KECK-17
DR. ROBERT L. LESLIE
BIRTH DATE: DECEMBER 18, 1885
INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 14, 1985
RUNNING TIME: 45:00
INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB
RECORDING ENGINEER: CONNIE KIELTYKA
INTERVIEW LOCATION: BROOKLYN, NY
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: NANCY VEGA, 9/1995
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE DOCTOR AT ELLIS ISLAND
1912-1914

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb and I'm speaking with Dr. Leslie on the 14th day of August, 1985. We are beginning this interview at 5:35 and we're about to talk with Dr. Leslie about his experience as a doctor at Ellis Island. Tape one, side one.

LESLIE: Tell me when I can go ahead.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, Dr. Robert Leslie, um, uh, for a little background, where were you born, and when?

LESLIE: I was born in the Lower East Side in New York when there was no electric. My first job in New York I was a lamplighter at fourteen years, when I was going to school.

GUMB: Yeah. When, when were you born?

LESLIE: I was born on December 18, 1885, and my address was 5 Hester Street on the Lower East Side.

GUMB: Yeah. You spoke of your mother. How did your mother get here?

LESLIE: My mother, that's a sad story. When she was caught by the

Russian police she was sent to jail and after thirty days she was interviewed and they told her they'd give her an option, Siberia or out. And she says out. And so she communicated with her only other relative, her brother, that's my uncle, who lived here. And he sent her what is called in German (German), in other words, a ticket for a boat. And so for three weeks on the ship, it's a terrible thing, steerage, twenty-five dollars for a three-week trip on a boat. She boarded the ship in Hamburg, but then the ship stopped in Liverpool. In Hamburg the sailors were German so she communicated. But when she got to Liverpool the sailors were English and she couldn't talk to them. She became very ill on the ship and she was completely, as we say in medical language, exsanguinated. She weighed only eighty pounds. And this sailor, I'm sorry, (he laughs) he was the one who gave her a cup of tea three times a day. By the time they got to New York she couldn't talk to him but through another woman on the ship and she told this man saved her life and she would marry him when they got off the ship. And she asked him whether he would jump ship, and he agreed to do that. And he jumped ship. When my uncle saw him he said, "Well, you can't marry him, you're Jewish. He'd have to be circumcised." (he laughs) Well, for a boy of twenty-two to be circumcised is not easy, but he did. They got married, and then my uncle tried to get him into industry but he was a sailor.

GUMB: He was your father.

LESLIE: He would be my father, yes. I was the first born and I'm sorry to say but I grew up hating him because he became an alcoholic. He had to have a wee drip every morning, a weep drop was a half a pink of schlivovitz, you know, that's a strong, stronger than

vodka. And he was a good baby maker because my mother had twelve children and four of them died in infancy and there were eight left, four boys and four girls. And I'm sorry to say they all died. I'm the only survivor in the family.

GUMB: You were talking about your mother in Russia? What did your mother do in Russia?

LESLIE: I told you she was an apprentice as a baker. That's all she did. But she was involved in getting rid of the czar. There was a cell, you know, called nihilists. Similar to what we call communists. Well, but I think it's enough. After she told me her story about her life I graduated Towns and Harris, the high school in New York, and from Towns and Harris I went right to City College. I graduated City College in '04. I was too poor to go any further. I received a Phi Beta Kappa in chemistry. I was a good chemist. I got a scholarship to Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. I had an idea where Baltimore was but I never travelled beyond the East Side. I never got anywhere but down on the Lower East Side. So the charity organization, in Hebrew they called it the gahila. This gahila were the ones, they said because I was such a bright fellow they would try and raise the money for my scholarship. It took them four years to raise the funds to go down to Baltimore and stay. They assigned me to a rabbi's home. But he had a daughter and they thought perhaps something would work out. But the chemistry didn't work. (he laughs) I didn't like her and I didn't like the rabbi. But it was my home for four years. It was a terrible ordeal but my fellow students were marvelous. They let me have their notes and their work. It was a terrific thing. I had the great honor of listening to the great Dr. Osler, O-S-L-E-R, who was then

