**Janet:** Today is September 15th 1996. I’m here in Canton, Ohio with Mrs. Esther Rudner who came from, what was Czechoslovakia after World War 1, in 1920 when she was eight years of age.

Today Mrs. Rudner is 84 years of age. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Okay, if we could start at the beginning, if you tell me where you were born.

**Esther:** I was born in a small village called Hanušovice. I have that written down, I’ll go get that and I’ll spell it for you.

**Janet:** You got the mic on. I really have to unhook you.

**Esther:** Oh, alright. Go where my telephone is in the kitchen, there’s a little red [unclear 00:01:00] I came from.

**Janet:** Okay, we’re resuming here.

**Esther:** The town I was born in was called H-N-U-S-O-V-C-E, and it was pronounced Hanušovice.

**Janet:** Did you live in Hanušovice until you left for America?

**Esther:** Right. I always lived there and my grandparents lived there. In a village not too far from there called B-Y-S-T-R-A. My paternal grandparents lived in that village. We were six or eight miles apart.

**Janet:** Did you have a lot of contact with those grandparents?

**Esther:** Until I was eight years old yes, till I left Europe, when I left that country. In fact during World War 1 my parents’ home was taken by the government to billet soldiers. We lived with my grandmother. My grandfather was gone by then. My grandmother’s name was Hausner, H-A-U-S-N-E-R, her name was Sally.

**Janet:** Sally Hausner.

**Esther:** That was my mother’s mother.

**Janet:** Why don’t you say your birth date for the tape?

**Esther:** There are different dates on which my birthday is because when we came here, on my passport was one date but I have been using March 17th 3/17/12.

**Janet:** Why the mix up? Why …?

**Esther:** Because when I started school in Canton, Ohio my father gave them one date. Then later on when I sent for some information to Czechoslovakia, I wanted to know some stuff. The immigration office in Washington DC gave me the name and place where I can send for information, which I did.

At that point they were communists. They sent me all the information that I wanted for different dates. They had a different date for my birthday. We’re on middle ground, so to speak, I’m still in the same month but …

**Janet:** The same year.

**Esther:** Yeah and the same year but somehow out there the dates got confused. It was a holiday time for the Jewish people. When I was a little girl they used to always say I was born on this holiday and that’s why my name was Esther because it was a day before Purim, the day was called Esther Tonis, was named after Queen Esther, this holiday.

That always came in March. Therefore, I know that the birthday is the right birthday but maybe not exactly the right date. In order to change everything it was a whole big to do so I just kept the birthday that I started school with.

**Janet:** Maybe you could talk a little about where you came from, was Austria Hungary when you were born.

**Esther:** Yes, I was. When the World War started in 1918, I was six. From 12 to 18 is six.

**Janet:** Actually it started in 1914 [inaudible 00:05:59].

**Esther:** Yeah it did. I’m trying to think, it started in 1914, I was two years old. I can’t remember stuff from when I was two but I can remember our family talking about this because in 1914 my father who was Edward Klaussner immigrated to the United States.

**Janet:** You were just born practically?

**Esther:** Yeah, I was two years old so I couldn’t remember him at all except from a picture. During the war, as I said, my mother had five children to take care of without a husband because my father came here and he used to get mail from the Hungarian Army to come back and serve.

Because he had served in the army, everybody had to, was conscripted at one time or another. He would not leave the United States at that point and come back.

**Janet:** Do you know why it was that your father left for the United States?

**Esther:** Yes, because he had brothers in Akron and sisters here in the United States. Several of my mother’s brothers were here in Ohio and they encouraged him to come. At that point he decided he would go and see how things were then bring our family but then the war came.

**Janet:** I see, was part of his reason for leaving to avoid going back into the Hungarian Army do you think? Or he hadn’t really …

**Esther:** No, that was before the war broke out. The war broke out in July and I think he came here in April or May of that year. However, it was in May of that year that the head of the Hungarian Government was assassinated. Then they started the war.

