, what it meant. But, we were not to go through that door and a lot of people were lucky, they went right through. Ordinarily, it took a matter of hours for the immigrant to be examined and then just went right on and landed in New York in a few hours. But not us. We were really getting lost but we, it's a good thing we didn't know it beforehand. Anyway, we sat, we had to wait in a very large, like a vestry hall, it could have been like a courthouse, courtroom and we were told to wait until our names were called, were going to be called. And I was suddenly taken by surprise by a black man, he held a tray with all kinds of sandwiches and coffee and tea and milk. And he held it to me and said, "Go ahead," I think that's what he said, I couldn't understand English. And I was hungry, I was starved and I took one of the sandwiches and I had my very

first ham and cheese sandwich and I loved it, and a glass of milk.

And my grandparents were just happy to get a cup of coffee. And, well, we enjoyed it and after a while they did call our name. We had to step forward. So, we were interviewed again and they, this was going, it was like a final verdict. And the official said, "I am sorry Mr. Schramm, we cannot let you, we cannot release you from the Island, you have passed the age limit, the limit for immigrants is seventy years," and my grandfather was older than that. "So, your sponsors in--"

APPLEBOME: How old was he?

NASTKE: Seventy-one, around seventy-two.

APPLEBOME: And spell his name for me please.

NASTKE: Mr. Schramm. S-C-H-R-A-M-M-. Mr. Schramm. And my grandmother was very high-strung and she just started to cry and she really, she was heartbroken and the official said, "Since you have passed the age limit, you will be detained on this Island until your sponsors can produce a five-thousand dollar bond. And it probably won't be too long and you will be released. So for now, you will have to go with the official," and he took us down the hall and opened the door and there was a huge room, they were really packed with immigrants. And that's when I noticed, some of them were crying. They were so unhappy and I asked my grandfather, "Why do they cry?" He said, "Probably, they have been rejected, they have some kind of illness, and this was most important, that people with an illness, not pass into the United States. They had to make good and sure, then they were examined, they found a certain disease and so they had to be sent back. Some of them had an eye disease or whatever. So, here we sat and we were told to wait and then I did nothing but look at these people with all their fancy costumes and I thought it

was like a masquerade and--

APPLEBOME: How were you dressed?

NASTKE: Pardon?

APPLEBOME: How were you dressed?

NASTKE: Well, it was, I would say, like people in the United States. It isn't really--

APPLEBOME: Do you remember what you were wearing?

NASTKE: Yes, I was wearing a wool dress, plaid, with long sleeves and velvet cuffs and a velvet collar and it was very pretty.

APPLEBOME: You were all dressed up?

NASTKE: Well, I was dressed according to what people wore in Germany, when we left. And we were by no means dressed poorly. My grandmother had a very lovely wool coat with a fur collar and a velvet hat, I remember. My grandfather had a very nice tailored overcoat. I had my gloves, I had a little velvet cap to match my dress. And so they told us to wait and we did. The only, uh, interruption we got was when the official came once in awhile with the list of names that he called out. Well, it took about two weeks and I woke up one morning with a king-sized headache.

APPLEBOME: What went on the two weeks that you were there?

NASTKE: Always waiting, waiting, waiting.

APPLEBOME: What kind of accommodations did you have?

NASTKE: It was like a big, huge waiting room and every evening about six o'clock, the bell rang and we had to form a line at the door, then we were led down the hall, quite a ways, there was a huge commissary. Long, long benches, a table, so we all took our seat and we were served regular American food.

APPLEBOME: What kind of food?

NASTKE: That first evening, I remember, we had, uh, pork and beans and white bread, I remember, tea, coffee, hot chocolate and coffee and then milk. And it was ample, everybody, nobody had to starve.

APPLEBOME: Did you and your grandparents talk with any of the other people?

NASTKE: Yes, my grandfather, that was the first day, when we were told to wait, and my grandfather was always active, in spite of his age. He had to keep moving, moving, moving. So he just wandered around and finally, after awhile, he came back to where we were and said, "Come on, let's go over to Germany." I said, "What do you mean Grandpa?" He said, "Let's come, let's come, just trust me." And he had found a group of people that were from Germany and so we were able to converse in our own language, so we were able to laugh. especially my mother, uh, my grandmother.

