

KM-022

PEARL FRAIMAN POLLNER

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AGE 16 (AS RECORDED IN THE INTERVIEW)

PASSAGE ON "THE OLYMPIC"

MOORE: Good afternoon. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 13th of January 1994, and I'm in LA at the home of Pearl Pollner, who came from Poland in 1922 when she was sixteen-and-a-half years old. And why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth, please?

POLLNER: June 10, 1904.

MOORE: June 10, 1904. And what's your full name?

POLLNER: Pearl, my maiden name?

MOORE: Yeah.

POLLNER: Fraiman, F-R-A-I-M-A-N. Pollner, P-O-L-L-N-E-R.

MOORE: And where were you born?

POLLNER: Poland.

MOORE: And where?

POLLNER: Pultusk, P-U-L-T-U-S-K. Pultusk.

MOORE: Pultusk. And what size town was Pultusk?

POLLNER: It wasn't a very small town. It was considered a powiatowa [ph]. How shall I say? The administration was in that town. It wasn't far from Warsaw. The exact dimension I don't really know.

MOORE: How big in population was it?

POLLNER: I don't remember that.

MOORE: That's all right.

POLLNER: It was, it had two gymnasiums. They had a Polish

gymnasium, and there was also a Jewish gymnasium. And so it was a, powiatova [ph] city. What does that mean?

MOORE: How do you spell that, powiatova [ph]?

POLLNER: That's a Polish word. Eh, P-O, povo. W . . . On me.

MOORE: We'll get that later then from you. What was the major industry in your town?

POLLNER: I'll be honest with you, it was an industrial city. There were some, people would bring food from the surrounding countries. And twice a week, like marketplaces, fruits, vegetables, and . . .

MOORE: How far from Warsaw was it, about?

POLLNER: Exactly, I really don't know.

MOORE: You were young when you came anyway. What was your father's name?

POLLNER: Samuel Fraiman. Schmucl, S-C-H-M-U-E-L. Schmucl. Schmucl Fraiman.

MOORE: What was his occupation?

POLLNER: A businessman. He produced, my father was making grains like Wheatina, farina. He had a grinding, like a grinding, a stone grinding, yes, with a horse. Horse-drawn grinding mill. On the outside, a big area, and the horse was always, he closed the eyes, so he wouldn't get dizzy going around and around and around, you know. That I remember well, because there were different, making Wheatina, farina. That was it. Out of the grain.

MOORE: The grain that was ground.

POLLNER: Yes. And this was roughly, a few people working. My father had about one man, my mother helped. And it was a family business. And when he had, let's say, a couple of peak amounts, so he would pack it, and he would take it to Warsaw and sell it.

MOORE: I see.

POLLNER: So that was, like he had, say, stone ground cereals, wheat.

MOORE: Cereals, yes.

POLLNER: Wheat. Yeah, wheat. So that was my parents, my father's business.

MOORE: And could you describe what your father looked like?
(Mrs. Pollner gestures to a photograph) Ah, there he

is on the wall there.

POLLNER: Yeah.

MOORE: He had a beard.

POLLNER: He was very, my father was a very outstanding person. He was a very intelligent man. And I'm saying it in modesty. I'm not bragging now. He was one of the real patriarchs that you don't meet today. He possessed learning and wisdom on his own. It wasn't school, actually, school educated. He learned it from life. He became an orphan when he was about nine years old.

MOORE: An orphan?

POLLNER: My father, yes. And he had sisters, and somehow, with his help, they all grew up and they all married and, you know, life went on. I didn't, at that time you accepted it, you don't think of it. But in retrospect it sounds a little different. He was very wise in his evaluating life. He was very learned in the Torah which, and you don't meet many people like that. He was really very, very outstanding, considering that he didn't have any formal education.

MOORE: And do you have a story about your father that you associate with your childhood? Any story about him?

POLLNER: Yes. I think one story I'll never forget . . .
(a telephone rings)

MOORE: Hold on. (break in tape)

POLLNER: Where are we?

MOORE: I asked about a story about your father that you associated with your father.

MOORE: Well, he was a very, he loved us children, and children generally. And one thing stands out in my mind mostly, like, we were six of us growing up, one after the other, you know, a year-and-a-half difference, two years' difference. And when we were really bad he'd say, "You wait, you'll get it." And this chalice, you know, on Friday night the Jewish people have a chalice with wine. He says, "When this gets filled up, you'll get it." And we all grew up, he never laid a finger on any of us. We were Marvis, six of us. Four girls and two boys. He never laid a finger on us.

MOORE: So he just threatened you.

POLLNER: Just said, "Wait until this will fill up." And it never filled up. I mean, when you see now how people abuse their children, this came to my mind, predominantly, as a characteristic of a man who loved

children, and knew how to raise them, how to love them. We weren't rich, but when he went to Warsaw and he would buy, let's say, fruit, and you don't have an abundance in this country, he would buy, let's say, an orange, and it had all these parts. Even when we had friends, let's say I had a friend, my other, my sister had a friend. He would take out every part divided. Every child got a part of this orange. You see, that's the type, I'm giving you an idea of a person. He was very tolerant in his life. He has met, when he came to this country, I brought my parents here. You see, I brought them, I came here. My grandparents before that came here. There was a legacy left in Memphis, my mother's father, and he came for the money here. And my mother was the oldest, and she had seven sisters and brothers. Now, my grandfather was very religious, and he didn't want the oldest daughter to come to America where it didn't, there was no religion, that was the idea then. So my mother remained in Poland, and married my father, and all the other children came to America. You see? And they all did well for themselves, you know. Some were peddlers, some were businesspeople. In time they emerged, and they did quite well for themselves, most of them. Except us. (she laughs) So, you see, there's a whole history behind all that. It's not just one thing. It's intertwined, one with the other.

MOORE: What was your mother's name?

POLLNER: Uh, Faye.

MOORE: Faye. And what was her maiden name?

POLLNER: Zion. Z-I-O-N.

MOORE: And what did she look like?

POLLNER: Uh, she was a very gentle, sweet person. She was not, actually a little taller than I, very, the way I remember her. As much as my father was outgoing, she was more a quiet-type person, very. But she was very highly educated. She spoke German, (?) Deutsche, Jewish, Polish. She had formal education, much more than my father. But my father was brainiest. To be honest with you, I don't know whether he was brainiest, but he was more worldly-wise, you see?

MOORE: And you, how many brothers, no, do you have any stories associated with your mother that you tell?

