**Janet:** This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I’m here in Manhattan at the home of Elaine Klein Weiss, who came from Hungary in 1921 when she was seven years of age. Today is August 8th 1994 and that would make you 80 years old at this time, Mrs. Weiss. Let’s start by stating your birth date.

**Elaine:** I was born on May 3rd 1914.

**Janet:** Where in Hungary were you born?

**Elaine:** I was born in Miskolc.

**Janet:** Could you spell that?

**Elaine:** I wish I could.

**Janet:** Did you live in Miskolc up until the time you left for the United States?

**Elaine:** Yes.

**Janet:** I know you were seven and you don’t remember a lot but when you think of Miskolc and your life there, are there certain memories that you do have of that period of time?

**Elaine:** I don’t have many memories. All I know is what I heard from my family when we’d sit around the table and it was discussed many times and I visualized that.

We lived in a little house that was owned by a baker. He had three children, and this is my sister’s story who is 91 years old as I say, fourth of July. She told us that there was a big yard and we would be playing with the owner’s children whose name was [unclear 00:01:57]. She told me stories about how they’d put a tub of water outside and being seven of us they couldn’t carry the water out for each and every one of us so we would each take turns taking a bath in that same tub.

She used to tell me stories about how people over here had such luxuries like ice cream soda. She used to make us a thing that tasted like ice cream soda out of [unclear 00:02:32]. She said it would fizz and when she saw the ice cream sodas here she compared it to that.

I was three days old when my father came to America so I didn’t remember much about him but when we came to America in April of 1921 and I remember the name of the boat; it was the Aquitania. My mother kept saying how sick we were on the boat and it took quite a few days. It wasn’t as fast as the transportation now.

**Janet:** Tell me about your father, did he send money back?

**Elaine:** He wasn’t able to send money because the war came; it was 1914. My mother used to go to the market with a horse and wagon with my oldest brother who at that time was 14 years old, and then the next day she would sell it. My grandmother lived with us so my grandmother took care of us a lot.

**Janet:** What was your mother selling in the market?

**Elaine:** Whatever they were able to buy; what was marketable to make a living. My father wasn’t able to send any money. My father lived on the Lower East Side and the stories he told us was that he worked over in Brooklyn. He never did this before but he worked in a dry cleaning plant and he’d walk over the Brooklyn Bridge and he never bought a newspaper or anything because every penny he saved to bring us out. He would go into a bar, he sat for his lunch and buy a glass of beer and there would be all that food on the counter.

Seven years later, which I think was wonderful, he accumulated enough money to bring out nine of us; my five brothers, my sister, myself, my grandmother and my mother. We came to Ellis Island. The stories, again, I visualize that maybe this is the story I tell my children and they think that I remember.

When we got to Ellis Island my father came for us the next day. One of my brothers had a birth mark on his arm and every time the lilacs would bloom, these lilacs would come out on his arm. As they examined us, I don’t know if everybody was examined, but as they examined him they didn’t know what this thing was on his arm. They pulled him to the side and before my father had a chance they said they may have to send him back because they didn’t know what this birth mark was on his arm. My mother said that if they send him back she would go back with him. My father came with a friend and a doctor the next day and the doctor explained to them that this was a birth mark and it only comes out in the time of the lilacs.

**Janet:** Do you remember seeing that birth mark?

**Elaine:** Yes.

**Janet:** Was it lilac?

**Elaine:** It was lilacs on his one arm.

**Janet:** Did he continue having that birth mark come out at least?

**Elaine:** As the years went on I think it went away but in the meantime it was a scary thing for us because nobody wanted anybody to be sent back. Anyhow they let us out. I remember the [inaudible 00:06:17] ferry. It was April and it was snowing. In 1921 it was snowing. By the time we got into the city it stopped snowing and the way the Europeans came, and I saw this in Ellis Island, the bedding and everything and of course my mother brought out all her down feather bedding and we were all carrying bedding and the luggages.

I don’t think my father had enough money to put us in a taxi so we came home on the Third Avenue elevator and I remember we probably filled up a whole car of it with our family. He had an apartment waiting for us at 426 East 79th Street. It was third floor walk-up and he bought it with furnishing.

