**Janet**: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I am here today at the Ellis Island studio with Lola Gruenthal. Mrs. Gruenthal came from Germany in 1937 when she was 22 years of age. Today is the 19th of August, 1994 and so that would mean that you are at this time Mrs. Gruenthal how old?

**Lola**: Almost 80 but I am not quite yet.

**Janet**: Okay. Well I am looking forward to very much to hearing what you have to say about your experience of immigrating to this country. Why don’t you start at the very beginning, if you would say your birth date and where in Germany you were born?

**Lola**: I was born on November 24, 1914 in Berlin. This is a complicated story but I will make it brief because by American law, I was later immigrated under the German Quota. In Germany I was never German because my parents came from Russia and we all had Romanian citizenship because that part of the country went back and forth between Russia, soviet Russia, and Romania.

So that made everything more complicated and of course a child -young person it was very difficult for me because I wanted very much to be like everybody else [laughter] but I was very much aware of my foreignness in Germany. I was made aware of it before the Nazis but German was my first language.

**Janet**: Okay. I know you have brought something with you that you translated from German and I think it would be good to begin with you’re reading that which you did translate for this occasion and then we'll go on from there.

**Lola**: Okay, this was written on June 28th 1937 the day I arrived on Ellis Island and I wrote this for Mark Gruenthal who later became my husband but at the time he was still married to-he had a different family but we were-I mean this was very important and we were always keeping the contact through writing whenever we were separated and this I wrote I think when I knew already that he was coming to bail me out. I am not sure but whether I-I expect that yeah, because I had received a telephone call from him that he was getting the money together which was difficult because of-it’s a different story.

So I read this now. Is this-this is the translation of the German-"Is this now the great adventure? Partly I see it as literally material. As though I was standing outside of myself. Then again I think this may be the end of all sequels. While anyhow, let’s enjoy it."

The last sentence was in English in the original. "I am sitting in a large tiled room divided into many smaller rooms by wooden benches. On its upper level there is gallery that I was not yet allowed to inspect. I have no idea what may be lurking behind it. Two large American flags hang from the ceiling.

At least I know that I am in America the land of liberty even though I can no longer see the lady liberty. The silhouette of the sky scrapers stand out against an invisible sky behind the artfully barred windows. My fellow inmates sit around in the corners and at tables.

Some waiting empathetically with their hand baggage next to them like people at a railway station before departure, others read newspapers which are available in many different languages even in Hebrew. It is a humane jail. Imagine it has even a few rubber trees as well as a pathetic palm.

Long haired girl accompanied by a Negro and a white man, is using the space for a marathon walk. Back and forth, back and forth reminding me of the promenade deck on the Normandie. Opposite me sits a young flaxen blonde Swedish girl. Her eyes glazed and red from crying. She knows only her mother tongue and has nobody here to talk to.

A while ago I tried to comfort her little as well as I could." And then there is just a short note written on the next day June 29th, “I have survived the first night. I shared room with the Swedish girl and a mentally deterred German woman who has already been sent to the hospital because of nervousness as she told me grimacing uncontrollably. Everyone here knows everyone’s story."

It a sort of- I mean [laughter] attempt to give a sort of detached account. Actually I felt very desperate and very scared. And I tried to keep it somehow under control.

**Janet**: Well thank you very much that is a welcome addition to the interview. I am happy that you translated it. Well let’s go back now, you were saying that you felt foreignness in Germany all of those years before you came to this country. Do you remember where you lived in Germany? In Berlin?

**Lola**: Yes. We lived in a very elegant residential area and actually my parents-my father had a dental practice and we lived very comfortably and had a-it was a very large apartment and with big staff really because my father also had his practice in her apartment. And there were maids and cooks and Kinderfoilans. This-it was a really-well very upper bushwer environment.

**Janet**: How long had your family been in Germany before you were born?

**Lola**: My father-my parents-I’m not quite sure it must have been-- I am not sure about the dates. My father came to Berlin earlier- at the beginning of the century and he was a dentist and at that time he was assistant dentist-what do you say-Assistant to the court dentist of [unclear 00:09:21].

