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ANNA SHRIMPL KUTHAN

BIRTH DATE: DECEMBER 12, 1899

INTERVIEW DATES: AUGUST 15, 1973, NOVEMBER 16, 1973, 1973,  
DECEMBER 10, 1974

INTERVIEWER: MARGO NASH

RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: CHARLENE A. KEYLOR, 1973

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: JANET LEVINE, 2/1995

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: JANET LEVINE AND PETER HOM, 3/1995

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1922

AGE AT IMMIGRATION: 23

PASSAGE ON: *SUSQUEHANNA*

PORT OF EMBARKATION: BREMENHEVEN

NASH: Today is August 15, 1973, and I am visiting in the home of a woman who came from Czechoslovakia fifty-one years ago. She spent the first day in America exactly on the same street where she lives now, (she laughs) and she was brought to New Rodney Hall, a hall built by Czechoslovakians so that they would feel less lonely in this country. She was brought there and she had her first meal, after Ellis Island, right across the street from where we are now, and we are going to hear the story of her life. Why don't you introduce yourself?

KUTHAN: My maiden name was Anna Shrimpl. I came to this country from Czechoslovakia. I always dreamed about this

wonderful country since I was a little girl, my father used to tell us so much about it, and we could hardly believe it. So after, you know, I was working so hard in Vienna, during the first World War, you know, and many other places. So then, all of a sudden, I came home, back in my home town, and a man from New York, he lives 72nd Street, he has a three-story house, and used to come twice a year in my home town for a business. When I heard about it I was so excited I didn't even tell nothing to my parents, I just, you know, want to go to this country so badly, so I was waiting when they came out from the movies, you know, and it was the night. And I approach him and I says, "Please Mr. Kovash, can you take me with you to this country?" And he says, "My goodness, child, what are you going to do here?" I says, "Oh, I could speak German. I was working hard in Vienna and other places. "I could cook and bake and scrub. I could do all the housework and you don't have to be afraid. And I just want to come to this country." So he say, "Alright, I am going to see what I can do about it." So he wrote a letter to his foreman, you know, because he has a business here, and we know him also. And they have a little baby and they would need somebody to take care of the baby because the wife was also in the business. So he send me a letter like, you know,

and that is why I have to pay my own way, and I had to scrape all the money from the relatives, even strange people, they trust me so much because I had just a few, you know, a few crowns, and that was nothing. So my parents they have first time in the bank, first time in their whole life they have seven hundred crowns. So I ask my father, I says, "Please, can you lend me the money, I am going to pay you back?" So my father says, "Please, don't forget us, that's our all money we have." So I says, "I won't forget as long as, you know, I would be in this country, and I am going to work so hard and I am going to pay everybody back all the money I owe them," you know. So everything was going fine, right away, you know, the man send a letter, with that letter I went, you know, to all the places with the documents, you know, my birth certificate, and all the things I need. And I did everything myself and so everything went nice and smooth. And they went in July, 26th of July I was ready, you know. So they went ahead of the time, that man with his wife because they was waiting for us in Bremen, we went to Bremerhaven, so I went on the train alone, you know, and good thing that I could speak the language, you never know how good that is if you speak a couple of more languages, so I was not afraid. So when we came to Bremerhaven I helped them shopping because they

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couldn't speak German, so I did all the shopping for them. And after I see the first time that big boat, I could hardly believe it, and the ocean, you know, I was going to run right in the ocean I was so excited, you know. So then we was two weeks, fourteen days we was on the boat.

NASH:What was the name of the ship?

KUTHAN:Susquehanna, the name of the ship was Susquehanna. It was a very slow boat, it was only second and third class.

NASH:What nationality was the boat?

KUTHAN;I think that must have been English or American, Susquehanna.

NASH:Susquehanna.

KUTHAN:Susquehanna, Susquehanna, that's how they spell it, Susquehanna because the people like very slow boats and I was seasick right away, the first night I throw up, and so we had to go over to second class because they didn't have enough room in the third class because the boat was overcrowded.

NASH:What was the difference between first and second class, do you know?

KUTHAN:Oh, you had better food, you had better cabin, you know. We was only three in one cabin. And in the third class, I don't know, maybe it's four or five, that time, fifty-one years ago, of my gosh, you know. And the boat was packed with immigrants from all nationalities, you know, and it was so interesting. And so, you know, since I could speak German, you know, it wasn't so hard for me and already, I tried to speak English. You know, I remember all the words, you know, and every day I mark it down and I repeat it and repeat it, you know, I was so excited already, you know. Then I was seasick the whole way, you know, and they was so nice to me, we had very good food. Yes, but after that we have a big storm, you know, and so after about three days the ocean calmed down, and little by little the man that went with us, you know, Mr. Kovash was his name, so he says, "Now, you have to watch when we gonna land. I want to show you, you know, everything." So we went on the first deck so we could have a nice view. And he says, "You see, this is Statue of Liberty." That I never forget, you know. And it was already at night like, you know. And you could see the New York, you know, Manhattan Island,

you know all the lights, all different kind lights.

NASH:What year was this?

KUTHAN:1922, 1922, that was year 1922. August the 24, we land here.

And I was so excited, tell him, he says, "This is Coney Island." All the beautiful lights, you know. So I was running around and I want to see everything right away, you know. So then after, you know, we land, so the man, you know, he has married sons, and they came for the parents with the car. But, you see, I couldn't recognize the uncle, that's supposed to meet me, you know, because that if they would say how he looks then I would wave with my hand or a handkerchief, or a something, but you see, he was there, but I didn't recognize him. So, you see, they says, "My God, everybody went home already and they, you know, paid everybody already and I was all by myself on the big boat." So I says, "What they gonna do with me, why don't they, you know, somebody call for me?" But I didn't panic. So, you know, then they say you have to go on Ellis Island. So the little boat that brings the people from the big boat to Ellis Island, it was waiting for me because that was the last boat. So, they was waiting for me. So when I came on Ellis Island, my gosh, there was

something I never forget, you know, the first impression, all kinds of nationalities. And first meal we got, fish and milk, big pitchers of milk, and the white bread, the first time I see the white bread, and the butter, you know. And there was so much milk and I drink it so much because we didn't have enough milk in my country, you know. So I says, "My God, are we going to have a good time here. We gonna have plenty to eat," you know. So then everybody was waiting if somebody going to call for us. Now, after fifty-one years, I could imagine what a job they have spelling all those names from all different nationalities, it's not so easy because some of the names were so long and hard to pronounce and hard to spell. And so I was always waiting, when they going to call my name or if they could only spell it. I was going so near the man so he wouldn't miss me, you know. So, everybody was going, after somebody went, you know, I says, "My gosh, what they going to do with me, maybe I have to sleep here over night," but that's nothing , you know. So, one lady, you know, she came with the Czech costume, you know, and she says, "My gosh, I never work no place and my boyfriend supposed to pick me up and we supposed to get married on Ellis Island," because he paid her ticket, you know, the fare. So all of a sudden she saw him and they hugged and kissed

and cry, you know. So right away she give me her address after I settle down here I should come and see her so she won't be so lonely. So after that, you know, I says, "Boy, I'm going to sleep here." One, two, three, one man was calling "Shrimper, Shrimper," you know, I says, "By gosh, he's got my name. So I start hollering, "Here I am, here I am," you know, and that was my uncle, you know. He says, "My gosh, I saw you." I says, "Well, I saw you too, but I don't know it was you, you know." So, you know, after, you know, they took me right away because there was one lady, they have lady, I mean, people there from all nationalities, why, so they could translate it to the immigrants, you know, so that they won't be so panicked because many of the people has to go with the train to other states, you know, but I want to, you know, park right in New York so I didn't have no problem with that.

NASH:They didn't ask you any questions of any kind? Did they examine you in any way?

KUTHAN:No, no, they didn't.

NASH:No.

KUTHAN:They examine us in Bremerhaven.

NASH:U.S. officials?

KUTHAN:Yes, yes, yes. Oh yes, we have to have a, you know, all the doctors examination, and we have to have approve also that we won't bring any sickness here. That was all done in Bremerhaven, you know. So after that, you know, they took me right out, that lady says, "Oh, my God" --she was a Czech lady, and that uncle knows her --she says, "My God, don't worry, everything goes very fast now and your names going to be free," and I thank her so much, you know, because I hear my own language and I was so glad. So we went from the boat, you know, we went, with that little boat again, you know, to take us to the --

NASH:Battery?

KUTHAN:Battery Place, that's right. And first time I went on Second Avenue elevator. That was something for me, and the people was going home from work and the train was packed. I was going up the stairs and I turn around, turn around, I says, "Oh, my God," I says, "Where are we going?" So after we sit in the train, you know, people was looking

at me, you know, I said, "Oh, I bet they have greenhorns here again." That's what they use to call them, you know, "greenhorns." so I said, "How could the people hang their wash on the lines from building to building?" That I can't get over, you know, I was looking out the window and looking what's going on here, you know. It looks to me, it's impossible, big city like that. And the people live so near and it was so hot in August, you know, and people have windows open and the train was going by the windows. I thought the train going to right through their rooms. And they was sleeping on the floor because it was so hot, they have no fans, they have nothing. So they have to have the window open. And they were sleeping on the floor. And so many children, you know, and almost naked, you know, and the train was going by and the station, and the houses was shaking, the vibration, you know. So I says, "Oh, my God, how could the people sleep with all the noise going on?" So after we stop on 72nd Street, that was the station from the elevator, so we went down, you know, and I have my two baskets like, you know, they didn't have any suitcases that time, you know, like a straw basket, you know, two of them, so now I says, you know, "What is going to happen to me now?"

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NASH:Were you dressed in a costume?

KUTHAN:No, no, I was dressed because I came from a city. And you know, I borrowed so much money, so I have to pay, oh, my God, you know, for a long time I have to pay all my debts, you know, because I want to be dressed a little bit decent, you know. So, I have few nice things, you know, really. So thank God, you know. But, many people from Solvakia, you know, they came, and from Moravia, Moravia belongs, you know, at that time, to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Slovakia, and Moravia used to belong to Austria, you know, before the First World War, and now, you know, it's one country. So you know, the many came in their own costume like, you know, and on the boat they was singing, you know, and dancing, and playing harmonica and violin, everybody, you know, has something. And, you know, the captain from the second class, you know, he came out on the bridge and he spoke to me German and he says, "What are they singing?" I says, "Well, they singing like a Czech songs like, you know, so that they won't feel so lonely, you know. And they are young and they are willing to work. Nobody knows what is going to happen to us, but we are young and we are not afraid." So I explain it to him and he shake my hands, and he start clapping hands, he don't even understand the

language, but the rhythm, you know, it makes him so happy, you know. So that's, you know, I learned that on 72nd Street, so the man, you know, the uncle, he took me to National Hall, right across the street from where I lived now, you know. That used to belong to the Czech people. And they used to have parties there, you know, and they used to play on the stage and whenever they have some kind of special parade, you know, all kinds of things, you know. They build it, all the immigrants they chip in years and years ago. And so they have some place to go, you know. So that's where I land first time without any money. Excuse me. So that man and another man, from that man that brought me here, so he has a business on Fifth Avenue, and he also came from my home town. That's the first time I see him, old man with white hair, and he was so nice, like a grandfather, you know, to me. And he says, "My goodness, I feel so sorry for you." And I says, "Well, I am not afraid." You know, and it started getting late and I was so tired already, you know, from the trip. So I says, "I'm going to treat you with a nice supper," and you know, the man that owns the restaurant, you know, he was looking at us and all the people they were sitting in the restaurant because it was, you know, mealtime at night, you know, supper time. And they all was looking at me and they says,

"Gee whiz, I wonder what's going to happen to her." So, you know, they order a meal and I tell you before he came I started eating already, I was so hungry I was ashamed, but I couldn't help it, you know. So we was waiting, and that old gentleman with the white hair, he says, "Wait a minute, I am going to ask the people from across the street because we belong to lodges here in the Nation Hall," they know him well because, you know, they have Czech school for the Czech language, you know. "So I am going to ask somebody if they could keep you overnight," you know, "I'm going to pay you for the board, you don't have to worry about that," you know, "I just want to find you place where you could sleep for a couple of days." So I says, "Oh, I be so glad, I never forget you," you know, "I am so thankful." So he was going across the street and he knows the man, they have no children, you know, two old people, and the lady used to go washing and cleaning and they have four rooms, right across the Nation Hall. He went there and he said, "Please, can you leave the girl here overnight, I am going to pay you. She just came from the boat." And she said, "For God sake, I am going to work in the morning, what do you think I am going to keep the greenhorns here? I have no room for them." And he said, "You have another empty bedroom, I pay you, just for a

couple of nights." She says, "Oh no, you had better try some place else." So the poor man got so disappointed, he has tears in his eyes. He says, "I would never believe it, our own nationality that they could turn somebody," you know, "away in a time like this." So he says, "but don't, don't, just have more patience. I know somebody." So he went across, around the corner, and there was a lady, old lady, and she used to give jobs to the domestic like, you know, she used to run like an agencies, you know. And he said, "I remember her because my wife used to be a domestic also before I marry her. So she used to give her job, so I am going to go there, and just wait here I be right back." So I was waiting and they still bring me some food and coffee, you know, and I was still eating and waiting for that poor man to come back. Finally he was running back. "Come on get your basket, I have already place where you could sleep around the corner." I was so glad he even help me. It was eleven o'clock at night. So when I came up, you know, in her house the janitor was hollering, "Mrs. Crawl you got some greenhorn here." She says, "Alright I am waiting for her." So she was living on the first floor and she has also three little rooms, those two window was facing First Avenue, you know. And it was so hot in August, it's very hot here, and she has

those windows open and all the noise from the avenue, you know, and people was yelling and hollering because they used to stay on the street, God knows how many hours because they can't sleep inside it was so hot. So, when she saw me she said, "Oh, for God sake, come on in, don't be afraid, I am going to take care of you," because she could hardly speak English, just a few words. She speak Czech language. So, she says, "You gonna sleep right here in the kitchen," old fashioned bed, you know, iron bed painted white. And that other bedroom has no windows. And there she has all suitcases and boxes from all those immigrants, from all those, you know, single girls that came here in this wonderful country, and they just want to make living, they want to work hard. So she says, "Keep those suitcases here because you don't know if you are going to like the job, maybe the lady won't like you, so why should you drag everything there. Keep it here and when you get a job steady then you could always come for it." So, she explain it to me. So I says, "My, God, I am going to wash myself, I am so tired." And I just flopped in that bed and I slept like a rock. So in the morning when I get up she was making coffee, you know, in the kitchen. So now I start looking around and I says, "Oh my God, that place wasn't painted, I don't know how many years," you know, but she was very

