

KECK-33 NAGY

NAME: LOUISE KAZMIERA SZULUC (SCHULTZ) NAGY

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INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB

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POLAND, 1913

AGE: 10

PASSAGE ON A CUNARD LINE SHIP

PORT: HAMBURG

RESIDENCES: POLAND: WARSAW

US: NEW YORK, NY; NEW JERSEY

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb and I'm speaking with Mrs. Louise Nagy on the 16th day of September, 1985. We're beginning this interview at 10:55. We're about to interview Mrs. Nagy about her immigration experience from Poland in 1913. Tape one, side one. Okay, Mrs. Nagy, if we could begin with the question, where were you born?

NAGY: Well, I was born in Warsaw, Poland, 1903, and, uh, it is the city of Warsaw, it's the capital of Poland. It's a very, like, up-to-date modern city, for considering like the outskirts of Russia, uh, well, part of Russia. It was a lot of country. But this was actually a city, like New York would be to us today. And, uh...

GUMB: What do you remember about life in Poland at that time?

NAGY: Not too much from Warsaw, Poland. Because my father was a specialized worker and he was always needed some place where they couldn't find that type of worker. So we were always picking up and going to Ukraine, that's a part of Russia, Ukraine, and where ever he was able to make more money and he was needed. So we didn't stay put in one place. I can't remember too much about

Warsaw, Poland where I was born, but Ukraine I know. Well, it's mostly farms and trees and country, real country.

GUMB: What was your father doing?

NAGY: Uh, I think it was called, silversmith, or silver and metal spinner, silver metal, like sterling silver, really sterling silver.

GUMB: So, um, uh, your father was, uh, a silversmith.

NAGY: Let's say a metal spinner, or, uh, he worked on sterling silver, like you get a flat plate of metal and then you have this lathe and it shapes into whatever shape, like a loving cup of a little drinking cup, or a dessert dish, uh. I remember going to the factory once with my mother, and I don't remember how old I, maybe six, and then I remember my father doing on the lathe with the making the shape of the cup, or whatever he was doing, and the, the droppings on the sterling silver on the floor. Boy, they would be worth a lot of money today. Then, uh...

GUMB: How long would you stay in one place?

NAGY: I don't know, it seems like no more than a year or two. And she would move around, in the sense, she is my mother. She would move around in the same country like Ukraine to different places because of this, each place had something wrong with it. She moved to improve our, uh, living, and, um, Ukraine, I mentioned, and part of Russia, and that, that was it. By the time I was nine, nine years old, we were already in the town of, a suburb of Warsaw with my grandparents, uh, I was nine years old. And then, of course, I acquired the Ukrainian language, the Russian fluently with the reading, the writing and the speaking, and, uh, of course we spoke only Polish at home, so that's two languages. When I got to my grandparents, they only spoke Czech, so I learned Czech. And while we were waiting for my parents to save enough money for five children to bring them here, they, uh, my grandfather says, "You're not going to waste all that time just hanging around the house," and he sent us to a German school, to learn German. And I learn languages very fast, not the rest of my family, but I did. And that little town, the reason my grandfather sent me was because that little town, if you knew German you could become like a big official someplace, in, uh, in, a different place that you'd want to work. So that was important to him. And I am very grateful to him because I acquired the most important language to prepare myself for coming to this country. Because the German language helped me a lot on the ship traveling, and once I came to this country, it

made it much easier. Somehow there's a lot of similarity between the German and the English. Many words, even if they weren't similar, I could sort of put them together. So that, I'm very grateful to him for that. So that goes, what, three languages, and, Czech, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and then when we came here I learned English within almost three months. Not fluently, but the important words and my parents used me as an interpreter because they didn't learn a thing in the year they were here. Somehow in those days people, that must have been in their late forties and fifties, to me, that was old. And they didn't make any attempt, most of the immigrants my parents' age did not make enough attempt to learn the English, they didn't make an effort. That's, that's what I was just telling my daughter when she was here. That's one thing I hold against them. And, um...

GUMB: Why did your parents decide to come here?

NAGY: Why? Well, that's my mother, was an adventurer. Everybody was saying that, uh, you make out good in America. She already tried the, uh, the area we were in, and it was nothing very promising, so she like sent my father first, they didn't have enough money for all this, even though it was a small amount, maybe it was fifty dollars for the ship card. Uh, she got him out first. She sold things, and, he wasn't very daring, she was the pusher. And he, he came here, and he, again, and I'm repeating, he didn't make much of an effort to learn the English fast enough and he didn't know how to look. The World, the newspaper way back was the greatest for people finding jobs. But you had to know under which column to look for what you were going to do. And, so he didn't have anyone to help him too much. But everybody in New York City, downtown, Manhattan, we came into Manhattan, 15th Street. Everybody lived in little cliques, the Polish, the Ukrainian, the Russian. So they would help each other out. Whatever, maybe on knew a few words more than the other and, and, uh, he, he just was not for him, living in, with people. They used to live, I don't know how many, maybe ten, twelve people in one room, because one was helping the other to get established here. And he, he, within six months wrote to my mother not to get ready to come because he's coming back. And she said no, "You're not coming back, I'm coming to be here with you." And she did. She sold whatever else she had, and left us with our grandparents, and she came over, and she was very fast in finding out which was her type of work. She found like operators on the sewing machines. And she made money, and she made a definite decision, I'm going to get all my children here and we're staying, no matter how bad it was. So...

