

KECK-36

JULIA JACOBS (YOAND JACOBWITZ) BLAU

BIRTHDATE: APRIL 6, 1905

INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 1985

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 80

RUNNING TIME: 45:00

INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB

RECORDING ENGINEER: CONNIE KIELTYKA

INTERVIEW LOCATION: BAYSIDE, NY

TRANSCRIPIT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986

TRANSCRIPT RECONCIEVED BY: NANCY VEGA, 8/1995 (TRANSCRIPT

RETYPED BY: NICOLE STOTZ, 2008)

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL SIGRIST, JR., 1995

HUNGARY, 1923

AGE: 16 (AS RECORDED IN INTERVIEW)

SHIP: THE AMERICAN

PORT: BREMEN

RESIDENCES: HUNGARY: VITKA

U.S.: BROOKLYN, NY

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb, and I am speaking with Mrs. Julia Blau on the 19th day of September, 1985. We are beginning this interview at four minutes to three. We are about to interview Mrs. Blau about her immigration experience from Hungary in the year 1923. Okay, Mrs. Blau, if we can begin with where and when you were born?

BLAU: I was born in Hungary. Do you want the town?

GUMB: Yes.

BLAU: Vitka.

GUMB: Can you spell that, please?

BLAU: V-I-T-K-A.

GUMB: And, uh, when were you born?

BLAU: April 6, 1905.

GUMB: And, uh, what was life like in, uh, Hungary, in Vitka?

BLAU: Well, life was nice. But my mother was a widow and my father died in 1914, and we were very poor. In those years, uh, if a girl didn't have money, a dowry, you call it you would never can get married, no matter how beautiful you are. So, my mother arranged me, so I had relatives here in this country and they should send me a ticket to come to America. I was the oldest of four girls. I was, uh, I had a sister four years younger and one six, and one eight years younger. So, we laid it out that come to America and they, I'm gonna bring them over. And, uh, I came, so, they send me a ticket, and, being I was only a niece, I couldn't get the visa very quick. I was awaiting, uh, two years. Then...

GUMB: What do you mean by niece?

BLAU: A niece to who I came to.

GUMB: Oh, I see. Your sponsor was your uncle.

BLAU: Yeah. But then my uncle went over, to governor [addresses daughter] Cellar [ph], Emanuel Cellar [ph]. And he wrote a letter to the American counsel in Budapest. And when I came up with the letter, there was a block-and-a-half line, they rushed me right in. And I had my eight dollars for the visa and I got my visa right away.

GUMB: Who was Emanuel Cellar [ph]?

BLAU: He died. Congressman Cellar [ph], he died not long ago. I always wanted to see him, but never, so then I prepare to come. I got to Budapest November 22nd, and from there I went to Bremen. There we stayed a whole week in a hotel. It was a hotel with, uh, bunk beds. Men and women, boys and girls, all in one big room. Uh, we were there a whole week. But we were treated very good. They gave us nice meals. And then we started out from there, on a boat, USA, American, the boat's name was American. It wasn't bad on the boat, but it was third class. Every day they disturbed us, and examined us. And I had some psoriasis. See, before I left I went to the doctor in Budapest. "Are they going to let me?" He said, "Don't worry, psoriasis, they let you." So I came to Ellis Island. We, we docked Friday, we stayed on the boat Monday morning, and Monday they put us on a boat, a little boat, that took us to Ellis Island. And there they held me back. And I was there, uh, till Christmas Eve, I didn't speak the language, and then I got there,

they gave me, uh, I was Kosher at that time, I didn't eat meat with milk. They gave me a meat sandwich with a glass of milk. So I knew, even though I didn't know their language, to eat this stuff was not right. So I didn't eat that. Then, they didn't let me through. The doctors came and they said I would have to be under observation. So they kept me a whole week. It was, Ellis Island was like a hospital. But I didn't know what was going on. If they're going to deport me back, or they're gonna let me, and, it was, uh, pretty hectic. It was, they even brought me Hungarian books, Hungarian paper, everything. They catered to me like in a hotel. And, of course, I told my daughter, I've seen them change. I wasn't in bed. They changed the linen every single day. And that was something new to me. Because we didn't have that in Europe. And, uh, that's how I, they let me go Christmas Eve.