We lived in 5 rooms, 10 of us, and we all seemed to love it and there was a lot of love in the family. It’s difficult living in 5 rooms with 10 people but as time went on he bought us new beds and nobody slept 3 on a bed. Everybody slept. Even if they put up beds in the kitchen but nobody slept more than two on a bed.

We lived there for many years. It was a cold water flat and one winter the gas froze. We had a heater dividing the living room and the dining room. We had a heater there which we would all fight to sit in front of the heater on the cold days. When the gas froze and we didn’t have the heater, my father said we’re not going to live here any longer; we’re going to move to a steam heated apartment, so we moved to 437 East 80th Street just a block away. I lived there till I got married.

When we came out, my father didn’t want to work in the dry cleaning place so he bought a little grocery store on 79th Street a block away from where we lived and my father and mother managed it and we as children helped in the store.

One of my brothers, the one with a lilac, was an iron worker. He was already married and he got a heart condition so my parents gave the grocery store to them and they went on a little vacation. When they came back they bought a store on 223 East 82nd, that’s right across the street from where I live now. When they moved here they moved into a building two houses away from where I now live. When there was a vacant apartment I moved after them.

I was the youngest of the seven and we were all very close but I never coped, even after I got married because my mother said we had such a large family, everybody got married and I wouldn’t cook if I didn’t have who to cook for so I, with my husband and three children, would eat at my mother’s and how convenient can that be. So I moved after them. My mother passed away about 15 years ago and I live here at 222 East 82nd for 53 years.

**Janet:** Tell me your father’s name.

**Elaine:** His name was Sam but his Hungarian name was S-A-M-U, Samu.

**Janet:** And his name was Klein?

**Elaine:** That’s right.

**Janet:** Your mother’s name?

**Elaine:** Hermina, H-E-R-M-I-N-A.

**Janet:** And her maiden name?

**Elaine:** Her maiden name was Grossman.

**Janet:** So that was your grandmother’s?

**Elaine:** My grandmother was Rebecca Grossman. That’s who my granddaughter is named after.

**Janet:** Can you remember your grandmother from when you lived in Hungary?

**Elaine:** My grandmother I’ll always remember her. She was wonderful.

**Janet:** Tell me what she was like and what you remember about her.

**Elaine:** She was a very active lady and never tired. She took care of seven children my mother [unclear 00:10:41]. She stopped us from getting a lot of beating. My mother was very fast with her hand. I guess after having seven children and working hard you lose patience. I lose patience with three. My grandmother would stand between us all the time and she’d say to my mother, “You have to hit me first”, so we idolised her.

**Janet:** It’s a little unusual to have brought a grandmother with the family.

**Elaine:** She went through so much with us in Hungary. My father’s mother was alive; her I don’t remember. Let me tell you a story about my father’s mother. My brothers all went to work eventually and one day we got a letter saying that my grandmother from my father’s side passed away. I as a kid used to wait on the corner for my brothers to come home. I ran up to my oldest brother and I said to him, “Grandma died.” He turned white, and I said it wasn’t the real one. It’s probably cruel but I didn’t remember my father’s mother.

My mother’s mother was just wonderful. When she was 65 years old she learnt how to smoke and she did that to earn enough money to bring her son, the wife, and two children out from Hungary. She did it with her own money. She was just wonderful.

**Janet:** How old was your grandmother when she came here?

**Elaine:** She was 65 when she learnt how to smoke; she must have been about 55 or 60, because my mother was 18 years old when she got married so she was very young and when she came out she was still pretty young. My grandmother must have been about maybe 60 years old. She was very active.

My son and my older daughter remember her because Linda, the one I showed you, my parents when they had the grocery store across the street from where I live and my parents lived on the same side as we did, my grandmother would run across. My little girl was three years old and she would hold my grandmother’s arm to cross her.