I don’t know which [unclear 00:09:22] that fine I think-well the Kaiser you know at the time but this is an interesting part of the story. While he had a very good position but he was not satisfied with it and he was very independent.

That was where it must have been before 1910 that he decided that he would come to this country and he wanted to study American dentistry which was recognized in Germany whereas his background training would not have been sufficient for him to practice on his own. So he came-Is these worthwhile?

**Janet**: Yes absolutely.

**Lola**: He came here then-it must have been before 1910 or around this time and went straight to-while yes to Boston, to Harvard and said he wanted to learn more American methods of dentistry but it was not too difficult to get in except that, his language was very inadequate and so he was told he would have to learn more English first and he did in a very short time and then he got his American dental diploma at Harvard in a relatively short time because they give him credit for this background.

But then he thought it would be nice to-he liked it in Berlin. He could have stayed here but he went back to Berlin and there were only two American dentists in Berlin and he was one of them so he had very good practice.

But he never-this is also stranger but-he did not make-at that time-he never made any effort to obtain the German citizenship which he could have done at that time. But my parents-I mean where they lived in their own foreign circle but my mother came into the picture later. She [laughter]-there are too many stories involved but anyway this is part of the background.

**Janet**: You said he was an American dentist did he became an American citizen when he was-

**Lola**: No, no, no. He just got his American diploma. Dental diploma.

**Janet**: I see, I see. Well, getting back to your early childhood, did you have grandparents on either side that you saw with any frequency?

**Lola**: No, because the grandparents-my parents families were both at that time when I was a child somewhere in soviet Russia then. I guess yes and my parents keep from the same area but how was that? The grandparents-yeah I met my mother's parents but very briefly I mean there were allowed actually to travel at that time but there was very little family connection when I was a child and I miss that here.

**Janet**: How about you said your parents were really within the circle of their own friends,

**Lola**: Yes.

**Janet**: What was that circle like and what was it like for you as a child?

**Lola**: It was like crazy. It was very funny because there mostly-when I was a child-they were mostly white Russians immigrants, were people who had fled around revolution and there was a large Russian, white Russian community in Berlin especially.

My parents spoke mostly Russian. They did not speak Yiddish or rarely, I don’t really remember hearing them speak Yiddish and most of their friends were white Russian immigrants and they were also well living quite comfortably, the people.

They apparently had been able to bring money with them or possessions and they were business people. I remember vaguely but it was a very, it was strange for someone who when I went to school-later I mean I went to school quite late actually because before I had sort of private tutoring.

There were just a few other girls but later when I went to a regular school, I felt also uncomfortable about this different background which was really very different from anybody else’s and I tried to keep that apart and then I had only German friends and I wanted very much to be German of course.

**Janet**: Can you say anything else about the cultural life or the social life that your family and the other-the white Russians who were in Berlin at that time?

**Lola**: They gave big parties and they lived it up somehow. I mean that was all in the 20s when I was a child. No, it was very strange looking back. Now it’s difficult even to describe because there were actually two different worlds but my parents went out a lot also and they went to the opera, they went-they had a very active social life and the children were left to the Kinderfolians, you know to the governances and-

**Janet**: Did you have brothers and sisters?

**Lola**: I have a brother yeah.

**Janet**: And what is his name?

**Lola**: His name is Elea which is a Russian name or Russian Jewish or I think comes from-It occurred to me the other day, it may be connected to Elia but it’s also Elia is also a Russian name. And I know very little about my brother now. I haven’t had any contact with him for quite a long time but there so many stories there but--

**Janet**: Maybe you can tell me your mother’s maiden name? Her name and her maiden name and your father’s name?

**Lola**: Well, her Russian name was Marusha which is a very lovely name in Marusha. But then it was in her passport or in Germany it was changed I think to Marian-Marian. And her last name-

**Janet**: Her maiden name,

**Lola**: Her maiden name was Flimennonn.

**Janet**: F-

**Lola**: F-L-I-M-E-N-N-O-N-N and my father's name was Sulim, which is-Sulim is if not Solomon I think but he used only the S on his-

**Janet**: Passport?

**Lola**: Well not on his passport on his-what’s called-I can’t recall, on [laughter]-

**Janet**: When he had for his dental practice he would be S?

**Lola**: Yes. S Bronstein.

**Janet**: Bronstein. Huh. Now, you were born at the beginning of the First World War, do you have any first hand recollections, remembrances associated with World War 1?