This I learned in American history and of course in my parents’ conversations on different things like that and my aunts and uncles because both my father and mother came from very large families, children of nine and eleven, we had a lot of relatives.

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

**Esther:** When we came here …

**Janet:** Before we talk about coming here, if you could say a little bit about -How did she get along when your father was here in America?

**Esther:** It was hard, I remember it being hard, what I could remember. My oldest brother was seven years older than I so that meant at that point he was -When I was two, he had to be nine. My grandmother had a home. We all lived together with my grandmother.

**Janet:** What do you remember about your grandmother?

**Esther:** I remember that she was a very kind-hearted lady. In today’s terms, she would look old but she was not that old because a very sweet and kind lady.

I know if you know anything about Jewish life, the Sabbath is very holy. My grandmother used to bake, what we called challah, its egg bread, braided egg bread. Couldn’t buy it in any market today but …

**Janet:** I’ve made it actually.

**Esther:** Have you? If you were sick she would save some of the white egg bread to give you a treat. Otherwise, we mostly ate dark rye bread. I think they had to bake all that because we were not close enough to a city to go buy those things.

I remember playing with some little girls, one of them was a cousin to my father. I remembered going to Hebrew school, because you start at a very young age. We had a synagogue that was not too far from where we lived so the little children would walk with the older children.

We had a regular school. After school they would teach Hebrew, it was a Slavish school, at that point where I could remember it. We learned Slavish and the Hebrew. He was a Jewish teacher, so he taught both things. In fact I think this teacher’s name was Mr. Klein. At that point when I was four, five and six years old he was an old man, he was a teacher, must have been in his 20s and I do remember that.

Then I remember during the war, when we lived at my grandmother’s house -who lived further down the street. Their house was not taken to billet soldiers because they had a family and there was a father and mother and a family.

I don’t know why they didn’t ask them to move but they did ask us to move. May be because my grandmother lived nearby and they needed room for the soldiers.

My oldest brother I know used to go to the river that ran through this town and he would go fishing. Very often, our meals were fish meals. To this day, I detest fish, I won’t touch it. Any cooked fish. I can’t stand the smell of it. I think it did me in when I was a little girl. What else can I tell you about? We used to play with different people.

**Janet:** Do you remember any of the games or kinds of things you [inaudible 00:13:54] when you played?

**Esther:** I think we used to play a game like tag, I don’t know what they called it then. I know we used to run in the fields and play with other children.

**Janet:** Were you closest to any particular family member?

**Esther:** All of my brothers were very dear to me. It’s as we got older that they moved here and they moved there from -They lived in Canton and then as they got older and wanted to work. When we came here my father had a business. The uncle that came to bring us was my mother’s brother.

My father had had enough money to buy passports for the five children and my mother. My uncle who had been in World War 1 was not allowed to go to Czechoslovakia to see his parents or his mother, until he was discharged from the service. He had to come back to the United States, get an honorary discharge then made arrangements to go back to Europe. Of course he had to sail because there was no flying in those days.

**Janet:** This uncle, what was his name?

**Esther:** His name was Irving Hausner.

**Janet:** He had come to this country earlier?

**Esther:** As he was a young boy.

**Janet:** He had become an American citizen?

**Esther:** Right. That’s what happened with a lot of our family. Some of my mother’s family and some of my father’s family had come maybe in 1910, 1912, they were young men. One of my uncles was only 14 when he came here and never got to see his parents again.

**Janet:** How was it that they happened to settle in Canton in Ohio?

**Esther:** Because my mother’s brother, one was in Cleveland. The one that offered my father a job to work with him was in Canton.

**Janet:** Do you have any idea why originally they came to Ohio rather than somewhere [inaudible 00:16:39] …?

**Esther:** I think they had family here that had left Europe many years before and had settled in Cleveland. One family led to another family. This one uncle, his name was Leopold Hausner, and he had a business in Canton. When we came here my father was in business with him. My uncle had a clothing store on the east side of Canton and my father had a grocery store.