APPLEBOME: Were there other children?

NASTKE: Yes, quite a few children too.

APPLEBOME: Did you play with them?

NASTKE: And after awhile, when I got used to the surroundings, I was bored, I was so bored and I just walked up to the kids. So, we just made a lot of noise and none of us, we couldn't understand each other because one of them, some of them talked in Russian, some of them in Hungarian and some in Italian. And I think I saw some Japanese too, every, every, all kinds of nations. But you know, not being able to converse in a language, in a uniform language, it didn't bother us. We somehow we got together and we, we chased one another and one of them had a ball and so this is something that kept us from literally going crazy with all that waiting, you know.

APPLEBOME: What kind of games would you play with the ball, do you know?

NASTKE: Hide and seek and then we would throw the ball to this one and to this corner and to that corner and so we passed the time.

APPLEBOME: Were you able to get outside at all?

NASTKE: No.

APPLEBOME: They wouldn't let you?

NASTKE: No, we had to stay put and behave ourselves--

APPLEBOME: Were you giving your grandparents a hard time or they let you alone?

NASTKE: Yes, yes, they didn't worry about me so much. Some of the other

kids, you know, some of the, well, they weren't teenagers yet but they were pretty wild and, but, I had a feeling that the adults, they welcomed this upheaval made by these children because they were so bored to sit there and wait and wait and wait. And, at about 9:00 every evening, the bell rang and we had to form a line at the door and then march down the many, many halls. Then at the end of one hall, the men and the, the men had to separate, walk into their own quarters and the women and children, on this side and at the gate, a huge entrance, a black man, one black man here, another one there, handed out paper towels and soap, little pieces of soap. And, so we had to, we took those. At the entrance, everybody was ordered to pick up two blankets and we did. And it was a huge sleeping quarter and it was made of steel and wire and the lower bunks were to be for the adults and the children slept in the upper bunks. And so, about 10:00, the lights went out, except for a few lights left burning in the washroom and we were able to see enough if we had to get up. And it was a fitful sleep, the first night, I remember, very fitful and I just slept a little and I woke up again and then once I looked down and I saw a cockroach just dancing by the light of the silvery beam, coming from the washrooms. And, but they did have little containers at the bottom of the, what do they call it, the box where I'm standing on, and it had some kind of disinfectant and this stopped them from crawling up further, you know (she laughs). Well, anyway--

APPLEBOME: And at this time, you were waiting for bond money, so you could leave Ellis Island?

NASTKE: Uh, my grandmother and grandfather, they were discussing it among themselves, uh, wondering how much longer it would take. The finally--

APPLEBOME: Who was it who was going to send the money?

NASTKE: Uh, my grandmother's sister and her husband. My aunt and uncle in Montana.

APPLEBOME: Had you wired to them, who got in contact?

NASTKE: Have I what?

APPLEBOME: Who got in contact with those people, to let them know that you needed the money?

NASTKE: The Ellis Island authorities. They had to contact them and so--

APPLEBOME: And they were wealthy enough that you, that your grandparents thought they--

NASTKE: Yes, it took a little while, they, first they let us know, uh, they were willing to put up the bond but it would take a little while. Five thousand at that time was a lot of money. So--

APPLEBOME: Do you remember how they let you know? Did they send a cable to your grandparents?

NASTKE: To the Ellis Island authorities. They were the ones that had to handle all the situations. Now, if they had not been able to, if they would have not been able to furnish the bond, they would have had to send us back, and this is what was mainly the concern of my grandparents. Well, finally word came that they would furnish the bond and as soon as we had that news, they took us away from this waiting room and took us upstairs, I think it was one or two flight up. And it was a welcome change, it really was. It had, it was light and they had an outdoor, uh, fresh air court that was wired, you