**Lola**: Only of turnips [laughter]. I remember that was after the end of the war because there was very-there were severe food shortages and everything. I mean even-well although my parent did probably buy food at black market prices but I think that I will really remember the horror of turnips.

Because I mean everything was turnips from morning to night for onions and otherwise, no I don’t really have memories of these early years in connection with the war. We lived-we lived in a-we lived in another apartment before my brother was born.

My brother was five and half years younger than I and it was not such a fancy neighborhood and then I remembered the year before my brother was born but that was in this west- what was it-[unclear 00:21:09] of where we had our big apartment.

**Janet**: So you changed residences because of the war? Is that why?

**Lola**: It were because, there was I guess in connection with the war because it took also- When my father’s practice was really beginning to grow and he could afford this very large apartment but I don’t remember the earlier one but it was not in a such a good neighborhood as my parents would have said [unclear 00:21:53].

**Janet**: Okay, were you a religious family?

**Lola**: We were-not really I mean my parents were religious only on big holidays. Otherwise-my father talked about religion but it did not mean much to me and I felt that it came of as not really genuine and I resented that.

I mean that on holidays-it was not real. Tradition, it probably had been a tradition in his family as also in my mother's family and they tried to keep it alive but it was not really meaningful anymore at least for the children. It was not congruent, it was not convincing.

**Janet**: So do you have memories of your school life in Berlin?

**Lola**: Well there were different kinds of schooling that I had and because-I am sorry [laughter]. Well at first because my parents always felt that-well they tried or they wanted to be so very special and nothing was good enough for them so we were sent to regular school at first-it would have been public school it would not have been good enough for them so we had this private instruction first.

There were different kinds of private instruction and I went to a regular school where it would have corresponding to Junior high school here. That was when I was 12 that was first time when I went to a real school and that was also a very strange experience because it was like a totally different world-

**Janet**: Describe what that was like for you?

**Lola**: Well, the way it’s usually is when a new child comes into a class and everybody-the other children tease the newcomers-so they was lots of teasing but I looked very German.

I didn’t look strange or exotic, my parents-my mother looked much more exotic in her way of dressing and so on. At first I felt uncomfortable and I very soon became part of the group there. At first I was too good really I was very well behaved and that made me also too different really and after a while I became really a rebel [laughter].

**Janet**: In school?

**Lola**: In school yeah. I became a very successful rebel [laughter].

**Janet**: What were you-what would be one of your causes as a rebel?

**Lola**: I don’t know mostly-just mostly silly things I mean silly tricks. No I mean I was not-not politically oriented and this was all that was still in the 20s. But I became sort of-where I was pushed into sort of leadership position by just doing very silly tricks or sticking my neck out and I don’t know I mean very silly things. But I got punished for whatever happened but I was very popular in school and I liked it. It was okay.

**Janet**: Can you describe yourself as a 14 year old just prior to leaving Germany?

**Lola**: Oh as a 14 years old, and I was a different situation because then I was sent into my first exile and that was in Switzerland and I was removed from the school where I liked it very much-I will be very long this whole thing.

For a reason that I didn’t not know about I was sent to a boarding school, also very fancy boarding school in Switzerland near St Moritz and for almost a year-I don’t think my parents ever explained the reason to me and I really felt that I had been-yes that they wanted to get rid of me.

And later I found out that they were concerned or that I might get TB or that I had a-there were some indications or I had a spot on my lung that I found out much later but I really couldn’t understand why they did this to me. These were things that were not talked about.

This Swiss boarding school that really did some awful things to me because that was led by two Calvinist ladies and we were brought up with an extremely rigid Calvinist spirit and that was supposed to be good for our character.

**Janet**: I think maybe we will pause here to turn the tape over and then we will continue with this.

**Janet**: Okay we are about to begin side b now. And we were talking about your Calvinist training in school in Switzerland is there anything else you would say about that-

**Lola**: In this connection it was really pretty terrible because where there were-these was girls’ school-and there were girls from 12 I think to 18. And they had very rigid discipline. And it was all supposed to be character building but what they did was as bad as the turnips really [laughter].