clean that old lady. She was, you know, playing on the stage in that Nation Hall, She was very comical, very old lady, and very honest. She even was wearing those old skirts from the old country, you know. So she says, "Now you wash your face and I am making the coffee. I am going to run down across the street to the bakery and I am going to bring something. You just wash yourself and comb your hair." So I went in the front room and she has big windows, two window a long mirror. And instead of paint on the walls, she has all those postcards from those girls, from those maids, domestic maids, you know, that they used to land in her house. So after so many years when they got a job they sent her postcards. She save all the postcards and she paste the whole front room with the postcards. I can't believe it when I seen it, I start reading it. She says, "You see, this is a history from all those old immigrants, I don't even know where they are, if they are still alive or not, but they all send me cards." And it was so interesting for me. So after she came back from the bakery, you know, the bakery was a Czech bakery, and they used to save all the things that they couldn't sell, and whatever fell down, you know, they put it in an extra drawer and after, you know, she used to with big shopping bag and they put everything in there for nothing, you know,

because they feel sorry for her. So she used to bring it up (she laughs) and all the best pieces, everything, cake, and all kinds of pastry, you know, and she put a little bit of sugar on and she fix it up on the plate, you know, and she put it right between those two windows in the front room. And she went back in the kitchen to fix the coffee on a tray. By the time she came back I start eating and eating, you know, I can't help it. I don't even chew it, I swallow it because it was so good, it taste so good, you know. And I don't know, I says, "If I am going to eat like that I'm going to get fat soon, you know, I can't believe it, they have so many good things here." So when she came back with the coffee, she look at me and she says, "For crying out loud, now you going to drink the coffee without any cake. Don't tell me you ate everything." I says, "Please Mrs. Crawl, don't get mad at me, I couldn't help it, I was so hungry, oh, I couldn't help it." She said, "That's a good sign." You know, she was comical, "that's a good sign, just eat much as you can. In a little while you going to get so fed up with it that you won't even look at it." I says, "Not me, because I know what a hunger is, you know, I'm going to appreciate and I am going to treasure everything." So then after she says, the lady's going to come here, and, you know, she's going to interview me. The

ladies, you know, they came for the maids, you know, like a general house worker, you know, or just for the children, you know. So as long as I could speak German, you know, I have better chance because all the Jewish people speak Jewish and Jewish is mixed with German. So, you know, I could understand Jewish too! You know. So, a lady came, a Jewish lady, from Rockaway and she was looking for a maid, general houseworker for her sister because she was there in Rockaway, and the job was on 110th Street, you know. And they have a big store with clothing. So it was about the end of August like, already, you know, because we stay a couple of days by that lady, you know, to get a little bit rest. So you see, then that lady came and she start talking to me like German, and she says, "I'm going to take you right away." So that Mrs. Crawl, she just say, "She's okay." That's all she could say English. And she just hand her five dollars and I was sold, you know, after two days here I was sold already. So the lady took me up in her place, you know, and they have painters, they was painting the seven rooms apartment, and the painters they tell me, you know, I was greenhorn, I don't know any better, he says, "You have to scrub the parquet floors." So, I was scrubbing the parquet floors, I was sweating so much, you know, on my knees. And I didn't know that I am not

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supposed to do that, but they says, "Oh to hell with the greenhorn, you know, we going to make her do it," so I did it. So the lady after she came in, she want to see how I am making out and when I told her in German, she says, "My God," you know, she says, "you're not suppose to do that. They have to paint the floors anyway after," you know. So they was very nice to me, you know.

END SIDE ONE, INTERVIEW ONE

BEGINNING SIDE TWO, INTERVIEW ONE

NASH:What was that neighborhood like at that time. Were there many buildings?

KUTHAN:110th Street. That neighborhood was 110th Street between Central Park West and Fifth Avenue. I remember that place, a big house, I think it was about twelve story house.

NASH:Were there many buildings in the neighborhood? Is it just like it is today?

KUTHAN:I don't know, i wasn't there for, I would like to find too, you know, if the building is still there. But, that I

remember that they have elevator and they have colored men on the elevator. And when the lady brought me in she spoke to him like, you know, that he should be nice to me, in the case that I don't understand something he should have patience with me, you know. So after, you know, I stayed there only about three weeks. You know why? Because they have so much cooking, you know, a Jewish family, but they have everything in the house, they wasn't stingy, you know, for the food. But I don't like kosher cooking, I never did kosher cooking, you know. So then I said, "Oh my God, they pay me, because the lady told me, 'Never go, never leave your place before you get your money, that's the first thing you have to learn. Once you close the door you're licked.'" So that I remember, you know. So I excuse myself, I says, "Please lady, you know, I can't get used to this. I am going to mix you up, all the kosher dishes and everything and I can't get used to that. So I would like to leave my place." So she was very sorry. And so I went back to Mrs. Crawl again, she says, "One does nothing, don't take it so hard." So another Jewish lady, you know, she came in. And that one she has three children and she lives 161st Street, Fort Washington. And she says, "I'm going to take you right away." She don't even look at me much because she needs somebody to take care

of the three children. Then they have another cousin, he was, you know, boarding there also. There was two big mans, three children and the lady, six people. She has a nurse for the children, but as long as she got me she left the nurse go right away the next day. And I never was by children. I used to only cook, you know, and did the general housework and so on, you know. So they have seven rooms apartment, when she took me up it was nice corner house, and at that time we have the awnings, you know, that time, fifty-one years ago, they was in the summer hot. So I have my own room, you could imagine my own room. So I says, "Oh, my God, and my own bathroom." I never had a bathroom, you know. I was so glad first thing I look in the bathroom, I says, "Good thing I am small; I am going to fit right in," you know. And I had my own closet in my room, a nice bed and a dresser. I liked it right away. I says, "I don't care how the family going to take me, I like my room and I think I am going to stay here," you know. So the lady speak to me like German, and the boss was very nice, Mr. Greenstein was their name, and they have also business with millinery, you know, very expensive hats. So the lady says, "Anna, you going to get plenty hats from me, even the clothes," but I was very skinny and she was very stout, but I says, "I will be

thankful" You know why? Because I could make the clothes over. Even the shoes, I says, "I am going to fit in them, I put little cotton, you know, in the front so they would fit me, so I don't have to buy nothing. And I could save the money, so it worries me because I want to pay fast as I can all the debt I have, you know. So I was so thankful, and the lady says, "I hope you going to like my children." I says, "Well, I am going to try." And they have a little baby about five weeks old and I never have baby in my hand, you know. And she was so cute, blonde hair and black eyes and she look at me, you know. So you see, I learned so much English from the children because, you know how children talk, Annie this is knife, Annie this is fork, Annie this is plate and so on, and I repeat it after them, you know. And meantime, that little baby later on started talk too and Mr. Greenstein used to say, "My God Annie, you that kid of mine has the same accent just like you, she talks like those greenhorns." I says, "I can't help it." You know, but they like me so much because I like the children. And Jewish family will do anything if somebody really like their children because they live for them and they have so much love for their children, you know. So I says, "Oh my God, you know, I like that little baby so much," you know. So they was so thankful for me,

so they give me presents. They bring me hats and the clothes and the lady always give me something. And they used to go out on a Saturday, you know, they used to go on Broadway to the show, and they says "Annie can we trust you with the baby?" I says, "You just go ahead and enjoy yourselves and I am going to try my best," and that little girl, her name was Dorothy, she was already twelve years old, then they have another one seven years old, Bernie. So I says, those children going to tell if I am going to make some mistake and I am going to try diaper the baby first time, you know. So they was so glad and they went, you know, so after they left the baby started to cry, you know, the baby, I don't know what was wrong with her, so that little girl, Dorothy, she start talking a little bit Jewish and German and I started to think, I says, "Oh, my God, maybe she needs enema," you know. I says, "What I'm going to do, I never did this before." So, you know, we did everything, that big girl helped me. And you know, we fixed up that little baby and the baby was so happy after. And I was crying, I says, "My goodness I never did such a thing and now look at me what I am doing." So when my people came home, you know, I was still up, they was so happy when I told the stories, and the lady says, "Annie, I am going to do everything I can for you because I know

you are going to like my children." So I went first time, I have nobody here, and I went first time on my day off, Thursday. I says, "Where am I going to go, I have nobody here," you know. So I want to go with the streetcar, so the lady wrote me what name of the streetcar and that was Fort Washington streetcar on Third Avenue.

NASH:How was the streetcar run, by electricity?

KUTHAN:By electricity, yeah. At that time we only have streetcars here, you know. So she told me where I should get off because I want to go to 72nd Street, I want to visit that old lady, I want to tell her all about it, that I have steady job and I have so much to tell, and I want to share it with her. (she clears her throat) So she wrote me everything, so I went and I, oh, it took so long with the streetcar, but anyway I was watching from the window and then finally I said, "Oh, I know where I am." So I get off 72nd Street and I visit the lady, you know. And she was so glad that I kept the job, you know. So she said, "Anytime you going to feel lonely just come here and, you know, I am going to be like your mother here. I haven't got much, but, you know, you could always warm yourself up here and I could always make coffee and go across the street." And I says,

"I am willing to pay you, I am so glad I could talk to somebody." And meantime, some of those girls they came also visit her, so that's how we know each other, you know. So I know a couple of girls already. And one day I was, you know, outside with the baby and all of the sudden I see about four girls wheeling the carriage, you know, and they was laughing so much and speaking Czech language. I run to them, I says, "My goodness, I'm Czech too, I'm so glad that I hear the language," and they said, "My goodness, how long are you here?" I says, "Just a few months and I don't know nobody and I am so glad, you have no idea." And they says, "Well, we working around here too and we are watching the kids and we are going out every afternoon with the children, with the carriages. So we could always wait for you here, front of the house and you can join us. And you know, we are going to take you down to the Czech neighborhood, and we have aunts here and we have relatives, and you can go with us if you have nobody here, you know, so you won't feel so lonely." And I was so thankful, you know, I could hardly sleep that night, you know, because when you in a strange country you always, you know, wish if you could only meet somebody or bump into somebody that you could hear own language, you know. So I says, "Oh, my God." I could hardly wait for the next

day and I rush with the housework, and I says to the lady, you know I am going to go early because I have some friends here downstairs and they are waiting for me, you know. So that's how we met. And that time there was a deaf and dumb institution on 161st Street, you know, and there was hardly any building there fifty-one years ago, you know, and we was sitting, it was like a empty lot, big empty lot, and we was sitting there the whole bunch of us and we was, you know, enjoying ourselves and talking about where we going to go Sunday when we have a day off, and meeting some boys, and go dancing. And you know, I says, "Oh, I am so glad, I hope you are going to stop for me and I want to go with you," you know. So we was, you know, making a date like. So I says, "You are going to go with us with the subway." I says, "Oh, my God, the first time going with the subway from 161st Street." We have to go, I think, to 145th Street, I think that was the first station, you know. So my lady says, "Listen Annie, you might get lost, I am going to write down the whole, you know, whole trip," like, she make like on a paper a green line and a red line, and this is the same thing from the subway. "When you come to 42nd Street, Times Square, you know, there you have to watch because you are going to get lost there, always look on the ceiling." So I says, "Oh, my God, what is going to

happen to me," you know, first time I went. So when I came to 42nd Street I get off and I supposed to take shuttle, that's a small train that will take you on Grand Central Station and then from there I take the Lexington Avenue subway to, to 59th Street, at that time there was no 68th Street yet, 59th Street, you know. So when I came down to 42nd Street I was looking on the ceiling, always on the ceiling, and my neck hurts me so much looking. And the people bump into me, says, "Where are you going, why don't you look down?" I didn't understand I just keep on going looking and I was always watching the lines, red one and green one, you know. And where should I go down the stairs and where should I go in that little train. Finally, I made it and I was sweating so much because I says, "I hope I won't get lost here," you know. So then I came on Lexington Avenue and then I get off and it was everything so easy. So when I came back at night, again I went the same way and little by little I remembered the stations because I always watch and I remember something. So it was going better and better. So then we was going then seeing, you know, and I met some other people like in the Nation Hall, so-called hall, 71st Street, 72nd Street, they have three Nation Halls like where people go together, and single people where they could meet girls, and the

girls meet boys like you know, like in any country. So we was going to dancing (she clears her throat) and that time they have double deck buses on Riverside Drive. And I caught the double deck bus and I caught a big cold in my head, because it was so windy, it was in the winter time. And I got sick. And that time, that was already 1923, it was in February, I remember that, it was a flu. We have so much flu here. The hospitals was crowded and they don't know what to do with the sick people, it was like an epidemic, and it was called a flu. Now they have all kinds of fancy names for it, but it is a plain flu, and I got that flu. My lady has it, all the three children has it, you know. So the lady has to hire a new maid, a colored maid, part time maid because I was in bed and I have fever, you know, and I have inflammation in my ear also. So when the doctor went and see the family and he was speaking German, thank God, so the lady says, "Please can you go in and see my maid in her room because she is also sick." So when he examined me and he speak German to me, and he says, "I am going to try every hospital I could get because you have to go right away to the hospital," you know. So, I says, "Well, I am going to be glad because I can't do nothing, I have fever and I don't know where I am, and I have to pay the debts." The debt was in my head, you know,

like a sickness, I can't get rid of it, you know. So finally, he got a hospital, so that colored lady, you know, our maid, she took me with the taxi there, you know. So it was a small hospital, very small, old fashioned, 149th Street, Edgecomb Avenue, I remember that place. Edgecomb Avenue, 149th Street, very small hospital. So finally they got a bed there, you know and we was about twenty in ward, you know, a big ward, old fashioned hospital. So you know, they let me stay there and they don't know what to do with me. The doctors came every day and examined me and speak in German, you know, and my doctor from the lady he came, he explained it to them, I'm no living around here, and I couldn't speak English, I only speak German. And so he translated everything to them. So they says I have double pneumonia and I have infection in my ear and they have to operate, but they going to wait a while. They going to give me ice bag on my head, and they going to wait if it is going to blow out without any operation because they couldn't operate on account of the double pneumonia, you know. So I don't know where I was anyway because I have that big fever. So that one German lady, she was staying also in that ward, and, you know, all the people they came visiting, you know, and by every bed they had visitors, flowers and presents and nobody came to my bed,

and I cover myself and I cry (she is moved) so much because nobody came to see me and I think I am going to die and I have to pay the debt. What's going to happen to my parents, I promised them. "I am going to pay everything, please God, save me." You know, I pray so hard that night, even in Czech language, I don't care, but I pray because the God could listen to all the people in every language, you know. So that lady she feel so sorry for me, that German lady and she spoke to the other people and she says, "Please can you go to her bed and just shake the hands with her and just, you know, say hello to her and just, you know, tell her that you not going to die and just calm her down a little bit, " you know. So that they came and they shake hands with me. And they just stroke my head and I was sweating so much and so I thanked that German lady after she was so kind to me, and she translate everything, you know. So I was like that in a coma three weeks lying there, they can do nothing with me on account of double pneumonia. At that time they didn't have any wonder drug, they had no penicillin, they have no oxygen, they have nothing, don't forget fifty-one years ago we haven't got those wonder drugs, you know. So it was very hard, you know. So I just was waiting, what is going to happen to me. And the lady next to me they had to cut her breast, and you

know, she was crying so much, she always touch her breast and she didn't have any, you know. And that was the first time I was in the hospital in all my life, first time, you know. So I couldn't speak to her because we don't understand each other, you know, I just, you know, I touch her hand and squeeze her hand like, you know, and we were just communicating with our eyes, you know. We try everything, if we could only say a few words, you know. So finally one night, I know, I get up during the night, I don't know what happened, and I have my feet up and my head down on the floor, you know, I must have been in that big shock or something from the fever and I was full of blood, the bed was full of blood, and puss, and myself and the floor, and that pressure because I have my head down on the floor, everything came through the ear without any operation, you know, and the nurse came because the German lady says, "Please nurse, hurry up, come here, look what happened to that poor child here." So she came and she say to me, "Good girl, no operation, no operation," you know, and she was so glad, so they lift me up and they clean up the mess and they gave me new nightgown and they clean my hair, and you know, my head feels so light, you know. And I feel like a newborn, and I was so thankful. So thank God, they don't have to operate on me. So at night my boss