**Janet:** What was your mother like? She was I guess the disciplinarian of the family but what else was she like?

**Elaine:** She was a very wonderful woman and we used to kid around with her. My mother was short and my father was over six feet tall and we’d kid around. My mother had a very good sense of humor, of course she lost it at times. Now I understand after having children how you can lose your temper. We would say to my mother at times when we’d joke around with her, “We don’t know why he ever married you. You’re so short and he’s so tall.” And she would say, “I’m not short, only my legs are short”. This was cute. She was an extremely good cook.

**Janet:** Did she cook Hungarian dishes?

**Elaine:** All Hungarian dishes. My mother would cook and bake and she made strudel. We took her to Washington because my daughter already lived there. My son and I drove down and we took my mother. My daughter… you know what crepe is?

**Janet:** Yes.

**Elaine:** In Hungarian it’s called palacsinta. My daughter wanted my mother to tell her the recipe how to make palacsinta. My mother never had anything written down although she did write it down. My birth certificate and everybody’s just full of recipes.

**Janet:** Really? On the birth certificate?

**Elaine:** On the back of it because if she couldn’t find a piece of paper she would write recipes on whatever she found. I was looking for my birth certificate the other day, and I knew this, and I looked at it and I couldn’t believe it. Whatever recipe she heard about she would write down.

My daughter said to her, “Grandma tell me how to make palacsinta.” And my mother would say a pinch of this and pinch of that because she didn’t measure. My daughter said to her, “Maybe my pinch is different from your pinch.” And she said, “A pinch is a pinch”. She said if you had to add something to it all you do is add to it. She was very good and she used to sing Hungarian songs to the children.

**Janet:** Besides the crepes, do you remember any other dishes?

**Elaine:** Everything. She cooked a lot of soup because soup was very filling. We had soup every day with a lot of vegetables. There were chicken markets on 79th, a live chicken market. My mother would go because she was kosher. My mother would get the Rabbi or whoever cuts the chicken and my mother would pluck it and clean it and she was an extremely good cook.

When she had the grocery store, people would come in and she’d always be writing down recipes and trying them. We would beg her all the time, “Don’t listen to people what they tell you all the time”, because her cooking was so much better than the recipe she tried. We always said, “Don’t listen to people; just do it the way you would.” My mother baked her own bread.

**Janet:** What kind of bread? Do you remember?

**Elaine:** It was rye bread and she would bake about 8, 10 loaves of bread and it never got mouldy the way the breads are over here. She made her own noodles. We had a big dining room table and she would do her own strudel leaves and we’d stand around watching the way they’d blow up. She was an extremely good cook. I never cooked. I used to wash the dishes because we ate at my mother’s. When my mother went into the hospital my children said, “If grandma doesn’t come back home soon we will all end up in the hospital”.

My specialty of course at that time was spaghetti, the easiest thing to do. But I’ve learned how to cook. I make stuffed cabbage and I cook good. I did that because my sister, I said to her when my mother passed away, “Where do I start?” I watched my mother cook but I was never interested in it. My sister would say, “You fry onions and then you throw everything in and that’s the way you cook.” She’s got a point there.

**Janet:** What about your father? What was he like? His temperament...?

**Elaine:** My father was a very gentle man. He was very quiet and I learnt only to have a father at the age of seven. He was very patient and he was wonderful.

**Janet:** Do you remember getting used to having a father after you got here?

**Elaine:** I had to get used to it; he was very easy to get used to. He was a little bit strict with my brothers because at that time everybody played on on the street not the way they do. If we did anything he would never hit us but the punishment was after you came home from school, you had to stay upstairs and not go out. My mother was glad to have us go out and she’d say, “Try to get up before your father comes home”.

My older brothers would play gamble on the streets, like play cards. I had a brother that always won and when my father saw them playing cards or shooting dice, he came home from work and he said to them, “I don’t ever want to see you do this again”. They forgot and the next time he saw them he slapped one of them and he said that he never got over it. He never hit us but when he said something you knew that he meant business.

This was the difference between what the children go through now with their parents beating them. I don’t say a slap in the back side, I hit mine; I didn’t beat them. But when you hear about this, all a father had to do was say something to you and you knew that that was the way it had to be.