Because they told you several times a day or on whatever occasion stable or unsuitable that nothing good was ever going to become of you and that one should not-these are horrible things to remember after all this years.

But it was a time where when kids are very impressionable and it left a lasting impression to be told don’t imagine that you are special. Don’t imagine that you are intelligent. Don’t imagine that you are pretty and don’t imagine that this or that.

And there I don’t know I mean they-well it was really very damaging and I was not the only one who suffered from that because the girls whenever or one was never allowed to be alone actually or alone with just one other person. We always had to do things in groups and any personal contact was discouraged.

So all sorts of other undesirable things happened then and that well I don’t know-we got together secretly and formed secret suicide societies at night and other things like that and that’s whole-also it was a very strange experience. There actually one of the girls there was the daughter of Nijinsky you know the-there were two daughter one what was her-Kyra, Kyra Nijinsky.

She was a very bad girl and then if somebody was bad then there were put-what do you say the expression for this in English or-in Coventry you know that is an English expression. Whoever had-then they were really ostracized and nobody was allowed to talk to her and it was pretty awful, so anyway.

That lasted not quite a year and-we become also very indoctrinated with Swiss values. All sorts of Calvinist with Swiss, Swiss history, Swiss geography and Swiss literature as much as [unclear 00:33:32] and Swiss literature.

But actually what happened and when I came back to my original school, I found out that I had wasted a whole year because I had-well it was such a different method of teaching also and that I had missed a lot that I had to catch up with in order to get back to my or to continue with my original class, so but then I was quite happy to be back. But-

**Janet**: Is there anything else that you would want to mention about your life in Berlin and before you and your family came to this country?

**Lola**: In Berlin, well that was-I have to think about the period the dates-where the Nazi started the Nazis regime-

**Janet**: Well you must have finished school, and then were you working before you came here?

**Lola**: When I finished school I did all kinds of other things and I started-well then first I spent quite some time outside of Germany. Also because when I was 18, I went to London where I studied English or where I was supposed to-where my parents really were thought that was a waste of time and money for me to get an education Because the best thing that could happen would be to get married quickly but they sent me to London to study English at a special language school where I got a diploma. There I didn’t-I did not feel very happy because I didn’t know a soul and I left very isolated.

That was when I was 18 and then-before I came here I also -between ‘36, the end of ‘36 or November ‘36 to march I think ‘37, I was in Paris where I also studied French at the Alliance François but this were-the studies were pretext for me but [laughter] but I did alright but this was a wonderful experience in Paris. I was very happy to get away from home because as I got older I liked it less and less being tied up or tied up in the family because there were all kinds of problems. So-

**Janet**: When did you return from Paris to Berlin?

**Lola**: That was in ‘37 in the spring of ‘37 March. I think March or February or February I think.

**Janet**: So you were in Berlin approximately three months before-

**Lola**: Before I left and that was all much unexpected really but then there I got a lot of help from a friend-a woman whom I hadn’t known before and whom I met through Gruenthal who was not-I mean he was not in Berlin at that time.

He had immigrated-he had gotten his immigration visa from the then governor of New York Herbert Lehman and he had come here-oh well immigrated around Christmas of ‘37 and then he went back to-not to Berlin he went to Holland where some members of his family had settled. They thought they were safe there and now what would-what did I start with [laughter] yeah, how I happened to come here-

**Janet**: And also those three months or so before you left, what was happening in Berlin and what did you experience as a buildup of the second-towards the Second World War?

**Lola**: Nobody suspected at that time, not nobody but nobody in my environment or nobody I knew actually very few people who were politically better informed would have expected that at that time.

Because in ‘37- well I was not there on a-well I was out of country several times and this was possible because it was easier I think because I had a Romanian passport so I could travel more easily in a way although I had to have a re-entry visa and a exit visa and re- entry visa but I think-I don’t really remember how it was as German Jews could not travel easily at that time. But now I am little lost where-

**Janet**: We were talking about you were going-you were saying that your later to become husband had immigrated.

**Lola**: So it seemed at that time it seemed like a very hopeless situation with regard to our being together in any way.