POLLNER: Well, that she was the most gentle person that I ever knew. When I brought her to this country, and I had a whole, opened a little apartment, three rooms I rented. And the supervising or in the building was very stern, strict, a big, Irish lady. But when she saw my mother walking in the street with a little package, she would

run to her and take the package and bring it in. That shows you, you don't get that because you ask for it. That's something that comes from the heart, because she was that type of a loving, sweet person.

MOORE: And who would you say you were closest to in the family? Who was the closest family member to you? Was it a brother or sister, or was it . . .

POLLNER: It was always my father. He was the one. You see, he dominated, because he was so bright. Like he would go to Warsaw to sell his wheat, Cream of Wheat, farina, Wheatina, and he would come back, usually he would bring a little pamphlet. You know. And he would read it to us Friday night. That's when the Shabbos service would start. One was on this side, and the other side, and over his shoulder, and he spread all the letters around him, and we would all discuss these stories. It was something that we learned very young in life, and we weren't afraid to express our opinions. It was quite nose-y, you know, but it was always informative and very satisfying. We sort of accepted it. We loved it. And as we were growing up, the girls, you know, you get a little older, you have boyfriends, girlfriends. And I had a feeling they came more to see my father and see us, because they were a lot of fun. He had a very terrific sense of humor, and a great love for people. That's all I can say.

MOORE: How many brothers and sisters you had? You had, uh . . .

POLLNER: I had two brothers, as I remember, and my mother had four sons and four daughters, but I remember two children died when I was very, very young. The cholera was prevalent in our town, and people, you know, were taken to the hospital, and my father had it, but he wouldn't, he was afraid to go to the hospital because very few people came back. So he would, he had a prayer shawl he put on, and he was praying, like every day more, you know, these people that pray with a certain tallith, and he was standing there, and they didn't realize. They didn't even look at him because, but he had, he was sick. And we were lucky that, of course, we had a doctor in town and all that, but he didn't, he did not want to go to the hospital.

MOORE: So could you name your brothers and sisters in order, including yourself and their names?

POLLNER: My oldest sister is Hannah, Chaya, Hannah. Between her and me there were two boys that died in that time of the cholera. My name is Pearl, then there is Eva, Bennie . . .

MOORE: Betty?

POLLNER: Bennie.

MOORE: Bennie, a boy.

POLLNER: A boy. And, uh, Morris, and Ruthie. That's it.

MOORE: And so you were actually . . .

POLLNER: In the middle.

MOORE: In the middle.

POLLNER: In the middle. I wasn't the youngest, I wasn't, and I'm the oldest survivor now. I'm the only one. None of them lived to the age that I did. Even my parents didn't live till seventy.

MOORE: You're blessed.

POLLNER: I don't know if it's a blessing. Maybe the idea of being alive, seeing the world developing, and seeing my grandchildren, my daughter, because it's nice. But since I lost my husband, it's become a little more difficult.

MOORE: When did you lose your husband?

POLLNER: Uh, in 1985, March.

MOORE: If we go back to your house now, we'll get to that in a moment. When we go back to your house in Poland, do you remember what it looked like? Could you describe it?

POLLNER: It was, we had two rooms were like separated, one here and one here, (she gestures) and there was a small kitchen. And we children slept, one or two together, it was fun, I don't know . . .

MOORE: How was the house lit? How was it lit?

POLLNER: Uh, it wasn't electric lit, I don't think. Or maybe it was already, I don't remember.

MOORE: How about heating? What was the heating?

POLLNER: Uh, wood. Uh, we had a big stove, like the bakers have, you know. And, uh . . .

MOORE: And what about the furniture? How was it furnished?

POLLNER: Modestly. It was, modestly. It was a nice home with a nice table, a lot of chairs, and a bed in the, in the dining area there was a portion where the children slept, where the kids slept. There was a bedroom.

MOORE: Where was this house situated? In town or outside of

town?

POLLNER: It was in town with, like the center of the city had a clock in the middle of it. It was about two blocks away on the corner, closer to the river. You know, there was the Vistula. It was always, how do you call it? Not regular, the outlet. It really . . .

MOORE: Can you spell that, visla? What did you say, that . . .

POLLNER: Vistula?

MOORE: Yeah.

POLLNER: Vistula.

MOORE: Vistula. I see.

POLLNER: That's it, you know.

MOORE: Um, did you keep any animals at all?

POLLNER: Here?

MOORE: No, there in Poland.

POLLNER: There? Well, yes. You see, when you have, when you grind food, they had geese, chickens, because that was food for them.

MOORE: Oh, I see. And you had geese and chickens, but was that next to the house, or out where they ground . . .

POLLNER: A little, away from the house. It was a big yard. A lot of people lived there, a big yard. There was a big spot where all kids would play.

MOORE: And was that where your father's business was?

POLLNER: Yes, further out.

MOORE: I see.

POLLNER: It was a big round area, horse-drawn machinery, whatever. It was quite. But afterwards, before I came to this country, there were already electric mills springing up in our town where wheat and corn was more modernized, you know. Modern electricity, I guess, because . . .

MOORE: Well, what about plumbing? Was there indoor plumbing, or did you have an outhouse?

POLLNER: You mean water?

MOORE: No. I mean, uh, going to the toilet. Was that inside?

POLLNER: Outside, outside, yes.

MOORE: Outside. And did you have a garden, too?

POLLNER: Yes. There was a very nice garden. There were fruits in the back, fruits growing. It wasn't ours. The lady who owned the building, that was hers. But we had fun there, growing cherries, currants, you know, green . . .

MOORE: And did you have your own garden, like, with other things?

POLLNER: No. Not ours. No, no. We just enjoyed what's there, and if we wanted some, we picked.

MOORE: And who lived in the building besides you people? Was your house an individual house, or was it a different . . .

POLLNER: No, it was more than one dwelling. I don't know how many people. Three families lived there. It was like a few steps up. And there was one lady, she was a seamstress, he was sewing. And we were next door, and it was a yard down leading to the mill. So it's, I don't know what, I'm describing it as eloquently as I could.

MOORE: You're very articulate, actually. Who did the cooking in the family?

POLLNER: My mother. She'd get up very early. When we got up, everything was ready. She would make a big pot, you know. We were six kids. And Mama helped in the business. And if our friends came, nobody went out hungry. I want you to understand. It was like potatoes and barley and what do you call it, pasta. Different shapes. It was a big pot. The whole day it was going. Everybody that came with us after school was hungry, had something to eat. It was one, she got, this tells you the type of people they were, my parents were.

MOORE: And what was your favorite food?

POLLNER: Oh, I didn't care. Everything was good for me as far as I was concerned. My sister didn't feel that way. Because I was so happy, I guess. When you're happy, it doesn't matter what you eat. In fact, my mother was a marvelous cook. She could make a soup with nothing, not much meat, from bones, but it was delicious. I can still smell it, you know. (she laughs)

MOORE: What about the kitchen? Describe meal time. What was meal time when you ate, did you eat together ever?

