

EI-158

EVA BROKSAS

BIRTH DATE: 1907

INTERVIEW DATE: 5/23/1992

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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LITHUANIA (VIA GERMANY), 1952

AGE 45

SHIP: GENRAL STUART

PORT: BREMERHAVEN

RESIDENCES:

- **EASTEUROPE: ?, LITHUANIA**
- **GERMANY: ?, SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN**
- **USA: , INDIANA, NY**

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE:

Mrs. Broskas is the mother of Arthur Broskas and Hilda Broskas, EI-157. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., 2/2/1993.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Eva Broksas, who came from Germany in 1952 when she was forty-five years old. Today is May 23, 1992, and Eva Broksas is eighty-five years old.

BROKSAS: That's right.

LEVINE: And we're here in the Ellis Island Oral History Studio. I'm very happy that I have a chance to talk with you and get some of your stories on tape today. So why don't we start by you telling me your birth date. When were you born?

LEVINE: I'm born in the Lituvina [sic: Lithuania?]. *Meine Mutter* [my mother] is *kam* [come] from Germany. *Mein Vater ist von* [my father is from] Sweden. *Die* [they] come together, *mein Vater* [my father] come first in Lituvina. *Und meine Mutter* [and my mother], and they meet in Germany. *Meine Mutter war ja* [my mother was, yeah] young, eighteen years old. Yeah, eighteen years. They meet, and they take. *Mein Vater hatte* [my father had] job, for strangers. Good job.

LEVINE: A job?

BROKSAS: For strangers, yeah. And my father *sagt* [says], "Okay, you want, I'll marry," he talk. "We'll marry." And then in *sechs* [six] months, they come together and marry, in Lituvina, come by. And my *Vaters Vater* [father's father] buy

a big house, a big farm. Oh, boy, beautiful. And they started to work, *mein Vater* [my father], for strangers. And they gone, you know, for strangers, most of them, gone all over that, *sechs* [six] men help him. Every day, they not no car. *Die reiten mit* [they ride with] horses. They had big land, farm. And then *mein Vater* [my father] meet one guy work on the farm. And my mother *hatte* [had], *startet mit* [starts with] the children. *Sie startete mit* [she started having] childrens every year. *Die waren wir zehn* [there we were ten] children. My mother had ten children.

LEVINE: Your mother had ten children.

BROKSAS: Yeah. And then we older. My mother, then we can, we older, we want to (?) for help. They help, and then they grow up. They grow up when I was seven years old, they started, *die Russen mit die* [the Russians with the] German war. *Und die Russen* [and the Russians] took the all the Germany in *Siberie* [Siberia]. My father took in *Siberie* [Siberia]. All *von* [of] the Germany must have gone. All right. (she clears her throat) Then right away they are, our family, later on. Then *meine Mutter* [my mother] pack everything together, every day that's come and pick it. *Aber das* [but that] coming in Germany over. Then we stayed. They come, and the Germany, they were lucky, they stay. *Mein Vater war* [my father was] five years in *Siberie* [Siberia], in Russian. Come back, and nine months die. And my mother raised ten children by herself.

LEVINE: And then when did you meet your husband?

BROKSAS: *Mein* [my] husband I meet, okay. My, all brothers and sisters, we gone over *Grenz'* [border] in Germany, you know. *Meine Mutter* [my mother] all relatives, *wir waren* [we were] in Germany. We gone all in Germany. *Und mein* [and my] husband's father, his parents, from Germany, too. Okay, but

in one big farmers, *da* [than] the Vater [father] die [the] talk you come and very cheap you can buy. And my father-in-law buy for *mein* [my] husband, and they give them land, they farmer. Very cheap. Okay, the *Grenz'* [the border] was closed. We come on (?). Then, all right, later on, my husband, my husband, then my husband's sister, the husband, the (she clears her throat) husband, and the husband's wife die. Mary comes, *hat* [had] had three children, my mother *sagt* [says]: "No". "You are better now. You had plenty of time. You know you need marry." And it come that my husband's sister marry, then the man told her, "(?)" I'm going to marry. Then my mother (she laughs) Then, yeah, I come. They said come. Yeah, say, what, "They need more." "Oh, yeah. All right. I will marry." And marry, one year, we bought beautiful house, and everything. But my daughter born, my son born, I had one son from first boyfriend. My boyfriend take an automated – die. Take my first, son from (?), okay. Then my husband's talk, "Okay." Talk, "I'm going to marry." And they all talk, "You're going to marry." And my daughter born. One day they come, *Russen* [Russians], again, in Lituvina. You know, German Lituvina started war. *Und die Russen kamen um* [and the Russians came to] right away over. And then they talk us, "No." The German, then Hitler, German, they talk, "Okay, I'm take all the German, the German from Lituvina out." We lost everything, the big farm, everything, we lost and everything. And we gone, all, all the streets, all, all. My children, that I marry with my husband, we gone *von* [from] all streets, the different countries, yes.

