**Paul:** Good morning this is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is April 24th 1995 and it is Monday morning about 10:30. I’m at the Wesley Residence in Saratoga Springs New York with Veronica Tkacheff.

Mrs. Tkacheff was born in what was then Russian territory but when she left to come to America in 1922 it had become Lithuania by that time. Mrs. Tkacheff was 21 when she came to the United States in 1922.

**Veronica:** 22.

**Paul:** You were 22? Present also in the room is Reverend Jane Borden who is the chaplain at Wesley. Good morning.

**Veronica:** Good morning.

**Paul:** Could we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

**Veronica:** 1900 September 30th.

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

**Veronica:** Veronica Sadowska.

**Paul:** I’ll spell that S-A-D-O-W-S-K-A, Sadowska. What town where you born in?

**Veronica:** Kaunas.

**Paul:** We have the map here and that is spelt K-A-U-N-A-S, Kaunas. That is now in Lithuania but at that time was Russia.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What is your earliest memory? When you were three years old, four years old, what is the first thing you remember?

**Veronica:** This is going to be very hard to say, I had been from [inaudible 00:02:13].

**Paul:** You want to stop?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** We’re going to pause just for a moment. We’re now resuming. Can you tell me a little bit about the town that you were born in? What did it look like when you were growing up?

**Veronica:** It’s a nice city but it was more military, the biggest military fort.

**Paul:** Was in Kaunas?

**Veronica:** Kaunas. People work in a factory, the ladies or woman to help out for family support. They have housework taking laundry to their home and that’s the way parents support us.

**Paul:** Did you live right in the city itself?

**Veronica:** In the city.

**Paul:** Was it a true city at that time or was it just a town?

**Veronica:** That time, I don’t know very much, because we live in the city one place we don’t know what was different site.

**Paul:** Is there a building that was in the city that sticks out in your mind that you remember?

**Veronica:** There was brick buildings.

**Paul:** Is there one building that you remember vividly for some reason?

**Veronica:** School, high school, American would be high school, there was a school. Was churches, nice churches.

**Paul:** Did you attend one of those churches?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** Do you remember the name of the church?

**Veronica:** That’s hard to remember.

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

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** You were Catholic?

**Veronica:** Catholic, yes.

**Paul:** Were most of the people in town Catholic or were there different religious groups?

**Veronica:** Many different religious, people in the town came from all over, from around, how could I say? Kind people, all kind people, different country.

**Paul:** Did all the different groups of people get along with each other or was there tension between?

**Veronica:** They work, everyone mind their own family, all living. I could tell you my church if I could spell for you.

**Paul:** Do you remember the name?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What was the name?

**Veronica:** Carmelite.

**Paul:** Carmelite?

**Veronica:** Yeah Church Carmelite.

**Paul:** Was there something inside the church that sticks out in your mind?

**Veronica:** Beautiful.

**Paul:** Can you describe it a little bit more?

**Veronica:** Very nice, always very nice priest.

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

**Veronica:** We went every Sunday to church with family. Then May and June, we had prayers, June we pray to Saint Mary and June is for Jesus, two months, every day.

**Paul:** Do you remember any of the prayers that you said?

**Veronica:** Yeah, I know those prayers.

**Paul:** Can you say one for us in your native language?

**Veronica:** Now, in this second?

**Paul:** Yeah right now.

**Veronica:** Polish prayers?

**Paul:** Sure, just one that you happen to remember we can.

**Veronica:** In Polish way?

**Paul:** Yes, if you could say a prayer for us in your native language.

**Veronica:** Our Father Ojcze.

**Paul:** Take your time.

**Veronica:** [Polish 00:06:23].

**Paul:** Thank you. Was Polish the language that you spoke on a daily basis when you were growing up?

**Veronica:** Yeah, Polish. Polish and Russian.

**Paul:** Because that was a Russian territory at that time?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How did you practice your religion at home?

**Veronica:** Mother every night teach our prayers. We went to church every Sunday. Then when we was seven year old, before confirmation then used to come nun prepare us for confirmation.

**Paul:** A nun would come to the house?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did all children, regardless of sex, have to go through this religious education?

**Veronica:** For Polish people yes, but different country, different prayers.

**Paul:** Girls didn’t get a different education from the boys, religious education?

**Veronica:** No different, both boys and girls were taught by parents and the church.

**Paul:** Was there a place in the house that you lived in that was a religious area?

**Veronica:** We had very big like Jesus.

**Paul:** Was it a statue or?

**Veronica:** No, a picture.

**Paul:** A picture?

**Veronica:** Picture. Statue we have cross, we got cross, now I see in this country, cross of Jesus pinned on cross.

**Paul:** In those days it was a picture?

**Veronica:** Picture.

**Paul:** Then what did you do? Did you use that like a little church? Did you pray in that?

**Veronica:** We pray every night before we go to bed, every morning we pray. I was brought up in a religious family.

**Paul:** Who was more religious your mother or your father?

**Veronica:** They both was religious people.

**Paul:** What was the most important religious holiday that you celebrated as a child?

**Veronica:** Christmas.

**Paul:** Can you explain for me how Christmas was celebrated at that time?

**Veronica:** This is big story.

**Paul:** Please.

**Veronica:** I don’t know if I want to put on the record, when I tell you maybe then you put.

**Paul:** Please, go ahead and explain.

**Veronica:** We low class people, Christmas time we used to have big supper. We put hay on table.

**Paul:** Hay?

**Veronica:** Hay. Then cover up with white bedspread, tablecloth. Then we prepare for Christmas supper. It was fish, baked bread with, how you call those little seeds?

**Paul:** Like poppy seeds.

**Veronica:** Poppy seeds yes.

**Paul:** You’re saying baked bread correct?

**Veronica:** Yeah, my mother baked bread. Then poppy seeds. Then what else we had?

**Paul:** These were special foods that you had just for Christmas?

**Veronica:** Special foods, we couldn’t afford to get besides. Lent food, herrings, you know herrings? Low class bread that was good, taste good.

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

**Veronica:** We soak in water before salting. Then when the herring was clean, put on a plate and put cut onions around the fish and put oil. I don’t know how but we call that time for us oil, America we got all kind of oil. That big oil that was popular in this country.

**Paul:** Olive oil or?

**Veronica:** Olive oil. Then we used to make pierogi, my mother used to make. It was filled with poppy seeds, some potatoes, mashed potatoes peeled. That was pierogi.

**Paul:** When did you eat this dinner? Was it Christmas Eve?

**Veronica:** When sun set down …

**Paul:** On Christmas?

**Veronica:** That Christmas Eve. Christmas tree we never had, we couldn’t afford it. Who people had Christmas tree, they don’t decorate with toys, they decorate with food, apples, oranges, tangerines, pears, all kind cookies.

The tree would stay till Three Kings’, that was 6th of January I think Three Kings’. After Three Kings’ holiday then invite neighbors children, and what we got on the tree we shared for children.

**Paul:** All the children waited to take everything off the tree?

**Veronica:** We were waiting yes.

**Paul:** Let me describe this to you, make sure I have it right. You had your table and on the table was the straw and the hay covered with a piece of linen?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** What was the symbolic?

**Veronica:** Jesus was born in manger. We had little cradle of Jesus, we put on the middle of the table. That’s the holiday, Christmas.

**Paul:** The people who ate this dinner, was it just your parents and your immediate family?

**Veronica:** Just family.

**Paul:** What about extended family? Grandparents or?

**Veronica:** Everybody does it private.

**Paul:** They do it all?

**Veronica:** Yeah. Next day six o’clock in the morning we used to go to church and have a mass. Then when we came home, the family, and then if we thought we able to afford somebody to invite to come to have with us dinner. Children they had their, what they’re supposed to get. That was Christmas.

**Paul:** Was there a gift that was given to the children?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** What kind of a gift might you get?

**Veronica:** As I say that was in the tree.

**Paul:** The food?

**Veronica:** We had one thing, we had cookies, some might get different things. What children got, that’s there and what they prepare family whatever they prepare, to prepare dinner invite neighbors. One day it was going to be at my mother, next day another house, another people. That was Christmas.