considered a great physician. I heard him lecture. And in his lecture he said, "Gentlemen, when you are beyond forty you're on the way down." (he laughs) Here I am a hundred and I don't believe it. Well, he died when he was seventy-six. The point is it was a terrible grind from age fourteen when I was a lamplighter I lived on the Lower East Side and across the street, Essex Street was then the name of the street, was a Russian printer, El Lebraun. I remember him with pinch nez glasses. He was a Russian intellectual. Because I knew the cyrillic alphabet I was able to talk to him in Russian, and he liked me. He said, "I can't pay you any salary." There was no electric and you had to kick the press, you know. I said I was fascinated by printing. Well, the story is, I spent nearly two years after school, everything was after school, it was a terrible time. My father was no finance man. We suffered. But my mother was a remarkable woman. I can show you a picture of her. She was able to make things meet, you know. And so my first experience was selling newspapers in the street and then she would buy apples and cook them and put a piece of sugar in each apple and I would take it to the sweat shops because on the Lower East Side there were all sweat shops. People who came from the other side and were taught a trade and everybody knew how to, they were called "bushel men," you know.

GUMB: Who were called bushel men, who were called bushel men?

LESLIE: The men who were the sewers. Of course, they worked on top of a bushel. They called them bushel men. But I became very articulate. At fifteen and sixteen I joined the Socialist Party and I could make speeches in the street. I was known as "the young speaker." They put me on the platform and I would say, "If

you want to get rid of your poverty you have to vote and vote for the right people. Vote for the Socialist Party." (he laughs) And so there was no Seward Park then, now we have. The conditions on the East Side was just, I can't even attempt to describe it.

GUMB: What was the story about your mother in Russia, as a baker, what she did there in terms of the pamphlets, putting the pamphlets in the bread? what was that story, could you tell it?

LESLIE: Well, as I say, she was arrested, but they let her go when she said she wanted out. But my mother told me, as a young boy, that she suffered a great deal and her ambition was to get to America, the land of happiness and freedom, where the streets were lined with gold.

GUMB: What were her, did she have memories of Ellis Island?

LESLIE: Well, all I can tell you is, she told me the conditions that they had on the Island. I felt if I could do anything to help the people . . .

GUMB: What did she say about the conditions?

LESLIE: They were terrible. People were herded like cattle from the ship. Most of them had to come by steerage, you know, and you could see actually, physically, lice on the people. She said it was a terrible life. They brought their own food and all the immigrants were tied up, you know, that business. (break in tape)

GUMB: You were speaking of your mother's experience on Ellis?

LESLIE: It was a terrible experience.

GUMB: You said the immigrants brought their own food?

LESLIE: Food, yes. And they came with bundles. They didn't know what they were facing. But there was one great feeling of hope. They were coming there, to a new land. And adjusting to the land would be easy as to what they had on the other side. There were not only immigrants from Russia, from Germany and from all foreign lands, but there was a sort of a cohesion. All the people tried to share with each other and the immigrants were very nice. When they had food they would ask her to eat, but she couldn't. In other words, even in their poverty, they showed generosity. There was a certain feeling of compassion and love for each other which you don't find today, at any rate.
(he laughs)

GUMB: Getting back to your medical school, when did you graduate?

LESLIE: After my medical school I was assigned to the Public Health Service. And when I heard of the conditions at Ellis Island I asked the Surgeon General for permission to go as a volunteer. He said he would put me on my salary just the same. It was very sweet. Salary at that time was three thousand two hundred and eighty dollars a year. So, you see, it wasn't much. But every dollar meant a great deal. When you compare the money, my mother had a six-room apartment for seven dollars a month. Of course, the toilets were in the yard and the water was in the hallway. There was no bathing or anything else. I remember being bathed with my brothers in a washtub. We washed each other and there was no other (?). It was a tough time.

GUMB: When did you begin your service on Ellis Island?

LESLIE: I started in 19--, I got out of school, I went there from 1912 and intermittently to 1914. I had to report to Washington every three months so that I'd be on service. And then after that they assigned me to a ship (he laughs) because they wanted twelve-mile limit to prevent ships from Africa to come to the States. There was a fear of cholera and all the food stuffs coming, we had to send the ships back. Cocoa beans and all, everything, even hides that came from, from, they would have to reship it, go to either Italy or some other place. They'd clean them up and then send them from their own ships here. I had quite a job. The main thing was, as a volunteer, I could speak those languages and that was a great help to the people. My compassion for them was enormous. I had to talk to them, I had to tell them everything will be all right. They learned, the first thing they learned was, "Okay, okay." (he laughs) That's the first thing they learned. All I could say was it was a tremendous experience for me because when I got out of school, at City College, there was no Board of Education here. It was all run by Tammany Hall. And Tammany Hall said if I went to a certain Tammany Hall District they would tell me what school I should go to. And so I served one year as an English teacher. Graduation in the primary school was at that time 6B. I was assigned to P.S. No. 2 on Henry School [sic], or East Broadway someplace. I remember the principal's name, Mr. Bernpalmer. He saw me with a high collar. I used to wear a high collar because it was made of celluloid and you could clean it off, you didn't have to wash it. And that was my laundry. He said, "You speak such fine English, you should be in charge of my English department." (he laughs) And that was the story there. After one year I felt I couldn't

