**Paul**: - For the National Park Service. Today is Friday September 29th 1995. I am in Toms River, New Jersey with Josephine Sokolowski. Mrs. Sokolowski came from Poland in1932 and you were 23 when you came?

**Jose**: 22

**Paul**: You were 22 when you came. You hadn’t turned 23 yet. Present also with us is her daughter in law-

**Jose**: Daughter.

**Paul**: Daughter, Amy Baxter. Sorry and we are in their kitchen doing the interview. Mrs. Sokolowski can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

**Jose**: [unclear 00:00:42].

**Paul**: When were you born?

**Jose**: In Poland.

**Paul**: No, when?

**Amy**: Your birthday? What’s your birthday?

**Jose**: I don’t know November 1st.

**Paul**: November 1st?

**Jose**: I think 1999

**Amy**: 89

**Paul**: 1899 you were born in November 1st 1899.

**Jose**: I am 95 years old.

**Paul**: Almost 96. Almost. Where in Poland were you born?

**Jose**: Born in place?

**Paul**: Yeah

**Jose**: I was lucky. I was born in a farm. That was in a farm. The city we go that [unclear 00:01:35] like state to [unclear 00:01:40].

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

**Jose**: What [Unclear 00:01:42]?

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

**Jose**: The farm? There was nice farm like more vegetable, any kind. Horses. I think have six children and [unclear 00:02:08] that was too many over there. I always liked to go to someplace else. I was like to United States and I have to over here and my aunt brings me here. His name Kardia Sadoska from Poland but here her name was Locadia Sadoska.

**Paul**: I want to talk about the farm in Poland, what kinds of vegetables did you grow?

**Jose**: Cabbage, Carrots any kind. All vegetable. I give you that. We don’t have no-no tomatoes that time. I never see bananas but cabbage, all carrots, and all vegetables we grow there.

**Paul**: Potatoes?

**Jose**: Oh yeah, whole lot. That the main thing.

**Paul**: What did you do with the vegetables?

**Jose**: We eat them, cook them.

**Paul**: Did you ever sell them?

**Jose**: Sometimes I would go- yes [unclear 00:03:18] the mashed potatoes we sell too. But the other things that was- that year I came here. That was we have cabbages. The Bolsheviks take away a whole lot. Just left us, just leave it. They didn’t leave everything they take some to the government and left some here.

**Paul**: What do you remember about the Bolsheviks coming? Tell me what you remember about that experience?

**Jose**: I don’t think the Bolsheviks does some of the children. 15, 16 that could wear shoes, one socks [laughter] and we came to our house were full of them but we sorry for them because they were so young those kids but the [unclear 00:04:32] that’s what they called us here. How do they call them? I forgot what they call them. [Unclear 00: 04:40]-

**Amy**: Oh God! The men in the army? The general or the captains?

**Paul**: The soldiers?

**Jose**: Yeah something like that.

**Amy**: The solviek [unclear 00:04:54] soldiers I think that what she meant.

**Jose**: And after that the caged them. The Pollack’s they chase them to Russia again. I can’t remember all this things were possible.

**Paul**: Can you remember the house that you lived in in Poland?

**Jose**: We got three big house buy big rooms very big one. Three rooms. From the beginning that was a nice place to live at.

**Paul**: What was the house made out off?

**Jose**: Wood.

**Amy**: Wood? What kind of?

**Jose**: I don’t know!

**Amy**: Wood, floors what kind of floors did you have?

**Jose**: What?

**Amy**: Floor?

**Jose**: Floor? We have a wood floor.

**Amy**: Wood floor too?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: What kind of a roof did the house have on it?

**Jose**: Roof, roof.

**Paul**: A roof, roof? [Laughter]

**Jose**: [laughter]

**Paul**: How did you heat the house?

**Jose**: Stove, we got stove. We bought -what do they call it? Wood.

**Paul**: And where did you get the wood?

**Jose**: We got wood.

**Paul**: On your farm?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Amy**: They chopped the trees down, is that what he did?

