

KECK-162

JOSEPHINE FRIEDMAN LUTOMSKI  
BIRTH DATE: UNKNOWN  
INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 10, 1986  
RUNNING TIME: 50:00  
INTERVIEWER: EDWARD APPLEBOME  
RECORDING ENGINEER: MIKE STARLING  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: POWAY, CA  
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986  
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 6/1995  
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

WARD MAID AT ELLIS ISLAND  
1922-1923

APPLEBOME: This is Edward Applebome and I'm speaking with Mrs. Josephine Lutomski on Monday, February the 10th, 1986. We are beginning this interview about 1:30 in the afternoon. We are about to interview Mrs. Lutomski about her experience as a worker on Ellis Island in 1922. She was employed there as a ward maid. Mrs. Lutomski, can you tell me a little bit about your background and how it was that you came to work on Ellis Island?

LUTOMSKI: I came from a broken home and my mother happened to go over to Ellis Island and get a position and being she had me she wanted to bring me over there with her. So i'd have a home. To Ellis Island. I'd have a home. I was born in Yorkville section of New York City. And, uh, my mother and dad, and I needed a job. I graduated from school, had no place to stay. So she spoke to one of the officials and they got me a job over there.

APPLEBOME: She worked on Ellis Island before you?

LUTOMSKI: She worked on Ellis Island as a nurse's aide. She had more experience than I did. And i, uh, was a ward maid. I had to--

APPLEBOME: Tell me a little bit at first about your mother's working experience there.

LUTOMSKI: My mother was working in a leper ward with some lepers.

And was very, very, I think there was more, uh,uh, ill people than people who were, uh, like scarlet fever and diphtheria. But I was in the measles ward and the chicken pox, and they had different wards for the different type illnesses.

APPLEBOME: Was there a point first, though, when your mother was working there and you were still at home?

LUTOMSKI: I was living in a furnished room, yes. And then my mother was worried about me.

APPLEBOME: And your parents were separated at that point and you were left alone?

LUTOMSKI: Oh yes, they were separated quite a long time.

APPLEBOME: Do you remember her coming and telling you about Ellis Island?

LUTOMSKI: Yes, she told me that was a good place to work. You had your room and your board and, uh, you had very nice hours. And you met a lot of nice people and, uh, it was interesting. You met people from different countries who spoke different languages and a lot of them had some very trying experiences. They came over, they were scared, they didn't know what they were coming

into.

APPLEBOME: How had she gotten the job on Ellis Island?

LUTOMSKI: She got it through an agency. Uh, she went to an agency where she wanted a place she could have a home, a room and board, where she didn't have any worry about living in, in a furnished room. And, uh, she, she was more, she had more nursing experience. She had a little nursing experience so they put her in the, with the more patients who were, uh, you know, in the worst condition than, the, uh, when I was in with the ill, ill pers--ill people who weren't so very ill. They could walk around, uh--

APPLEBOME: At first, though, was she commuting to Ellis Island and were you staying at home or was she living on Ellis Island?

LUTOMSKI: She was living on Ellis Island. I was living in a furnished room. And that's why she worried about me.

APPLEBOME: You were there by yourself?

LUTOMSKI: I was there by myself. I was working.

APPLEBOME: How old were you?

LUTOMSKI: I started to work when I was 14 and a half. And I was living in, knocked around, you know, from place to place.

APPLEBOME: What kind of work were you doing?

LUTOMSKI: I was working in factories. In the paper bag factory and a compact factory. I worked in a, uh, old folks home for a while and, uh, then she got me over with her and where we could be together.

APPLEBOME: It was in Manhattan, your other jobs?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. They were all in Manhattan. Yes. All in New York City, in New York City. Uh, the Island was interesting and I'm very sorry I didn't stay there. Because I had a chance to go to night school and be a, become some kind of a nurse. And I just didn't take advantage of it. I'm very sorry today that I didn't. The, uh--

APPLEBOME: When you went there for the first time, can you remember that?

LUTOMSKI: I was scared. I was frightened because I was, they took me up to this building and told me what I had to do. I had to, when the boat would bring in these patients who were ill, they would bring them up and we would have to take them into this room and wash their hair and some of them had never seen a bathtub and they were afraid to get in the water. And you had to scour the tub good and put these people in it and take their clothes off. The, uh, and put them in a bag where they were sent down to be fumigated. And you had to, chart there where you had to list all their clothing that you took from them. And you had to list all their, their, uh, belongings that they had brought with them. Some

were kept downstairs in the main office until they would go home, but they were allowed to bring some of their things with them. And if there was a sick child usually they let the mother stay with the sick child. And I know one night I was taking care of a little infant who was born on the ship and it died. And I was, I was such a child then myself that it was like a baby, taking care of a little doll.

APPLEBOME: You were how old?