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came because they have so much trouble home, all the children was sick, and the lady, and they have to work overtime with the business, you know, so anyway, he came in and he brought me a box of candies and he spoke to me in German, and he says, "Annie, don't worry, don't worry because we going to pay you even if you are in the hospital. We are going to take care of you because you are so nice to our children, and don't cry. You are not alone because you are like in our own family."

END SIDE TWO, INTERVIEW ONE

BEGINNING SIDE ONE, INTERVIEW TWO

NASH:Today is November 16, 1973, and I have the great pleasure of speaking with Mrs. Anna Shrimpl Kuthan, who lives here in New York City. Mrs. Kuthan was born in Czechoslovakia and came to this country fifty-one years ago, 1922. Mrs. Kuthan, where did you come from?

KUTHAN:I come from Czechoslovakia. My home town was Usti nad Orlici and I was born December 12, 1899. So I'm seventy-four years old.

NASH:And what was the town like?

KUTHAN: Oh, the town was mostly there was industry. We had about thirty-eight big factories, you know. So mostly the people, they work in the factories, you know. But that time they was very poorly paid. There was no union and, you know, things like that nobody knows. So you see, they have very meager wages, you know. And many of the people from little villages, they have to go twice a day over the big hills, you know, just to come in our home town to the factories, you know. So it was very, very bad for them in the wintertime. They have to put something over their shoes, you know, some kind of rags because it was so slippery from the snow. And so, you know, they went through hell both ways. They have to do that trip twice a day, you know. So we was lucky that we live in the city. And where I was born, you know, we live like in the factory because my father supposed to be the janitor, you know, in the factory. So we have only one little room. And there was seven of us. And I don't know, when I think of it now, I don't know how we all fit in, you know. And we get along. We share everything. And I don't know, I never even see that we would be fighting, you know, because it wouldn't help anyway, you know. And whatever we get on our plate, hurry up, we eat it. Sometime we eat two

from one plate, and we hurry up. And we even count how many spoons we ate because it was not enough what we get. And milk, we forget about the milk, you know. We have to buy the milk, you know. And so we have only once a day like coffee. It wasn't real coffee, you know. It was like from chicory, you know, and some kind of, you know, substitute like, you know. But mostly we was living on soup, vegetable soup, because my mother has a little garden and we have potatoes and we have cabbage. Everybody, all the poor people, has to have a big barrel cabbage and the potatoes. And that means a lot that they have like for the winter, you know, that they could survive for the winter because many times the people was laid off from the factories. And there was no other, you know, way to make a living. So we used to go on credit. You know, we got a book and we go to the store and, you know, they write down everything. So we always owe money, you know. We never have enough and we don't even have a bank book. Who has bank book that time? Nobody, you know. We live from one day to the next day. So my father, thank God to him, you know, because he was, when he was single, he all over the world, you know, because he was in the Army, you know. So he always run everything like instead of my mother because she has arthritis. When she got married, old

already, because my father was a widower with three children. So you see he can't pick any single girls. So my mother has a boy also, you know, because she has a misfortune, too. She was going with one fellow, and after she told him she is pregnant, then he left her and he married another girl. And my poor mother, you know, she has to go back on the job. And she leave the boy by her parents. So they raised a little boy, you know. So after my father was a widower, somebody told him, "Oh, we know about one woman and, you know, she couldn't pick anybody like, you know, so you just go there, you know, and talk to her." Sure enough, you know, and in three weeks they got married. So she has already made family, three kids and one of her own. But that boy wasn't raised up by us. He still was by her parents. So then we came, three of us. So there was six of us home. So my father, you know, he was already thinking ahead of time. Soon as one gets thirteen and a half, he's going to leave home. We can't say no. We can't ask him we want to learn this or we want to learn that. Whatever he say has to go. So one by one of us leaving home, you know. So then after my brother, you know, we all was very undernourished. So we couldn't take any heavy job, you know, because we was so skinny, you know. And we looked terrible. I'm telling you when

I think of it today, you know. So my brother left and my father when, oh, it's about two hours walk to another town, you know. It's a very historic town where Bedrich Smetana was born. That's the town. And you know...

NASH:What's the name of that town?

KUTHAN:Litomysl. Oh, it's very historic name, you know. So he went and get him job. You have to learn four years to be a barber. You wouldn't believe it, in Europe. Four years, you know. The barber has to do the, you know, hair work, you know, all the wigs and everything. And he has to learn that work. So, and then after next year I have to leave home, thirteen and a half, you know. I couldn't even go to school until I was fourteen, you know. So my father went to the school and he asked the principal, "Please, I have a job already for my daughter. And, you know, she has to help, you know, with everything." So he just packed my bundle, little bit of bundle, and Sunday afternoon, because they worked six days a week, and my mother couldn't go because, you know, she has arthritis and she was worn out already. So my father did everything. He run everything. So he told me, he says, "Well, you going to go also in that little mission so your brother won't feel

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so lonely. So you going to be two over in there," you know. So he took me there Sunday afternoon with my little bundle and bare-footed. I have to put my shoes over my shoulder so, you know, I should save them because the shoes was on a credit also. Everything was on a credit. So then we went, you know...

NASH:Your father gave you something?

KUTHAN:Nothing. Nothing.

NASH:You mentioned a little box.

KUTHAN:Oh, that little box! That little box. You know why? I can't get over why mother doesn't, that was my mother's.

MALE VOICE OFF MIKE: ...start talking about the box. (coaching her) My father gave me a little box.

KUTHAN:Yes.

MALE VOICE OFF MIKE: My father gave me a little box.

KUTHAN: Yes. Margo saw that box. I show it to her.

NASH:Okay. So what you do is you begin by saying, (she coaches Mrs. Kuthan) "My father gave me a box when I left."

KUTHAN:Box. And there was two buttons in that box and a couple of, you know, sewing thread.

NASH:You have to start the sentence by saying, my father gave me a box.

KUTHAN:Yes.

NASH:So you start with that.

KUTHAN:Yes. So my father gave me that box. The box was already maybe fifty years old because he got it in the attic in the rich people's attic, you know, from the factory. And he says, "Here, here is the box." There is couple of sewing thread, you know, so and needle and sewing thread and a couple of buttons, you know. So I took the box, you know, and nothing else I got. That little bundle and we went. So when we came, after two hours we was sweating. It was hot in July. July, you know. And so when we came to that little mission to that town and we went, you know,

in a big house. It looks like a (?). That town is an antique historic town. All (?) houses, you know. So, and underneath is a lobby. Lobbies like, you know, where they have stores, you know. So we look on that house and my father says, well, this is the house where you going to work, three-story house. Downstairs they have a store, grocery store and a bakery. And they have two children that time, you know. So they need a maid for everything. You know, like a general houseworker. And I was a skinny kid, you know. Oh, my God, well, I can't say no because my father even say, "Now, listen, if she not going to behave, just give her a good licking." Just like that. Imagine! And he don't even say, "What are you going to pay her," you know. So the lady says to me, "Well, we can't pay her much because she's so skinny, you know. So how about three crowns a month." Three crowns a month! You know. So my father says, "All right." He was glad he got another one rid of, you know, like.

NASH:How much was three crowns?

KUTHAN:Oh, almost nothing. Couple of pennies, you know, nothing. So, you know, when my brother saw me, we start crying, both of them. Both of us was crying, you know, because my

father don't even kiss me. My mother don't kiss me, you know. And I don't know, we felt like that we didn't have any parents. (she is moved) It's awful feeling, you know, when you leave home first time like a little children undernourished. And you have to work hard and you can't come back home. You can't come back and you can't complain. So we was like lost children, you know. So I says, "Oh, I hope I'm going to get plenty to eat here. I'm going to work hard here," you know. So they have a bakery, you know, in the back. In the front they have store. And upstairs they have rooms. And I thought I'm going to sleep in the kitchen because I see the bed. I says, "Oh, what a nice bed," you know, and the feather beds and everything, you know. So when the lady says, "Well, come on up in the attic," you know. So I went up in the attic, and she says, "There you going to sleep." When I saw that broken-down bed and the broken-down closet, you know, all the junk they put in attic, you know. So I says, "Oh, my God, here I'm going to sleep?" I'm going to cry myself, you know, to death because, you know, I never see anything like it, you know, dirty and filthy and cold. And they have a big wheel from the mixer, you know, from the bakery from the mixer. It was going on electricity that time already, you know. Three o'clock in the morning I could

hear it, you know, the wheel. And I jumped out of bed and all of a sudden I hear, "Ann, come on, get up. Hurry up." The boss was all, you know, calling me and I have to go, you know, in the bakery and help him with the dough, you know. That was not my job. That was job for a man, that he learned the trade, you know. But he didn't have any, you know. So I was, you know, doing everything. So he said, "Hurry up, hurry up, you know, you have to work like a machine," you know. The bread putting in and you know it's like a straw pan like, you know. You put the bread in, then you have to make those rolls and everything, you know, and I have to put it on the shelves and everything. Oh, I have to work so fast, you know. And then after I have to go and wash the diapers, you know. And go down the river and rinse them in the river in the cold weather in the wintertime, you know. So I says, "My God, I'm so hungry; I wish I could swipe something," you know, because when you're hungry, you know, your stomach goes up and down, you know. So I have to go before six o'clock with all the fresh rolls that we bake and they count them in the big straw basket like, they count them. And I have to go bare-footed, that was in the summer, to a big school, you know. It's like a cooking school, you know, where the rich girls learn the cooking and everything, you know.

Oh, it was beautiful, you know, building out of the city, you know, little bit outside the city. I have to go there. And I says, if I could only take one, maybe they wouldn't know it, but I was afraid that they going to beat me up. So when I came, you know, the one, they still was sleeping, you know, the whole building. And they have a big kitchen, and I have to go there and put the big basket on the kitchen. And that one supervisor, she came and she count all the rolls. Then she signed it, that everything was okay. And I look like, you know, just like Hansel and Gretel, you know, those two kids. I looked around and I see that big blackboard where they have, with the chalk, writing down what they going to cook next day. And I says, "Oh, my God, is it possible they have such a good food here," you know. You can't believe it when you're hungry, you know. So after I came back again, then I got, you know, little cup of coffee and one little roll, you know. And I could eat six of them, you know, I was so hungry. So then I says, "I'm going to swipe something when they wasn't looking," you know, because they bake all kinds of cakes and things like that, you know, and with yeast dough, you know, when they have like a fair, country fair. So I says, "They couldn't count everything, so hurry up." I swipe something and put it in the attic. And my poor brother

was so hungry, you know. And I said, "When I'm going to go and rinse the diapers, I'm going to put a big diapers, wrap it up in a piece of paper and put the diapers on the top. And I'm going to run behind, you know, to the river." And my brother was waiting behind the door, you know, like a beggar. And I says, "Hurry up and, you know, beat it before somebody catch me," you know. And that poor thing he couldn't even, you know, he couldn't chew it. He just swallowed it. He was so hungry, you know. And after all them years, I'm here fifty-one years, when I write and he write me back, how could I forget? I never forget how he used to bring me behind that big iron door and how we was so hungry. So you see we could never forget the hunger, you know. Many times I says to myself, "I bet I have a big hole in my stomach from the hunger," you know. So I tried, you know, to stay on the job on account of my father, you know. And then after I said, gee whiz, I couldn't take it anymore because the kids was very nasty to me and all the work they pile. I have to go and clean the store and help in the store, you know, grocery store. So my brother, the oldest one, you know, from the first marriage. He was already, see those three children, they was older. So, you know, he was in Vienna already. He was also a barber, you know, because we was skinny, too.

So I wrote him a letter that he could send me on the train the money, you know, three crowns and I would go to Vienna, you know. So he wrote me back. He sent me the money and I quit the job, you know. So my father has to call for me because we have to walk two hours to my home town, you know. And there, you know, I didn't have much to take with me. So, you know, he put me on the train to Vienna, you know. So then my brother take care of me, and my two step-sisters was there already, but my step-brother really take care of me, you know, until I got a first job by janitor, you know, because I have to learn German language, you know. Just like here, English you have to learn, so you have to take everything. No matter what it is, they never, you have to take everything. So I got a first job by janitor. He took me to the agency and he says, "Well, you know, she's skinny thing and she can't speak German, so give her whatever you can," you know. So that was in a poor-working people's section, you know. Where the poor working people live. And there everybody has bunch of kids, you know. And they used to call me all kind of dirty name. And, you know, I run so fast, so I start calling them dirty names, too, in German already, you know, because you learn the dirty names, you know, one, two, three. So then I stay there six months, you know, because my brother

tell me, you have to have at least one year that you stay on one place because you have to have a working book. In Europe you have to have working book. No matter if you work in factory or on the job domestic, you have to have a working book. Then you have to go to the police station and, you know, you have to tell them where you, the address from your new job. After you leave, you have to go back to the police station and report again you leaving the job, you know. That was the rules that time, you know.