**Jose**: Yeah, like I would [unclear 00:06:35] they chopped wood and prepare for the winter.

**Amy**: Oh.

**Jose**: We got all the big pieces. That I know.

**Paul**: Did you have running water in the house?

**Jose**: I don’t think have-just like tap, like the big wood [unclear 00:07:02].

**Paul**: Where did the water come from?

**Jose**: From water [Laughter].

**Amy**: Where did you get the water? From the well? Did you have a well?

**Jose**: We have big well.

**Paul**: Whose job was it to get the water?

**Jose**: We got big pail, we got take the water from the well. All year long but we have a river. In the summer time we could go to river.

**Amy**: Was that your job to get the water?

**Jose**: No, every-

**Amy**: Everybody went and got the water themselves?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: How did you light your house? How did you have light in your house?

**Amy**: You didn’t have electricity.

**Jose**: We got [unclear 00:07:53]?

**Amy**: Did you have electricity then?

**Jose**: No, not then no.

**Amy**: How then did you light the house?

**Jose**: With gas.

**Amy**: Gas? Gas light?

**Jose**: We called kerosene.

**Amy**: Oh.

**Jose**: We got lamp like a big room we got lamp like something like this. But in the kitchen we got small lamp.

**Paul**: What kind of food did you eat in Poland?

**Jose**: My mother cooked for us that’s all. I don’t know what kind of food. I can’t explain that. It’s impossible.

**Paul**: Was your mother a good cook?

**Jose**: Yes.

**Paul**: What was your favorite food as a child?

**Jose**: I liked potatoes [Laughter].

**Paul**: How did your mother prepare the potatoes?

**Jose**: Potatoes, cabbage, turnips, red beans-boracic.

**Amy**: Yeah but he wants to know, how did your mother cook the potatoes?

**Jose**: Cook them peel them-

**Amy**: Did she make anything different with them than we do here?

**Jose**: Yeah, mashed potatoes or all potatoes. Any kind.

**Paul**: What were some of your mother's responsibilities in the house? What did she have to do around the house?

**Jose**: Everything.

**Paul**: Like what?

**Jose**: What your mother do in the house? Tell me?

**Paul**: Well my mother and your mother are different. What did your mother have to do?

**Jose**: Not very different.

**Paul**: Did your mother clean the house?

**Jose**: We cleaned the house every grown up-

**Paul**: The children did?

**Jose**: Yeah we help. We help.

**Paul**: You were six girls?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Yes, and what was your job in the house?

**Jose**: [laughter] what tell me to do that I do because I was small.

**Paul**: You did anything they told you?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: It was a long time ago.

**Jose**: That’s right.

**Paul**: [laughter].

**Jose**: I can’t remember those things. So many years here, don’t forget that.

**Paul**: Do you remember how your family celebrated Christmas at that time?

**Jose**: Oh yeah, very, very good. That we got big celebration like Christmas, before Christmas, New Year’s, we have New Year’s party just like-after but for beginning those party you're not supposed to have that because if they find out we got polish together they not supposed to do. The Russian come in you give you trouble.

**Paul**: That what you remember-

**Jose**: But after their stuff Poland got that we got like here. Christmas tree everything.

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

**Jose**: Joseph.

**Paul**: And what did he do for a living?

**Jose**: In the farm.

**Paul**: He was a farmer.

**Paul**: What was your father's personality like?

**Jose**: Very good.

**Paul**: What were some of the things he liked to do? What did he enjoy in life?

**Jose**: We didn’t enjoy anything. We were used to that. I can’t explain I tell you this why. He got the big throat and he talk like that like for many years.