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- GUMB: I'm wondering about her motivation. What, uh, was life hard in Poland? Was, uh...
- NAGY: Well, the work. Yes. It was very hard. And having the five children. Well, she was, they were both very talented, I would consider so. And so, I would consider her the same, because she, uh, sewed so beautifully. And when she was, before she married, which was approximately fourteen or fifteen, that's an adult over there. And she was trying to get work like for Radziwill, they had an estate, those big estates. She would go as a helper to one of the servants. Or, uh, one place she was very daring, and she went, uh, as like a governess, and she didn't have any idea she didn't have the education. But she knew how to sew beautifully, and that swung her in there. And...
- GUMB: What was the name of that estate? Can you spell that?
- NAGY: R-A-D-Z-I-W-I-L-L. I think it's a double "L," or it might be one, I'm not sure. Why did my mother always wanted to better herself? How was the like in Europe?
- GUMB: Right, uh, your mother's uh, motivation and you. You said that life in Poland was hard.
- NAGY: It was hard and it was, being that it was under Russian rule, the czar's rule. It was, my father got politically mixed-up, and he came home shot in the arm once. After a certain hour in the evening you were afraid to go out at night. It was one of those things. She wanted to avoid that, I guess always, he should make more money, and she couldn't get a job. But I started to tell you about her, yep, before she got married. She used to, enough courage, or nerve, whatever you want to call it, to, to build herself more than she was. So she went as a governess to one estate or landowner. They were considered wealthy people compared to us. And, uh, and she, but knowing her sewing, she sewed beautifully. The lady of the, the estate, she got so interested in her sewing, so she let, she forgot everything else my mother should have known. And she went from one place to another, and she became like knowledgeable about how people could live wealthier and all that. I guess all that impressed her. And, uh, like I started working here when I first came here. My first job at fifteen was on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street. That's the heart of New York. And I got used to Fifth Avenue things, and I wanted to be more rich, too. (she laughs) But, anyway, that's more or less one thing corresponds with the other. So...
- GUMB: So she went, uh, to America, to join your father.

- NAGY: Yes, that's right, that's where we left off.
- GUMB: And you, you and your brothers...
- NAGY: We stayed with my grandparents.
- GUMB: How long was it before you went...
- NAGY: Almost a year, and that's why my grandfather didn't know how long it would be. And he said instead of you wasting time, you're going to learn German because that's going to be very important to you, that language. And he was right. So we did. My brother didn't do so good. He was eight, and I was nine. But I did very well. And we had to learn the reading, the writing, Gothic German, Gothic letters, and, uh, as I told you before, I'm very grateful to him for that. Because I acquired another language.
- GUMB: But while you were in, uh, Poland there, do you remember hearing about the United States, or...
- NAGY: That's all you heard. Gold on the streets of America. They didn't say United States, they used the term just America. There's not North America and no South America. It was just, the, um, what did I say, it was just, no, not United States, just America. And every, it was all good things. You could be anything you want here and make a lot of money, even if it was a dollar a day. So that's what gave her courage to push. And then, after my father said he's not staying here any more, he's coming back, she, she said, "No, you're not coming back. I'm coming over there." And she did exactly that. She left, as I said, she left us with our grandparents. Five children, very small. My grandmother went to work, and she worked the looms, it was a little, town started by two Englishmen named Gerard, and that's why they call that town Zyrardow, like after them. But she was very fast, my grandmother. To me she was old, but she, actually she was not. And she worked the, the looms, she was that fast, one on one side and one on the other. So she could make enough money, my grandfather was sick, he was in bed. And she still had a family of four. Two sons, three sons, and a daughter. And then five of us. My parents were sending money, but, you know, it was just barely for food. Because they're trying to save over here for six people. Five of us children and my mother's younger brother, uh, that was our chaperon, or whatever term you want to use.
- GUMB: Could you spell the name of that town?

NAGY: Z-Y-R-A-R-D-O-W, but at the end it was pronounced "Zyrardow." I'm giving an "O" at the end but it was an "OU" sound because the "O" had a little accent over it, like in the French language you have that.

GUMB: So did your parents in America send you enough money for the voyage over?