NASH:How soon after that did you decide to come to America? How did that happen?

KUTHAN:How did it happen? That was First War broke out in 1914.

NASH: Okay. Now that I ask you that question, now you answer, you say, you somehow say that things were so bad that finally a man came so --

KUTHAN:That's what I want to bring out now.

NASH:So somehow --

KUTHAN:Yes, that's what I want to bring out now. You see. The war

broke out, First World War, and my brother has to enlist right away in twenty-four hours. And, you see, I was only like, you know a young girl and he was afraid to leave me here in that big city because, you know, it was going on something awful just like here, you know. So he send me home.

NASH: This was in Vienna?

KUTHAN: Yes. So he send me home, you know. So my father says, "My God, what we going to do with you," you know. Meantime, typhoid fever broke out. We have no hospital in our town where there was, you know, big industry. They never thought of it that people going to be sick. We have to go to that little mission, and that's two hours, you know, by foot. And we have no autobuses, you know, nothing. Or we have to go with the train to another big town. By the time they get somebody there, the people used to die on the way to the hospital, you know. So the people all dying. I got the typhoid fever. My youngest brother got it from me. My brother got it from me, and to last my father got it. So we was in that one room all sick and people was dying. The couldn't even bury them, you know. It was so bad, you know. So one aunt, she heard about us.

Somebody told her, so she came. If we wouldn't have that aunt, that was my mother's sister-in-law, you know, so she take care of us. She was living only two hours in the village. Every day she came, you know. And she used to take care of us like, you know. But because we didn't have nothing to eat, we survive. But people, you see, your stomach is like a tissue paper, you know. And you lose your hair and you have fever and fever and fever, you know. So we have nothing to eat. And those people that they really have something, that's the one they died, you know, because the stomach couldn't take it. So you see the people that they owned the factory where we lived, they die half an hour from each other, half an hour from each other, you know. And my father take care of them and, you know, he was drinking cognac. Cognac is like a medicine, you know. And we have a big bill, you know, because he buy everything on a credit. But he has to take it, why? Because he would get sick and who's going to take care of him, you know. So the rich people died and so on. So after I work little while when I get a little better, you know, I work in a factory. And then I don't like to work in a factory, and my father was very much against it because he says, "A factory is not for you. You have to go out in the world and see things and, you know, it's better for

you." So we have to thank to him that he is such a brain, you know. So then I heard, you know, about that man, you know, that he used to come twice a year on account of business.

NASH:Tell us about that man.

KUTHAN:And he lived here, 72nd Street.

NASH:Okay. Begin by saying that there was a man who came, so start speaking about the man by saying, there was a man who came to our town.

KUTHAN:Yes, and he was born in our home town.

NASH:No, you have to start the sentence.

KUTHAN:Yes, there was a man.

NASH:Yes.

KUTHAN:Yes. There was a man, and I heard about him, that he came, you know, from New York because he live here. And he used to come for the business twice a year, and I heard about

it. So they went to the movies with his wife that time. And I wait outside, you know, in the dark when they come out, you know, from the movies. And I spoke to him. I says, "Mr. Kovash, please can you take me to this country to America, you know, because there is no living here. There is no future for us," you know. And he knows it. So he says, "My God, little bit of thing like you," you know, I was so skinny and small. And I says, "Oh, I could cook, I could speak German. I'm a hard worker. You won't have no trouble with me." Believe me, you know, I beg him, you know, so much, you know. And his wife says, "Well, what you going to do, Joe?" That's the first time I heard him, you know, Joe, calling him Joe. So he says, "Well, have you somebody here?" I said, "No, I have nobody here. But I have some very, very, you know, distant relative like," you know, but he says, "I'm going to find out about him. And I'm going to write him letter and he's going to send you the affidavit like," you know. So he did that. And I got the letter back very soon, and I read it, you know. And he says that his wife's going to have a baby, you know. And that they need me. I could help them out. But the man told me, you have to pay your own way. I says, "My God, how I'm going to scrape the money?" Nobody has money that time, you know. So whatever I have, I used to

get presents once a year on a Christmas, you know, from the rich people, but they don't give you much. So I start making my own trousseau, but I didn't have much. But anyway, I put ad in the paper that I want to sell whatever I have. I didn't get much for it, but I have to borrow money from everybody, even strangers. And people that they know my parents. My parents has first time seven hundred crowns, a bonus, from the people from the factory. That was the first year they start taking care of the old people that they was working all their life in that factory, you know. So they should really get some bonus. That was like a peanuts, seven hundred. So I says to my father, "Can you lend me the seven hundred crowns?" I beg him so much, you know. And he says, "My dear girl, what we going to do?" you know. I says, "Well, I'm going to pay you back, I'm sure," you know. Then my brother, you know, he lend me some money and a lady next house like she has a beer saloon, and she knows me when I was born. She says, "Ann, I'm going to lend you much as I can," you know. Then my mother's sister, you know, she lend me some, you know. We scrape it all together. Why I have to pay so much for a dollar that time, sixty-five crowns, a dollar. I have to buy the dollars with our crowns, you see. So I have, you know, the money.

NASH:How much did the trip cost?

KUTHAN:Oh, because I have to go with the second class, they have no room in the third class. So I have to take in Bremen second class, and I have to pay the twenty dollars what I supposed to show here, you know. I have to pay it for the second class. So I didn't have any money left, you know.

NASH:And how much did the ticket cost?

KUTHAN:Oh, it cost that time, oh, my God, it cost about I think about three, four hundred, you know, because I have to pay so much for a dollar, you know.

NASH:Three or four hundred crowns or three or four hundred dollars?

KUTHAN:It would be about three hundred dollars, I think that time, you know, because the dollar was so high, you know. And I have to pay, you know, everything back to everybody. That took me about two years to pay everybody back, you know, all the things I owe. So, and so you see I got all my papers, you know, everything went nice and smooth, you

know. And I didn't have much to take with me. We have two little basket, you know, like straw basket. There was no suitcases that time. And I have, you know, I have to buy everything on credit, too, because I have hardly anything to wear. So I have few nice things. And I says, "As soon as I get job, I'm going to pay everybody back," you know. That was my promise, and I really did. So then we went to Bremen, but that man, you know, that was in our home town, you know, they left ahead of us to Bremen. They was waiting for me over there, you know. They was waiting because they ask me because I speak German if I could help them shopping because they couldn't speak the language. And they was buying lots of things, you know, so I went shopping with them. And we stay in a hotel. They have already, you know, rooms. And other immigrants was going. On the train you meet so many immigrants. Oh, you could see the big, you know, signs and sign, you know, they printed big sign and, you know, because you see from all over Moravia and Slovakia and Poland and Germany, you know. And many of them went to Hamburg and some of them in Bremen. That time all those agencies, you know, they sent you booklets like. That was from Bremen we got, we got Misler and Bremen, you know. That was the name of the agencies, you know. And they sent us booklets all over

Europe. They was needing all the immigrants here, mostly to South America, you know, on the farm. But, you know, you have to cultivate the ground, you know, because that was a real jungle, you know. So you see many people, they says, you know what they did? Well, you don't need any money. After you come here, you're going to pay us back. That's how they catch the people with children, small children. They all have big families, you know. All those poor people, you know, they was blessed with big families, you know. So they just packed few belongings and they went. But they never know what was waiting for them. They would swim back if they could, you know. So we was lucky, you know, that, I mean that in Bremen we have to go to the quarantine, you know, because they have to examine you if you haven't got any sickness, if you are healthy, you know. And you have to have clean hair. Well, we was always kept clean home already, you know. So then we, when we have everything ready, you know, everything was okay from the quarantine. We stayed about three or four days in Bremen. And the city was nice and clean. The first time I see the boat, big boat, and the ocean. You know I was dreaming about the ocean, if I could only see the ocean, you know. So finally we went on the boat, you know, and you see I have to pay that twenty

dollars for the second class because the third class was packed. They slept even on the floor, every corner, you know. So I says, "Well, what can I do, you know, as long as I'm going to get in this country." So you see that lady, you know, that went Mrs. Kovash, she says, "In case you need money, we're going to lend it to you." I says, "Thank you very much. Whatever I need I'm going to pay you back," you know. So we, you know, we went with a small boat because it does them good, the ocean air, you know, and the good food. So we was fourteen days on the ocean, fourteen days, and very bad weather, you know, storm and, you know. I was throwing up and sick. Then finally we land in New York, you know, and that was at night. And the boat stopped all of a sudden, you know, and we all went up on the dock. And we want to see the view. And that man, you know, Mr. Kovash, he says, "Hurry up and come on up. I want to show you something." So he say, "You see, that's the Statue of Liberty what you dreaming about, you know. And look at those big building and there is the Coney Island." I says, "All those lights? How could they waste so many lights," you know, because we have to save everything, you know.

END SIDE ONE, INTERVIEW TWO

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BEGINNING SIDE TWO, INTERVIEW TWO

KUTHAN: All kinds of colored lights and you know the reflection on the ocean, you know. It was like a fairy tale. You know, I can't even describe the feeling inside, you know. I says, "My God, I'm going to close my eyes." I couldn't believe it. I have to pinch myself it's true, you know. It's like a dream coming true, you know. So then after, you know, after we after, second class went first because the small boat has only third and second class, not first class, you know. So they let us first, you know. But all of a sudden I look for my uncle, you know. I see somebody, tall man with a carnation and so on, you know. But he don't know me and I don't know him, you see. But the people said, "Don't worry, we know him," you know. So they took me with them like, you know. So we went first time on the, first I have to go, you know, on the Ellis Island because if nobody call for you, they won't let you go, even if you go with another train further to different states like, you know. Before the people left I says, "Can I go with you?" Says, "Oh, no." A lady came and she said, "You see that little boat," you know, the ferry with from the third class all the people was there, and that was the last one. And they was waiting for me, you know. And I said, "I'm

not supposed to go there on Ellis Island. I come with second class." "You have nothing to say," she said. I thought I could understand, you know. So I said, "I'm going to go with you." "You come with me, and you go on that little boat and that takes you to Ellis Island." So I see all the people from third class there. They say, "What are doing here?" I says, "I don't know, but I'm not afraid," you know. So finally we come Ellis Island and then they have big rooms there, big halls and tables, you know. And they have fish that day and big pitchers with milk. Oh, you know, first time I'm going to have so much milk you wouldn't believe it because we have hardly any milk home and we need it so badly, you know. That's why we was so undernourished, you know. So I said, I wish I could have that pitcher with that milk. And that white bread. First time I eat the white bread, you know. So they give some lunch to us and so, then I look on all the people from all kinds of country with big bundles, you know. Polish Jews, German Jews, you know, Austrian Jews, and all kinds of old people, young people, young couples with little baby. One was nursing the baby. And you know how they dressed them, all different. You know those little tiny babies. You know they have those white laces like all around and they, you know, they bundle them up

tight, you know. And I says, "My God, what's going to happen to all those people?" Everybody's like frightened, you know, the people was frightened like because, you know, you can't speak the language. And many of them don't even have relatives here, you know. So it took a very long time and another thing, and many times I think about it now, it was hard job, all those people, you know, that they work there. They can't pronounce their names. That was the worst job. You see, they have such a long names, especially from Poland, you know. And they spell it. Well, we have no spelling in Europe. We just, you know, say the name and that was, you know, that was, that's all was to it like, you know, tell the name. So, you know, I says, "My God, how could they spell my name? So I was going, you know, near to that man where he was sitting, and I says, "Oh, boy, I'm going to hear my name. I hope I won't have to stay here overnight." So nobody called me. I said, "Gee whiz, everybody's going. What's going to happen to me," you know? So they was calling "Shrimpl", you know, all day. You know, I couldn't recognize my name because they couldn't spell it. And they could spell it, but they couldn't pronounce it, you know. So they called me couple of times, and then I says, is that my name? I have written down, you know. Says,

"I call you so many times. I says, "Well, I don't know," you know. I says, like this, "I'm sorry," you know. And I even speak German, you know. I heard myself with all kinds of, you know, language, so I could understand. So then all of a sudden, you know...

MALE VOICE OFF MIKE: Want to give pronunciation of the name. How they pronounce it...

NASH: Do you remember how they made your name sound, like Shrimpl, Schrampel, Shr...

KUTHAN: Oh, Schramper and Schiero, you know. I couldn't recognize it, you know, I says, "Well, it's not so hard to spell it or to pronounce it."

NASH: How did it sound, those names?

KUTHAN: Oh, it sounds horrible (Ms. Nash laughs) Schlamper, but you know, now if they could only put L on the end it would be Shrimp, you know Shrimp. If they put only L to it, that was my name, maiden name, you know. But how should I know that time? So everybody's name, they pronounce it so badly, then they spell it, but nobody understand how write,

you know. So everybody was more excited, you know, and those big bundles, you know. And the children was crying. So finally I see that uncle coming. I says, "Oh, my God, that's the man; I saw him on the dock, you know. And Mr. Kovash and Mrs. Kovash I said "Those are the people from my home town. They came with me." And they brought a lady with them, and she was Czech lady that she translate their languages to the immigrants. You see, like from Poland, they have a lady. From Germany, they have lady that do that translation, you know. So she knows those people and she knows the man because they belong to the Czech lodges, you know, lodge and they did so many things for the poor immigrants. So right away says, "Oh, my God, if I would have of know it, you know, so that poor girl don't have to stay here so long." So he says, "All right, you can take her home," you know. So everything was okay, one, two, three. So I don't have to stay there overnight. But I feel sorry for those other people. You should see those bunks, you know. On the top of each other like you see at the museum. That time it was like that, but you was on Ellis Island. I don't know if they explain it to you, but I seen it, you know. So many, where would they put all those people with all the bundles, you know. And, you know, I don't blame, you know, the government because

you see they could bring all kinds of diseases here, and that would be something. So they have to be very strict, you know. So they don't like to keep them too long on Ellis Island because it would be bad for the government and for the poor people, you know, because they, some of them, they went to different states, you know, mostly farmers, mostly farmers yet.

NASH:So what happened when you got off Ellis Island?

