**Kate:** Good Morning this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 18th of July 1994. I’m in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at the home of Molly Epstein who came to the United States from Russia in 1921 when she was …

**Molly:** 22.

**Kate:** In April 1921 when she …

**Molly:** May or April, I [inaudible 00:00:22].

**Kate:** May or April when she was 16 years old. Why don’t we begin by you giving us your full name and date of birth please? What is your full name?

**Molly:** Molly.

**Kate:** Molly.

**Molly:** Molly [inaudible 00:00:36] Molly was a Russian [inaudible 00:00:37].

**Kate:** What was your last name?

**Molly:** Dektor.

**Kate:** How do you spell that?

**Molly:** D-E-K-T-O-R, Dektor, D-E-K-T-O-R.

**Kate:** Here we have it written D-E-A-K-T-O-R.

**Molly:** [Inaudible 00:00:56].

**Kate:** Then you’re married name?

**Molly:** Epstein.

**Kate:** Would you spell that please?

**Molly:** E-P-S-T-E-I-N.

**Kate:** Where were you born?

**Molly:** It was a small town Pavlovsk.

**Kate:** Do you know how to spell that at all?

**Molly:** No, I don’t think so, but [inaudible 00:01:19] small town.

**Kate:** Where was that town near? The nearest city?

**Molly:** Near Kiev.

**Kate:** What’s your birthday?

**Molly:** In December.

**Kate:** December?

**Molly:** The 3rd.

**Kate:** The 3rd?

**Molly:** I would guess, years ago they didn’t [inaudible 00:01:35] my mother used to say, “You were born before Christmas and New Year’s holiday.” They pick a day.

**Kate:** You knew according to the high holidays?

**Molly:** Yeah and [inaudible 00:01:50] it was a high holiday. It was Hanukkah when to give Hanukkah, before they pick a day [inaudible 00:01:57].

**Kate:** They estimated December 5th and the year is 19?

**Molly:** 1905.

**Kate:** Now …

**Molly:** A day [inaudible 00:02:06] before [inaudible 00:02:07] I wouldn’t tell you.

**Kate:** The small town you mentioned near Kiev where you were born, what size was that? How small?

**Molly:** It was a very small, it was for [inaudible 00:02:19] center but it was train transportations used to go. It was a small old town.

**Kate:** How many families would you say would be there?

**Molly:** [Inaudible 00:02:31] 100.

**Kate:** 100 people or families?

**Molly:** 100 families [inaudible 00:02:37].

**Kate:** How would you describe to us, if we’ve never been there the town, what the town looked like?

**Molly:** Like a small town, everyone had a house to live in and a little garden and a cart or two carts or horse.

**Kate:** What about the country size how did it look like?

**Molly:** Country size? Alright.

**Kate:** What was the major industry in that town? What did people do mostly?

**Molly:** The trains pass by so [inaudible 00:03:11] they used to sell.

**Kate:** Buy and sell?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** With the train industry?

**Molly:** The train passed by, they stopped and then they shopped.

**Kate:** What was your father’s name?

**Molly:** Max [inaudible 00:03:25].

**Kate:** Max, M-A-X.

**Molly:** My husband’s name was Max too.

**Kate:** What was your father’s occupation?

**Molly:** A butcher.

**Kate:** He was a butcher?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Could you tell us what your father looked like? Could you describe him to us?

**Molly:** He was a nice looking, nice built man.

**Kate:** Eyes color, hair color?

**Molly:** Dark. I look like him, dark.

**Kate:** Dark eyes and hair?

**Molly:** Yeah. [Inaudible 00:03:53] the family, I am.

**Kate:** What about your father’s personality and temperament?

**Molly:** He was a good-natured man.

**Kate:** Is there any story about your father you associate with your childhood? Anything you remember special?

**Molly:** I remember my father’s mother, the grandmother. She died years ago [inaudible 00:04:18] a lot of children out of all of them there were six living [inaudible 00:04:21]. The sister passed away, left her son and they helped him. My mother raised him. My mother was a very good-natured woman.

**Kate:** What was your mother’s name?

**Molly:** Sarah.

**Kate:** How do you spell that?

**Molly:** Sarah.

**Kate:** Sarah? S-A-R-A-H?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What was her maiden name, your mother?

**Molly:** Levenson.

**Kate:** Levenson?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How would you spell that Levenson? L-E-V-E-N-S-O-N?

**Molly:** I don’t know, she didn’t know so I didn’t know.

**Kate:** What was her occupation your mother if any?

**Molly:** A wife, housekeeping.

**Kate:** Housewife.

**Molly:** She cooked and baked, that was her occupation was to cook and to bake.

**Kate:** What did she look like? How would you describe her?

**Molly:** She was a beautiful looking woman. You could still see the picture there, she was beautiful looking and nice built.

**Kate:** How tall was she about?

**Molly:** She was taller than I was.

**Kate:** About five?

**Molly:** 5’3”.

**Kate:** How about eyes and hair?

**Molly:** They were like your shade.

**Kate:** Blondish?

**Molly:** Yeah blondish.

**Kate:** Eyes?

**Molly:** The same thing.

**Kate:** Blue?

**Molly:** Yeah, grayish.

**Kate:** Grayish blue eyes. You said she is good-natured. Tell us about your mother.

**Molly:** She was very good-natured. She used to help out people whenever she could, very good nature. Whenever she had money she always used to- they always used to come collect the money. She never could hold on to money, we used to kid with her.

