

AKRF-98  
SOPHIA KREITZBERG  
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INTERVIEWER: DANA GUMB  
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RUSSIA, 1904 AND 1908  
AGE 5 (FIRST TIME)  
PASSAGE ON "THE PETERSBURG" (1908 CROSSING)

GUMB: This is Dana Gumb and I'm speaking with Mrs. Sophia Kreitzberg on the sixth day of December 1985. We're beginning this interview t 3:40 and we're about to interview Mrs. Kreitzberg about her immigration experience from Russia in the year 1908.

KREITZBERG: That's the second time I came in.

GUMB: Right. And that's when you finally, you made it. Right. It was 1908. Okay. Okay, Mrs. Kreitzberg, if we could begin with, uh, where and when you were born?

KREITZBERG: I was born in Bialystok in Russia in, uh, well, 19 hundred and , well I was five years old in 18, 1899.

GUMB: Okay. And, uh, could you spell Bialystok?

KREITZBERG: B-I-A-L-Y-S-T-O-K.

GUMB: Uh, well, what do you remember of Bialystok? What kind of town was it?

KREITZBERG: Well, when I first came over in 1904 I didn't remember very much then. I just remembered having left there. But, uh, when I came back and I didn't come here again until 1908 I had a lot of time to observe. It was, uh, a it was really like a little city. But, uh, the street we lived on, uh, it was a, uh, a circular, it was like a circle. And, uh, my grandfather's house was at the beginning of the circle. He had a bake shop in the back of his house, and all the little surrounding houses in the circle were all his tenants. And in the middle of this courtyard there was a big pump, a water pump, because there was no, uh, water, you know, no water faucets in any of the hones. And around the pump I, I can vividly see it even now, they

had benches. And the, uh, people, mostly women, who came out to get their water, used to sit down on these benches and gossip. And, uh, as far as my grandfather was concerned, naturally, they all bought their, uh, baked goods from him. But, uh, an interesting part was since all the people in that courtyard were Jewish they observed the Sabbath but not lighting and lights or doing any cooking, they used to make what they called a choant. It's spelled C-H-O-A-N-T. And it's really a beef stew with, you know, the vegetables. And it's late on a Friday afternoon. They used to bring that into my grandfather's great big oven which kept it, kept their, uh, pots warm all through the night. And after services on Saturday noon they all used to come and pick up their, uh, food for the holiday meal. And I can remember that so plainly. And uh--

GUMB: What did your father do in Bialystok?

KREITZBERG: I don't remember what he did in, uh, in Europe. What I do remember is, as you can see, he was a handsome young man. My mother was a beautiful young lady. They were both twenty-eight, no, twenty-one years old. And they were very much in love. And they wanted to be married and in those days you didn't choose your husband. Your father chose your husband. And while my grandfather thought my father was a very lovely young man, he did not want him to marry his daughter because he didn't have any money. So I don't know what he did for a living. He was very young. I mean, he couldn't have too much of anything. And that is the reason that he wanted to go to America because, in those days you thought if you went to America all streets were paved with gold and you just picked up the gold and became rich and sent for your family. Of course, when they got here they found out it wasn't so.

GUMB: So, uh, how old were you when your father left?

KREITZBERG: I was, uh, three years old.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about that?

KREITZBERG: I only remember the night that he left. I didn't know the reason that he left until long after. But I was, they awakened me. I was in my small bed and, uh, my mother was crying. They were both standing over me. My mother was crying and my father picked me up in his arms. He hugged me and he kissed me and he put me back again in my bed. And he left that night. It was very late at night. He left for America at that time. And that's all I remember of my father. The only other way I can identify him was to look at his picture. I had a big one like that. I don't know what they did with it when they moved me here, but I'm

glad I have this one.

GUMB: So, uh, what did he do in this country?