NAGY: Yes. Well, it had to be. But we did it the hard way. By the hard way I mean, when you go first class you get passports, but there was nobody there to do that for us, get, know how to go about getting the passports. Five children, each one is different, different age. It seems easier enough to us here, now. But then, it was very difficult. There was nobody to take care of all that and to save money. Uh, because passports evidently must have cost money. Uh, so we went to buy, uh, like, uh, black market, whatever you call it, underground, uh, a man that just does that. Like gets you across the border. From Poland then, this was Poland, uh, to Germany, because we had to get to Hamburg to get on the ship. And so, we had to go after midnight, and its like, there's a word that you use "swatza" is a black in German or Jewish, so you call it, "In the black of night you get across this border." Well, I was still a kid, ten years old, and my uncle helped my sister and the younger children. He carried them across like a narrow little bridge, and I must have had a fear or phobia of heights. And I saw the water. It was pitch dark for one thing. So my uncle had to drop my sister, or whoever he carried, at the other end of the bridge, and he had to come back and carry my across. So that was rough. And then the same person, we were paying him for getting us across the border and there was always Russian men on guard to catch anybody and you were sent back. That's what we were afraid of. But we got across. And we made it. To the main Hamburg station for the ship.

GUMB: How did you get to the border? How did you get from your town to the border?

NAGY: Uh, that's a good question.

GUMB: Do you remember?

NAGY: We must have been in some kind of a train, it is very vague in my mind, that part.

GUMB: Do you remember the agent of the black market, or how much it cost?

NAGY: It must have been a small amount like it, it was ruples, the money was ruples, it wasn't German money and it wasn't Polish money, it was just the Russian exchange of money, there at that time.

GUMB: Do you remember what nationality he was?

NAGY: Jewish. Jewish, Polish Jew. He could have been a Polish Jew. Because there were Polish Jews, German Jews. You know, there still are. So he was a Polish Jew. And he had a little, you didn't have matching luggage or anything like that. You just took a sheet or something, a rag, and you folded all your belongings, and you tied it in the four corners. Uh, they were put into this sheet, and then the only thing you would have of any importance was like a wicker square basket, and that's where your most important belongings went. Otherwise you set, you must have seen pictures where they sit on these bundles that they're bringing across. Everybody almost that was leaving Poland had to have a feather pillow. So that was always one of the items that was in the bundle. And then the storekeeper, before we left to say goodbye, uh, so she was very nice as we were leaving and saying goodbye to her, she gave us a bag of solid candy, like sour balls, five children, so we would remember her last gift to us. So...

GUMB: Okay. You were talking about the sort of situation it was?

NAGY: Uh, the, you called the word was, uh, in Polish (Polish) because it means, its still translated from German or Jewish, Swatza, black, and you say, "Black is the night," and that's the name of the word. What's the word when you're getting across borders? What do you call that here? How do we refer to that? I'm asking you.

GUMB: Uh, um...

NAGY: When you're sneaking across.

GUMB: Uh, sneaking across...

NAGY: Sneaking, or even if you're going legitimate. But this was not legitimate and that's why we had to sneak in the middle of the night. And back to this lady that gave us the candy for our trip. It was a long voyage, it was going to be two weeks, and it was horrible. And so, this man, these people that are getting you across the border, he was supposed to leave our baggage off. He said, "You go ahead," like they tell you, like the baggage here, more or less and your baggage comes later, and you pick it up. So that's what we

were going to do. Especially my uncle because he was a man to me, seventeen, wow! So he went looking once to get it, and I guess he had the numbers, what number our package was, and he came back to me and says nothing. So he looked very down, and I didn't understand the meaning of it. And, uh, I think we just carried, he just carried the wicker basket, and whatever else we got, what was supposed to be delivered, delivered to this destination. He was supposed to, we were supposed to pick it up ourselves. However, my uncle went two or three times, then he gave up, very down-hearted, because we didn't, he stole everything. It didn't, and it didn't only happen to us, it happened to many families. And that was the worst, the most horrible part of the situation, because my sister was two or three and I was her mother. She was still baby with diapers. She kept getting very ill. All of us children got very sick. The seasickness, constantly. So, uh, she, that poor thing, she had diarrhea and I needed a lot of changes of clothes for her, not a lot but enough at least. And with no change, because the man stole everything, didn't give it to us. So that was a sad part. It made it very hard for me, and for my uncle who was taking care of the three boys. I had her as my, my child, you could almost say, well, she considers me as a mother today, too.

GUMB: What sort of items were in the wicker basket? What were considered the most important things?

NAGY: Change of clothes. Like we had one outfit, my aunt made it before we left, my sister has the photograph. So we had the outfits for traveling. But you have to allow, two weeks for small children, for some change. Maybe underwear, whatever it was. That was very important to me. I never knew. I was at a loss, uh, how am I going to change her, how am I going to clean her. You don't bathe, you don't have no showers. And in this, the ship had steerage I'm speaking about. If you remember Doctor Zhivago, uh, the train scene, where they were on those bunks, we were on bunks, uh, and sleeping on straw, just straw was our mattress. And, uh...