**Kate:** She was generous?

**Molly:** Very generous, very good-natured.

**Kate:** What were her chores around the house? You said she cooked and she baked.

**Molly:** That’s all.

**Kate:** Did she clean as well?

**Molly:** No, cleaning not much. We’d go up and assist her. We used to do the work in the house.

**Kate:** Did you have servants at all?

**Molly:** No.

**Kate:** You said that your mother took in a child of your father’s sister?

**Molly:** Yes, when the mother died she raised that boy.

**Kate:** How old was your mother when she did that? Died before you were born or after you were born?

**Molly:** The boy?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Molly:** You mean the other sister? The boy she married him and he came to this country.

**Kate:** What about brothers and sisters, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

**Molly:** Three brothers and one sister.

**Kate:** Could you name all of you in order?

**Molly:** Yeah, Sam, Harvey and Joe, then Lisa.

**Kate:** Sam, Arving or Harvey?

**Molly:** Harvey and Joe.

**Kate:** Then you came along, you had three boys first?

**Molly:** I was the youngest and then my sister was after Harvey and then Joe.

**Kate:** Then your sister is named?

**Molly:** Lisa.

**Kate:** Lisa?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Then came Joe?

**Molly:** Then Joe came then I came the last one.

**Kate:** You’re the last one?

**Molly:** Mother she had twins after me but they didn’t live.

**Kate:** What do you remember about your house back home, in the old country, what do you remember?

**Molly:** It’s a small house and there wasn’t too many rooms, we slept in one room.

**Kate:** How many rooms were there about would you say?

**Molly:** We had four rooms.

**Kate:** How was the house? How did you heat the house?

**Molly:** It had like the two walls, in between the two walls was like we used to heat up and then we used to get heat from them in the oven.

**Kate:** What was your house made of?

**Molly:** From charcoal, cheap.

**Kate:** No, but I mean when they built the house was it made of?

**Molly:** Frame.

**Kate:** A frame house?

**Molly:** Yeah, the frame and the plasting.

**Kate:** What about lighting? How was your house lit?

**Molly:** Gas lamps.

**Kate:** Gas lamps?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You had a garden did you?

**Molly:** Yes.

**Kate:** What did you grow in the garden?

**Molly:** Vegetables.

**Kate:** What type of vegetables?

**Molly:** [Inaudible 00:08:38] potatoes, carrots, stuff like that, [inaudible 00:08:42].

**Kate:** Did you actually eat from the garden? Majority of your vegetables came from your garden?

**Molly:** The most [inaudible 00:08:52] they came in and took what they needed.

**Kate:** What type of furniture did you have in that house? Was it store-bought or homemade?

**Molly:** Store-bought years ago, but it wasn’t fancy furniture. We were not rich people.

**Kate:** Did you keep animals?

**Molly:** Yeah, we had a cow and a horse.

**Kate:** Anything else?

**Molly:** Chickens.

**Kate:** How about plumbing? How was the plumbing? Where did you get your water?

**Molly:** We had to dig out a well [inaudible 00:09:31].

**Kate:** What about toilet facilities, were they?

**Molly:** Outside.

**Kate:** Out house. You mentioned your mom did the cooking and [inaudible 00:09:44]. What was your favorite food as a child?

**Molly:** I ate anything, I was not a picky, my sister was the one picky. I wasn’t.

**Kate:** Did anyone else live with you? Grandparents, did they live with you?

**Molly:** My father’s mother, my grandmother.

**Kate:** Your grandmother lived with you too?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did she help cook?

**Molly:** No.

**Kate:** What about the kitchen? Could you describe your kitchen?

**Molly:** [Inaudible 00:10:14] a build in oven.

**Kate:** A built in oven?

**Molly:** Yeah and that’s all. There you cook it in [inaudible 00:10:22] anything you put it in there to cook.

**Kate:** How did you take baths?

**Molly:** We had a bath house too you could go there was [inaudible 00:10:44].

**Kate:** A bath house?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** In town?

**Molly:** In that city, you go and take a bath.

**Kate:** How far was your house from town?

**Molly:** Close.

**Kate:** Within walking distance?

**Molly:** Walking yeah.

**Kate:** How did your family get about from place to place, did you?

**Molly:** With the horse and the wagon.

**Kate:** When you ate your meals, back to meal time now, when you ate your meals, how did your family organize meals? Did you eat them separately, together, how?

**Molly:** We ate together. Everything was cooked in a [inaudible 00:11:21] and then you take to the table and everybody was eating.

**Kate:** Everybody sat down at one table? Where was that table?

**Molly:** The table was in the dining room. The dining room, the living room, it was one room.

**Kate:** How would you describe your grandmother? You said your grandmother lived with you, were you especially close to her?

**Molly:** Yes, she was an old woman yeah. A nice white woman, she was short and fat and didn’t do anything, and die she didn’t felt better. She died [inaudible 00:11:54].