**Janet:** What about your brothers and sisters? Could you name them in their order?

**Elaine:** Sure. Do you want me to give you the Hungarian and English name? Because everybody changed.

**Janet:** Maybe if you could spell the Hungarian ones.

**Elaine:** My oldest brother was Geza, G-E-Z-A and he had himself called George. Then came my sister who has Margit, which was Margaret. Margit is M-A-R-G-I-T. Then my brother with the lilacs was Imre, I-M-R-E and he was called Emory. My other brother was Mikas and he was Mickey. My other brother was Sandor and he was Alex. Then I had a brother Paul, he was P-A-I-L-I, and then I came.

**Janet:** The name Alex doesn’t really sound like the Hungarian name.

**Elaine:** I think Sandors were all called Alex, and then he shortened it to Al.

**Janet:** Were you particularly close to any one of your brothers?

**Elaine:** I was particularly close to all of them. It was my sister who was a difficult person because she was a little bit jealous that after all these boys I came into the picture. There was a little bit of… not with me but with her, like when my grandmother knew how to sew very well and she would cut my sister’s dresses down to my size and I didn’t care and neither did she; she didn’t care what they did. But when she got married and she went to the country and my mother said to her, “Why don’t you take your sister along? She doesn’t get out.” She didn’t want to take me but she had to I guess. I had long hair at that time and she wouldn’t comb my hair and I came home loaded with nits. These are the things and actually she was a little bit jealous.

How we became close was, I worked up at Mount Sinai. When I got married, few years after that, my husband had hypertension, high blood pressure. We bought a candy store on 81st Street on Second Avenue. After my husband got sick, we sold the store and I was home about six months. I said to him, “Would you mind if I got myself a part time job?” Because by then the children weren’t home and it was just too much doing nothing. He said he didn’t so I applied at Mount Sinai and they accepted me right away. I got a job as a clerk up there.

I was working up there a short time when my sister was to be admitted. Through me she didn’t have to wait for admission or anything. When she came into the hospital she sort of changed, like she needed me then. That’s when I think we became closer. She’s very difficult to get close to. She’s still got that European habit of being rigid. She thought whatever she said everybody had to follow her orders.

I’m a very funny person. My grandmother used to say to me, “You listen to everybody and you always do what you want”. When my older daughter got married I said, “I give you only one advice, you have to learn by your own experience. Some things don’t always turn out right but whatever you feel a gut feeling, do it.”

When I told this to my niece, my sister’s daughter who my sister was very rigid, and really those two children even to this day are a little bit afraid of her. I said to my niece once, “I only have one advice to give you; move far away from your mother”. She told her mother this. This was to show the intelligence of my poor niece being under my sister’s control.

But my sister by now she’s pathetic. You talk to her sometimes she still remembers things but she still lives at home. Her son never got married and my niece who lives out in Jackson Heights still comes in every day to see that her mother eats. They don’t want to put her in a nursing home. They’re two wonderful children. I think their whole lives are ruined but that’s their prerogative. I feel sorry for them because I’m pretty independent.

My two daughters live in Washington. I went for a cataract operation I never told them because I thought, “I’m coming home the same day, why do I want to have them come here and just sit around worrying?” They were very angry at me but I said, “What?” I’m very independent. I try not to tell them anything, which I don’t know whether that’s good or bad but that’s the way it is.

**Janet:** When your sister went into the hospital when you were working at Mount Sinai, was that much later in her life?

**Elaine:** Yes. I worked there for 16 years so it was in that time. She went in for an ear operation. She had this many years where she was getting dizzy and they frack her inner ear out. It was quite a frightening experience.

Working there, I was able to go visit her more often, I had more privileges and she started to depend on me more, which she doesn’t depend on me anymore now because I can’t do much for her.

**Janet:** We’re going to pause here. We’re resuming now and Mrs. Weiss’s son and daughter-in-law are here. Let’s talk about packing up to go. You had mentioned that your mother had all this luggage. What did she bring from Hungary?

**Elaine:** There were a lot of down comforters and of course they couldn’t pack that in valises so everybody was carrying it when we got on to the Third Avenue elevator. I don’t know about how much luggage. I don’t think we had much luggage; it was mostly bedding. She found that that was the most important thing that she wanted to bring.