LUTOMSKI: I was 16. But I was not like a 16 year old today. I didn't know anything. It was just like taking care of this little baby doll. It had pneumonia and, uh, it didn't live through the night and it was quite a shock for me to have, the doctor told me prepare for burial. And I didn't know what to do. I had to bathe it and wrap it up in a, and I don't know if they buried the baby to sea or they, I don't what they did with it. Quite a bad experience for me for a couple of days. It was something I had never seen. I met some lovely people there and I've have to give them their breakfast and make the beds and keep the place clean and we had a dining room where it was one table with benches and those who could get up to eat. One night I wanted to go into New York City. We had to catch ferries. They ran at certain intervals, the ferries. And if we wanted to go into New York City to the movies or something we would have to take a ferry. And this one boy had asked me to go to the movies with him and I said yes. And another boy come up and asked me to go and I told him no I couldn't go because I was going with somebody else. So he said, "Okay." So about five o'clock when I was supposed to get off duty and he came up and brought me six patients. Well I couldn't get off duty until I bathed these patients and we had one lady there who was over, she was almost seven feet tall and she couldn't fit in any of the beds. And they had the white metal beds there with the, the posts in them and I had to take two chairs and put a pillow and put her feet through the posts and put each foot on the pillow. (She's laughing.) But she was from England and she could speak, uh, you know, English I

could understand her and she was very nice. She was, she thought that was wonderful that I found a place for her feet. (She's laughing.) I also got the nurse to let me take the, some of the patients down to our movie place. We had movie, we had a big recreation hall and we had pool tables and card tables and we had a piano and a Victrola--

APPLEBOME: This was in which building?

LUTOMSKI: I think that was in building number two.

APPLEBOME: Which was on Island--

LUTOMSKI: Island Number Two. That would be Island Number Two. I don't know, remember the names of the buildings. It's been over 60 years, you know/ But I, I would take them down and I remembered, uh, it wasn't talkie movies then it was just, you just saw movies and everything, and titles, well they couldn't read them, but the first time I went down I took three ladies down. This one young, young German girl and her mother and another girl that was ill. And, uh, we took, we went down there and they were showing Charlie Chaplin. And these women were so hysterical with laughter. They had never seen him before. And, of course, they couldn't read but they, they got such a kick out of the pictures and they, they told the nurse about them. That they were so happy and every week they wanted to go down again. Uh, the patients, some of the patients were, would get very nasty if you try to take their clothes from them. They thought you were stealing their clothes. And then they found out why. Some of them had money sewed in their hems. The bills. And even in the seams they had the money rolled up and sewed in the seams of their clothes. And,

uh, one person wouldn't take his hat, her hat off. She wore like this bed cap and then we found out why. It was, she had all the money sewed, her bills sewed in there. And they were very afraid if you took their jewelry that they wouldn't get it back. Uh, I used to, this one little German girl and I became friendly with, in a way, one way we could. We didn't understand each other but we liked one, and I bought her a Hershey bar for the first time. She had never seen a Hershey bar. And she was just so thrilled with that candy, she wouldn't eat it she would, she just enjoyed it so much. Then there was another Armenian girl who came in who had been abused by the Turks. They had burned her with cigarettes , burns all over her breasts and her arms and they had become infected. And we, I had to take her downstairs to, uh, I think it was Island Number Two where the laboratories were. Now i"m not so sure about the numbers of the Island. And I would take them down there for different blood tests and, uh, and one doctor, I think his name was doctor Spencer, like me very much. And he said I'd make a good nurse and he tried to talk me into going to school, but I didn't. The, uh, I liked it over there because I had my room, my own room, and the food was good and I became ill with appendicitis and they took me in the hospital and they treated me royally. I was treated just like, uh, one of the, the first class patients that came in. There was a special place for the, uh, first class patients. They weren't on, I was with mostly the poorer class, the steerage passengers. And they had, some of them had never been washed the whole time they came over it was, and you had to take them in and just scrub them and they didn't like that very much.

APPLEBOME: Is this men, women, children?

LUTOMSKI: No, I was with the women and children. Uh, little, mostly girls. The men were in a separate, uh, ward. They had a separate ward for the men. But they could come and visit their wives and children.

APPLEBOME: How did it work in terms of what was the routine that you would be out in contact, that you would pick up the people who had been identified as being sick?

LUTOMSKI: Well, when they, they would send word up to us that a ship had come in and to be prepared for the patients. Well then we had to make sure that there were enough beds and that, uh, the beds were all freshly made. And then they used to call them, I guess, runners. These young, young men worked there, college boys, I guess, they were. And, uh, they would work there and they would, uh, bring two or three patients up to you and then you would, had this big long room with a bath tub and a big table and you had a chart where you wrote down their name and their number and what clothes they had at all, uh, petticoats and socks and shoes and what you took from them. And you put them in a large burlap bag and you tied it and gave them, you know, hospital wear and then you would take them into bed and then a doctor would come up and, uh, examine them and then there was two nurses there that would treat them and would give them their medication. I didn't have anything to do with the medication.

