

Narrators: Petras, Theresa A. Vivod and Petras, Ronald

Interviewer: Malvin, Nancy Byrkit

Date and place: [REDACTED] (Narrator's home)

Nancy Byrkit Malvin: Okay, today is Oct. 25, 2001, and this is an interview of Theresa Petras that is being conducted in her home at [REDACTED], by Nancy Byrkit Malvin. Would you spell your full name? You can sit back if you want and be comfortable.

Theresa A. Vivod Petras: No, I'm kind of hard-of-hearing.

Malvin: Oh, okay.

Petras, T.: You want my maiden name?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, T.: And —

Malvin: And married, yes. It's Theresa —

Petras, T.: Theresa A. Vivod Petras.

Malvin: Okay, and Theresa is T-h-e-r-e-s-a. And the A stands for? Your middle name?

Petras, T.: A. Ann.

Malvin: Ann. With an E on the end or?

Petras, T.: Just A-n-n.

Malvin: That's my middle name, too. [Laughs]

Petras, T.: That's nice.

Malvin: And Vivod was V-i-v-o-d.

Petras, T.: V-i-v-o-d.

Malvin: Okay, and Petras is P-e-t-r-a-s.

Petras, T.: Right.

Malvin: Okay. You told me on the phone that you moved to Lincoln Place when you were a year old.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Where were you born?

Petras, T.: Bonne Terre, Missouri.

Malvin: Banna Tear?

Ron Petras: Bonne Terre.

Malvin: Oh, Bonne —

Petras, R.: B-o-n-n-e —

Malvin: Right. So how did your family come to move to Lincoln Place?

Petras, T.: You got me. I guess my Dad must have a got a job over here at Union Starch or somewhere, and they just moved here.

Malvin: Do you know —

Petras, T.: They never talked about it, you know.

Malvin: Do you know what he did in Bonne Terre?

Petras, T.: No. Here I guess they — well, mine workers over there at that time, you know.

Malvin: Was he born in the United States?

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: He was born in Hungary?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Okay. And how about your mother?

Petras, T.: She was born there, too.

Malvin: Were they married before they came here?

Petras, T.: Yes. But he came before she did.

Malvin: Oh, okay.

Petras, T.: You know, and I guess he made money and —

Malvin: Uh-huh.

Petras, T.: — then sent it back for her to come over here.

Malvin: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Petras, T.: I have two — two brothers.

Malvin: Are they older than you, or —

Petras, T.: They were older and they're both passed away.

Malvin: How much older?

Petras, T.: Well, let's see. My — I think I've got it written down in the Bible. Anyway, I'm 84, and they would — they would be a lot older. Ron, bring the Bible here.

Malvin: [Waiting for Ron to come back with the Bible] I have two older brothers, too.

Petras, T.: Uh-huh.

Malvin: My brothers are like six and nine years older than I am.

Petras, T.: Uh-huh. [Ron hands her a Bible.] Is it in — let's see if it's in here. I probably won't find it. I know — Let's see — oh, this is my kids. I don't have them.

Malvin: Were they born in Hungary also, or were they born —

Petras, T.: No, they were born here.

Malvin: Born here? Okay.

Petras, T.: [Looking in Bible] That's when they died. We don't have —

Petras, R.: Their age —

Petras, T.: We don't have the kids. We just got grandmas and grandpas on here.

Malvin: What were your brothers' names?

Petras, T.: William. My oldest brother was William. And Douglas.

Malvin: Okay. What's one of your earliest memories of living in Lincoln Place?

Petras, T.: I think — [Laughs] we had a barrel, one of these water barrels or whatever you call them, in the back yard, and I think we used to take showers in there. That's about the only thing — and playing in the alley — it's about the only — going to school with long underwears. When we got so far, we used to pull the underwears back up. [Laughs] But — really that's — I don't remember too, too, too much. I mean, we didn't have too much. In them days they didn't have too much, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Uh-huh. Am I right that your parents — that you grew up right across the street?

Petras, T.: They — they just tore that house down a few months again, ain't it?

Petras, R.: Yes.

Malvin: Hm.

Petras, T.: They — they moved over here, and then from there I just moved across the street.

Malvin: Tell me about your mother. What was she like?

Petras, T.: She was a — she was a tiny, frail woman. She passed away when she was 67 years old. She didn't do much. My dad, he used to do most. He did the laundry and cook mostly. She cooked some, but she was mostly sickly all the time.

Malvin: Even when you were a child?

Petras, T.: Yes. She wasn't, you know what I mean, a real healthy woman.

Malvin: Uh-huh. So, was that unusual, for your father — for a man to do the cooking and cleaning?

Petras, T.: No, he loved it.

Malvin: Did he?

Petras, T.: He served her tea every morning in bed before she got up. Yes. She'd never get up until he would, you know, he brought her tea and toast. And then she'd get up.

Malvin: Did he help you kids get ready for school?

Petras, T.: Yes. And he was just a tiny man. We've got a picture of him in there — he wasn't — well, you know, they were both small. Now my kids, they are so tall. I don't know who they took after. I don't know — that's about — we used to play in the alley. I had a girlfriend — [Ron brings in picture] This is my dad with my sister-in-law. That's me when I was younger.

Petras, R.: I mean, there's other pictures. I just made that one and stick it in there because that's the only one she's in a costume.

Malvin: That's neat.

Petras, T.: Those are Hungarian costumes.

Malvin: Would you mind if I came back and made copies of these at some point?

Petras, T.: Well, Ron could make them.

Petras, R.: I might even have — I'd have to look, I think I might have —

Petras, T.: I think we got one in that box — look in that box that's on the bed.

Petras, R.: Well, that's the one I made, and I made a larger one, Ma.

Malvin: Was that a special occasion when you had that dress on?

Petras, T.: No, it was just — I guess — they used to — they had a Hungarian Home — hall, on Spruce street —

Petras, R.: [Inaudible]

Petras, T.: They had dances and different picnics, and then they'd — we'd dress up. And — just to go, you know, just to go to enjoy ourselves, I guess.

Malvin: So, you dressed differently when you went to school?

Petras, T.: Oh, yes.

Malvin: You didn't wear —

Petras, T.: Oh, well this is just —

Malvin: Dress-up.

Petras, T.: Just when we had the picnics and stuff. Uh-huh.

Malvin: Did either of your parents like to read much?

Petras, T.: No, not that I remember. I don't remember.

Malvin: So, did your Dad get you ready for school and then go to work?

Petras, T.: Well, he worked different shifts. He [stutters momentarily] I'll get it out — three different shifts he worked.

Malvin: Wow. So it rotated?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: When he worked?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Did any other family members live nearby or in the same house when you were growing up?

Petras, T.: I think there was — my father's cousin lived with us, but that's about all.

Malvin: What was his name?

Petras, T.: His name — I think was George. No, it wasn't George. Probably. I don't know.

Malvin: There was a George in the City Directory that I saw.

Petras, R.: George Vivod?

Malvin: Uh-huh. What other kinds of things did your Dad do? You said he liked —

Petras, T.: Oh, he used to — they used to — there was no houses on them before, and they used to have a big ball diamond, and they'd have baseball. He'd go to the games. He didn't play. But he — he always used — he loved to go see them play ball.

Malvin: Would that be neighborhood kids played?

Petras, T.: No, it was different — from different places — they'd come. Like — they had a lodge, Verhovay lodge, and different — I guess from downtown and different — whoever belonged to the lodge — kids. They would come and play ball.

Malvin: Did they have teams of the people that worked in the factories, or it was more of the social clubs?

Petras, T.: It was most of the social club.

Malvin: Did you Mom ever go to those?

Petras, T.: No. No.

Malvin: She stayed. Did she get up during the day and —

Petras, T.: Oh yes.

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, T.: She got around, but she didn't — what I meant, she didn't do too much, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Uh-huh. So were your brothers still in school when you were in school, or were they that much older?

Petras, T.: Yes, I guess they did go to school. I don't know. I don't even — I don't remember it. I remember one time I got a doll for Christmas, and one of my brothers and my — well, it wasn't my husband then, but his brother, they took this doll, took it away from me and was throwing it back and forth, and took it apart. That's the only doll I think I ever had.

Malvin: Did anybody fix it?

Petras, T.: No. It was unfixable.

Malvin: Oh. What elementary school did you go to?

Petras, T.: Do what?

Malvin: The elementary school.

Petras, T.: Washington. And then I went to — til the third grade, and then I went to St. Joseph's School til I graduated. But don't ask me what year, because I don't even remember that.

