

AKRF-172

JULIA NASUKAITIS MACK

BIRTH DATE: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 1986

RUNNING TIME: 1:15:00

INTERVIEWER: DEBBY DANE

RECORDING ENGINEER: DEAN CAPELLO

INTERVIEW LOCATION: WORCESTER, MA

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 5/1995

TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

LITHUANIA (BORN U.S.), 1914

AGE 7

SHIP NAME NOT RECORDED

DANE: This is Debby Dane and I'm speaking with Julia Nasukaitis Mack,  
on Saturday, February 7, 1986. We're beginning the  
interview at 2:40. We're about to interview Mrs. Mack about  
her immigration experience from Lithuania, in 1914. She was  
seven years old, and this is Interview Number 172. Mrs. Mack,  
yours is a special situation because you were actually born here  
and then returned to Lithuania.

MACK: Correct.

DANE: Tell me how that happened.

MACK: Well, my father had come here, prior to 1900. He was here 1889. And he married here, they got married in 1903. He met a young Lithuanian girl here, and she was born in Lithuania also, but she had migrated here. And in 1907, 1908 there was a depression, jobs were scarce in America. So, he had to make a choice. Actually, he was, by making this choice, "What do I do," he wasn't too happy. The life was not as he thought it would be. So he decided he would go back to Lithuania, sell the little house that they had, and the money that he had made, whichever, what it was, and they would, he and his wife, my mother, and two of us girls, my older sister and I, of course, were there then, and he would go back and see what he could do there. And see how well he could survive in Lithuania.

DANE: Was he living here in Worcester?

MACK: He was living here in Worcester, yes, this all happened in Worcester.

DANE: What was his job at the time?

MACK: Well, at that time, he was working, as far as I can make out, he wasn't working at a job so much. He was selling

little things like, uh, like what we would describe the five and ten cents stores, threads, shoelaces, and so on, from his own house.

DANE: Would he go door to door?

MACK: Yes, he went door to door like a peddler, almost. Just like the old peddlers we had years ago.

DANE: Did he have relatives here, is that why he came that first time?

MACK: No, he not have relatives here, but he, uh, he knew of people who were here. Because his brother before him, had come to America, and come back to Lithuania, by the time my father was leaving for America. So that he had told him to call on some family here in Worcester, and they took him in.

DANE: Had your uncle's experience been a positive one, in America?

MACK: Oh no, no. That is what always amazed me. Because when Uncle Vincent went back to Lithuania, the story was that he was so unhappy in America, and his unhappiness all came out of

the fact that the people were rough. And one thing that he, he especially was blaming, were the Irish. These tobacco chewers, as he called them. That was, when he was trying to be a peddler, make his own living, that is that they would come in and not pay him. They would take the things and not pay for the things, you see. That was the way of life he found it here. And he came back. He never really came back to America again, he was known as the American until he died in Kalvarija, in Lithuania.

DANE: And despite that, your father still came?

MACK: My father had to see for himself. And he came here and he saw, he didn't conquer, so he went back to Lithuania, and he figured he would make a life there with the few dollars that he had. So he, got himself the house, and bought a, well it's a doroshka, it translates to a hack, in those days, and a couple of horses, and he went into business to see if he could make money. Which would entail driving the soldiers, the Russian soldiers 'cause you see, at that time, Lithuania was under the Czar's control. So that would be where his money would come from.

DANE: Like a taxi service?

MACK: Like a taxi service.

DANE: And how old were you when you went back?

MACK: Well, I was only eight, I was only eight, so I don't remember any of that very beginning but I remember the horses 'cause my father spent all that time and I remember some lights, like lanterns, on the side of it. And, that was his pride and joy. But, it was not a successful business. And well, my sister was born in 1910, born right there in Lithuania, my younger sister, and it was shortly after that that my father went back to America. Because he found there, the American life was superior to what he had returned to.

DANE: For historical purposes, what was the name of the town that you went back to?

MACK: Kalvarija.

DANE: Would you spell it?

MACK: K-A-L-V-A-R-I-J-A. And that was a little town but it was in

Suvalku, that's the state, in the state of Suvalku Gubernija. That's, do you want, well, Suvalku is, S-U-V-A-L-K-U, that's one word, and state is Gubernija, G-U-B-E-R-N-I-J-A.

DANE: Thank you so much. And life in Lithuania for you, can you describe what your home was like, how was it different? Did you have facilities?

MACK: I can't say how it was different, because I don't remember my home here, but, uh, well, I had a good life, if that's what you mean. I thought I was happy, with what was available.

We lived in a house that had two rooms, however, we rented out the other side of the house. Uh, it was dirt floor, it was very primitive, there certainly were no toilets in there, you had a hole dug in the backyard, and that's where the excrement was thrown out to. Uh, you had no water so you went into town, which was across the bridge. And you washed clothes on the rocks. And you had soap and you had a piece of plank or something, that you would hit the wash with, you know. You put the soap on, and that was the only method you had to wash your clothes. No electricity, only, there was no gas, you had lamplight. And--

DANE: Heating?

MACK: Oh, good heavens, no. The only heat you had in there was a built-in

stove, like a, well, it was an oven. And then you cooked everything on top of this oven, and that was the only form of heat that you got in the house because there were no fireplaces. The only thing that I remember about heat, was the woman next door, who had come from Germany, she was a Jewish lady. Her name was, uh, Sorkia, which translates to Sarah. And she had a kettle, you know, one of those black kettles that you put irons in, uh, coal in. Well, of course, they had no coal. They have peat. They have peat, is it peat? Durpes is the way they call it, durpes. And she would light those, and I remember that because when I would come over, across to her house, just going from one door to another, uh, and she knew that it was cold, she'd ask me if I'd like to stand over the kettle, you know, just put your feet right over the kettle, and have the heat go through you a little bit, and that was a beautiful thing. And then she'd make some tea in the samovar, with, a samovar is a coffee, a very lovely, she had lovely, all that fascinated me. It was so beautiful, it looked like silver, but it wasn't. But she would make this tea and serve it either with an apple or a lemon, or she might have some greens of some kind, you know, but it was a different taste. But really, it was rough. But we had the grounds, we had fun.

