**Paul:** Good afternoon, this is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Sunday, November 13th, 1994. I'm in Saratoga Springs with Mary Belstak. Mrs. Belstak came from Czechoslovakia in 1913. She was 14 years old at that time.

Present also with me is Fran Gother, Mrs. Gother is the daughter of our interviewee Anna Crupper and Mrs. Belstak knew Anna Crupper when they were girls in Czechoslovakia. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

**Mary:** 1899, February the 2nd.

**Paul:** Can you tell me the name of the town in Czechoslovakia where you were born?

**Mary:** [unclear 00:00:58].

**Paul:** And was that Czechoslovakia at the time?

**Mary:** No, I think that was ----

**Female:** It was Hungary.

**Mary:** Was it already at that time?

**Female:** Hungarian.

**Paul:** Well [laughter], I also want to say for the sake of the tape that you may hear the ventilation system. Mrs. Belstak, what do you remember about the town that you grew up in? What did it look like when you were a girl?

**Mary:** Work hard, farm work. That’s all I could remember, that’s all they were doing. Go to school up to six grade and then I was big girl, I had to come to this country.

**Paul:** Was there a certain part of town that sticks out in your mind when you think back to that town? What do you remember about the town itself?

**Mary:** Not much, when you were in a farm, you don't go no place. It’s not like over here even though you learn. Not much.

**Paul:** Do you remember the house that you lived in?

**Mary:** Oh yeah.

**Paul:** Can you describe that for me?

**Mary:** Well, it is small house you know one of them. The roof was shingles, that’s all I could remember, small shingle house.

**Paul:** How many rooms did it have?

**Mary:** Three.

**Paul:** Who lived in that house?

**Mary:** My parents and all my sister and my brothers.

**Paul:** You had one sister.

**Mary:** One sister and three brothers.

**Paul:** What was your sister’s name?

**Mary:** Millie Gava.

**Paul:** Millie.

**Mary:** Millie, Milana.

**Paul:** And was she older than you?

**Mary:** Younger.

**Paul:** And you had three brothers.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Paul:** What were their names?

**Mary:** One of them was Ceral, John and Steve.

**Paul:** Ceral, John and Steve, and were they older?

**Mary:** Younger.

**Paul:** They were younger.

**Mary:** I was the oldest one.

**Paul:** You were the oldest. Being the oldest girl did you have special responsibilities in the house?

**Mary:** Oh yeah.

**Paul:** What were you responsible for?

**Mary:** Taking care of them and taking care of like stuck chickens inn stuff like that.

**Paul:** Do you remember when your brothers or sisters were born?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What do you remember?

**Mary:** What I remember, I was making supper with my father and I heard my mother scream [laughter] and then little bit later I heard the baby, so my father was so glad he say, "Oh thank God [laughter]. That I remember.

**Paul:** Did your mother ever tell you any stories about when you were born?

**Mary:** Never.

**Paul:** Did people talk about those things back then?

**Mary:** That was terrible. They never used to say anything to us.

**Paul:** What was your father's name?

**Mary:** Steve.

**Pau:** And what was his--?

**Mary:** Stanko.

**Paul:** Stanko, how do you spell that? Do you suppose Stanko?

**Female:** S-T-A-N-K-O.

**Paul:** Thank you.

**Mary:** That’s right.

**Paul:** Stanko. Tell me a little bit about what your father's personality was like.

**Mary:** He was helping like what should I say? What should I call that? You know when something happening that he was the one that announce it like all the town.

**Paul:** Like a town crier?

**Mary:** Something like it.

**Paul:** He told everybody the news that happened.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Paul:** What was he like as a person? What was he like as your father? What do you remember about him?

**Mary:** Wonderful man, good looking man.

**Paul:** What did he look like?

**Mary:** They said that I looked something like him.

**Paul:** Describe, picture him in your mind and describe him for me.

**Mary:** How can I do that? Big moustache, big man, good looking [laughter].

**Paul:** What did your father like to do for fun?

**Mary:** What should I say? Work [laughter].

**Paul:** He worked, did you have a farm?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What kinds of things did your father do on the farm?

**Mary:** They raised the vegetables and you know weeds and stuff like that. We had chicken. Cows and you know a lot of work to do to keep him busy.

**Pau:** What kind of vegetables did you grow?

**Mary:** All kind of vegetables, any kind of vegetable you think of they grow it.

**Paul:** Did you eat the vegetables?

**Mary:** Oh yeah.

**Paul:** Did you ever sell the vegetables?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Where would you sell the vegetables?

**Mary:** There was like a market, twice a week. I used to go sell it there, pack it basket and I went and I sold them.

**Paul:** Did lots of farmers do that?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What else did they sell at the market?