Malvin: Graduated from high school?

Petras, T.: No, I didn't go to high school.

Malvin: Eighth grade?

Petras, T.: Eighth grade, and then I went to work at Nesco.

Malvin: And what did you do there?

Petras, T.: Well, I had three different jobs. Every time they get slack — they got slack, then they'd laid me off. And then when they called me back, they'd put me in a different

department. So I worked — I worked in the enamel department and the roaster department and the shipping department.

Malvin: And what did you do? What was your job in those?

Petras, T.: Well, in — in — Nesco, I mean, roaster, the electrical, we used to connect the electrical. And then shipping, we used a bucket, like wire buckets and tubs, like six in a — you know, in a bundle.

Malvin: Uh-huh.

Petras, T.: To be shipped out. And then in enamel, I — there was — they used to dip ware in enamel, and then they had like a furnace running through, and I was — they had girls — women on the outside, and we'd get the ware and hang them on this furnace that would go — on this — not the furnace but this rack that would go through the furnace to burn the enamel on them.

Malvin: Were those all for roasters, or did they make other things, too?

Petras, T.: What?

Malvin: What — what were the wires for? What were they making?

Petras, T.: Well, they would make — whatever they did. They did pots, pans, and —

Petras, R.: [Inaudible]

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, T.: Cups and ladles and whatever.

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, T.: And then I did work in another department where — on a machine where we formed — some man cut the tin, and I formed a bread pan, you know, just formed it.

Petras, R.: Did you use a mold or something?

Malvin: Yes. How did you do it — by hand, or was there a mold?

Petras, T.: Well, I'd get this tin and I'd put it in the machine and stamp it, and it would come out, you know.

Malvin: How long did you work at Nesco?

Petras, T.: Well, I started when I was 16, but like I said, it was off and on. And then got married in '37, and I worked til 41, off and on because I got pregnant, and so I quit. And my husband didn't want me to go back to work anymore. So and then —

Malvin: Did you miss it? Did you — [Clears throat] Excuse me. Did you miss working?

Petras, T.: Well, I missed the — you know, the people, the crowd. You know.

Malvin: What was the factory like? I mean, like was it really hot or cold or did they have — Just tell me about working at the factory — what it was like at Nesco.

Petras, T.: It was fun. It just was fun. I enjoyed it.

Malvin: A lot of people your age?

Petras, T.: No, they were a lot older, like in the enamel and them — they were a lot older than I was.

Malvin: Was your first one — was in enamel where you started?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Any special friends you made there?

Petras, T.: Yes, but they all passed away already.

Malvin: Did you keep in contact with them for a — I mean, they lived here most of it?

Petras, T.: Yes, we even had a picture taken, but then after that — well, after the kids were born, just drifted apart, you know, didn't go anywhere and just drifted apart.

Malvin: Let's go back to when you were growing up. You said there — you had your Father's cousin George lived with you. Did you have any other relatives down here?

Petras, T.: Yes. I had cousins that lived on the other street, Ann Kasick and Julia Lotzy.

Malvin: And they were your — on your mom's side?

Petras, T.: They were on my mother's side. That was my aunt. Her name was Mary. She was my aunt.

Malvin: Tell me about her.

Petras, T.: Well — didn't — I know we used to go visit her every — almost every night. But she worked at the — I don't know whether — they called it the back factory in St. Louis. I don't know whether that was the name or not. But she worked there.

Malvin: What was she like?

Petras, T.: Well, she was — holy. Every time we'd go, she had the Bible, reading the Bible. And she'd quote the Bible and talk to my mother. She was a nice person. We just — that's all I remember about always going. I remember when she passed away, my cousin — at that time they used to bring the deceased to the house, you know. They didn't have the funeral homes. And she just — we stayed there all night. By the coffin. That's about it.

Malvin: Were you a child when she died?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: So she died very young.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: What happened —

Petras, T.: She was — well, I was — you know, I was — well, I was 13, 14, 15 years old.

Malvin: So what happened to your cousins after she died?

Petras, T.: Well, they all had jobs. They were older already. They had children, you know.

Malvin: So they weren't living at home.

Petras, T.: Yes. They could take care of themselves.

Malvin: So when you went over, did you play with your cousins at night, when you'd go visit?

Petras, T.: Well, you know, I don't remember. I remember one of them, her name was Theresa, one of the kids. She'd always be behind the stove. She was always playing, making doll dresses and stuff. And Julia, I don't remember — I can't — I even told her, I says, "I don't remember you, when, you know — I just don't remember." They had one, two, three — three girls, three boys.

Malvin: What was your mom's maiden name?

Petras, T.: Korasi, but I don't know how to spell it.

Malvin: And what was your aunt's married name?

Petras, T.: The what?

Malvin: Your aunt's married name?

Petras, T.: Lotzy. L-o-t-z-y.

Malvin: What were — what kind of holidays did you celebrate when you were growing up?

Petras, T.: There wasn't too much. They didn't have money. It wasn't like now. It was quiet. I remember having birthdays. Every — now, when I got older, my parents gave me birthday parties, for just a few would gather, you know, but — at Easter, though, I remember — like Easter Monday, the Monday after Easter, there was — we had boys come with bottles with perfume in it, and then they wanted to sprinkle the girls, and then they — they'd give something in return, you know. Money or a gift or something, you know.

Petras, R.: But that was at the Hungarian Home, wasn't it?

Petras, T.: No, when I was a kid. The boys would — and then it was the girls' turn on Tuesday. But then the girls always had to go back to school, so we always got cheated on that. [Laughs] So it was the boys that always came on Mondays, you know.

Malvin: Did they come to the house?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Interesting.

Petras, T.: Whoever come — wanted to come, you know. But there wasn't too much. Like I said, there was no money. And a lot of time there was no work, either, you know. So — it was a lot different than it is now. A lot different.

Malvin: Can you tell me a little about that?

Petras, T.: About?

Malvin: What - well, what was the inside of your home like that it would be different from now?

Petras, T.: Well, now we got everything. Then — then, we didn't have, we had to do without a lot, you know what I mean? Now, I don't know. If you have the money — the work, you know what I mean? Just —

Malvin: Everyone was pretty much in the same way, though.

Petras, T.: Well, yes.

Malvin: Do you think when you were growing up, you knew that you had — didn't have a lot, or was it just the way it was?

Petras, T.: It was just the way it was.

Malvin: Did you feel like you —

Petras, T.: When you bought a car, and then — you was rich. They would say you were rich if you could afford a car. But —

Malvin: Did many people here have a car?

Petras, T.: I don't remember. I know my brother had one, but — you know, it was — it was just different. It was different.

Malvin: Did you travel out of Lincoln Place very much —

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: — to other parts of Granite City?

Petras, T.: We went to Bonne Terre once in awhile. But —

Malvin: Were there still relatives there?

Petras, T.: Well, at that time, but then we haven't — after my parents died—

Malvin: No, I mean when you would go there. Was that to visit relatives?

Petras, T.: No, friends. No, friends.

Malvin: How did you get there?

Petras, T.: I guess my brother took us. I don't know. [Laughs]

Malvin: I thought maybe you might have taken a train?

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: No?

Petras, T.: No. No. We went in a car, but I don't know who drove. Can't remember.

Malvin: Were there — on Easter, were there certain kinds of foods that you only ate at Easter?

Petras, T.: Well, let's see. It was before — was it on Good Friday? I think we used to have — no meat. Noodles, I think it was poppy seed noodles. Well, for Easter we had Easter ham and eggs — the traditional. We had that — but —

Malvin: Did you color the Easter eggs then?

Petras, T.: Yes, we had Easter eggs.

Malvin: What did you use — I mean now, you go to the store and you buy —

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: — a kit. What did you use to color them?

Petras, T.: I don't remember. I know we had Easter eggs. I don't remember what they used. I don't remember.

Malvin: Did your dad help with that or your mom? Or both?

Petras, T.: My mom.

Malvin: Your mom did.

Petras, T.: My mom. Yes.

Malvin: Now, were your brothers older that they would have done that with you, or was that just you?

Petras, T.: You know, I don't remember too much of what my brothers did.

Malvin: So they were a lot older?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: I have that with my older brother. He's nine years older, and my first memory is like when he graduated from high school, pretty much.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: I just don't remember him being at home.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: [Inaudible]

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, T.: They don't — they don't associate with you, so you're not going to remember too much.

Malvin: Right. I was just the pest. [Laughs] So did you play with other neighborhood girls?