**Kate:** Who were you closest to in the family?

**Molly:** Here?

**Kate:** Back when you were a child? Who was closest to you in feelings, who were you?

**Molly:** You are always close to your mother you know that.

**Kate:** What about religious life, what were you religiously?

**Molly:** Jewish. I was Jewish religious not Orthodox.

**Kate:** Were your parents?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did they keep kosher?

**Molly:** Strictly kosher.

**Kate:** Your father was a butcher?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** He was a kosher butcher?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did you say prayers daily?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How did you observe your religion? What did you do?

**Molly:** When it’s a holiday you observe the holiday religious way.

**Kate:** How about in sun down and sun up, did you observe the Sabbath that way?

**Molly:** Sabbath and the seventh day. The Sabbath and seventh day [inaudible 00:12:59] you don’t do nothing, you rest that day. Six days you work and the seventh day you rest.

**Kate:** Was there a synagogue nearby?

**Molly:** There was a small place like a little chapel. Weren’t many people, it was a small chapel.

**Kate:** Did you ever experience any religious persecution when you were a child?

**Molly:** Plenty. Jewish people had plenty persecution in [inaudible 00:13:33].

**Kate:** In what form did it take when you were a child?

**Molly:** We had to hide ourselves [inaudible 00:13:39] when they would pass by the soldiers they was looking for women to rape them.

**Kate:** Where did you hide?

**Molly:** We hide in the stable, [inaudible 00:13:52] trouser, you hide in a [inaudible 00:13:53] you hid, they pass by, they could stay there half an hour or so when they were hunting.

**Kate:** How about in terms of the community, was the community Anti-Semitics too?

**Molly:** Good and bad.

**Kate:** It was a mix?

**Molly:** Yeah a mix. Some of them were very nice and some of them all they could know is to help themselves, they rape.

**Kate:** When you said you had to hide, how often did this happen?

**Molly:** When they went by, soldiers. We had to hide …

**Kate:** How often did the soldiers come by?

**Molly:** I wouldn’t tell exactly how often it was when it happened, was a couple of weeks, and then sometimes in a couple of days pass by there.

**Kate:** Do you know anyone who was hurt? Do you know …?

**Molly:** A couple of them got killed.

**Kate:** There were women who were killed?

**Molly:** Men.

**Kate:** Men?

**Molly:** Women they were raping.

**Kate:** Did you know women who were raped?

**Molly:** The [inaudible 00:15:00] we wouldn’t tell you see. Another thing, they find us playing that to hide.

**Kate:** What was your favorite holiday then as a child?

**Molly:** Every holiday was a favorite, you prepare eggs, then you bake [inaudible 00:15:16].

**Kate:** What type of baking and food was good on holidays?

**Molly:** Bread, coffee, cakes, different pastries to [inaudible 00:15:27].

**Kate:** What about school life? Did you go to school?

**Molly:** Not much. You couldn’t [inaudible 00:15:33] there wasn’t many schools, they didn’t bother with it.

**Kate:** Did you go at all to school though?

**Molly:** A little bit, not too much.

**Kate:** What age did you go?

**Molly:** I wouldn’t tell exactly, but [inaudible 00:15:48] studied in the house as much as we could. During the war, there was the war at that time, the 1913 war.

**Kate:** How did the war affect your life?

**Molly:** It affected everybody’s down there.

**Kate:** How? What happened?

**Molly:** You were afraid for getting killed.

**Kate:** Was anyone in your family fighting the war?

**Molly:** They were too young to have to fight.

**Kate:** Did you ever suffer from hunger?

**Molly:** No.

**Kate:** Because you lived …

**Molly:** We [inaudible 00:16:28] we were a neighbor was a [inaudible 00:16:32], was a gentle people, they were very nice. My mother used to help them out, they tried to save us, find a place where to hide.

**Kate:** What were their names? Do you remember?

**Molly:** I don’t remember, no.

**Kate:** They tried to save you when?

**Molly:** When the soldiers came around [inaudible 00:16:51] and they’re looking for trouble, they tried to find a place to hide.

**Kate:** Whose soldiers were they?

**Molly:** I think they were the [inaudible 00:17:00] there that time [inaudible 00:17:02] they were fighting. Then the country the one for the [inaudible 00:17:04], they were fighting one country with the other, were fighting wars.

**Kate:** Cossacks?

**Molly:** The Cossacks too was with them.

**Kate:** It was either Cossacks …

**Molly:** The Cossacks was with the [inaudible 00:17:23] they came to be.

**Kate:** Also Bolshevik soldiers came through?

**Molly:** Bolsheviks were fighting with the Cossacks.

**Kate:** Did they come and try to hurt?

**Molly:** The soldiers, whenever they would go fighting, they tried to help the [inaudible 00:17:39] they tried to hurt.

**Kate:** What did you do for entertainment when you were a child? Did you have games that you played?

**Molly:** We didn’t have much time because with the war all the time.

**Kate:** How was your area affected? Was there destruction in your part of the country?

**Molly:** We lived [inaudible 00:18:01] it was completely swept. From this city we went to another city, it wasn’t good. [Inaudible 00:18:12] for those couple of years, bad.

**Kate:** How did you get to the United States? When did the idea come into your families mind?

**Molly:** It was [inaudible 00:18:21] to go. We couldn’t get in touch with, my brother the oldest one was here. He left just before the war broke out, and he was there in America.