**Janet**: Excuse me but had you met in Berlin? Is that how you knew each other?

**Lola**: In Berlin yeah but we didn’t have any real plans but it really happened then that well I thought it would be-for him the situation was pretty clear because he had his papers and he had friends and he had colleagues and he was going to prepare.

He had to pass region exams in all subjects. He was medical doctor, he was psychiatrist and he had to pass exams in all subjects before he could practice and also he had to study English which was not-I mean he had a humanist school back ground which meant Latin and Greek.

So his English was not very good but, it seemed like totally hopeless situation that we would ever be able to be together again or at all. And then, meant that my parents would let me go to this country. My parents-who knew about my relationship, they were certainly not happy about it which is understandable but then this friend whom I met only after I came back-I mean this was somebody whom I met through Gruenthal and she was from a very famous British family and she was-well I have to explain too much there.

She was younger than I and her husband-they were both about my age-her husband was a journalist he was writing for a British paper and he actually later became the head of the BBC. That was Sir. Hugh Carleton Greene. And he was brother of Graham Greene so it was an interesting family there.

But his wife then Helga, she then became a very close friend, a very good friend in a very difficult situation that she also had to convince my parents that it would be a good idea to let me go here and she helped also with contacts and with money and so on and so my parents thought alright? Let her go. And-

**Janet**: Once-tell the name of the ship and what it was like coming here for you?

**Lola**: Yes. The ship was the Normandie and that was the most-well it was beautiful it was enormous and it was very elegant and very art. It had a lot of very modern at that time art work in the public areas.

As I said on the phone it was like something that you could hardly imagine except I mean it was what you would imagine coming out of Hollywood or existing in a Hollywood movie but not in real life. And so-

**Janet**: Do you remember your thoughts and feelings when you were en route?

**Lola**: On one hand I was it seemed-it was really like a dream that a dream come true which sounds about right but it was something that I had never imagined it would be possible and on the other hand it seemed that it couldn’t work out. Something well that you would have to wake up from this and it happened also when I came here and it seemed like logical conclusion because it couldn’t just be that wonderful you know.

**Janet**: That’s just your Swiss school [unclear 00:48:10]. So, then do you remember the ship coming into the New York harbor?

**Lola**: Yes, well I didn’t really- yes I remember-I remember it’s difficult to describe but it was all very organized and people went through very quickly, went off the boat. It was really I don’t know how many, how many people this carried.

But as soon as we got to the pier actually, I and two other people-two young men were separated from the rest of the passengers and put under guard and were told to wait for further instructions. We went- I don’t remember whether we were led were told that we were going to be taken to Ellis Island.

It took several hours I think and that was very strange so this luxury liner turned into a ghost ship really because there were just these poor three passengers. We got lunch there and the two guys got kosher food also and then somebody was standing guard at a distance.

And one could I guess walk around but I remember that one couldn’t go to the bathroom without a guard. At that time I felt that perhaps this was the end and if they would send me back I would really jump over board because I didn’t want to go back home which was no more home for me.

**Janet**: So you were then taken to Ellis Island?

**Lola**: Oh yes after several hours I think and these other guys sat separately and we didn’t much talk to each other I think. And I think I always thought there were three men I was the only woman there. On my ship papers that I have here you know I can show them to you later.

George got the passenger list and there only three mentioned there. So anyway, then we were taken by a motor lounge to Ellis Island that went very quickly and then we came here.

**Janet**: And what were you told about why you were coming to Ellis Island?

**Lola**: Yeah this is strange. Well I don’t remember really. Was it usually people were usually told why or that there were some of the reasons where why-I don’t know. Maybe have repressed it but I don’t remember being told.

**Janet**: I have heard other stories where the people were not informed as well.

**Lola**: I don’t think because I would have told Gruenthal then later-something was not right and then yeah I have the story that this little anecdote. I think I was- I don’t know whether they observed certain people on the ship or people who did not have the right -well I mean people who didn’t.