continue. It was a repetition of what I had before. So I read in the newspaper that a great man was coming to this country. His name was Jacob A. Reiss, from Denmark. He was the man who established social service in the United States. Well, I went there and interviewed. He said, "You look like a good candidate. We can make you a caseworker. But you're gonna get twelve dollars a week. It's a seven day week. As a case worker you have to visit all these homes." After I visited all these places I felt that my poverty was mild in comparison. People sleeping on the floor. No covers. It was a wretched life. The Lower East Side, how anybody survived, it was a miracle. And so I spent three years with him. That completes my (?), then i went to Hopkins.

GUMB: Right.

LESLIE: From 1908 to 1912 I was in Baltimore. And while there I was serving on ships. Assigned, and my job was I represented the United States Government. I was in a white uniform and black and gold epaulets. A small beard. (he laughs) I was just a little fellow, you see.

GUMB: You were with the Public Health Service?

LESLIE: That's right. And I demand to see your manifest. And I came up with sailors and they'd show me the papers. If they had food in there or anything I would say, "I'm sorry, we cannot let you go beyond. You have to go back." But otherwise I would say, "I want to be shown your cook." They didn't call them a chef in those days, they were cooks. And the cooks were usually Scotsmen. "I represent the United States Government. Confidentially, tell me, are there any rats aboard?" And he

said, "Confidentially, the captain is a rat." That was my joke of the day. It was a terrific experience. And now in my late age if I go fishing here, down below we have a place where we go fishing, you know, everybody is sick on the boat but I'm okay. See, after all this training. But, my life in Ellis Island was a continuous story of giving my own life. I, I went home. I was exhausted.

GUMB: Where did you live while you were working at Ellis?

LESLIE: I couldn't live with my parents. I didn't want my father and my mother, I would see her, but I was staying with friends, also on the Lower East Side.

GUMB: How did you get to work every day?

LESLIE: The Public Health Service sent for me. They had a station on Staten Island. They still have it there. And I would get to work. Streetcars were five cents and they were run by horses. But my life as a lamplighter from seven in the morning, no, five in the morning, I turned the lights off and five at night seven days a week in all weather. For two dollars and fifty cents a week. That was life. But Ellis Island was a tremendous source of education for me. With this background, as I say, I became a good speaker for the Socialist after seeing all this poverty.

GUMB: Where did you work on Ellis Island? Where, did you have an office there?

LESLIE: I would get there three times a week and I was assigned with the medical men. But I did no medical work on the ship. Mine was just translations to keep the people even. People who were psychologically upset, they would assign me. They didn't call

them psychiatrists then, we were neurologists. But we kept each person, each person was kept as best as we could.

GUMB: Were you working in the hospital?

LESLIE: No, I was outside. I was assigned to what they called reception.

GUMB: Okay, or Island Number One?

LESLIE: That's right. What else can I tell you about it? It was a sad thing to watch. Seeing these people and yet you felt that this was the land of opportunity. This was the land that would save the people, and I was right. And so I'm happy to contribute what I can to the, to your Ellis Island project.

GUMB: So did you treat people? Did you have to, were you treating people or were you just acting as an interpreter?

LESLIE: I was an interpreter. That was the more important thing.

GUMB: So you were working with another doctor?

LESLIE: Whoever it was, doctors who would, they couldn't talk the language. They wanted to know what is hurting you, have you had any disease, show me your arm, have you had any, you know (he laughs) skin abrasions, and so on. We had to stop a few who had measles and so on. But in those days the politicians even had their little nooks and they had names of people that they wanted to have no examinations, you know. That was a political business.

GUMB: Oh, really, immigrants, names of immigrants?

LESLIE: Yeah.

GUMB: Who they wanted to let pass through?

LESLIE: That's right.

GUMB: Did that happen?

LESLIE: Sometimes. But every person, whether they said interview, I had to go right on, and I said, "Gavoritti Poruski, Russian. Polski, Deutche." And so on. And I would relax them. (?), sit down, take it easy. Don't worry. I'm a doctor, but I'm not working yet. I want to know are you all right? Do you feel okay? Have you coughing? Have you seen a doctor while you were in the old country? I had to check all these things. And I filled out the forms.