GUMB: Where, um, where were you staying on Ellis Island?

BLAU: A hospital, it was like a hospital quarters. I had a bed, upstairs, yeah. Downstairs was the new arrivals, examinations, you know. But, uh, in Ellis Island, every day, they examined me from top to bottom. I was a sixteen-year-old girl or seventeen or sixteen, all right. You know, I was never opened for that. I come from a small town. It was very embarrassing. For me it was embarrassing. You know, man doctor, I even remember it was a young red-headed doctor. Every day he examined me all over. But then they let me go.

GUMB: All right. Maybe going back to Hungary first, and filling in some of the details. You mention that, uh, uh, you didn't have any dowry in be married.

BLAU: No, we were very poor. My father died. My mother had a little one from about two years old, and my mother had to support us, and you know my mother, years ago, you didn't even know how to read or write. My mother didn't know how to read or write. In those years they didn't have to send us. In my time already we had, uh, to go to school because if not we were fined. But in my mother's time they had no such thing, a hundred years before.

GUMB: You had to work there?

BLAU: Oh, yeah. Uh, I learned dressmaking. And, uh, that what I was doing, I was a dressmaker. But I finished four, six years public school, and my mother gave me away to learn how to do dressmaking, and that was what I was doing.

- GUMB: What did a dowry usually consist of?
- BLAU: Oh, uh, four or five hundred dollars, those years. No, not dollars, pengas. Those years one dollar was five pengas, and my mother didn't have that, my mother hardly had enough to give us to eat, and clothes. Because there were four young girls, orphans.
- GUMB: Could you spell pengas?
- BLAU: Pengas. P-E...and that's what goes on there, no two pengas. But no, uh, dollar is fifty pengas.
- GUMB: Uh, so when your mother suggested that you maybe should go to America. Did you resist that idea?
- BLAU: Well, I was heartbroken. I was a young girl. So then what happens? I came out, after four-and-a-half years I got married, and then send for my mother. I became a citizen. The law was, a mother, a daughter, a child could bring back a daughter, a mother. But in, a mother could bring out a child. But they didn't need no waiting for visas. So I brought my mother over in four-and-a-half years, to this country. And then my mother brought over two girls from Europe. One was over age, so they wouldn't let her. But they felt sorry for her, because she ad nobody there so she came over. They let her come. The highest [?] that she should come. And they all came here.
- GUMB: Okay, Mrs. Blau. You were talking about your feelings of, uh, leaving your country...
- BLAU: Well, it wasn't easy feelings because, you now, you leave your mother, you're going some place that you don't really know what and, uh, it wasn't easy here neither at that time. It was hard to make a living and, uh, I, uh, I came, I had to go to work. I went to work, because they took me to a cleaning factory, with an iron, to iron the whole day from eight to six, for two dollar a day, and I went with one of my girlfriends, and she says, "I don't want this," eight dollars a week. And from that I had to pay my rent, four dollars a week, and I had to send to Europe, to my mother, they figured over the dollar in pengas, and they thought I make a lot of money, they didn't know I had to spend it here, not in Europe. So, uh...
- GUMB: Well, uh, once you made the decision to come, uh, what was the, what did you have to do? What offices did you have to go to and what were the procedures?