Petras, T.: Yes. We — when I lived across, you know, across the street, we — across the alley from us, they had a — oh, they had two, three girls, but one was my age. And she'd come and we'd play. We'd get tin cans and put dirt in them and play stores, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, T.: And she used to be in the barrel with me sometimes. But we had to be good, because if we weren't good, my mother would always say, "The ragsheeny man. They used to be — come a wagon collecting rags or tins or some — and they used to always holler, "Rags. Rags." And my mother would say, "If yous aren't good, I'll give yous to the ragsheeny man."

Malvin: Rag what?

Petras, T.: Ragsheeny.

Malvin: Ragsheeny?

Petras, R.: Spell that one.

Malvin: Do you have any idea?

Petras, R.: I was telling her to spell it.

Petras, T.: I don't know.

Malvin: Ragsheeny. What did sheeny mean?

Petras, T.: She — she. I don't know.

Petras, R.: Hungarian something?

Petras, T.: No, I just remember her saying ragsheeny.

Malvin: Hearing ragsheeny. Was your friend that you played with — was she Hungarian, also?

Petras, T.: Yes. Her parents were.

Malvin: How was her family like yours, or how was her family different from yours?

Petras, T.: Well, I — I didn't go visit, you know. My mother didn't ever let me go anywhere. She always said, "Stay home. Stay home," you know. So I didn't go too much.

Malvin: She came to your house?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: To play?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Did she talk about her family or —

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: Just played?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Was it just the one girl that came or — ?

Petras, T.: Yes. No. The other two were a lot older. There used to be a — ice wagon, I would say. I think he lived on the corner of the next street. His name, I think, was Skeeto. He'd sell ice because they didn't have refrigerators in them days, and every time — we picked ice — like you wanted 25 pounds, you'd pick it — we'd always go out, and he'd give us the chips. [Laughs] I remember that. And then there — we had — he was also on the

other street, a fruit and vegetable truck that would come around, and he'd stop at the house with some — you'd, you know, buy whatever you wanted, and — I don't know. You know, then after I grew up, I remember going to the Hungarian Home all the time. Dances.

Petras, R.: [Showing his mom a paper] You told me about that, and you told me to write it down.

Petras, T.: Oh, well, I said most of these already.

Petras, R.: I don't think so.

Petras, T.: Yes, I was thinking what I'm going to tell you. But I — I said most of these already. Oh, my husband says there was a Red Skelton medicine show down here, but I don't remember. I remember we had a theater, but then I don't remember Red Skelton. But he says we had a Red Skelton — he's only — he was only 3½ years older than I am — my husband was. But I don't remember. But he says — yes, there was a — he was here. Selling medicine, you know how they show it now — but —

Malvin: Tell me about meeting your husband.

Petras, T.: Well, this is a funny story. He used to bum around with my older brother, but I didn't have no — we didn't have no — you know, nothing in common. And to me, he was always one of these — my cousin, this cousin, she told me, she says, "Why don't you make that Joe Petras?" I says, "Him?" I says, "I wouldn't have him if he was the last guy." And I married him. I don't know, he — at one of them dances, he just brought me home from the dance, and it just happened. For somebody I didn't I want — I tied about 60 — 63 — 63 years, 63 years. He just passed away a year and a half ago.

Petras, R.: Didn't you tell once that Ann Kovach was over here, and she said that smart alecky, you didn't want to go with that smart alecky Joe Petras or something?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: Used the word smart alecky?

Petras, T.: She — Ann Kovach — she was supposed to — she said she might come down today, but she didn't. She always says — that was Ann Kovach — she was at the meeting, and she was supposed to be interviewed. But she said nobody ever called her yet. And she says — that would be — her aunt — Joe — my husband's mother was her aunt.

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, T.: And she says she always thought he was — my husband was a smart Alec, you know. But you had to know — get to know him. His ways was different, you know what I mean? But he was a good man. So —

Malvin: Is Petras Hungarian?

Petras, R.: Yes.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Okay. So, did he live close by when you were growing up?

Petras, T.: Well, they lived in different places, different houses. But they lived down in Lincoln Place.

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, T.: In fact, they had three houses over —

Petras, R.: Where that restaurant is — that Garden Gate — I don't know — did you drive by there?

Petras, T.: You know where the Garden Gate is?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, R.: That block house there?

Petras, T.: Three — I think three — two or three different homes over there. And Ann — her mother and father lived on one side, and my husband's mother and father lived on — they lived on one side.

Malvin: Do you remember him when you were in school?

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: It was after you got out of school?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: What kind of dances did you do?

Petras, T.: They had Hungarian dances.

Petras, R.: [Inaudible]

Petras, T.: They had one particular time in the fall, they had — would call a grape festival. They'd have grapes hanging, and then whoever danced, it didn't have to be man and a woman, it could be woman — whoever took a grape and they caught you, you had to pay a fine. And, it was mostly, you know, Hungarian dances. And they used to have like stage plays, but I never was in them. My husband was, but I was never in them.

Petras, R.: Were they polkas, you mean?

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: Polka dance?

Petras, T.: No. Hungarian. Polka is —

Petras, R.: Well, they got — Hungarians got polka dances, too.

Petras, T.: Polka dance is —

Petras, R.: Polish.

Petras, T.: — Polish.

Petras, R.: What's that csardas — c-s-a-r-d —

Petras, T.: Csardas [Pronounced char' dash]. That's Hungarian.

Petras, R.: Well, that's — then that's what you probably were doing over there.

Petras, T.: It's csardas.

Malvin: How did you spell that?

Petras, T.: I don't know.

Malvin: You said chardash?

Petras, T.: Yes. Csardas. You'd —

Petras, R.: I know it was c-s- [Looks in a Hungarian/English dictionary.]

Petras, T.: — you'd go — stand up, Ron — stand up. [He complies.] You'd go — you'd go like this [Facing him, she places her right hand on his left shoulder], and the man would go like this [She places his hand on her shoulder], and then you'd go — dance, and then they'd turn you around, twirl you around. It was fun.

Malvin: Did you always wear the costumes when you went to the dances?

Petras, T.: No. No.

Malvin: That was just occasionally?

Petras, T.: Yes. Yes.

Malvin: So, besides the grape dance, what other kinds of special dances?

Petras, T.: Well, that I don't remember. I remember that one. And they used to have picnics, and they played Bingo outside the Hungarian Home. And one year, we were already married, and we — my husband won a great big roaster. Great big one. Enamel. It triple — you'd never find a roaster like that any more. Triple enameled. And he won it. But we didn't have no kids yet, so it was too big. He said, "We don't need it." So he gave it back. And then my

neighbor — he wanted to give her the card. He says, “I’m going to win that roaster again.” She said, “No you’re not.” And he says, “I’ll give you this card.” She says, “I don’t want it.” And he won it again. So he says, “I guess it’s intended for us to keep it, you know. So we still — I still have it. It’s a big — oh, it — and it comes in handy —

Malvin: Is it blue?

Petras, T.: — or it did when the kids were growing up, you know. And then, well, after they got married, too, then they used to come home, you know.

Malvin: What color is it?

Petras, T.: Ivory yellow, like a —

Malvin: Oh. Okay. I was thinking maybe it was blue.

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: I remember enamel roasters being blue.

Petras, T.: Yes, I have a blue enamel, too. But this one — and she didn’t want it. He says, “I’ll give you my card.” And she says, “No, I don’t want it.”

Malvin: That was Bingo?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Playing Bingo.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: So, how long did you and your husband date?

Petras, T.: About two years.

Malvin: And was he already working at —

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Okay. Do you remember when he proposed to you?

Petras, T.: I don't even know whether he proposed or not. [Laughs]

Malvin: Maybe that's what I should have said: Did he propose? [Laughs]

Petras, R.: Probably just kind of ran off, didn't you?

Petras, T.: We just — one day he says, "Do you want to get married?" So we just got married. [Laughs]

Malvin: Where did you get married?

Petras, T.: Justice of Peace.

Malvin: Here in Lincoln Place?

Petras, T.: In Granite — in Granite, downtown. I don't even know what his name was.

Malvin: Was anyone — who else was there?

Petras, T.: My brother and his wife.

Malvin: Anyone else?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head no]

Malvin: Did you take a honeymoon?

Petras, T.: We didn't have no money.

Malvin: Did you talk about beforehand where you would live?

Petras, T.: Just, just moved across the street.

Malvin: Now did his parents live — did you live with his parents?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: I noticed in the City Directory, there were two or three looked like different families.