When we came to Ohio from Ellis Island, we came directly to Canton. My father picked us up in a horse and buggy that he had borrowed from somebody to pick up his family. When he had the store, he used to deliver groceries and meats on a wagon that was a horse and a wagon.

My oldest brother used to help him because at that point when we came in 1920, he was born in 1905 so he was 15. He used to help my father in the store. My older sister used to help in the house because she was five years older than I was.

**Janet:** What had your father done for work when he was in Czechoslovakia before he came here?

**Esther:** His parents owned a saloon in this small town not far from us. I think he went as an apprentice to an uncle in Budapest to learn the grocery business. That’s how when he came here, he must have had the apprenticeship and probably helped his parents in the saloon when he was a boy because that’s what children did, they helped their parents.

By the time he came here, he evidently wasn’t doing very well or he wouldn’t have left. He probably felt he could do better here and my uncles used to write and tell him, “Come and bring your family. It’s more prosperous here.”

That’s why he immigrated here. He couldn’t afford to bring his family with him, so he really came to see if he could earn enough money to send for his family, which he did.

**Janet:** Do you personally remember anything that occurred during World War 1?

**Esther:** A couple of instances, I remember the soldiers coming through town with cannons, the cannons were on wheels, on the main street.

I remember one of my uncles who lived in- I’m trying to think of the town. That was my mother’s brother his name was Julius Hausner. He had to go to war and he was wounded. I remember him coming to my grandmother to convalesce. I remember that because that was a big event for my uncle to be wounded and come there to convalesce.

**Janet:** What was his name that uncle?

**Esther:** His name was Julius Hausner.

**Janet:** Do you remember any experiences or any anecdotes of things that happened with that uncle?

**Esther:** No. He came and he was just at my grandma’s and everybody in the family tried to help to take care of him till he got better. He had a wife and children too. Later on in life his children, eventually, one of them ended up in Israel. His daughter was the one that lived in Switzerland for a while.

**Janet:** How about your grandmother, you mentioned she was a kind woman.

**Esther:** Kind, sweet lady. Very kind, sweet lady.

**Janet:** Can you remember any incidents with her? Any things maybe she did or [inaudible 00:21:57] do?

**Esther:** She cooked, she baked and she was very good to all of us children, very good. Not one particular incident stands out for myself but I know all of our family loved her when we were little kids.

**Janet:** How about the religious life of the family, do you remember?

**Esther:** Yes, we all had to attend a Hebrew school. On the Sabbath we went to the synagogue. Everybody would get dressed up and go to the synagogue.

Some of our Jewish holidays are more like festivals. I remember one in particular in the spring, it was called Shavuot. That holiday was when there were lilacs all around our house. They used to bring the lilacs in the house, I remember that. Always, when that holiday comes I think of those lilacs and the smell of lilacs.

I forget what they called that holiday in English, I think the Feast of Weeks, in English. It was at a time when the flowers would bloom. That holiday always reminds me that I remember as a little girl we always had lilacs in the house from my grandma’s yard.

**Janet:** Any other festivals or rituals that you remember from Czechoslovakia?

**Esther:** I remember some of the Passover holidays. In the fall, like we are now coming to it after the Yom Kippur holiday which is next week. There is a holiday called Sukkah, where they build the booths. They still do here. At the synagogues they still do that.

I remember that we used to eat in that the Sukkah, that booth we used to eat in there every night during that week of the holiday. I remember that my grandmother used to bring the soup tureen from the house into this sukkah where we all ate our meals during the holiday.

**Janet:** Do you remember how the sukkah was decorated? What was on the walls of it? Or was anything else brought into?

**Esther:** Yeah, they used to have leaves, flowers and whatever vegetation was in the area, I guess they used to decorate that sukkah with that.