KUTHAN:So when I got off the train, we went on the elevator, you know, down on about Battery Place going up the stairs. And I look, I says, "My God," and then after that train left, you know, it was a rush hour. People was going home from work. Oh, the train was packed! And I was looking, you know, all over; my head was going like this, you know, because I want to see everything, you know. Then I seen the clothes, you know, clothes lines with the clothes hanging from one, you know, like a cross. I said, "How could they hang the clothes," you know. I couldn't figure it out, you know. But I don't see the pulling lines, you know, from the window, you know. So then the train was going so near, Second Avenue elevator that time, you know. And I said, "My God, he's going to go right through the

house." And you see when he stop on the station the station was shaking, the house was shaking with people. And it was in the summer, very hot and they was sleeping on the floor, the windows wide open, you know. And so many people in one room! Most of them naked because it was so hot. That time they didn't even have electric fan, nothing, you know. And they had to, you know, be so cooped up. It was like an oven those old buildings, you know. So I says, "My God, how could they sleep and go to work the next day?" But they say later on how I find out. They got used to everything, you know. So then after we stopped in 72nd Street, there was a station here on Second Avenue, so we got off. And, you know, that man, he was the friend from that Mr. Kovash, you know, because they worked in a Czech clubhouse like 73rd Street, where I live now, across, you know, the Nation Hall I told you. That was the first one they built in New York, you know. So he came with him and he says, "My God, isn't that nice." I says, "Well, I don't know where I'm going to sleep because the uncle hasn't got any room for me," you know. But the people that Mr. Kovash, they have a three story house, private house, you know. They have business downstairs and they have room upstairs. They have two married sons, you know, and one single son home. So I says, "I will sleep on the

floor." I beg, you know, I beg so much, you know. And I says, "I will sleep in the corner," you know. I don't care. I'm used to everything. We went through hell in the first war. As long as I have a roof over my head, you know, in a strange city, strange country. And if, you know, if it would be by him, he was very kind, but she says, "I don't want that greenhorn here," just like that. I says, "A greenhorn, gee whiz, what, you know," that's what they called a, "I don't want that greenhorn here, Joe." So I says, "Well, after I would get a job, I'm going to pay you everything, believe me." So that other man, his friend, he says, he took me by the hand, he says, "It's all right." He says, "Joe, I know you so many years. I would never believe it that you could do things like that in a strange country." Believe me, I never forget it. So he took me by the hand and he took me to Nation Hall. 73rd Street. There was a restaurant. And he pay for the food, you know, and he says, "You stay right here and I'm going to look around." Across the street I know so many Czech people because they coming to the club-house and I belong here. And I'm going to ask them if they could let you sleep a couple of nights before you get a job. He went from one house to another house, out of luck. He came back and he says, "Well, I can't understand the people. I would like

to pay them. I don't want it for nothing. But we are all Czech people. Why couldn't they let you stay, you know, a couple of nights?" you know. So he says, "Stay here yet." But you see the people start to go home from the restaurant and the manager, you know, he even gave us, you know, another friend, you know. She has no place to go either, you know, so she was with me, you know. So I don't know what happened to her that time. So, you know, he give us coffee and some, you know, yeast cookies like our own. And we ate so much because we was always hungry, you know. Hungry and we was so filthy from the boat and everything. So that man says, "Wait a minute. I know about some lady. She used to give job to my wife when she was single. She was also a domestic, you know, like a cook and general houseworker. And she just live around the corner, First Avenue," you know. So he said, "I'm going to run there." Old man with white hair. And he was so nice, you know. And I said, "Gee whiz, isn't that nice of him." So he run around the corner and he spoke to the lady. She lives on the first floor. And she says, "Come on, take your basket. I'm going to help you. And you know you have a place to sleep." So around the corner we went on the first floor. And there was a janitor, fat lady and she hollers upstairs, "Mrs Crawl, there's one greenhorn coming up." Oh, my God!

Fat lady came up with a petticoat, you know, old fashioned, European petticoats. And nice looking old ladies, you know. So she open up the door. She says, "Come on in," you know, in Czech language. And I says, "My God, am I glad that I'm someplace. I don't care where I am," you know. So she says right away, "You going to sleep in this bed here," you know. Old fashioned iron bed painted white. That time you have those old fashioned iron bed. I don't think you remember them. And, you know, I didn't even look how the place looks because I was so filthy. She just gave me some water to wash myself and I just flop in the bed. And all the noise it was on the street, you know, windows open and everything. It was in August. And I slept like a rock, you know, because the bed was shaking and the vibration and everything. But the next day, you know, I get up and I say, "My God, what a place!" You know, little windows in an air shaft, you know. And there was another little bedroom without a window. And there I see all the boxes and broken down suitcases and bundles what those immigrants, you know, the single girls, when they get a job, she always tell them, "Don't take everything with you. Just take maybe for one or two days because you don't know if you going to like the job. And in case you don't like it, you come right back, you know. And you

could pay me few pennies for it," you know. So I says, "My God, piled up to the ceiling like a storage room." So then I see the front room. You wouldn't believe it! All the postcards all over the walls. She don't need no painting. That was pasted up with postcards all over the walls from the single girls that they stay in her house. And after they get a job, you know, they write her. And in a case sometime they visit her. So I says, "Isn't that interesting," like a museum, you know. And she has, you know, a few old things, old dresser and that long mirror between the two windows. And those two windows was facing First Avenue. That was the only two windows, you know. So she says, "Now you wash yourself and comb yourself and dress yourself and I'm going to go across the street to the bakery." So she put up the coffee, you know. And after she came back, you know, the man was also Czech. They was all Czech people here, you know, baker and butcher, you know, grocery man, ice man, everybody talked Czech language. So she came there and they know her, you know. So whatever they couldn't sell day before, you know, they put everything in the bag, all kinds of cakes and cookies and bread and rolls, you know. And they only charge a few pennies for it. Big bags she bring everyday, you know. So she put up everything on a plate and she put

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sugar on the top. She fix it up so nicely, you know. So then she put it in the front room between those two windows, she had a little table. And then she went back to the kitchen to make the coffee and she was going to bring it up there, you know. And meantime, you know, I says, "Oh my God, I'm hungry" I start eating and eating, you know. And she came back with the coffee. She said, "Gee whiz, my goodness, what happened to all those cakes. (laughter) I says, "Oh, I'm so sorry, you know, I was so hungry."

NASH: Oh, you know, when you got up, I guess you walked away from the microphone. (laughter)

KUTHAN: Oh my God.

NASH: So, let's see. What was the last thing that she...

KUTHAN: I'm sorry.

MALE VOICE OFF MIKE: ...cake.

KUTHAN: Yes, you know, I was so hungry, you know, I start eating the cake because it tastes so good, you know. So by the time she came back with the coffee, she look and she said, "Gee whiz, you got

some nerve!" She says that in Czech language. It sounds even worse. I said, "I'm so sorry. I was so hungry, I feel like crying." She says, "That's a good sign. That shows you that you're going to like in this country and later on that you wouldn't even look at it because there is plenty to eat here. You know, soon you wouldn't even look at it." I couldn't believe it, you know. Said, "Come on and finish it up. I have some more in the kitchen," you know. And you see, she used to play on the stage in the Nation Hall, you know. Oh, she was a very good actress, old lady, you know. And she was very comical. So, you know, she was living alone. And the church from 61st Street, you know, the Catholic Church, all the nuns used to come. And they, you know, they was like giving her charity once in awhile, you know. And because that time we didn't have any pension. And whatever she gets from her, from the agency like, you know, she don't get much because she doesn't charge much, you know. So, you know, so I stayed there about three, four days, you know, because the man was so nice. He knows this lady from the Nation Hall, you know. And he pay her one week the board and the food. And he told her, you go to the Nation Hall to the restaurant and take those little, those, you know, you carry those three little dishes like, you know. They come, you know, and they give you the food in the kitchen and then, and you take hot home. And then you just put it on the plate and you could eat it. So he paid that for a couple of days. And he said, they going to give you enough so you would have two so you don't have

to cook, you know. And so I was so glad I don't have to worry because I haven't got any money, you know. So then the next day a lady came and she needs a maid, general housekeeper, a Jewish little lady. And you see everybody was in the country because it was in the summer. And her twin sister was in Far Rockaway over summer. And she told her sister, please give me some greenhorn, you know, greenhorn. So she came to that Mrs. Crawl and Mrs. Crawl couldn't speak much English, just a few words. And she introduced me and you see it's good to know the German language. No matter what language you know, so I spoke to her German because, you know, Jewish language is mixed up with German. So you almost understand everything. So that's how, you know, we spoke and everything, we arrange everything. So she says, "Well, I want, you know, that's not for me, for my sister." So she took me, you know. "I'm going to take that girl." So I was sold, one, two, three, five dollars. Mrs. Crawl says five dollars, you know. She give her five dollars and I was sold. So she took me with that little belonging, that little basket, she took me on the bus, Fifth Avenue bus we took that time. That was double deck bus, you know, that time. And the sister lives in 110th Street and they have seven rooms apartment, you know. And two boys. The boys already in the college. So when they came home from the country, they paint the place. Meantime, you know, the painters was there. And I have to scrub everything, you know, after the painters. But they was kosher, you know, and I can't cook kosher food because you

mixed up, you know, the dishes and they are very fussy about it. So after I stay there only three weeks and I quit. And I got another job on 161st Street, you know, Fort Washington. And that lady has seven rooms apartment. And she has a little baby about three weeks old and she has a nurse for the baby. And two girls, bigger one. One was thirteen and one was seven. Then the boss has a cousin, he was living there like a boarder, you know, and the lady and me, you know. So there was a big family. So she hired me like a general houseworker. And right away the next day she let the nurse go, you know, because she says, well, that greenhorn, she's going to do all the housework. She don't know any better anyway. And you see that time they do those things, you see. You have to learn the hard way. So, you know, she says, "Annie, I'm going to help you with everything. And I'm going to do the baby's diapers and everything. And, you know, you just going to do the cooking and cleaning and sometime you going to take out the children. So I did everything. She speak, you know, German like, you know, Yiddish, you know, Jewish, you know. And the boss, too. So you see, I learn all the language from the children. From the children you learn fast. Why? Because they have patience. "Annie, this is knife. Annie, this is fork. This is spoon," you know, and you remember it because you're young and you want to learn it so fast and so badly, you know. And the baby, later on she took the same accent like me, you know. That's how she talked. So I have to do everything that time. And in the winter time, you see, there

was a flu, you know, going on. Very, very, it's like epidemic, you know. You know, the flu. Everybody was getting sick and it spread so quickly, you know, and I got it. See, on my day off, I was on the bus on the top because downstairs was no room, so I went on the top, Riverside Drive, you know, was very drafty from the Hudson River. And, you know, I must have got a head cold or something. But the lady was already in the bed and the children, too, you know. So then I says, "Gee whiz." I started getting headache and sick. And nobody paid no attention. I have to do my work and take care of the lady and the children. But later on I get more sick. I got fever, so I have to stay in my room. Thank God, I have my room and my little bathroom, you know. So then her own doctor used to come and check on the children and on her. He was a German doctor. And the lady says to him, "Please, can you look on my maid in her room because she is so sick. Can you look at her?"

NASH: Three minutes? We have three minutes left.

KUTHAN: Oh my God! Can you look at her? So he came and he spoke German to me, you know. And right away, he says, "Boy, oh, boy, she has to go right away to the hospital." So he try on the phone all kids of hospital. He couldn't get a room. So finally he got one room because it was an emergency, you know. I have double pneumonia already. And infection in my ear, you know. So finally he got in

old hospital, Edgecomb Avenue and 145th Street, small wooden hospital, old fashioned. So they got me there with a taxi. The lady has to take a colored maid meantime, you know. And so I got, I stayed there three weeks. And they was going to operate on me, but they can't account of double pneumonia, you know. So they have to wait and I have infection so bad in my ear that I almost went crazy. And first time in my life in a strange country, only couple of months here and I got sick like that, you know. And I have to pay my debt to everybody. That was worrying me the most, you know, because I have so much borrow the money from all the people, you know. And I think that saved me because I have, you know, I have it in my head. I can't die, I can't die, you know. So I was lucky that, you know, they don't have to operate me. One night I, you know, my head was down, my feet was up and, you know, the pressure in my head, it was everything, you know. So that saved me, all the operations and everything, you know. And the lady was so glad that so get me back after. They was very nice family to me, you know, because they know they was responsible for me because I was a greenhorn without anybody here, you know. I don't even know who paid the hospital that time. Believe me.

NASH: It's been wonderful. Yes. Well, Mrs. Kuthan, it's been a pleasure talking to you. I hope we can talk some more and hear more of your wonderful stories about your adventures and your

misadventures (chuckle) in America. Thank you very much.

KUTHAN: I wish I could talk and talk and tell because there is so much to tell, you know.

NASH: I hope that we'll have a chance to hear you more.

KUTHAN: Yes.

END SIDE TWO, INTERVIEW TWO

BEGINNING SIDE ONE, INTERVIEW THREE

NASH:. . . 1973 and I'm visiting with Mrs. Anna Kuthan who came in 1922 to the United States from Usti nad Orlici, Czechoslovakia. And today Mrs. Kuthan has a tremendous correspondence with people from Czechoslovakia who live all over the United States, and she's going to read some of these letters and explain to us just how it happened that she has this correspondence and how it happened that her life story is being published in an American Czechoslovakian magazine. All right, Mrs. Kuthan.

KUTHAN:When I started writing my life story in the Czech magazine,

I have no idea that I'm going to have so many respond letters from all those immigrants that I can't believe it! That there is so many Czech people almost in every united state, in every state! And they was so interested in my writing. So after they start writing me letters, and in those letters they wrote me their hardship, how they get to this country, how they settled on different farms, and how hard they have their way because they have to clean that ground, you know, and everything. They have nobody here.

NASH:Would you like to tell us a little bit about the magazine?

KUTHAN:Yes. And, you know, the magazine is, must be very, very old. Maybe I was thinking about it one night. I says, "My God, it must be great, great grandfather already." And how it started because the immigrants, the immigrants was so lonely here. And they would like to know about other people and, you know, if they have some Czech people maybe on the next farm and they would like to meet them. And so one man, you know, he has idea. He says, "Well, how about if we would print a Czech magazine. And all the immigrants, they would chip in a little bit," you know. And we could send them that magazine, you know, wherever

they live. And at least we could start with all kinds of farming and help whatever, you know, if they have like idea, you know, they could put it in the magazine and they could learn, other farmers could learn, you know, about everything. And about the sickness because they have no doctors. And about the schools they built later on, you know, and about the little village and the children has to go I don't know how many hours, you know, by foot, you know, to all kinds of other, to the little school, like one room. So you see that newspaper, you know, brings so many farmers together and they like it so much, you know. And they started growing and growing, and that's how the people met and they don't feel so lonely because they says, "My God, we going to go and visit those neighbors couple of hours," you know. They was going on horseback. They don't even have a wagon. And they just, you know, pack up their kids and they walk, they just want to see how those other farmers look like, you know. And even they was not even Czech people, other nationalities, Swedish, Norwegian, German, you know.