GUMB: Was it, uh, were there any individual cabins or was it one big...

NAGY: No, it was one big floor of everybody. There was men, women, children, uh, all languages, all nationalities as I said to you in the beginning. Uh...

GUMB: Was there any, what kind of toilet was there? Was there any place to wash or anything?

NAGY: The, the, there must have been, but it's very vague. And you mostly got some water in a basin or in some kind of a container, and you all had to take that one container to do for washing and, that's where I mentioned the stealing of the cups. When you come on the ship, they count how many supposedly you're supposed to take one for each one of you that's going on this passage. Uh, but they didn't give us enough. So my older brother, in the nighttime he'd creep under somebody's bunks across or whatever he got, I remember him getting extra cups. And whoever was listening to me on that interview, she said, "Stealing cups, there was a shortage of cups." That's exactly how it was.

GUMB: You mean the ship, uh, the, the ship company gave each person, gave each passenger a cup.

NAGY: They should have. But this is steerage. And you don't get treatment like you do. And they would empty everybody out at certain time of the morning, uh, to fumigate, or to pour some kind of antiseptic on the floor so we shouldn't start getting diseases, everybody sleeping in the same, no ventilation, no nothing. Uh...

GUMB: Do you remember what kind of food they gave you?

NAGY: Uh, the food, yes. I do remember. But what did I want to, oh, they would yell, uh, every morning at this special time they would use the word "rouse, rouse, rouse." The means get out, get out. And everybody was like soldiers in the army. You had to get out that time and throw anything on if you didn't have on the right clothes. Just go up on deck. And, uh, no, what did you ask me?

GUMB: About the food?

NAGY: The food. Well, I remember saying to her that night, that's what I remember, too. First you get in the morning you get coffee, I don't know what kind of milk, you call it, but I never forgot that taste in all the years I was here. But we all, there was no such thing as children getting something different, that's all you got. It was coffee, and it must have been either Russian black bread or some kind of rolls, I don't know. It wouldn't be the type of rolls we have now. And then for dinner we sat at these long tables and everybody together. Well, there must have been a lot of tables. And, uh, we had, it looked like herring that is caught in the ocean, but maybe they had them in barrels stored for the trip. We got herring thrown on the plate and boiled potatoes. When I think back it as very healthy, just having your potato with no fat or anything, just in the skin. We had

that, it seemed to me like almost every day. But there might have been some change, which I do not remember. Uh...

GUMB: Do you remember how you got from the border to Hamburg?

NAGY: From the border to Hamburg? Well, I think we went on a small ship. Small like a ferry or something, because the ship doesn't come in on shallow water. Like over here when we came to Ellis Island, we had like a little special boat that brought us from Ellis Island to the shore at Battery Park. To the shore, and my parents took the elevated. I thought, we thought, I don't know what my family thought, but, but to me, oh, a train up high, that was very unusual. We were used to the ground trains in Europe. So the elevated was unusual to me. And then it seemed like we walked and walked and walked. The elevated was First Avenue in Manhattan, and we rode from Battery to 16th Street, that's where we lived, and First Avenue to Avenue B. That's near the East River. So that walk seemed long. We were tired. And, and the bad thing, my parents came to pick us up the same day the ship landed here. However, our name was Schultz. And my uncle's name was Miller. So I think we went under his name because he was the adult, and they did our names and they probably wrote all Miller or all Schultz. And when my parents came to pick us up, my father told them the names, they said, "There's no Schultz." Couldn't find it. And my father didn't believe them. They gotta be here because we were notified that they landed. And my father argued back and forth and couldn't find, couldn't help him out. So they went home. And they came back the next day. That means we had to spend a whole night there, and, uh, it was very scary to me, because there again is the bunk beds and I don't remember seeing colored people, you didn't say colored then. You called them negroes. I don't know what we called them because I was too little to understand that. I had a fear of them because I never saw black people and the women were sitting on some of these bunks, like right across our bunk, and they were putting paper curlers in their hair. I says, I was afraid to go to sleep, because I didn't know what they would do to me. That was a childish fear.

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

END OF SIDE ONE
BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is the beginning of side two, tape one. Okay, Mrs. Nagy, if we could get back to the voyage, uh, across, uh, across the country,

across the ocean? Do you remember what, uh, your first impressions of America...

NAGY: No, I just want to go back to the ship, and they day of the landing, the ship landing, and, uh, the harbor. Uh, they emptied out the, uh, because the doctor was there you had to be there, up on deck for the vaccination, and my sister just had an accident, with bowel movement. And, I don't know if I should put this in. And there again, I was crying, "How am I going to clean her up?" Because they're yelling, "You have to hurry up," and, uh, you had to fit everything in time. And I was only a child, and I was scared because the man, the ship, what do you call those, the sailors. He was yelling hurry up, hurry up, and I started to cry, because I didn't know how to clean her up fast enough, then I wrapped her in some kind of towel or rag, and I brought her up on deck. The rest of her body was nude. And so they did the vaccination, and, uh, that was okay. And, uh, then we already in Ellis Island, but that was the way we were getting off the ship, it was very frightening to me, because I was a child, and, and, the stolen things, that all made it so much worse. Then we, um...