POLLNER: Oh, always. What do you mean ever? (Ms. Moore laughs) It wasn't like here. My father would come home in the evening, we'd all eat. Especially Friday night. It was a big table. Not only that, but Friday night my father went to synagogue, and there was some homeless people from different towns that came to look and learn at the synagogue, they would always be an extra person invited to our meal on Friday nights, regardless of what we had, we shared it. It was such a different way of living, you know.

MOORE: What were the meals like on Friday? Was it noisy? with people talking, and . . .

POLLNER: No, no. It was very respectful. My father would say the prayer, and before my father came from the synagogue my mother said, "Anybody who's a little hungry now, have it now. Later you won't get it until the prayer's over." See, there was a lot of respect and reverence paid to life that I can remember in my home, my life. My parents were religious but, as I said, very tolerant. And my, when he was praying everyone was quiet. There was no noise here. It wasn't like disrespect and things like that. We wouldn't, you see, when my father was trying to reprimand you for something you did, your heart was palpitating. I didn't want him to feel that we offended him in any way. That's, at least I felt. I respected him so much.

MOORE: Were there many other, any other family members living nearby that house?

POLLNER: Oh, yes. Near us, across the street in my, an aunt, my father's sister. She was also not rich, also, we weren't rich, but we weren't poor. I want you to understand, there's a difference. We were so rich in the spiritual life. We had such a good feeling about learning, and listening, and respecting, and helping, that I don't know how to describe it. It really, you know, I met here in America a lady, when I was telling her a little bit of background, she says, "Pearl, I'll edit it for you. Tell me your story." I'm sorry I didn't. Now she's gone, you know. I've met some very interesting people in this country.

MOORE: Well, what about your grandparents? Where did they live?

POLLNER: My grandparents, I never knew. They were in America. See, my mother was in Poland and we were in Poland, and they were in America.

MOORE: How about your father's parents?

POLLNER: They were dead. I never knew any.

MOORE: And . . .

POLLNER: He had sisters. That I knew. Some of them went to Canada later on, cousins.

MOORE: What about religious life again? You said that, did you go, did the family go to synagogue or only your father? Who went?

POLLNER: No, all of them went.

MOORE: All of them went.

POLLNER: We went to school to learn Hebrew, cheder. You heard that, I'm sure, expression. You're not Jewish, I know.

MOORE: No.

POLLNER: But you heard cheder. It was a Jewish, it was, those were the times that were very primitive. As I was growing up, that was disappearing. It's becoming more, children go to public school. Now my father wasn't born in the town where we lived, so we children weren't accepted in the public school, although we paid taxes for school, for water, or whatnot. But my older sister got her elementary education at home. My father, my parents would pay for a young man to come in and teaching her at home.

MOORE: And who was this young man?

POLLNER: A tutor.

MOORE: Was he a . . .

POLLNER: A stranger.

MOORE: Was he a Gentile, or was he . . .

POLLNER: No, no. He was, uh, a Jewish man, educated some, but somebody we knew, and she got her primary education at home. And she was a very pretty young girl, and he was her teacher, and I didn't like that. But I, see, I was six or four years, five years younger than my sister. I said, "Oh, no. I'm not doing that. If I can't go to school, I don't want to live. Why do all the children go to school?" So my father had to go to the elders of the town and put in a big fight because I stopped eating. It was no fun. I was serious. I was a very brave child. I never even gave up easily. That's true.

MOORE: So you started a starvation strike . . .

POLLNER: Yeah.

MOORE: So you could go to school.

POLLNER: That's right, in order to go to school. Would you believe that?

MOORE: How old were you then? (she laughs)

POLLNER: I could have been five, six, seven. I don't know. But I was young, and I said, "I'm not going, I'm not going to have a tutor home. I don't want it. That's not for me." Mama used to say, so my father looks, "The child's not eating. What's it going to be? We're losing her." So my father went, and we cried to the elders of the city. He says, "I'm paying taxes." Because he was a businessman. "And I'm living here. Why are not my children accepted in Polish schools?" After that I paved a road. After me, it was easy. All the kids went to school.

MOORE: Did you speak, what did you speak at home?

POLLNER: Yiddish.

MOORE: Yiddish. And what did you speak in school?

POLLNER: Polish.

MOORE: And did you know any Polish before you went to school?

POLLNER: Not much. But I learned, I learned very fast. As you know, I wanted to learn. I was eager for learning. Because my father was such a learned man. He was so brilliant. He would bring these articles for us kids to hear what's going on, the background, and it was always very interesting. And we were all ears, you know, you don't get that type of, this is something that's dead.

MOORE: What about religious persecution? Did you ever experience any as a child?

POLLNER: Oh, definitely. We were very much persecuted. Well, as I grew up, you know, the years passed by. And I, then after I graduated public school with very big honors, I'm saying in modesty. It's really true anyway, because I was a very good student, and I got some, and my mother working in town. People said, "Congratulations." Mama said, "Why?" She says, "Don't you know the honors Pearl gets?" I was a good student. And then there's a question of going to gymnasium, and gymnasium was partially subsidized by the government, it was very expensive. My parents weren't rich, and they, my father said, "What do you have to go to gymnasium for? You read so beautifully, you write, you know your math, you help me with the bookkeeping. You have enough." I said, "No, that's not enough for me. I have to go to gymnasium." Again, I fight, and again, I won out, I really did. And I'm telling you that in

honesty. It's not exaggerated, actually.

MOORE: And so you, did you go?

POLLNER: I went to gymnasium. That first year my parents had to pay. And then I was a very good student, so I helped, in gymnasium I helped the children in my class with their studies, and I got paid, and that helped, partially, for my going to gymnasium.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

MOORE: That's interesting. Now, what about the persecution? Were you at all considered different?

POLLNER: Oh, yes. The Polish, the students, they always had disparaging remarks they made.

MOORE: Like what would they say to you?