**Janet:** How about the Jewish community in the village where you were, was it all Jewish or [inaudible 00:25:06]?

**Esther:** No, we had a lot of Gentile people around us, no. it was not Jewish at all. We had lots of Gentile neighbors, some were very friendly. Before I left, somehow or other I remember that they used to tell us that some of those young people didn’t like Jews.

Not to befriend them or not to be friends with them, they didn’t like Jews. What their names were, anything like that, I don’t remember. There were a lot of Gentile people that were very good friends with our family.

**Janet:** Did you personally experience any anti-Semitism over there?

**Esther:** No, not that I remember. I experienced more here as a little girl than I did there. Because then I was old enough to remember but I didn’t remember, if I did, I don’t remember.

**Janet:** How about food that you remember from a little girl in Czechoslovakia? Do you remember any particular kinds of dishes? You said the Challah and the rye bread, anything else that you recall?

**Esther:** They used to make chicken, and they would make a roast but I don’t remember too well just what they were …

**Janet:** Fish.

**Esther:** Fish, we had lots of fish. During the war years, you could hardly buy meat because everything went to the army.

**Janet:** Do you …

**Esther:** We did have chicken. I know on the Sabbath we generally had chicken and soup. Everybody made their own noodles. You didn’t buy anything like noodles.

**Janet:** Was there a marketplace or were there shops? Do you remember anything about that?

**Esther:** No, I don’t remember but there evidently were places where, either they had a farmer’s market somewhere. I don’t remember because I don’t think I ever went. It was adults that went to get the food.

To this day, I often had thought about that and I should have asked some of my uncles who would remember or my oldest brother remembered a lot too. Now my oldest brother and my sister are gone, who would remember more than I would?

I don’t remember. There evidently had to be a place. A lot of people grew stuff in their yard, had gardens. Because I remember having green onions that were picked out of the garden, so we must have had a garden around the house somewhere.

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

**Esther:** Hungarian and Yiddish. Our Yiddish was more like German because that part of the country that’s the way they spoke. When I was a little girl I could speak Hungarian, Yiddish, German and Slavish.

When I came here, my father said, “You children have to learn English so when you talk to me, you have to speak to me and I will answer you in English so you will know what language you’re talking about.” Because he felt that was very important for us if we were going to live here, that we had to learn to write in English.

**Janet:** Initially you were speaking to him in Yiddish or whatever you knew …

**Esther:** Yes, sure.

**Janet:** He was returning it in English?

**Esther:** I was eight years old in the first grade, I was put in the first grade, it wasn’t too long, you pick it up. I never went beyond the eighth grade in school here because at that point I went as a freshman in high school. I was going on age 16. My family needed help at home and my sister had been helping at home.

I went the freshman year in high school in Canton. Then after my freshman year, I had to drop out of school and help at home. I learned how to cook and bake at a very early age.

My younger brother, the one that was younger than I, we were a year and a half apart. He went to high school here. My youngest brother who was born here went to high school and college and became a doctor.

Everybody who was working in our family, my sister, my older brother, everybody helped to keep our household going so that my youngest brother, Joe, could go to college. That was an achievement, in 1939 he went.

**Janet:** Do you remember when the family was getting ready to come to this country? Do you remember preparations to leave? What your mother packed, any of those kinds of things?

**Esther:** She packed our clothes, whatever we had. My uncle helped her to bring whatever we had. I was too little to really look and see what she was bringing, as long as I had a dress to wear and shoes to put on.

**Janet:** Do you remember before you left? Do you remember saying goodbye?

**Esther:** Yes. That stuck in my mind for a long time. We left to go to a larger city that was not too far from us where we got on a train, I had never been on a train before. The goodbyes to my aunts and uncles who were in the area and to my grandmother was a very sad thing.

When we got to this town, it was called Eperies. I don’t know what it would be called now. It may not have the same name. That’s where we boarded a train. On this train we went to Antwerp, Belgium to pick up the boat that we were going on.