When we got here my father and my mother, after my father showed her how to take the elevator, we all went down to the Lower East Side to Orchid Street to buy clothing. My mother was a wonderful bargainer. I think I learnt that from her.

When everybody got their suits and dresses, then my father said everybody down the older ones and wanted to know what they wanted to do; do they want to go to school? Do they want to go to work? He asked my oldest brother first and my oldest brother said he wanted to work. When he asked my sister, she said, “I don’t want to do anything.” He said, “You have to do something, either go to school or go to work” And she said, “It’s your responsibility. You brought us out here and I don’t want to do anything.” And actually she didn’t go to school and she stayed home for a while then somebody bought her in as a milliner. They taught her how to be a milliner. But my sister wasn’t very ambitious so she got married soon after that and didn’t work anymore.

**Janet:** How about the rest of your brothers?

**Elaine:** The two younger ones, Paul and Al, went to school. The other three went to work.

**Janet:** Did you go to school in Hungary?

**Elaine:** I went to school here.

**Janet:** Tell me what going to school was like for you.

**Elaine:** We lived on 79th Street and the school was on 81st. I was registered over there and after my sister didn’t want to do anything, it was her job to take me to school. This is a very funny thing. They were painting the fire escapes and when she went, they had the orange coating on it. My sister had a very poor sense of direction as I do. When she came back, the fire escapes were being painted black and she couldn’t find the house. That was a very funny incident.

**Janet:** How about learning English? How was that for you?

**Elaine:** I learnt English. The older ones all learnt English but they all had their accents. The ones that went to school didn’t have accents but the ones that didn’t still have. Unfortunately now there’s only my sister and I left. But the three older brothers all had their Hungarian accents.

**Janet:** Were there a lot of other immigrant children in your school?

**Elaine:** Not so much in the school as there was where we lived. We lived on 79th Street. There were a lot of people that had immigrated and most of them were from Hungary. There was also a few Irish there but they all had very large families. They all had 7 and 10 children.

Every Wednesday, in the summertime, the mothers would take the children to Coney Island even if it rained because if it rained we would run up and down in steeplechase. I don’t know if you know Coney Island but the station had like a… you ran up and down. If the sun came out we went out on the beach and if it didn’t we got back up on the train and came home.

My sense of direction one day I went into the water, you know how you come out and you don’t sense it right? I got lost and nobody missed me for a whole day. When people were going home and the beach got empty was when I found the bunch that we belonged to, and nobody missed me all day long.

**Janet:** Do you have any particular memories about Coney Island.

**Elaine:** Yes, I loved it. I hated the cold water but I liked Nathan’s, my mother would make up sandwiches and we had a lot of fun till I didn’t get lost. But there were so many children there. When I got married and took my children, there was a taxi driver here and he would drive us all out and my three children would come and we would take other people’s children and that was a lot of fun. Coney Island was a very popular place.

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

**Elaine:** He was introduced to me. I told you my parents had a store on 79th Street and I was introduced to him. I really want to have much to do with anybody because I was so happy with my five brothers. They used to take me all over as I got older and this guy just kept coming around and I guess he grew on me.

**Janet:** What was his name?

**Elaine:** Joseph.

**Janet:** When you got married then you stayed in the neighborhood?

**Elaine:** Yes. Apartments were a little bit hard to get then so we got an apartment on 79th Street and it was called the suburbans. There was a lot of things about it. Some guy that owns the newspapers bought it and wanted to tear it down. It’s a suburbans on 79th Street. We got this cute, little apartment not knowing the suburbans were 79th and 78th Street and it was like you paid your rent by the week. We didn’t know that this cute little apartment had the boiler room for both streets under us.

We got married in June and it was very hot. We would sit down by the East River which is now the drive but it was just the East River then. We’d sit there all night long because we were so hot. My father gave us a fan, the bedroom was so small that we both woke up in the morning not being able to talk because the fan was hitting us all night long. Then my brother and brother-in-law went to the country.