POLLNER: Oh, "Dirty Jew!" Or, oh, "What are you talking Jewish for?" Or something like that. I don't know what they said. But whatever they said, I didn't like. You know, I did something very bad. When I was in gymnasium, one of the Polish students molested me. He wanted to kick me. And I said, "I'm not taking that." Just like that. So I went to gymnasium. At that time I remember my parents made me wear a nice outfit. I went up, and I complained that this and this student wanted to kick me in the middle of the street, and I wanted him to know, is that what they're teaching their young people? It was a, son of the nobility, schlocter [ph] in Poland, that's nobility, and they went to gymnasium, they were the privileged boys, they went horseback riding, they were into ice skating on the Vistula. And there were some very nice parks with different tiers going up. Jewish people weren't allowed there, only certain hours. And, you know, as a young growing person, as I began to realize what's going on, I was very resentful. When I went to that school and I complained, the head of the department asked me, called in the boy, he said, "Is that true?" He said, "Well, she was talking Yiddish." When I heard that, I said, "Now, look, just one moment." What I'm going to say I'm not very proud. But at that time I spoke Polish much better than Yiddish because, I told you, I was a good student and I learned fast, and I wanted to learn. There's a difference when you want to and you have to. I wanted. So I said, "I'm not proud of it, but my Polish, as you can hear, is much better than my Yiddish, and I'm not proud of it." So they saw that I made sense. And I suppose I wasn't afraid. I was a nice little girl, I guess, and I had a new suit, which was a very rare thing, you know. We never had, I didn't get some of these new clothes frequently, like

here. So the boy was demoted for a year. That was a very big punishment for a Polish boy. And I grew in stature from my, as you can see now, of course, I'm a little shorter now than I used to be, but everybody was talking about that I dared to go to the gymnasium, Polish gymnasium, and face these officials and bring forth my complaint. So that was, a milestone, like, in my life, you know. And I felt that if I had a chance I'd get out of Poland. Now my oldest sister is growing up, see. There was a difference between us of almost five years. So she, my uncles in America, my grandparents had died and left some money. So they wanted all the children to come to America, and we were supposed to go, my sister and I. But meanwhile she became engaged in her home town, and she was getting married. And one of my uncles came to the wedding from America. And my father gave everything he had to the oldest daughter. You know, it was very, the first child, and, as I told you, he loved children. And he was, I guess very, he wanted my sister to help him. He gave more than he should have, since he had five more children at home. And I was beginning to grow up and realizing what's going on, that conditions weren't good, that we still had to eat, and we had to have shoes and things like that. I said to my father, "I'll go to America with Uncle Morris." A bombshell. I said, "Since my sister is getting married, I'll go to America." That's when I came to America alone.

MOORE: Now, how did you arrange it? Did your Uncle Morris pay for it?

POLLNER: No. My grandparents left money, I told you.

MOORE: Oh, your grandparents' money.

POLLNER: Yes.

MOORE: Okay. So it's with that money that you got to come over.

POLLNER: Yes.

MOORE: And how, when you mentioned this to your father, how did your family take that idea?

POLLNER: Well, I was surprised that I didn't get as much resentment as I expected. (?) They realized that I made sense. I was already at that time fifteen. And I was saying, "I'm grown." And I was just fifteen. Because, don't forget, when you grow up in these circumstances, I mean, when you have to fight for school, you have to fight for everything. Like we, everyone, I would help my father with the bags when he was going to Warsaw. And I would sew, I said, "You make this, give it to me. Buy me a dress." And I wanted a new dress. Which girl doesn't, you know?

(she laughs) So, but at a time it came to buy me a dress, he says, "Look, Pearl, you're so happy without it. Next time I'll buy it." He never bought it. He didn't have no money. Not that he didn't want. Because there were five kids to feed, five pair of shoes to buy, five coats! You know, the weather was cold in Poland. So that was my childhood background, you know. But I never felt resentment. I must be a very dopey person. (Ms. Moore laughs) I wouldn't . . .

MOORE: Now, let's describe, about coming to America. You decided to come, and you got the money from your grandparents. Do you remember getting ready to go and packing and getting papers?

POLLNER: I didn't, no. That part I don't, I didn't, I didn't pack as many things as you would going to a trip here. I don't even remember what I took.

MOORE: Did you take anything special with you? Anything? Family photos, anything, do you remember?

POLLNER: I don't recall. I really don't.

MOORE: Was there a goodbye party for you?

POLLNER: Yes. My friends from the gymnasium. See, in school, I had very nice friends.

MOORE: Do you remember their names, any of them?

POLLNER: Yes. One was Evelyn Ringprince, Evelyn Ring. Oh, all the kids, gee, how I've forgotten their names. There was one girl, her father had a, books, like a library, but you had to pay for that. And she was playing the piano. I had the nicest friends in town. I really had very nice friends. Even though I didn't play the piano, we couldn't afford but I was invited when she gave a little recital, and all the kids in the gymnasium, I think, were financially richer than I. There was one girl, she was, how would you say, she was very sexy. She was growing up, at a very early age. She was after boys, you know. And she was a very rich girl. Her father had the electric mill. And her sisters liked me because I was such a good student, and I couldn't afford to buy all these expensive books. So she bought the books, and they would invite me to their home, and I'd do the homework with her. And I would have the privilege of using the books, and, but my teachers, they didn't like her so much. They thought that she wasn't as nice as I. They called her an ordinary person, girl. And I couldn't, at that time I couldn't understand, but later on I understood what they meant.

MOORE: But what about your favorite subject in school? What

was that?

POLLNER: Uh, we had to learn a lot. We had to learn, in gymnasium we had to take French, German, because the, you know, government changed, and Latin. I think Polish was the most important subject, because that was our language. And I liked all my subjects.

MOORE: Did you learn any English before you came?

POLLNER: No, not one word.

MOORE: All right. So . . .

POLLNER: That they didn't teach in Poland. See, those languages, they taught in different countries, closer to America. But in Poland you had to learn these languages because (she gestures) here was Germany, here was Italy. Latin, we took Latin in gymnasium. I took Latin.

MOORE: Now, did you have any stories of Cossacks coming and doing anything to the house?

POLLNER: Well, yeah, it was funny. Mama used to tell us that when that came into the town when we were very little children, and they would come, they'd want to go into private homes, they'd want to break in. They looked for (?), you know, women. And there were, in our building. And my sister was already a big girl. Mama used to put the three of us together. But, when they come in, they should see little kids, you know, and my mother would, wouldn't open the door for them. There was a lot of fear.

MOORE: Did they ever come to the door?

POLLNER: Huh?

MOORE: Did they ever come to the door?

POLLNER: Yes. Because in our, where we lived upstairs there was a woman who was a prostitute. You see, in Poland prostitutes were open. They would go off to the city for a physical examination, I found out later, because they shouldn't infect the men who come to visit them. And we knew it, everybody knew who the prostitutes were. It wasn't a secret. But it didn't mean anything. You know, you don't take it that way.

MOORE: Let's go back to that party. You said your fellow students in the gymnasium, they gave you a party.

POLLNER: Yes. It was very nice. And they wrote to me. I kept in touch with them. And one, when I was here in this country, and I went to high school, to Washington Irving High School, I went the first year, to learn

English.