DANE: Did your mother work?

MACK: No, my mother did not work. My mother was quite a nice seamstress. And she did sew for the people. If someone wanted something made, and of course, they thought she was a wonderful seamstress, because she, they thought they hadn't

seen the kind of sewing she did. And I guess it was right, I don't know, but it was good enough. But the only thing that I remember very vividly, was the dresses that she made, and I remember her spending, but that was before we left for America again. But I had no schooling there. I had the woods, and I remember we lived on a street that translates to Death Road, well, in Lithuania it doesn't sound that bad. But that's what it translates to, and I know that at the end of that street was the mental hospital, because I used to go through the, and peek in through the wooden gate, not a gate, but a fence, like a high fence, and I could peer through that. And then, on the right side of that road, was the Old Cemetery. They called it the Old Cemetery. They were no longer burying people there. And the fascination of that was that my grandmother was a great, great mushroom picker and she took me along with her. And then, we would look at the sunken graves, you know, they had gone way down, and my grandmother used to point out and she would say, "Did you see that in there?" Well, I never could, what they were, because she'd say there was something shining in there, must be this or that, you know. It was just that they were sunken down, and they no longer buried people there. And I remember the church, because there was only one thing that I remember about the church, but that was later on. Not as I arrived there, but I mean before I left. Was that we were special sort of, in that town, uh, they used to refer to us also as Amerikonis, which means the Americans, you see. And even when we went to church, uh, they would, there were no seats in church there, but behind the communion gates, there were a couple of benches, and they would let us sit on those benches because we were Americans. So that was always

fascinating to me. At that time it wasn't fascinating but when I think back on it, that was one of the fascinations. And the meals, and the furnishings in the house. Now the furnishings in the house, they served a double purpose. For instance, we would use these benches, they were long benches as I remember them, and we would sit around these benches to eat, use them as a table, like. Then at night, these things that we used for a table were put together, and they were spread over with blankets and different things that they had, plywood sometimes, I remember wood being put on it and my mother would put a blanket so it wouldn't scratch the wood. And then they served as beds.

DANE: Any mattresses to go down?

MACK: No, I don't remember any mattresses. I just remember that these were softened with feather beds, feather beds. Everybody seemed to have feather beds, and that is what was put across them. And you can't really get anything softer. We brought some feather beds along with us when we came back to this country.

DANE: Like a down comforter?

MACK: Oh yeah, just like a down comforter. And you can use them, either to sleep on or you can use them to cover yourself up with.

DANE: Another thing you mentioned about, uh, being under the Czar's control, that the schools weren't allowed to teach Lithuanian. Will you tell me that story?

MACK: Well, the schools weren't allowed, there was no Lithuanian taught in Lithuania, because as I say, it was under the Czarist rule. And so that when you went to school, when you were of age, you went to school, and you were only taught Russian. And the teaching of Lithuanian, was left to the parent. Like my grandfather, oh gosh, I must tell you about my grandfather. Someone asked me one time, "What did I have in the history that I could be proud of?" And I told them of my grandfather. Well, now, you know, you're proud because someone has done something. Well, I was proud of him, later on in life, because he was a man, (she laughs) that was, or so they said, and I guess it's true because they used to talk about it, that he was arrested on a Sunday morning for going out to translate the Gospel into Lithuanian. And he would be arrested by the Russian soldiers. But he was put the next day, I mean it was almost, there was no violence associated with in. So, I always admired him for that, because he believed in teaching the Gospel, the Gospel.

DANE: You were seven years old when your father--

MACK: When I came back.

DANE: How old, when your father decided to leave?

MACK: Well, it was when my sister, my sister was born in 1910, and it was after she was born, that he decided to leave for America again.

DANE: Was there discussion in the house? How, did just one day you woke up and he was--

MACK: No, no. We were prepared that Pa would be going away, Pa would be going away, and I know that Ma would feel, once in awhile you would see a tear coming, she didn't like it. But it was never a frightening thing. It was just that Pa was going back to America. And that was all it meant, that in time, we would all be going back. There was a preparation period for this. But I know that when they gathered one night, in the house, that is my father's mother and father and a couple of his younger sisters, and it was just the fact that he thought, as I say, that life in America was better than what he was experiencing in Lithuania, and he would take another chance in going back to America. So that was how it turned out. So that was around 1910 because Anna was born at that time, 1907.

DANE: Do you remember the day he left?

MACK: Yeah, I remember the day, because we weren't out in the yard, as I recall. We were only looking out through the window. We were looking out the window while Pa left us, there were people around there. Not a big crowd, because it was a small community. But there were tears amongst the people, but we weren't exposed to being part of that mob scene. We just could look through the window and see Pa and wave our hand and that's all.

DANE: Did you cry? Was it sad?

MACK: No, I don't think it was sad. Pa was going away, we'd see him again. It was not, after all, at our age, years meant nothing. So Pa was going away, he was going to America, and the people seemed to be so excited that Pa was going to America. Everybody was happy, except his mother was crying, (she laughs), you know, things like that. No, it never bothered me, that was a very minor part of the experience.

DANE: Did you develop an image of what America was supposed to be like?

MACK: While there?

DANE: While there in Lithuania?