know, screened in, but we were able to go out and exercise and walk and we had our fresh air and we had a wonderful view of the Statue of Liberty and all the boats going back and forth. And, we were here about one day, in the new quarters and I became very ill. I woke up with a king-sized headache and I had a terrific fever. So my grandparents notified the matron. We had a matron, oh, an overseer, and told her about my condition and she said, "Well, I will call the nurse." We had a hospital here too, which was fortunate, 'cause there were a lot of people that got sick on the Island, I wasn't the only one. And she took, then the nurse appeared and she said, "Come on Inge, let's go." and I was in such fever, I didn't, everything was in a fog. Well, anyway, she went along and I just tried my best to catch up with her. I was so sick, practically reeling, you know. I had a pretty high fever and it was scarlet fever. And, I was there in the hospital, oh, and when the fever subsided, then I got the whooping cough, and more reason to keep me there. Altogether, I was in, in the hospital dept--uh, the hospital section, about five weeks. For two weeks with my grandparents, now in the hospital, five weeks. and finally, one day between Christmas and New Year's. I was released.

APPLEBOME: What did the hospital look like?

NASTKE: Well, wards, I was in the children's ward. All those beds in a huge room and I tried so hard to ask, to find out, how long I would have to be there and what was wrong with me. I just wanted to talk and they couldn't understand me, they couldn't speak German, and I couldn't speak English. Oh dear, anyway--

APPLEBOME: There were no children there who spoke German either?

NASTKE: No, not one. All, the children of any, all nationalities. There was one that did a little German but I couldn't understand her because of the dialect. You know, in Germany, we have different dialects. Like, I'm from Hamburg and if I would meet someone from Bavaria or Thuringia, I couldn't understand them. It's a very, very different

way, you know, of talking German. And, so one day I was declared well enough to go, to be released from the hospital and that, that last day, I always said, "It's like Christmas Eve on Thermometer Row," when we did have Christmas and a nurse came in and she spoke a little German and I was so happy. And in broken German but she talked and I really appreciated being able to talk to somebody, to someone in my own language. And, I asked, "Why did I never get a visitor, why didn't my grandparents come and visit me?" She said, "It's against the rules of the Island." If they come and visit or anyone comes, they would be in danger of picking up a disease and this what they want to avoid. There are hundreds of people that come in, practically everyday, and we need room for them. Well, I was in the, in the hospital about--

APPLEBOME: No, I just have to interrupt you for a second, we have to take a break and we'll flip the tape over, okay?

NASTKE: Okay.

APPLEBOME: This is the end of side one of tape one of the interview with Mrs. Inge Nastke.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

APPLEBOME: This is the start of side two of tape one of the interview with Mrs. Inge Nastke. This is Tape Number 149. Okay, Mrs. Nastke, you were telling me about the stay in the hospital, when you had been ill and you were finally going to be released and you were upset, nobody had been to visit you in the time you were there?

NASTKE: Yes, I would have to backtrack a little. The day after I

was put into the hospital, the, our case was cleared. They had furnished the five-thousand dollar security bond and they said to my grandfather, "Your case has been cleared and you can leave," and my grandmother just had a fir and she said, "I will under no circumstances, will I leave the Island until my granddaughter is, has been released." And the officials told her, "I'm sorry, we're sorry Mrs. Schramm but we have to go by the rules. As soon as your case is cleared, you must leave the Island immediately because, as we have mentioned before, there are so many people coming in, practically everyday and we must have room for them. You must leave the Island." And my grandmother had a fir but it didn't help. So, she had to leave the Island of Tears in tears. And, fortunately, they had made shipboard acquaintances with a German couple and this couple was a lifesaver. They said, "You come with us." They were both cleared at the same time as my grandparents were cleared. "You come with us and stay there until you get notified that your granddaughter can be released from the hospital." So, this is what happened. Here I was, I was released and the nurse took me back to the huge waiting room and I ran to the far side of the area, no grandmother. There was a grandmother but it wasn't mine. And I asked the people, "Where is Mrs. Schramm, where is Frau Schramm," that's your German. They looked at me as though I had two heads. They never heard of her. And I was wondering around and I thought, "Well, maybe they're out in the fresh air court." No, no way, no one there was familiar to me and I was a perfect stranger to them. All of a sudden, somebody took me by my arm and whirled me around and she said, "Where in the world did you come from?" It was the matron, the overseer. And I explained, I said, "I have just been released from the

hospital and I thought my grandparents were here waiting for me."