GUMB: Do you remember who gave the vaccination?

NAGY: It had to be a doctor. And Ellis Island had a room like with doctors in the long white coats, and they were, they could be sent back for any kind, some kind of eye trouble, sickness, that's one big thing, and the other one was T.B., a lot of people coming in had T.B. and, uh, whatever they would find. I was supposed to be considered an adult at ten. Whatever they would have found wrong with me at the time, they could have sent me back without my parent's permission, whether my parents cared, or wanted me to go, because you had to be, like the eyes had to be good. I was just lucky that we came through and nobody was held back. That's another fear everybody had that was coming in, as immigrants, because, uh...

GUMB: So, what, what was the first impression when you saw land? Do you remember what you first saw, pr what your first impression was?

NAGY: Well, first we sat in this Ellis Island hall, it had such a resonance, the sound, the acoustics, whatever, just like Grand Central Station, in New York. And he would, several times a day, he would go on the platform, and he would call out the names, that means somebody came to pick you up, that you were ready, go. And we waited and waited, we went each time, they were calling the names. It was nothing that first day. And that's when I stopped, so

my father went home very upset, and didn't know what to make of it. And the next morning he came again, and didn't know what to make of it. And the next morning he came again, and he made the, the official, let him look at the book, he says, "I'll find it for you." And he did, because the Alfred Miller was first, and we were all Schultz's, five Schultz's. And that's why they couldn't, whoever was looking, couldn't find us. So, uh...

GUMB: If we could go back to the vessel landing, in the harbor. Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

NAGY: Uh, as a child, they didn't, I didn't pay attention to that. The adults at that time would have known. Because that's what everybody tells one another, that's the first thing you'll see. The Statue of Liberty is very vague in my mind. Maybe if I was an adult I would have been more interested. I was disinterested because I had this problem with my sister, to get her dressed and, uh, and finally my parents got to us, and there was a linked fence on one side where the family or somebody, or sponsoring you, to come and get you, on the Ellis Island side, were the immigrants. We had to identify each other. Now, I was the oldest, the younger children did not know my parents. And one year, a child forgets. However, I remembered, I don't know about my older brother, he was eight, and my mother got stouter, and she was a slim lady in Europe when she left us, and she got stouter, and my father changed. So I had a rough time, but I had to say yes, that's my father and that's my mother, and my parents had to notify, you know, like give us, identify us, and that's, and we finally went through the gates. That was it. We were finally in this country.

GUMB: Where was your uncle at that time?

NAGY: My uncle, he, uh, see, I'm not mentioning him at all. Well, he was the main cheese in the whole thing. He was like our father, mother, the whole thing, everything rolled into one. And he spoke for us, to whomever he had to speak, for baggage, everything. Well, anyway, so we got here, I mentioned my trip from the, um, well, then we went on the little boat to bring us to Battery Park, and then from there we took the elevated train. I was Allen Street then. The First Avenue El was in existence then, but it isn't any more. I don't know what year they got it down. So that's when we came, we walked. To me, my first impression was pretty awful. Because we lived surrounded by trees and orchards, and the little houses were by themselves, and this we were on the second floor, in an eight family building, and there was stable across the street, and a post office truck a few doors away, so I don't know if they used gasoline, and

whatever they used for the truck. And different nationalities, but being that I knew so many languages, by ten years old, uh, for me, I was able to communicate with all the children when going to school. We were put into the, like "C" class, just to learn the language. Some of them were eighteen years old in that "C" class, you didn't get into "1A" or "2A." You went into "C" class to learn the language. And there again, I had an easy time for me, because I knew the German, and little by little in one term, which is what, five months if you count the vacation. I got it pretty down pat, the language. Of course, I had to go, a year later, and sign in my sister for kindergarten.

GUMB: Okay, if you go back to the vessel coming into the harbor. Do you remember where it docked in New York? Do you have any recollection of that?

NAGY: Uh, well, the ship itself couldn't dock too close to the shore, like in Hamburg, Germany, they had to have this little ferry bring you to the ship, deeper and deeper into the ocean water.

GUMB: Do you remembering New York where the vessel docked? Do you have any memory of that?

NAGY: Well, we must have docked on Ellis Island someplace.

GUMB: Okay, all right.

NAGY: Because that must have been still deep water.

GUMB: Right, okay. Um, so, uh, once you, uh, docked somewhere, were there some officials that came on board? What happened at that point? Did some officials come on board and direct everyone to go someplace or what happened then?