- BLAU: Well, first I had to go to make my, uh, to the, uh, town clerk. In there, too, you know, wherever you went, whenever you went, all over the village, do you know what smear is?
- GUMB: No.
- BLAU: Bribe.
- GUMB: Smear, is that Yiddish?
- BLAU: Smear is Yiddish. Yeah, but they use this, anyway, I had to, uh, bribe. I went everyday to the town clerk. He says, "Oh, I have no time today, I have no time today." So, my mother went, and gave the town clerk, you know, in Europe we stuff the geese and we have big livers, and we gave him a liver from about four pounds. Duck liver. It was, well, right away he made it. Then with that we had to go up to another town, uh, I don't know how you call them, to make more passports.
- GUMB: What does the town clerk have to do for you?
- BLAU: Make up my, uh, what do you call it, passport, yeah, there's a passport. And then we had to go for the stamp up in another big town, they put the stamp on it. And then with that we had to go to the American consul. But there, too, I had to wait for the quota. But that's why we went to congressman Cellar [ph]. He gave us a letter from America, they send it to me, and I went up, uh, I think, if I remember, Governor La Guardia was the councilman at that time.
- GUMB: The mayor, who, the man who later became mayor.
- BLAU: Yeah, and he uh, as soon as they seen the letter, I showed it to the police who guarded the line, they seen the letter that was addressed to the consul. They took me right away up and I got it right away.
- GUMB: How did you get that? Who knew Congressman Cellar [ph], and how was that...
- BLAU: Well, we lived in, uh, that time we lived in Williamsburg. My uncle knew him, he went up and asked him for a favor, he should write a letter, and that's how he, uh, how I got to America, with his letter. Otherwise I would have waited for years and years because, as I told you, uh, child could bring a mother, and mothers could bring a child, without any...

GUMB: Visa?

BLAU: No, visa you had to have. But they gave it to you right away. You didn't have to stay in the quota. But now there is a quota too, I guess. I don't know. But, uh, that's how I landed here.

GUMB: Did you come into contact with LaGuardia at all in Budapest?

BLAU: No, I didn't, uh, uh, well, I didn't go back there.

GUMB: Did you go to the consulate by yourself? Were you alone?

BLAU: Yeah, I was by myself. But I had relatives right by Budapest, so I stayed there for a while. They, uh, he told me, "You got eight dollars?" I didn't have the eight dollars, when I went up with my letter. I had to go home and get my eight dollars and come back to Budapest. Because I didn't know I was going to get the money, and eight dollars was a lot of money in that time.

GUMB: Uh, so, uh, did you have to buy your ticket for the ocean liner?

BLAU: No. The ticket they send to me from here, from America. I remember it was one hundred and four dollars. I remember, one hundred and four dollar I paid for the ticket. It was a lot of money in those years. And, uh, the food was good on the boat. They gave me kosher food. I was kosher then.

GUMB: Were you traveling by yourself on the boat?

BLAU: Well, they, they assigned me a woman, because otherwise I wouldn't have gotten my, uh, passport, because I was underage, but I never came with that woman, I came alone.

GUMB: What, uh, what happened to that woman?

BLAU: She didn't come with me, she came in a different boat.

GUMB: Who, who assigned her to you?

BLAU: We assigned her, she, uh, she gave her permission to put her name down, but I didn't come with her, she came in a different boat. But I came all alone.

GUMB: You mean that someone requires that you have a chaperon?

BLAU: Oh, yeah, they required that I have a chaperon because I was

underage. Uh, see, uh, you have to be over eighteen to go by yourself, eighteen of twenty-one, I don't even remember.

GUMB: Do you remember who required this?

BLAU: The government, the, uh, they how you call it, the town clerk. He had to put into my, uh, book, or my passport, who going to be my companion, but she never came.

GUMB: No one checked, no one...

BLAU: No one checked.

GUMB: Uh, back at the consulate, uh, uh, how did they treat you there? What sort of attitude did they have?

BLAU: Well, uh, well, when you went up there, you gave them your bank book and they put a stamp on it, and that was the whole thing. Uh, not bank book, uh, passport books. Passport, that's all. They, uh, didn't make, there were millions of people coming to America. I'll tell you there was a line two blocks there waiting to get into the consul. Here, too, I just went to Europe, and I had, uh, to have a visa, and if you go in yourself, and you have it stamped right away, they charge you fifteen dollars, if you mail it in they charge you ten. Uh, it's nothing, they just put a stamp there. For that they charge you fifteen dollars, if you want it right away.