Petras, T.: No, well — my — my husband's brother. But they lived in the back. There's a — there was fixed up in the back. They lived there.

Malvin: In this same building or in a different —

Petras, T.: No, no, no. It's —

Malvin: A different —

Petras, T.: — different.

Malvin: Okay. So there were — and you lived?

Petras, T.: Here.

Malvin: Upstairs? Down —

Petras, T.: Here.

Malvin: In this part or —

Petras, T.: Yes. Well, my in-laws had the back room for their bedroom, but they had their kitchen down in the basement, and we had — when the kids — when they were little, they slept with us in our room, and then when they were older, they moved upstairs. We've got three bedrooms and a half bath upstairs, you know. Upstairs.

Malvin: [Makes tiny cough] Excuse me. So, were the rooms all connected — I mean —

Petras, T.: Well, they're different. They're just —

Malvin: I mean, did — for — when your in-laws were here. Did you all live pretty much together, or did you have doors between —

Petras, T.: No, they lived downstairs, and we lived up here.

Malvin: Okay. So did you visit back and forth —

Petras, T.: Oh, yes.

Malvin: — regularly?

Petras, T.: Oh, yes.

Malvin: What was your mother-in-law like?

Petras, T.: Well, she was all right. But my father-in-law, when he drank, he kind of got — you know how they get. But, I mean we got along.

Malvin: Did you eat meals together, or you ate those separately?

Petras, T.: No, they used to — if I had something she liked or they liked, I gave her — something that my husband would like, and she cooked and I liked, then she gave me, you know what I mean?

Malvin: So your parents still lived across the street at that time?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Did your mom come help you a lot with cooking, or were you —

Petras, T.: Well, no, they — let's see — when did — they moved on — down on 28th Street. I don't know what year. I know the kids were little because we used to go visit them on 28th Street. But, no, that's it.

Malvin: What kind of things did you and your husband do on dates? Was it always at the Hungarian —

Petras, T.: We used to always go to the show, Washington Show. That's about the only place. He never liked — in fact, we never went anywhere in our married life. He didn't never want to travel. He was more the home type, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Um-huh. Was that okay with you?

Petras, T.: Yes. Because I'm a homebody.

Malvin: So, after you got married, were you working at — you were working at Nesco before you got married?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Okay. And then you were still working there?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: How did your friends react when you got married? Did they know ahead of time, or did you just show up one day and you were married?

Petras, T.: Yes, that's what it was. Yes. It's so long ago. Some of them things don't — I guess that's what it was. Just told them we got married. We didn't have a wedding — well, later on then my mother did — give a shower, you know — at the Hungarian Home, there was a few people there. But — yes.

Malvin: Was that quite ordinary, for people to just decide to get married and get married, or was that unusual?

Petras, T.: Well, no, they did that. I mean —

Malvin: That's the way —

Petras, T.: Well, mostly, they had the weddings, but we didn't have no money. We couldn't afford them. In fact, I think my wedding band was only two — two dollars and fifty cents.

[Laughs]

Malvin: Did you go with him to pick it out, or did he —

Petras, T.: No. No. Later on he bought me a diamond, but — cause my fingers got thicker and I couldn't wear my wedding band. So — then now, we — last year or the year before

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

I had my wedding band cut, and I never did have it, you know, soldered back again.

Malvin: I can't get mine off. [Laughs]

Petras, T.: I was scared because my fingers got swollen, and I guess the more I tried to pull it off, it was worse, you know. So —

Malvin: So tell me about when your kids were little.

Petras, T.: What?

Malvin: When your children were little. You had how many children?

Petras, T.: I had three boys. But, like I said, we never went nowhere cause he never liked to go. They always played. They had kids come in, you know, their own age and play.

Malvin: Who's the oldest?

Petras, T.: Joseph.

Malvin: Is he Junior?

Petras, T.: No, because his middle name's different. His is W.

Malvin: And your husband —

Petras, T.: My husband name is — his middle initial is S, Stephen.

Malvin: Then who's next oldest?

Petras, T.: Douglas.

Malvin: And then Ron must be the youngest.

Petras, T.: Ron.

Petras, R.: [Showing an entry in the Hungarian/English dictionary] That must be the way you spell it, I think. C-s. That ring a bell?

Petras, T.: C-s-a-r-d-a-s. There's a knot — dot above the two A's.

Petras, R.: There's not on this one. This don't say dances, but it's got like a slash up there.

Malvin: [Looking at dictionary entry] Um, yes. So when your children were growing up — did you go to the Hungarian Home for dances when the kids were little?

Petras, T.: Not too much, no. We just stayed home most of the time. Not always. No, there was not too much activities.

Malvin: Did your husband cook like your father did?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head no]

Malvin: My dad didn't either. Boiling water was his —

Petras, T.: Yes. No, he didn't cook. Come home, read the paper.

Malvin: Did he do shift work, also?

Petras, T.: No, he was a day worker.

Malvin: Day worker.

Petras, T.: He was a wood pattern maker. In fact, sometimes he was most of a — more of a layout man. And he — they gave him the blueprints, and he would separate it, cut it up, and give different men their different jobs to put the — they used to make wheels or springs or something for the — for the trains.

Malvin: Did he seem to enjoy his work?

Petras, T.: I guess he did.

Malvin: Did he talk about it much?

Petras, T.: No — well, he didn't talk too much about work. I guess he had enough on his mind thinking of what to do because they — he would — I know he would say they gave him a blueprint and they — had this job to do in so many days. And he had to see that all that is, you know, divided up, and that it would be done in this so many days. But, he never talked too much about his work.

Malvin: There were a lot of different ethnic groups.

Petras, T.: Do what?

Malvin: A lot of different ethnic groups here — Hungarians and Armenians and —

Petras, T.: And Mexicans —

Petras, R.: Bulgarians, Macedonians —

Petras, T.: In fact, before — now, I — you don't even know your neighbors no more. There was mostly Mexicans and Armenians and —

Petras, R.: Yes, but they didn't come first, they come —

Petras, T.: — Bulgarians

Petras, R.: — they came after World War I. Mexicans come way back in the 20s or so more than —

Petras, T.: They — they lived on Chestnut Street when we used to go visit my aunt. That's all there was was Mexicans up there. They used to have, you know, a lot of Mexicans, Armenians and Hungarians. But now most all the — the younger generations, like my kids, have moved away, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Did you interact with the other — with the Armenians and the Mexicans and Macedonians?

Petras, T.: Did I what?

Malvin: Did you have — did you play with people when you were a kid or —

Petras, R.: Did you associate with them?

Petras, T.: No, just — just this one — one — one girl that lived across the alley from us.

Malvin: Okay. How about when your kids were growing up? Was it —

Petras, T.: They did. Ron, you should help me there? They would —

Petras, R.: The kids did maybe more so than the —

Petras, T.: Hungarians, Andrew and — what was that — used to come by Joey all the time — Metcalf. What was his name?

Petras, R.: Byron Metcalf.

Petras, T.: Byron.

Petras, R.: Well, he was just [Inaudible]

Petras, T.: No, I didn't let them go out either. They had a playground, but, you know, on the corner up here —

Malvin: Uh-huh.

Petras, T.: They didn't have it fixed like they have it now.

Malvin: How was it then? How was the playground then? What was it like?

Petras, T.: Like I said, the kids — they didn't have anything.

Petras, R.: It was just a — just a ground. Well, when I was growing up, they had like swings and stuff there. But now they put that barbecue thing over there that —

Petras, T.: But they've got everything now. Playground. But they didn't have the playground when you kids were little.

Petras, R.: They had the swings over there, the slide. And then the — then where that fenced in part right behind it, there used to be like a little swimming pool for little kids. But then they tore it down.

Petras, T.: Oh, I remember one thing. I — for a little while my mother used to let me go to the Clubhouse over there. They had an instructor, Mrs. Prather.

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, T.: Do you —

Malvin: I've read some. Go ahead, tell me.

Petras, T.: Well, she used to have — for the girls, she used to give them embroidery work. And the boys, they had an instructor for woodwork. And she was really a — a strict teacher. I mean — she'd go — I can't do it like that. She'd go [holding up her fingers] "Shh." Boy, you behaved. [Laughs] And — at the — at the end before like school would start, they had

an exhibit. They'd put all the things up on exhibit, and they'd have like a little dance or something to entertain. One time I — we was in the dance and I— a row of us, and I went like this [indicating kicking leg up], and my shoes flew off. [Laughs] I remember that. She had a — Alice Dineff was her helper. And she — she gave — she gave a lot of money, I heard, you know. She helped the kids down here a lot.