KREITZBERG: When he came over here, uh, my mother's brother was here and he had a much older sister who lived in

Paterson, New Jersey and she had a few sons. One of them lived in New York City and he and my uncle and my father had been pals when they were in Europe. And my, uh, uncle was a shoe salesman and he was instrumental in getting my father a job as a mechanic with a, uh, an elevator company. And he was, uh, in, at the bottom of the elevator shaft one morning when nobody reported that anyone was down there and when the elevator came down it killed him instantly. And, uh, since in those days they had no workman compensation, they had no kind of insurance liabilities, he naturally died penniless. And when my uncle, my mother's brother, sent that notice to my, to my mother, she just refused to believe it. She said she had to see it with her own eyes in order to believe it. And that's, she just said she had to go to America. And she arranged to come here. She took my, uh sister and me with her. I had a little brother, too. But he had a mastoid in his ear and in those days that was inoperable. You couldn't do anything with it except to keep it clean, drained and that was all. And they wasted away until, as long as they lived, which was not very long. And uh--

GUMB: What was that in the ear?

KREITZBERG: A mastoid. M-A-S-T-O-I-D. We very rarely have them here now since we have penicillin.

GUMB: Oh, a kind of infection.

KREITZBERG: Yes. It's a very bad infection. And they used to die from them here, too, in those early years. But when penicillin came around, uh, that took care of the infection.

GUMB: So what happened to the brother with the mastoid?

KREITZBERG: Well, when, I'll tell you about that a little bit later. When we, when my mother set sail for America

she had no papers that would take her directly from Russia, so we had to go across the border in the middle of the night until, I don't know where we landed, but we finally go to Amsterdam in Holland and took a ship from there. Of course, uh, it was a few days before we could sail, and my sister and I were enchanted with the ships and boats. And I especially noticed that they were cleaning their, uh, steps on the outside of their houses every single morning. I thought it was wonderful. But, of course, I'm sure my mother had different thoughts about all that. And

when we got on the ship, uh, we naturally were in steerage. And, uh, the bunks were three bunks high on two sides of a very , very narrow passageway. And, uh, all your possessions went into your bunks and most of the people were of different ethnic groups, and they all carried foods from their nationality, uh, place. And, uh, most, most of it, since they were going to sail for six weeks, had to be stuff that could hold, so most of it was smoked, like smoked salamis, etc. And with everyone in those bunks having that smelly food, I'll leave to you what the smell was. Besides which the atmosphere was so thick and dense with smoke and, uh, bodily odors that, uh, your head itched and when you went to scratch your head, and I can remember that, you got lice in your hands. And we had six weeks of that. They had a big dining room and, uh, we children enjoyed what was in the dining room, but my mother very rarely went to the table in the dining room because she was strictly kosher and she ate her own food. But she did eat, uh, dairy stuff like milk and cheese and eggs and bread and butter. And that was about all. And, at last, after the six weeks of this voyage, which was terrible because it was in the wintertime, we were notified that in the morning we would land in Ellis Island and, of course, everybody was excited. They were up all night yelling and screaming. And I could hear music that was coming, I didn't know where it was coming from. Of course, I know now that it was coming from the upper decks where the people who traveled very comfortably. And they were probably dancing all, all night. And, uh, I, being five years old, I thought the music was coming from heaven because we were going to land in the golden land. That is what they all called America, the golden land. And then when we got there, uh, we were taken into a very large room with many men, each sitting at a separate desk. And after much confusion we were assigned to one of these men, who checked us in. And then we were sent into the, uh, medical headquarters. And my sister and I passed the medical examinations very, very quickly. When they came to my mother they examined her eyes, they re-examined her eyes, they shook their heads, and they marked her for deportation. She had trichoma. Do you know how that's spelled?

GUMB: Yes.

KREITZBERG: It was a very, considered a very contagious disease at that time. And, uh, of course, we children didn't know what it was all about. But she knew exactly what that meant. And it took about a week before they could find a ship that we could go back on. But it did not go to Russia. It landed in a French port. I can't remember what the port was at five years old. Remember that was my age. And, um, from there she, we, she worked her way somehow, somehow she worked her