APPLEBOME: And you would wash them before this examination?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. Oh yes. They had to be put in the tub and scrubbed.

And then after you got one out you had to scrub that tub with this very strong solution to, you know, to kill any germs. And this one night when this English group came they were pretty clean so I cheated a little bit on cleaning and the next day about four of them had measles, So I, I got quite a scolding for that. (She's laughing.) Because they knew that I was in a hurry to get out. But, uh, I enjoyed it over there, but my mother, uh, started to get ill. It started, the weather, it was so cold over there. In the winter months. And in the spring, I believe in the spring of '23 she got a job up in Briarcliff Manor in the laundry where you got your room and board. It was a big, massive laundry and I left to go with her. But I'm very sorry now I did. I Really enjoyed my, uh, uh, employment over there because they were very good to me. Being I was a kid, they were all, you know, would help all they could.

APPLEBOME: Explain. Because you told me, uh, that you were too young, really, to have a job. How did you get around that?

LUTOMSKI: Well my mother spoke to one of the head nurses over there, the person who was in charge over there and she was a very big woman and she was a very, very strict woman. And--

APPLEBOME: Do you remember her name?

LUTOMSKI: No.. All I know is Red Mike, we used to call her Red Mike because she had red hair and she was, uh, she was strict but she was a nice person and she told my mother that, uh, she would

pass me off as 18 on the paper work and we got paid twice a month.

APPLEBOME: How much did you get paid?

LUTOMSKI: I don't remember. Isn't that terrible? I've been trying to remember but I just don't. I don't know, I think it was about \$12. Twenty-five dollars a month I believe it was but you get paid twice a month. Now I'm not sure of that, I'm not definite, but it was about that. Because I went to work for Briarcliff and we only got paid ten dollars a week and out room and board.

APPLEBOME: Where did you live on Ellis Island?

LUTOMSKI: Uh, we lived, uh, we had a special dormitory and I believe that was on the, uh, First Island. Not in the main building, but there was three islands and we had regular dormitories there. And a big dining room where we would eat and then we had this other recreation hall where we could go down nights and play. I used to play the piano a little bit and play cards or you could play, shoot pool if you wanted to.

APPLEBOME: You have to stop moving your hands because it makes noise.  
Did the workers have their own dining area?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. we had our own dining area.

APPLEBOME: Did you make friends with any of the other workers?

LUTOMSKI: Oh yes, I was very friendly with all of them because I was young and I could play the piano and I, we danced a lot there and we'd go into New York City and it was great because but you had to be back by the twelve o'clock ferry or you'd have to sleep in the waiting room in New York until morning. The first ferry, I think, was six o'clock in the morning.

APPLEBOME: How often did it run?

LUTOMSKI: I think it was running every half hour or every hour I believe it ran.

APPLEBOME: To the Battery?

LUTOMSKI: Uh, to the Battery. It went right into the Battery and then you got a subway to wherever you were going from there. Of course, when I was there it was horse carriage. (She laughs.)

APPLEBOME: You didn't share a room with your mother there, you had your own room.

LUTOMSKI: No, no, my mother had her own room and I had my own room. Everybody had their own room. And, uh, it was clean. We had to take care of ourselves and we, they furnished us uniforms. We had white uniforms.

APPLEBOME: Who supervised you?

LUTOMSKI: Uh, well I went on the ward and the nurse was there and,

and the nurse would tell me what to do. And the doctor, if he wanted anything he would ask me.

APPLEBOME: How many days a week did you work?

LUTOMSKI: I worked six. Six days a week from, I think it was, uh, seven in the morning 'til 5:30 at night unless we got patients we had to stay there until we got them settled. Some nights it would be seven o'clock.

APPLEBOME: Could you tell me what the routine was of a typical day? Start at the beginning when you'd get up and--

LUTOMSKI: Get up and I'd, uh, wash and go to eat breakfast and then Id' go to my ward. I would have to make the pot of coffee for the doctors and nurses. That was my first job. Then I would have to, the food would come up on an elevator from the bottom floor they, on a dumbwaiter. And I would have to feed those patients who could get up I would, uh, sit them at the table and get, then I would take and wash their hands and face of the children and try to feed the children. Then they would collect all the dirty dishes and then it was up to me to, uh, bathe them kids, and, uh, uh, help them, parents, you know, get washed and make up the beds and, uh, then when the doctor came if anybody had to go down for the blood test or down for, uh, X-Rays, or whatever. I would have to go down and take them down and bring them back and then by that time it would be time to serve lunch. And then I was given an hour for lunch. And then we were allowed an hour from three to four. I was allowed an hour for myself. And then in that hour the nurses took

over. Mostly the patients were sleeping. And I used to take them for walks.

APPLEBOME: Where would you go for walks?