My brothers after a while had a grocery store downtown and I would sometimes help them. I went away on my honeymoon with my brother and my brother-in-law. When I came back, there was an empty apartment on the floor where my parents and my sister lived. They furnished it and they didn’t tell me. When I went up, my brother Mickey had gotten married six weeks after I did.

We didn’t have a kitchen set on 79th Street so when I walked in and I saw the kitchen set I thought it was his apartment. They said it was his apartment. When I went into the living room I said, “This looks like my living room and bedroom” And then they said, “This was your apartment”. I lived there until Ronny was born there and Linda was a month old when we moved over here.

**Janet:** Looking back on your life and coming here as a little girl, do you think the fact that you were born in Hungary and came here at seven years old had any influence on you on the rest of your life?

**Elaine:** Not knowing Hungary; which I do know now, I’ve been back three times. I like Hungary but I wouldn’t live there. It’s a nice place to visit. I loved America. I think we all loved America. I think there’s nothing not to like about it.

**Janet:** How about your mother and father and grandmother? Did they learn English? Become citizens?

**Elaine:** They became citizens. My grandmother I don’t think became a citizen. My father couldn’t pick up the language. He didn’t have a good tongue for language. My mother went to night school and she learnt the language pretty well. As a matter of fact as a student in night school they took them to Washington D.C. She was like a child so happy to go. They took them on a bus trip. She loved it.

My father loved the United States. He never went back. He said he would never go back. I’m the one that went back. Gail lived in London at that time and my sister and I decided we wanted to go back. That was the first time either one of us went back. I asked Gail if she wanted to come and learn with us. London is not far from Hungary so she came and we were there three weeks and loved it but as I say, we loved it but wouldn’t live there. This is where we wanted to…

**Janet:** Did you actually see your house? Did you go back to where you…?

**Elaine:** The first time nobody went back. The second time… I think the first time we went to Romania. My husband was born in Romania which was sometimes Transylvania. Gail and I took the train and went to see it. We wanted to see where he was born and it was very depressing because he had only two nieces that were alive from concentration camp and a nephew. The nephew went to Israel and the niece was the only one that lived in this town we went to. I didn’t know her last name but I knew her first name and it wasn’t a big town so we found her.

It was very sad. She was the only Jewish one living there and it was pathetic to see how she lived. They sat on crates. When we went there, the husband and the daughter and the son came home. They wanted to give us food. I thought that when we went over there we’d stay at a hotel. There were no taxis. Chickens were running across the road and there was no hotel or anything. This was so pathetic when we saw them that we hadn’t eaten since we left Budapest and when they put on sausages, Gail didn’t speak Hungarian and I told her we weren’t hungry. I couldn’t see taking food out of her mouth and there were no restaurants.

They had no place to put us up they took us to a woman who inherited the house. The mistress was Jewish and they killed her in concentration camps so she inherited the house. The husband of this niece took us over there and we stayed there. She had a hope chest. She made herself a bed on that and gave us her bed.

During the night we couldn’t sleep. We kept on going under the cover because it was a horse hair mattress. Every time we turned the horse hair would stick us and the two of us would laugh and we didn’t want this woman to hear it, and then I said to her in the morning. We were starved by then. She went and gave us some jelly that she made without anything. I said to Gail, “We’re going back to Hungary”, she said, “I’m so glad you said that”. So we went back to Hungary then I said I don’t even want to go see where I was born.

By that time I had enough of seeing but I hear it’s a wonderful place because when I went back the second time I met a couple. They were [unclear 00:38:22]. We met in the restaurant and they gave me their card. They heard that I was born there and they invited me, which I never went. My sister said that it was a big city. I can’t tell you anything about it. I didn’t go back.

**Janet:** What do you feel most proud of having done in your life?

**Elaine:** I’m proud that I got married and have three great kids and they’re all healthy, thank God. I have great grandchildren, nice family, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law. I really have a lot to be thankful for.

**Janet:** Now that you’re 80 years old, how is this phase?

**Elaine:** It’s not easy. That’s the worst part of everything. When I hit 80 all of a sudden I seem to fall apart. I have a fear now which I never had before. 79 didn’t do this to me, 80 did; a fear which is hard to describe.