:Oh, your grandparents? I'm sorry child but they have been released many weeks ago." So I, this was colliding with an iceberg.

APPLEBOME: And you had been five weeks in the hospital without having heard a word from your grandparents?

NASTKE: Not one little word. And, this struck me so, so badly, I just had a nervous breakdown. Here, I was so happy, knowing that I, hoping that I would see my grandparents. Nothing! "Oh," she said, "Don't cry, don't cry, we're going to fix you up." You see, in their excitement, my grandparents had taken my winter clothes and my coat and my hat, everything. So, I just had my dress and it was bitter cold. This was December. She said, "Don't cry, don't cry, we'll see that everything will be alright." And she took me down the hall and she had a huge bunch of keys around her waist. She took one of those keys and opened a door, there we were in another large room and it had a huge pile of clothing, uh, brought there by the Salvation Army and the Goodwill Industry and the Red Cross. She said, "Now, you try on a coat," she spoke a very slight German and she said, "Her, try on, try on." And I tried on coat after coat after coat. Either is was for the romper set, or much too big for me. Well, she kept looking at her watch, "Mach schnell, mach schnell!", that means "Hurry up, I don't have much time." And she pulled out a long green wool coat and it reached down to my heels, sleeves covered my hands completely, she pulled out a little cap, it was gray with a big red pom pom (she laughs) and green mittens. She said, and I looked and, they had

an oval mirror, and I almost started to cry when I saw myself. And she said, "I'm sorry, we don't have your size, but it's warm, that's the main thing, you won't freeze to death." So they took me to the huge vestry hall and I had to wait there. So, by and by, there were more people coming in and somebody came in and hung a tag around my neck with all pertinent information. Then the official said, "Follow me, you will be brought to Manhattan." So we went down to the pier, boarded a little tender and off we went. And I just couldn't believe, I just thought, oh I'm really released. I took a last look at the Statue of Liberty and I was wondering, "Would I ever meet again," (she laughs) and then I looked at Ellis Island and I thought, "Oh, how many tears I had to shed there." I really cried me a river. Then we were--

APPLEBOME: Especially the time in the hospital, can you tell me anything else about that?

NASTKE: About the--

APPLEBOME: Was it you were there for five weeks? What was the medical care like?

NASTKE: The medical care was fine and the beds were good and we were given all the attention we needed and we were constantly being checked for fever and listened to our hearts. It was really well being cared for. Everyone was in the same spot.

APPLEBOME: Were you in bed for five weeks?

NASTKE: Most of the five weeks.

APPLEBOME: Did you know how sick you were, had you ever been sick like that before?

NASTKE: Never, never. But, it was, my most, uh, the worst part of it was that I couldn't speak German to anyone and I didn't have visitors, that was the worst of all. Well, I had to take it and as I said, the nurse who came on Christmas Eve brought a little tree and she trimmed it and she left me a little package at my bedside and then she said, "Froeliche Weihnachten," and that means Merry Christmas and then she was gone. And I looked at the package and I was flabbergasted, I was overjoyed that someone would think of me. And this was a very kind nurse, she was very wonderful. Well, most of them were but they couldn't speak German. And I opened the package and she had given me a little patent leather bag, leather handbag and two satin ribbons for my pigtails. And I was so happy and I, unfortunately I had never been able to speak to her, she didn't come to the ward again and I wanted to thank her because I really appreciated it and I wanted to tell her how happy it made me. But she was probably in another section of the ward. Anyway, another nurse came in and she said, "Here are your clothes, now get dressed and I'll take you back," and I believe I mentioned what happened.

APPLEBOME: Right, so now you were on the boat and you were going to Manhattan. Did you know, where were your grandparents now?

NASTKE: This something that nobody was able to tell me. And I was just

full of questions and anticipating and wondering, "What next?" Well, as soon as the boat, the little tender, docked at the pier and I went down the gangplank and I saw a Red Cross nurse and she was looking at everybody very sharply, closely, and she saw my big tag around my neck. And she came forward, "Du bist Inge?" "Are you Inge?" I said, "Ja," and she said "Oh fine, come along, come along." She took me by my hand.