Malvin: Mrs. Prather, Miss Prather?

Petras, T.: Prather. She gave my husband — they had a Sunday School — a Bible. I still got it. It's put away.

Malvin: So all the different groups would be at the Center, the Hungarians —

Petras, T.: Different, all, you know, they went to the Clubhouse.

Petras, R.: It's the Community Center now.

Malvin: Right.

Malvin: When she was teaching the embroidery, were you sitting with only Hungarian children or did—

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: So you sat with everybody?

Petras, T.: No, she — she helped all the children. Mexicans, Armenians, Bulgarians, whoever came. She would — she — I wouldn't say she gave real expensive, big pieces to embroidery. Just for you to learn how to embroidery, you know. Teach you.

Malvin: Did you like embroidery?

Petras, T.: Yes. And crocheting, I love crocheting. But I can't do it no more. I just can't do it. Cooking — baking — baking and crocheting was my — my biggest, you know, what I enjoyed the most. [Inaudible] In fact, that tablecloth, I made. I made one for my daughter-in-

law. But then after I got my operation [carpal tunnel release], I can't — the thread won't stay on my fingers. And I love to crochet.

Malvin: That's difficult. I used to knit a lot, and the same thing. I can't — I can't do that.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Did you make things as presents a lot? A lot of embroidered presents?

Petras, T.: I crocheted more than embroidered.

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, T.: I gave —

Petras, R.: That thing by your hand there —

Petras, T.: No, this was given to me.

Petras, R.: No, but that's the kind of stuff you'd make —

Petras, T.: Oh, I made afghan and —

Petras, R.: Pot holders and things?

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: Pot holders?

Petras, T.: Oh, well, pot holders, towels, and I give them — most of them for gifts. I give them away. I have a few left, but I have two — two afghans, I guess. I think two or three. Christmas skirts for Christmas trees. I used to crochet a lot but can't do it no more. And I miss it.

Malvin: Did your mom do a lot of crochet or embroidery?

Petras, T.: No, I learned it on my own. We went fishing one time because my husband's father loved to go fishing. Used to go fishing, I took a — crocheting book and needle and

thread. While they fished, I crocheted, or try to crochet. I was learning to crochet. But, I loved it. I did.

Malvin: Did your mother-in-law do any needlework of any kind?

Petras, T.: She did a little, not too much. Nothing to brag about. [Laughs] She had me do it after she didn't want to do it. She had me do it.

Petras, R.: I remember you trying to teach me to do it one time, on the pillowcases and stuff like that, but then just like — designs on a pillowcase, and you just try to follow them [Inaudible]. But I never kept up with it, so —

Malvin: You said you liked to bake. What kind of things?

Petras, T.: Well, my real special thing — I call it Three Layer, but everybody's got a different name for it. You make a layer of dough. You put jelly, and then you put another layer of dough, and you repeat that. Then you put another layer of dough and sprinkle a little nuts on top and sugar. That was mostly — well, I make it now once in awhile. The oldest boy likes it. But mostly around Christmas and holidays. Cause it's an expensive —

Petras, R.: It's like a sheet cake, you know, only about — what is it, about this big by about this big, about that high?

Petras, T.: That's my most — and then I just bake off — if I find a recipe I liked, I'll try it. Not no more. Now I look for everything that's easy. [Laughs]

Malvin: Did — when you went to the Hungarian Home, did you have lots of potlucks where everybody would bring in food?

Petras, T.: No, they used — well, yes, we — we didn't — the people didn't have take it, but they had where you could buy, you know what I mean, different foods.

Malvin: Oh, at the Home, people would bring in — to earn money —

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: — for the Home?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Did you have any dishes that you liked to take there?

Petras, T.: I didn't have to. I mean, they had special people that they bought it from.

Malvin: Oh, okay.

Petras, T.: Yes, or take it, you know. No, I didn't have to take anything.

Malvin: What other kinds of things did Miss Prather do?

Petras, T.: Well, they had activities for — well, I guess in the evenings, you know, basketball and stuff for the boys and — I don't know what. Like I said, my mother didn't let me go too much, you know.

Malvin: But she let you go during the daytime?

Petras, T.: Yes. Once in awhile. Not all the time. She would buy me something to embroidery. She says, "Sit on the porch and embroidery." But she didn't let me go too much.

Malvin: Do you remember your parents talking about Hungary at all? Or about their parents?

Petras, T.: They never did. We used to — after we got married — I don't know how we got involved in this, my mother's brother's daughter — what would that be, niece?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, T.: I don't know how we got in contact, but she would write to us. And she would send us different things, and we'd send — but then after awhile she said don't send too much because they would take it away from them, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Who would?

Petras, T.: The —

Petras, R.: Communists.

Petras, T.: Communists would take it away. Then they got so they asked for money, and we couldn't send no money, so we just stopped writing.

Malvin: This when you were growing up?

Petras, T.: No, when we first got married.

Malvin: Oh, okay.

Petras, T.: In fact, I — we even set her her wedding dress, but —

Petras, R.: Somewhere they did in the 50s, because I remember them writing —

Malvin: Did you make the wedding dress?

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: I said somewhere — the writing — writing to them ended in the 50s — early to mid 50s because I remember you used to write to them —

Petras, T.: I got — it's in on the bed in that box, there's a — she sent postcards and a record. It's in — it's real interesting. I didn't ever play it because — I don't know why. It's a postcard, but it's a record, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Um-huh. Did you buy her wedding dress or did you make it?

Petras, T.: No, we bought it. There was a friend of mine, she used to sell wedding gowns and dresses, different bridesmaids. And she had one that she said she'd sell for me real cheap, so we bought it and sent it to her. And she has one little girl the last time we corresponded. But we lost track.

Petras, R.: Now that they were trying work with the genealogy, I'm not sure that they even know where she's at anymore. I don't know she ever — did Carol-Lynn ever write to her?
No.

Petras, T.: I don't know.

Petras, R.: Did she ever do that? Probably not.

Petras, T.: My daughter-in-law took all the family history tree, what you call it?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, R.: [Talked over others and not audible]

Petras, T.: I don't know if she ever wrote to her or not.

Malvin: Which son is she married to? Which son is your daughter-in-law married to, that did that?

Petras, T.: Carol-Lynn.

Malvin: And she — which — which one of your sons is she married to?

Petras, T.: Oh, Joseph.

Malvin: Joseph. Okay. Do they live here in Granite City?

Petras, T.: They live in Crestwood, Missouri.

Malvin: Crestwood.

Petras, T.: If you'll excuse me, I'll bring you — show you this. [Leaves room]

Malvin: I'd love that, yes.

Petras, R.: That might be — wait — should you turn it off?

Malvin: Oh no, that's okay.

Petras, R.: That might have their — their [Inaudible] and birth date and —

Malvin: Right.

Petras, R.: Because I know they were working on it, a couple of — a couple of relatives and then they stopped, but they — I think they moved out of the area, and I think — I don't

know if they moved to California or what. [Shows Malvin a small, white picture album.] We could always make copies for whatever, you know, whatever you need out of it.

Malvin: Do you have a copy machine here or —

Petras, R.: No, I mean I could go to the library.

Malvin: Oh, okay. Well, I — well, I was thinking what I might do if it was okay is I have a laptop computer and a scanner, and I could —

Petras, R.: Well, yes, you could do that — in the car?

Malvin: I — I didn't bring it with me today, but if it's okay, I could come back at some time and do that?

Petras, R.: Cause I don't know if you'll get all the information you need now or you'll —

Malvin: Right.

Petras, R.: — you'd start writing it down, and you'd say, "Well, here's a gap here or something and you'd need to come back.

Malvin: I was kind of hoping I could, if that's okay?

Petras, R.: Fill in this part or something.

Petras, T.: [Returning to room] Here's some of the postcards that they used to send.

[Shows address and message side of postcards] Oops. [Bumps chord] I'm sorry.

Malvin: That's okay

Petras, T.: It's coming apart. I guess I should —

Malvin: So do you read and write Hungarian?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head no]

Malvin: How did you know what she was saying?

Petras, T.: Well, that I know. That's — Merry Christmas. This is “[Reads in Hungarian from card].” But that's about all I know.

Petras, R.: My dad used to —

Petras, T.: See that's their name [Says names in Hungarian]. That's a Christmas.