LUTOMSKI: Oh we'd walk along because down there, there was a connecting hall, like a passage way and you could look out the windows. And, uh, they would like to walk and I would take them up and own the passage ways. Especially people who were anxious to see New York, they couldn't wait to see New York. You couldn't see very much of it but they, they would love to go to the window where they could see the Statue of Liberty. They really enjoyed seeing the Statue of Liberty.

APPLEBOME: This was women and children?

LUTOMSKI: Women and children. Yes. And, uh, there was one incident there that I remember very well, that there was this woman, I don't remember what she was, from what country, but she was very nasty. And every time the doctor would go to examine her little girl, she would fight with him. And, uh, the child was so unruly that, that it took two or three of us to hold her down for him to look at her sore throat. And he was kind of rough with her one day, you know. We, he didn't hit her or anything, but he was rough, and she tried to sue him. And I remember getting a call to go down to the main office. That I was wanted down there. And I was scared. I didn't know what I, oh boy, I did something. But then they, I saw the doctor and this woman and her lawyer asked me several questions about what went on, you know, up there and I just explained to him that the child, we couldn't handle her and, and she'd, the woman had told him that the doctor had hit the child and

he hadn't but she was bringing charges against him, you know. I don't know what for, but she had and, uh, they wouldn't let her in the country because she, the child had some sickness. They wouldn't let them in. And there was quite a few. They used to call it the City of Tears because they would, we'd have to, be turned back and go home. And then when they came in they called it Castle Gardens because they loved the, gardens were so beautiful as you came into that first building. And, uh, then they were sent around in holding pens there, they had different holding pens for different people who were going to different states. And you had to wait until your papers came through or your sponsor's came in to, and they would review them and see if they, you were able to go in. I used to feel sorry for the patients whose clothes, we would put these in bags, they had to go downstairs to be fumigated and then they would be brought back and we had a special room to store them. And then when they were to go home we would have to get them out. And they would be so wrinkled and I used to feel so sorry, I was wishing I had an iron that I could iron their clothes for them.

But, uh, I got along very good with, with the patients and they liked me. And, uh, I, I, realized that they were coming to a strange country and, uh, they used to ask me, this one girl used to ask, try to ask me to explain what was in the city. And you'd try to talk to them in your language and they don't understand you, but I got along very good with my patients.

APPLEBOME:       What would you do with them during the day when they were out of their beds? Where could they go?

LUTOMSKI:       Well we just could walk up and down this, uh, passage way

and, uh, I would show them books. I would get them books from the, we had a big library there. We had a room there with books and I would get the books and try to show them pages. You didn't have much time to give your patients. Because by the time you made up beds and cleaned bathrooms and, uh, uh, emptied bed pans. You, you were kept pretty busy and then you had to get ready for their, visitors could come in the afternoon. You know, they would have people from the States who were their sponsors.

APPLEBOME: Even though they had communicable diseases?

LUTOMSKI: Well if it was, wasn't so bad as, you know, like I had a lot of pneumonia cases and, uh, they wouldn't let them in k\like, I had a group of West Indians come in and they were very, very black people. They were lovely people. But they had glaucoma. They had the eye disease. And they were kept separately. We had a special room for them. And I would have to take them down for blood tests, I remember I went down one day and this doctor down there was trying so hard to find their veins and he was having such a problem because he couldn't find their veins to get the blood out and it was real, uh, I was almost crying for them, you know, and they would sit there and they would try to be so patient with him and, uh, he, that's when he told me I'd make a good nurse and he wanted me to study but I, I didn't, I wanted to be with my mother. (She laughs.)

APPLEBOME: What were the differences in the way the people acted or dressed from some of the different countries?

LUTOMSKI: Well some of them came over in their real, uh, country clothes, you know. And they didn't want to give them up. They were afraid that you wouldn't bring them back. And, uh, uh, of course, I was there during the winter months and they wore these big heavy coats and you had to look through the clothes to see if, you know, if there was any, uh, anything in the pockets or anything in the hems and all, you had to watch for that. And you had to out all this in the big bags and they, uh, would go down to be fumigated. And, uh, the, the costumes, some of them wore beautiful clothes. Some of them came over very poorly dressed.

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

LUTOMSKI: Uh, we had Greeks, Armenians, uh, we had a lot of Germans and we had a lot from, uh, Jewish people, I guess they were from Israel. And, uh, Irish. A lot of Irish came over. And England. We had a mixture of every, a little bit of everything.

APPLEBOME: Did the patients get along with each other?

LUTOMSKI: Some of them did. Some of them would ignore. Some of them were very quiet. They wouldn't bother with anybody. They were afraid to talk. It seemed that they were afraid to talk. They wouldn't talk to you and, uh, and, of course, they didn't, they couldn't get used to our food either. You know, it was so different from what they were used to. They liked potatoes. Every one of them like potatoes. You couldn't give them enough potatoes. But, uh--

APPLEBOME: What were some of the other meals you would serve to them?