MACK: No, no, not until they started to make plans. That, all I know is, is one day, my mother had a letter, saying that Pa was making arrangements or getting someone to make arrangements, to come back for all of us, to America. And all I know, is, it was a time when they were talking about war. And the reason for going back to America was that there was a war brewing, and that Pa thought it was time we came back, and that was the only time my mother made an emphasis of teaching us like, for instance, "What is you name?" and the address where we were going to which sounded like Worchester not Worcester. And then she got busy making us these clothes. I remember--

DANE: Special clothes?

MACK: Well, special clothes for a reason. Ma was a very methodical person. We were going away, she had come, she had gone to America when she was a girl, she had come back to Lithuania, here she was going back to America now, so she must have has

some feeling of what to get. Because she was afraid of being lost. That seemed to bother her, that the three of us young girls, well, I was seven, my sister was nine and the baby was five. And so she made these maroon, I remember them very well, 'cause we had to wear them and they made them big enough so that they would last awhile, maroon colored dresses for the three of us, with black, like a sailor collar, trimming, and long sleeves, and the material was kind of rough, as I remember it.

And that was what, and we were instructed that, you know, well, that was later of course, when we got ready to leave almost, that we should hold hands at all times, not to get lost, and if we did we should at least understand what the question was when they asked your name, "What is your name," to tell them.

And my mother, this is an interesting thing, come to find out that when my mother came over, the first time, this was how, I feel so sorry for these people that came. When she went to be interviewed, now I don't know if she went through Ellis Island, she must have. When she went to be questioned somewhere, in America, maybe employment, or having the children, I don't know.

But, her name was Valincius, now listen to the spelling of it, V-A-L-I-N-C-I-O-U-S. but let's take it by fractions. There is no -W- in Lithuanian, so a -V- is Walincius. So whoever was interviewing her, this was the first time when she came over,

and with her brother I guess, because she ended up having the name of Lynch, the guy who was interviewing her could only get the Lynch you see. So, Lynch, that's a good Irish name, and her brother became Wall, on the papers. They had an awful time. But on her tombstone today, it's Lynch.

DANE: Is it really?

MACK: That's right, it's Lynch.

DANE: It stayed with her? Isn't that incredible. So you were, so you mother had some idea of what you should know?

MACK: Yeah, she did, she did. And she really watched over us and I remember getting into Germany, uh, I think that's where we sailed from. Either the name of the city was Hamburg Hamburgos, or the name of the boat, but I remember that. And that was the first place we had ice cream, in Germany, oh that was delicious, in Germany.

DANE: Was it sweet for you?

MACK: Oh yeah, it was beautiful, it was beautiful. And we also had

bananas, seems to me it was bananas, 'cause we were familiar with apples, apples were plentiful. Bananas were not plentiful, oranges certainly were not plentiful.

DANE: Tomatoes?

MACK: Ah, no, I never saw a tomato until I got to America. I hated the taste of them when I, just the beauty of them nearly killed me.

DANE: Let me keep you in Lithuania for a moment. So the decision had been made for you to come to America. What kind of preparations do you remember? Did things have to be sold?

MACK: Yes, they were selling the things, well, that woman next door, Sarah, Sarah bought a lot of things, which after all, what do you have? You had just arrived there a few years ago, I know that she had to sell her table, and there was another table that she had to give back to her father, her father-in-law, my father's father, he was a cabinet maker. And, apparently a pretty good one. They had a very nice house beyond where the church stood, you know, near the church, very nice house. He was in business for himself, as they say, not a very lucrative

business, but he was in business. And, he was a grandfather that was well-versed in things that were going on. He talked of airplanes, in those days, you know. And we'd think he was crazy because he talked of, "The day will come, mark it, when we will see birds bringing people," he called them birds, "Bringing people in from America to Lithuania and all over the world." So he must have been fairly well-read, because we didn't understand and we thought that was kind of --

DANE: Did you think he was a little--

MACK: Yes, just a little queer, saying things like this, you know, 'cause I remember I used to, people that he'd be telling these things to, they'd say, "Ah, Mr. Nasukaitis," they called him Nasukaitis, "You're out of your head." You know, there'll never be such a day when they'll bring these machines, where they'll have these things that will bring people over." Well, it came to pass you see. Well, Ma--what was your question?

DANE: Preparing for departure--

MACK: Well, preparing was the dresses and also, I remember my trying to get like dried salamis, dried bologna of all kinds,

and we have our Lithuanian cheese, uh, that is, can be dried, and that's what they were drying, this cheese, 'cause apparently it keeps. I know it keeps, 'cause I've had a chance to do it in my life. A lot of that, and black bread. Of course, there were no canned goods in those days. You took what you could with the bread and made up food, and sukerka, sukerka was candy, and some candy went along, and as far as furnishings were concerned, it was mostly the things that we needed, and she had a trunk, a "kashus" they called it, made out of reed like. Most of the, I noticed that everybody on the boat had the same thing, and that was filled with feather beds, feather beds, pillows and the sheets that she had, and the children's clothes, you know. Because she said, "At least, I remember her saying, "At least when we get there we'll have a place to put our heads on," you know. So that was about the only preparation, and of course, when we got on the on the way, she made sure that we held hands very closely, not to be separated. And--

DANE: Did you bring anything special, any special dolls or special--

MACK: Dolls, I never saw a doll until I got to America, because that was, that was a luxury. In fact, you talk about dolls. The first doll I saw, oh I handled, was the first Christmas

that I was in America, and I was in the first grade, and the teacher came, and took me by the hand, and took me normal school, which was then, the beginning of the Worcester State College.

And that's where I got the doll, and that's where I saw Santa Claus coming down the chimney.

DANE: Had you ever heard of Santa Claus before?