**Paul:** Christmas Eve was intensely private?

**Veronica:** Very.

**Paul:** Then all the socializing began Christmas day and … ?

**Veronica:** Yes Christmas day, but we know those people from way back.

**Paul:** Did you go to church somewhere in there?

**Veronica:** Yeah, we went in the morning, 6 o’clock.

**Paul:** 6 o’clock Christmas day?

**Veronica:** Then church, yeah.

**Paul:** Was there anything different about that Christmas service that you attended, the Christmas mass?

**Veronica:** Yes, very nice we went in church, very nice service. Then we had good breakfast and we enjoyed.

**Paul:** Eating is a very important part of celebrating a holiday?

**Veronica:** That one [inaudible 00:15:08] we have the luxury.

**Paul:** You were mentioning oranges and tangerines, which of course in Eastern Europe, at the turn of the century, were very valuable to come by.

**Veronica:** That’s what I mean we couldn’t have them. [Inaudible 00:15:19] was Christmas time, parents somehow manage.

**Paul:** Tell me about Easter and celebrating Easter, was there unusual?

**Veronica:** Yes Easter very Holy Easter, when Jesus was sacrifice. We have midnight mass Easter time, midnight Easter time. Before Easter Sunday, Saturday we used to go, how many churches in the town, we go to every church with prayers.

Then we come home Easter breakfast, but Easter breakfast was not on hay, just tablecloth. We had to dye eggs, usually they had to bake ham that was once a year, nice homemade bread.

**Paul:** White bread?

**Veronica:** White bread and rye bread.

**Paul:** Only for Easter did you have white bread?

**Veronica:** Yeah. My mother bake homemade.

**Paul:** Was that a special thing to have? White bread?

**Veronica:** Yeah its luxury. We used to have rye bread.

**Paul:** Usually rye?

**Veronica:** All the time rye bread.

**Paul:** Tell me about dyeing the eggs. Tell me about the process of doing that how do you did it?

**Veronica:** They had something dip the egg colors. I don’t think we had very many eggs you decorate by hands, some kind of dye. First time Easter, we’re talking now, and we come from church.

How many in the family we are, we crack the egg, which was stronger. The one from the family, all the eggs, one is stronger, we don’t know, then that means he’s champion. This is very mysterious, but for us was very holiday.

**Paul:** Something to look forward to?

**Veronica:** Forward, my goodness [inaudible 00:17:46] we don’t have any luxury.

**Paul:** Let me get us away from religion for a minute and ask you to describe the house or the apartment, whatever the structure was that you lived in?

**Veronica:** Very poor.

**Paul:** Did you live in the same building until you came to America?

**Veronica:** No. We went by months.

**Paul:** Was it an apartment that you were renting?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** House?

**Veronica:** Little houses.

**Paul:** What are they made out of?

**Veronica:** Wood, roof single.

**Paul:** How many rooms?

**Veronica:** We had one big room and eight of us in one big room.

**Paul:** What kind of a floor?

**Veronica:** Wooden.

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

**Veronica:** With wood.

**Paul:** What did you burn the wood in?

**Veronica:** Like brick stuff, and I think its metal stuff because wooden burn. We brought them up to the house, we got wooden brick stuff.

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

**Veronica:** Kerosene.

**Paul:** You had lamps?

**Veronica:** Lamp, yeah.

**Paul:** Was it cold in this part of Europe where you lived?

**Veronica:** Very cold.

**Paul:** Is there a particular winter that you remember that was particularly hard or a blizzard that sticks out in your mind?

**Veronica:** Very cold. We children barely go outside, because we didn’t have clothes to wear to go outside. Very poor.

**Paul:** How long did the winters last, do you remember? When would it first start to snow?

**Veronica:** That’s hard to remember.

**Paul:** It was different probably?

**Veronica:** We had no way, only Christmas time big snow, big ice.

**Paul:** How did people travel when it snowed? How did you get from one place to another?

**Veronica:** In the city they walk. Main road, the everywhere and landlord who had the property, they clean with shovels, the snow clean, put sand down.

**Paul:** Put sand down on them?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** To [inaudible 00:20:36]?

**Veronica:** Slippery.

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

**Veronica:** Joseph.

**Paul:** What was his name in Polish? How would say that?

**Veronica:** Yusuf.

**Paul:** Tell me what your father’s personality was like?

**Veronica:** Poor personality, hardworking man, he knew just to go to factory work his hour. When he come home, that’s it, he rest. Quiet man.

**Paul:** Did he work in the factory as long as you can remember that was his job?

**Veronica:** Very long till he die.

**Paul:** What factory was it?

**Veronica:** All kind metal, very many things was produced for, all kind metal, copper and wires, blocks, very hard.

**Paul:** Did the factory have anything to do with the military installations in town?

**Veronica:** Lots of ammunition.

**Paul:** That’s what this factory was producing?

**Veronica:** Yeah, ammunition.

**Paul:** Tell me what he looked like, describe him in words.

**Veronica:** The factory?

**Paul:** No your father.

**Veronica:** My father very quiet, nice man.

**Paul:** What color hair did he have?

**Veronica:** Black moustache.

**Paul:** He had a moustache.

**Veronica:** He smoked pipe.

**Paul:** What were some of the things your father enjoyed doing when he wasn’t working? Other than resting, he was probably very tired.

**Veronica:** Like family, in a family, prepare wood, store the wood, cut the wood and talk family, just like family.

**Paul:** Do you know anything about your father’s background and his family history?

**Veronica:** He came from big farm.

**Paul:** Why did he?

**Veronica:** Three brothers.

**Paul:** He grew up on a farm?

**Veronica:** On a farm, yeah.

**Paul:** Did you know his parents?

**Veronica:** My father?

**Paul:** Your father’s parents, did you ever know them?

**Veronica:** Yeah I met them.

**Paul:** What do you remember about, they’d be your grandparents?

**Veronica:** Babushka, Russian grandma. They used to come visit us. My husband father had a big orchard, fruit, apples, pears, plums, cherry, big orchard. They was farmers. They used to bring, when it is season, to the town with horse and wagon.

They used to live only in the [inaudible 00:23:25] and by the time they reach city, it was already about 10 o’clock in the morning. Then city people would buy what able to afford. Then what was left was used or smashed or something.

Then my father brother came to Kaunas, sell what he had to sell. Then my mother and father prepare big dinner to treat him. There was little bottle of whiskey, that has to be. They ate, and what was left from the market [inaudible 00:24:13], then he brought he gave us big [inaudible 00:24:18].

**Paul:** You said earlier when you were talking about the orchard that it was your husband’s parents, but did you mean your father’s parents had the orchard?

**Veronica:** My father they have three brothers. Then their mother, they had big orchard.

**Paul:** They had the orchard?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** You described your grandmother as a typical babushka.

**Veronica:** That’s a very long time, babushka shahrukh.

**Paul:** What kind of clothing did an adult person wear at that time?

**Veronica:** Farmers they make their own clothes. The seed lin, you know lin?

**Paul:** A linen seed?

**Veronica:** The seed under field. Then the lin grows thin white flowers and then when that already flowers were blossom then they go with sharp cut.

**Paul:** Yeah, like a sieve?

**Veronica:** You see that some place in history maybe they got these things. The woman cut them and make them bunches. Put on a field grass and stay till dry. Then, this is very hard stories to tell, then in the fall time they then have to loosen up the seeds, they have made from root like a whip. Then they pick the seeds, and somehow that was on a farm, I cannot tell you very much.

**Paul:** They’re hitting the seeds with this wooden whip kind of thing?

**Veronica:** Yeah, loosen up.

**Paul:** Can’t think of the name of [inaudible 00:26:26].

**Veronica:** Like a whip.

**Paul:** I know what you mean exactly. Flailing wheat, you do it with wheat too.

**Veronica:** Yeah. In my father’s family, then they take those stumps or the seeds, those long, you know where this is growing stumps?

**Paul:** Yeah.

**Veronica:** That was men job, they take to their barn and till they loosen the seeds.

**Paul:** Till the seeds fall out?

**Veronica:** Yeah the seeds fall out. The stump they used to take in the city we have hot vat to soften up.

**Paul:** With water in the vat?

**Veronica:** No, when they dry. I just can’t tell you exactly how they make to the thread. They had big homemade, the weaver.

**Paul:** Like a loom?

**Veronica:** Loom. Woman’s job was to put the thread through that through the loom and to weave.

**Paul:** To make cloth that way?

**Veronica:** Beautiful weaved thread. Then they had, you saw this very easy, I think they got in [inaudible 00:28:12], how they make thread wind.

**Paul:** Winding it?

**Veronica:** Yeah winding. Then they put in that instrument and it had the weaven beautiful linen, beautiful linen. They used for their clothes, their self, and that was farmer’s life.