LEVINE: So you kept moving around then.

BROKSAS: Moving around, yeah. No homes, no nothing. Just, no. Then later on, you know, I wrote to (?), and my husband's father, than look, and find in there, in Germany. We lost everything. They send the paper we come in America. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So you were happy to come to America.

BROKSAS: Happy. Thank God my father-in-law buy a farm. Eighty acres land. Big, beautiful house. Two stories.

LEVINE: You mean, in Indiana?

BROKSAS: Indiana.

LEVINE: When you, before you got to Indiana, when you went to Ellis Island, do you remember being held at Ellis Island before that?

BROKSAS: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember how you felt?

BROKSAS: No. Yeah. I remember about I can no more, recognize everything. You know, one like that, we were in small one room *mit* [with] all *mein* [my] children. *Und* [and] then I'm cry out one week. You know, my father-in-law, sign the papers, granted us stay one year. Granted, they came, in one year. Everybody, most of the people. And the papers come late. The one week we stay in there. Yeah.

LEVINE: And then you didn't know why you were being held here.

BROKSAS: Oh, no. Yeah, that's why I'm cry. About, it's like, when we come back, we have nothing again. We lost everything. We had nice everything, furniture and that, everything. I sold when I'm gone in America. All right. Then later on they come, they come, the nurse. "Oh, you can go." Oh (she laughs), so happy. Then we called Chicago, that's *mein* [my] father-in-law, to take the

train up, we're going up the train. The train had accident. Oh, God. Gone one o'clock, and hit. Then for three hours we started (she laughs) to go again. My children cry, no food, no nothing, sleeping on the floor. The one black lady, in Germany I never black people, no. Black lady looking at them, my children cry. (she whispers) She can't talk. (she laughs) And she gave everybody bread, piece of bread. Oh, wow, that, bring us to eat, then *schliefer* [he slept]. (she laughs)

LEVINE: And what was it like in Indiana when you got there?

BROKSAS: Indiana? Indiana (she clears her throat) *wir haben* [we have] a big farm, you know. Oh, beautiful, all ours. Oh, with everything, my children, and, try, we want, my religion, the children private school. *Mein* [my] oldest was only about fifteen years old, they started by the different – by farmers working. Had eighty cents in a hour. (she laughs) Five dollars in a week (she laughs) they brought home. *Und dann* [and then] with the money, we sent my children, four childrens gone in the Lutheran private school, and paid eight dollars to all four.

LEVINE: Oh, boy. Eight dollars for all four.

BROKSAS: Yeah, *da war* [than was] so I happy. *Und dann* [and then] all finished and they started, when they finished the grade school, they started high school. Okay, high school finished. *Der* [the] oldest *sagt* [says], "*Mama, wir können* [Mama, we can], we have no money, no nothing. So I'm going in the Navy." Okay, go in Navy. You know, oh, boy, The second boy, again, finished high school. Said, "Mama, I'm going to Army." They send it in French, over there about four times. Seven times in Vietnam. Oh, I'm cry. Coming in Chicago, in California, all the time called, "Mama," and, you know, cry so hard. The third son (she laughs), and said, "Mama I'm going in Navy, too." "All right,

go." (she laughs) It's Christmas. Then nothing. And my husband died. My son said, "We have no money or nothing, so I can go on." Always, told them, said, "Mama, all the farmers (?). We'll be better." Okay. The oldest come and want to marry, they're going to buy in, *wo wir* [where we] live now, in Phoenix, and to buy land. They said, "Mama, you come in Phoenix."

LEVINE: Is that where you are now?

BROKSAS: That's where I am, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, are you happy that you came to the United States?

BROKSAS: *Aber wie* [But how], you know, I'm so happy. Oh. My language *war* [was], you know, my children come from the school home, my language, no talk, when I come in Arizona. (she laughs) My grandchildren... (she laughs)

LEVINE: How many grandchildren do you have?

BROKSAS: *Ich habe* [I have] thirteen grandchildren, and one grand-granddaughter.

LEVINE: One great-granddaughter?

BROKSAS: Yeah, uh-huh. Four years ago. I'm so happy, and so proud. They are (?). Oh, Europe. I am so proud of my children. They love me so much. I'm loved so. That's why I'm really pray God. God help me so much. *Ich sag...* [I say...]. And he brought me, I believe in God. God help.

LEVINE: I think that's a very nice place to stop. Thank you.

BROKSAS: That's right. When you, God, pray, God help. I'm nobody for nothing. And now look every my childrens love me, and I can't no more money. And everybody care. (?) I'm so, thank God.

LEVINE: Okay, well, thank you so much. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I've been speaking with Eva Broksas here in the Ellis Island studio on May 23, 1992. Thank you.

BROKSAS: That's right. Thank you.

END OF THE INTERVIEW