GUMB: These, these were people who were in the first examination. These were people that were picked out?

LESLIE: That's right. So I didn't know what else I could tell you. The love of my country became enforced. (he laughs) I love the U.S. more than ever. Although I've now travelled the world through Public Health Service.

GUMB: Do you remember where on Ellis Island you had these interviews, these talks with people?

LESLIE: It was called Reception. From time to time they moved me. Offices were changed.

GUMB: Was it, uh, do you remember where it was in relation to the Great Hall?

LESLIE: Yeah, it was before you got to the Great Hall. People were stopped. And they were all burdened with bags and heavy, and my job was to keep them quiet. They would say, "Doctor, here's your

man." And so a woman, all the women I spoke of began to cry all the time. My job was to calm them down.

GUMB: Was this after their papers were checked?

LESLIE: Yes.

GUMB: And after the first medical exam?

LESLIE: That's right. In other words, they used me as a sort of intervening agent to keep things moving.

GUMB: And to take people aside, to keep the line moving. After they were calmed down, after you calmed them down, what happened to them? Where did they?

LESLIE: They went back again to the first examiner and I would give them a slip and say, "Okay."

GUMB: You would make a judgment whether they were okay, or . . .

LESLIE: That's right. Really, it was an important job because I had to pass on so many people.

GUMB: So you were making the key decision?

LESLIE: That's right. Actually I'll never forget, my memory, it's as though it was only yesterday. My mind is extremely clear. I will not die of Alzheimer's disease. Gerontology is okay for others, they asked me to come and talk to senior citizens. And I say, "Senior citizens, I admire you. I'm a senior citizen, too. But you must have young people in your home. If you haven't got any, get them from outside. Have the school send to you. You must live with young people." So you know the psychology, their understanding. And I must laugh about some people. "How

about sex act?" I says, "Don't mention that. Forget about it, you know." All sorts of things like that. And then they ask me to have food and I say, "No, I don't eat." I have to protect myself.

GUMB: What sort of people were turned back. I mean, what . . .

LESLIE: People who didn't even talk any of my languages, you see. People whom I felt would not make good citizens.

GUMB: How did you make that decision?

LESLIE: Well, that's a good question. I would ask definite questions of these people and through these questions I would evaluate their whole idea of life, we call it psychiatry today, but it wasn't that. It was direct question and answer, you see.

GUMB: What kind of questions, what questions?

LESLIE: Well, the questions were, "Did you get married just to come to the United States?" See, and then, "How long are you married? Have you any children? How old are the children? Have you had any differences with your wife? Do you get along all right?" Those are social questions that had to be answered. So I would know how to assign them, you see. It was gathering their social background in a way not to make it offensive, you know, or make them feel I was taking part of their private life, you see. I didn't ask them how many times they had sex or anything, nothing like that, you know. It was an arduous job. Although I only came three days a week, at the end of a day I was exhausted. But I felt I was doing a good job for the state.

GUMB: How many, did you turn away many people?

LESLIE: No, no. I would say about five percent of the people that I saw. I wasn't the only one interviewing. There were other interviewers, you see. But for my group, out of every hundred there were five that I would say no. If they were deaf or dumb, they had handicaps which we couldn't help.

GUMB: What kind of handicaps?

LESLIE: Mostly speech, hearing, vision. And then I would read the report of the first examination and I would know what further questions to ask. I made it so that the people would not feel that I was trying to dig out something, you see. I made them feel at ease. It wasn't easy. (he laughs)

GUMB: Was this taking place in a, in a private room? A small private room?

LESLIE: Yes, that's right.

GUMB: Did you have, to get to that room did you have to go upstairs?

LESLIE: That's right. They would say, they would say, you have to turn the, you have to, to turn the thing over?

GUMB: This is the end of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is tape one, side two.

LESLIE: Any other questions you'd like to ask?

GUMB: Oh, yes, um, what, what languages did you speak again? What languages did you speak?

LESLIE: I spoke Russian, Polish German, which is part Yiddish and, of course, English.

GUMB: The, the, your office, where you interviewed people, where was it in relation to the Great Hall?

LESLIE: Outside the Great Hall there were side rooms and I was assigned one room and when the people got their first medical they were sent to me. I was doing a sort of a mental examination.