**Kate:** How did he get to the United States? Who paid for him to come here?

**Molly:** My father.

**Kate:** Did he have any contact person here?

**Molly:** We couldn’t get a contact that time. During the war you couldn’t get a contact. It wasn’t one country, like Russia fighting with Germany, no then there was no peace.

**Kate:** Before the war when your brother came and you say you think your father paid the money for him to come. Did he know anybody here?

**Molly:** My father had a brother here.

**Kate:** You father had a brother. Where was your father’s brother?

**Molly:** He was here in Pittsburgh.

**Kate:** In Pittsburgh. Your oldest brother …

**Molly:** He had one brother, when they called for the army, he left and he came here in America. His wife’s parents lived in America so they brought him over.

**Kate:** What did your father’s brother do, your uncle what did he do for a living?

**Molly:** In America?

**Kate:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Molly:** He bought a butcher shop, he know how to cut meat, and you become a butcher.

**Kate:** He was a butcher here?

**Molly:** My brother when he came here he become a butcher too.

**Kate:** Your father, your uncle and your brother were butchers?

**Molly:** They had experience with that wherever they knew they went to.

**Kate:** Your brother came first then came the war?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How did it happen that you all came over?

**Molly:** We tried to leave here and go. We had a little money saved up. We dig the money in the backyard in the ground the money. The neighbor were very nice people and they knew, we told them where we hid the money in our garden. Then they made up 1920 to leave and to go on the train was [inaudible 00:20:38] you’re afraid. We did see when the woman went with us. We take the [inaudible 00:20:44].

**Kate:** What woman came with you?

**Molly:** The neighbor.

**Kate:** The neighbor woman came with you?

**Molly:** Yeah we joined our neighbor. [Inaudible 00:20:57] that woman she could talk with the soldiers since she’s one of a kind. [Inaudible 00:21:04] to the port in the border where she would [inaudible 00:21:12] to go back to the border, they pay them that night to take you over. That night they took us over there.

**Kate:** Took you over the border of?

**Molly:** To Romania.

**Kate:** To Romania?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Before all this happened, lets back up a bit, you said you hid your money in the ground?

**Molly:** Yeah, we couldn’t keep any [inaudible 00:21:37] whatever we had in the backyard, but they knew it, we told them.

**Kate:** The neighbors?

**Molly:** Yeah, the neighbor we were very close with them. My mother we used to help them out, poor people. Then she came to Romania and gave a testament now when there we had a little bit [inaudible 00:21:59]. The Jewish people they [inaudible 00:22:04], we had one room of five people when we were [inaudible 00:22:07].

**Kate:** Do you remember getting ready to come to the United States? What did your mother and father know about this country?

**Molly:** Nothing, they said in America it is peaceful, we’d be able to live no matter what you have. There was no peace, those years was nothing but war, fighting and fighting in and out was fighting. [Inaudible 00:22:30] couple of people began to fight and [inaudible 00:22:35] get all of it.

**Kate:** Did your parents speak in English at all before coming here?

**Molly:** No, [inaudible 00:22:47] speak English, nothing.

**Kate:** What did your uncle tell your father of life here? Do you remember?

**Molly:** Nothing. He came, he worked hard and he was married and they had one child after another. They had six children [inaudible 00:23:04] …

**Kate:** Who did your father?

**Molly:** My father’s brother.

**Kate:** Your father’s brother okay.

**Molly:** I worked with him here in this country [inaudible 00:23:11] working and that’s how we make a living.

**Kate:** What did you do to prepare to leave? Do you remember preparing?

**Molly:** Nothing, we had [inaudible 00:23:22] yourself and what you took along. You don’t take nothing with you, you couldn’t carry a bag.

**Kate:** Did you tell anyone you were leaving?

**Molly:** Nobody [inaudible 00:23:29] we leave at night.

**Kate:** You left secretly?

**Molly:** Yeah. You couldn’t take anything because they’ll take it away from you. They’ll see you carrying it.

**Kate:** Did you bring any type of religious things at all?

**Molly:** We couldn’t take anything. We couldn’t even take some clothes to change. Whatever we had [inaudible 00:23:51] to change on the way. We came to Romania in [inaudible 00:23:57] and there we settled and we waited to get a hold to my brother to let him know in America to send us some money.

We didn’t know it, my brother came there [inaudible 00:24:11] he knew these people coming to look for us. My father went to a little city, one we came it’s a smaller, a little bigger city to find the dock and he was talking to them, he says, “I have a son in America but I don’t know how to get a hold of him.” He asked them what [inaudible 00:24:28], he told them [inaudible 00:24:29] and he was there too. We met him, when you met him …

**Kate:** Who is he now, who are you talking about knew him?

**Molly:** One fellow down there.

**Kate:** Just a fellow in the town?

**Molly:** The fellow from America too, we happened to talk to him about [inaudible 00:24:48]. He tell, “I know your son.” That’s how we got in touch to them.

**Kate:** It was by chance?

**Molly:** By chance. My brother was there in Romania to look for us, they got a hold of him. When we met him he was very sick anyway, bad cold, my brother he didn’t take care of himself. We took him back to our place, the one room and he was very sick.

He laid down there I feel the typhus and we thought he’d never pull through. The other brother was nurse, nursed him day and night. He was supposed to be [inaudible 00:25:32] it’s very contagious and we have to get [inaudible 00:25:33] next to him, he didn’t get it.