Petras, R.: I think dad used to know a little bit of writing it and reading it, but then he didn't use it no more, and he forgot it, too. So —

Malvin: When you went to elementary school, was it all in English?

Petras, T.: Yes. Yes. We went to Washington up here. And then they broke that down, too, the Washington School. They tore that down. But I only went to the third grade, and then I went to St. Joseph's.

Malvin: Did your parents talk English at home, or did they talk Hungarian?

Petras, T.: Hungarian.

Malvin: Hungarian. Did they ever talk English at home later on?

Petras, T.: [Shakes her head no]

Malvin: They always talked Hungarian.

Petras, T.: Yes. This is — see the records. [Shows picture side of postcards]

Malvin: Oh, my goodness. A postcard that's a record. Isn't that fascinating! Wow!

Petras, T.: Wait Ron. This is —

Malvin: So would this have been like the 1940s you got these?

Petras, T.: Well, here's — but —

Petras, R.: 40s or 50s.

Petras, T.: — I can't make out — [Looking at postmark]

Malvin: Oh. I can't see anything on there.

Petras, T.: But that's — let's see — 37 —

Petras, R.: 40s and 50s, yes, because it runs —

Petras, T.: 37, about 40s, in the 40s.

Malvin: That is incredible. That's just fascinating.

Petras, T.: This is an Easter one. Isn't this beautiful? [Shows another postcard]

Malvin: Oh, isn't that beautiful! Oh, my. So she would have been your cousin probably?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: That is beautiful. Do you remember your mom having any dishes or plates like that?

Petras, T.: No. They —

Petras, R.: They didn't have nothing.

Petras, T.: They didn't have nothing. They were just poor people.

Petras, R.: [Inaudible]

Malvin: Financially.

Petras, T.: They were just poor. Well, there was no money.

Malvin: Were they happy?

Petras, T.: I guess they were.

Malvin: That's rich.

Petras, T.: Yes. That's —

Malvin: Did they ever learn to speak English much?

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: How about your in-laws. Did they speak English?

Petras, T.: A little bit, not much.

Malvin: Did you ever have to translate for them?

Petras, R.: Yes.

Petras, T.: We never went nowhere.

Petras, R.: Yes.

Malvin: Tell me about that.

Petras, R.: Well, I don't know what they translated, but I mean —

Malvin: No, but I mean the circumstance — I mean, was it —

Petras, T.: Well —

Petras, R.: I mean, my — my dad, well it would be her in-laws then. They all lived here, too, when we were growing up, so they — they talked mostly Hungarian, and it was — well, just was like I say, they was [Inaudible] of this area around here, they worked over here and everything —

Petras, T.: Everybody around was Hungarian. They just talked Hungarian. In fact, and then I — after they left, I — I even forgot how to talk it. I can't even talk it anymore.

Malvin: Did you used to have to go to the — to a store with them and — and translate for someone in the store?

Petras, R.: Well, no. Not that.

Malvin: Did the people in the store talk Hungarian, or did you not — mostly they came to the house to sell things?

Petras, T.: No, we had —

Petras, R.: They knew enough English to get by, I think, but it, you know, as far as —

Malvin: So they talked a little?

Petras, R.: Yes. When I was growing up, they talked Hungarian. When I was going to school, they had to change because — I could only talk Hungarian, even though I didn't know a whole lot. So they had to change to English, so they talked, you know —

Malvin: They. Your grandparents?

Petras, R.: Yes. Then — I guess my parents did, too.

Malvin: Did you ever feel, when you were growing up, that other people looked at you differently because you talked Hungarian? Or everyone down here just accepted —

Petras, T.: Just the same. Everybody was the same.

Malvin: Did you understand any other languages?

Petras, T.: No. Oh, here it is. And those —

Malvin: Is it okay if I look at these, too? [Looking at the picture album on the table]

Petras, R.: Yes. I just got them a couple of years — along with the other pictures in there.

Malvin: Where is this?

Petras, T.: Did you save that picture, Ron?

Petras, R.: At the Hungarian church in St. Louis — where, I wrote that down. Oh, well, that — that starts it there.

Malvin: Oh, okay.

Petras, T.: Ron, you look at [Inaudible] [Leaves room]

Petras, R.: If I can explain anything in there.

Malvin: Sure. Where is the Hungarian church?

Petras, R.: It's on — near the ball park. It's on Ratchet and about what is it Third or Fourth and Broadway. It's more toward the River.

Malvin: Hum.

Petras, R.: It's kind of — as you're going to Soulard Market, there's — you go down south on Broadway, and then there's like a little wedge, and there's a White Castle, and then there's a filling station. It's kind of like a triangle thing. But the street you want to go on is on the opposite side. And it's like one way going down and one way coming up. So you had like — you got to go make a left right between the White Castle and the filling station and come back about a block and make another right there, and it's underneath the — underneath the highway, the 55/70 that goes south. You can see it as you're going over the — on — the upper part of the church as you're going past on the highway there. They have —

Malvin: I've probably seen it, just in —

Petras, R.: — they have a sign like before Christmas — Hungarian sausage or something. Or I don't know, they have — But. Yes, you've probably seen it.

Malvin: — and just didn't know what I was looking at.

Petras, R.: It's supposed to be the second oldest church in St. Louis.

Malvin: Now there — there is or is not a Hungarian church here anymore?

Petras, R.: No.

Malvin: St. Joseph's was Hungarian? When she was growing up?

Petras, R.: I doubt it. Well, I doubt it, no.

Malvin: Isn't that where she said she went to school?

Petras, R.: Yes. But the church, I mean it's over here downtown. I think it was for anybody.

[Looking again at picture album] And that was an opera singer from Hungary. Well, she lives in St. Louis now.

Malvin: Hm.

Petras, R.: And that was her pianist there.

Malvin: Does your mom have any costumes —

Petras, R.: She did the one —

Malvin: — still?

Petras, R.: — the one in the first up picture there, but she loaned it out to somebody and then never got it back. And then you know how that goes. They said, “Well, I — I — you didn’t give it to me.”

Malvin: Oh. And that was the only one she had left?

Petras, R.: Yes. She only had that one.

Malvin: Oh.

Petras, R.: [Back to picture album] And this is, well, the celebration.

Malvin: There’s so many things, I don’t even know where to start asking.

Petras, R.: And I forgot the camera, so I talked to somebody over there that took the picture, and she said she’d make a one-time effort just for me. So she called a friend that was Chicago, and they made prints of all them. That’s how we got all this or else we wouldn’t have got nothing. [Laughs] Picture-wise. That’s neat the way they all painted the furniture.

Malvin: Yes. That’s mind boggling to think of the time involved. [Theresa returns to room.]

Did your mom make your clothes when you were growing up?

Petras, T.: [Motions no]

Malvin: Did you buy them at a store?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head yes]

Malvin: Down here?

Petras, R.: Probably downtown, I imagine, don’t you think.

Petras, T.: We had a nice downtown, but all the stores are closing now.

Malvin: Would this be like downtown downtown or downtown Lincoln Place?

Petras, R.: Yes, right across the tracks over here. I don't know.

Petras, T.: Downtown.

Malvin: Okay. So you did go out of Lincoln Place?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: Back then everybody kind of just stayed in their own neighborhoods and just kind of you didn't go out of town all that much.

Petras, T.: They used to have busses drive around —

Petras, R.: Streetcars.

Petras, T.: — for a nickel. They'd take you all around town for a nickel.

Malvin: When I was coming down, I came across — there's a piece of the street where the streetcar rail is popping through again.

Petras, R.: Yes.

Petras, T.: I used to ride on — that used to be Nesco.

Petras, R.: Nesco Barrel or whatever it is.

Petras, T.: Nesco Barrel. That big plant over there?

Malvin: Where the Michelin tire plant is?

Petras, R.: Yes. I think right up there —

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: Right about as you —

Petras, T.: Yes. That's where —

Petras, R.: The big building looks like 19 — early 1900s.

Petras, T.: Yes. They used to have streetcars coming —

Petras, R.: Yes.

Petras, T.: — down.

Petras, R.: And you'd turn right by there —

Petras, T.: It would turn over there —

Petras, R.: — by Prairie Farms.

Petras, T.: — where Dressels —

Petras, R.: Prairie Farm is now, the milk place.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, T.: Yes. For a week I worked in — at the rag factory, and I used to ride the streetcar.

Malvin: In St. Louis?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: How did you only work for a week?

Petras, T.: Well, I only worked a week. They put me on dirty rags, and my nose was a bleeding all the time, so I just quit.