GUMB: Right. Was it on the same level or was it in the mezzanine?

LESLIE: No, in the mezzanine.

GUMB: In the mezzanine.

LESLIE: That's right.

GUMB: What was the scene like in the Great Hall? Looking down from the mezzanine.

LESLIE: Well, you saw humanity there. As I say, coming home from a day's work I never took liquor in my life, seeing my father, but I felt like if I could take it it would make me a little stronger maybe. But I didn't dare take it. But it was a remarkable experience. It did thing to me personally. I felt that I was helping my fellow man, you know. I'm a great believer in religion. Whether it's Mohammed or Jesus Christ or, (he laughs) Moses, I'm universalist in my religion. And when I spoke to these people at that time they, I could feel myself emphasizing my religious belief. And I felt this was my opportunity because now, across the street is Grace Church and my one hundredth year they made me a deacon in the church and they said, I said, "What is my job, minister?" "Collect money." That's my job. It's a black and

white minister here.

GUMB: Do you remember, what was the initial exam like, what did that consist of, the exam before they came to you?

LESLIE: Well, they got tested, there were no x-ray equipment, but they listened to the chest and made them stand and lift a leg, you know, to see if they were ambulatory. And where they had difficulty with the patient they called for me, I would ask what was the language and I would explain to the doctor. That's it.

GUMB: What would the other thing, what were the other things they look at?

LESLIE: Well, the eyes, the hearing, and may of them asked to stick their tongue out, but they say it's not polite. (he laughs)

GUMB: How did they examine the eyes? Did they use a special . . .

LESLIE: We had eyescopes, you know. Of course, there was a prevalence of eye diseases from the other side, you see.

GUMB: Um, uh, do you remember any specific cases, especially difficult cases, or cases where it was hard to decide whether someone should stay or go?

LESLIE: Well, no. I got it down to a simple working basis. I would ask some leading questions and if the answers came through all right, or when there was hesitancy and when they weren't certain, I would try to fathom, because every examination took a minimum of half an hour, see.

GUMB: Your examination.

LESLIE: Yeah. Prior to that they were examined physically, you see. But my examination was just a matter of conversation. I would get

them at ease and say, "You have nothing to worry about. You are coming to a land that is going to worry about you." (he laughs) We didn't have Social Security then, but that's what it was.

LESLIE: We had eyescopes, you know. Of course, there was a prevalence of eye disease from the other side, you see.

GUMB: Um, uh, do you remember any specific cases, especially difficult cases, or cases where it was hard to decide whether someone should stay or go?

LESLIE: Well, no. I got it down to a simple working basis. I would ask some leading questions and if the answers came through all right, or when there was hesitancy and when they weren't certain, I would try to fathom, because every examination took a minimum of half an hour, see.

GUMB: Your examination.

LESLIE: Yeah. Prior to that they were examined physically, you see. But my examination was just a matter of conversation. I would get them at ease and say, "You have nothing to worry about. You are coming to a land that is going to worry about you." (he laughs) We didn't have Social Security then, but that's what it was. I would get them at ease and I got many letters at that time thanking me for my kindness. That was a good response. I don't know what else I can tell you.

GUMB: What were the main groups coming through at that time, the main nationalities?

LESLIE: The main nationalities, Italian, German and Russian. Oh, Polish,

Russian/Polish were all mixed up at the time.

GUMB: So you didn't deal with the Italians?

LESLIE: Yes.

GUMB: Did you deal with the Italians?

LESLIE: Oh, yes, I could speak Italian. Parle Italiano.

GUMB: Oh, you speak Italian.

LESLIE: Oh, yes. I got along fine with all of them.

GUMB: Okay, so pretty much any immigrant that came through you could communicate.

LESLIE: That's right.

GUMB: How did you learn Italian? Where did you learn Italian?

LESLIE: You pick up languages, you go along. I didn't go to school for language. (he laughs) But I say, through my mother German came to me naturally, and Russian and Polish was her special languages. And I had to speak it to converse with her. And when I worked with the Russian printer I got more of the language. I meant to tell you, after my experience with this Russian printer I met an Irishman who was a member of the typographical union, number 6, and he said, "You're the ideal man for an apprenticeship." And so I was apprenticed to a plant on Lafayette Street called "Theodore Lodivini." A famous printer. Before you go I'll give you a copy of a book that every person got.

GUMB: Going back to Ellis, why did you work only three days at Ellis?