He was laying next to him watching him and the clothes that he used to change, what he brought with him. The little money he had [inaudible 00:25:46] to help him to survive. We forgot we couldn’t ask his wife when we did ask his wife if she had the money to send us.

He had a butcher shop and he left and they [inaudible 00:26:02] down in the market and he shared it they weren’t [inaudible 00:26:07] so he manages his pocket. He managing his pocket and before I [inaudible 00:26:15] left, she was borrowing [inaudible 00:26:18] to succeed.

**Kate:** You were in Romanian, how did you get then from Romanian to the States?

**Molly:** Romania we waited for him till he gets better then he get paper for us. Of course he was American so he had papers, we went to Belgium, then we were waiting to get the boat to go over.

**Kate:** How at night did you leave secretly, by what means?

**Molly:** As I’m telling you.

**Kate:** When you came from your house and they came to get you at night?

**Molly:** At night we took that woman, we went with her. We had to go by train to go to the border.

**Kate:** Where was the train? Stopped right at your town?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You went by train to the border?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You stayed in Romania?

**Molly:** In the border, we hire someone, there’s always, you pay him and that’s the security guard, they pay them [inaudible 00:27:15] exactly what night to come. You take then small boat and they take you over. Some of them they drowned them because they was afraid. They were [inaudible 00:27:27] into the city and they were very nice people and they found a place to stay.

**Kate:** How long in Romania did you stay?

**Molly:** We were there from [inaudible 00:27:39], from September till the middle of the winter.

**Kate:** Then your brother arranged the papers?

**Molly:** After he was very sick with typhus, and he laid a couple of weeks. When he got better he [inaudible 00:27:55] his mind was mixed. My younger brother was with him he was [inaudible 00:28:02].

**Kate:** Did he ever recover fully from typhus?

**Molly:** Yes, he got better, took a while.

**Kate:** Did he come back with you to the United States?

**Molly:** Yes.

**Kate:** How many people went to the United States together in your group? Who was traveling with you then?

**Molly:** My two brothers with the older brother the one who was sick, they went first. My sister came later with her husband and she went separate.

**Kate:** Which sister?

**Molly:** I had one sister.

**Kate:** Lisa?

**Molly:** Lisa yeah, she was married.

**Kate:** She married then?

**Molly:** She was married in Russia, she came with her husband.

**Kate:** Your mother and father came too?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** That woman came with you? Do you remember?

**Molly:** No, she was a Russian, she gone back home.

**Kate:** She didn’t stay in Romania?

**Molly:** No she didn’t stay anyway she only took us to the border. She got paid and after we were in America [inaudible 00:29:05], the standard for a living, we used to have [inaudible 00:29:08] they were very deserve it, packaged food, money.

**Kate:** Did you receive them?

**Molly:** Yes, they did.

**Kate:** You came from Belgium? From what port did you come?

**Molly:** I don’t remember very well.

**Kate:** Let me see if we have it here in your papers. Says you came, part of the port it just says Belgium. Do you remember which port it was at all?

**Molly:** I can’t think of it [inaudible 00:29:41].

**Kate:** It’s okay. The year that you departed was 1921?

**Molly:** I came 1921 here and then we board in 1920.

**Kate:** How long did you stay in Belgium?

**Molly:** In Belgium, we weren’t that long, about two, three weeks. We were in Romanian most of the time for seven, eight months.

**Kate:** Seven, eight months in Romania then couple of weeks in Belgium?

**Molly:** Yeah, till they were on the ship.

**Kate:** Do you remember the name of the ship?

**Molly:** I don’t remember well that I think.

**Kate:** Tell me about, you had only the clothes on your back?

**Molly:** We didn’t have nothing, clothes, [inaudible 00:30:24], change of we had nothing. We came to America, we had nothing and [inaudible 00:30:30] there was no one to give us anything. We had a lot of relatives here but it didn’t bother to offer any help.

**Kate:** Tell me about the ship voyage, what kind of accommodations did you have?

**Molly:** They were nice. We had kosher, we didn’t need nothing. We had with us a couple of cans, sardines and pieces of salami, [inaudible 00:31:02] the bread.

**Kate:** How long was the voyage?

**Molly:** It wasn’t that long, about seven, eight days.

**Kate:** What class did you travel?

**Molly:** Third class. We were poor and my brother was broke, we could afford any better and nobody helped us.

**Kate:** Did you go hungry on the boat then?

**Molly:** No, I did not get hungry, bread and a piece of salami was satisfied.

**Kate:** How did you sleep?

**Molly:** In bunk beds.

**Kate:** Were any of you sick?

**Molly:** Not me, there was a one friend of us who came with us she was sick. Me, I felt wonderful on the boat. I was going [inaudible 00:31:48] they had motors works, everything. I didn’t mind. I felt good on the boat.

**Kate:** You said a friend came with you. Who came with you?

**Molly:** Another family from the same town.

**Kate:** Were they Jewish?

**Molly:** Yeah. A mother with two sons and a daughter [inaudible 00:32:05], they have two sons and their husband in Cleveland.

**Kate:** In Cleveland?

**Molly:** We were traveling the same way together.

**Kate:** Was there anything unusual or something for the first time that you saw on the boat. What do you remember about the boat trip?