NAGY: Well, more or less what said, after we got together on the names, the names played such a big part in this because when they keep calling, "Schultz, Schultz, Schultz," it was, uh, and the, one of the, uh, I wouldn't call them officials, they were just people that, who had to write everybody in, and, uh, this is back at Ellis Island. And they, as I said, they wanted to make the name sound American right off the bang. They shortened them, and they, um, like our name was spelled the Polish way. They made it real German, and, of course, we had the First World War with Germany and the second, and my brothers had a rough time here as children. But, if you want to know the beginning of us here, well, of course, the school was the first thing we had to take care of. With me, okay,

with my older brother, I think he sailed through pretty good, and the third one, the fourth one had a rough time, he couldn't grasp the English language.

GUMB: So it was the immigration officials who changed your name to Schultz?

NAGY: They spelled it the German way. And we became instantly Germans, not Polish, but instantly German.

GUMB: What was the Polish version of Schultz?

NAGY: S-Z-U-L-C, and the letter "C" stood like "tee zee" for sound, in English. Like Schultz, so the letter "C" was the true letter and it was really spelled in Polish, if you know the Polish language, it spelt, S-Z is the "sh" sound and "U" and "L" and then the "C," everybody knew you were Polish. But we started off with Schultz, and we ended out lives, my father never knew enough to make it any different, I mean, we were in America. We wanted to be American so quickly, that we were embarrassed if our parents couldn't speak English. We were embarrassed, my father was reading a Polish paper and somebody was supposed to come to the house and I remember sneaking it under something, so we were that ashamed of being foreign. Very, see, uh, after the Second World War, you were proud, you were, what do you call, these D.P.'s, "displaced persons." And they were proud to say it, they were proud to have an accent. But we, the faster we lost the accent, the better for us, because we were really American. The Irish people really lorded over us. And any foreigner that could speak it, cause they understood English already, they came, the Irish people came, and, uh, that's where the Polish people, the Russian, they all had a rough time with the Irish, because they played a big shot part, "Oh, well, you're only a Pollack!" "You're only this!"

GUMB: What do you mean, lorded over?

NAGY: Well, lorded, that means they were lords over us. Because they knew the English language, and we had an accent and we, just pollack was just, I think we got the worst beating, the curse word in front of it, the Pollack, it was really at a low mark.

GUMB: Going back to Ellis Island, you were talking about the examinations. Do you remember how long those examinations took?

NAGY: You mean, just, the, uh...

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- GUMB: The medical examination?
- NAGY: Well, we were called for the medical, we were called before the landing. You know, every group, or two or three people at a time. You went into a special medical office on the ship with the doctors, I told you, with the white coat.
- GUMB: And what happened then?
- NAGY: Then, there they would examine your eyes, your chest and, in general, your body, and if you're healthy enough to come in here, if you didn't have any disease, a contagious diseases, which T.V. was, we called it T.B. then, or consumption. Consumption was a horror word, and I remember one man in particular, he must have been found consumptive and I remember his crying, that meant he had to go back, he couldn't come into the this country.
- GUMB: That was on Ellis Island...
- NAGY: Then they had hospitals on the Island itself where they kept them for a little while to see who could be helped before they actually sent them back.
- GUMB: What was the, how did they examine your eyes? Do you remember any details about that?
- NAGY: They had the regular eye thing like they have today, the little gadget. They really looked for whatever, you know, it must be written in the archives, or someplace, what the eye disease was, I don't remember, I could have found out for you. I didn't think that was very important, but it was. Your eyes, and your chest, were the two most important things they were looking for.
- GUMB: What was the vaccination for? What were they vaccinating you against?
- NAGY: That you shouldn't get, uh, you shouldn't bring in diphtheria, scarlet fever, any of those big frightening diseases. Diphtheria, I'm, well, those are the two I remember. I wouldn't be like the measles or chicken pox, it wouldn't be that. But you shouldn't bring anything in until they vaccinated you, you had to be vaccinated. We all had them as children in Europe, and the second one was on the ship.
- GUMB: You mention the, uh, the Great Hall, like Grand Central Terminal.
- NAGY: Like an assembly hall, packed.

GUMB: What, can you describe what the room looked like?

NAGY: Yeah, it had, it, the, uh, ceiling windows, well, sort of ceiling, like a dome, and that's what I remember in Hamburg, too, a glass dome, a lot of glass, and for what reason I couldn't tell you. Um...

GUMB: Were there people sitting in the hall?

NAGY: There were very few seats. It was so packed that you were almost standing close together, like in subways. And I remember, it was in August, it was very hot, and the milk, there was a court yard, that was the only area you got if you wanted air, uh, you went out in this courtyard, at twelve o'clock you got this little glass of milk for small children, I was considered not a child any more. So I remember standing in line for my sister and my youngest brother, and you had to stand in line, I don't know, maybe for an hour, and that hot sun beat into that courtyard, and, uh...

GUMB: Do you remember who was serving the milk?

NAGY: It was coming from a faucet, some kind of faucet.

GUMB: A faucet.