way to Paris. We had hitch hiked, we had people who weren't very wonderful to us, who took us in and gave us a meal and, uh, encouraged us, encouraged her, because we didn't know what it was all about, until we finally did land in Paris. When we got there, she started looking for a place to live. It had to be cheap because she had very little money left. That's why we couldn't go right through to Russia. And, uh, after inquiring, not knowing the language, she was, uh, sent to a place where they made paper bags, like our grocery bags, but they weren't the real large ones. They were, you know, comparatively small. So she came back home to this attic room in Paris with, uh, no heat and just a, um, it was a kerosene light on the table. That was the only light that we had. And by this light she made hundreds and hundreds of bags. They gave her glue and showed her how to glue these bags together. And, of course, we had to eat very meagerly because she was trying to save all the money that she constantly could to get us back home. And she finally must have saved enough money. It took a long time. We were in Paris for a very long time. But we didn't go around seeing the sights. We were confined to this little room, little walks around. And, um, then, when we got on the ship and we came back home, we found that my little brother, who had been suffering from this mastoid, had in the meantime died. So she had another sorrow to meet her on the, on the other end. And my grandparents had to see to his burial. Well, my mother had a very guilty feeling about having left him, although she couldn't have done any more for him, but it bothered her so that she was not with him when it happened that she really closed herself off for a while and didn't want to talk to anyone. But that desire to come to America, to prove to herself that my father was not there, she figured he still was there, she'd find him somewhere. And, uh, but she knew she could not come through Ellis Island again because she had this disease, these diseased eyes that would not pass even another time. So, by, through some advice that my uncle from the, from New York, had given her, which he had gotten from lawyers, they advised her to go to England, where she had many cousins in London. And she established a residency in England, in London. And learned a lot about the, uh, life in London, their afternoon teas and so forth and so on, which she certainly was not accustomed to. And, um, after establishing enough of a residency she went on to, uh, Canada. And from Canada she was able to land in the United States. And then my uncle met her and, uh, he got her a job in a, uh, some kind of a clothing factory. I don't know just, you know, what kind of clothing it was, but it was a poor living. And, and they lived on the East Side where most of the Jewish people at that time did live. And, um, when she wasn't working they were socializing with these people. And, uh, my uncle told

her that in order for her to bring her daughters over she would have to make drastic changes. She would never be able to care of them herself on her meager salary. And she would have to marry so she'd have a home for them. And, uh, so she met this one man who was in the same position that she was in. He had lost his wife a couple of years before and he had four small children ranging in the ages of three to ten. And she was thinking, of course, of the two small girls she left at home. And, uh, she undertook to take care of all of that in order to have us join her. And, um, she couldn't send for both of us at the same time. There wasn't enough money for both so, within two years I came with relatives. We came with a, uh, the cousin and their family of, I think it was two girls and I was listed as a third child and, uh, we went a little more comfortably. We were in Tourist class at that time. And, uh, there's a little story attached to that, too, because when the, my stepfather had not taken out citizenship papers, so that we were not citizens. And when the war broke out, the World War Two, World War One, not World War Two, I was very worried about my citizenship. And it seems that these cousins, who lived somewhere out in Long Island, were also worried about their citizenship, because they had three daughters listed on their application. We came on the steamship Petersburg in 1908. And they could only account for two daughters, and they had to find the third daughter. So at the same time that I was looking for them, they were looking for me. And finally, through this uncle, they located us, and, uh, it was on, I was supposed to pick up my citizenship papers the following day. This was on Sunday morning. I was supposed to pick them up on Monday morning. I had a witness with me. And this man who was a friend of ours and helped me to gather up diplomas and stuff to establish citizenship really didn't believe me. He thought I came in illegally. And when he saw these papers he was amazed, so that he was able to show them instead of me just having to say, have proof of people who knew me that I was entitled to citizenship. Well anyway--

GUMB: May I interrupt you just a second there. Did you, uh, did you go through Ellis Island that second time?

KREITZBERG: Yes. we did. But, uh, we didn't have to go through all of those questions because all the questioning was done on the ship, because we were not in steerage. Only the steerage passengers had to go through all of that. Uh, uh, you know, all of the processing of coming in, uh, because they didn't know who was coming in. Well. the same questions today. The rich don't have to worry. The poor have to prove that they're alive. And when I came here I naturally didn't know and English at all. And I met my, uh, two stepsisters and two stepbrothers. And it was wonderful. We took