**Molly:** Nothing.

**Kate:** What about the trip? What kind of sea conditions were they? What was the sea like?

**Molly:** I didn’t mind any rough.

**Kate:** Was it rough?

**Molly:** Yeah, for some [inaudible 00:32:37] I didn’t mind it. It didn’t bother me.

**Kate:** Were other people affected?

**Molly:** Yes, there was the girl she was sick most of that. Then my [inaudible 00:32:49] is sick. I didn’t mind it, it didn’t bother me, I was strong.

**Kate:** Did you have any activities on the boat that was fun and all?

**Molly:** Nothing.

**Kate:** Do you remember seeing land for the first time?

**Molly:** No. We came here we didn’t see, we all the land, we had to start [inaudible 00:33:13] island till somebody picked us off from there.

**Kate:** Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time?

**Molly:** Sure.

**Kate:** Did it mean anything to you?

**Molly:** I happened to see it is when we reached the border.

**Kate:** What was the atmosphere on the boat then?

**Molly:** Me, it didn’t bother, some they were sick. They felt good rather coming to [inaudible 00:33:39] they felt good about it. When they came here they had to go on their own.

**Kate:** After Statue of Liberty what happened with the boat? Tell me how, you mentioned going through Ellis Island, how did you get from the boat to Ellis Island?

**Molly:** They took us off and they went and then we right away find someone to come and claim us to pick us up.

**Kate:** When you say they took us off, did you go on another boat?

**Molly:** No, we went to New York, down there they …

**Kate:** Back to Ellis Island, what do you remember? Do you remember anything about the Ellis Island? Do you remember being processed?

**Molly:** No, the only thing they examine you if you well. If anybody got some kind of a sickness they wouldn’t let you through or if you [inaudible 00:34:30].

**Kate:** They gave you an examination?

**Molly:** That’s all.

**Kate:** What did they examine? How thoroughly?

**Molly:** They want to check your eyes, your ears, see if you’re well enough to come in.

**Kate:** Did you have any fear that you would be rejected at any time?

**Molly:** I was healthy, I was well.

**Kate:** Did anybody in your family have any fear? Your older brother?

**Molly:** No, they were fine.

**Kate:** How did you manage not knowing English?

**Molly:** There were Jewish people you meet and then you come into the city, then nothing would, they’re mostly Jewish people, so you get along.

**Kate:** What language did you speak at home?

**Molly:** Russia.

**Kate:** Did you speak Jewish at home?

**Molly:** Jewish, yeah.

**Kate:** Did you mix the two or how did you …?

**Molly:** We didn’t mix, whenever we had to talk Russian we talked Russian, [inaudible 00:35:23] Jewish here like [inaudible 00:35:25] with the people, we had friends who spoke Jewish.

**Kate:** You understood Russian too?

**Molly:** Sure.

**Kate:** You’re fluent in both languages? When you were at Ellis Island, did they ever speak to you in Jewish or Russian, the officials?

**Molly:** The officials talks to you in Jewish, they’re Russian they [inaudible 00:35:44].

**Kate:** Did they talk in any other language at Ellis Island do you remember?

**Molly:** No, I don’t remember.

**Kate:** Did you stay overnight at Ellis Island? No? You were only there a short while?

**Molly:** Yes, because my brother left before us, several days before. He arranged when he [inaudible 00:36:10].

**Kate:** He didn’t have to go through Ellis Island?

**Molly:** He was already American, he was here already. He had a wife and a child and he picked us up. When we came here from New York, we took the train and we came to Pittsburgh [inaudible 00:36:27], you lived in Penn Avenue.

**Kate:** On Penn Avenue here in Pittsburgh?

**Molly:** Here in Pittsburgh.

**Kate:** How big a house did he have?

**Molly:** The second floor, the second, the third floor, was a whole of the house and the rooms to stay in.

**Kate:** Your whole family came there?

**Molly:** Yeah, we all came to that house yes.

**Kate:** Do you remember saying goodbye to the other family? The family that came with you?

**Molly:** We were for long time good friends.

**Kate:** Did you go on the train together?

**Molly:** They went to Cleveland.

**Kate:** Did they go on a different train?

**Molly:** They must have taken a train to Cleveland and we went to Pittsburgh.

**Kate:** You kept in contact afterwards with them?

**Molly:** Yes. They used to come to see us after they had a car, they used to drive in.

**Kate:** When you got here, what type of house -You said the house was an old house your brother?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did it have indoor plumbing?

**Molly:** Yes, it had indoor plumbing.

**Kate:** What about lighting? What type of lighting?

**Molly:** Electric.

**Kate:** Electric?

**Molly:** Yes we had electric [inaudible 00:37:30].

**Kate:** You came all the way from your small town to the United States, was there anything here that you were surprised at first or was new?

**Molly:** When we came in, we came in to a poor neighborhood. When I went in the house it was a poor, there was nothing worth surprising. We didn’t see anything special good so we managed.

Then when we came to [inaudible 00:37:52], we didn’t have much but my brothers was [inaudible 00:37:55] they went to work where they used to get. The neighbors they used to come and chop the wood for them because they needed that wood.