MACK: Kaledu Dedukas. We called him "Uncle, Dedukas it translates to Uncle, well, Christmas, it means Santa Claus, but it's Christmas Uncle, Christmas Uncle, that was the way. Oh, I think one of the most beautiful things I remember, talking about Christmas, with no lights or anything else, but the Christmas Eve, the beauty, I can still see it. It's pitch dark, and of course when it's cold there, you just have a pot to, for your comfort, and it was getting a little late I guess, and we asked if we could go out and my mother said, "Well," she said, "You'll have to go outside," she says, "'Cause that potty is pretty full." So my sister and I, my older sister and I, went out, instead of going behind the house, nobody can see us anyway, we stooped in front of the house, and all at once we saw the heavens open, what we thought, a myriad of lights, or so it seemed to me. And voices and singing, and they had this starlight,

but it was all lit up with candles, and they came from house to house, and of course, you gave them a donation. 'Cause I remember we ran, and I really thought it was him, because my mother had said. "Don't you, don't you do anything else but go out in the backyard where you're supposed to." And we felt that we had broken the law, and we're just using the outside, that the heavens had opened and they were after us. And that I remember very well, but it was a Christmas carol thing that came around the house. And I know when we got in there, they came to our house, and my mother gave them a few cents while they sang a carol.

DANE: This is the end of side one, Julia Mack, Interview Number 172.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DANE: This is Julia Mack, sid two, beginning of the tape, Interview Number 172, it's 3:15. We've got you to the day that you were leaving your town to come to America. Do you remember that day in particular?

MACK: I remember just that we were saying goodbye. My grandmother was there, my grandfather, and the relatives. And we also took with us, well, my mother took with her, a girl, a distant relative, uh, Vera, who would take care of us kids in America, and be a help to my mother, hopefully. And we just, there were no tears--

DANE: Excitement?

MACK: No, no, not excitement, the excitement was that we were going somewhere. That was the excitement, we were going to America, yeah, we were excited 'cause we were going to America. We didn't know what it was all about. But they all spoke so highly of it. "Oh, how lucky you are to go," you know. That was about the only excitement that we had.

DANE: Then you think that you left from Hamburg?

MACK: I think that, that is why, that word, I always associate with Hamburg. And I think that was where we sailed from. I might have been the name of the boat, the line or something. I know there was something about Hamburg.

DANE: The ship, do you remember where you stayed on the ship?

MACK: Oh, yeah, do I remember that. That was in the steerage. I didn't know that it was steerage at the time, but I know that was what it was then because it was down in the bottom and all our reed suitcase that we had with us, were in there, and it was crowded. And a lot of kids, well, not too many kids as such because we seemed to, we seemed to sort of fare quite well with the other people, otherwise we wouldn't have. And yet, there were, I remember, two babies crying, and then they had hammocks there, uh, where people slept in the hammocks. Well, they slept everywhere in fact, because you would see some of them sleeping on the, on the kashus, they called them, you know, the packed suitcases, like we had.

DANE: The trunks?

MACK: Yeah, like the trunks, they were high, only they were made of reed, the ones that contained our, our feather beds and that. And we had no, I remember one thing, we did not have, I cannot remember going to any bathroom there, because there was a container that was, that we had to use, and I know that in the morning, this girl that my mother was taking over, Vera, her name was, would have to go up on the deck, and throw this, the contents of that overboard. How I remember that, was because

this particular morning she came back and she was crying because she had thrown the pot over the water, and my mother was lambasting her, and she (she laughs), and wanted to know what she was doing, why she wasn't paying attention. And she said, "I wasn't doing anything," she says, "Some sailor came along and spoke to me," she says, "And before I knew it, I had thrown the pot over," you know the railing and lost the pot. I know that was apparently a big crisis at that particular time. And then I remember a big storm. I remember a big storm and the fear. And it was just as though, just as though people were falling, and then someone, somewhere, I know people were kneeling down, and they were praying, and I remember my mother grabbing hold of us and trying to calm us down. And I know that the rosaries were all out, you know, of the people going over, they're all praying, you know, and it lasted apparently, quite a while. It was frightening, that is, the fear that they had could instill the fear in us. But then it calmed down, and everything seemed to be all right. But I know that the soldiers came, the sailors came in, and they gave some orders, I don't know what they were and everybody was saying that we might, the ship might go down.

DANE: Did people get sick because of it too?

MACK: No, I don't think they got sicker. I don't remember anyone getting sick so much, not, I remember people getting sick on the boat, but I don't relate it to that, to that particular, because this was not a long lasting storm. It was like a freak storm they said, as I remember, you know, but I do remember people being sick on that boat. And people who couldn't eat for days. It seems to me that boat took an awful long time. I don't know how long, but I know that we were in there and there was always that fear of my mother not to go near people because you're liable to get pediculi in your hair, you know, and all this sort of thing. And--

DANE: Did it smell down there?

MACK: Well, let me put it this way, I don't think I ever smelled roses down there. It was, I think the type of smell, that if you're in crowd and you just, I don't think as a kid, you would notice it that much. I really don't, because I don't remember any smell, the only smell that I remember was the smell of that stuff that they gave us, and it was like a stew, the smell of steamed, as I related it later on in life, when I used to get that "hospital food" when I was in training, you know, in the nurse's dining room, and so on. Of course, the food then was almost the same I guess. But that's the smell that I associate most.

DANE: Of institutional--

MACK: Yeah, institutional stew, that's the only thing that I can remember. And then I remember one taste that I've been looking for all these years, and that is, one woman had some sardines, as I told you (she laughs), she had some sardines that were just out of this world. Little tiny sardines. I have bought every brand, trying to see if I will ever capture that taste of that sardine. I don't know whether I was hungry when I got it or what, but it was delicious. I've never been able to get anything that goes anywhere near it. No, I don't remember much, nor do I remember much arguments there or anything. It was just, uh, non-descript.