APPLEBOME: What else did it say on the tag? It had your name?

NASTKE: I had my name and the different, all kinds of information which I couldn't read because it was in English. So I just put my trust into the nurse and we boarded a streetcar which was stopped right near the pier and then we went to the center of the town. And I was just thrilled with the advertisement, the light that sprang up. It was very late in the day and getting dark, somewhere between the dark and the daylight. And I had never seen such display of electric lights, all the boards were dancing and leapfrogging, and I just fell over backwards, looking at the skyscrapers. And, I remember we crossed the street one time, one time and there was a traffic cop and he did a double take when I, when he saw me walking along, along side the nurse and he probably thought, "Well, what is this?" I was really Eliza Doolittle (She laughs), all I needed was a Professor Higgins, you know, to come to my rescue. Well anyway, another trip with a trolley, we had mostly trolleys at that time, not anymore today I know.

APPLEBOME: Did you ask the nurse where you were going?

NASTKE: I asked her and then she did answer me, she said, then she shook her shoulders, I remember, "Deine Grossmutter--?" and I couldn't understand the rest, she was talking in English. Anyway--

APPLEBOME: And what does that mean?

NASTKE: "Your grandmother, vartet, diene grossmutter vartet," that means your grandmother is waiting. So that satisfied me. And we took another trip on a cross town line, I believe it was and then we did, we did a little more walking. Finally, in a fairly quiet side street, there was a long row of brownstone houses. So we walked up the steps of one of these houses and this was a haven for temporarily displace children, lost children, displaced children. And here is where I spent the night, hoping and praying for a better tomorrow.

APPLEBOME: Do you know where it was?

NASTKE: It was somewhere downtown. I can't remember anymore, it was too long ago but I do know it was a long, long row of brownstone houses with the steps going up. And this is where I spent the night. And in the morning, in the meantime, the authorities had notified my grandparents where I was and where they could pick me up. So, and the next day about 11:00 they came and they brought my clothing with them, my regular winter coat and my hat and we were at last reunited. So now, we started for the new frontier. I crossed the land to Montana and we found out what made the West so wild.

APPLEBOME: Okay, we'll get to that in a minute. Is there anything else you can say about the home that the--

NASTKE: Oh, you mean on there ranch?

APPLEBOME: No, no, the residence that you stayed in for that one evening, for children who had no place to go. What was that like?

NASTKE: It was like a little, a huge apartment but they had partitioned off the, uh, little, how can I say, bedroom, sleeping quarters. They had partitioned them off, you know, there were more children that were, stay, had to stay there and--

APPLEBOME: Did the people speak German there?

NASTKE: They spoke a little German, not much. But they explained to me that, "Your grandparents have been notified and hopefully, they will come tomorrow to pick you up."

APPLEBOME: Where were they, that they weren't able to come and meet you at the boat?

NASTKE: Uh, you mean my grandparents?

APPLEBOME: Right, where had they been staying?

NASTKE: Well, they had made the acquaintance of a very nice German couple n shipboard.

APPLEBOME: Right, and where did these people live?

NASTKE: That I don't remember but it was somewhere on Long Island. And they took my grandparents with them, and that's where they were staying until they got word that I was finally released from the Island. And they had someone with them, because, to point the way, they would have gotten lost, they would never have been able to find the little place where I had been staying. They would never have been able to find it on their own. And so at last, we were happily reunited.

APPLEBOME: And what did you say to each other when you finally--

NASTKE: Oh my, it was, I can't, it was emotional, it was very

emotional. Oh, my grandparents cried, my grandfather cried and I cried. But they were tears of happiness and it was really something that you can never forget.

APPLEBOME: What did they tell you about the time that they had been waiting? Did they know that you were going to get off the Island?

NASTKE: They had been told by the Island authority that I would be, I was in good hands and they did tell them that I had scarlet fever and they did tell them that I had the whooping cough and they told them that I would not be released until I was absolutely well. And this is what happened, so they were satisfied, knowing that I was in good hands at the Island. But they weren't really happy until we all got together again. If there's something else that I might have left out that you would like to hear.