That night on the train was very sad, my younger brother cried for his grandmother on the train. I’ll never forget that, just thinking about it.

**Janet:** This is the one who was a year and a half younger than you?

**Esther:** Yeah, he and I were very close.

**Janet:** Was the feeling that you would never see them again when the family left, was that?

**Esther:** Probably.

**Janet:** Did you stay a long while in Antwerp?

**Esther:** Yes. First we had to go to Prague. The first time I saw a mannequin was in Prague in a big department store window, I had never seen that before. I think later on somewhere along the line, I had read about this department store in Prague.

Then from Prague, we got a train to go to Antwerp. Yes, we had to stay in Antwerp. I think about, three weeks before the boat came for us. My uncle who was an American citizen, and he spoke many languages because he had learned them as a boy, was able to help us, direct us to everything. He knew what to say and he knew what to do.

I remember being on the waterfront in Antwerp and he took us to a coffee shop. I have never smelled anything so delicious like the pastry in that coffee shop. That’s a memory from when I was a little girl. He bought some little French pastries or whatever they had. I can’t remember what it was anymore. I remember the smell of this place was wonderful.

**Janet:** Were you examined at all before you boarded the ship?

**Esther:** I don’t remember that at all. We evidently must have been, because I think we had to have vaccination some stuff before we could get in the boat, on the ship. I think either that or my uncle had arranged all that before we left. I don’t remember that.

**Janet:** Why don’t you say the name of the ship and anything you remember about that …?

**Esther:** The New Zealand. I remember being very sick to my stomach when it started to sail. I do remember that- I’m trying to think. I don’t know if it was called steerage in those days, I don’t really know. I remember lots of evenings, the families of the people who were on this boat were in one great big room like an auditorium type thing.

Everybody was either playing guitars or violins or whatever music that they played. People were dancing around and trying to be happy on the voyage because it took us -We were in the ocean at least three weeks.

**Janet:** Where the dancing and singing was going on, was that the same area where you were sleeping then or was that a different …?

**Esther:** I don’t remember that. The sleeping had to be nearby because how far can you go?

**Janet:** Unless you were up on deck for the singing and everything and down below …

**Esther:** I don’t remember whether it was down below or on deck, but it was a big room where everybody seemed to be happy and looking forward to their new adventure in the United States.

**Janet:** Do you remember your mother, anything about how she felt leaving her family and coming to this country?

**Esther:** Her husband was here and she was looking forward to that. I’m sure she had feelings like I’m having now.

**Janet:** Do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

**Esther:** Vaguely remember. The ship came in and I think some small boat took us to Ellis Island. I remember Ellis Island was a huge place, never saw anything that big, with lots and lots of people.

We all must have been vaccinated or something before we got on that boat because when you come in to Ellis Island, each child had to be checked out. My mother had to be checked out. My uncle who was an America citizen had to be checked out.

I have to tell you a cute story about my uncle who came to get us. He met a cousin of my fathers who he fell in love with and after he brought us to the United States and we were settled in Canton, he lived in Cleveland. He went back to Czechoslovakia and married this cousin of my fathers who became my aunt.

Lived in Cleveland for many years, charming lady, very charming lady. As I grew up I remembered more and more about her. I didn't remember her so much as a little girl because she was a young woman and I was six years old. You don’t pay attention to those people that much.

She became my aunt and she’s a very sweet charming lady lived in Cleveland, but they didn’t have any children. When I would go to visit some of my relatives in Cleveland I always visited her too. This uncle played the violin and he also had a good voice. He was a cantor in one of the synagogues in Cleveland.

**Janet:** Is there anything else about Ellis Island -Do you recall how long you were there?

**Esther:** I think we just there overnight. I think we were shipped out the next day.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything about the accommodations or food or how you were treated?