**Paul:** Did the farmers also do any decorating work on the linen?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** How did they decorate the linen?

**Veronica:** That’s very tricky.

**Paul:** Is there a name for what they did?

**Veronica:** I can’t tell the names but they could make beautiful designs.

**Paul:** Did they do it with … ?

**Veronica:** They make designs like these with that weaver. Woman sits, they got pedals that were changing, [inaudible 00:29:15] go this way then they went second. That was winter time woman job to make those clothes.

We had beautiful linen white, nice wool from sheep, we had the sheep too there in the farm. That’s from chicken and duck feathers, make pillowcases, pillow.

**Paul:** How about mattresses to sleep on?

**Veronica:** From the straw.

**Paul:** You slept on straw?

**Veronica:** From the straw.

**Paul:** Did you have a bed frame?

**Veronica:** Frame bed. Big family, we’d be eight people

**Paul:** In one bed? It was warm that way I guess. We started talking about clothes and then you described this beautiful description how the cloth was woven …

**Veronica:** How they make homemade.

**Paul:** You have a wonderful memory.

**Veronica:** Those I remember, but today I don’t remember many things.

**Paul:** Tell me what the clothing looked like?

**Veronica:** Beautiful wearing clothes, beautiful linen, sheets, bedspreads, pillowcases.

**Paul:** Remember when you were maybe 15 years old, what did you clothes look like? What kind of clothes did you wear as a young lady?

**Veronica:** When I was 15 already we live in the city. We had material if able to afford. Mother would sew for us clothes.

**Paul:** Your clothes are more stylish, I’m I to believe, rather than the simple farm garments that you were talking about before?

**Veronica:** We was talking we they got farmers, but we live the city. When they get for us material, my mother used to make pillowcases, mattress cover. Straw you have to put in a back because the straw would fly all around the floor.

**Paul:** Sure, with eight people sleeping on it. We’ve been talking quite a bit about your mother, what was your mother’s name?

**Veronica:** Ludwicka.

**Paul:** What was her maiden name before she was married?

**Veronica:** Now I have to think, father Sadowska, her name I don’t think I could think.

**Paul:** You always just remember having your name?

**Veronica:** It was way back.

**Paul:** What do you know about your mother’s background?

**Veronica:** That’s my mother babushka.

**Paul:** She came from a farm background?

**Veronica:** Farmer too. My father and my mother met in the city. My father family brought the fruits.

**Paul:** They brought the fruits to the city?

**Veronica:** From this orchard. Then [inaudible 00:32:16] time beans, potatoes, carrots. My mother family, father was carpenter, no not carpenter, who made woolen pale, wooden barrel.

**Paul:** Wooden implements to?

**Veronica:** Yeah, that they was [inaudible 00:32:34].

**Paul:** Did they … ?

**Veronica:** Then my mother father and my father father, father’s side, they came to big market, they came with their fruit for sale. My mother came with these wooden things, pale, basin, he make beautiful carpentering.

They met. After the sale, they was hungry all day, there was a big restaurant, all the farmers go in there and they having already something to eat. What happened, my father family and my mother family they met. One say, I got a son and the other say I got a daughter.

In that time, you don’t get what you want, you get what they give you. They usually have a little drink and they shake their hands and they say, “Well, I got son you got the daughter, marry.” They married and after marriage, the brother live on the farm and my father live in the city, so that’s the way.

**Paul:** You may not know but do you know, did your mother’s family have to give your father’s family some kind of a dowry?

**Veronica:** If they get engaged and get in a serious marriage, they have to give my mother family all the best things they got, linen, sheets, towels, whatever they got in their farm through the winter they’re not throwing away.

Geese feather was very good, the nicest feather in a gees. You know geese? When they kill the geese they plug their feather and then you save them. Then when winter time, tie feather from the stump.

**Paul:** Clip them?

**Veronica:** No, they pluck them. Clean and then from the feather they [inaudible 00:35:16] from the [inaudible 00:35:19] and they make beautiful pillows, beautiful clothes, nice and warm and light. That’s the way it was the duck.

**Paul:** That was part of this dowry they had to do give?

**Veronica:** Yeah, that men. I don’t know what men have to have [inaudible 00:35:38] that I don’t know but that’s woman. Then before they get married, family and there came father to father. They’re married by church, very nice weddings.

Then when they go on their own, the woman always has to have big wooden trunk with all the goodies that her mother did, that she did. That mean were rich. I don’t know what the men gave, maybe horse.

**Paul:** Both families are giving the other family something? It’s not just the woman’s family giving the man’s?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** That interesting.

**Veronica:** That’s very interesting.

**Paul:** Do you know what year your parents married?

**Veronica:** My parents?

**Paul:** Yeah, what year did they get married do you know?

**Veronica:** That would be too far, I’m already near 100.

**Paul:** You had seven brothers and sisters yes?

**Veronica:** Six.

**Paul:** Where did you fall in that six? Are you the youngest the oldest?

**Veronica:** Together, eight family.

**Paul:** Can you name your brothers and sisters for me?

**Veronica:** The oldest one Josephine [inaudible 00:37:06]. Second brother Felix, then I come, Veronica. Then we have Akasha, Katie could be Kasha then we have Helen, sister and brother Stacie. That’s my family.

**Paul:** Two brothers?

**Veronica:** Two brothers.

**Paul:** Four sisters.

**Veronica:** Four sisters.

**Paul:** Mom and dad

**Veronica:** Mom and dad.

**Paul:** You’re third? How much older is Josephine than you are?

**Veronica:** Josephine, my dear sister she pass 100 December 7th.

**Paul:** She’s living still?

**Veronica:** She’s living. She’s living in this country.

**Paul:** How much older is she five years older than you are? Do you remember how much older she is than you are? How many years between you?

**Veronica:** Five years. Because between her and me, we had brother.

**Paul:** Did he … ?

**Veronica:** He die.

**Paul:** Felix, we’re talking about.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did your mother have any children that didn’t live?

**Veronica:** Yes, she had two, they died.

**Paul:** Did they die as infants or did they live an amount of time before?

**Veronica:** That’s so many years back. Maybe they die infants because we don’t know them.

**Paul:** You don’t remember any of that?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** Tell me some of the other responsibilities your mother had around the house? You’ve talked about baking bread, talked about making cloth. What were some of the other things that she did to keep the household going?

**Veronica:** She didn’t have a chance, six children. She very low class, poor class.

**Paul:** Just raising the children was?

**Veronica:** Yeah to raise the children. On the side work for rich people, she was very nice laundress.

**Paul:** Se worked as a laundress?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did she work as a laundress when you were little kids too?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** She was always did that?

**Veronica:** When she went to work, one older take care of us children. Father work in a factory, mother work as a laundress and the oldest one in the family take care of the children. You know children like children, some was good, some was too active.

You see this tragedy, the oldest one take care each of us. Then which one not obey when parents come home, “She do this, she do that, she went there.” Parents punish us, “listen to her.”

**Paul:** How did your parents punish you?

**Veronica:** Good slap and good talk.

**Paul:** Josephine is watching out for everyone and then tattling on everybody?

**Veronica:** It’s a [inaudible 00:40:33]. Josephine took me to this country, she came to this country 1913.

**Paul:** She was the first of your family to come to … ?

**Veronica:** Yeah, oldest yeah.

**Paul:** Which brother or sister were you the closest to when you were growing up?

**Veronica:** It’s very hard to say, children we all was close, we didn’t have no choice. [Inaudible 00:40:59], then if mother saw, mother slapped, if not, that was forgotten.

**Paul:** Do you remember an incident when you were growing up where either you or one of your siblings got hurt in some way, hurt an arm or a leg or something? Can you talk about that please?

**Veronica:** Yes. If they’re not broken, then parents take care because we couldn’t afford doctor. They used to wash, I don’t know what kind of grease they used to put.

**Paul:** Grease?

**Veronica:** Grease yeah. From the pig grease, because pig grease is good, healthy and put on the sore and you suffer till it heals.

**Paul:** Do you remember any other kind of home remedies that your parents used for other ailments, if you had a headache or -Some kind of herbs that they used?

**Veronica:** We had herb tea. I can’t help to think American way.

**Paul:** Some tea made with herbs?

**Veronica:** Yeah, from some kind of flowers.

**Paul:** What would that do? How would that help you?

**Veronica:** If you got the chest full, they give you nice tea, they rub with the grease from what, I don’t know animals must be, and keep you warm. If you pull through you pull through, and if it’s not that’s when we bury you.