DANE: Entertainment? How would you--

MACK: Oh there was no entertainment there of any kind in the steerage.

DANE: Would you sing songs? I mean among yourselves.

MACK: Oh yes, yes. Amongst ourselves. There was Vera, and there was another family that my mother, well, they got acquainted while they were there, that was coming over. And they talked, you know, that way, and it was like you might meet anyone you know, but nothing too much. There was a group that used to sing

in one corner, further down from us. But they seemed to sing, they were the only singing group. But I don't remember this family singing, because they would have only been singing Lithuanian, or they didn't know and other kinds of songs. But, no, I don't remember. I remember a lot of people talking. There was laughing, there was laughing. And what I remember was the way they shared their food. Now everybody brought something along and as you walked along, especially if (she laughs) if you were funny, walking around getting acquainted which I always did to find out what they were doing, everyone gave you something to eat. Might be a piece of bread, or might be a piece of cheese, or maybe some kind of bologna or whatever they had. They'd offer it to you, you know, and so that you were never hungry, as such. There was no hunger associated with any of this.

DANE: Were they mostly Lithuanians on the boat, were you hearing other languages?

MACK: Oh no, there were other people on the boat. No, no, there were other people on the boat. I know there were Polish, German, because I think, I never checked that out but there must have been a port there, and so that other people from the area

or otherwise would come on that Hamburg, I think that was the boat name because my sister tried to remember for herself because she had to become a citizen here, you know, she was born there.

I had a sister who was born there. So--

DANE: Would you ever go above deck? Were there ever times when everyone would go upstairs and outside?

MACK: I don't remember going above deck. The day that we went above deck, seems to me was the day we landed. I really don't remember, you mean to run around? Oh no, I don't remember that at all, because I would remember that for I hate walking even over a crack in the old fashioned bridges, where you see the water underneath. I fear that, now what that fear comes from, but even today, I fear walking over water. That's walking over any bridges where I can see the water under me, that bridge is going to break, I mean that, now whether there's something that happened there, but I don't know why. But I do not remember, there was no running around, just. The quarters were closed, big kashus, those trunks were all lined up there.

DANE: And people were very crowded?

MACK: They were crowded, yeah. You know, even, even some of them, like in the afternoon, some of them lie down on their kashus as they called them, or they'd get up in the hammocks, some of them. But I can't remember, I just remembered those hammocks, because my sister Anna, used to sleep in one of those hammocks. She was the little one, she was only, a little over five when she was coming over. And that's about all I remember. Just the smell, the food, and the people were very nice.

DANE: Would your mother be getting you ready for arrival? Did she, was she worried about your health and--

MACK: Well, she was, yes, yes. I think she was worried, but I'll tell you what she did a lot of. She would, she would talk about it, not that she could do very much about it, but she would talk, "I hope, I hope to God they don't hold us there," because she'd been coming over, back and forth, you see. And she was aware of the eye examination, and so she would tell us about that. She would examine, she'd pull our eyelids down, you know, lower lids just to make sure that they looked all right to her. Now, what she understood about them or not, but anyway. And she would examine our heads. And she'd say, "Don't catch cold." Now that seemed to be because something they could keep you there, you know. And she knew someone, and she'd be telling them, I remember her telling this woman that she had met there, how someone had tried to get through, and was sent

back, you know, and that was the fear that she had. She thought she was all right but she didn't know about the kids, 'cause we had never been to a doctor. We never saw a doctor in our lives, until we came.

DANE: New York Harbor, you finally made it across the ocean.

MACK: Yeah, yeah, the only thing I remember about New York Harbor, there was a commotion there. But I remember my, how I remember the Statue of Liberty, and that's what got me with the letter was because my mother was saying to us, showing us that that was a lady that, "laisva", it means "freedom" in Lithuanian, "Laisva." I'm trying to remember, like when you get to America, you can learn anything, and, I remember her saying something about, "We can learn, we can speak Lithuania, we can write Lithuanian," that was her concern, "And you can learn English too," you know, and all this. And she, all she said was, "You'll remember that someday," you know, just as though she was talking to kids, "You'll remember that, that's what that means, Laisva." As they say laisva, America, freedom. And I think that has stuck with me, because even as I wrote this article, the other day, you know, it's, I have a very close feeling for Lithuania.

DANE: How do you spell laisva?

MACK: Laisva. L-A-I-S-V-A.

DANE: And were you at the railing at that point? Or were you on Ellis Island when you first saw the Statue?

MACK: It seemed to me, we were on the boat. It seemed to me we were on the boat when she first--but it must have been close to it, because the next thing that I remember, was getting off, getting off, sort of a feeling fight, fighting the mob. And, "Hold your hands girls, don't get lost," that feeling, and I know that we were examined. And I know that my mother answered the questions very good. And I remember her saying afterwards, how dumb Vera was, the girl that was with us. She was related to my mother somehow. But Vera didn't understand a word that was being said. But here again, the fear, the fear of my mother, "I know it all." You know (she laughs) that's the attitude I seem to see her in. "I know it all, and Vera doesn't know anything." But there was very little there, there was just mobs, there was nothing to remember, really, outside of the fear expressed by the people. That was in turn related to the children. When I say children, to us. And, "Hold on, and know your name,"

and that was all, and someone was going to, from there somewhere, we're going to another city. And that was the one word we remember, Worcester. And that soon we'll see Daddy.

DANE: Do you remember the examinations, yourself, of being examined by a man in a uniform?

MACK: A man, yes, but I don't remember that they had a uniform. I don't remember, maybe I wasn't, uh, astute enough to know what a uniform was. Actually just a man.

DANE: And what would he do?