**Esther:** I think on Ellis Island, my uncle brought us some ice cream cones. That may have been the first time I ever tasted ice cream. It was like a treat for the children. I don’t remember too much about it because it seemed like all I can remember is loads and loads of people that seemed like they were all over the place.

I don’t even know if we had spent an overnight there, I don’t remember that at all. I remember coming to Canton not too long after we got to Ellis Island. It may have been that we got there one evening and then the next day after we were all processed we might have gotten on a train to come to Canton.

**Janet:** You went to Penn Station apparently and then …

**Esther:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything about that part of the voyage, going to the Penn Station and then the train ride?

**Esther:** I remember the train ride, but I don’t remember the station at all. I guess there was just too many things to observe when we came in. Little girls, at that point, you’re afraid or you just hang on to your family. I remember getting to the station here and getting off the train and meeting my father for the first time.

**Janet:** What was that …?

**Esther:** I remember that.

**Janet:** What was it like?

**Esther:** This was a strange man that I never knew. After a while we just loved him, he was very good, sweet and kind. At first, I think when you’re eight years old and you first see your father for the first time, I can’t exactly remember my feelings.

My brother remembered my father, my sister remembered my father because they were older. I was two when he left, I couldn’t remember him at all. I didn’t remember any of the uncles that had emigrated before until I lived here for a while. Then little by little from Cleveland and I had an aunt in Indianapolis. Little by little they all came to Canton to see these little greenies that came here.

**Janet:** Do you remember that, do you remember being considered the greenie …

**Esther:** Sure, I remember that. We used to joke about it in later years. We thought it was a big joke, but I remember when they came to see us. This aunt would give you 50 cents or a dollar to go buy candy. Then for years when they’d come and you were a little girl, they would give you a dollar when they came to visit.

I remember I had aunts in Akron, two aunts in Akron and two aunts in Cleveland. Then some of those cousins were my age. As a girl, before I got old enough, I used to go vacationing there. But by that time I could speak a little English and they could understand me.

Then as I got older and into my teens, my cousins used to fix me up on dates and stuff because they were girls. One girl was a year younger than I. another one was two years younger than I. Then the older cousins were friends with my sister and my older brother.

We had relatives in Pennsylvania, the sister to my father. As we got older, those girls used to come and visit and my brother and sister would fix them up on local dates here. I would say that, mostly we were a close-knit family, because we used to keep in touch.

To this day, I keep in touch with -I have a cousin in Israel, I just sent him a New Year’s card. When my children went to Israel about eight or nine years ago, I had his address and they looked them up. He lived in Tel Aviv and I wrote him and told him where my children were going to be, at what hotel.

My daughter-in-law, who’s been married to my son now for about over 30 years, 32, I think it’s going to be this year or 33. My daughter-in-law said when she saw this cousin come in to the hotel.

He resembled one of my uncles so much that she could have picked him out that he was the relative because these people were first cousins whom I had never seen. They lived in a different part of Hungary than I did. Through the war years you didn’t see anybody.

**Janet:** Did the family ever consider themselves Hungarian or Czechoslovakian or half …

**Esther:** They always said Hungarian because my father came here, he was Hungarian. It’s when I came here that it became Czechoslovakia at that point. The grownups all came from Hungary, Austria Hungary it was called at that time.

**Janet:** Do you remember any other experiences when you first arrived, like coming here to Canton? Did you start school right away?

**Esther:** Yes, not too long afterwards, yes we had to start school. I had some aunts and uncles in Canton, one of them had little children. This aunt was like 12 years older than I, as I got grown up.

I thought she was an old lady when I came here. She had two little kids already, she was an old lady. I used to look at her when I was in my teens, this aunt was old. When I got married she wasn’t old anymore. It’s funny how your attitudes change.

**Janet:** Can you think of any attitudes, values or things that your mother and or father told you that were things that had to do with how you should be or how you should live?