Must have been suspected of one thing or another or becoming undesirable aliens and probably these were not people who had family here or not people who had regular immigration papers but mostly people who came with tourist visa as I did and I didn’t have any family.

And I had this Mr. so and so lee. I have his name there on this manifest there who was a friend of -his family was-they were friends of my English friend in Berlin and she had asked them to pick me up-I mean I don’t know it was not well enough prepared what was wrong actually at that time.

Well especially with people who did not have family or it was for a young woman travelling alone. This is what I was told later, it was absolutely essential to have somebody and preferably-I mean either family or a woman to be there to pick her up and also vouch for her character.

**Janet**: So how long were you detained there at Ellis Island?

**Lola**: One night. Until the next morning.

**Janet**: And what happened the next morning?

**Lola**: The next morning I had this hearing but by then I knew already that Gruenthal had-I mean he had he would call me the day before in the afternoon and that he was getting the money to-for the bond and that he was coming with somebody to pick me up.

So left greatly relieved and then I had this hearing and there-well it was somehow pretty obvious that they had a preconceived idea of my intentions or that I didn’t really belong here and that I didn’t want anybody I mean who didn’t have a family or didn’t have any good reason to be here.

And so they wanted me to tell the story. Where it’s started actually was something else and this official-I don’t know the official interrogator asked me how-what means of support I had and what I was under-what money I would have to live on here. And I said very naively that I had a-well when I say a friend in Germany who had arranged for me to have money sent to me from England. And who was that friend? And I mean it was all very stupid of me but I said it was somebody who was interested in my poetry and who had seen my poetry and who actually-but I did explain that very convincingly but it was true really.

It was somebody who was -he was sort of patron of the arts and somebody who made a particular, who went out of his way to help young artist but that was I don’t know-I don’t remember because it was somebody who I did know very well and somehow-and maybe I was too cocky or that-but I didn’t respond very. I certainly didn’t make a very good impression on this official.

And then came the question. I don’t know how this started well that somebody was going to come to bring or to pay the bond-what is called-somebody was bringing money he $500 bond for me-

**Janet**: Okay we will have to pause here because we are at the end of the tape but we will pick up there. Okay this is tape two of an interview with Lola Gruenthal who came from Germany in 1937 when she was 22 years of age. We were talking about Ellis Island and we were talking about the hearing that you had here having been detained overnight. Why don’t you continue with whatever significant happened at that hearing.

**Lola**: Well at that time then I felt quite confident that Gruenthal was going to come and that I would get out of here and I would really be admitted to the country outside of Ellis Island.

I told the interrogator I don’t know whether in response to question or spontaneously that I expected Dr. Gruenthal to come with the $500 bond to pick me up and the official then asked who is Dr. Gruenthal and I said he is a friend and then he asked how long have you known him.

And this conversation took place in English because I said I did not need a translator. So when he asked how long have you known him I said, “For 3years?” Then he said well, in a really he sounded very shocked and then he said, “You expect a man whom you have known for 3weeks to pay $500 for you?”

And then it was my turn to be shocked and I corrected him and this misunderstanding. but then I got an idea also of what he thought of me because somehow I must have made the impression of being a loose woman or intending to make a profession of that or something like that. Okay that’s the story.

**Janet**: So then did Dr. Gruenthal arrive at Ellis Island? Talk about that and seeing him there and meeting him.

**Lola**: Yes, then he came with the wife of the manager of the Marcy hotel. Whom I don’t know-he was certainly not a close friend but he must have made, many phone calls and he had been-I found out later-he was actually more desperate or as desperate as I was.

And was not so easy to get the $500 together but he did and he told also that he had to come with a woman to officially get me out. And so then-then everything was easy and we went to the Marcy hotel where we stayed for two nights I think and then we moved on to more affordable quarters [laughter].

**Janet**: Do you remember your first few days in this country? Do you remember anything about it or anything that you saw that struck you as-because you were a cosmopolitan young woman but was there anything new in this country that you hadn’t seen before?

**Lola**: I remember that I said the sky scrapers aren’t as large as I thought they would be [laughter]. But they didn’t have the-it was actually it was a nicer sky line and it was not so-but it was also uneven but there weren’t they was-somehow I wasn’t really overwhelmed but well everything was wonderful. It was just wonderful being there and being part of this and being allowed to be free really.