**Mary:** Not much, only most vegetables, nothing else like fruit you know. You've got fruit they could sell the fruit and which that’s all.

**Paul:** What kinds of foods did you eat when you were a little girl in Czechoslovakia?

**Mary:** Homemade bread, homemade cakes, not many cookies, once in a while but the rest of it soups, fat roasted.

**Paul:** Where did you get the meat?

**Mary:** Market, there was a butcher. We got it from the butcher.

**Paul:** Did you ever slaughter your own animals?

**Mary:** Pigs and chicken.

**Paul:** How did they slaughter a pig?

**Mary:** First they feed her good [chuckle] and then they grip her and stuck the knife in her that’s all. They didn't shot it that time.

**Paul:** What would they make from the pig?

**Mary:** Baloney, blood baloney, rice baloney and like [unclear 00:08:52] and rest of it they smoke it like even the [00:09:04] they smoke it and survive they give us some [laughter].

**Paul:** Did you make these things at home?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How would you make a blood baloney that you just mentioned?

**Mary:** How would they make it?

**Paul:** How did they make that?

**Mary:** How did they make it? They grind a meat, cook it first, they grind it, cook rice or sometimes barley, mix it together you know with onions and garlic, salt and they got things to put it in and that’s the way we used to do it and then they boiled it. Not boil it just put it over in the hot water for a while and dry it and then then that keeps.

**Paul:** It would keep a long time.

**Mary:** Not too long, about a week to time. It keeps about week or so, not no more, not more.

**Paul:** Was there a special place in your house for storing food?

**Mary:** Not much, on top of the attic like they used to do it.

**Paul:** What would they store on top of the attic?

**Mary:** Bread and meat they used to store it in the chimney, they hanged it up in the chimney and smoke it and they keep it over there.

**Paul:** You mentioned that you ate soup?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How did they prepare the soup?

**Mary:** They had to put it in water and put meat in it or the way I make it, take the skin you know the thing from the blood, take it off and then put vegetables in it, boil it and I can't explain any other way [laughter].

**Paul:** Who did the cooking in your house?

**Mary:** When I was in Europe?

**Paul:** When you lived in Czechoslovakia.

**Mary:** My mother.

**Paul:** What was her name?

**Mary:** Anna.

**Paul:** What was her maiden name?

**Mary:** Kolar.

**Paul:** Can you spell that please?

**Female:** K-O-L-A-R.

**Paul:** Do you know anything about your mother's background? Do you anything about her history?

**Mary:** I know that they were two families living together, two brothers married two sisters like my grandmother and they were living together and my mother was the oldest one when she was a little bit older she had to go out because there was the other children [laughter].

She had to go out to be working for somebody else. That’s what I could remember what she used to say that she didn't have very happy life you know because she had to go someplace else.

**Paul:** How old was she when that happened?

**Mary:** Maybe about 12-13.

**Paul:** And when you say she went to work, what kind of work did she go and do?

**Mary:** Taking care of the children and helping with the farm work.

**Paul:** And this was at somebody else’s farm.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Paul:** I see, can you describe for me what your mother looked like?

**Mary:** My sister [laughter].

**Paul:** She looked like your sister but what does your sister look like [laughter].

**Mary:** She was a big woman, not as big as I am. She had a little bit smaller face than I had [laughter].

**Paul:** Is there something that you remember from Europe about your mother that you enjoyed doing with your mother when you were growing up?

**Mary:** I tell you not very much because there was always more children and I was the oldest one, I always had to go out and work, work. I can't even picture myself you know what I mean.

**Paul:** It was a hard childhood?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What would you do for fun when you were a little girl? If you had some time to do something you enjoyed, what would you do?

**Mary:** Go out and play with children because I was only a child [laughter].

**Paul:** Do you remember a game that you played as a child?

**Mary:** I go see that I remember now, whole lot of little things, like play with- they cut up piece of wood and we heat it and see how far we could hit it and bowl.

**Paul:** Were there other children who lived near you?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What religion were you?

**Mary:** Catholic.

**Paul:** Do you remember going to church as a little girl?

**Mary:** Oh yeah.

**Paul:** Tell me what you remember about that? Do you remember the church what it looked like?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What did the church look like?

**Mary:** It’s a big church.

**Paul:** How often did you go?

**Mary:** Every holiday and Sunday and sometime when they had like devotion. We used to go as far as I see every Sunday and every holiday and devotion.

**Paul:** How long did the service last?

**Mary:** The devotion usually used to last one hour and Sunday mass was a little bit more than an hour.

**Paul:** Did the priest ever visit your house?

**Mary:** No.