**Esther:** Yes. I remember when my oldest brother, when he would go out, my father would tell him to be home by 12 o’clock, when he was old enough to go out on a date. I remember that my dad used to sit on his bed and wait for my brother to come.

If he was later, my brother would take his shoes off so the steps wouldn’t creek on the way upstairs. My father was standing in the hall and saying, “Where were you all this time?”

When my sister was dating, when I was 12, she was 17, I wasn’t dating but she was. I remember my father would say, “Good girls don’t stay up late at night.”

She would say to him, “Pa, if I wanted to be bad I could be bad in the morning. I didn’t have to wait till at night.” That was one of the expression she always used to tell my dad but yes they taught us values, sure they did.

**Janet:** How about the religious life of the family, did it continue for …?

**Esther:** Yes, we always belonged to a synagogue. My younger brother, I remember his Bar Mitzvah. I think Leo was the first one, he must have been, when I was eight he was 12. I think we were here a short while when he was Bar Mitzvah.

In those days, your father took the family to the synagogue. The day that they read from the Torah was the day you were Bar Mitzvah, it was no big deal. My brother Leo was a Bar Mitzvah, my brother Albert, I remember on a Thursday morning.

My baby brother for him, we were more advanced by that and we did what the custom was. They had the Bar Mitzvah and it was on a Sabbath. We, I think served some little lunch at the synagogue, which at that point got to be what you should be doing.

**Janet:** In the old country, your oldest brother was Bar Mitzvah?

**Esther:** Yes.

**Janet:** Was that the same kind of thing the day he read the Torah?

**Esther:** Yes, the day he read the Torah. Then they took him up to read the Torah, at that point there was no Conservative synagogue, it was Orthodox. The day he read the Torah was the day he became the Bar Mitzvah boy.

You were 13 years old then. You became what they call, the day I am a man. He was still a young boy, but by the time we came to the United States he was 15 years old.

**Janet:** How about the girls, was there such a thing as the Bar Mitzvah or?

**Esther:** No, Bar Mitzvah is within the last 25, 30 years.

**Janet:** The girls really didn’t have a ceremony [inaudible 00:50:35] …?

**Esther:** No, that was unheard off. That was started in the United States. I remember the first Bar Mitzvah I went to, I was already married. I would be married 61 years if my husband was living, because I got married in 1935.

The first Bar Mitzvah I went to, I’m trying to think how old I was. I got married when I was 23. I had to be in my 30s, the first Bar Mitzvah that I went to for a girl. It could have been sometimes in the late 40s.

**Janet:** How did you meet your husband?

**Esther:** He was a Canton boy. I used to go to the Jewish center a lot as a little girl in my teens. I belonged to some things there. I met his sister first. I knew his sister for a number of years, one of his sisters and that’s how I met him.

Actually he was a friend of a boy that belonged to a club of young boys. I just knew him for about five or six years before we got married. I met him through the young kids around town.

**Janet:** Were there a lot of people who had immigrated in your community besides [inaudible 00:52:30] …?

**Esther:** There were some yeah. Nobody came from Czechoslovakia at that time, some of them came from Poland, some came from Russia. My husband was born in Cleveland and his family ended up living in Canton when he was 11 years old.

His sister and I, his sister who’s a little older than I, we belonged to a club together. I got to know her. Then I met some of her family and Sam was one of them but we didn’t even look at each other at first.

Then as I started to date more, he was a very handsome fellow, very good looking man and he read. By the time I married him he had great temples and his hair was just beautiful and curly and grey.

As I said, as a youngster we used to date fellows from Akron and Cleveland and Youngstown. Then these boys from Canton used to date the girls from those towns.

When I met Sam he was going with somebody, a girlfriend. Then little by little we started dating more and more. One of the fellows in his club was dating one of his sisters. Then another fellow was dating a girlfriend of mine. As you go along, you start, this is your boyfriend and you start going with him more and more.