**Paul:** Do you remember, when you were in Europe, an instance where there was an epidemic in town? When there was a certain sickness that everybody had?

**Veronica:** There was no sickness children sick you have cold, cough, whooping cough we had that. My older sister, when my parents work -She has to take care of us. To rule so many children, that’s not easy job. My sister told us, “You do this, you of that and you scrub the floor,” for me, I was the oldest.

I scrub the floor on my knees with pale of water and a brush. When I was scrubbing I got big, I never forget that finger sliver, big sliver, wooden. I was already crying with pain, mother came, father came.

I say, “Josephine told me to scrub the floor, I scrub the floor I got a sliver,” and I say, “so pain I can’t stand it.” They try to pull out, there was no doctor, they to pull the sliver out, they took out a little bit but it was left. Then fingers swollen very painful, but little by little when the sliver rot in there.

**Paul:** Decomposing in your hand?

**Veronica:** Then I lost nail and then it never grow up. I don’t know, this must be, now I got paint American way.

**Paul:** How old were you when that happened?

**Veronica:** Maybe 10 year old, maybe seven year old.

**Paul:** You never forgot that sliver?

**Veronica:** Never. When I look on this my finger I never forget. It’s still, not sore but damaged. There was no doctor.

**Paul:** In a way, it was your responsibility then to stay healthy since it was hard for them to … ?

**Veronica:** Yes. Little cold, they cure with medicine their own.

**Paul:** Did you eat in a healthy way? No? Tell me a little bit about your ever day food, you talked about your Christmas food, what did you eat on an everyday basis?

**Veronica:** [Inaudible 00:45:31] with toast.

**Paul:** What with toast?

**Veronica:** Breakfast.

**Paul:** Breakfast?

**Veronica:** Bread.

**Paul:** Bread with?

**Veronica:** Homemade bread.

**Paul:** Which your mother made?

**Veronica:** Yeah my mother. We buy, we live in the city, rye bread, nice tasty bread. We then have no butter, no jelly. I have to think how did they make? My mother used to go where they kill cattle, to that place.

**Paul:** Slaughter house?

**Veronica:** Slaughter house. She used to buy very cheap fat, the fat under the skin between. Then she used to come home bring the fat and cut in very small pieces and she fry all that, whatever there is, long time takes.

Then when it’s clear and nice, then they drain it, the grease whatever, they drain and make nice clear like oil. That would be thick. Then they make butter oil, no butter, no oil, but that was something. That they freeze and you take a slice of bread you put like butter, taste good.

**Paul:** You must have [inaudible 00:47:14] that you’re putting on.

**Veronica:** Cup of tea, was good. For dinner she make big pot soup.

**Paul:** How would she do that?

**Veronica:** Where they was killing cattle, then the which one already legs, feet, cattle feet, and what else they used to take? They clean, wash them and put that big bone in a pot.

Put whatever they got, [inaudible 00:47:52] potatoes, vegetable, big pot. Taste good. With piece of bread and that soup, that’s all we want. We had coffee only once a week and poured milk.

**Paul:** Of course you’d have to buy the coffee somewhere here?

**Veronica:** Yeah buy coffee. Mother used to make big pot, not in a nice, whatever pot, coffee and pour the milk put in there. From that we have a cup of coffee. That was Sunday breakfast.

**Paul:** That was sort of a treat?

**Veronica:** Treat, yeah.

**Paul:** Where did you water come from? Did you have … ?

**Veronica:** Wells.

**Paul:** Where was the well?

**Veronica:** Some time two neighbors, where we live two neighbors, I live here [inaudible 00:48:47] house, they got the well. We used to get there.

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

**Veronica:** It was a job.

**Paul:** Who did that?

**Veronica:** Parents, poor parents.

**Paul:** That’s not something children did?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** Parents.

**Veronica:** This is heavy job for them.

**Paul:** What did you get the water in?

**Veronica:** Wooden pale. Wooden pale already heavy and you fill that. When we wash clothes, we used to go to the lake or a river to rinse. That would be called Niemen, I don’t know if it that on map, Niemen.

**Paul:** The river yeah.

**Veronica:** We go to the city around the lake, big lake. One lake big, the ship boat was going that big lake. Then everyone have their who goes there they prepare, take some little wooden block or something to nail. Go nail, and they used to wash nicely and bring back. We don’t have no line, we had wooden fences and put on the wooden fences, dry. Mother iron, it’s beautiful.

**Paul:** What did you use for soap?

**Veronica:** For soap we use to buy.

**Paul:** You bought the soap?

**Veronica:** Yeah, we bought the soap.

**Paul:** How many times a day did you eat?

**Veronica:** Three times.

**Paul:** You had three meals a day.

**Veronica:** In between some time maybe crackers some time, if mother able to buy for us.

**Paul:** The middle meal was the light?

**Veronica:** Breakfast, dinner and supper.

**Paul:** Supper would be the heaviest meal?

**Veronica:** Maybe we cook soup again.

**Paul:** The more substantial?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What time of the day would you eat supper?

**Veronica:** About five o’clock.

**Paul:** What time did your father get home from the factory?

**Veronica:** Four o’clock.

**Paul:** What time did he go into the factory?

**Veronica:** Six o’clock.

**Paul:** That’s a long day for him.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Did he bring his lunch?

**Veronica:** Yeah, mother gave him piece of bread with that grease and bottled tea.

**Paul:** Did he have something that he carried that in?

**Veronica:** In a paper bag, no such a things that time.

**Paul:** You mentioned to me before we started that going to school was not a possibility for you, but you said that the building you remembered in town was the high school that stuck out in your mind.

**Veronica:** High school in the center, and was cadet school. Because our city fort and the higher rank generals officers, middle and higher, they have children. They was brought up in a [inaudible 00:51:54] like way, they went to school, they went to high school and the boys went to cadet high rank.

**Paul:** Do you remember seeing them … ?

**Veronica:** We see them go and come, but they’re not much with us mixed up, we poor people.

**Paul:** There was a very distinctive military presence in this town?

**Veronica:** Very nice city.

**Paul:** That leads me to ask you, since this was such a military high place what do you remember about World War 1? What happened to you and your family during that time, 1914 to 1918?

**Veronica:** 1914 happened we had First World War. German and Russia fight, and German win [inaudible 00:52:55]. We was in the middle, the city where it was bombing. When we hear plane go and then, I remember my father and mother take all the children and we had very big military hospital in that city and they have big basements.

They allowed us to hide ourself till the shooting stop. Meantime, when the shooting stop then [inaudible 00:53:39] brave going to go out and look if it’s quiet. Then he takes his family and they go. When we was going home, that was blood in the streets, soldiers killed, civilian people killed.

Then I remember when it starts, very bad already, city bombing, you know the bomb from air, that’s very bad, no escape. Then one time was very bad, we don’t have very much, so my mother what we had, clothes, whatever [inaudible 00:54:28] things. We had a big trunk, and my father dig a big hole to bury the trunk.

When we see already war bombing then we used to run to those sailor for hiding. When it stop, again we come to the house and go and you have to step, to not to step on killed soldiers.

One time it was very bombing, very hard for Russian German, very hard. We went there down there, lots of people to those, I forget that, lots of people to those basements. Then stop everything quiet, my father and other fathers come out of the basement and look big river.

German came from other side, and he came back to where we could [inaudible 00:55:58] was so many people. He say, “Germans coming,” he say they see they put border bridge and they was -You know what I mean

**Paul:** They can go over?

**Veronica:** Yeah. By the time he run to tell us to be careful not to get out, the German already come in. Then the German tell civilian people, “Go to your own homes where you belong.” We went there and that was tragedy, they guard, we was prisoners already, would go every or so minutes to see if all in our place with a big light on your face. That I never forget. That begin starvation, that was a tragedy.

**Paul:** How did you feed yourself at that point?

**Veronica:** Very bad, if we had a bread and water, that’s it.

**Paul:** Were you reliant on the Germans to give you your food?

**Veronica:** No, they don’t give food. What was left …

**Paul:** Already in the city?

**Veronica:** Yeah. Then was tragedy.

**Paul:** How long was the German occupation of Kaunas?

**Veronica:** From 1914 till 1919, between 1914 and 1919 already was war peace. [Inaudible 00:57:53] poor people we were starving. When German took us prisoners, then my mother as she was a laundress woman and people [inaudible 00:58:12] people.