MACK: He looked. well, all that they would do, I remember they would look at the eyes, and that was where my mother got this, she'd go like this, in your eyes. And there some man that looked in your eyes, put the light, I remember some kind of light. And it wasn't the ophthalmic light, as I know it. It was more like, almost like a flashlight, that's all I can remember about that. And, uh, he never bothered looking through our heads. We had very, very small scrutiny for us. Maybe because we were from America originally, I don't know why, but it wasn't--and I know that they were asking questions, 'cause my mother had

said, telling Vera that, that they'll ask questions, and that was why she was answering questions for Vera, you know. And who, I know that he wanted to know, was going to--I remember one of the questions, she told, she told the man she was talking to, that no one was going to meet us, but that someone, we're going on a train. So, apparently, they had to know where we were going, that was one of the things. And we did go on a train. How we got there, is very vague to me, on that train.

DANE: Did you eat while you were on Ellis Island?

MACK: It seemed that we had something, but I don't remember there was anything, I don't remember. I don't remember buying anything as such, maybe my mother did.

DANE: Spending the night, did you sleep there? Or was it just--

MACK: No, no, we didn't sleep there. we did not sleep there. We got off that Island, we, I know the next thing was, we were on a train, and we got off in Worcester, on the old, it's no longer there, the old Worcester train stop, the old stand there on Shrewsbury Street. And, then I know that there was actually no one to meet us there except a cousin, who wasn't a grown up.

I mean, probably a little older than we were, and that cousin was there and said that he mother, would be back soon. Well, when the mother came back, she had this hack. I know we went in some kind of a team, or a hack, that's what it was, a taxi, I suppose in those days. and from there we went to my aunt's house.

DANE: And did you see your father?

MACK: No. My father wasn't home until the day's work was done. And, (she laughs) that wasn't that important for, he had to make a dollar. But, we were primed, we, my mother did keep a picture of my father, to--(telephone rings).

DANE: You were saying that you were primed to see your dad for the first time?

MACK: Yeah, well, what do you remember of your father. So my mother used to tell us, you know, have the picture here. And that's how we know our father. And, that day, of course, he wasn't meeting us anywhere. He had to get out of work, and we stopped at my mother's sister's house. That's where we stopped at, and he was boarding with my aunt up to that time, you see.

And we were going to the house that he had rented, on Berkeley Street. That was quite an experience. But anyway, she had said he would be home, and every so often, she would look out and say, "It's time for Pa to come home." And all at once I saw this man walking down the street, and I felt well, that must be my father. It doesn't look like him but, he was walking down--and she had explained that he carried a dinnerbox with him. A black dinnerbox. That's all I knew. I saw that dinnerbox for the rest of my life. It wasn't a tin one, it was a leather one like. And I saw a man coming down, as far as I know, that's, he was carrying something, so I ran up and said, "Hi," you know, "Hello Papa." And he looked at me and smiled, but never said anything, and I knew he wasn't my Papa because he didn't understand what I was talking about. And sometime later, when my father did arrive, I did make a good choice, because I ran up to him. I didn't wait until he came into the house, I ran up to this man, and I said, "Papa, I'm Julia," you know,. And he answered me, you know, and picked me up, even though I was seven years old, he picked me up as he was kissing me. And then we, it was just a short ways from my aunt's house, and that's how I remember my mother coming out, and the tears, you know. And they hugged and kissed and all that sort of thing. And then he wanted to know, you know, "Is this my Margaret?" That's

the only one he remembered, of course, that was his first child.

Then he picked Anna up. And it was a pleasant feeling to sort of, you know, the pleasant feeling of coming into that house.

And that's where I saw the tomatoes, nothing would do, but I saw those what I thought were apples, they were absolutely gorgeous. Such red things. And when my aunt said, "Why aren't you eating? Aren't you hungry?" I said, "Yes," I said, "But I want one of those apples." And so she, I remember her looking at my mother. She brought one into me, and when I ever tasted it, that was a terrible taste, that was terrible--of course I like tomatoes now, but, that was the one thing that I remember about that.

DANE: What other impressions, were there any immediate things, about how things looked, that houses looked different here?

MACK: Well, they were certainly different. It was the width of the streets. Now we, we came, uh. the big road that goes to Boston, heading towards Route 9, and just seemed so wide. Oh, and everything was big, and the house was big, and this was only a six room house. But it was three tenement house, and you know, another uncle lived up on the next floor, and someone lived on the top floor. That sort of thing. And it was, it

was unbelievable, let me put it that way. It was like, uh, well, it was so big. And then my, I know that my father said that we would be leaving 'cause he had made arrangements, after we ate, that we would go to our house, that he had taken. And I remember that my aunt was making fun of my father, that he had rented this house. And she was giving him a call-down, I would say, that he was going to pay \$16 a month for that house, where he could live in her, 'cause she owned the property, that she could move someone out, and give us an apartment for something like \$5, you know. And I remember my father, that was when I really kind of thought he was all right, he said that he would not live, he would not put the children in that house. He wanted his children to get away and never live, and not, he didn't say never, but not live within an ethnic settlement. And I know what he meant because when we went to that house, on 5 Berkeley Street which was owned by an Irish family. They had two, twin sons and a daughter, Elizabeth, and the twin boys. And Elizabeth was a school teacher and one of the other kids was a school teacher, I don't know what the other one was. And that house, was one of those houses that was new, and it had hardwood floors, and apparently America had gas then, because we had gas, no, we, yeah, we had gas. I remember gas first, so we must have had gas. Because we used to use mantles for the gas. And shortly

after that, sometime shortly after that, I remembered that the landlord said, something about we're going to have different lights, and then we had electricity, but that was quite awhile after that. Of course, there were no phones in those days. And I think electricity was just making its entrance into the world. But that had shiny floors, that house, hardwood floors.