**Paul**: Why did you want to come to America?

**Jose**: Because I like to see United States.

**Paul**: What did you know about America you got here?

**Jose**: Nothing, nothing much. I have no idea but lot of people go there.

**Paul**: Did anyone in your family go to America before you did?

**Jose**: Yeah, my father was here.

**Paul**: What did he do in America?

**Jose**: Something do I don’t know. Before I go my father was here not me.

**Paul**: So he was here for a while then?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Did he go back and forth from America to Poland?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Did he ever bring you anything from America?

**Jose**: I can’t remember because I don’t born that time. Before I was born, before my father was married something like that.

**Paul**: I see, you said you wanted to come to America because you wanted to see what America was like-

**Jose**: Not much, I tell you this much. Not much different.

**Paul**: It wasn’t much different-[Inaudible 00:12:58]

**Jose**: [Inaudible 00:12:59]

**Paul**: Do you remember what you packed to take with you to America?

**Jose**: [laughter] what I was supposed to get that’s all. They had to give it to me.

**Paul**: What did they give to you?

**Jose**: The [unclear 00:13:17] that’s for sure. I got clothes.

**Paul**: Did you take any food with you to America?

**Jose**: Never.

**Paul**: Was it difficult for you to say goodbye to your family?

**Jose**: If you go to a place you say goodbye to your father and mother? That the same thing I do [Laughter].

**Amy**: Yeah but?

**Paul**: Did they want you to go to America?

**Jose**: Yeah, my father take me to the station.

**Paul**: And then where did you go to get the ship?

**Jose**: To Gdansk.

**Paul**: You went to Gdansk. Were you traveling alone?

**Jose**: No with my cousin and my girlfriend. Three of us come from Poland same time. So we had to there but not same state. But different state. But the four of us had one room in the ship.

**Paul**: How long did you stay in Gdansk before you actually got on the ship?

**Jose**: From Gdansk, we go on big ship. Just I can’t talk, I can’t talk.

**Amy**: Do you want some water?

**Paul**: You want some water?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: We are going to just pause for a second.

**Amy**: Yeah.

**Jose**: Starts 1949 or 34 or something?

**Paul**: 1914

**Jose**: No. 1949.

**Paul**: The First World War started in 1914.

**Amy**: Yeah that started before she came to America.

**Jose**: Yeah, yeah.

**Paul**: That was before you came to America?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Amy**: But he wanted to know why did you want to come to America? You didn’t answer that. You didn’t say why.

**Jose**: Why? Because I liked to come to America.

**Amy**: Yeah but that wasn’t the reason.

**Jose**: That was the reason.

**Amy**: Because she had to work on the farm that’s why she had to come-

**Paul**: You didn’t like doing farm work?

**Jose**: Nobody like farm. Everybody wants to run away from here but after a while that’s the same life.

**Paul**: Were you alone on the ship?

**Jose**: Alone?

**Paul**: You said you were travelling with your cousin? And a girlfriend, were you all together on the ship?

**Jose**: All together in one room.

**Paul**: In one room on the ship. And tell me what you remember about being on the ship?

**Jose**: There was breakfast, dinner, we got pretty good there. They give you pretty good food and mostly like here. I remember like fish, herrings. There are those things like everybody eat. Yeah.

**Paul**: Did you get sea sick?

**Jose**: No. my cousin- I was walking [unclear 00:16:34]-

**Paul**: Never seen before. Things that you had never seen before?

**Jose**: Ice -was big houses big factory. But yes they were- nice on the big ship [unclear 00:16:58].

**Paul**: When you went to Gdansk to get on the ship, was that the first time you had ever been in a large city?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**. Yes.

**Jose**: Although I was in Warsaw few times.

**Paul**: How long did the ship take to get to America?

**Jose**: I think almost two, almost two weeks.

**Paul**: Almost two weeks. And do you remember what time of the year this is? That you are travelling on the ship? Do you remember what month it was when you left?

**Jose**: We going to, maybe October 29, October 29 we go to Gdansk. From Gdansk that was almost November. We wait in Gdansk a while. From Gdansk we go to the big ship. We have two weeks.