GUMB: So, um, on the voyage over, do you remember how many days it took or how long a trip it was?

BLAU: Twelve days. The boat took twelve days.

GUMB: And you said you were in third class?

BLAU: Yeah.

GUMB: And, uh, what was that like?

BLAU: It's like, I don't know, like savage. Every day you had to go, uh, for examination, so when I sent for my mother, "Let's send them second class." I said, "You know, anybody I'm going to send for I don't want them to come third class." Because it was terrible. See, if I would be second class I wouldn't have to go through Ellis Island. If I would be second class they wouldn't examine me every single day.

- GUMB: What, I think you might have mentioned it, but what were the examinations, what were they, what did they look for and what did they do?
- BLAU: I don't know what they looked for but they examined me from top to bottom every day. Even, even here they pushed their hands in all over. I was, I was an innocent girl from a little small town, seventeen years old. In those years, it wasn't like today.
- GUMB: Who were these people?
- BLAU: Doctors.
- GUMB: Do you know, were, who they were hired, who they were hired by?
- BLAU: I guess, American, it was an American boat, ship. U.S. America it was, I remember it. It wasn't a big one.
- GUMB: So, um, how about the accommodations on the boat, the sleeping accommodations?
- BLAU: Well, there was four in a room. It wasn't bad. Listen, we weren't used to better. But, see my mother, I brought her over second class. Cost more money, but you don't go through torture.
- GUMB: Were there other torturous things about the voyage other than the examinations?
- BLAU: No. no. There was plenty of food and, uh...
- GUMB: Did you meet anybody on the trip?
- BLAU: Yeah, I met a lot of people and, you know, for a while we seen each other, we met, but that cools off.
- GUMB: Uh, so, um, did you have any first impressions of sighting land?
- BLAU: Oh, yeah. I came in Christmas Eve and I seen those, uh, big Christmas trees. Of course, I'd seen the lines, the clotheslines, and I was wondering "How do they get up there?" It's true. And the food in Ellis Island, I didn't eat nothing. I had eight hard boiled eggs every day. They gave you fruit, they gave you good, the meats I wouldn't eat because, there were some nicer Germans. I understood one of two words because being Jewish, the Jewish language is almost like German. But when she told me, that tomorrow I'm gonna go into America, that was a day. She told me

in German.

GUMB: Who told you this?

BLAU: A nurse.

GUMB: She spoke German?

BLAU: Yeah, she was German, she spoke German, and English, of course, but I didn't speak English. The only language I knew a little Yiddish, in Hungarian. Nobody spoke Hungarian there.

GUMB: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

BLAU: Yeah, yeah.

GUMB: Had you heard about it?

BLAU: No, I never heard about it. But people used to go up on the deck. Everybody started to cry, they see the Statue of Liberty. And it was nice.

GUMB: Okay, so, do you remember where the boat, where the boat landed?

BLAU: It was, that I don't remember which dock. It was American boat, I don't know, I don't remember. But I know that we, the boat came in Friday and, uh, we stayed on the boat till Monday morning. My relatives came to see me.

GUMB: They, they could get on the boat?

BLAU: No, no. We just spoke to them from downstairs up to the deck.

GUMB: So you were on the boat for the weekend?

BLAU: That's right.

GUMB: Why was that?

BLAU: Because, I don't know. That Monday they took us out. Only Monday they took us out to Ellis Island. They kept us on the boat, I guess they didn't work on the weekend, those officials and doctors. Only Monday morning they, it was bitter cold. An open boat. We went on an open boat.