My mother was taught [inaudible 00:58:17] to wash their clothes, mother took, she washed soldiers higher rank people higher. When it was ready, washed fixed, I remember my mother gave me soldier [inaudible 00:58:36] mending. Then they don’t pay money but they brought loaf of bread, little sugar. They don’t have any money either. That’s the way we were living from 1914 to 1919.

**Paul:** Was your father still working in the factory?

**Veronica:** Father already dead, father die.

**Paul:** He died before?

**Veronica:** Germany [inaudible 00:59:08] prison when he died and my mother die and we children then was tragedy.

**Paul:** Both your parents died while the Germans were in the city or did you father die before?

**Veronica:** Before.

**Paul:** What did your father die of?

**Veronica:** He’d been hurt in the factory when they were stacking wood, those big logs. That was very cold and slippery. I don’t know how high they stacked that wood, that was for sale.

They wanted two men or four men build up those, they slipped, the wood slide and my father under. He was very hurt. He was sick not very long, smashed his chest. Mother die after him, three months after him.

**Paul:** What did she die of?

**Veronica:** My mother had a gallbladder, we don’t understand. She was very sick, and we was children around the war, she was in bed. German soldier came found her sick and they took her to hospital, that …

**Paul:** Because we need to get you to America.

**Veronica:** Was a terrible tragedy.

**Paul:** We were talking about World War 1. You had told me how your parents had died, your father died before the war, your mother died during the war. You said the Germans captured …

**Veronica:** Captured us prisoners.

**Paul:** Tell me about your experience, being captured by the Germans?

**Veronica:** All nationality people, we was their prisoners, we have to obey their orders. Like I was saying there was nice, my mother she was laundry woman. She know that the young people they have to be washed, German very clean people, wash and mend for them. For friendship for exchange they used to gave us loaf of bread or a little sugar.

**Paul:** Did they take you to a different place or were you allowed to live?

**Veronica:** In the city, where they took over.

**Paul:** [Inaudible 01:02:38] live in your apartment?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** Did they take you to barracks somewhere?

**Veronica:** No we live in our houses, apartment.

**Paul:** What was the experience of your brothers and sisters during this time period?

**Veronica:** We children, we don’t know very much, we listen to mother.

**Paul:** What about after your mother died, then what happened?

**Veronica:** This is under German yet, my brother and sister. I was already 16 year old so they put in laborer, in the group for high rank they cook them own food, their own people. They don’t trust prisoners to do anything.

There was about 500 the highest officer generals, and they had their own cooks from Germany. They had [inaudible 01:03:55] maid or anything from Germany. We was prisoners, we prepare, we peel potatoes, we was vegetable for them, whatever has to be prepared. I work from 6 o’clock in the morning till 4 o’clock afternoon. 10 of us prisoners.

**Paul:** 10 of you doing this kind of work?

**Veronica:** Yeah 10. In lunch time what was left, food, they not use, then they gave us little bit, we have little food through there. Then till next morning.

**Paul:** Then you were allowed to go home?

**Veronica:** Go home, yeah.

**Paul:** Did they offer you anything in exchange?

**Veronica:** No. We was prisoners and we obey, because they strict, there is no freedom, no speech, nothing. We work but we couldn’t talk, no conversation, no anything. Do your work and then when time go home and behave. If not, if they found you in the wrong place, they arrest you then they go to camp.

**Paul:** Did that ever happen in your family? Did any of you or your brothers and sisters do something wrong?

**Veronica:** I was the oldest and they put my sister and brother to orphanage.

**Paul:** Josephine, your oldest sister, was in America now?

**Veronica:** In America yes. Through the war time, I lost mother, I lost father, I lost sister.

**Paul:** Which sister did you lose?

**Veronica:** The youngest one Helen.

**Paul:** How did that happen?

**Veronica:** Germany put them under control because there was orphans. They don’t let roam around the streets. In orphanage was very strict, whatever they gave, whatever they told, that mean under rule.

**Paul:** How did she die? How did Helen die?

**Veronica:** All the things went through and scare of everything, she wasn’t too strong and she die. The same my brother.

**Paul:** Which brother was it?

**Veronica:** The youngest [inaudible 01:06:34]. Then when 1913 open transportation, Europe with America, and my sister was already from 1913 in America. Through all those years, war time, she was anxious to see who’s alive. She found me alive and those brother and sister.

**Paul:** This is 1919, after the war was over?

**Veronica:** 1919.

**Paul:** When World War 1 was going on, was it not possible for Europe to communicate with America?

**Veronica:** No, it was closed, transportation. No transportation.

**Paul:** She’d had no idea what was going on?

**Veronica:** She wrote where we used to live. Do you know I remember where we live the address, I never forget.

**Paul:** What was it?

**Veronica:** I’m going to say in Russian, that time was Russian, [Russian 01:07:38]

**Paul:** Was it a letter that you got from Josephine? Is that … ?

**Veronica:** Yeah we’re coming back. Josephine wrote letter from America to Red Cross, and she ask if possible to locate where we are. That’s what happened. She found us three, but she couldn’t take three because lots of money.

They just, how many from 1913 to 1922 how many years in this country? They work, they able to take one. My sister Josephine she say when I come then I’m already 22 years old I’m going to go work and try to whatever I make. We’re going to take them to America.

They’re growing already, already my sister bigger, my brother already was growing up. By the time we decide to take them then already was too late. My sister met somebody she went to Paris. That time French Paris, they look for laborers like farmers from different country. My sister they took her she [inaudible 01:09:19] French, that’s what I mean French to [inaudible 01:09:26]. My brother was time for him to go to army service.

**Paul:** Is that Felix? Is this … ?

**Veronica:** No Stacie. We’re in America and that was Lithuania left family.

**Paul:** By the end of the war, it’s just you and Stacie.

**Veronica:** Helen.

**Paul:** Helen had died in the orphanage yes?

**Veronica:** Yes Stacie was in orphanage.

**Paul:** He was in orphanage?

**Veronica:** Too with them.

**Paul:** They both died in the orphanage?

**Veronica:** I don’t know, when I left already was different life.

**Paul:** They were still in the orphanage when you left?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** When the war ended, you didn’t get the kids back?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** They were still in orphanage.

**Veronica:** There was in control.

**Paul:** During World War I, or maybe even before, can you tell me just a little bit about the relationship between the different religious groups in the city?

**Veronica:** Many religious groups, we belong to Catholic Church.

**Paul:** How did the Catholics get on with the Jews?

**Veronica:** The Jews got their own synagogue, their own church, temple.

**Paul:** Did your family have any interaction with Jewish families?

**Veronica:** Neighbors, Jewish and Polish, Kaunas place all kind nationality, Arabian, Turkish, from around the world, they used to come. To make living there or maybe they look for something, they were all kind nationality. Germans left after the war they leave there.

**Paul:** The Germans left?

**Veronica:** With their who was taken prisoners from the place. They left those Germans behind, they don’t need them to take to Germany.

**Paul:** When the Germans withdrew was the town in a bad state of condition by that time?

**Veronica:** Yeah, that was very bad. That was hunger everywhere, because when they took from the country they took over, they took everything they left nothing. That was life.

**Paul:** When you were in Europe, what did you know America before you came here?

**Veronica:** We know what my sister in America and my aunt and uncle.

**Paul:** On what side of the family was the aunt and uncle?

**Veronica:** My mother.

**Paul:** They were your mother’s … ?

**Veronica:** My mother’s sister.

**Paul:** Sister and her husband?

**Veronica:** Her husband. They have three children, the small children they grow in America already.

**Paul:** Did you have any ideas about what America must be like? How did you think about it, if you thought about it?

**Veronica:** I don’t remember, that’s young days, young children. I remember my aunt from America, she sent us, every holiday, five dollars goat. When we exchange we got double. She said, that’s for your holiday dinner, whatever we want to do. That would be 10 rubles, Russians. Then my mother bought any food we never had then we bought, we enjoyed holidays.

**Paul:** That’s when you were buying the oranges and the tangerines with this money?

**Veronica:** That’s right.

**Paul:** When Josephine contacted you, were you surprised when that happened?

**Veronica:** Very much.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit about the process of getting your papers together and preparing yourself to leave for America?