NASH:All these people are in the same magazine.

KUTHAN:No, no, no, they not in there, but the neighbors, the farmers,

they met them there, you know. And they didn't even know they exist there, you know. So they started, you know, visiting each other. And that's how the magazine grow and grow, you know. So then I start getting all those, you know, wonderful letters. Sometimes I could, I have to read them two, three times because, you now, I start to cry, my tears was going, you know, and I can't help it. I was so emotionally, you know, upset that those people write me all their hardship they went through here, you know. Otherwise, I wouldn't even know it, you know. And how they survive, no matter how hard they work, even their children has to help, you know. And the husband sometime he has no job, you know. In the wintertime was very bad because they couldn't make any living. Many times they lost everything on their farm, you know, what they plant because it was a very bad season, you know. And every one of the farmers suffered hardship, but they didn't give up.

NASH:Could you tell me how it happened that you decided to write your life story in this magazine?

KUTHAN:How it happened, because one day I read the article in the paper, in the magazine, and I start thinking about it. I says, "My goodness, so many people write all their life

story. I'm going to start writing, too, because I know people going to like it because I went though so much, not only here, but already in Europe. Therefore, I left to this country. And maybe they going to publish it and maybe people going to like it." So that's how it start, you know. And with help, you know. I never wrote nothing before, not in any magazine; that was the first time. And I didn't have so much experience. But I just remembered everything that happens so many years before. And all the things that had happened since I'm here, over fifty years, you know. So they start writing me so many letters and that's how I keep on writing. I'm not finished yet, you know. I still keep on writing, you know. And I get more and more respond. I says, "My God," and I do an even better job now, you know, because the more you write the more experience you get, you know. And the people are, you know, so thrilled because the way I describe everything and write everything. It's really truly, it happens to us here, and to me. That's why all the letters I'm getting, it's all from the old, hardworking immigrants what they went through. And they even write me, you know, sometimes they forget, you know, how to write the right name and so on. They make mistakes just like I do, but that doesn't make any difference to me, even if the hand

is shaking and they are mostly, mostly they write me over from seventy up, over ninety years old. Those are all the old-timers. And some of them are here sixty-five years, seventy years in this country, so they could tell something about the hardship. And they are not lazy and they write me letters that, you know, if, I can't describe it, the feeling I have for them, you know. It's nothing compared what we going through now, but what they went through. And they couldn't turn back to old country. Why? Because they have children born here already. They'd have to think about them. They have to build schools! And they have to keep on going so the next generation, they should have it better. And that was, you know, they work all together very hard. And they made it, you know, even if they have to sacrifice so many things. Many of them settled down in Pennsylvania in the coal mines. What they went through, hardship! The way they live so poorly. And they have, mostly they have TBs, you know, and they was underfed, undernourished. And so many children was born and dying, you know. And it was so bad and they couldn't (?). They didn't know where to turn. I feel very sorry for all of them. So then when I start writing more and more, more and more letters I was getting, so I get involved so much, you know, and so deep that I can't stop now. I'm

so involved in it. And I like to do those things for the old immigrants because they really did deserve it, you know. And especially in this time, you know, I think more in the back because you see those hardship what they went through. How many people nowadays would go through it? Many of them would maybe quit, but not our people. You know they scattered all around, even in South America, Buenos Aires, in those worst jungles because they all wrote to the Czech magazine and that's how we find all the stories in the magazine. And it was so interesting, so I always says, "My goodness, my goodness, you know, is it possible. How could the people get in those jungles, and the country was wild." They were write that we have to use rifles to shoot the wild animals and we was afraid we never have a rifle in our hands. And, you know, we all have to shoot because we have to survive. We have kettles, we have a little farm. And during the night all the wild animals came to the house, and they was afraid, you know, that they would break the house. And, you know, they would even maybe kill us. So we, some of them has to always watch during the night and watch those animals because they ate everything. Even some of those little baby cows, you know, in the pasture they even kill. So it was, you know, it was, and those big snakes in the jungles. My gosh, big

ones! They have to kill them. They have to fight with them. And they have to have those machete so they could go through the jungle. And one man wrote that he was, it's such a deep jungle that those big mans was living. You could imagine, and he lives up in the tree. He make like a little house in that tree. So he wrote it to the magazine. And you know when people was reading it, they have goose pimples because they couldn't believe it that man lived through all that wild animals and through the wilderness, you know. And that's all true. All the things that people write in the magazine, this is not a fiction; that's a true stories. That's why, you know, we old people, we didn't have so much education. We never had a chance, you know, but we are very simple people and we are speaking the truth. And I'm so glad that this going to be, you know, in the history because maybe it's the third generation already. And the great grandchildren, they might get hold of some of those peoples and they will say, "Is it possible that our ancestors went through such a hardship just to come in this country and they tried to build it, make something out of it, grow something?" What they bring the seeds from the old country. They have it in little bags. They get them from home to this new country from every seeds, everything they should grow for

remembering. (she is moved) Only thing they (?) springs, if it good are bring is that wood if the ground would be right, if the seed would take so they could see whatever they got, that it grows. And I know that they will take care of it because this was part from the old country, and the new country. And it was so touching, you know, when they wrote in the magazine. "My God, you should see our field, the wheat, the corn, the cotton. We never see cotton in Europe." All of a sudden they have to learn how to plant the cotton, how to pick the cotton. Even the little children, they have, they blood was running from their fingers, you know, and the bag was hurting. The grandmother has to go and help because they have only little field, you know, with the cotton in Texas. And it was so hot. And they bend down and pick the cotton, you know, just to make, you know, little money. They didn't have much for a bale of cotton, just a few pennies. But it helps them because there was no other living. So it was so hard for them, you know, and very bitter experience, but they didn't quit. They says, "Well, next year if it's going to be God help and were going to have better harvest. Maybe we could pay some of the debt, "because everyone has to go on a credit, buy on a credit. So when they have a little bit, you know, better season, they have to pay a

little bit on the credit again. So it was so hot they never have a penny. They couldn't you know, but they all was so working together, the whole family; everybody has to chip in and work. So you could imagine that old poor mother. When she went to bed (she is moved) and covering up her children and looking at them sleep, that they have enough to eat. And they have only little house, you know, made out of mud. Mud houses that time. They didn't have any house, you know. Later on, well, yes, later they could afford to have a little better house. And, you know, this is why we did leave our country. We have better houses, better thing. We have no idea that we going to go through all those hardship. We couldn't even picture that, you know. So it must be very hard for them many times. I even cry when I read all those heartbreaking letters in the magazine, you know. And I says, "My God, and they didn't quit. They didn't quit." So now you see the third generation, they already have it made. But if their great grandparents would not immigrate here, you know, God knows what would happen to them. And I only speaking for other immigrants, too, because every one of us that we immigrate here, we came with, you know, with empty hands. We didn't have no money. We have a lots of, you know, we had to pay all the money we borrow, you know. And so every one of

us has to stick here no matter how. Why? We can't go back. How could we go back? We can't swim back. So I was not afraid to hard work, never. No matter what it was, I says, I'm going to try, you know. So that's why, you know, I got involved in that magazine and all the people, they write me I should write again because it's so interesting. And that lady in Minnesota, when she wrote me that she is invited on the Statue of Liberty for grand opening. That museum, Immigrant Museum, she send costume. And that costume, you know, it's an antique from her great grandmother. And she donated, and she donated some cut glass and I don't know what. So they invited her for the grand opening because she lives on the farm and she is very sick. She has arthritis and asthma. So through the magazine, when she find my address right away she wrote me, sending me that letter introduction. And she beg me as long as I live in New York City if I would be so kind and go with that letter of introduction to Statue of Liberty and introduce myself and she would like very much if I could speak to somebody and if they got that present and everything whatever she donate. So that's how I know Mr. Kallop, you know. And I was so thrilled when I met him. He was such a nice gentleman, and he took me to his office, you know, and explained me everything.

Then he took us through the whole museum, you know, so I could see all the things they did already, you know. But that would take weeks and weeks, you know, because I'm, you know, nothing escape my eyes. I want to see everything because history, it fascinate me, you know, because you see behind every little thing, every little donation, whatever they have from all kinds of immigrants there is a story behind. And that story means so much. Just like the box I get from my father when I went first time from home and I leave home. And he gave me two buttons, couple of needles and a thread. That was everything I get (she is moved) so that box, I still have that box went through hell with me all my life up to now I still have it and even I showed it to Miss Margo so she could see it. It's nothing on, it's an old box. And that box must be already God know how old because my father he found it in a attic by the rich people. And he says to me, "Annie, that's all I can afford you, to give you that little box. You going first time for a home. So don't forget, be a good girl. Sew up everything whatever you have and keep this box for remembering." So, you know, with tears in my eyes, I left home like a little orphan, thirteen and a half. So with that box it went through two wars. First of all, War of 1914, I went through hell. Now wherever I was, I always

says, "Oh, I hope I got that box with me," you know, because that was something that would keep me going, you know, like the rabbit foot. The colored people believe in rabbit foot. But I didn't have any but this box. It's a treasure, and I'm going to donate it to the museum because that would be the right place, you know. So there is so much to tell, you know, but I have to get it out of my chest because, you see, God knows how long we going to live here, you know. And why should I take it with me? I want it tell it people. That's why I put everything in that magazine. And more I write, more respond I get. I could read you letters and translate them. You wouldn't believe it. One lady wrote me from Ashland. She writes, "Dear Mrs. Kuthan. I can hardly believe it and I can hardly wait when I read your articles in the magazines what you went through." I know, you know why, because I was a widower when I was very young yet. My husband passed away and he left me with two small girls. What I'm going to do now, what I did. I put a ad in the Czech magazine that I would like to get a job with some widow and I would be like a housekeeper, run his home, and if I could bring my two children with me so they, we could live together. So I got a letter from New York. It was from Tarrytown, I think. And the man was a widower and he wrote me that he

would be very glad and he would send me the fare, the money for the ticket and I would come and be his housekeeper. He was a widower but he has no children. So he told me which train I should take, where to get off, and how to get in New York, and then I would have to take a bus to get, you know, outside the city. So she writes, "My goodness, I never forget, I thought I never going to get here. I never was in New York. And then I don't know that man. So when I finally land in New York, I took a bus, I ask people, and, you know, we was so worn out from that long trip. So finally when he says you have to take this bus and you just get off, you know, on the next stop and there you have to ask somebody again. So they was, you know, running back and forth all tired out. So finally when they came to the house. They see the house of the man open up the door and he says, "My gosh, who are you?" I says, "Well, there you are. I got the letter, you know, that you need a housekeeper, and these are my two daughters." So he said, "Well, come on in," you know. And he has a house, but she wrote, she wrote: "He was so good to our two daughters and he was so good to me. We was like, just like he was relatives." And that I treasure so much because, you know, it means so much to my two little girls. They went to school. And then on my day off, we

used to ride on the subway. You always ride all the subways and everything. That's how I writing you that I know New York subway. And we went to Radio City on my day off. And I want to show my two little girls that they should really know something about New York because there is so many things to see. And maybe they later on wouldn't have a chance to see it again. So we was going on a sightseeing tours like in New York. And then I know where the Czech people was living and all the Nation Hall where they have, on 71st Street, you know, gym because they believe in gymnastic. And so I know all the places that you are writing about. That's why I'm writing you that you are writing with things so nice that anybody could read it. Very plain and very truly. So then another lady wrote me. "My God. When I read your articles I just think about that we could shake hands because she went through so much hell like me. I'm third time married already. I'm eighty-four, and I live in Wisconsin on the farm also. And I have three children. And my parents immigrate here. I was not even born yet, you know. My father and mother, you know, they start going together and I was on the way already before they got married." And that's what she wrote me. And so I was, I don't know how to explain it. That's how she writes everything. "So after later on, my

parents bought a farm after they got married. And we have five more children, brothers and sisters; almost every year we have a kid. And my father wasn't much for the work, you know, so my mother has to do all the hard work and take care of us. So later on when we grow a little bigger, we have to help also. We have a farm. We have chickens and we have everything, milk and so on. But we didn't have any money. So we can go to the factories because there was no factories around. So we just try everything we could so to survive the winter. And it was such a bitter winter, so much snow that we have to make tunnels to go to the barn. And we was afraid that the cows would freeze and the horse would freeze. And we would freeze. Thank God, we have enough firewood. And so we was sitting in the kitchen by the stove." So later on she wrote, that poor thing, she got married. And she has such a hard luck. The first husband, he didn't have you know, ambition for, you know, working. He didn't make much money. So she says, "What are we going to do?" So she went to factory. They didn't pay much either. Then she says, "I'm going to work in a restaurant." She works so many hours almost for nothing. She was glad that she has something to eat there and she could bring something home for her children, you know. So she says, "My feet hurts me so much I could

hardly stand on them." She says, "That time they have for twenty-five cents big dinner." Imagine, twenty-five cents! And we have, restaurant was packed with all kinds of working people, dirty people. They just want to have some hot supper or a dinner, you know, for a few cents. And they got a glass of beer for nothing. So she says, "I start, you know, hoarding as much as I can," you know. So then after she got sick, she has to go to the hospital. So, you know, no job and her husband, you know, he owes money. And he couldn't have pay it. So she says, "My gosh, soon as I get back on my feet maybe I'm going to try and open up a restaurant for myself because I know how things going in a restaurant. And maybe my children could help me already and my husband could help me. At least I could see him if he's working or not and I will chase him so he should work, too. So we did it. We buy a little restaurant. And I work twice as harder than before because everything was on me, all the hard work and supervising everything. And like I say before, you know, everything was so cheap. So we don't make any profit. When I start counting by the month all the receipt, I says, "My God, we didn't make any profit. I have to change everything," you know. So she start charging ten cents more like, you know. Then she lost customers again. So

she says, "Well, we can't go on like this. We have to, you know, sell the restaurant. Then she says, "I'm going to go to a factory." So she went to a factory where they was making gloves just to make few cents again, you know. So then her husband passed away. So she's met another man, also a farmer. So they have again a farm by the lake. That's where she lives now yet, you know. And it's like a summer resort where they could rent cabins by the lake. And so they was making few dollars on the cabins in the season. So what did happen? The husband was going to the garage and he was going to put kerosene in another big can for, you know, for something else that he could use it and it explode, "The whole kerosene explode and the whole barn was one, two, three in the flame. And he was burned to third degree right, you know, on the spot. And I was, you know, in the house and I looked through the window and I run out. And I couldn't help him because everything was in flame. So the neighbors, you know, they start calling, you now, and they took water and everything they want to help me. But it was too late. When we took him to the hospital, he died in the car already. So I was left a widow again." So I says, "I'm not going to lose my head. I have got little old house and I have those few cabins." And don't forget I was very old already.