MOORE: In New York?

POLLNER: Here, yeah.

MOORE: Okay. We don't know yet. We haven't gotten to the point where you came.

POLLNER: Oh, I see. Okay. Am I ahead of you, or ahead of this?

MOORE: A little bit ahead. What I'm trying to get to is what did your family do for you when, who, how did, where did you go? Warsaw, to depart? Where did you have to go?

POLLNER: Yes, to Warsaw. That was all the government places. I had the visa. I came legally. There was nothing funny about it, you know.

MOORE: But what about your family, when you were about to leave, how did they react to it? Were they realizing . . .

POLLNER: They accepted it. It wasn't a tragedy.

MOORE: And it wasn't emotional?

POLLNER: I don't remember, I'll tell you the truth.

MOORE: Well, how did you get to Warsaw?

POLLNER: By buses.

MOORE: By buses.

POLLNER: Trains. There were wooden trains. Have you ever been to Israel recently?

MOORE: No, I haven't.

POLLNER: They have these wooden wagons, they go on powers.

MOORE: That's how you got there, from your house to . . .

POLLNER: Well, you had to get to a place where the, you were getting on there, get to a train.

MOORE: Forgive me for being detail-oriented . . .

POLLNER: Yes.

MOORE: But one of the questions is how you got from your house to . . .

POLLNER: Walked. I suppose we walked over. My parents took me over. It wasn't a very emotional thing, it really

wasn't. Because I think looking back they were glad that I had the courage to say, "I don't want to be in Poland any more." They were so relieved.

MOORE: And what did you know about America before coming?

POLLNER: That's the golden land of opportunity. That's all I knew. I knew nothing. Everybody, everybody thought you come to America, you get rich, you know. But you learn differently when you get here. (she coughs) But, guess . . .

MOORE: Do you remember taking any food with you?

POLLNER: Food? No.

MOORE: Okay. And did anybody see you off to the boat?

POLLNER: From Cherbourg?

MOORE: Yeah.

POLLNER: No, not my family. They couldn't afford it.

MOORE: So you went alone.

POLLNER: I went alone. But I was not eighteen, so the, there was an interpreter on the boat, and he thought I was a very nice little girl. He was really nice to me, let's put it that way. They were really good to me, and I spoke Polish, very beautifully. I really knew the language well. And I had a little knowledge of German, a little French. At that time, everything was so fresh in my mind, you know, when you're young. Now it is so many years back, so much forgotten. If I would retain all that knowledge, I'd be a walking encyclopedia.

MOORE: And what boat, what was the name of the boat that you were on.

POLLNER: The Olympic.

MOORE: The Olympic. And when did you leave? Do you remember the date and the month?

POLLNER: No. It was November, and I'll tell you why I remember. In Poland it was really very, very cold, and my feet felt like frozen. When I came to Cherbourg it was warm there, and my feet started feeling less, uh, frozen.

MOORE: Now, Cherbourg is where?

POLLNER: In France.

MOORE: I see, I see.

POLLNER: France.

MOORE: So you, you took a, where was your port of leaving?
Where did the boat leave?

POLLNER: Cherbourg.

MOORE: Cherbourg. All right. You took a train from Warsaw.

POLLNER: That I don't recall. This is completely oblivious in
my mind, you know.

MOORE: How you got exactly there. Okay, that's all right. Do
you remember, when you got to France, did you stay
overnight there beforehand?

POLLNER: I think so. We stayed there, and we were taken care
of, because I was a minor.

MOORE: I see.

POLLNER: So they were taking care of me.

MOORE: And what accommodations on the ship did you have? What
class did you travel?

POLLNER: I went the lowest class, third class, down.

MOORE: And describe your accommodations on the boat.

POLLNER: It was very small.

MOORE: Did you have your own cabin?

POLLNER: Hmm?

MOORE: Did you have your own cabin?

POLLNER: No. You were like one on bottom and one on top, you
know, like . . .

MOORE: So it was a dormitory, was it, or . . .

POLLNER: I don't know. It was just, it was, like the soldiers
sleep, that's all.

MOORE: In bunk beds, you mean.

POLLNER: Yes. And I was on the bottom because I was the
littlest. They were afraid I'd fall out. I don't
know. I was never a very big person. (she coughs)

MOORE: What about the dining room and the facilities to eat?
How was that? Do you remember it?

POLLNER: That's wasn't ever a part, uh, a part that I dwelled on
because of so many other things I was interested in.

MOORE: Like what were you interested in on the boat?

POLLNER: Well, I was talking to people about literature, about art. I was a student, a real student, you know, and I loved it.

MOORE: And what other people were on the boat that you were sharing?

POLLNER: People come from all over Poland. Some Jewish, some Polish. Not many Poles were Jewish people. I don't really know. At that time I didn't look what they are. They were just nice people.

MOORE: Were you allowed on deck at all, on the deck?

POLLNER: I don't remember, but I did develop an earache. And the interpreter, and once they saw they were afraid something would happen to me, I was taken up to first class, and I was given very good care. Oh, excuse me.

MOORE: You were taken to first class and given good care because of your earache.

POLLNER: Hmm?

MOORE: Because of your earache.

POLLNER: Yes, yes. And I suspect that they thought I was a nice little person, girl. I knew literature. I was alert. And nothing escaped me, you know. I have a granddaughter. She's terrific, you know. She's really something. Now she graduated from Berkeley. I shouldn't intervene to put this in, should I?

MOORE: That's all right. Go ahead.

POLLNER: And she's taking advanced courses in USC and teaching there. She's getting paid and learning, you know. She's very bright, and she's very alive, very much alive. (a telephone rings) (break in tape)

MOORE: All right. So you went to first class because of your ear. And what was it, was there a big difference between the classes?

POLLNER: Well, it was much nicer. The surroundings were nicer. And I don't know, certain things that you may think of are important weren't important to me. It was the idea that I'm going to America. What am I to expect? What type of people will I meet? But I always had a positive attitude, I guess. Maybe that's sustained me through the years. I really don't know.

MOORE: What about, how long as that voyage? Do you remember?

POLLNER: I don't think it took more than about five, six days.

It was a very good voyage.

MOORE: Was it rough or smooth?

POLLNER: That I don't really remember.

MOORE: Were you, other than your earache were you healthy?

POLLNER: Yes. I was fine. I had fun. And the people, yes, I really did have fun. Because I met people who also had backgrounds, educational background, and that was something I'd always liked, talk about. We talked about books, about literature. And that took up a lot of my time.

MOORE: Do you remember seeing land for the first time?

POLLNER: I remember coming on Ellis Island. It's a very large area, a wooden . . .