LUTOMSKI: Three meals a day, they got. Breakfast and lunch and dinner.

APPLEBOME: What kind of food?

LUTOMSKI: And it was good cereals and hot cereals and cold cereals

and, uh, they used to send up scrambled eggs but a lot of them, you know, of course, then they used all the fresh food it wasn't like powdered eggs like they use today. They used fresh food. And for lunches they had soups, different kinds of soups. And, uh, on Fridays we had to have fish meal because, because of a lot of people who would not eat meat on Fridays. And, uh, they had a very good, good food over there. I can, food was very good. Even for the, you know, the help and patients got very good food.

APPLEBOME: Was there any stealing that went on?

LUTOMSKI: Oh they'd steal, uh, if you had cookies. They'd sneak in

the kitchen and get the cookies. See the hall, the room was, a hall and then there was three rooms on each side of it. One was like a dining room and the next room was the room with this, uh, bathtub and then we had the toilets. They had four or five toilets with sinks. And, uh, then there was a kitchen and then there was a medicine room and a, uh, then the nurse's station was a big room with desks and, for them, the nurses to keep the charts. And then there was the store room where we kept the, when the clothes would come back from the, uh, fumigation. They would send them up and we would put them in this room and keep things in there for them. And we'd put, had a safe there so we'd show them where their jewelry was going because a lot of them wouldn't give up their jewelry. Because they only brought with them what they could. The other stuff was kept downstairs someplace on Island Number One I imagine.

They kept their streamer trunks or things that they had brought with them. Some people came over with very little. Some people came over with bags, carpet bags, bags, I guess you would call them, I don't know what they call them now. But they brought them over. But it was a very interesting experience and I'm just sorry I got out of it.

APPLEBOME: What were some of the other officers that you saw at work.

For example the kitchen. Did you know any people from the kitchen?

LUTOMSKI: Uh, I met one or two of the chefs and they would come in

the recreation hall at night when we would be down there. We used to go down there quite frequently. That was the only place you could go unless you wanted to go to New York. It was too much going back and forth on the ferries so we'd go down to the recreation room every night. They had a library down there where we could read and get books if we wanted to. And, uh, they used to shoot pool. The fellows would shoot pool there and we had card tables where we could play cards, and, uh, uh, we could dance, we had records, we played records. And we could have guests come over. I used to have quite a few of my, my school friends from school come over and spend the evening over there and, uh, we had, we had a little stand where you but soda and popcorn or things like that, it wasn't as popular then as it is today, but. We had, uh, it was, uh, it was a different life over there. It was interesting and I, and I'm sorry I didn't learn a few extra languages because it would have been wonderful. I could have been an interpreter over there. They had several of them.

APPLEBOME: Who would, that, who would speak the language?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. We had interpreters. If we got stuck we would try to talk to them with our hands and explain things. And, uh, of course, when they'd come in a room with me alone and they would see that bathtub and a lot of them were bashful and shy and they didn't want anybody to see them naked. And, you know, they'd try to push me out of the room, you know.

APPLEBOME: Was there somebody there to help you take their clothes off?

LUTOMSKI; No. Unless I needed help. If I needed, if I saw they were getting belligerent I would call one of the nurses and she would come in.

APPLEBOME: What about the toilets. Did people know how to use the toilets or the sinks?

LUTOMSKI: No. They didn't know how to use the toilets. And, and, they didn't know. They would go and they wouldn't know what to do and then they would be ashamed to call you to find out. So you used to, I used to have to go in after each patient and make sure that it was flushed properly and, and we taught them a lot. Some of them were, people there, had been. lived in houses and had known, but the majority of them came over steerage. And they were all poor people. And they thought the streets were paved with gold. And, uh, it was, uh, very interesting to talk to some of these people who could speak to you who understood the language.

There was a few who, from other countries, who understood. We had several Chinese people come over there and, uh, the Chinese were the ones who were the lepers. They were lepers. They had lepers.

APPLEBOME: Tell me about that.

LUTOMSKI: Now I didn't know too much about it, but my mother worked in the leper ward. And they knew they weren't allowed in the country and several times they would jump overboard and say they were going to swim to Hong Kong. They wanted to get away from the, uh, they were, they didn't want to go back home, they were going to swim home, you know? And, uh, they were afraid, you know, because that, that was one disease that they would, as soon as they found out they were deported right away. Uh, measles wasn't too bad. They didn't, that went away in one or two weeks. And chicken pox would go quickly.

APPLEBOME: Do you remember any people on your ward who were sent home?  
Do you remember seeing people who were sent back?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. I sent, this German girl was sent back. She had a blood disease and they wouldn't just let her in the country. I felt very badly for her. They, I don't remember, I know her first name was Gretchen. It's the only thing I can remember about her. But, uh, her parents were very good and they gave me a nice tip. And she had given me a very pretty golden ring when I, when she left.