LESLIE: I couldn't take any more. (he laughs) It was too exhausting. I pleaded with the staff and I said, "I can give you three days." I volunteered at the time. There was no money involved, you see. Of course my salary was coming from Washington. Uncle Sam took care of me and I took care of my mother and that was the only thing. But I meant to tell you that this Irishman got me into the typographical union and when I was still at the medical school I had to earn some money to go send my mother cause she had no funds. So I worked on the Baltimore Sun as a proofreader on the lobster shift from twelve midnight to eight in the morning. And then I'd come to classes nine o'clock. I couldn't keep my head up.

GUMB: This is while you were in medical school?

LESLIE: What?

GUMB: While you were going to medical school?

LESLIE: That's right. So you see I had two careers. And to this day I'm happy to say that the typographical union send me a pension. I get three hundred and thirty-three dollars every month, as long as I live. That's not bad. (he laughs) With that and my social security, I'm okay, see.

GUMB: Where did you eat lunch, where did you eat lunch on Ellis when you were working there?

LESLIE: Well, they used to carry around trays for the staff. There was no, there was a dining hall, mostly for the immigrants, but for the staff, some gal would go around. So it was the same bologna sandwich every day.

GUMB: So you didn't, did you have a lunch hour, a time off?

LESLIE: Well, they gave you time off, yes.

GUMB: What did you do on your time off?

LESLIE: Just sat down to recuperate after my diligent work. It wasn't an easy job. But if I die tomorrow I feel I've done my share, you know. I feel if every American citizen would feel that he's got to give something to the country that made him free, I would inspire that with the immigrants. I'd say, "You are now coming to the land of opportunity. You will have a chance to work, to live and to enjoy life. The police will not bother you." See, they were all bothered. "You won't have to carry with you your identification card." They all had to carry cards, you know, who they were. What else can I tell you.

GUMB: Do you remember what the food was like in the immigrant dining hall, what kind of food was served to the immigrants?

GUMB: Well, basic food I would call it. Potatoes or what I call cabbage soup. That's a staple. All the foreigners would love that, you see. Very little meat, of course meat was expensive. We had problems of refrigeration there. We didn't have automatic refrigeration. So everything that was brought in had to be consumed that same day. So there was plenty of vegetables. And at that time there were some wonderful people contributing food to Ellis Island.

GUMB: Do you know who, who was contributing?

LESLIE: Well, people who were in the food business, you see. Fish markets and so on.

GUMB: Just for charity?

LESLIE: Right. The government didn't ask for it but they contributed it. In other words we had a wonderful backup, if you know what I'm talking about. People would all want to help and that to me was a great thing.

GUMB: Were these former immigrants that wanted to help, or?

LESLIE: No, no, most of the immigrants said can they work here? I said no. They wanted a job right away. I said, "No, you have to learn to inhale the air in this country and after you've settled down then. Only citizens can get jobs here." So that's the story.

GUMB: Did you come in contact with any of the social service agencies like HIAS?

LESLIE: Oh, yes, it was a hell of a time. They were wonderful. But they would ask me to be especially kind to the men with the beards, you know, and I was. They have many memories of me in the early days. I remember Mr. Bernstein in those days, he was then president of HIAS, he did a nice job.

GUMB: How did they help people? How did HIAS help people?

LESLIE: when they came and found out that these Jewish people did not have a home to live in they would supply the places. They, they supplied, what shall I call it, residences, they supplied just like what the people in Israel today, absorption. And I'm sorry to say but today Israel is fighting HIAS because HIAS said, "We'll take care of those who don't want to go to Israel come to the United States." So there's a battle there now. Well, I'm

sorry about that. But HIAS was at that time the basic organization to take care of the Jewish people.

GUMB: How did they help people on Ellis, on Ellis Island?

LESLIE: They had also interpreters there. I would exchange things with these people. And they had women with badges who would talk to them. They would start right off by saying (?), you come from my place. You see, they met many relatives that way.

GUMB: You said you exchanged things with HIAS, what do you mean?

LESLIE: Well, they asked me what did I do about this person and so on, I would be glad to exchange information which was only normal.

GUMB: Did they ever criticize you for a certain decision?

LESLIE: No, no they were helpful to me. I must say I enjoyed with them all the time. They wanted me to become a life member. I said, "No, I'm an American." So that's the story. I can't tell you any more. I'm getting tired.

GUMB: Oh, you are. okay.

LESLIE: Can I bring you my little book I want to give you? Can you take this off? (referring to the microphone)

GUMB: This is the end of tape one, side two.