NAGY: Right. Like water. So that had certain times, that sounds like a modern thing for those years, but that's what I remember, the milk was coming from, unlike in, uh, do you remember those, uh restaurants where you put a nickel in, automat, it was like an automat, coffee or milk. So that's how I remember the milk, and standing in a long line, just so my sister could have this, uh, glass of milk, it was important to me. I was, I had that motherly instinct to take care of her, and. Well, else about the, uh, well, everybody just sat and waited to be called. That's why you were assembled in that hall, to be, to have you name called, that was the thing everybody waited for.

GUMB: Do you remember how long you had to wait?

NAGY: You knew there were two or three times during the day that they would come on the, uh, some sort of a platform, the man would come, and he had the list in this hand and he would read off the names. Oh, he would read off, it sounded to me then, being as I didn't know English, like he was saying Alfred Miller, and to me it sounded, being that I knew German, Alles, meaning "everything"

Miller, so we already knew all of us, uh, the family, that meant his name, Alice Miller. That's what it sounded like to us.

GUMB: So what did you do then when you heard it?

NAGY: Oh, well, we just, everybody dispersed, the crowd that came to hear their names called, then we disappeared, just sat around, or walked around, kept waiting for the next call. And then it was nighttime, then it was the little supper, and there were long tables for eating. I don't remember the meals too much, the only thing I remember that it was the first time in our lives that we had slices of white bread. Well, we didn't see that, because in Russia it was the black bread, and mostly saw black bread, and , uh, well, in the Ukraine it was almost the same.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about the questions the person had asked? The official asked?

NAGY: Well, mostly your name, and if you were sick, and if you had anything wrong with you. That went fairly quick and, like I said, they would come back with this American name. First name and your, I don't know, somewhere they gave me the name of Kate, too. Because my middle name began with a "K," so why, 'cause Kazmiera is my name, and so they made me Kate, it began with a "K" and it was easy for them, so they, that's how they dealt with us. Oh, you'll hear a lot of foreigners say that how they changed everybody's foreign names, their original name, Italian, Polish, Russia, choose a way they thought would be American.

GUMB: How did you spell your original name? Kazmiera was it? Could you spell that?

NAGY: Kazmiera, like K-A, that was my middle name...

GUMB: How do you spell that?

NAGY: K-A-Z-M-I-E-R-A, that the right way in Polish.

GUMB: So after the, uh, interrogation was over, you were, you went, some, do you remember where you were taken on the Island, to wait for your parents to come?

NAGY: We just stayed in that one area, that building where we slept. If you go there now, you will see how the bunks I think are still there, if I remember, uh, for sleeping you were in a different area, and I think they already separated the men from the women and not like on the

ship, the ship, everybody was all together. What did I say about the bunks, it was Ellis Island you were asking. The courtyard, the hot, hot courtyard in August, the hot sun beating down, and you just milled around with the crowd all day long, and that was it, and then you sat down to eat.

GUMB: So it wasn't until the next day that your parents came?

NAGY: Yeah, we would've gone the same day if they had found the name in the book, but on account of the two names, that's where the mix-up came. My father kept insisting, he wouldn't budge. He hollered, and hollered, "They're here, they're here," and you've got to find them. But somehow, he didn't connect. Somehow, my father must have forgotten Alfred Miller, that came under his name, that was the problem.

GUMB: Where did your uncle go? Was he, did he spent the night there, too?

NAGY: Oh, yeah, we all did, we were all together. But he had the three boys and I just had my sister. He was taking care of them, and I was taking care of my sister.

GUMB: Did you have any impression of, uh, the officials on the Island, or what their attitude was?

NAGY: They looked like conductors on the street cars here years ago with the, uh, those peaked, those patent – leather peaks on the hats, and they each probably had a number on the lapel. They looked, I would say, uniformist. Navy blue, and they looked like they were conductors to me.

GUMB: But what kind of attitude did they have? How did they treat people? Did you get any impression on how they treated people?

NAGY: One of the crowd, move, move, go, go, come. Very, very abrupt, very short, abrupt.

GUMB: Do you remember where on the island, you were talking about that, uh, that event where you had to recognize your parents? Do you remember where that took place? Was that in the Great Hall, or was that somewhere else?

NAGY: No, it wasn't in the Great Hall. It was outside the building. They must have had this separate area and the linked fence. You can never get it out of your eyes. It was a linked fence. We had to

identify each other. That was, that must have been towards the exit somewhere, when you're going out to this little ferry boat. That was the last destination, they didn't ask any more questions after that. The last thing was the linked fence, identification, and the, uh, the exit to some kind of platform to the boat.

GUMB: You mention the food on the island, uh, was it one big dining room, where everybody ate?