- GUMB: What did you do to occupy that time?
- BLAU: Nothing much. There was nothing to do on the boat. We didn't get entertainment. Third class didn't get nothing except food and lodging.
- GUMB: So, uh, that Monday morning, uh, when you finally could get off the boat, do you remember what happened?
- BLAU: Nothing happened. We got off the boat and little boats, little open boats, and they took us to Ellis Island. And there's where the fun begin.
- GUMB: What was the, well, first, the, I forgot to ask what you were carrying?
- BLAU: Oh, what I was carrying. I was carrying, uh, geese feathers for pillows, and that's about it. I had, you know, but today it's very much in style that baskets, like wicker suitcases. That's what I had.
- GUMB: Were there any special items that you were bringing from home?
- BLAU: No, no. Only some clothes and, uh, feathers for bedding. My trousseau, that was my trousseau.
- GUMB: So, once you landed at Ellis Island, what was the first step? What was the first thing that took place?
- BLAU: I don't know. The first thing they did, the put on everybody tags. I couldn't read the tag. I didn't know what it was. And then my relatives were there so they told me that they wouldn't let me out. So then they put me up to the hospital quarters and they, there was a lot of, some of them, they, they sent back a lot of them. They sent them back, you know. Contagious sicknesses, eye trouble, they sent back.
- GUMB: Do you remember who put that tag on?
- BLAU: I forgot.
- GUMB: They had uniforms?
- BLAU: Yeah, uniforms.
- GUMB: Um, so, um, do you remember what happened at the medical examinations?

- BLAU: I didn't know, I don't know what was going on. They put me up in the room and I was there, but I wasn't laying in bed because I wasn't sick. I got up. I told you, they brought us magazines and books and that's all.
- GUMB: Do you remember where the room was?
- BLAU: No, that I don't remember. It was upstairs, you had to go upstairs. Because downstairs was all offices. And, you know, when the people came in from the whole boat it was hundreds and hundreds of people there. Everybody with tags, with kids crying and screaming, they separated families. You know, somebody was sick from a family, they send them back. And the rest of the remained here. I remember a woman, her baby was, something wrong with the baby. They sent her back. They sent everybody back who was, uh, contagious sick, they sent them back.
- GUMB: How did they communicate with you? How did they tell you go up the stairs into that room?
- BLAU: They pointed. They were talking but I didn't understand, but there were pointing. That there where I had to go.
- GUMB: Do you remember any questions, uh...
- BLAU: No, they didn't ask no questions. They couldn't ask me no questions.
- GUMB: There were no interpreters
- BLAU: No interpreters, no. But they gave me Hungarian books and Hungarian paper, they gave me, but no, there was no interpreters.
- GUMB: So after you were taken up to that room, that little room up the stairs above the Great Hall, where did you go then? Where did they take you then?
- BLAU: My hospital quarters.
- GUMB: Do you remember where that was in relation to that room?
- BLAU: No, no, I don't remember. It was so big you couldn't remember. It was big. Because the whole upstairs was hospital beds.
- GUMB: So, um, you spent one week there?

BLAU: One week, from Monday, I think it was Monday to Friday. I don't remember what day Christmas was that time, 1923, but that's when they let me off, Christmas Eve.

GUMB: And, um, ah, did you stay in one room?

BLAU: One room, same bed, same room.

GUMB: What thoughts were going through your mind?

BLAU: All, everything. Everything the worst. I was afraid they gonna send me back. It was hope for me, my whole family, my mother and my sisters if they send me back. Because it took long time till they, I had here tow uncles and an aunt, my mother's brothers and sisters that sent me the passport. And then, you know, they had to send the papers, too. That they are responsible for me.

GUMB: End of side one, tape one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: This is tape one, side two. Okay, Mrs. Blau, we were talking about your week on Ellis Island. Was there ever anyone who could explain to you what was going on?

BLAU: Yeah, they, um, my relatives. I guess they told my relatives what's wrong and they knew about it.

GUMB: Where, where did you see your relatives on Ellis, on Ellis Island.

BLAU: There was a, Ellis Island, there was a room, you know, a waiting room, or whatever you call it. There was a room. They used to, they came to me.

GUMB: Were there guards in this, in this room?

BLAU: No. Listen, there couldn't be guards because we were on an island. They couldn't snitch me out.