END SIDE ONE, INTERVIEW THREE

BEGINNING SIDE TWO, INTERVIEW THREE

KUTHAN: And from that hard work I was so run down, but I have to make a living. I can't depend on my children. And also he was a widow and he has one daughter and she didn't like me. I even have to bury my husband with my last insurance. So I was left penniless again. So my sister, you know, she moved with me. She was even older than I am, and I'm sending her, I'm sending you a picture from my sister. And you could see her on the photograph, she's only half of it," but that don't matter, you know. Even the half it's better than nothing. So, you know, when I read the letter, when I see that picture, you know, I start crying, you know. Why? Because those two old ladies looked so worn out and old. (she is moved) And they even send me their picture. Wasn't that nice of them? So I could see how they look if I didn't have a chance to meet them in person. I can't express myself how those people are so honest and they like to, you know, write people they problems. I write to them letters to cheer them up little bit, but the best way I can, you know. So they won't feel so lonely. Every letter I get is heartbreaking. Everyone of them suffers hardship. Many of them are maybe three times a widow and left alone. I have one letter from an old gentleman and he's in

old-age home. And he didn't have an envelope, air mail letter and he wants to send me air mail letter, so I get it faster. So he make a envelope and he make himself with three different pencils, red and blue, I think, all around that envelope so it looks like an air mail envelope. When I opened the letter, I start to cry. (she is moved) Old gentleman and he thank me so much for those beautiful, beautiful stories I write. He says, "I'm already eighty years old. I'm in an old-age home. I'm all alone, and I'm so glad that I could read such nice stories. It would keep me going. And, you know, you wouldn't mind if I open up my heart to you because I know you're writing to everybody and that you would understand what I went through." So, you know, after I read all those letters, then I couldn't even sleep sometime during the night because I think about those people and I picture them. I wish I have wings if I could fly to them and surprise them and just shake hands with them and see they wrinkled faces and their old arthritis hands. That would be something. Why? Because I look the same way, you know, so we would understand each other. And you could imagine. And we would start talking all those things that we went through, all them years here. That would be some story. That would be a history, you know. And that's all those immigrants in this country. Even from other nationalities. They all went through the trouble here. Even now like the people, it's also third generation. Every one of them in New York downtown. They used to call it the Lower East Side or a

Jew Town, downtown, you know, where they all land and they all stay there, you know. They make their home and they says, "Well, this is the big city and maybe we could make a start there, and we going to try." That how they all start there. And that was cold flats, all broken down houses. And they children grow up in it. The toilet outside the hall, cold water, box sink, and there was not even gas that time. Kerosene lamps. So they made it. In every house was like a U.N. All nationalities. They all have to get along. They have to start learning the language. And when the children start going to school, they start teaching the parents the English language. "Please, Mama, you have to say it this way." But Mama says, "I'm going to say it my way;" you know how it was, Italian, German, Polish, all kinds of nationality. That's how they start, you know. And now when they great grandchildren are on a television now. And another thing, they are not ashamed of their ancestors that they immigrate here. And that's how they was poor and cooped up in those old tenement houses. They says, "We are proud of our parents." And, you know, we went through, I remember how we lived and I'm not ashamed to tell it now. Now we live better. And our parents worked so hard and they skimped so we should have better education and we should make something of ourselves. We have to chip in every penny. We went to sell newspaper. We went to, we did all kinds of errands just to bring couple of pennies home. Then we start counting them. "Do we have enough, Mama?" You know, we going to try again. We going

to go someplace and you could make few more pennies. Some of them start singing in a little beer saloons like Irving Berlin and many, many of them, you know. They start from the bottom, you know. And then little by little they start climbing up. But they did it the hard way. And look at nowadays, you know. Nowadays, one, two, three and overnight it's a star and they make big, big money. But I rather appreciate people that they learned and went through things the hard way. Why? Because they appreciate it better. If you going to do something and you need something and you going to go out and you says, "My God, I need so many things, but I'm going to work hard and I'm going to get it." After you get it, you says, "Oh, my God, look at it. And nobody help me. I made it with my own money," you know. You have more pleasure out of it, you know. So I could go on and on and translate all those letters that I can't even explain it, you know, that feeling I have for those old people. And how on Christmas I get so many cards. Every one of the readers who wrote me beautiful Christmas card and inside a long letter. They praying for me I should live so long. (she is moved) And I shouldn't get sick. So I should keep on writing those beautiful stories because they could hardly wait when the magazine comes. First thing they looking for my stories. And it's like a Bible to them. They treasure that magazine so much because this is the only one we have already, you know, because all those old-timers are dying. And, you know, the young generation, they have different ideas so they wouldn't, you know, read all those

stories. Maybe just the second or third generation, but you can't blame them, you know. But those parents, you know, they really did it for them, you know. So I answer every letter because I answer every letter. Not that it's going to be in history and another thing. When I told my daughter in Connecticut, she lives so far out, and I have only that one daughter and she's married; she has two children. That they tape recording my stories. She start crying. She says, (she is moved) "Mama, I can hardly believe it! On your old age you were so many years in this country, it's unbelievable!" I says, "Dorothy, I was crying because Miss Margo is so nice. And when she came first time recording my stories, you know, we talked so much just like that we know each other or really God knows how long. And now we know each other better. And it's so interesting because maybe later on when I won't be here, I was begging if I could get the tape recording so you would have your mother on a tape recorder because you never know what you going to go through yet. And this would be something for you to remember me by in case some bad time would come. And you could put on the tape recorder and you would say, 'My God, what my mother went through!" (she continues to be moved) You know, it's a wonderful thing that they tape recording everything nowadays. So many people, you know, would just put on the tape recorder and they could hear it because it's true. They couldn't say, "Oh, my God, this is not so." There it is, it's really true on the tape recording. So I'm so proud that I'm involved, you know, in that

immigrant museum. And that tape recording everything. And that my daughter, when I'm going to tell her everything when I go there, and my granddaughter already she says, "My goodness, Grandma, I'm going to tell my teacher what a famous grandma I have," you know. So she is already interested, and she's only seven and a half years old. So, you know, we get so much involved and it happened so unexpected, you know. We didn't rehearse nothing at what time like, you know. This is everything the way it happens without rehearsing. And another thing, I want to thank everybody that they was so nice and kind in the tape recording studio. It was the first time I was in tape recording studio and there was such a handsome man and they all was tickled pink. They says, "My God, we couldn't do it even better the way you did it," you know. And such a nice building, soundproof. I always was looking if I going into one room, nice and soundproof room, you know. Where I live, it's a jungle. And so I want to thank everybody and Mr. Kallop and all those nice gentlemen. And they sent me such a beautiful letter that I cried when I read the letter. (she is moved) And I want to answer their nice letter. And I'm going to keep on writing stories and I know that I'm going to get more and more letters from, even from Europe I'm getting letters because they reading my story. That magazine goes in every corner of the world. And it's so interesting because I speaking for my Czech nationality because I'm here in New York. And those other immigrants they live in every different states. They wouldn't have a chance to speak on

the tape recorder because they don't even know about it. So I'm speaking for all of them, and I'm glad that I live in the fun city and that we have everything. And that's you know, isn't that wonderful that I could speak on the tape recording and speaking for our Czech immigrants. Isn't that wonderful? And maybe if it goes to history, who knows, and I would go in the spring when the weather gets better, I would like to visit the museum and I want to find out how they progressing and all those things.

NASH:Thank you very much, Mrs. Kuthan. (chuckles)

KUTHAN:You're welcome, Miss Margo. And, you know, I have tears in my eyes, and I'm still, you know, crying because that's how I am, you know. I can't help it. You see, that's so emotion. You get emotional, you know, involved in it because I feel really sorry. You see all those letters. I wish I could translate them all. That would take a whole storybook, you know. (she sniffs) And one thing I want to ask you yet, I'm alone, a Czech, like a immigrant that's on the tape, or did you interview some others?

NASH:You're the only one. (she laughs)

KUTHAN:Oh, I'm so proud. I'm so proud. And, you know, it's too bad

that we didn't know about it like before. But you don't know it yourself because Mr. Kallop told me last time I was there, but they didn't have nothing ready yet. They have it in mind, you know. So I was so glad when they progressing so fast, you know. And that the people going to have history and they could put it on a tape. To the students, to the groups, whatever, you know. And, you know, they could hear all that trouble the immigrants have. And that's from all different nationalities. That's why it's so interesting how they immigrate here. And many of them are maybe already seventy-five years here. They could tell stories if they are still living. But maybe they grandchildren know about it, what their parents was telling them. And they could even remember things. That's why it's so interesting. Oh, I could keep on talking and talking, (laughter) you would never get finished.

KUTHAN:And thank you very much, Miss Margo. You are so nice, and it was pleasure talking to you.

NASH:Thank you. (she laughs)

END SIDE TWO, INTERVIEW THREE

BEGINNING SIDE ONE, INTERVIEW FOUR

NASH:. . . December 10. 1974, and after a year and a half we're finding out (she laughs) what was the next thing that happened to Mrs. Kuthan after she got out of the hospital with double pneumonia. She got better and she went back to her family in Washington Heights.

KUTHAN:Fort Washington.

NASH:Fort Washington Avenue. Mrs. Kuthan, how long did you stay on that job?

KUTHAN:Oh, I stayed there about, I think, nine months because I was very weak and I have to get my strength back. And the lady bought me a little footstool so I should go outside on the sidewalk and get little bit sunshine. And then I says, "My God. I'm going to take the carriage out with the baby," you know. And she was so glad. So every day, you know, after lunch I take the baby out. And all of a sudden I see some girls going with the carriages and they speak Czech language. And I said, "Oh, my God, I'm so glad that I could meet them, you know." So then after they take

me dancing in (?) Hall and, you know, around our Czech neighborhood. So then I met my husband right after New Year. And he was born in Vienna, and I used to work during the First War in Vienna also. So he knows the people the same like I know, and we have to meet here after so many years. So we start going steady. He didn't have nothing, I didn't have nothing. So then I changed another job because the lady won't let me off Sunday or Saturday so we could go dancing. And I says, "Well, I have to go out sometime because, you know, how I'm going to go with my boyfriend if I couldn't go out with him." So then I left the job and my husband used to work on antique furniture. And they have one customer lady and she just came in this shop week before, and she ask the boss if he would know some kind of good cook and general houseworker. And my boyfriend heard her, and he said, "Oh, my God, I'm going with a girl, my girl, and she wants to change her job. So right away we make a date. He gave me the address and I introduced myself to the lady. And they was living 77th Street on Madison Avenue, old-fashioned big house. They have no children. There was only two old people, very rich, very rich. And the lady, you know, she used to do some kind of, you know, what you call it, you know, she used to work for the hospitals for the poor children

because...

NASH:Charity.

KUTHAN:Charity work. She did all different kind charity work and I liked the job because they have no children. And very plain cooking. And main thing was I can go out every night, every Sunday, Saturday, and that's what I was looking for. So we start dating. My husband used to wait downstairs, you know, and every time we went to the Central Park because we have no money. So in Central Park, you know, that time you don't have to be afraid. Even at night nobody bother you. So then I start saving money little by little, you know.

NASH:How much did you earn?

KUTHAN:Eighty dollars that time. That was a big money, you know.

NASH:Eighty dollars a week?

KUTHAN:No! Month! Eighty dollars a month. And very, very easy cooking and not much cleaning. And I have a laundress, you know. So I like the job very much.

NASH:How old were you?

KUTHAN:I was going on twenty-five. And my husband was four, five months younger than me, but that don't make no difference. (she sniffs) And so we was dating for one year. I start saving the money because he didn't have nothing. So then after we have a chance to buy the furniture from a warehouse. The boss says to my husband, he says, "Listen, Anton, there is a nice furniture and you just go ahead and look at it up and maybe you could buy it." But he didn't have no money so he called me up, and we went to the warehouse and we, you know, I put a deposit on the furniture. But we have to take the furniture out because the warehouse was moving out of business. So (she laughs) if it wouldn't be for the furniture, maybe we wouldn't even get married yet because I don't want to rush. So, you know, what we have to do? We couldn't get any rooms. We couldn't get any apartment. So I put an ad in the Czech newspaper, and I was going to give them ten dollars reward, that was in 1925, you couldn't get no rooms for no money. And finally we got three broken-down rooms in 70th Street next to the Lenox Community House. And that was our first rooms, so we put the deposit on. We to fix everything

ourselves because, you know, that old house, the same one like I live now. So then we get the furniture inside and start buying little by little. And I still was on the job, you know. And then I told the lady that I have, you know, I want to get married and I have to quit the job. And she was so mad at me, you know. I says, "Well, I can't help it. My husband wants to have a home because he has nobody here. And we just going to make it even if he didn't have money. So we went on a City Hall on February 14, on Valentine Day, and we got married, and it was snowing so bad. So we just took subway home. You can imagine. Subway! And I cook, you know, before and bake, and then we have a couple of friends coming in. And that was the poor wedding. The next day I went to work right away, part-time job cooking on the West Side for a very rich Jewish family. But they have plenty to eat. And they have two cooks. I was afternoon cook. Another one was in the morning cook. So then I make twelve dollars a week. My husband make twenty-nine dollars. So we put the money together and everything was so expensive, 1925, so we have to start, you know, and be on a budget. Every week so much and so much I have to put on the rent, gas and electric. And then, you know, we have to, but we was satisfied. We didn't ask for much. The main thing is that we have those

three little rooms. We was living in the back. Downstairs the janitor she has a self-play piano and all those sailors, they used to come there because she has a daughter there. They was playing the piano, the whole house was shaking. The husband was so skinny, and the wife was about over three hundred pound, you know. So, you know, there was so much music and going on, you know, every Saturday night. And, you know, we couldn't even sleep. And you could hear everything through the walls. So we stay there for a couple of months and meantime we was looking for decent apartment. Then we got a chance at 77th Street for a beautiful box room. So we fix them. Every time we move we was fixing, fixing, fixing because landlord don't do nothing that time. And if you want to live little half decent, then, you know, you have to do it yourself. So then we stay there about nine years in that apartment because that time, you know, we could get apartments any time all ready. And I was working all the time. I could get so many jobs. I wish I have another pair of hand, you know. So then we start saving little money. Every week I put couple of dollars on the side, you know, in the case on a rainy day or in the case we going to get sick. You have to think about it. Then we move again. We moved to Bronx. But we couldn't get used to the Bronx because we

was used to our people here, our neighborhood. So then...