APPLEBOME: This is the end of side one of tape one of the interview

with Mrs. Josephine Lutomski.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

APPLEBOME: This is side two of tape one of the interview with Mrs.  
Josephine Lutomski. To get the record straight you were going  
to tell me what your, uh, maiden name had been working there.

LUTOMSKI: Yeah, my maiden name was, uh, Josephine Friedman.  
F-R-I-E-D-M-A-N. And my mother worked there a s Sally  
Friedman. And, uh, we, we both enjoyed it over there but the  
weather was so cold my mother couldn't take it anymore and when she  
left I left with her. I didn't want to be alone

APPLEBOME: You were talking about the people who got sent back.

LUTOMSKI: Yes, we had several people who came in with some blood disease or  
something and they would not allow them. And they felt, they, they cried so and it made me  
feel so bad to see them because I imagine they would have been, uh, good citizens if they had  
been allowed to, but they couldn't do it. All the lepers were sent back.

APPLEBOME: What was the procedure when people were sent back? What  
would happen?

LUTOMSKI: Well they would have, uh, just give them their clothes and  
they would take them down and they would wait in Island One,  
on the main island 'til the ship was going back and they would be

sent back. I don't know if their, their sponsors, what their sponsors did, I don't know. Several people had to wait in the waiting pens until sponsors came to take them to the different cities they were going. There were people going to Chicago and Philadelphia and to other parts of the country. And they had relatives picking them up. And, uh, uh at, they would let their, if they weren't to ill, uh, they would let the relatives come to visit them before they, but they had to be cured of whatever they had before they were allowed into the United States. And, they had the sponsors had to have their, and they had to have so much money or something, I don't know just what the routine was there, but that was mostly done down in the main office. They had these, uh, uh, men and women there who would interview them and find out if they had enough money to come in here so they wouldn't become. become wards of the city.

APPLEBOME: Describe the procedure of what would happen when the boat came into the harbor.

LUTOMSKI: Well, uh, the boat would come in and, of course, the people would stand around and they would just be in awe when they would see the Statue of Liberty and also Castle Garden as they called Ellis Island then. That was called, because the grounds were so beautiful and the building was so impressive and a lot of them would be in awe, they couldn't believe that, that was such a building there. And, uh, they would be brought in, in so many would be brought in on, from the big ship or brought in on a small ship. And they were sent to First Island and they were interviewed and then they were given a physical and if they were ill, then they had a runner bring you to the different, uh, hospital wards where they were, uh, would be patients until they could go home.

APPLEBOME: And the ferry would shuttle back and forth?

LUTOMSKI: The ferry would shuttle back and forth. And they, when  
there was quite a few of them they would have an extra ferry  
put on to carry them over. But they had to have somebody meeting  
them in New York because they couldn't, you know, they didn't know  
the city and the majority of them had relatives or sponsors and  
they would meet them at the Battery there.

APPLEBOME: Was it a different ferry that they used going back and  
forth between the boats than the one you took to  
Manhattan?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. They had a special ferry that would bring them from  
the ship to the Island. But then they would use the other  
ferry, our ferry, to go, you know, the ferry from Ellis Island to  
go into the Battery. And I, and they would go mostly during the  
daytime. They didn't go at night. They kept them there at night.  
I mean these people had to sit in these, there's like pens around.  
They called them waiting pens and they'd have to sit in these pens  
until somebody came for them. Now whether they went, uh, according  
to States or I don't know just how or where or alphabetically order  
I guess they went in alphabetical order, their names. And their  
names was something to pronounce. It was quite differently.

APPLEBOME: What would you do, would they have their name written on a  
tag?

LUTOMSKI: On a big tag and they would pin it on them and they would

pin that, uh, uh, tag and it had their name and number and had their destination or and their, their name of the sponsor would be on there if they had a sponsor. And, uh, they would come over to me and we'd, when they brought to me. like I said, we had to bathe them and put them to bed.

APPLEBOME: Did it ever get confused and you would lose somebody's name and wouldn't know who they were?

LUTOMSKI: No, I. (She laughs.) No, I was never confused. Some of them had very weird names, you know, weird spelling names. They spelled their names so differently than, when they'd, than they would be pronouncing them. It was quite difficult to, uh, to, uh, understand.

APPLEBOME: The people were mostly appreciative?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. Of course, we had a few belligerents who thought you were doing them a favor, you know, and they thought they had every right to go right in there. A lot of them didn't expect to go through the physicals and to go through all the, the red tape, I guess, you would call it. But it had to be done.

APPLEBOME: Was there ever any fisticuffs?

LUTOMSKI: Oh yes. Oh yes and, uh, they'd argue among themselves because they would say, "Well I was here first." You know, and they want to go ahead of them, and, "Why are you making me wait?" And, why you, and, uh, the same when they would be brought upstairs. They, they didn't want to stay there and they, and, uh, I had a bench to sit, and

I'd sit, we had to make them wait until it was their time. I couldn't put them all in one bathtub. You know, and we had to scrub it. And, uh, they would get, oh yeah. And it was the same with, uh, calling them for their meals. Some of them would run out of there and get the (she laughs) want to be the first at the table. You had a, have a, with, you know, all over. But, uh, some of them were very--

APPLEBOME: I assume the eating habits were different for different people.