MOORE: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

POLLNER: Yes. That we saw before we landed. After we landed, very exciting. That's all I can say.

MOORE: What was the atmosphere? Were people on deck looking at it?

POLLNER: Yes. At that time there were only immigrants. When I came, there were only immigrants coming by boats, and they were put in groups, I guess from different countries or different parts. And I remember, I had a nosebleed on the boat. And they took care of me. I don't know how, and then when my mother's brother, the oldest brother, came with a daughter my age, to take me off the boat.

MOORE: So, wait a minute. Before that, how did you get from the boat to Ellis Island? Do you remember that?

POLLNER: The boat docked.

MOORE: She docked, okay. That's good. And when you got there, did you get a medical examination?

POLLNER: I guess so. They looked that you're clean, that you don't have, you know, infections and things like that. They were quite careful.

MOORE: And how did they treat you, as such, did you feel?

POLLNER: No, I didn't feel that, it was all right. I didn't find it.

MOORE: How about the big hall? Was it crowded, filled with people? Was it empty? How was it . . .

POLLNER: It was very crowded. Different groups. The place was tremendous. To me it seemed tremendous at the time. I don't know how to see it now, but it looked like a very long platform, a wooden platform, that we were going. And I don't even think I stayed over on Ellis Island any . . .

MOORE: You weren't detained then, right?

POLLNER: No, no, no.

MOORE: So do you remember, did anybody translate for you at all?

POLLNER: No. It seems I was, I had no difficulty that way.

MOORE: And what about, did you, was there any concern amongst your fellow passengers about being rejected? Did anybody fear that?

POLLNER: I wouldn't know because I wasn't interested. That didn't interest me, you see? I was there away from my family. These people were strangers! So I just looked at them as strangers. They didn't mean much to me at the time.

MOORE: And what were you wearing when you . . .

POLLNER: Oh, gee, that, really, I don't know.

MOORE: And, uh . . .

POLLNER: Absolutely nothing.

MOORE: And was there anything new that you'd never seen before in Ellis Island when you got off the boat? Was there anything new?

POLLNER: Well, that was a completely new experience. I've never seen a, such a large place, so many people. It was one group here, one group here, one group here. (she gestures) I guess I caught onto countries, and they checked those who came legally, you know, you had to be legal or illegal. This was very strict at that time.

MOORE: So you were not detained. You went right there to your family.

POLLNER: No. My uncle, my uncle and my cousin came to take me off the boat, and they had to vouch that I wouldn't be a burden to the United States. That they would . . .

MOORE: Where did you go from Ellis Island?

POLLNER: To Flushing, Long Island.

MOORE: To Flushing, Long Island. Do you remember the address?

POLLNER: Well, I'll tell you, even that place has been demolished. It was a corner place, and later on they made a subway going from my uncle's, he had a house there, and he had a store, and they demolished it and they built something else. Main Street.

MOORE: How did you get from Ellis Island to Long Island, then?

POLLNER: My uncle was there, I guess, with a car. They were wealthy people. My family were quite well-established. They had real estate, they had businesses. They were all right.

MOORE: And what about the apartment or house that you lived, that you went to, your uncle's place? Could you . . .

POLLNER: It was very nice. It was, they had a store downstairs, a general store, and then it led upstairs to a very nice apartment, where they even had shower rooms. That I remember distinctly because I took a shower, and the water wasn't too warm, so I got a cold.

MOORE: And, so there was indoor plumbing and there was electricity?

POLLNER: Yes, yes, yes.

MOORE: How many rooms in that apartment?

POLLNER: I don't remember. I don't know.

MOORE: What about the neighborhood? How was the neighborhood?

POLLNER: It was a business street, it was Main Street in Flushing. Some very nice, uh, stores, clothing. I think my uncle had a haberdashery store, and there was electrical things, a lot of land, antiques. There was a movie around the corner.

MOORE: And so who lived in that apartment all together? How many people? Your uncle?

POLLNER: Just my uncle and his family. They had . . .

MOORE: What was the family?

POLLNER: There were three girls and one son. Yeah.

MOORE: And how long did you stay there?

POLLNER: (she sighs) Well, I'll tell you. I stayed there about half a year, and then I had some friends in America who left my home town a couple of years ago. We used to go to public school together. And that girlfriend came to see me, and when she saw me I

couldn't recognize her, she got so much prettier. She was a tall girl, you know. I always remained little. But she came to see me. She found out, took me out, we went to movies. And at that time I told her that I don't like to live in Flushing, I'd like to go to New York to where I could work. Because in Flushing it was hard for me to go to work. The family saw that I got a job someplace at a millinery house, and I wasn't a milliner. I wasn't good but, you know, I did a little. They were telling me what to do, and I learned, but I didn't work there very long because I was, as I told you I was very bad. Because as I was at work, I was talking to the ladies asking questions, you know, a young kid coming there. So the man came over to me, he said, "In America you don't talk, you work." So I got up very indignantly. I said, "You're not paying me enough." And I walked out. My uncle said he was proud of me and shocked, you know. It was true. I got another job. I got adjusted, you know. It wasn't hard. Because I learned fast, but then I had, a forelady, I told you, an Irish girl, she had to do bookkeeping, and I was supposed to do millinery. And I didn't know, you know, I never knew how. I'm not good at a needle anyway. I never learned how to sew. But you have to make a living. You have to earn some money. I couldn't really, if I would be smart, my family was in a position to send me to school in the daytime where I wouldn't have to go to work. It wouldn't be such a big loss to them. And I could have gotten something easier, but I was very proud. You know my background, how I was fighting for everything, that I wouldn't give in. And I tried to learn. But this lady recognized, she said to me, I saw she's struggling with the bookkeeping. I said, "Let me help you with this." She saw I did a good job. So she did the millinery for me, and I did the bookkeeping for her. Because this place had two places. They had a big place uptown New York, and this was downtown, the Lower East Side. I don't know whether you're acquainted with it. So it took me a couple of months, but I learned English very quickly, because English is a derivation of the French and German and Latin. When you combine these words, you directly get the English language. Like "reservoir," "to receive," "to receive." I already knew what it meant. I mean, I didn't know how to talk yet, but I connected things very quickly. And I learned, I learned fast. I had to.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

MOORE: Well, how about, we're going to talk about, did you go to school in this country, then, finally, in the United States? Did you go back to school ever?

POLLNER: Yes, of course. I went at night time. At first I went to, the first summer I think I went to Washington Irving High School, and I learned English. And I really loved it because the teachers were very nice to me. And after a few months they even gave me books, gifts, because I was so good. So . . .

MOORE: Now, Washington Irving High School was . . .

POLLNER: Downtown New York.