APPLEBOME: Well, you can tell me the trip out to Montana.

NASTKE: I was hoping to see some Indians.

APPLEBOME: Did the three of you leave immediately for Montana?

NASTKE: Yes, yes.

APPLEBOME: That day?

NASTKE: Immediately.

APPLEBOME: They had all the bags packed?

NASTKE: Everything, everything, and --

APPLEBOME: And how did you travel?

NASTKE: We traveled by train and it took, I believe, it was four days, if I'm not mistaken. It took all of four days.

APPLEBOME: Do you remember boarding the train?

NASTKE: I remember.

APPLEBOME: At Grand central Station, I assume, or was it Penn Station?

NASTKE: No, I believe it was Penn Station and the train made many stops and I was so interested in looking at the land, and I couldn't get over how we had to travel so long, all across the land. It took all of four days. And I kept looking and I thought, "Where are the Indians?" (She laughs.) I saw a couple of buffalos but no Indians.

APPLEBOME: Did you have a sleeper car?

NASTKE: No, no, we had, we had a settee and it was, uh, we were able to, kind of get comfortable by laying back as far as possible. I slept on my grandmother's lap or my grandfather's lap. Well, we made it. And then, when the train stopped--

APPLEBOME: And none of you spoke English, right?

NASTKE: No, not a word.

APPLEBOME: So how did you take care of yourselves?

NASTKE: The conductor was able to speak German, I remember.

APPLEBOME: You were lucky.

NASTKE: Yes and he was quite interested in our case. He wanted
to hear all about our coming over and my grandparents had a
lot to tell him. He said, "Well, just relax, be comfortable,
it'll be a couple of days before we get to Montana." And when we
arrived, my grand, my uncle was there. Big cowboy hat and a
lumber jacket on.

APPLEBOME: What city in Montana was this?

NASTKE: Greta Falls.

APPLEBOME: Greta Falls. How long had they been there, you
relatives?

NASTKE: Uh, they went, they immigrated to Montana in 1892. Now, all this,
my personal experience was sixty-four years ago and I'm still around.

APPLEBOME: So when you got to Montana, what did your grandparents

do?

NASTKE: This is a story by itself. It was a disaster. A very true disaster. They hadn't, my grandmother hadn't seen her sister for forty years, forty long years and then when they finally got together it proved, it turned out that they couldn't see eye to eye on anything, nothing! And they were constantly at each other's throats. And I will never forget my grandparents, we had our own bedroom, our own bedroom, it was quite a big ranch house. They sat there on the edge of the bed, their arms around each other and they were crying. Heartbreaking, it was heartbreaking the way they cried everyday. It was homesickness. You can't possibly uproot an older couple and try to make it, make it the rest of their lives. It's impossible, no way.

APPLEBOME: Well, why do you think your grandmother had been so anxious to come? You said she was the one who was most enthusiastic about it. What had she expected?

NASTKE: Yes, she wanted to get away from Germany because Germany was down to rock bottom, politically and economically and we were constantly being threatened by civil war rumors.

APPLEBOME: Had she and her sister been close as children?

NASTKE: Yes, very.

APPLEBOME: And so she expected things to be different?

NASTKE: Yes, very. But now they were that much older, both of them and they just couldn't see eye to eye on anything.

APPLEBOME: What would they fight over? Can you give me an

example?

NASTKE: Fighting over the cooking, how to cook this and how to cook that. And, well, it was rather primitive. We had to go out and, outside and pump, we had a pump, you know, for water. Every drop of water had to come from outside. It was just an enormous difference. Life on a ranch in Montana and life in Germany. They had everything, they really wouldn't have needed to go. But my grandmother was so adventurous. She wanted, she was probably totally bored with life in Germany and thought this must be heaven. They describe it as a land of great beauty and vast fields with corn and cattle and they describe it as a land of the greatest opportunity anybody could ever have.

APPLEBOME: So, did you like it at least?

NASTKE: I liked it. I enjoyed (she laughs) it was fun.