to each other very quickly. We all liked each other very much. And, uh, going to school was an experience. I was very lucky to be able to, uh, learn very quickly. I'll never forget my first day in school. I even remember the name of my teacher, because it made such an impression on me. She had me come to the blackboard. She wrote the word beat, B-E-A-T, and she wanted me to copy it. I was left handed, and it was a very difficult word for me to copy even if I was right handed because of that "e" after the "B", you know, that line across. I just couldn't get it. And I asked her to write it for me, so, on a piece of paper, so I could practice it at home. So, to make a long story short of that, I, uh, skipped through the school very quickly, because I was very anxious to learn, I was very anxious to be an American. And so I did the eight grades in five years, and then I graduated in 1914. And, uh, my teachers were very surprised I was not going to high school. We couldn't afford to go to high school. My father, stepfather, didn't make enough money to even support us decently. My mother did what no housewife could do today. She used to shop every day. She used to buy not a quarter of a pound of butter, don't forget there were six children, not a quarter of a pound of butter, but half of a quarter of a pound of butter, and butter every slice of bread for each one of us. And I'd have somebody say, "Why did your mother butter all your bread?" And I'd say, "Because it was the only way it would go around." She'd butter them all evenly. And, um, they, the stepchildren all loved her which, in those days, was very unusual, because a stepmother was an ogre at that time, somebody that you were afraid to have in your household. But she was the kind of woman that got the confidence of all four of those children. They actually loved her, didn't just like her but loved her. When she died one of my stepbrothers said, "Who am I going to tell all my troubles and get all my answers from now?" So that living together, outside of poverty, made it very interesting. Because everybody had their own niche in the family. And today, if you don't get a college education, you can't even get a janitor's job. But in my day, when you graduated from the eighth grade, you had a better education than someone coming out of high school today, because we were drilled in those three basic R's, reading Writing and arithmetic. Everybody was drilled in them so that they could really manage. And, uh--

GUMB: Okay. Well, Uh, you know, if we could go back and maybe fill in some details of the very dramatic story, go back to, uh, the first trip, the first attempt to get into America. What was the year of that, again, just to get that clearly?

KREITZBERG: 1904.

GUMB: Okay. How old were you?

KREITZBERG: Five years old.

GUMB: Okay. Um, and, uh, you mentioned, uh, having to cross the border. And, how did you do that? What, uh, did you have to do?

KREITZBERG: We had to go, we had to go in darkness. And you see it in the movies today, when, uh, somebody whose doing something illicit sneaks around so that nobody will see them. That's the way we had to do it, until we finally got over the border. I don't know just where we got to, because you have to keep remembering my age. I was five years old. I haven't discussed this with anybody. Today there isn't another soul living that, except me, that would know any of this.

GUMB: Do you remember how you did it? Was it by train or by foot?

KREITZBERG: By foot. We had to crouch down whenever we thought we heard a noise. There was man who helped us get across. And, uh, whenever there was a noise he would motion for us to crouch down and be very quiet. And when the noise was over we'd keep going on. We were going practically the whole night until we got to the other side of the border.

GUMB: Did your mother pay that man? Was he a paid--

KREITZBERG: Yes. He did this for a living. Uh-huh.

GUMB: What sort of things, do you remember anything about what kind of things you took on the trip, what kind of possessions you took?

KREITZBERG: Very few possessions. When we got to Ellis Island they, uh, I mean, when they decide to deport my mother, they took us into a room, into a sort of a, a bath house where we got cleaned up and they deloused our hair, because all of our heads had lice in them from that steerage trip. I don't know whose clothes it was, but I know we had clean clothing, and they brought us to a small room that had three cots in it. And, uh, what impressed us was the clean bedding, nice clean, white bedding, because we had been in, in, uh, in steerage things were not that clean.

GUMB: What kind of bedding did you have in steerage?

KREITZBERG: I don't remember, but I know it wasn't very comfortable. And we had to sleep there amongst all, all the possessions that we had. Clothes, food, etcetera.

GUMB: You mentioned the, on Ellis Island, you were deloused.  
What did that involve? What did they do?

KREITZBERG: We got a good scrubbing, and they put kerosene in our heads, on our heads, and washed our heads with kerosene, to get all of those bugs out.

GUMB: There were attendants to do this?

KREITZBERG: Pardon?

GUMB: Some sort of attendants, or there were officials, or some, who did, did somebody do the scrubbing?