Malvin: And when would that have been? Before you started at Nesco?

Petras, T.: Before — before I started at Nesco. Before.

Malvin: [Looking at photo album Ron was showing again] Oh, how intricate. Wow.

Petras, R.: They have somebody's collection from here in St. Louis or somewhere — a couple of people's collection, and they just —

Malvin: Now what is that?

Petras, R.: I think it's a wine — wine things or — you know, carved out of wood.

Malvin: When you were doing embroidering and crocheting, did you make — I don't know if they call them table runners or dresser cloths?

Petras, T.: Yes. I have one right there —

Petras, R.: Come to think about it, yes.

Petras, T.: — on my buffet and the tablecloth.

Petras, R.: But not like that, you know, but not — [Referring to a picture in album]

Malvin: Right. But I was just —

Petras, R.: Oh, yes.

Malvin: Wow. You talked about the doll you had that your brother and your soon-to-be husband tossed back and forth.

Petras, T.: Not my husband-to-be. His brother.

Malvin: That's right. Do you remember, was that like a Christmas present? Do you remember getting it?

Petras, T.: I think it was. They — the house — well, it was similar built like the one that's still standing. They had three rooms. Well, and then the attic. And then I think my parents built, they called it a summer house or a little extra room it was.

Malvin: For cooking?

Petras, T.: And they would make — well, they cooked in the big house, too, but in the summer they would cook in this other. And they had a table and a bench, stove in there. And the attic, they used to — when they washed clothes, they used to climb the steps to hang the clothes in the attic.

Malvin: Did they hang them outside in the summer?

Petras, T.: In the summer.

Malvin: And then upstairs in the —

Petras, T.: In the winter.

Malvin: Wow. What kind of washing machines were they? Scrub boards?

Petras, T.: Well, at first they had the scrub board, and then they got a Maytag. I remember they had a Maytag wash machine.

Malvin: Was that when you were still at home?

Petras, T.: Yes. When I was a kid growing up.

Malvin: Was that a wringer washer?

Petras, T.: Well, at first it was a wringer. I remember putting the clothes through. And then they got a Maytag.

Malvin: So you helped —

Petras, T.: That had a wringer, too, I think, in the beginning. You know, the first one.

Petras, R.: Yes, it had that thing and you put the clothes — [Laughs]

Petras, T.: I know.

Petras, R.: — turned the handle on it.

Petras, T.: Well, then they had the electric, and it would go through with the electric.

Petras, R.: Well, yes, then the electric, yes.

Malvin: So you helped your dad with the laundry?

Petras, T.: Sometimes.

Malvin: Did he sing or anything when he was —

Petras, T.: Oh, you know, this was one thing, too. They used to butcher hogs in the winter.

You know? And they'd get up early in the morning — men — three, my dad and my cousin — his cousin, and a couple other men. I don't know. And they'd get straw and then butcher the hog in the early part of the morning and then burn all that hair off of it with straw. And — they used to cut the ear off. That was the best tasting. [Laughs] And then, well, they'd cut

it up. And then they'd drink all day while they were cutting the meat. By night they were all polluted. And they put it in a barrel with salt, you know, different — they'd cut the meat all up for the winter. That was interesting.

Malvin: Now how often did they do that?

Petras, T.: In the winter. I wouldn't say every winter, but, you know, most of the winters.

Malvin: Did they raise the hogs?

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: They bought it?

Petras, R.: Raised chickens down here. I remember.

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: Everybody down here raised chickens. I remember growing up there was always chickens and stuff down here.

Petras, T.: Yes, they used to have chickens —

Petras, R.: Roosters.

Petras, T.: The house next door, they used to have — sell chickens. Then there was Toots. They used to sell chickens.

Petras, R.: [Inaudible] Yes.

Petras, T.: You know where they tore that down?

Petras, R.: Somebody on the corner used to have a rooster. I remember — it'd wake me up, it would be hollering —

Petras, T.: We used to have —

Petras, R.: — real loud.

Petras, T.: — I don't know how many taverns. All we had was taverns, barbershops, and grocery stores.

Petras, R.: Grocery stores.

Petras, T.: We had every corner.

Petras, R.: At least four grocery stores.

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: At least four grocery stores and about maybe six or seven taverns.

Malvin: Did you have —

Petras, T.: Taverns, and grocery stores, or they called them saloons, whatever.

Malvin: Did you have a grocery store that you liked more than —

Petras, T.: Well, we always just went to the corner because it was the closest.

Malvin: Which one was that?

Petras, T.: It was Kirchoff's.

Malvin: Kirchoff's. Was that —

Petras, T.: Kirchoff's, and then Louis Market, I think they called it.

Petras, R.: Across the street. The one real big building over here as you turn the corner.

Petras, T.: And then we had barbers — three barbershops, I think. Saloons and grocery stores. Now we don't have nothing. Now if we need a loaf of bread, we got to go way out.

Malvin: Did your mom go to the grocery store much?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Did she let you go with her?

Petras, T.: Did what?

Malvin: Did she let you go with her?

Petras, T.: Oh, yes.

Malvin: Tell me about the — being in the grocery store. I know it's much different than today's grocery store.

Petras, T.: Yes, well, they had — just about same like now. They had the counters, you know.

Malvin: Did the clerks get the food down from the shelves or —

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: — did you go and pick it out yourself?

Petras, T.: Gosh, it's been so long, I don't even remember. I know towards the end we used to, you know, help ourselves. Well, they had the butcher man, I mean the butcher. They'd cut your meat up. I don't even remember. I know [Inaudible]. I don't know. I remember, though, all these grocery stores and saloons, barbershops. We had on every corner, but now they tore all down. All down.

Malvin: Did you go to the saloons, or was that just —

Petras, T.: No. [Laughs]

Malvin: That was just for —

Petras, T.: Well, towards the end I remember the women would go, you know. But I never — I never did.

Petras, R.: It was mainly for the people that worked down here. They all worked American Steel or down by the Union Starch. I don't know if you come over the over overpass — no, you come down this way.

Malvin: Right.

Petras, R.: But there's —

Petras, T.: Well, yes, they had —

Petras, R.: Well, they tore that one building down. But the other building's on this side. One was Union Starch and one was something else.

Malvin: Now when your husband would go to work, did he take a streetcar, or did he walk?

Petras, T.: No, they walked. They walked. They took a shortcut, I think. That Commonwealth, General Steel. Well, they just would walk. Then he used to drive. Later on he used to drive the car. But I know when we first married, he walked a lot.

Petras, R.: Well, you used to go to the levy, didn't you? Said you used to go to the levy to walk?

Petras, T.: Yes, the levy. We had a levy —

Petras, R.: Cause the Army Depot wasn't there and the highway wasn't there.

Petras, T.: Where the depot?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, T.: There was — there was no depot. That used to be a road. And they had trees down both sides. I remember. And the levy, we'd go walk down that road and watch the water. And in the spring you'd sit under them trees. It was so nice. Yes. Things have changed, I'm telling you. A lot. All our stores downtown is closing. We used to go and shop. They used to have an ice cream store. We'd sit down and get a float, ice cream float. But, they used to have where they'd sell bread. Oh, we even had a — two bakery shops. Busy Bee, do you remember Busy Bee used to be on the corner up here. We'd go there and they'd fry doughnuts. In the evening, boy you'd spell that. Then we had a bakery shop.

Petras, R.: Chris's Bakery. [Speaks louder to Theresa] Chris's Bakery.

Petras, T.: Chris's. And boy, when he baked bread, boy whole Lincoln Place would smell.

You used to go — and he was the nicest man. He — on Sundays, so many people. I — we didn't, but a lot of people, they would take their roasts and stuff, and he'd fix it for them, you know, for nothing. He'd just put it in the oven for them.

Petras, R.: He had that brick oven, which I think is better than just a —

Petras, T.: Every now and then he'd make extra little breads, I guess, to give to the kids. I remember getting some. But, like I said, those were the good old days.

Malvin: Now, you got those loaves when you were little?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Hm.

Petras, R.: Even when I was little, back in the 50s. He was there before then, I guess.

Petras, T.: Well —

Petras, R.: I don't know what country they come from, but —

Malvin: I was going to say, do you remember his last name?

Petras, R.: [Laughs]

Petras, T.: [Laughs]

Malvin: He was just Chris.

Petras, T.: Just Chris.

Petras, R.: There was a couple — one guy could speak English a little bit, I think, and the other guy couldn't. Or how was it? One guy could speak it, and the other guy could just speak it or understand a little bit, but he —

Petras, T.: Shoemaker. Shoe shop.