LUTOMSKI: Oh yes. Oh yes. And a lot of the Chinese and the Orientals would want chopsticks. We's have to get chop, order chopsticks for them. And, of course, they didn't

like our food at all. (She laughs.) They were used to their own, you know, type of food. But, uh, they ate. They had to eat or go hungry. We, we tried to, uh, they had to, you can't have a meal for everybody, you know, there were too many there.

APPLEBOME: I've heard stories of people not being familiar with how to eat a certain kind of food. For example, a banana, where they would try to eat the skin.

LUTOMSKI: Oh yeah, oh yeah they would try to eat the skin all that was, that was one of the things. And, uh, if you, some of them would eat the skins and all, you know, of pears and onions. One man wanted an onion, one woman, I should say, wanted an onion one day. And I didn't know why she would want to eat the whole raw onion. So we found out that a lot of them like raw onions. So we kept raw onions there. (She laughs.) Instead of fruit for them.

We tried to please them, but it's, it was quite an experience. I really enjoyed it.

APPLEBOME: Do you think the Island was well run?

LUTOMSKI: It was at that time, yes. It was very well run at that time. And, uh, you had, uh, everything was done on a schedule, you had to live up to a schedule. And, uh, they didn't allow no carousing or drinking, you know, we, if you were caught drinking. We used to have one man that, we used to have a man on the floor, to scrub the floors and wash the floors and do the heavy work. And he was, got so he was always drinking and, and I went to the nurse and I just told her I couldn't put up with him because I was getting blamed for it. There was, the work wasn't done and then and they were yelling, the nurses said, "Why isn't the bathroom floor done?" And I told her. I believe his name was Mr. Webster. Now I don't why that name just came to me now, Mr. Webster. Wouldn't, wasn't doing it though. They had to fire him. But they were, very, uh, they had a nice group of people when I was there. Nice group of people.

APPLEBOME: Were there any instances of the staff stealing from immigrants?

LUTOMSKI: No. They accused us of it. They would accuse you of it. We had a couple of incidents there where they, they would accuse us, but we knew that, why would we steal from them? You know, they would, uh, and we weren't supposed to accept tips. But this one little German girl, she gave me a beautiful ring. I, and

I had a big fire and I lost everything. That's why I have no pictures around here. Everything is gone. But, uh, uh, we had one people, one woman over there whom I met recently over, at one of my last visits. And she said to me, uh, I was talking to the guide, and she said to the guide, "I was told that everybody named, uh, if they couldn't say your name they'd call you Lipshitz." Because they couldn't understand what your saying so they would say Lipshitz. And they'd call everybody Lipshitz. And she d\said to me, "Is that true?" Because my son-in-law told them that I had worked there when I was, over 60 years ago. And this woman, this guide asked me if that's true, I said, "No, I never, no. They had their own name." And I said we wrote it out the best we could understand, to our, our way of, if their name was something we wrote it the way we'd pronounce it. Not the way they'd pronounce it. And I never called anybody by their name unless they told me. Like this girl told me her name was Gretchen. I called her Gretchen. But I'd call them Mrs. or Ma or Grandma or somebody according to their age. And, uh, I, uh, I really in, had made a lot of friends over there.

APPLEBOME: Do you remember seeing families split up?

LUTOMSKI: Yes. They would be split up and that would be hard because the women would be frightened when they weren't with their husbands. But they couldn't come on our floor. We didn't have the facilities for the couple, the only couple that stayed there was that, and they only stayed there, when that German baby died. That was a German couple. And they let him stay with her because she was, she wasn't too well. And she went into pneumonia right after that. She had to stay. And then he went, uh, had to go to another place. I don't know where he went. Whether he came into the city or not. But, uh, the

German people that had Gretchen, they had to go back to Germany. We had a lot of German people come over at that time.

APPLEBOME: Were there other cases where people died that you were aware of?

LUTOMSKI: Uh, no. Not that I was aware of. That was the only one that died while I was there on my floor. On my, in my ward. That was the only one there.

APPLEBOME: What stories did you hear from your mother?

LUTOMSKI: Well my mother would tell me about the lepers. A couple of the lepers had died. They just, uh, when they got here, I imagine they went into pneumonia right away. The, uh, change of climate was so much for some of them. Some of them were used to the cold and others weren't. And during the winter months, I know I was there during the winter months. And that's when my mother, we left in the spring of '23.

APPLEBOME: What kind of uniform did you wear?

LUTOMSKI: We wore a plain white dress. And it had a little blue stripe in it, uh, and the nurses wore all white. And they wore the caps. But we wore, uh, the ward maid and the people worked, it was a white with, uh, blue stripe in it. And, uh, it was a very plain dress. It was nothing fancy to wear. Just, as long as it was clean. We had to be kept very clean.