- GUMB: What was the overall, did you get any feeling of the overall atmosphere of the place? Was it, did it just feel like a hospital or...
- BLAU: Well, it, it, it was a hospital. There was no noting else there. It was a hospital and there were doctors. So it was a hospital. But they give you, they fed you, they gave me a banana, but I never seen a banana. I looked down and I turned it over and I didn't know what it was. I never seen one before. They didn't tell me how to eat it.
- GUMB: You talked a little bit about the food. You could only eat hard boiled eggs?
- BLAU: Because I didn't want to eat meat there. Because I was afraid it's not kosher and God forbid. My mother broke me in if, I don't eat, I shouldn't eat non-kosher meat. My mother was very religious.
- GUMB: Where, where did you go to have meals? Do you have any idea where it was in relation to the hospital?
- BLAU: There was a dining room. And you could eat as much as you wanted, whenever you wanted. They had everything. They treated you very nice there.
- GUMB: Was it cafeteria style, or...
- BLAU: No, I don't know. I don't remember that. Really, I don't. Whether it was cafeteria style, I don't remember. It must have been cafeteria style because I took myself a whole bunch of hard boiled eggs and I was on it the whole day [she laughs].
- GUMB: Uh, any general, or any feelings that you had about the attitudes of the people that were there, uh, the people that you came in contact with?
- BLAU: They were all nice people, but we couldn't contact each other. They didn't speak my language and I didn't speak theirs.
- GUMB: Any idea why they finally decided to let you go?
- BLAU: Well, the idea was that my sickness wasn't contagious. You know what I mean. I, as I told you, I went up to big doctor in Budapest, if they gonna let me I had psoriasis, some psoriasis, and they told me don't worry about it, we let you know with psoriasis and no contagious sickness. But they still kept me a whole week.

GUMB: Do you remember, you talked a little bit about when you got the word that you were let go, could let go. How did you get that word? It was German.

BLAU: A German, a German nurse told me, "Tomorrow you gonna go." But, you see, I was afraid that I, I had asked her a couple of times, "Where I gonna go." Because there was two ways to go. To America or back to Europe. But she said, she said, "America." Then I was very happy.

GUMB: And, uh, do you have any idea where you met your relatives?

BLAU: They were waiting for me.

GUMB: On Ellis Island?

BLAU: On Ellis Island. No, not on, from Ellis Island the boat came in. I don't know where it landed, but not on Ellis Island.

GUMB: So you, alone, you came over.

BLAU: Well, not alone, a lot of people came, but that I remember that it was an open boat because we were freezing. It was, you know, Christmas time, it was very cold on the water.

GUMB: Um, okay, so then at that, once you'd met your uncle and where did you go? Where did...

BLAU: I went to Williamsburg. That's where they lived. In Ellery Street, you never heard of it, I guess. It's Brooklyn. It's a Williamsburg section and that's where I lived. And I lived there for four-and-a-half years. Till I married from there. I got married.

GUMB: Was it difficult learning English?

BLAU: Uh, it was, it was. Because they used to explain it to me, what it is. Uh, the one thing carried in my mind, what it means, I heard it already, "Shut up." I says, "What does 'shut up' mean?" And then they explained it to me. You know, kids, because there was kids in the house. Shut up, shut up. I said, "Okay, what is that 'shut up'?" I was thinking every minute they say, "Shut up." So they told me.

GUMB: Do you remember other problems of adjusting to the new country?

BLAU: Oh, it was plenty to adjust. They, then they took me to New York. One day with the train. And it was the Myrtle Avenue train to

Broadway. From Broadway I went to New York. And I had to come home alone. Well, I, I knew I had, I remembered the station where I had to get off, Tompkins Avenue. But I went the opposite way, Canarsie. I went one station. I said, "This, I don't remember this." I got up, I went back to my Myrtle Avenue and then I went toward East New York. I didn't remember. Then I came back and then I went again to another. I changed there times the first time. I went to Tompkins Avenue, and it was.