**Veronica:** They sent all information from America and Lithuania already government that time, 1919.

**Paul:** It had become Lithuania by this time?

**Veronica:** Lithuania. Then we was under Lithuanian government and she sent all the papers. She sent $25, because she wrote to them they explain for us, they’re saying that we got $25 not to spend. If you even dime, not to spend, because when you’re going to reach America, Staten Island, they’re going to ask you what we got, $25. We miss many food children because we want to come to America.

**Paul:** I’m just curious, where did you keep that $25 when you came over here?

**Veronica:** On a string in my chest, day and night, because I want to come to America. I rather be hungry than spend the money.

**Paul:** Right after the war, were you able to visit your brother and sister in the orphanage?

**Veronica:** Yeah till they was alive.

**Paul:** Where were you living at that time, are you still in the same house that you were had been?

**Veronica:** In the same house. I met another girl, she was orphan, and we had one room house. She was older than me, she control me, I was 16. She watched me like mother. We live till they sent for me to this country.

**Paul:** Did you have to go to Vilnius or to one of the big cities to get any papers?

**Veronica:** No, we have to go to Latvia.

**Paul:** To where?

**Veronica:** To Latvia. Because this is Baltic Sea and that section other side Europe. I went to Latvia to get my visa. Then when time came already they let me know that I pass. I come from Baltic Sea, it’s a very big sea, I think the biggest in the world.

**Paul:** Did you have to be photographed in order to … ?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** Had you ever been photographed before?

**Veronica:** Before yes, but that was special taken for the papers, photograph and left stamp, everything. Then they wrote [inaudible 01:16:48].

**Paul:** You had been photographed before?

**Veronica:** It’s a very big ship and for transportation, only 200 people that go from Lithuania wherever they came, from Latvia. Was transportation already cows, horses, I don’t know how to call that kind of.

**Paul:** Livestock.

**Veronica:** Life already changing, from Libau, from Russia already this time, they send [inaudible 01:17:38] in America send them, the business already. We was only 200 people in that big ship.

**Paul:** Do you know what the name of the ship was?

**Veronica:** That I don’t know, and I don’t have money to buy pass card.

**Paul:** They were selling them?

**Veronica:** I don’t have money, my $25.

**Paul:** Before you left your town, do you remember packing? What did you take with you when you left?

**Veronica:** Very little, because we don’t have nothing. Shoes we have [inaudible 01:18:14] shoes we came. I came March 18 1922.

**Paul:** Did you bring any food with you?

**Veronica:** No, you got in the ship. They gave us food.

**Paul:** How did you get from Kaunas?

**Veronica:** By train.

**Paul:** You went by train?

**Veronica:** Yeah. I remember we took the train 12 o’clock at night and when they reach border, Latvia border, then sun coming up already, maybe six o’clock in the morning. Distant by train.

**Paul:** What did the inside of that train look like, because that’s a long trip?

**Veronica:** Yes, it’s a long trip. I was only one from my place from Kaunas, only one travel. They pick up 200 people all around the world or where they could go.

**Paul:** How did you feel when you left Kaunas, what kinds of emotional … ?

**Veronica:** Scare. That time already agents work. Where to put us till we go aboard ship and where we’re going to stay. There was very big building, and before we came to America we have to go so many, all kind test.

**Paul:** Even in Europe before you .. ?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** What kinds of tests?

**Veronica:** Everything.

**Paul:** Like what?

**Veronica:** Eyes, your condition, any rash or any sores. Very strict.

**Paul:** Had you ever been examined by a doctor before?

**Veronica:** When I came to Libau, done examination. Then all the papers, and back and forth. I don’t remember how many weeks we’d been waiting till ship come, the ship they let us go on the ship. That I do not remember. A couple …

**Paul:** The ship was leaving from?

**Veronica:** Libau.

**Paul:** Tell me what you thought when you saw the ship.

**Veronica:** Scare, but it wasn’t not so bad, we just came to, how you say? Went Libau and we went to the ship.

**Paul:** To the port?

**Veronica:** Yeah. Maybe two days after, when ship start to go deeper, then it was scary.

**Paul:** Where did you sleep on the ship?

**Veronica:** They have bunks.

**Paul:** Was it one big room or were you in cabins?

**Veronica:** Cabins and two bunks, up and down. Two beds, bed up and down, just to get in. Then when the time come out, I don’t know what time they let us out from the cabins, it was breakfast.

**Paul:** You had to stay in your cabins and then they told you to come out?

**Veronica:** Yes. We had breakfast. I was 18 days on water.

**Paul:** 18 days, that’s a long time.

**Veronica:** Cargo, not express.

**Paul:** Tell me a little about what the ocean voyage was like? What was your typical day on the boat?

**Veronica:** Scary. We pass icebergs, ship pass that at night. That was very scary because, you know better than I do iceberg is a mountain. The ship start to go close. I was second on the bunk and there was round windows, the water cover half those windows.

When the ship reach that iceberg, start to scratch and then everybody start to get scared, it might damage ship, sink. The ship gave signals wherever they can reach, to let know that there is ship going by.

Another was scary thing, it was scary because war time they put, I don’t know who put the German or what, those bombs under …

**Paul:** The mines.

**Veronica:** Mines, that was scary. The ship was going very careful because if you reach the mine that’s it.

**Paul:** Do you remember having to undergo safety drills on the ship? Did they instruct you what to do in case of an emergency?

**Veronica:** Nothing, sit quiet.

**Paul:** What about life boat drills?

**Veronica:** No, life boats. This is deep water, you don’t see nothing, water, waves and skies, nothing. 18 days.

**Paul:** Whom did you share your cabin with?

**Veronica:** With another young girl.

**Paul:** Where was she from?

**Veronica:** Maybe different state, not from Lithuania.

**Paul:** Was it mostly people from Poland, Lithuania and Russia that were on the ship?

**Veronica:** Yeah. We talked Polish people, we talk Russian people, different nationality.

**Paul:** Where did they feed you on the ship?

**Veronica:** Wherever, there was three meals, breakfast, lunch and supper. I don’t remember what food was we eat they feed us.

**Paul:** Was there a place you had to go to?

**Veronica:** Dining room yes.

**Paul:** There was a dining room?

**Veronica:** Tables yeah. When its big waves, that was scary, when the waves going back and forth. When time come to eat wherever they put food on table the food war sliding back and forth. Then if you reach you hold, scary.

**Paul:** You were allowed on deck?

**Veronica:** Yes. In times.

**Paul:** What would you do on deck?

**Veronica:** Sit and watch skies and waves and water and talk, gossip. Some singing young people, some knitting, those people different states talking about their life, we’re talking about where you come and this and that.

**Paul:** This is just a few years after the war so people have …

**Veronica:** I think the war ends 1919.

**Paul:** 1918, 1919 the Germans were pulling out

**Veronica:** Already Germans gave back to Russia.

**Paul:** Did the ship make any stops along the way? You left from Libau?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** That you remember?

**Veronica:** I know ship was three big chimney, you call different [inaudible 01:25:53].

**Paul:** Smokestacks?

**Veronica:** Yes. Big ship. People walking aboard there, we’re not allowed to roam around. When time came they told us to go out. Many people was afraid to go out and fall over.

**Paul:** Out on the deck?

**Veronica:** Out their cabins. How do you deck?

**Paul:** The deck?

**Veronica:** Yeah deck, and benches. You sit and watch skies and waves and you talk or you think or you sleep. You were [inaudible 01:26:38].

**Paul:** Did you get sick?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** Did your roommate get sick?

**Veronica:** There were other people who was very sick. Other people when they got to the cabin, then they came out when we reach the island, very sick. God gave me strength.

**Paul:** Do you know how much your voyage cost, do you remember?

**Veronica:** That I don’t remember because already agent.

**Paul:** He took care of all of that?

**Veronica:** Yeah the agent.

**Paul:** Did you have your luggage with you in your cabin or was it somewhere else?

**Veronica:** With us yeah. Little suitcase broken, a couple of broken dresses.

**Paul:** It took you 18 days from the time you left Libau to get to New York?

**Veronica:** yeah.

**Paul:** Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

**Veronica:** When I came to America.

**Paul:** Did you know what that was?

**Veronica:** We were told that there was going to be. People used to come from America, in the quiet time changing, European people. Some go and stay for two three years, and then they go back to their own country. Then when they use the money they have anymore they go to America to make money.