Oh do I remember those. I thought they were gorgeous. And my father had bought a green, velvet living room set, only a chair and a velvet divan. And there was very little furniture in there. There was a bed, there were two beds. One bed in one room and then another bed. Now there were three of us kids but there was only one bed, but the three of us slept in that bed. And half the time, Anna cried because she wanted to go in and sleep with Ma, she'd been sleeping with Ma all these years.

So that she was with us half the time, but I do remember that.

DANE: And the feather beds?

MACK: And we had the feather beds, we had the feather beds. You know, that was good life. And one thing that I remember, of course, is going to school because I didn't understand a word of English.

DANE: Were you treated any differently in school as someone who

couldn't speak good English and--

MACK: I think we were the exception rather than the, with, the treatment we got was exceptional, at least I feel that it was because we had the complete school who was watching us. Uh, the school that we had to go to was not too far away from the house. But the Italian element had started to move in, uh, to that particular section. This was an Irish section, near St. Anne's Church. But the Italians had started to move in, a few streets down, so that the school, predominantly was the dark-haired kids, Italians, and we were standing out I guess, like something, I don't know. Because I was a tow-head, complete tow-head, complete tow-head, and almost white kind of hair. And my sisters were blonde too, and I think that may have been that we were the stand-outs and, of course, the fact that we couldn't speak English. Now the other kids all seemed to speak English. I don't remember any kids in school that didn't speak English.

DANE: Did they ever make fun of you?

MACK: No, they never made fun of us. We were never too conscious of it. The teachers used to walk us home when we first came there. And the first Christmas party, as I say the first Christmas I attended, uh, at normal school which is now, well, the location is different, but that was the beginning of Worcester State College. That was where the teachers came, took me to

that first Christmas that was so fascinating, with Santa Claus coming down. And they used to bring us home and they used to come up and see my mother if there's something going to happen in school. They would come in and relay the message to Ma, and Ma would tell us about it, you know.

DANE: Did you get frustrated ever, you couldn't speak the language?

MACK: The only time I'd get frustrated, was going down to the store, because those days, the buckets of onions, potatoes, and whatever was in containers, you know, right on the floor. Nothing was canned, and everything was open. And these were little stores. Little Italian man, I remember, had that store. Then there was another store further down, uh, where some Jewish man was, would have, would have some things to sell. It was a little delic--not a delicatessen because they would sell sandwiches but this was just a like vegetables, he'd have, only, but anyway this day I went down that store. And my mother had wanted three things, and I know one of them was onions, what the others were, I don't remember, but I do know that I forgot the onions. I had said to my mother, "Repeat it, repeat it," the things myself, and she was so impatient she said, "Well, it all stands on the floor, all you have to do is point at it,"

and I got there, and the only thing that was missing was onions.

I pointed the other two, but no onions, and I had to run all the way back to find out what onions were, and go back. Frustration, yes. But the learning process, amazing. Of course, my mother had taught us how to add, you know, before. She used to teach us at home, and she had also taught us how to read Lithuanian.

DANE: This is the end of side two, tape one, Julia Mack, Interview Number 172, it's 3:45.

END OF SIDE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

DANE: This is tape two, side one, Julia Mack, Interview Number 172, it's 4:00. A question about your mother, did she adapt to life in America easily? Did she wish that she could go home to her family?

MACK: No, my mother adapted very readily. She, she was a wonderful teacher, about life, that is, in general. In other words, we had to go to church a certain time, we had to be in

school, and we were admonished, if you misbehaved in school, remember when you come home, you will be punished, you know. She did, she said she would never go back to Lithuania. She had had America before and it was only the job that drove us back. The life in Lithuania certainly was no bed of roses, without having a floor under you, you know, just a dirt floor. So she was glad to get back to America. And this was her reaction to it. I think she was very satisfied in America. In fact she loved America, and one of the cute things I remember about my mother, one of the things that I treasure about my mother, is she loved America so much, I can go back to the First World War.

Where her English was not that good, and I can hear her singing the World War I song, "America, I have the boy for you. America, you find him staunch and true. Place a gun upon his shoulder, he is ready to die or do. America, he is my only one, my hope, my pride and joy. But I had another, he would march beside his brother. America, this is my boy."

DANE: Patriot already.

MACK: That's right. That was the type of person she was.

DANE: And she sounds like a forward looking person. Education was

important.

MACK: Education was important to her. She, she had excellent command of the English language. She learned that very, of course, she'd had experience before. And, actually when she had come over before, before she got married, she was like a nursemaid to a minister's little girl, in Boyleston here, so that she did have to learn, you see. But she had difficulty learning. As an example, she used to hear the farmers, the people who worked for the minister, and she used to go out with the minister's wife a lot on the farm, that's just beyond here. And she used to hear a lot of swearing, and it seems that the foreigners readily picked up the swear words. And the favorite swear amongst the foreigners is, "Son of a bitch." Now, she felt that was a beautiful word, because everybody used it. So that she relates the story of one time she had her arms around the little girl who she was taking care of, the minister's daughter. And she was caressing the little girl, after she combed her and dressed her up, and everything else. And she was looking at the little girl with love in her eyes, and she was saying, "My little son of a bitch," when the minister's wife came in and said, "Eva, you should never say that," you see. You learn the hard way. So these are some of the things that we learned

from my mother. She really was very happy here.

DANE: And yourself. Did you miss Lithuania? Did you adapt immediately?