KREITZBERG: Uh, the attendants, the attendants at Ellis Island. And when, while we were there for that week, uh looking in the dining room, we were looking out the window and I saw what I thought were mermaids. They were dressed in leotards, and they were jumping off the diving board to go swimming. And I, I thought they were mermaids. I mean, I never saw anybody do that before. But they were the nurses and personnel of the, of Ellis Island.

GUMB: Oh, in bathing suits?

KREITZBERG: Yes. They had leotards. In those days you don't, you didn't have bikinis. You had leotards.

GUMB: So, um, okay. Before we get to Ellis Island, uh, uh, back to the voyage, uh, you mentioned all the lice. Where did they come from? How did--

KREITZBERG: Well, I guess from so many people being together in such close quarters. Body smell, body odors, uh, produce them.

GUMB: Do you know what other nationalities were on the, on the vessel, what other kinds of people?

KREITZBERG: Well, they were, uh, Italians, uh, Polish and, uh, I didn't know the nationalities of the others because, uh, I mean, I didn't recognize their languages. But the Polish I recognized because it was so much like Russian. And my mother spoke Russian and Yiddish very fluently.

GUMB: Okay. End of side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

GUMB: Beginning of side two. Okay, you were talking about the languages that your mother spoke.

KREITZBERG: Yes. She spoke Yiddish and Russian very fluently, which was very unusual in those days. Don't forget,

this was in the 1880's that she was growing up in. And Jews in Russia weren't allowed to get a formal education, let alone Jews who were female. That was really extraordinary, but she was an extraordinary woman.

GUMB: You mentioned that the, the voyage, it lasted six weeks?

KREITZBERG: Six weeks.

GUMB: Why so long?

KREITZBERG: In those days they did. Listen, I remember the first time that I, uh, I went to Europe. I was on, uh, on an airplane. They didn't have jets at that time. I was on an airplane for twenty-one days. [SIC, hours]

GUMB: What kind of, did they feed you any, did you get any food on the ship?

KREITZBERG: Yes. We got food. And, uh, the basic foods. But, of course, we were not allowed to eat any of the, uh, meats, because we were Jewish and kosher. But the other people ate them and, uh, we ate all the dairy foods.

GUMB: Okay. Um, all right. Do you remember your impressions when you first entered New York harbor?

KREITZBERG: Oh, the impression of seeing the Statue of Liberty all lighted up because it was still very early in the morning. The sun hadn't come out yet. It, it, well, you can imagine what it looked like to people who had traveled and seen nothing but ocean for six weeks. There were screams and screeches all the way through.

GUMB: Did you know what it was?

KREITZBERG: I just was excited.

GUMB: Had you heard of the Statue of Liberty before?

KREITZBERG: No. No. I didn't know what the Statue of Liberty was at all. But it was the most beautiful sight to see whether you knew what it was, or whether you didn't know what it was. The second time that I came I knew what it was, and I appreciated it all the more, because by that time I had realized that it hadn't treated us very generously when we had to be sent back.

GUMB: Uh, your, I think you mentioned that your mother knew about her problem the trachoma, that she knew--

KREITZBERG: No, she didn't.

GUMB: She didn't.

KREITZBERG: No. She wouldn't have made the attempt to make the trip if she knew about the trachoma.

GUMB: So, do you remember when, when she got the word that she had the problem, do you remember what the reaction was and what--

KREITZBERG: My mother was a very stoic woman. She didn't show her emotions in front of other people. When we went to bed at night, I heard her crying softly into her pillow, or her covers or whatever. She didn't want to burden us children with details because she didn't feel we would understand.

GUMB: Uh, do you have any idea how she handled the language problem, how was that dealt with?

KREITZBERG: I really don't know, but she seemed to be able to get herself understood. I think they had interpreters.

GUMB: Um, let's see. Uh, the, uh, you mentioned staying on Ellis Island for a week, you had to stay there for a week. Uh, and I think you said something about the dining facilities. Do you remember anything about the food there, what kind of food they gave you to eat there?