NAGY: Well, it couldn't fit, well, sort of one, but it couldn't be one, they were very long tables. And it was neater to me than the ship somehow, I remember the ship, horrible. I don't remember any covering, but here I seem to remember white, white, the doctor's offices, the tile, white, in the room where we were examined, and the more cleanliness. However, you could have that clean with so many people, men, women, and children. Noise, the talk, everybody was speaking their language. It all came to you, you didn't know what was what. For me it, I understood it, because I knew so many languages. I don't know how other people felt. And, as a child, that was my impression.

GUMB: So you were, uh, mentioning, uh, living...

NAGY: And the, the link fence, it just stays in your eyes. I got so impressed there. So, uh, what else is it that you wanted to know?

GUMB: Well, uh, as far as being, as far as adjusting to this new country, um, you mention that...

NAGY: Excuse me, you asked about the food. The long tables, very clean, and I think it was pitchers standing on the table with milk, which I didn't see in Europe either. What did you want to know?

GUMB: Well, as far as adjusting, uh, to the new country, you mentioned that different nationalities lived right together.

NAGY: On Ellis Island?

GMUB: No, in New York.

NAGY: Already downtown Manhattan, on 16th Street, that's where we moved to first. The place looked dirty to me, crowded dirty. However, there used to be street cleaners, everyday, coming with a, like a garbage can, on a little rolling thing, and a broom. They used to sweep the gutters every day, so that part of it was very surprising to me, I didn't see that in Europe and, uh, and the little

organs, the Italians, mostly Italians. They used to come and play on the street and the little girls would come out and dance, five, six, seven, either. I didn't, because I considered myself big and grown up. And I was translating almost immediately for my parents. It was very dirty compared to European orchards and, uh, the greenery, and the, uh...

GUMB: Were there any other expectations that you had of America?

NAGY: Well, I didn't have too many expectations at ten. You just went along with every day, and you just, I was always expecting knowledge, I am going to learn something, and as I kept getting a year too older, my father was in politics, wanted to get, but, there again, the Polish home on 8th Street in Manhattan, St. Mark's Place, there was a nationality clique, that was how it was there. That's how most of them stayed throughout their whole lifetime, I didn't. I kept going, and going, and, uh...

GUMB: Were there some customs of Poland that you brought to this country, and kept following?

NAGY: Well, no. Because we wanted to be Americans. The customs, I couldn't acquire too many customs by the time I was nine or ten years old, because I was always, the family?

GUMB: The family?

NAGY: Uh, well, you had the strictness of your parents, the respect, the usual thing, not only in Europe, but in the United States, but uh, the older generations, there was always a fear and respect, the two things went together. I had a fear of my mother, I had a fear of my father, because you have to honor them, your parents, no matter how bad, but that's not just the Polish. Customs, customs was it? It was a simpler life over there. We walked to a water place where we could go swimming, put some kind of, something on you, a little bit, no special bathing suits. There was a hot, they call them canals, hot canal, speaking about just before we left. If you want to go in cold water you went in cold water if you wanted, uh, warm you went there. But then again, I was a mother for one year, I had to watch this suction from the canal, however the water, my sister shouldn't get sucked in, I was a constant watcher, adult, and, uh...

GUMB: Do you have any idea of what would have happened to you if you stayed in Poland, if you hadn't come here?

NAGY: Pretty awful. Because we came in 19, August 1913, and April 1914 the First World War broke out, and I have, uh, what do you call it, tapes, I taped with my aunt here in Plainfield, where she stayed longer than I did. She came after the First World War and, uh, she's describing to me on the tape how awful it was when the German Army went through this town, and this is where she lived, too, through this town. Which was better, when the Russians went through or the Germans went through, oh, she said, "The Russians were good," or vice versa, I don't remember, it's on the tape. So we just missed the horror of a war, they used to hide in cellars, and no food, they had to go from one farm to another, my grandmother to beg for a piece of bread. So we missed that, because that's what we would have been drawn into, the war, so, well...

GUMB: So, Mrs. Nagy, I seem you have some memorabilia, and I see the first time is, uh, the inspection card.

NAGY: Right, but, uh, we came on the Hamburg, uh, Cunard Line, into, uh, New York Harbor.

GUMB: What the name that, uh, I see it's your old name, original name.

NAGY: Yeah, the name, the inspectors gave me the name of Kazmiera, uh, and of course, my last name is Schultz and, uh...

GUMB: I see it's stamped.

NAGY: Well, yeah, and then it has the book number, and the page it was entered into, that would be in the Washington, D.C. archives.

GUMB: Now on the manifest, the book number and the page number on the manifest, where your name appears.

NAGY: Okay, well, you said it, I don't have to repeat it.

GUMB: Right, and then I see where it is stamped, on, it's stamped by the Public Health Service on Ellis Island.

NAGY: That's from the vaccination, we all had to be vaccinated.

GUMB: Okay. Then this other item?

NAGY: The other one is my birth certificate, but it's really baptismal and, uh, it was issued in 1903, March 4th, but, of course, it was the Gregorian Calendar, and the, uh, there's a few days difference...(tape ends abruptly)