MACK: Oh I cried for, when I came back here, I cried because I couldn't sleep on my grandmother's stomach. My grandmother had a great, big pendulous abdomen, as I remember. A big woman, and she'd take me up and let me sleep, you know, on her, near her, hold me on her lap like. She was very warm, Grandma was. She was big woman, my grandfather was a little man. And that was missing. And I would actually cry for, to go back to Lithuania, just because of my grandmother. And that was something that lasted quite awhile. I still have very close feeling to Lithuania. I hope to get back there someday. In fact, I have a letter waiting to be answered, that I have heard for the first time, from the daughter of my father's brother, Vincent, the American. The one that was called the American. And she is now 73 I think the letter said. Apparently she's educated, and she is an artist and she was working in, taking care of an Art Museum, and she tells us, or she's pensioned now, according to her letter. And she has a two-room apartment and living in Lithuania, in Kaunas. And we're just getting re-acquainted. And I would like to go back and see these, meet my, after well, all these years. My God, 1907, well, she wasn't born in 1907, but that is what I have there. I have a nephew apparently, too.

DANE: You're involved with the American Lithuanian Roman Catholic Women's Organization, Alliance. Why would you become involved with that? You were a young child when you came from Lithuania.

MACK: Well, I think, after working in the community so long. First I got involved in the community and then I reached the stage where I thought it was very important to get back to the Lithuanian people. And there was a reason for my going back there, I found that as I got into the Lithuanian people, there weren't too many educated people, and I wanted to really speak the language well. So I did take some courses in Lithuanian and learned how to read it and write it and I followed right through. But I think the one that brought the fact home to me, that I had to be part of Lithuania, regardless of my being a director of the YW or the director of the Budget Committee, or the director or running for office, you know, as I had for City Council. I went to a meeting I was invited to and that was in relation to the displaced people. And when I got there, and when I heard them planning this great big thing, raising money, how to get them here, and how to house them, how to feed them, how to get the sponsors, and so on, and meet the requirements here. And when I heard the, the thinking of these people. Now, remember, I have been in the community and I know how to do these

things. I thought to myself, my God, I've got to turn to these people, they need help. That was the deciding factor to come in, to really work. Not so much in the Lithuanian, 'cause I already knew about the organization which I later turned out to be the national president of and am president currently. But it was a need, they needed leadership, and I who was just an invited guest, the priest had invited me to come. I met him on the street, and I said, "I'll go to that meeting," over to the Lithuanian church. And by gosh, I opened my mouth, and that was the end of it. And I told them that, "Don't talk in figures of 500 to take care of displaced people." I knew what figures they were saying but I don't dare say it, but I did say, "You should vote to raise at least \$10,000," 'cause at that time \$10,000 was something, and they all thought I was crazy. And, the priest that was there, said, "If you're so smart," he said, "Why don't you take it upon yourself?" And I had this woman sitting down there, there was an educated woman, she and I worked on many projects. And I nudged her, "Do you want to come on?" under my breath. And she nodded her head. I said, "Yes, I will accept this job, if you make a concession, and that I choose my own co-chairman," I said, "Because I want someone to work with, who knows what my methods are of working." And that's how I got involved.

DANE: In reflecting back on your life, you've been successful. You've got children that are highly successful. Your parents came from Lithuania. Any thoughts on how your contribution was possible? You came from, you have a title of you book, Was I Rich, Was I Poor? What is that question, what do you mean by that?

MACK: Because I've had such a full life, regardless of where the beginnings are. The beginnings were in America. It might have been, it could have ended up there. But wherever I was, I, I was satisfied with everything that was happening. And I could adjust to any move that was being made. And I saw nothing there that would stop me to make choices. So I feel that I wanted an education, I got an education. I wanted to go in politics, I had that chance, not that I succeeded. I worked in the community because I loved the work, like budget chairman of the United Way and all these things. It was a challenge and the recognition, not from the standpoint of being recognized as a "somebody," but recognized for the contribution that I made to the programs. For instance, on the panel, at the auditorium for free enterprise, of course, I had entered the business field more then. Every step was a learning step, and today, here I am. I'll be 79 in March, I'm still learning, I'm still learning. And I'm having more fun now, at this age, because when I went back to college, you know, in '83. Because I had more in common with my children when they say, "Aha, so you made the Dean's List? Do you remember how you pushed us on this and that?" you know.

It's a wonderful feeling that at my age, I can go on and my son, my grandson goes to the same college now, with me, we pass in the hallways. And it's an intergenerational learning. I have never felt that I was any older than the person I am talking to. I have felt, when I was talking to kids, 15, 16, I was just as old as that kid or that kid was just as old as me. And I feel the same way today. I don't see age, I don't see age. And that is why, currently, I'm working towards a degree, a B.S. degree in the field of Urban Studies, and hopefully a certificate also in Gerontology, because there is a contribution and I study the statistics. If we're living that long, then those of us who are old, should be working towards planning a program or doing something to get these elders who are living so long, to come into the program and make a contribution until they can't make it anymore.

DANE: Do you think life would have been any, do you think you would have been just as active and involved if you'd stayed in Lithuania?

MACK: Absolutely. Absolutely. I may not, well, I don't know enough about Lithuania, but I know enough about myself. I know enough, that given a chance, anyone can rise above, unless it's health or something like that, you know. I'm not talking about the rarities. I'm talking about the average person. They can do anything that they have a, that they set their hearts

to.

DANE: Does America provide anything special, chance, opportunity--

MACK: Oh yes. America provides special chances. America provides special chances. But you must be on the look-out for them too. You are just one in the melting pot of lot. But, as a melting pot, there is enough of them coming out of every pot, to make something of themselves. It's a land of opportunity, you've got to examine your ways, you've got to make your choices yourself. And just plod along. Because I think everyday is a challenge, to me, at this stage, the day I get up is a challenge. I'm thankful for the day I have. So I, no there's much that America has, much more in America, because this is the land I've lived, this is the land that, that if I had to make a choice, if I were put in a position, where I would have to make a choice if I were male, would I fight for, it would be America's side I would be on.

DANE: I think that's it. This is the end of side one of tape two, Julia Mack, Interview Number 172.