**Paul**: Two weeks. Do your remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when the ship came into New York harbor?

**Jose**: I saw that. But I don’t know what the Statue does so. [Laughter] I don’t know what that mean.

**Paul**: Do you remember what class you were travelling on the ship?

**Jose**: What?

**Paul**: What class, do you remember what- what?

**Jose**: Class?

**Paul**: Yeah, what class? What ship ticket you had? If it was first class, second class or third class?

**Jose**: First class and second class rich people be there but he third class, they were poor people there [Laughter].

**Amy**: I guess that you were in third class.

**Jose**: Like people for the first time but before could travel like back and forth to the first class. Well I saw that.

**Paul**: So do you remember when the ship came into New York, did you have to go to Ellis Island?

**Jose**: I have to. You do if you like it or not.

**Paul**: What did they do at Ellis Island?

**Jose**: We used to stay there for one day just only. Went out to big house. Everybody was there but nobody sleep there, there was no sleeping just-my aunt come over and take me home from New York and that’s it.

**Paul**: And where did she live in New York?

**Jose**: At Brooklyn.

**Paul**: In Brooklyn. And then did you get a job?

**Jose**: Yes.

**Paul**: What was the first job you got when you came to New York?

**Jose**: I work with the people. I stayed with them.

**Paul**: And what kind of work were you doing?

**Jose**: Housework.

**Paul**: Like a domestic servant?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Can you tell me how you learned English?

**Jose**: From all the things around me [Laughter].

**Paul**: Do you remember your first word that you learned in English?

**Jose**: Before I came here, I remember what people say hello, hello hello. That taught me [Laughter].

**Amy**: [laughter]

**Paul**: [laughter] so you knew one word in English before you came to America, hello?

**Jose**: Yeah. I say goodbye and that I know.

**Paul**: Can you tell me a little specifically what your duties were when you were working in this woman's house? The house work? What kind of house work?

**Jose**: The house, big house. Nice people. They are Jewish people but I liked that woman. She was not very-like rich people but not rich. But not poor. They are between.

**Paul**: What did she teach you to do?

**Jose**: Oh teach me do everything. House work, help cooking, wash clothes hang the clothes. That I know myself before I came here.

**Paul**: [Inaudible 00:21:08] kind of work?

**Jose**: Like you come here to different people. In this country and you like to live, you like to eat. You have to do anything. [Laughter]

**Amy**: [laughter]

**Paul**: Your aunt who is already here, whose sister is she? Your mother's sister or your father's sister?

**Amy**: Mother's sister [Unclear 00: 21:38].

**Jose**: Oh my mother's sister.

**Paul**: Did you know her from back in Poland?

**Jose**: Yes.

**Paul**: And why had she come to America?

**Jose**: Just like I am.

**Paul**: She came to work. Was she married when you-?

**Jose**: No, she not married. She come to United States she marry here. She got three children. Peter, [unclear 00:22:06] and Irene and we grow up not far from each other.

**Amy**: Was she married when you came to America? No? She wasn’t married yet? Yes she was. Well you said no.

**Jose**: Who?

**Amy**: Chacha!

**Jose**: Oh yeah. She was already here in the United States.

**Amy**: I know but she was married when you came to America?

**Jose**: No, no, here I told you.

**Amy**: When you came to America not her.

**Jose**: I know that. She was married.

**Paul**: Yeah that’s what we are looking for right?

**Jose**: How many times I am going to say this though?

**Amy**: Well you didn’t say that though.

**Paul**: Do you remember how much you were paid to be the servant in that woman's house?

**Jose**: [laughter].

**Amy**: How much money did you make?

**Jose**: Oh yeah, $45 a month.

**Paul**: $45 a month?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: And did you live there?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Can you describe where you slept?