They made a couple of dollars, a couple of [inaudible 00:38:05]. For that you bought bread, you bought meat, something to eat. We saved a few dollars, but my brother got …

**Kate:** Back in Romania you mean?

**Molly:** Yeah. When my brother got sick you had to pay the doctors so it’s a good thing we had a few dollars to pay the doctors because he didn’t do nothing, he couldn’t sign a check or nothing. He was very sick. We never thought he was going to pull through.

In the same house where the son got sick with the same thing. He was a young boy, 18 years old and he died from typhus and he pulled through. He was a really [inaudible 00:38:40] my brother, believing in God, he said they prayed for him.

**Kate:** When you got to this country, where did your family find work? Did you find work immediately or did you have problems finding work?

**Molly:** Stayed a couple of weeks and met some people she says, whether we want to work. We had to work because we had nothing to buy salami. She start working in the factory machine, the [inaudible 00:39:08]. I went there, and I knew how to stitch in the machine and I got a job like that.

**Kate:** You worked sewing in a factory?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How long did you work there?

**Molly:** A couple of years. I was fast I made good money.

**Kate:** How about your father, where did he find work?

**Molly:** He was a butcher experienced butcher, so he find work. When you have some kind of experience you could get work.

**Kate:** What about your brothers?

**Molly:** My older brother left a store for his wife to take care, I told you [inaudible 00:39:44]. The house was his. They went into the store to work with him, to build up the store. There was no car, when you made an order you carried all the way in the shoulders so [inaudible 00:40:00] extra meat, you go up and you take it and you carry it. You worked hard.

My younger brother got a job [inaudible 00:40:09]. Then the one where my mother with a nephew paid him $10 a week, took [inaudible 00:40:16] years ago. [Inaudible 00:40:19] and they take advantage, he worked for $10 a week.

For a while, my two brothers worked in that store when he left and they build it up. When you work yourself, you builded up, you carried [inaudible 00:40:34]. Then later they rented a place in north side near the space where they had to cut meat. He went to work the manager and he made a success in that store, very big success.

Everything you have to have a little bit luck, some come here and they don’t make it but they made very good, they worked hard. My brothers and they build up one store and they build another store and that was their market and they were pretty rich people, the brothers.

**Kate:** How did your mother and father adjust to life here?

**Molly:** Fine. They were happy.

**Kate:** Do you think that they thought their original decision was a good one to come here?

**Molly:** Yeah, it was a good one. Back then we couldn’t stay there, it wasn’t impossible to be there.

**Kate:** You have pictures of all your grandchildren and husband. How did you meet your husband? What age were you?

**Molly:** I was I think 20, 21, I don’t remember really.

**Kate:** Where were you working at that time?

**Molly:** I worked and I sewed then my mother was not well, her pressure was high, she had typhus fever in Europe. She was not well. She used to run up the pressure very high. I had to stay home and take care of everything, cooking, baking, stuff like that.

**Kate:** When you say the pressure, what pressure?

**Molly:** Blood pressure. She had to be on a diet, and she didn’t believe on diet, old time [inaudible 00:42:02]. I lost my son that’s the worst part of it. I had two children, a daughter and a son. My daughter went in high school she got a job. She was very good in school. We wanted her to go for a kind of bookkeeping when she got a job years ago and …

**Kate:** Hold on.

**Molly:** Years ago you had to work, excuse me. You got the pay $50 a week, she was good [inaudible 00:42:35] she was good. Then she met her husband and they got married.

**Kate:** Hold on for just a second here, I’m going to fix this up. Now, let’s move back a little bit. How did you meet your husband?

**Molly:** You go to the Jewish organizations you know of and that’s the way you meet him.

**Kate:** What was your husband’s name?

**Molly:** Max.

**Kate:** Max, like your father?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What did he do for a living?

**Molly:** He was a salesman.

**Kate:** He was a salesman?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You had two children, a daughter and a son?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You mentioned the tragedy of your son?

**Molly:** Yeah. I had a son. He was a very good boy. He was born bad with cold feet and I’d done everything in the world to correct that. He was a plastic surgeon, not a big surgeon. After years ago when they graduate medical school they have to go to the service. He was drafted and he went there to the Air Force in Texas, Wichita, Texas. He stay two years and one year, he remain for three years there.

**Kate:** Where?

**Molly:** Wichita, Texas.

**Kate:** In Texas.

**Molly:** He was there and when they came back then he remained and the way he know. He had to pay so much for medical school, when he made in the service, he didn’t have to pay. The [inaudible 00:44:01] went up so he went, they sent him to Japan. He was in Japan three years and he done wonderful down there, a lot of surgery, plastic surgery, with the Japans doctors in their hospital he [inaudible 00:44:15].

He got married when he was in there -In Texas, she was there was just a nurse. She worked, I talk about it but there was same. While he was in the service at the [inaudible 00:44:37] they used to come to different states at the airport. [Inaudible 00:44:45] the emergency, they used to come, they used to fly. He used to do the flying, the pilot, so what they were not that big [inaudible 00:44:54] and they got in small planes and he went on the plane and he went down and got killed.

**Kate:** Where?

**Molly:** In California.

**Kate:** What year?

**Molly:** It’s a big date, 12 years ago.

**Kate:** Did he have children?

**Molly:** He had a son and a daughter. They got that little girl in California, they had a beautiful office being fixed up, he had a very big practice. The boy is a polite boy but the girl was very good in school, she was like him. She said to him, she’s going to be a doctor. He told her, all right that I’m going to fix up an office for you and you’re going to work with me. You know what? She’s in medical school and she’s an A student.