MOORE: In downtown New York, right.

POLLNER: And I, something happened, and I came there. It was a rainy day. I wasn't dressed so well. So the lady said to me, "We don't want people like you here." I said, "You won't see me here any more." See, I wasn't dressed because it was rainy, it was cold. And, so I went to the East Side evening high, it was Seward Park High School, Lower East Side. And there I was very warmly received. And I took, you see, I didn't know English. I knew the little bit that I learned in the summer, and I learned, I took two lessons in English and I followed from like, let's say I took two years of math. I took, one year I had from Europe, I took second year and I passed the regents exam. So I made high school very, in about two years, in the evening session. That's fast. And, like, I took French. I took in Poland two years. I took a third year here. I passed in three years, and I got credit for the three years. So I made high school quite fast. And after that I applied to Brooklyn College because I lived with my friends. At that time I didn't live any more with family because I found, I told them that it was too hard to travel, and I moved in with my friends. Because she was, see, they had one daughter and three sons, and her parents said, I told Lillian that I didn't like Flushing, and I wanted to get away. Oh!

MOORE: You wanted to get away.

POLLNER: Yeah. You see that? So she went home, she asked her parents. So her parents said they knew my parents, they knew them since I was born. They lived right nearby, neighbors. They said, "Look, Lillian if you want to, if it's agreeable to you, Pearl can move in with us. You had to share the same room, the same bed, and you're friends from childhood, no problem." I agreed, and I paid them. You know, I was working, and I paid them, and they were very nice, very fine people. I only knew nice people. You know, I didn't, the others I disregarded. (she laughs) As you can see, I just didn't want to know them. The father of the girl was a very religious man, something like my father. Not as bright, because nobody was as bright as my father. So he said to me, "When Lillian is hungry, she goes to the refrigerator and takes food. When

you're hungry, go over and take food." They made me feel like one of them. And I stayed with them until I brought my parents here.

MOORE: How old were you?

POLLNER: I had to be twenty-one to bring my parents.

MOORE: And so you stayed with them how many years, would you say?

POLLNER: Uh, oh, about four years. The first year I lived with my family in Flushing, and then I moved out and I was in Brooklyn, Eastern Parkway. I don't know whether you're acquainted. Eastern Parkway still exists, you know. (she laughs) And, it's different, it changed a little, but it was a very nice area. I lived with them. I was considered like a member of the family. Her cousins were my cousins. Her friends were my friends. And it was a very good relationship. And my parents didn't know that I lived not with a family, because I was afraid, I was so dumb, that my parents would think ill of me that I don't get along with a family, that I had to move in with strangers. And to me it meant a lot that my parents would not think ill of me, you know, because I missed them so terribly much, and, as I told you. I think, truthfully speaking, I was the closest to my father because whenever he did things, when I was a little girl, like when he was grinding the cereal, and he goes to a bakery where they bake with a big oven, and he would go there, I would be scared for him to go alone. I went with him to the hot stove room to see that he is safe. That's how I felt. I was really, I missed him so terribly much.

MOORE: So you brought them here.

POLLNER: Yeah. Well, they wanted to come already, then. Yeah, I couldn't come bring them if they wouldn't want to. You understand. And it was a question of bringing my father first, and then, and leave my mother and the children. They decided. Both of them came together, and I rented a room near my friends where I lived, and I furnished it a little, you know. And my parents came, and they lived there for a number of years.

MOORE: How did they support themselves?

POLLNER: My father went into business. My father was just, I told you, he was a very brilliant man. He even had friends here who were in the textile business: remnants, clippings, you know, there was a big field at one time. My father never did anything like it, but he learned. He, as I told you, he could learn anything. So he went into that business. It was a struggle. (she coughs) Because, you know, when you buy things

and you sell they don't give you the money right away. They wait until a month later. Papa came home one day, he says, "You know, Pearl, I bring them the merchandise and they don't give the money." And he didn't have enough money to go and buy again. He said, "Could you come with me?" So I went to the people that he was selling, and I explained to them that my father didn't come with money to America, and that they if they were buying, would it be possible to pay right away. You know, how they wait thirty days. So they couldn't understand why I spoke English so well. At that time already I was in college, you know. When my parents came I was almost graduating, and, oh, they were very impress, and a little embarrassed. They didn't realize, and my father needed the money. So they made up. He said, "Mr. Fraimen, from now on, don't worry. You'll get the money the minute you deliver the merchandise." And that's what happened, you know. I sort of helped him. My father made friends that I couldn't dream in my wildest dreams. He made friends in nature he made, big Skinner brothers, the velvet people, I don't know whether you know them, millionaires. They allowed him to bring in rags in their shop, their place until he got it together. He gathered together a few, and he hired a horse and buggy to get his place. He had a place to work in. So . . .

MOORE: Well, could you describe your life, briefly, after you got out of college, if you married and had children and those things? (Mrs. Pollner coughs) How did you get to California?

POLLNER: Oh, California I came only recently.

MOORE: Oh, so you've been in New York.

POLLNER: In New York all these years, sure! Well . . .

MOORE: When did you marry? How did you meet your husband, and when did you marry?

POLLNER: Well, I got married in 1940. I met him in a German nightclub. It was on a Christmas Day. You know, on Christmas, before Christmas. My girlfriend calls me up, she says, "Pearl, we have no dates, two of my friends. Would you join us tonight? We'll go to, there's a very nice German place on 96th Street, you know, and music and dinners." I said, "Look here, Lillian. I ordered a hat for myself. If the hat will turn out good, I'll join you." And she called me up, and I joined. And I said, "All right, Lillian. I have my new hat, and I'm going out Christmas Eve." That was in '39. It was a very nice place. There was, you know, we were city girls. And we had dinner, and there was dancing on the floor, and one of the head waiters came over and asked one of the girls, I went with two girlfriends, they were very gorgeous girls, tall, you