**Jose**: Oh yeah. On a bed.

**Paul**: Yes [Laughter].

**Amy**: Did you have your own room?

**Jose**: Yeah, I have my own.

**Paul**: Did she have other servants?

**Jose**: No.

**Paul**: You were the only one?

**Jose**: Because that not-I told you that’s not rich people. They just help. But she do lots things herself, but I just have to help her.

**Paul**: Did you like America when you got here?

**Jose**: Well, beginning no because I think that people from Poland visit them. They got small house we got three rooms. We got three rooms we got big rooms. Just like twice, three times kitchen one. Big one.

**Paul**: Did you write to your family back in Poland when you were here? Did you write letters?

**Jose**: Oh yeah. What letters?

**Paul**: Did you write letters to your family?

**Jose**: Oh yeah. Yes. My parents write to me. My sister, yeah a lot.

**Paul**: Did you send them any money?

**Jose**: Not from beginning. I have to pay my aunt before because she paid for my pass.

**Paul**: She paid for the ship ticket?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Oh, do you remember how much that cost?

**Jose**: $229.

**Paul**: $229. It’s about right.

**Amy**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Do you remember the name of the ship that you on?

**Jose**: You know something I always think about that I can’t remember. I know it was Russian. The waiters that worked round there, they were Russian. They spoke Russia.

**Paul**: It was Russian boat that you came on?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: How long did you do the domestic work for that woman in Brooklyn?

**Jose**: Almost three years before I get married.

**Paul**: Three years?

**Jose**: No two.

**Paul**: Two years, for the same woman?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: And tell me how you met your husband?

**Jose**: Goda? Had a place with the people.

**Paul**: Was he from Europe?

**Jose**: My husband was from Ukraine but he’s polish but he came from Ukraine.

**Paul**: And what year did you get married?

**Jose**: 1924.

**Paul**: 1924 and what was your husband’s name?

**Jose**: Hipolit.

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

**Amy**: H-I-P-O-L-I-T

**Paul**: Hipolit Sokolowski?

**Amy**: Right.

**Paul**: What was your maiden name before you were married?

**Jose**: Skolski.

**Paul**: And can we spell that too please?

**Amy**: S-K-O-L-S-K-I

**Paul**: So it’s actually close to, close to your husband’s name?

**Jose**: Very close to each other.

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

**Jose**: First and my boy. Two children.

**Amy**: I am her daughter.

**Jose**: That’s my child-

**Amy**: And my brother.

**Paul**: And what is your brother’s name?

**Amy**: Edward.

**Paul**: Edward, did you ever go back to Poland? To visit?

**Amy**: No.

**Paul**: Did you ever want to?

**Jose**: Well, not really because after a while, after that war, war, first joy went then Russian then Poland about forty times up and down up and down.

**Paul**: Did any of your family ever come to America to live-

**Jose**: Yes, I take my niece. She’s here. My niece and my few cousins here, they’re in New York.

**Paul**: Did you help your family member to come to America?

**Jose**: I don’t understand.

**Amy**: One of them. You helped Elisia come to America?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: How did you help her to come to America?

**Amy**: You pay for her ticket or anything?

**Jose**: No, I don’t pay for her.

**Amy**: Oh she sponsored her.

**Paul**: You were her sponsor?

**Jose**: Yeah.

**Paul**: Did you become an American citizen?

**Amy**: No.

**Paul**: No, was your-

**Jose**: So many time, tired there was kind of something I don’t know. But I want to do that [Laughter].

**Paul**: Did your husband go back to Poland for any reason or go back to Europe ever?

**Jose**: No.

**Paul**: Do you think of yourself as being polish or American?

**Jose**: American.

**Paul**: You think of yourself as American? Yeah. How do you think your life would have been different if you would have stayed in Poland?

**Jose**: That I can’t explain [Laughter], that I can’t explain I am just going to say that.

**Paul**: Okay, that’s probably a good place for us to end then. This is Paul Seacrest signing off with Josephine Sokolowski on September 29th 1995 on Friday in Toms River, with Amy Baxter her daughter in attendance. Thank you.