GUMB: That was the first subway ride?

BLAU: There it was an elevated, not a subway, my first elevated ride from New York. They took me into New York but they never came home with me. And I had, I was on my own, but I found my way.

GUMB: Um, do you have any idea what, what would have happened to you if you hadn't come, if you hadn't come to America?

BLAU: To America? Hitler would have followed me, swallowed me.

GUMB: And then how long did it take for you to bring your family over?

BLAU: It took about six years, I think. About six years. My mother came over and then my two sisters came together. And then the third sister came alone. And they're all here.

GUMB: And how long did it take to become an American citizen?

BLAU: I, I became an American citizen 1930, May 30th. How long was that? 1930, seven years.

GUMB: How did that feel? Did you feel like you were closing a door to the old country?

BLAU: Oh, I never wanted to go back to the old country, never. My mother used to write me in those years. I should save money, she's gonna buy me land, you know, dollars. I says, "Ma, forget about it, I'll never go back." You know I worked here very hard. I had a very hard life. Because those years they worked the life out of you for nothing. I started to work eight dollars a week. Ironing with iron iron. And then I went to work, my uncle was a pants, he had a pants factory. So he knew somebody in the line so I went to work by vests. Then I went to work, I went to work by Three Gees, I don't know if you ever heard of it. Three Gees, they made very good suits. I worked in Three Gees for about seventeen years, in one place.

GUMB: Why, why the feeling that you'd never go back?

BLAU: Because, I don't know, because we were poor and my mother had three other girls and, uh, my mother had to work very hard, too, it was just bread and milk, whatever. And I was a dressmaker and it's a foolish thing to say, I used to make some people, it was a war going on, I came right after the war, the First World War. And if I made something and that person had it fit right. And the material was lousy. It shrunk, you, you must have took off a lot, you stole a lot from the," you know, they abused you. Let's say the truth. They abused you. Ignorant people, they thought that I cut it short because I took some away. And they took the life, the guts out of me if I made them something. So I never wanted. I liked, I worked my day off and I went home and slept. I didn't want to be bothered day and night, to be a European dressmaker.

GUMB: They would bother you at night even?

BLAU: Evenings, yeah, evenings they would run to me that this is no good. But here, I didn't want to go back.

GUMB: Did you bring any customs from Hungary to this country and continue to practice any customs?

BLAU: Well, I came and my uncles and aunt were Hungarian, so I didn't have to bring them, they, although they were here much before, but I still have my Hungarian customs. I cook Hungarian way. I bake Hungarian way. That's my custom.

GUMB: I didn't get, how did you get your first job? You arrived here at seventeen. Did you go to school or did you...

BLAU: I didn't go. I sent to school a couple of nights but, ah, you know, when you work from eight to six you're too tired. My uncle recommended, recommended me in a job, you know how people are. And they take the greenhorns, they work cheap. Even now they do. And then I joined the union. I used to go into New York. I worked in some place in Spring Street, a big building. I remember, I was a young girl, I remember once I was going up the elevator and the elevator guy grabbed me and he started to kiss me, he wanted to take me out. And I never went back to that elevator. The building had four elevators, four corners. I never went back there. That time, I didn't talk English. I said, "Let me alone, not talk English." You don't have to talk English. I never went back to that elevator no more. Then people told me why I didn't report that

elevator guy. He was a young fellow. I never went back there in that elevator. Things were different than it is today. Today you're afraid to go on the elevator.

GUMB: We didn't get your original name, Mrs. Blau.

BLAU: You know, that was another funny thing. Ah, my original name was Yoland Jacobowitz.

GUMB: Could you spell that?

BLAU: Y...wait a minute.

GUMB: We'll do it later. Go ahead.

BLAU: You want to spell it?

GUMB: No, go ahead and tell the story. We'll get it later.

BLAU: They made up my passport Yoland Jacobowitz. And then I went up and they dug up that it's not Jacobowitz, its Jacob. Jacobs.

GUMB: Who did this?