**Janet**: Well now, you mentioned that you had written some poetry, and was that something that you continued with and what happened to you? You were on a-I am asking too many questions at the same time. You were on visitor’s visa, and that was for a period of six months?

**Lola**: Six months yeah.

**Janet**: Then what happened?

**Lola**: Well then what did I do at first? Well I met a lot of people and I-actually on a visitor’s visa I was not allowed to work. but in the beginning I don’t know I just-very beginning I don’t really know I mean later the visa was later extended and I was trying to get a sponsor for the affidavit which I didn’t get which was not possible for six month.

And then later yeah well I did all kinds of odd jobs in the beginning and I did some typing and sort of part time. Actually things I was not supposed to do but whatever came up, but it was that was-I don’t know people where helpful. At that time I mean people whom I met through Gruenthal.

I don’t really quite remember what I did in this earliest period. But later I did-at first-but that must have been when I was allowed to work officially. I did secretarial work and that was very good because it, I mean it helped. To supplement the money that I got from England which was very little, I mean was not enough really to-

**Janet**: What did you do when the six months were coming to a close?

**Lola**: Well then I got the-an extension and I actually I immigrated finally in-yeah I think I got an extension-I got an extension and I immigrated in ‘38 via Cuba under the German quota because according to American law nationality is based on the country of birth whereas in Germany it’s the blood law and here it is the country law. And this if very important difference in Germany there is a lot of conflict about this. Also about their aliens.

**Janet**: So you were here for six months and then did you go to Cuba?

**Lola**: And then I went to Cuba a year later. And then I mean-then I got this affidavit from people whom yeah well I had taken care of the children and the people who really who could afford. Mostly people who could afford to give affidavit they were so overburdened or I mean that they had to have quite substantial resources and there was such a need at that time.

There were really-it was -as it became more and more critical the situation Germany so people tried to contact. I mean there was a limit to what people were-not only what they were able to do but there was-they had to have-it was not easy also for the sponsors because they could not give unlimited affidavits and it was real responsibility. So anyway.

**Janet**: Could you say simply, what was it like for you in Cuba during 1938?

**Lola**: In Cuba was wonderful [laughter]. That was really wonderful because that was real adventure but that was already-I was one of the last people to come in under the German quota because that was overrun already.

And there I met very fascinating people. And it was -in a way it was a sort of different from Ellis Island because there one could move round freely but also I met people who were had just gotten there at the last moment and actually who were very desperate to make it still to get to this country.

And actually I remember that I had my number my-they gave out numbers for people to get their papers and I felt so confident then that I said well I have the number and I gave it to somebody else who had to I mean there were difficulties-who had to leave the country there at a certain time or there was a deadline. And I was sure I would make it so I gave him my number.

I was happy to stay there for another day but there were no complications for me there. Actually I have always been very lucky. In German there is a nice saying, you have more luck than brains [laughter]. And sometimes it’s true.

**Janet**: When you came into this country coming from Cuba did you have to go to Ellis Island again?

**Lola**: No, no. then I was a real citizen. I didn’t have to go to Ellis Island.

**Janet**: Okay. When did you marry Dr.Gruenthal?

**Lola**: In ‘46, after the war.

**Janet**: And did you have children?

**Lola**: Yes.

**Janet**: And their names?

**Lola**: I have a son George-George Franklin Gruenthal. He doesn’t make any use of the Franklin. Does he make faces now [laughter]?

**Janet**: And one child? You have only one child?

**Lola**: Yes.

**Janet**: And you have a grandchild?

**Lola**: Yes. Mathew.

**Janet**: You did start writing poetry before you came to this country did you continue in that way? Did you continue doing secretarial work or were you writing or what did you do as a career?

**Lola**: As a career I have had so many different careers. During the war-what did I do? During the war I became a cooking teacher without being able to cook for instance that was at the settlement house. During the war it was very easy for anybody but anyway for women to get jobs.

So I benefitted from that but I worked with children and what else-I did secretarial work and also I met very unusual people somehow I mean were quite well known. Also all through-I don’t know it just happened lots of this just happened.