APPLEBOME: Would you say most of the workers treated the immigrants

as well as you did?

LUTOMSKI: Oh, I, I think they did. I think everybody got along, you know. Some of them might have been a little nasty. But I don't think there was anybody nasty to them. I never saw it, uh, they'd somebody, sometimes they'd send up a girl to help me if we, you know, we got rushed with too many patients. And they all seemed to be very nice people.

APPLEBOME: Was it ever, was it ever too many patients so that you weren't able to accommodate them all?

LUTOMSKI: We, well, if we couldn't accommodate them on our. our floor, why we would send them to another, they had other beds for, in another part of the building. Because the buildings were two stories high when I was there. Downstairs were the men and upstairs were the women. That's the way they separated them

APPLEBOME: Did you stay in touch with any of the people from the Island after you had left?

LUTOMSKI: No. No. No, I didn't stay in touch with any of them. Because I moved up to Briarcliff manor, which was quite a distance from, about 35 miles from New York. And that was quite a distance in those days. And I, I made all new friends up there.

APPLEBOME: Was there anything else you can think of that you would like to tell us about working there?

LUTOMSKI: No, I, I tell you I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it and, I'm just sorry I

left it. But, it's, uh, I was a kid and I didn't know any better. I didn't realize the opportunities that would have been opened for me if I had stayed there. Because I could have gone to school in New York and, uh, became a nurse or became an interpreter which I would have liked to do.

APPLEBOME: Would they have paid for that for you? Do you know?

LUTOMSKI: I don't know. This one doctor said I could go to a night school, to a night high school. I don't know who would pay for it, I--

APPLEBOME: There wasn't a school on the Island was there?

LUTOMSKI: No. No, there was no school there. And, uh, it was mostly where I was, was just sick people. You know, on my ward. I, now the first class patients had a different place altogether when they came in, if they were ill. They were all sent together. Because that's where I was taken when I was ill.

APPLEBOME: And did you see that facility? What was it like?

LUTOMSKI: It was, uh, was more modern. Of course, modern as was in those days, you know. Wasn't like the hospitals today but it was a nice clean room. Because I was in the room with an actress. I can't remember her name, she wasn't a big actress, she was just, but she had been in Europe and she had picked up some sort of bug. And she was in the room with me. They had two in a room. It was very clean, nice. I had an attack of appendicitis, but they didn't operate, they treated it. And, uh, I was there for about a week and it was great. They treated me great. Just like I was one of

the big shots that came in. But I really enjoyed it over there, I went over in '83, I think it was, and I was just, I just cried the whole time to see the devastation. To see the, how they could let a place, such a beautiful place go to ruin. The floors were, uh, tiles all off the floors and tiles off the wall and, uh, uh, my son-in-law took me around, showed me all the nooks and crannies we could get into. Because one of the guides said he wished he could take me over to the Third Island but he said, he said, "If you cried here," he said, "You'll go hysterical over there." He said, "Because being you had lived there," you know, and, but would they only let us on the first, you know, one main building there and showed us. And he, the guide said to me, "What are those things, those, uh, coops like over there." He teasing me. And I said, "Those are the waiting pens." And he says, "You ought to get a job over here." He said, "You know as much about it as I do." Because I could, uh, uh, you know, explain the cages, this big room where they had all these tables and chairs and seats where these poor people had to wait and wait and they had certain pens for, I guess it was different states or something. I don't know, they separated them some way. But, uh, I was quite shocked at the devastation. Uh, I hope I live long enough to see it re-done over. I don't imagine they'll do the whole place over. But, uh, they said that either marines or soldiers or someone had been there and had just left the water turned on and moved out and left everything flooded and all the pipes were rusty and oh, it was sad. It was some chairs and tables there that I had remembered, you know, they were laying around. And they had these big green things with like a woman, like a woman's head, uh, I don't know what they call them. They were, and they'd be on the front door. On the outside they

were green. And they had them all thrown on a pile and, uh, and in this room with all the, they had some fountains there. there's a beautiful fountain outside and they were just thrown in, in a heap.

Oh it was heart breaking to see a place go like that. I hope they, I hope I live to see it done over. I don't know if I will, but I hope, I'd love to go. I, I'll most likely go over this year, if I go to New York. I go to New York once a year to see my kids.

And, uh, I hope I live so long enough to go to the grand opening of the, whatever they're going to do over there.

APPLEBOME: I hope you do too. It sounds like you were a very good employee. I think you treated people well.

LUTOMSKI: Well I was young, and I did what I was told.

APPLEBOME: Okay. Thank you very much.

LUTOMSKI: You're welcome.

APPLEBOME: This is the end of side two of tape one of the interview with Mrs. Josephine Lutomski. This is the end of Interview Number 162.