**Janet:** How many children did you have?

**Esther:** I have two living children, I had a miscarriage of twins then I lost a little girl when she was 22 months old. I had the miscarriage of twins right after I was married and twins ran in my husband’s family too and in my family. I had a twin aunt and uncle and he had a twin brother and sister that was younger than he.

I would have had a set of -They would have been born about nine or 10 months after I was married, they would have been about 60. Now my oldest child is 55 and a grandfather.

**Janet:** What are your children’s names?

**Esther:** William and Sharon. William was named after an uncle whose name was William, my mother’s brother. Sharon was named after an aunt.

**Janet:** When you think back upon the fact that you came here as an eight year old and lived the rest of your life here. How do you think about that, any effects of that or the fact that the family immigrated into this country? Do you …?

**Esther:** I think as I got older we were very grateful to be here with all the trouble that was in Europe because we lost an awful lot of people in our family during the Hitler period, awful lot.

I remember an incident of one cousin who used to write to my father after the war. She wrote him and told him that the Gentile people in that town hid her and her brother in the [inaudible 00:56:31].

There were people who you knew all your life when you lived there. They were the kind that liked you as a neighbor and they didn’t want you to get killed so they helped you out. Those were stories that came from our cousins in Europe as they emerged from all this terrible period. A lot of them ran away to other places.

**Janet:** Was there ever an effort before it was too late to bring family members?

**Esther:** Yes. We had an uncle, my father’s sister’s husband who came here before the war broke out in Europe, before World War 2 broke out. He was here for about a year. He had brothers in New York and he had us in Canton.

He left his wife and children in Europe. He was so lonesome, he had to go back, he just could not stand it here. Our family begged him to send for his family and bring them here. He said, no, he could never live here it was so different.

He went back and sure enough that whole family was wiped out. We always think about that. Some of our relatives managed to escape and as I said they got to different parts of the world. I had some cousins in Budapest who came back from the war camps.

They were beautiful young women who sent us pictures, because my father used to correspond with his sisters in Budapest. These girls used to send pictures and then they were forced to go to a labor camp but thank God they survived.

I guess the labor camp wasn’t as bad from Hungary as it was from some other places. Poland and some places were terrible, so some of these young women when they came home from the labor camps, they would not stay in Hungary and live under communist domination.

Some of them married and they went off to Australia, had a couple of cousins in Australia. Now these people are in the United States, their children are here. I have a cousin living in Pittsburg that I never knew in Europe, he’s about my age. I didn’t know him as a boy child.

He came to Pittsburg after the Hungarian Revolution when they were trying to overthrow the communists in Hungary. He came here then.

**Janet:** It’s just about an hour, is there anything you’d like to say before we close?

**Esther:** I don’t know what else you want to know. I have enjoyed my life in the United States. For every day I’ve had here I have always been very grateful that I didn’t have to go through what my family did in Europe.

I don’t think people realize what those people really went through, nobody, unless you are living in those small villages. There were some terrible people in those small villages too that were very anti-Semitic.

On the whole, I guess it’s- how can I say this? It gains momentum, when one family starts disliking another family, then his relative and his cousin dislike him. That gains momentum, in a small village particularly.

Because look what they did in the big cities in Germany, how the neighbors allowed this to happen. It’s unbelievable that people would allow this to happen to people who were their close associates in a school, in a university, as a neighbor, that they would allow this to happen.

I’m forever grateful that I came to the United States when I did, because I’ve had a wonderful life here. Even with pitfalls and things and with deaths in my family. I had a very kind-hearted husband. We just together pulled through whatever things happened to us, we just somehow pulled through it all.

**Janet:** We’re going to have to close here. I want to thank you so much.

**Esther:** You’re welcome. I’m glad you came for the interview.

**Janet:** Me too. I’ve been speaking with Esther Rudner, who came from, what was Czechoslovakia at the time, in 1920 when she was eight years old. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It’s September 15th 1996 and I’m signing off.

**Esther:** Now I want to …