**Janet:** Let me ask you a few more questions about this neighborhood when you first came into it. There were a lot of Hungarian families.

**Elaine:** We lived in 79th. First of all it was a very wide street. It was a wonderful street to live on. It was a mixture but there was a lot of Hungarians.

**Janet:** Were there Hungarian social clubs in this area at that time?

**Elaine:** There was a Hungarian movie, there were quite a few Hungarian restaurants. It was a mixture. We had an Irish family but mostly Hungarians on 79th. As you go another street, like 74th was Bohemian, 86th was German so it was split up; now it’s all different.

**Janet:** When you went to school were there mostly Hungarian children?

**Elaine:** No, it was a mixture.

**Janet:** When you were learning English did you just pick it up naturally?

**Elaine:** I don’t remember. You just learn it. I guess it’s different now because at that time everybody had to learn English. Now they learn Spanish but at that time everybody had to learn English.

**Janet:** How about religion? Was your family religious either in Hungary or here?

**Elaine:** My grandmother was very religious. She wore the sheitel. My mother was religious. My father kept it because of my mother but he couldn’t care less. We went along with it. To this day I have never tasted bacon, ham, anything like that. I don’t keep kosher. When we had our store we used to close for the Jewish holidays and go to Florida for the Jewish holidays. That’s when I really started mixing the milk with the meat. Until then I wouldn’t do it. My sister is still kosher as much as she remembers; her daughter is kosher.

**Janet:** How about enjoyment when the family was newly arrived here? You mentioned Coney Island, is there any other?

**Elaine:** We didn’t go around much. As children you played down on the street. When you came home from school you went down and you played. I think that was most of the enjoyment. As my brothers got older they bought a car, occasionally they would take you for a ride. I didn’t go to camp. I’m so glad that I didn’t. I wouldn’t have liked it. If they had the money to send me I would have hated it.

**Janet:** Why would you hate it?

**Elaine:** Because I don’t think I would like camp. My son loved it.

**Janet:** What about customs? Did your grandmother or you mother or father, did they carry on certain Hungarian customs?

**Elaine:** Everybody spoke Hungarian at home. As a matter of fact the two older ones spoke Hungarian because my grandmother never learnt English and I wanted them to be able to talk to her. Ronny spoke Hungarian until he was four years old when we moved over and he started to play outside, children made fun of him. He came in one day and he said, “Talk nice to me” and he’s the first one that dropped Hungarian.

Linda and Gail I think they picked up a lot in Hungary. I think they both understand. I don’t know about Ronny, He always says he doesn’t understand. I can’t say that he does or doesn’t. But the other two understand, like Linda would speak more words. When she calls me she greets me in Hungarian; she loves the greeting. She understands everything.

**Janet:** Is there anything about Hungarian that you like to hold on to?

**Elaine:** I hold on to it because I speak the language fluently. It was very good when we were in this business and then 56 when all the Hungarians came out and it was very nice that we were able to talk to them. I always say any language you know you should stick to it because you never know when you need it. I wish I knew more languages.

**Janet:** Is there anything else you can think of?

**Elaine:** I think I’ve told you the story of my life.

**Janet:** We did talk about food before. Is there anything else about your grandmother, your mother, you?

**Elaine:** They were excellent cooks and every occasionally there’s a Hungarian restaurant here which I go to. There’s nothing different about it but it’s Hungarian food. We had lots of Hungarian restaurants. This neighborhood has changed and there’s not too many Hungarian restaurants as Italians now and Chinese. But the Hungarian food is good; you can get an ulcer from it. My mother made her own chicken fat which wasn’t the healthiest; a couple of my brothers had ulcers. This was from the good food.

**Janet:** I think that we can close here. I do know that you visited Ellis Island and that your name is on the plaque there on the Wall of Honor.

**Elaine:** I could tell you that I went back to Hungary three times and I loved it. Knowing the language it was good but as I say, it’s a nice place to visit but I wouldn’t want to live there.

**Janet:** This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I’m talking with Elaine Klein Weiss in her apartment at 222 East 82nd Street, New York City. Mrs. Weiss is 80 years old. Today is August 8th 1994 and I’m signing off. Thank you.