APPLEBOME: Did you work on the farm?

NASTKE: No, I was too young to work.

APPLEBOME: Was there a school you could attend?

NASTKE: Yes, I went to school and, uh--

APPLEBOME: How did the other children treat you, as an immigrant?

NASTKE: As an immigrant, they thought that I was an oddball (she laughs) and I tried everything. I tried very, very hard, I wanted to speak English and in one year I was able to tackle it. I really had made great advances. In one year I was able to speak practically without any mistakes and I enjoyed learning. I had very lovely teachers,

they were patient with me and after school, one of them said, "Inge, you and I will have a little talk," and she talked and she explained many things that I, that were new to me, you know. And I owe her a lot, I really do, she was very kind and understanding. And in a year I made it.

APPLEBOME: And how did your grandparents finally resolve their condition?

NASTKE: They would have died of homesickness. My mother was still in Germany and it took, like I mentioned before, she had to wait to get English pounds in order to get to the United States and with a little money because the German Mark was absolutely worthless. So, my grandfather kept writing to her and they, it had been planned that she also would come to the ranch. My uncle in fact had a couple of widowers lined up for her to get married to (she laughs) and then my grandfather, "Under no circumstances should she come West. Stay in New York, make a little money and we will join you."

APPLEBOME: Oh, she had come to New York at that point?

NASTKE: Yes, after one year. We were already on the ranch for one year. And then she finally was able to get to board the boat and she wasn't completely penniless, she had her English pounds. But, she rolled up her sleeves immediately and went to work as a housekeeper. And she was an excellent cook. Everybody loved her cooking. So, I can really say, she was fortunate. My grandparents on the other hand, were destitute. They had nothing. Their money was gone. But she did have beautiful jewelry, my grandmother did. Earrings, a ring, bracelet, beautiful diamonds. They sold all these un order to go, to board the train and go back to New York where my mother was waiting for them. And then

they also, decided to work in order to have a little money when they go back to Germany. That was their plan, they had to go back to Germany. Nothing else would please them. They were inconsolable, you know, it was homesickness. They were too old to try to get used to the new land or the language was very difficult for them. They picked up a word there but at that age you have great difficulty in learning a new language, which is true of my grandparents. and, they worked for two years, saved their money, then we saw them off, saw them off on the boat back to Hamburg. And their friends had already written to them, "Don't worry, we will find you a little apartment when you come back," and this is how it ended. They left Hamburg two years after being there, you know, they left america after two years of working here, saving their money. Then they went back to Germany, to Hamburg.

APPLEBOME: And you and your mother stayed on?

NASTKE: We stayed on.

APPLEBOME: Did you ever see your grandparents again?

NASTKE: Yes, we, uh, a couple of years, we were here about seven years and they were going to have their golden wedding party and we absolutely wanted to be there and we did and had a lovely golden wedding party. And they were happy, at last.

APPLEBOME: And your mother and yourself were happy staying in the United States?

NASTKE: We were happy too. We didn't want to go back. We were
happy too. And my mother always made good money. And I was
in, I went all through school and high school, and arts school.

APPLEBOME: Living in New York, was this now?

NASTKE: This was in White Plains.

APPLEBOME: In White Plains.

NASTKE: Uh-huh, I went all through school, yeah. Is White Plains familiar to you?

APPLEBOME: Yes it is.

NASTKE: It is? Well that's interesting. And they had the White Plains School of Art, where I was one of the students and I learned a lot. I did a lot of painting and I sold a lot. And I think we've come to the end of the line.

APPLEBOME: Yeah, that was very interesting, thank you very much.

NASTKE: Yeah, I hope that I've been able to make some sense.

APPLEBOME: You have. Could you just tell me what your maiden name was and spell it for us?

NASTKE: MatThies, M-A-T-T-H-I-E-S, Matthies.

APPLEBOME: Okay, thank you very mich.

NASTKE: You're sure welcome. I hope I've covered every subject that you wanted me to.

APPLEBOME: I think you did. This is the end of side two of tape one of the

interview with Mrs. Inge Nastke. It is Interview Number 149. This is the end of the interview.