**Paul:** You had seen these people in Europe then who had gone back and forth?

**Veronica:** Yes. We came under control, agents. Those people who came before many years back, and they used to say as America. We heard about Statue of Liberty but we never saw. When ship came, then we saw Statue of Liberty.

**Paul:** What did you think when you saw it? Did it mean anything to you?

**Veronica:** Statue of Liberty and New York buildings that’s [inaudible 01:28:44]. We never saw high buildings in old country, the highest building was two flights and America up to sky.

**Paul:** The boat comes in to New York harbor, you see the statue and then they take you to Ellis Island?

**Veronica:** Yes with small boat.

**Paul:** The big boat docked?

**Veronica:** Yeah docked, it can’t go because there’s no water. Small boat …

**Paul:** The big boat docked …

**Veronica:** Small boat came to this ship and took people across to.

**Paul:** To Ellis Island?

**Veronica:** Ellis Island. From Ellis Island big boat reach Staten Island, but from Staten Island was little over water we go to America, to land, New York. Staten Island this way, and New York this way. The small boat came to pick up from the big ship us and brought to New York on 42nd Street, street? No not street. Yeah 42nd .

**Paul:** There’s a dock on the street, yeah sure.

**Veronica:** In the depot. New York Depot, I think trains going by. Agent us guide, I came to Waterbury Connecticut, only one. From six o’clock in the morning, then we got to Connecticut nine o’clock at night. All examination, passport, numbers, all that questions, took all day.

**Paul:** That was at Ellis Island that all that happened?

**Veronica:** Yeah from Ellis Island.

**Paul:** You were at Ellis Island all day?

**Veronica:** Yeah all day.

**Paul:** What kinds of things happened then? What kinds of questions did they ask you?

**Veronica:** They go through examination doctors. I don’t remember everything, but they make sure we people coming from across not to bring any disease, needles, shots.

Then we came to 42nd New York Station. Agents from every place, where people was going, through the agent. Then agent say, “You’re going to Waterbury, you’re going to go to New York and Philadelphia,” and different states.

I was going only one on the train, the passenger train, from 42nd Street Station to Waterbury Connecticut. Nine o’clock by brother-in-law came to pick me up. They put name, who you are, where you’re going and who going to meet you.

My brother came, he called me my name and I answer. Waterbury Connecticut small city but I’m from such a big place coming, I was worry now. He took taxi that brought us to his home and that was Saturday night late. That night I didn’t let my people sleep, they ask question, we talk and we cry and remembering …

**Paul:** You hadn’t seen Josephine for years.

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Almost 10 years.

**Veronica:** Yes. Then Sunday morning Josephine took me to church, French church, Catholic French in Connecticut. She gave me three months vacation, stay with her, she feed me, she dress me, she watch me.

She took me to moving pictures to learn American way, silent pictures. I want to know what they’re talking I don’t understand, the writing picture going about them writing what they doing. I sit with my sister and I say, “What they say?” People back of us they say, “Why don’t you shut up.”

**Paul:** One way to learn English I guess.

**Veronica:** That I never forget. My sister say, “Shh” I don’t know what they meant shut up but my sister already eight, nine years in this country she was American.

**Paul:** You said they put a tag on you with your name and …

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** Who is they? Who put that tag on you?

**Veronica:** The agents.

**Paul:** The agent did that. What about your $25 did you have to show that to anyone?

**Veronica:** Yeah, on Staten Island when we come out.

**Paul:** On Ellis Island?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Do you remember having to pull that out of your dress or however you had to do that?

**Veronica:** They told me, and I pulled the string out and I gave them $25. That’s it.

**Paul:** Do you remember what you were wearing when you got off the ship?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** What was it?

**Veronica:** Shabby.

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

**Veronica:** Shoes with holes, dress was very [inaudible 01:34:35]. I came Saturday, Sunday whatever I had my sister gave me go to church, her clothes. Sunday, that time stores closed, no business in Connecticut. Monday they took me to store then they buy me things, whole outfit.

**Paul:** What did they buy you? Do you remember what it looked like?

**Veronica:** Everything.

**Paul:** Can you describe one of the dresses that they bought you?

**Veronica:** Nice dresses.

**Paul:** What color was?

**Veronica:** It was brown but the material was satin and trimming maroon, nice dress. Nice shoes, that time lots of shoes were shiny, how do they call?

**Paul:** Patent leather? Shiny?

**Veronica:** Yeah, patent leather.

**Paul:** How did you wear your hair back then?

**Veronica:** My long hair, I had big ball in the back of my head. My sister gave me everything Sunday morning, I wore, we went to church and that was quiet but Monday morning it was very business.

Then I stayed three months, my sister give me vacation. She don’t say nothing, she feed me, she gave me room, she took me like mother. My brother-in-law he had a big mouth, rest in peace he’s dead. He came from work and after supper then he start to explain me.

He say, “You know people coming from old country they think you pick up money from the sidewalk, street.” He say, “If you want to make dollar you got to work.” I was already growing up and I understood. I see what I see, came to this country.

He say, “Anytime you ready tell me what to do,” so that down they’re going to tell me what to do, no speech, no writing, no nothing. In a factory I couldn’t get job, then they look newspaper, American ads and rich people was looking of a maid.

My brother-in-law say, I take you over there and we see if they accept me or not because I don’t know nothing American from old country. Then my brother already was in this country, from 1913. He was educated from Europe, his father as lawyer so the children was educated.

He sold me like slave. He talk with those people and explained, the lady, very nice lady just like reverend lady, nice grey hair, shape like you, complexion [inaudible 01:38:03], nice lady. I don’t understand what they was talking, nothing. Then the lady say, “Well you know she don’t talk English, she know nothing, I take a chance.”

He sold me like a slave. Pay wasn’t set, how much she was going to pay me. She say, “I keep her for a month, if she able then we keep her, if not that’s too bad look for something else.” I work for a month like a slave. They don’t make how much they’re going to pay me, my brother-in-law and the lady.

When month came the lady give me $25. I work from six o’clock in the morning to 11 o’clock night. She had eight sons and that time the era of shorts has to be ironed, [inaudible 01:39:15] and iron. I used to iron it till I got blisters on my hands. My sister know, my brother know how I’m working but they gave me chance to get more used to.

When she gave $25, to me big money. She said, “Go to your sister and show the money and see what she thinks.” My sister very quick temper, she took me back and she said her piece to the lady. She say, “You took young girl without nothing, she working for you like a slave so many hours, she did everything.”

Only thing I don’t wash, woman can’t wash because top and bottom washing those days. [Inaudible 01:40:16] back from the line and I iron and put wherever they has to be. I wax floors, three flights of house she had. Those years we don’t have shining, how do you call that shining? Vacuum …

**Paul:** Polish.

**Veronica:** Yeah polish with vacuum cleaner we have to push, not electric. I clean, I polish till I drop. Then when my sister go to her and tell her what [inaudible 01:40:52] she had to keep me like a slave for $25. She say no more, then the lady knew already I’m good worker, she like me, she give me $35. I worked for nearly three years and when I worked the third year, she gave me $50.

**Paul:** You stayed with her for three years?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** That first month that you worked for her?

**Veronica:** $25.

**Paul:** The $25 month, what was the hardest thing to learn how to do?

**Veronica:** Speak, understand. My sister was very good, I have Thursday’s off so she took me to silent moving picture. She start to educate, get familiar.

**Paul:** Were there other immigrant servants in this house?

**Veronica:** Yes. American town, I could say [inaudible 01:41:49] state.

**Paul:** I’m wondering, was there someone in the house of the rich lady who taught you how to do this?

**Veronica:** The lady.

**Paul:** She did herself?

**Veronica:** She did.

**Paul:** Did she have other servants? Were there other people?

**Veronica:** No. She had the jewelry store business. The children, one children was one doctor one lawyer, they were very [inaudible 01:42:12] American people. One went to school, [inaudible 01:42:19] school, the smallest one. He taught me how to pronounce Chicago.

I have cousins in Chicago and I was telling her, when I make money to go to Chicago I’m going to go there not in Waterbury. My cousins there, the family they had another families. I told her that I’m going to go then she give me $50. I was spelling Chicago Chicago and that boy, 12 or 13 years he say, not Chicago Chicago, first thought I learn from the little boy and then from moving pictures and my sister.

**Paul:** Did Josephine speak English well?

**Veronica:** Yes she speaks well.

**Paul:** Did she work?

**Veronica:** No. She worked when she came.

**Paul:** When she first came?

**Veronica:** Yeah, she came but she got good life. She met nice husband, educated husband. Her husband was working in a factory office job, he was educated.