BLAU: In the town clerk they made the mistake. I had a lot of trouble with that, too. So they had it put in two names. We have four, we were four sisters. And two sisters are Jacobowitz. We had one father. And two sisters were Jacobowitz. You know, it was...

GUMB: Why were the names different for the sisters?

BLAU: Because it's a mistake in the town house. That was their mistake. But it was still a boo-boo.

GUMB: In Hungary. This was a mistake in Hungary.

BLAU: Yeah, yeah. So my name, my real name was Yoland Jacobowitz. Y-O-L...

GUMB: So how about, the name that appeared on your passport was what again?

BLAU: Both names, Jacobs and Jacobowitz.

GUMB: Okay. And that was the name that you had on Ellis Island? Did they change it on Ellis Island?

BLAU: No, no.

GUMB: Okay, so, was it changed in America at all? Did you shorten it?

BLAU: No, in America when I became a citizen I shortened it to Jacobs. Why I need Jacobowitz? Shortened to Jacobs. And then shortened my name to Julia, too. My name is Yoland.

GUMB: And you shortened it to Julia.

BLAU: Yeah.

GUMB: Okay. While you were in Ellis Island for that one week, uh, did you have to stay in the hospital room?

BLAU: There wasn't much place else to stay. Because they wouldn't let you down, downstairs they were busy with the immigrants coming in and out.

GUMB: Could you leave that room? Did you have to stay in that room?

BLAU: No. But there is not much place to go. There isn't any place to go.

GUMB: Uh, there wasn't really any other place to go?

BLAU: No, no.

GUMB: There wasn't a lounge or anything?

BLAU: No, no, no, no.

GUMB: Did any, uh, you couldn't wander on the grounds?

BLAU: On, no. There's no grounds. On Ellis Island, it's on an island. There's water all around.

GUMB: Could you go outside?

BLAU: No, no.

GUMB: Okay. Did any, anybody try to help you, anybody like HIAS, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, or...

BLAU: No, no, no, no.

- GUMB: Okay, then I'm wondering how your relatives, after you finally met up with your relatives, uh, what did they tell you about their wait, you know, and what they?
- BLAU: No, nothing. They, they was told that I had to stay there that's about it. That's about it. They couldn't do nothing.
- GUMB: Did they try, while you, while you were in the hospital, did they try to do anything to...
- BLAU: No, no.
- GUMB: Did they go to the doctors or anything?
- BLAU: No, no. They couldn't go to the doctors, that's a, how do you spell it? At that time, the doctors belonged to the Immigration. It was no private doctors there. Can't even talk to them.
- GUMB: Okay, um...
- BLAU: Those tall Christmas trees. That was enough to impress me. Because I never seen that before. Being that I come from a very small town, the whole town was three blocks. And after sixty-three years I went back and then I, I'm, again proud to be an American. I wouldn't stay there for no money in the world. You know, I had to make a telephone call so I had to come back about one hundred and fifty miles to Budapest. They have no lines. Only the government, the Russian government officials could have a telephone. Nobody ever can get a telephone. And I came up to Budapest to make a call and by that time I called here it was, what time was it?
- DAUGHTER: 5:30 in the morning
- BLAU: 5:30 in the morning. Uh, I had to pay in, I had to go up to the main post office, I had to pay in. I had to sit there and wait for about, almost an hour till they got me a line. And I had to wait in a booth and they called me. But, ah, the line came through. I made, I tried to make a call from someplace else so they told me I should leave a message and they're gonna relay the message. I says, "I ain't gonna pay nine dollars to relay a message. And if they, maybe they won't even relay the message." And otherwise it's nice in Europe. It's under the communist regime.
- GUMB: You mentioned seeing Christmas tree and clothes lines when you were first coming into the harbor. Do you remember your first impressions once you had gotten into the City itself?

BLAU: Oh, it was, it was evening already when I got in to New York. It was beautiful. Everything was decorated up. It was, I didn't know where to look.

GUMB: End of interview. Tape one, side two.