know, stately. And I was also a little one, you know, I was so short. But I never felt little. Isn't that strange? So the head waiter introduced one of the men to my girlfriend, and then the other girlfriend said, "You know, there's a fellow sitting here. He looks very nice. He smiles." So I looked back, and I smiled, too. And that was my husband. He had jet black hair and blue eyes, and very clean cut, very handsome man. And I smiled, you know. What else could I do? So he came over, and asked if I'd go dance with him. So I said, "All right." And we were on the floor. (she coughs) He thought I was Polish because I had blonde hair, golden hair. My hair was golden blonde, and he looked very much Italian, black hair blue eyes and a gorgeous brown suit. He was real handsome. So he said to me, so we were dancing. He thought I was Polish. So I said, "Are you Italian?" So we both started laughing, because he was Jewish, too. And so we, and meanwhile the other girl, all three of us were already dancing on the floor, we went back to our place. We paid ourselves for our dinner, because we came together. But a man asked if we were going to the Latin Quarter. So I looked at the girls, and I said, "All right." And my husband said he'll be my escort, and the girls had their escorts. And when they got there, you know what the Latin Quarter is like? It's a night club, one of the finest, very rich, very. I'd never been there before, but, anyway, I was a good sport, and we went there. Whatever, I danced, they were ordering drinks. I saw that my husband ordered only a small drink, so I ordered the same. And these two men must have been somebody very special, because we got the best seat around the dancing area, and they had a lot of money on them. I didn't notice, my girlfriends noticed, and my husband noticed. He said nothing, but we were dancing, we were laughing, and we had something to eat, and we were drinking, very little, very modestly. I was able to take more than my husband. I took two drinks. He only took one. I was careful to watch what he was doing because he seemed to be a nice fellow, you know. (she laughs) I said to myself. So, and then, does it sound funny?

MOORE: No, no, it's great.

POLLNER: You know, it was a lot of fun, you know. It was so innocently done. And then it was time, they're closing up the Latin Quarter. So my girlfriends lived in Brooklyn, I lived in the Bronx, and my husband-to-be lived in the Bronx, too. He said, "Can I take you home?" I said, "Yeah, that would be fine." And he didn't live too far from me, but these men said, "How about going for breakfast to Waldorf Astoria?" You know, they were real fast. So we said, "No, that we're not going to go. We'd like to go home." So the fellows saw already they're not getting anywheres, so they asked my husband, "What should we do with two

girls who live in Brooklyn?" He said, "If I were you, I'd hire a cab, pay the bill and send the girls home." Which they did. You see, my husband was so level-headed. Then he said to me, "Would you like to have a coffee?" He thought maybe I was, I had two drinks, maybe, but it didn't affect me. I was just laughing, joking. You know when you're young and careless. Carefree, I'd say, not careless. There's a difference, there's a difference. So he said, "Can I take you home?" I said, "All right." And the girls were sent home by cab, as he suggested. That was an episode. That was really a very, the girls noticed that these men had money on them. And they, what they did, I don't know. They were not as nice men as my husband. And then my husband asked me if I would have a date with him again, so I said, "No." We had made, the girls, we had made arrangements to go out the next weekend to New Jersey, you know, for a weekend, you know, girls go out to meet people, to have fun. And so he said to me, I said, "No, I'm going to see my aunt." I didn't want to tell him the truth. I said, you know, he checked up on me. (she coughs) It seemed, you know, things happened, just, you don't know. And one of my girl friends slipped him her address. I never knew about it. One of the girls I was with gave my husband her address, that he should call her, but I didn't ask if he was interested in her, and he called up home, and I said I'd be away, and my mother said to me that a young man called. So that was it. When I came home I started dating him, and we got married in July.

MOORE: And you had children?

POLLNER: Yes, I have one child, one daughter. The second one I lost. (she pauses) He was a very nice man.

MOORE: If you look back on your life, and coming to the States, do you, how do you feel about your original decision to come to this country?

POLLNER: I couldn't have made a better decision. I couldn't make any other decision. That was something that I felt was very important.

MOORE: And do you think the country has given you opportunity, and it's been a good place to live?

POLLNER: Oh, I think, oh, I was, I loved America. But, you know, when I started working, I looked around. I said, "Oh, my God. I'm among all these people. I'm earning money." I was sending a little money to Europe, to my parents. I met some very fine people in the millinery line. I met a lady, Mrs. Overburgh. She was a direct descendent from the Mayflower. Actually, I met the nicest people. I was looking . . .

MOORE: Overburgh or Overholtzer?

POLLNER: Overburgh.

MOORE: Overburgh.

POLLNER: B-U-G-H, B-U-R-G-H. She actually had notices from, that her ancestors came from, direct from the Mayflower. A very fine lady. And it seems I was lucky that the people sort of liked me. She had a daughter my age, Mrs. Overburgh. She was a little girl. And she said, "Pearl, would you like to meet my daughter?" They felt I would be a good influence for her. Which, I don't know, I accepted it, but I guess there was a reason for it. They were exceptionally fine people. Her husband was a manager for the Regal Shoes in New York. You've heard of them, didn't you? The Regal Shoe companies. Tall, slim, and I was a little bit of a thing, you know. I really wondered sometimes that these people wanted to be my friends. I accepted it, but now I, looking back, I really think I was very lucky.

MOORE: I think I understand why.

POLLNER: Hmm?

MOORE: I understand why they'd like to be.

POLLNER: I don't know. I couldn't understand, because they were so highly educated, very fine, very refined. And they wanted, they actually wanted to be my friend. I was very proud of that. I was very happy. And that happened with a lady that I helped in the millinery. Her sister, too, wanted to be my friend. So I got pretty good about it, and I kept writing to my parents, sending, periodically, some money. Not too much, because I didn't write very much. And . . .

MOORE: So you firmly think that decision was a good one.

POLLNER: Oh, definitely.

MOORE: Did your mother and father feel the same?

POLLNER: My father loved America. He really loved it. He was sorry, I guess, later on he was sorry he didn't come when he was young. He could have reached such heights, because he was so intelligent. He was so brilliant. He once took a trip to Canada. We had cousins in Canada who came to see my father, you know, when he came, and my mother. And they was so proud of him, and he traveled by car to, from New York to Canada, and he saw the land of America, corn, wheat. And he understood that, and he said the soil was so rich in food.

MOORE: In that area.

POLLNER: In that area, you know. And everything to him had meaning. I'm telling you again the type he was. What he gave us children to understand. He was very, very different. He even met Communists in America who loved him as such, because, as I said, he's so, such an intelligent man. And they said to me, "Be good to your father." You know, as if I wouldn't be, because they respected him in spite of the fact, you know, Communism and orthodoxy are two different worlds, but they respected him for what he was, what he stood for, and the type of a person he was. See, that was it. That summed it up.

MOORE: Well, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the Ellis Island Oral History Project for giving us this interview.

POLLNER: Thank you. I hope, I don't know whether it has anything, when it comes back how it will sound, but it was a very important life, part of my life. I look back at it, I've met some wonderful people in there. I had met a young lady who was working for the government as a secretary, but she was giving concerts in Town Hall, piano. And she, and I befriended her. She was a good friend of mine. I really was lucky that I met such wonderful people.

MOORE: Well, I'll tell you, we'll send you a copy of this, and we really do appreciate it.

POLLNER: Thank you.

MOORE: And this is Kate Moore signing off in LA, in Santa Monica, for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.