**Paul:** What was your relationship with the brother-in-law? Was it a friendly relationship or were you resentful of what he was doing?

**Veronica:** That time I was very quiet, wherever between them I was stranger. They treat me good, they took me to moving picture. I stay overnight there and six o’clock in the morning I went to my work.

**Paul:** That first month, the $25 month, did you live with that family or did you go back and forth from the family to Josephine’s house?

**Veronica:** I think they gave me to keep them, because I need to buy things. For $25 I buy lots of things.

**Paul:** What was your relationship like with the lady of the house? The woman you were working for, how did she treat you?

**Veronica:** She treat me like a maid, not first class. I say I was a slave, now I know what it mean. I work, I make my job, she told me do this do this do this and I work.

**Paul:** Was she patient with you as you were trying to learn?

**Veronica:** She [inaudible 01:44:51] appreciate what I was doing because she gave me $25 [inaudible 01:44:56]. Then second month when my sister told her what I did to her, let her know was to take advantage of me. The next month they gave me $35. Then from $35 she gave me $50, but I was living, I was American already.

**Paul:** If you did something wrong in the house, how did she handle that?

**Veronica:** She wasn’t happy.

**Paul:** Would she yell at you? Would she?

**Veronica:** No she don’t yell. She nice lady, remind me very nice lady. She told me not to do this, not to do this. After a few months I learn what she wants me to do then I know what to do, she don’t have to tell me.

**Paul:** How did you feel that first year in America? Were you happy you were here? Did you want to go back?

**Veronica:** No back. I don’t say nothing because I was happy she took me. I learned lots of things. If I be in old country [inaudible 01:46:19].

**Paul:** Did you have to wear a uniform when you worked?

**Veronica:** No, I work house dress.

**Paul:** How would you describe your relationship with Josephine?

**Veronica:** We Polish, my sister.

**Paul:** You had been apart for so many years. How did you relate to your sister? Was it a warm relationship? Was it a more standoffish relationship?

**Veronica:** I can’t express, tears, crying tears we both cry tears.

**Paul:** When you first saw each other?

**Veronica:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit about things that you saw in America that you had never seen before.

**Veronica:** Everything I never see but I found in America. We never had nice houses, nice buildings, freedom, we don’t scare, I don’t scare. I was talking with my sister free. It’s very all together, no war came.

**Paul:** Was there anything in America that frightened you? Were you frightened by anything in America?

**Veronica:** No.

**Paul:** Did anything remand you of bad things you had seen in Europe?

**Veronica:** All the time. You never forget till you die before I came to America. That was my story.

**Paul:** You worked for the woman for three years?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** Were you interested in becoming an American citizen?

**Veronica:** Yes.

**Paul:** When did that happen?

**Veronica:** I become American citizen. I met my husband before I marry.

**Paul:** When did you … ?

**Veronica:** He was already citizen. When we marry, when he was citizen I become citizen. A few years after, rule change, make no difference, I have to get citizenship myself. I don’t remember how many years, do you remember when this happened in this country citizenship?

**Paul:** The rule was changed so often.

**Veronica:** Yeah change. I can just tell, when we find out my husband I’m citizen but then we find out I have to become citizen. Then I went from Grammar school, never been in school but I went to high school. There was teachers to teach us American constitution. I went for one season to learn American many answers. My sister helped me and my brother-in-law helped me.

**Paul:** Was it difficult for you to do that?

**Veronica:** Yeah it’s hard. The things I suppose to learn I was thinking very hard not to forget. Then when time came judge gave you, it’s a city hall there is a judge and then when you want to become citizen, you go to that maybe court. That I don’t understand very well yet.

Many people one time question you. Before anything, when I have to become citizen, I have to go to school to learn constitution, all the year for constitution. I learn already one thing and another thing. What judge ask, I know.

The judge was very nice man because all become citizen European people. He wasn’t hard and he gave me citizen paper. Then I become instead of citizen by my husband, I become on my own.

**Paul:** How did that feel? How did you feel about that?

**Veronica:** Free. Then my son got married. He has two boys and they know that we’re from old country. The children used to come from school and they’re saying that in school they learning this learning that.

I was very smart, they listen we talking. I say to my older grandson I say to him, “Grandma never went to school and she went to high school,” and that was [inaudible 01:51:48]. Maybe he was five year old, he don’t say nothing but father and mother, they know what I’m talking.

Then when they went home, he ask his father, he was going already to school my grandson. He say, “Grandma never went to school and how she graduate from high school?”

**Paul:** Did you experience any kind of prejudice or persecution in this country because you were an immigrant?

**Veronica:** This country was heaven to us, we don’t know the difference. We all European people live close to each other, all kind, neighbors, there is no hard. There is no time, anything to have against or …

**Paul:** In this country did anyone ever make fun of you because you spoke funny or something along those lines?

**Veronica:** That was very easy to [inaudible 01:52:58].

**Paul:** Nothing serious? Nothing that you remember … ?

**Veronica:** Nothing serious, even now making fun, even when I talk now.

**Paul:** What year did you marry your husband?

**Veronica:** What year?

**Paul:** Yeah, what year did you get married?

**Veronica:** 1924 beginning 1925.

**Paul:** What was his name?

**Veronica:** Joseph Tkacheff.

**Paul:** You met him in Waterbury?

**Veronica:** In Waterbury, yeah.

**Paul:** Was he from Lithuania?

**Veronica:** He’s from Russia.

**Paul:** How did you meet him?

**Veronica:** Those days European people they have groups.

**Paul:** Social clubs?

**Veronica:** Social, yeah. They work hard, long hours but Saturday and Sundays they’re in the groups making some kind of dance some kind of gathering. Young people.

My husband met me but he waits two, three years till he. After I marry him I say, “Why you wait so long?” He say, “You still marry European who don’t know nothing,” he left me chance to learn something.

**Paul:** He wanted you to learn something before?

**Veronica:** Then we have wonderful life.

**Paul:** What attracted you to him? What did you find appealing about him in the first place?

**Veronica:** Nice clean man. No smoke, no drink, sociable. He had three years school in Russia. He helped my son high school till fourth year with his homework, for all those years. Then in fourth year high school, in Russia teach different way, arithmetic all those things, different, in America they teach different.

He came from high school in the evening one day and he say, “Papa you helping me with schoolwork.” My husband could help him to three years high school, he had education. He say, “When I go to school they teach me different and make me, I don’t know now to listen to you or to listen to school.”

Papa say, “Son, I quit, go to school, learn school.” That was question. I never went to school. I went one year for papers citizen, to understand and bible read few from bible few words. Then I was housewife.

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

**Veronica:** Only one son.

**Paul:** What is his name?

**Veronica:** Joseph Tkacheff Junior.

**Paul:** How do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Lithuania?

**Veronica:** I would be dead. After war was very poor people. Already different change, maybe German cut transportation with Russian factory or anything like that. I would be dead long time. God give me long life, I have good home when I come to this country. I learned beautiful language, I speak very nice.

**Paul:** Indeed you do.

**Veronica:** In my young days when I got married I stay home like a housewife, bringing my son. I went to educate myself to moving pictures, more people. I heard in one picture singing God bless America. When I get a little bit, see the paper and I find out that picture I crochet that picture.

**Paul:** The picture on the wall?

**Veronica:** I crochet, God bless America.

**Paul:** We’re looking at a crochet of an eagle over a branch [inaudible 01:57:59] …

**Veronica:** It says God bless America.

**Paul:** You did that?

**Veronica:** I did that crochet. I don’t know how to copy, that was in a magazine. I count every stitch, evenings when my husband used to come from work baby was baby yet. I wasn’t very much to go to school or anything, to me was nothing. I marry already I to support, keep my house, what would I go to school?

**Paul:** What advice do you have for young people nowadays? You’re going to be 95 this September, what advice do you have?

**Veronica:** No advice I can give, nothing, because now the world different. In my younger world when my son was growing, we live different, together. There was no television, there was no radio, go to school, play in the yard, supper, do your homework, go to sleep, in the morning go to school. That’s what happened.

I don’t want to be very, how to say show off, my son was very in that [inaudible 01:59:32] school, he graduate valedictorian. He went to high school and [inaudible 01:59:40] honors. It was America with war, 1950, all that. Then my son was graduate high school.