KREITZBERG: I, the children, we thought it was very wonderful. We had white bread, we used to eat brown bread when we were in, uh, uh, in Russia everyday. But for the Sabbath my grandfather, who was a baker, used to bake challah. I don't know if you know what challah is, but it's a white bread made especially for Jewish people, or by Jewish people, because everybody likes it. And, uh, that was the only time we had the, uh, white bread. And when I saw them serve white bread at all the meals, we thought it was wonderful. Now you can keep your white bread. I don't like it at all. (She laughs.)

GUMB: Do you remember anything else about what kind of food they gave you there?

KREITZBERG: They gave you plain, American food.

GUMB: Was it anything unusual, other than the white bread?

KREITZBERG: No, Nothing unusual. You got your meat, you got your vegetables and you got your cereals, a cereal and some fruit in the morning, and children got milk and my mother probably drank tea.

GUMB: Do you remember if it was, uh, cafeteria style or--

KREITZBERG: No, they had tables. Well, yes. It was cafeteria style, but you brought it to your table, and we ate at tables. I don't remember whether they had tablecloths or not. To me it seemed very grand after the steerage ride.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, okay. So then you, uh, finally you were, you were sent back. Uh, what was the voyage like back? Was it any better than the voyage here?

KREITZBERG: No, not very much better. We were herded together like sheep, and we couldn't wait until we got off the ship.

GUMB: Do you have, did you get any impression of the officials on Ellis island, uh, what their attitude was towards your mother and--

KREITZBERG: Very brusque. There was no sympathy. There was, they weren't unkind or anything, but, on the other hand, they weren't very sympathetic either. They had so many people to deal with, and every one had a problem of his own, and they had to deal with all of that. And, um, I remember now they, I know now that when, when you got Ellis Island, if they couldn't pronounce your name, they made up a name for you, that was Americanized. Because my, I remember my stepfather saying that his name was, um, uh, Kogan in Russia, and, um, they said to him, "Kogan Shmogon, that's not an American name. Sam Cohen." They gave everybody the name of Cohen or Schwartz or something. That's why you find so many Jewish people with the same ethnic names. They were given those names by the people in Ellis Island.

GUMB: So, uh, finally you, you came back to Ellis Island in 1908.

KREITZBERG: Yes.

GUMB: How, how was it different? Do you remember any--

KREITZBERG: It was a relief. A relief not to have to be detained. A relief to be able to go through with my family. They were my family at the time. And we were each met by our own people and, uh, we each had a life of our own. We didn't see these people very much after the first few years, and that's why it was so difficult to locate them when I needed their information for citizenship papers.

GUMB: Do you remember how much time you spent on Ellis Island the second time?

KREITZBERG: Didn't spend any time there. Didn't spend any time at

Ellis Island. We went right through from the ship.

GUMB: Oh, oh, you didn't go through Ellis Island at all?

KREITZBERG: No.

GUMB: Oh.

KREITZBERG: No, the boat landed there, but we were examined and checked out on the boat and released right then and there to whoever was waiting for us. It was only the first time that it was so difficult.

GUMB: Okay. Um--

KREITZBERG: It would have been difficult again if we came in steerage.

GUMB: Okay. While, uh, while your mother was away, uh, she went to Canada and then got into the United States, while she was away who took care of you?

KREITZBERG: I stayed with my grandmother and grandfather. And, uh, then after that it became very interesting for me because I had an aunt, my mother's sister, who was also a very attractive woman and, uh, there was a very wealthy landowner who owned a forest in a little town quite a ways, quite a distance from where we lived. And, of course, my grandmother and grandfather liked that very much because they were disappointed that my mother didn't marry a wealthy man. And my aunt used to take me with her. Wherever they went, they used to go on carriage rides through his forest, and other interesting places. And she used to like to show me off because I guess I must have been a precocious youngster. And after a while she asked me to come and live with her until it was time to, uh, go to America to meet my mother. And so it was a, a very unusual life for me there. They had like sort of a manor house and they had all these peasants. As a matter of fact, it was across the border, it was in Poland, and they had all these Polish peasants that lived in the town. I think most of them made their living through working for this uncle of mine. And, um, their, they lived in little, uh, straw, thatched roofs. They had maybe one or two rooms in the whole house. And they used to ask me un for their, to have dinner with them, which was at noontime, you know. They, the laborers came home for their big meal at noontime. Well, my aunt never knew I ate with them because their food was not kosher, but I liked eating with them because they were always large families. They used to have one great, big wooden bowl in the middle of the table and each one had a big wooden spoon and there was, uh, a great, couple of plates filled with bread, with black bread. And everyone grabbed a chunk of bread and each one dipped their big, wooden spoon into the, uh, uh,

center bowl. It was mostly always was a stew, meats or fish with vegetables and, uh. we all ate out of the same big pot, big bowl.