But with the poetry well with the poetry I did that on my own. I did when-from earlier on actually I did quite a lot of translating. And I started writing in English and also translating into English. Into English and into German and actually some things were published. Prose and poetry more prose actually. I mean there are endless stories [laughter].

**Janet**: Yes I’m a sure there are. Maybe you could mention a few of the things that were published that you have translated?

**Lola**: Well for instance that was during the war I discovered a prose story or novella or long story and autobiographical story by [unclear 01:15:40] I have to say it with a German L and at that time I did a lot of translating and tried to find publishers or a publisher or tried to place them the translations report in translation in literary magazines.

And I have a very big file of correspondents and where editor told me yes they liked my translations but actually [unclear 01:16:25] was overdone already and there was no market for [unclear 01:16:31] which is funny really because now there is an enormous market for [unclear 01:16:37] but what I found was this story which was not well known and I translated that.

I got some editorial help from American friends and this was published it’s called 'evalt tragy' it’s a name. It’s a story which he wrote-he has written very little prose actually aside from letters but that was one of his earliest works and that was published and it’s good it’s very unusual.

That was published first in England and also through this friend Helga I mentioned before. Who in the meantime had gone back to England ad become a literary agent there. She helped me. So that was published there.

And also I mean some poetry translations, German poetry into English poetry translations that I did were published in anthologies here. And then-again a crazy story I translated something from polish into English. Although I don’t know polish [laughter]. That was for a play. One act play by the polish writer [unclear 01:18:27] it is very difficult name to pronounce. That was also published and it’s called striptease, and that is the original title. It was published and produced also.

**Janet**: You mentioned you were doing some translating at this point.

**Lola**: Well yes. That is also-almost a lifetime project or is project for the rest of my life. I would think I started in the 50s. I discovered Emily Dickinson and I don’t remember how I met her. I don’t remember who introduced her but it was a very meaningful discovery.

And since then I have been translating at intervals but sometimes very intensively really. I have been translating her poetry-some of her poetry into German and this is now being recognized in Germany which is nice and it took a long time but now there is a real interest and I have readings in Germany in different places cities also.

Now there is a real interest. There is a whole industry now of Emily Dickson translators. But I was I think I was not quite the first but almost the first.

**Janet**: I have a question about translating poetry into another language, what happens to the musicality of the sounds in one language when you translate-

**Lola**: It gets lost mostly. Mostly it gets lost but that is just what interests me and that is really a labor of love and this is something that you can’t do with a delaine and you have to do it over and over again. And there has to be a real affinity. And it can be torture but it can be beautiful.

**Janet**: I want to ask you looking back on your life when you started out in one continent and came to this one, how do you think your early life affected the rest of your life essentially most of your life I guess that you lived in this country?

**Lola**: Well in retrospect what sometimes it all seems very meaningful. And that it just couldn’t be otherwise. And also-I don’t know it all makes sense. If you see it in the right perspective. You don’t always see it in the right perspective but actually it was the way it had to be I think.

**Janet**: What are you most proud of or grateful for that you have done in your lifetime?

**Lola**: Well-

**Janet**: Perhaps not the only thing that-

**Lola**: I guess the relationship with my husband and having produced a son where which is [laughter]. Having had a family and also the work I have done. I think the translating has been very meaningful to me. It has been a wonderful experience also because this translating has been something like building bridges you know.

It has reconnected me to Germany and through the translations also and through my-the context that develop through the translations I have developed or found new friendships or sorts. It really like a closing of a circle. So that’s something very significant for me.

**Janet**: Well is there anything else that maybe a very nice place to close this circle on the interview. Is there anything else that you would care to mention before we close?

**Lola**: I couldn’t really [laughter]. I couldn’t think of anything now.

**Janet**: its there is so much to want to say to think of one thing is difficult [laughter].

**Lola**: Yes. I am very grateful to you for your patience and I am glad it came to this and it’s a nice unexpectedly coming back to this place. Thank you.

**Janet**: Well I want to thank you very much for a most interesting interview. This Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I have been speaking with Lola Gruenthal who came from Germany at 22 years of age in 1937 and I am signing off.