NASH:Where did you live in the Bronx?

KUTHAN:Southern Boulevard. Beautiful apartment, beautiful. So my husband was lost there, you know, so we moved back. We got an apartment, 72nd Street, also nice rooms. That time you could get the rooms, you know. And we got steam heat also already. So we was moving I think about five times. So after I got my daughter, after sixteen years marriage, I got my daughter, we have to stop moving. So I have...

NASH:How old were you when your daughter was born?

KUTHAN:Forty. I was forty. I think that must be a change life baby. And you could imagine, I never was, you know, my children like, you know. So I have to start different life. I have to adjust myself, you know, like a mother. I'm ashamed to tell you because, you know, I was forty going on forty-one. And that baby was premature and we was living in that 70th Street, and my God, all those beer saloon, all the racket going on and people fighting always. All the kids, I think that 70th Street has most of the kids. Everybody was on the street yelling, hollering. But you

get used to everything. So then after, you know, when my daughter was born, I have to, you know, start little by little, thinking, well, now you have to live different life. You have to live on a budget. So I made it, you know. And I devote my life to my daughter. I want to bring her the right way. I didn't go to work. I start sewing. I start making home. I start making clothes for her. And I fix my apartment so nice. I was so busy. And I went out to the park almost every day and went shopping with the carriage. And we was living on the top floor, and I dragged the carriage down and the pillowcase and the baby and the grocery upstairs. I don't know today when I think of it, I think how could I make it, you know, all those things. But it was pleasure because, you know, once you're a mother you start thinking different way and you want to bring up the child, you know, the right way. And you want she should have a better break because she's born in this country. So I devote myself to her. And in that neighborhood was very, very tough. (noise in background) And I made it. I didn't go to work. I just stay home and I stretched the dollar. We have everything. I wash my clothes in the old-fashioned washboard. I hang up the clothes up on the roof. And we have four big box rooms and a bathroom. So I have plenty work to do. And my

husband has his meals when he came home. He has everything on the table and I even bake at night. (noise increases) And went to the park, and I was busy, and that kept me going. (she sniffs) So then after my daughter start going to school, that was one thing because we have everything in that neighborhood. We have churches. We have a public school. That public school on the First Avenue, 70th Street, that was very old school because many those children that they used to go there years ago still their grandchildren used to go there until the school was so old and broken down and neglected that they have to, you know, break it down. Demolish that school. But before that from U.N. Building, they was that those children from different countries, they used to go there to the school like temporary before they build a school, you know, the modern one for them. So then after, you know, they close the school altogether and then they demolish the school. And now they building for the senior citizen apartment house, as you know. (background noise continues)

NASH: Tell me something about all the jobs that you had before you had your daughter.

KUTHAN: (chuckle) I was working for actresses. You know, I don't

know how many pair hands and it was even in Depression, and I get so many jobs. I have recommendation. I was working for a very famous doctor. He was a cancer specialist, and he has a big office on Park Avenue, 51st Street. And we was living across the street. They have big duplex apartment, I think about thirteen rooms. The place looks like a museum because they have all the antique furniture and the doctor was very famous. So, in that building, they used to live all the millionaires only. Each one has about fifteen rooms and I don't know how many helps. And our doctor, he was a very famous, he make big money. But he came from a very poor family, and his parents used to live someplace on the farm in Wisconsin. They used to come and visit him once a year, you know. But after he get famous, you know, he make big money. And I started like, I went four days I was a laundress. And they have a baby and nurse for the baby, Swedish nurse. Then we have a Hungarian cook. Then we have a Slovak waitress, and I was Czech. And we have Italian chauffeur. So we was like a U.N too, you know, because (she laughs) when you go on a places and you see so many helps, you have to get along. And they have a big estate in Lake Mahopac. So I went there one summer. But the lady was so nice to me, and the doctor, too. So then after, they say, Annie,

can you work for our friends? So, you know, I got so many recommendations. So that friend was a big lawyer; Mr. Curry was his name. They also have a big estate in Lake Mahopac. So I have to go there. They used to live also on Park Avenue. Then I went to work for a Dems Taylor. A Dems Taylor was a writer, but I started working for them when he was not so famous yet. But he was composing and writing music for Metropolitan Opera House. So then he says, "Annie, we going to move, and please can you help me with moving." So then after, before they leave 83rd Street, and the super gave me the job. So then after we moved to 47th Street and they have the whole house, duplex apartment. Then he started making money. And he start getting famous. That's where I meet all those famous people because I have to open up the door for them. Paul Whiteman, Billy Rose and what was her name, that Kitty Carlisle. And, oh my gosh, so many famous name, you know. I could name them and name them, you know. So it was so interesting. And that lady was hiding in Connecticut because she was also an actress. Her maiden name was Mary Kennedy. She used to work on Broadway, stage actress. And she was in a family way, and they have a big, about hundred fifty years old house in Greenwich, Connecticut. So she hide there. So after she came back, you know, she

wants me to work there full time, but I don't want to leave that doctor, you know, because they want me, too. So I don't know what to do and, you know, so I stay by the doctor. And, you know, after that Mrs. Taylor, she says, "Please, Annie, if you don't want to work for us, at least come here and see our beautiful baby daughter," you know. But then one day I says, "Oh, I'm going to stop there." We was all crying. We was crying, all of us, you know, because they all like me so much because I was so honest. And I run the whole house and they could depend on me. So I says, "My God, I would, but I can't do it," you know, "because I have that other job and they want me four days. And then when they have company, I have to stay there." And that time we didn't have no telephone. So they always send me telegram. Again, that Mrs. Quick, that doctor's wife, she says, "Annie, I have a good friend, and they getting from China, from those monastery," you know, the monasteries where they embroidered everything, those big tablecloths and all the hand embroidery. So that lady used to buy everything and she wants somebody honest. And I have to, you know, do that in her living room. So I was pressing those heavy tablecloths and the napkin too much and the luncheon sets. And, you know, all kinds of fancy work. So, you know, she trust me so much. So I did that in her

dining room and they pay me very, very well. And I used to dye all different colors those tablecloths and then have to put them in the box and tissue paper. And all the millionaires, ladies, you know, they used to come up there, and they buy it, you know. Everything for they daughters and friends. So I met so many people. I couldn't even, you know, tell you everything. (she sniffs) But for me it was so much experience and it was so interesting, and nobody want to lose me because I was so honest. I have so many keys; I have bunch of keys. I have to put a little ticket on them so I won't mix them up. Even meantime, you know, when those ladies went to their countries, so they say, "Annie, please, can you take care of my husband? Can you make him breakfast?" So I have a couple of men during the summer, so I run from one job in the morning to another job. Hurry up, make breakfast and make the bed. I run to another job, you know. I was running, running, running. And, you know, that time they don't pay much, but every penny counts to me. So I was so busy. Then after, you know, when my daughter stated getting bigger, you know, she was going to high school. And I was glad that we have all those schools around here that she don't have to travel with the bus. So, and all the churches, and she used to belong to one church on 61st Street. And

they used to call for her. And they want to see my home. And they want to meet me. And they says, "Mrs. Kuthan, don't worry. We like your daughter and we're going to take her places with the station wagon and we going to bring her home again." So in that church, I went there. It was a Swedish church. And they used to sing there around Christmas time and Easter time, and they paid them, you know, few dollars. And then they have banquets in the basement there, like in every church. And they used to serve, you know, when they have some kind of special supper like, you know. So my daughter and those other girls, they serve around, you know. And they pay them, you know. And around Christmas time they used to go singing to all those banks around here, and they get five dollars, you know, extra money. And they was so proud when my daughter come home. She says, "My, Mother, you should see all those people. When we was singing, you know, they was so glad." And, you know, I was glad that she was safe with those people. And I know them all. And the, you know, when you have a daughter, even if you have a son, you have to be interested what kind of company they have. Where they going, you know, and talk to the, explain them everything. So now I was safe, and I was glad that she was in the right hands. And I know the people, and they like her. I keep

her clean. I sew. Every time she went out, I want to see if she has everything clean, you know, because then they know what kind of parents she has. And it's very important. So I was keeping busy. So then after she finished the high school, then she got a job, Metropolitan Insurance Company. And then she was dating boys, you know. And then later on, you know, she met the right one. Then she got married. And my husband got sick the year before she got married. He didn't even know the son-in-law. He got stroke. Then he got blind. So I was dragging him to New York Hospital. Thank God, we was living only half a block from the hospital. And every day I went on a different clinic. It was very hard for me, but I have to do it. He was my husband. So then it was altogether different life. You have to expect that, you know, because you have invalid on your hands. And we was living on the third floor. I have to drag him down little by little, and crossing street was very, very bad, on York Avenue. By the time I get him to the hospital, I have to rush and get a ticket. We was waiting always couple of hours. It takes half a day every time, you finish with one clinic because there is so many people waiting. But I was thankful because that clinic we went to, that's a special clinic for heart attack, stroke, and hardening of

the arteries. And all those best doctors, you know, they take care of people. So I could write a book about the hospital because I was going then. It was not even finished since 1938. And so I know every floor, everything. And they have all the modern machinery. So I know the hospital and all those clinic, but what good is it if they can't help him, you know. They try and try. They know how long he's going to live. So then I was so heartbroken. I says, "What I'm going to do now?" But, you know, you have to pull yourself together. You're not alone. And you have to keep on living. You have to keep on going. So then after four years sickness, he passed away. On the top of that where we was living. We have such bad people on the top of us, you know, above us and the ceilings fell down. And right on that day he die in the chair in the worst mess. And I don't know what to do because I have always clean house. And so when my daughter came home from work, you know, I don't want to scream. And, you know, when she saw him sitting in that chair, she said, "Mama, Mama, please, something happen to daddy." (she is moved) And I run from the kitchen and I don't know, that day I have premonition something going to happen, you know. It was so hot and humid. And I run and I know right away that's the end of it. So I says, "Please, Dorothy,

don't scream. I don't want the people in the house should hear it. Thank God, it's over," you know. So then we had to call the police and, you know, when you have to go through all those things like everybody, you know. And the whole night we was up. And the undertaker came and the coroner came. It was on a weekend, on Labor Day, you couldn't get nobody. So, finally we have to arrange the funeral, and then he was cremated. And after that, when we came home, I could see him in that chair sitting. And I think I'm going to see him for rest of my life. That's something, you know, when you married so many years, you grow together like, that you can't separate, you know. That's impossible. You see, the children don't understand those things until they get married and have their own family and if they have to go through the same thing, you know. But after awhile, you know, I have to pull myself together because they have to break the ceiling and they have to plaster everything and paint everything. I have to move the furniture. So I was busy again. I have no time to cry because it wouldn't help me. So then my daughter was going with that nice boy what she met in Florida. And they was going steady, so then I told to my daughter, I said, "Well, Dorothy, I don't know. I'll have to move because the New York Hospital, you know, they want

to build for the nurses. That's why they bought the whole block from 70th to 69th. And we have to move, so many families. Where we going to move all of a sudden, you know, when we lived there over thirty-five years? This was our neighborhood, the children grow up, that they was born there. And so you see it was another problem for me. One problem after the other. So I says, "You want to go steady with that boy, you know. I don't want to rush you into any marriage because, you know, you still have plenty of time. But, you know, I have to move, and I just want to find out, you know, what are you going to do?" So then, you know, she says, "Mama, we have to go together and find out, you know, everything about each other." And then, he lives in Connecticut, use to come up every weekend and he was a nice, clean-cut boy from a nice family, very simple boy. He was not spoiled like the city kids. So I was thankful for that. So then after I want to get her married so, you know, she take whole lot stuff, whatever I can give her. So they came for that with the big truck. We load up everything. So then after I didn't have so much. So then after she got married, I start looking for a place to live. And I couldn't get nothing that time. Nothing! So one lady, you know, in this house where I live now because they used to run the house before. And my daughter

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and her daughter, they used to go together and they was on each other wedding. So that lady die here, where I live. She die her; otherwise, I wouldn't even get those three broken-down rooms. So that's how I get in this house. So I have to fix everything, break down everything in the hottest weather so I could have a little decent place to live because I can't live in dirt!

END SIDE ONE, INTERVIEW FOUR

BEGINNING SIDE TWO, INTERVIEW FOUR

KUTHAN: So I was busy again through the summer. I thought I was going to passed away because it's very hot when you're old. And you have to break down everything, and by the time you get little bit settled. I'm surprised myself that I still live through it, you know. But, you see, I was so used to hard work and I don't mind, you know. I don't mind, you know, cleaning the place and keep it little bit clean. But now the house is run down. And everything is broken down. The landlord won't fix nothing. So, you see, I wish I could get just one little room where I could live like a human being them few years, them few remaining years, you know. If I could see sunshine little bit or through the window. You see, now they build a big thirty-six story modern, you know, high-rise building and it's

almost right front of my window. And it's so dark, I don't know if it's sunshine or a daylight or a night. So that place is not pleasant now. It looks like a jail to me. But I can, you know, do nothing about it. I only wish if I could get in that new project on the 70th Street corner, you know, because it's our neighborhood. So I have to wait for the interviewing and see what's going to happen; that's the main problem what I have. But I'm thankful for the writing I'm doing, you know. Miss Margo knows about it. To the Czech magazine and all the wonderful people, they writing me such a long letters. And since we doing the tape recording, they are so interested in it because it's going to be the big history and all are immigrants, all over United States; in every state there is immigrants that they build this country. And through that writing, I make so many new friends and that keeps me going, you know. And our writing them back long letters and I writing to the magazine. And I have a pleasure out of it because now since you do writing, you are more close to the people. You reach them deeper and you understand their problem, you know, because we all have problems long as we going to live. So this keeps me going, you know, because I'm alone here, you know, so I was glad when Margo dropped in today because we have so much to talk about and we get along so nice. And I can't thank her enough every time I write about her even to our magazine. And to the people how we get along, how we met, how we use to tape recording in the wintertime. We didn't even have a steam, we have our coats on in the kitchen.

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I have the stove going, you know. But we don't mind, you know, because we was busy telling the story. I don't know if people going to like it what I'm telling, (she is moved) but everything is true what I went through. (she cries) Many times I'm crying here. I says, "Is it possible that on my old age," I'm seventy-five tomorrow, and, you know, "that I couldn't even have it..."

END OF INTERVIEW