**Kate:** In medical school right now?

**Molly:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What does your daughter do?

**Molly:** My daughter was a social worker. Now she’s all over, she retired, her husband retired, so she retired too.

**Kate:** All over.

**Molly:** She’s a base player. She plays the base three four times a week. She does social work and she was very good there, she had a very good job. She worked for 20 years, when he retired said he was under [inaudible 00:46:14] so she retired, said she’s better off.

**Kate:** When you look back in your life, you’ve come a long distance to live in this country and you had a hard life at the beginning. How do you feel now about coming here?

**Molly:** It was the best thing. Here [inaudible 00:46:33] people wants the work, the one they could make the best of it.

**Kate:** Did you ever experience, in this country, persecution, religious persecution?

**Molly:** No.

**Kate:** You feel that you were able to live more freely here?

**Molly:** Sure.

**Kate:** Did anyone in your family ever think about going back?

**Molly:** [Inaudible 00:46:53] go back.

**Kate:** I’d like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for helping us and giving us the opportunity …

**Molly:** What to go back for? For what? Nothing. [Inaudible 00:47:03] could work, work and he had nothing.

**Kate:** Here you felt it was different?

**Molly:** Here if you work hard if you want you could build yourself up. If you want to work and you’re not lazy, you made a success. If anybody’s lazy it doesn’t make any difference, they doesn’t make a success.

My daughter got [inaudible 00:47:22] she works. She was working and [inaudible 00:47:26] two kids, she has two children and both of them went to school. She worked for them for college, for the boy, for the girl.

The daughter, I told her [inaudible 00:47:36] her daughter was a good girl, she listened to her mother. She was a nice social little girl not like those girls those days. Whoever she brought [inaudible 00:47:49] was all right, she was pleased about it.

That boy, who she married, he lives just one block away. He went to kindergarten with her and she’s older than he is with three months in the kindergarten. His brother went [inaudible 00:48:04] went after and [inaudible 00:48:10] high school, she went to college and he went to school.

That [inaudible 00:48:15] to God, my daughter says, “What are you doing?” “You’re doing nothing.” Jeff is such a nice boy, nice family, go with him to show and that was it. They went together for five years and after he was a pharmacist, after he graduate, she got engaged, a year later they got married.

They [inaudible 00:48:36] a school teacher. In between she used to go work, she’s [inaudible 00:48:42] part time. The manager down there he thought she’s a very quiet girl. Says, “Any time they don’t call you to go to be a school teacher, come in. You don’t have to call just come in.”

Part time, but she was teaching one place until after she get paid and then now she had to stop. They were nice, they worked together and they worked themself up. He’s a pharmacist, his father had a drug store downstairs and he didn’t like pharmacy he went because he’s a tennis player. He got part scholarship on it.

You know what he does? Everything, they went the real estate business even in homes where people lost their homes for the mortgage he [Inaudible 00:49:39]. He’s in real estate businesses. What it is, he does everything.

[Inaudible 00:49:46] the cops and they come here in the car and I ask them, “What do you have in the car?” He says, “I have a marker and I have a paint bottle, I have paint.” “What did you do? [Inaudible 00:49:59] when you show this license he’s a pharmacist. I says, “How is it that [inaudible 00:50:04].”

**Kate:** Is your life here …?

**Molly:** He build a home.

**Kate:** You just made me wonder, is your life as religious here? Did you maintain?

**Molly:** I am.

**Kate:** You are?

**Molly:** Not my children.

**Kate:** You keep kosher?

**Molly:** I keep the [inaudible 00:50:19]. My mother when she passed away my father remained for many years and he was religious like us, strictly kosher.

**Kate:** I noticed on your door …

**Molly:** Yeah. I kept in the house strictly kosher, I didn’t mix.

**Kate:** Your children do not keep the kosher?

**Molly:** No. They go to the temple, but the meat is not cheaper, the kosher is really high or chicken meat. That I don’t go eat and I don’t mix, when I do go and then buy something kosher.

**Kate:** They respect your wishes?

**Molly:** Yeah. I used to go to California to my son, she used to go to butcher buy some extra kosher meat and the butcher used to pack, mark on the package ‘kosher’. My son say, “[Inaudible 00:51:04] what’s the difference? It’s the same thing.” I say, “Honey, I’m too old to change.”

I wouldn’t change already, [inaudible 00:51:13] kosher [inaudible 00:51:14] downstairs [inaudible 00:51:16] they meet people then we come down to eat. My neighbor [inaudible 00:51:19] chicken, and mashed potatoes and apple sauce, she pays $260 for it [inaudible 00:51:28]. I don’t, I buy chicken and I make the way I like it.

**Kate:** I’d like to thank you for giving us this chance to talk to you for Ellis Island.

**Molly:** Thank you for that.

**Kate:** We’ll send you a copy of this as well.

**Molly:** Thanks.

**Kate:** This is Kate Moore on the 18th of July 1994 in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania with Molly Epstein who came from Russia in 1921. I’m signing off with the Ellis Island oral history project.

**Molly:** My granddaughter …