GUMB: Do you remember mother leaving, the second time, when she--

KREITZBERG: Yes, I remember crying that she, you know, would leave us. But she just said she had to go and she would send for us.

GUMB: What's so amazing is that she was so determined to come to, to come to America. It's hard to, you know, understand that, you know, she wouldn't just accept the fact that her husband had died. She was so determined to come.

KREITZBERG: That's right, that's right. She was determined to come. She was very restless. She couldn't stay there until she knew what happened. And I think she wanted to get us away from, from everything that, that reminded her of home without him.

GUMB: Okay. Uh, all right. As far as adjusting to the new country, you know, arriving here and-- Did you remember your first impressions of, uh, you settled in the Lower East Side, is that right?

KREITZBERG: No, we settled in Newark, New Jersey. And um, we lived in a four room flat which had, um, it did have running water, it had a sink with running water and it had a, um, washtub right next to it that you covered with a great, you know, a full size board. And that was your, um, your bath. We used to get a bath every Friday afternoon to be ready for the, clean for the Sabbath. And, um, we had no inside toilets at all. We had a bug, uh, they called a piazza in the back. It was six room house and there were two tenants on each floor. And we lived on the third floor and they also, they had seven children, all living in that same toilet. Can you imagine that today? If you have two people living in an apartment you want two baths because you don't think you can get along with one bath for two people. There were fifteen of us using it. And what I remember about it, it was always as clean as it could be because between my mother and the neighbor on the other side they used to see to it, they kept it so clean, there was an outhouse down in the yard in case anybody got caught short, I guess. And, uh--

GUMB: Do you remember anything about, uh, Newark that was very different from Russia? Do you unusual, things that seemed very unusual to you?

KREITZBERG: Well, uh, it was a city and there were so many houses. I mean, six people living in one, six families living in one house. They were row houses and, uh, at that

time we thought they were very nice because everybody kept their own property looking lovely, they kept their children looking well. The women, my mother had to boil her clothes in a great, big clothes boiler on top of the stove. She had to go to the store every single day because not only didn't we have refrigerators, we didn't even have an icebox at the time. There was no way of refrigerating your foodstuff at all. You had to shop every single day. And the prices that things were. I certainly remember the differences in the prices.

GUMB: Do you remember, how about food? Was it, did the new food take some getting used to?

KREITZBERG: Well, it, there wasn't anything that was so new, because my mother cooked the same way that she cooked when she was in Europe and the food really wasn't, wasn't new. She happened to have been a very good cook, and she made things stretch like nobody could make it stretch. We didn't have luxuries, but we always had enough to eat.

GUMB: Do you remember anything about your grandparents' reaction to your, your mother going to the United States?

KREITZBERG: Well, after, after my father had died, I think they had, they felt very badly that, uh, they felt guilty that they had really pushed him to come to America because after four years of being married at home he still, uh, didn't make very much money. And, uh, the second time, they helped her. They gave her money so that she could make that second trip.

GUMB: Okay. Were there any, uh, customs in the old country that your family brought to the new country and continued to practice?

KREITZBERG: Well, the religion. They, we practiced that .

GUMB: Okay. Uh, all right. Um, how long did it take for you to become a citizen? What did you have to do to become a citizen?

KREITZBERG: I had to show proof of neighbors who lived there, who had known me ever since I had come. I had my, uh, diploma from, from grammar school and, as I say, after I had all of that, uh, the day before I was supposed to become a citizen is when this cousin called up in the morning and, uh, was looking for me because she, too, was ready to become a citizen and, uh, needed me in order to prove that she had a third child there. And I made her give me her papers to take for examination for citizenship in Newark with the assurance that I would get it back to her which, of course, I did.