Malvin: Uh-huh.

Petras, R.: That didn't have no floor. That was like a dirt floor in that one that was —

Petras, T.: [Inaudible]

Petras, R.: It's tore down now.

Petras, T.: Well, they're all tore down.

Petras, R.: I guess they used to shoe horses in there. When you went in, there was a dirt floor almost like back in the old — old western days or something.

Malvin: Did your family have horses?

Petras, T.: What?

Malvin: Did your family have any horses?

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: Did you do a lot of gardening, to grow your own vegetables?

Petras, T.: Not too much. They had a little garden, but not, not, you know.

Malvin: What —

Petras, T.: We did. We grew —

Petras, R.: Everything.

Petras, T.: Ron and my husband, they grew a lot of beautiful tomatoes. Oh, we had so much to share, too. We canned and passed out. We have a little place up there, we had a little garden.

Malvin: Did you can anything but tomatoes?

Petras, T.: Tomatoes and peppers.

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Petras, T.: [Looking at a picture] — Kovach's mother. That was — aunt. She's an aunt of my husband.

Malvin: Now where was — was this here? At this house?

Petras, T.: Yes. In — I don't know this — I don't know whether it was this house or not,
but —

Malvin: Looks like a wooden porch.

Petras, T.: It might be this other little house. This is me when I was —

Petras, R.: Looks a little different now.

Petras, T.: [Laughs] — confirmation.

Petras, R.: Well, that's Lizzy's mom there on the right.

Petras, T.: That's Ann's mother.

Petras, R.: Yes. Okay, I was — I was thinking of somebody else.

Malvin: Now what are you holding here?

Petras, T.: Prayer book and rosaries.

Malvin: Do you remember getting this dress?

Petras, T.: Do I do — ?

Malvin: Do you remember getting the dress? Was that a — very special then?

Petras, T.: It — it was special confirmation in the Catholics, you know. They had baptism
confirmation, and that's a confirmation. Special.

Malvin: Did you buy it new?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: Do you remember shopping for it?

Petras, T.: No. [Laughs]

Malvin: How about the prayer book? Do you remember getting that?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head no] [Inaudible]

Malvin: Are these stockings? Like nylon stockings?

Petras, T.: I don't know what kind. Cotton probably. I don't think they were nylons.

Malvin: I remember when I was little, the first time you got to wear these kind of stockings was a big deal. Was that pretty big deal then? Did you wear stockings like this very often?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head no]

Malvin: These things are priceless. I was telling Ron when you were out of the room, I'd like to bring my scanner back and make some copies of the pictures.

Petras, T.: Yes. Any time. Just let us know. The only place I go — he does the grocery shopping.

Petras, R.: Doctor.

Petras, T.: Once in awhile I'll go get my hair fixed. Now I got to go and get it cut because it's bothering me it's so long in the back. I have to go get it cut. But, I mean, I'm home all the time.

Malvin: I'll call first.

Petras, T.: Unless I got a doctor's appointment. That's — but I won't have any for awhile.

Petras, R.: Shouldn't.

Malvin: [Looking at postcard of Theresa in confirmation dress] I love the way they always made postcards of these things. That was so neat.

Petras, T.: Everything was postcards.

Malvin: Uh-huh. Was this at the church?

Petras, T.: This was taken at the — where they take pictures — photographer.

Malvin: A photographer's?

Petras, T.: Yes. He was at right there — had a studio right behind St. Joseph's Church.

Malvin: Would that have been difficult for your parents to pay to have your picture taken?

Petras, T.: I don't remember. If it was, they did without something.

Malvin: [To Ron] What do you remember about your grandparents?

Petras, T.: Maybe we would have — when you come, maybe I could see — some of my old pictures yet that maybe I could show you.

Malvin: Oh, I'd love that. Yes. Very much.

Petras, R.: They liked to argue a lot, I remember that. [Laughs]

Malvin: Did you say it was your father-in-law that — that drank sometimes?

Petras, R.: Yes.

Petras, T.: He had a [Inaudible], yes. [Laughs]

Malvin: Do you remember that?

Petras, T.: Towards the end, yes.

Petras, R.: Oh, yes. And he would have still lived to be what, 85?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: I mean, well, he drank whiskey all the time. Not the cheap whiskey, the good.

And then he used to go to the tavern, and then he'd come home —

Petras, T.: Yes, there was a tavern over there.

Petras, R.: Well, it's still there. It's Sammy's tavern. Used to have that mouse on the window, but it's not — they took that off.

Malvin: That's someone that I'm supposed to interview.

Petras, R.: Nighohossians?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, R.: I kid every — every time I see them or somebody, I always kid — tell them it was my grandpa used to keep you in business, because he was there every day.

Petras, T.: Let's see —

Petras, R.: Smoked. He smoked cigarettes, pipes, cigars. A normal person would have died a lot earlier than what he would. But they — he ate — he ate a lot of hot peppers and —

Petras, T.: He died in 69. [Looking in Bible]

Petras, R.: — red peppers and the garlic, so I guess that helped, with your blood — with the circulation.

Malvin: Probably.

Petras, R.: Probably why he lived so long.

Malvin: [To Theresa] Your father-in-law?

Petras, T.: He died in 69. He was born nine fourteen —

Petras, R.: But, we were trying like find out when they come over, and what they did

[Inaudible]

Petras, T.: I can't —

Petras, R.: Let me see it.

Petras, T.: Grandpa — no, I know where I've got this other one. It's easier —

Petras, R.: You got that on a sheet of paper, probably.

Petras, T.: No. I know where it's at. I should have got it awhile ago. [Leaves room]

Petras, R.: It's all on the genealogy, isn't it? It should be all on there, I think. I just put the pages together.

Malvin: Is she's talking about — or is she talking about Petras?

Petras, R.: Yes, I guess.

Malvin: Okay.

[Ron and Nancy move to dining room, away from tape recorder.]

Petras, R.: [Pointing to a page on family tree chart] John. Yes, he was born in Békés [Hungary]. That was his brother, and that was his —

Malvin: Okay, your dad was Joseph, right?

Petras, R.: Joseph, yes. If there weren't so many Josephs or Johns. [Inaudible] Joseph, and then Theresa, and —

Malvin: Okay. John —

Petras, R.: It says here —

Malvin: John, Anna —

Petras, T.: No, now here's — here's your father, your grandpa's name.

Petras, R.: It was John.

Petras, T.: But she was Joe — your father's — father's father.

Malvin: I was just trying to figure out which generation we were here.

Petras, R.: Well, that's on the chart there, I think. When we get done here, we'll —

Malvin: [To Theresa] Did you find what you were looking for?

Petras, T.: Yes, but it's the wrong one. It's my father, not his.

Petras, R.: I know we had some on the chart there when we laid this down, because this piece —

Malvin: Oh, okay. Well, we'll just let that go.

Petras, R.: Is this it? I don't know. [Inaudible]

Petras, T.: Put the light on.

Petras, R.: That light doesn't do any good, Ma. We need to get a different light. [Inaudible]

Malvin: That helps a little.

Petras, R.: [Inaudible]

Malvin: Now is this all what your sister-in-law's done?

Petras, R.: Yes, and then the pencil stuff, I — we just found out and added [Inaudible] Now here's a better one than that. This is all in pieces, whatever it is.

Malvin: Now, here's your dad and mom. [Inaudible] John Petras and Anna Illich. [Inaudible] It says in 1912, well, according to the 1920 census, they came in 1912. Did they come straight to Granite City, do you know?

Petras, R.: I thought they come to Madison.

Petras, T.: You mean my husband — my in-laws?

Malvin: Your — yes.

Petras, T.: I think they were stopping — saying one they lived in — where it's real cold — Montana. And then they lived in Madison.

Petras, R.: That's the first time I've heard that, Ma. Montana.

Petras, T.: Yes, because your grandma used to say how cold it is — how cold it was, you know, when they were there.

Petras, R.: Not Montana. They didn't live in Montana.

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: They didn't live in Montana. New York somewhere.

Petras, T.: When they come. When they came over.

Petras, R.: They didn't go to Montana, I don't think. That's the first time I've heard of that one, Ma. [Laughs] We can make copies of this, too. One of the relatives wrote this.

Malvin: Oh, yes.

Petras, R.: Things that she remembered. I don't remember Montana. You mean Madison?

Petras, T.: They lived in Madison. That's where your father was born.

Petras, R.: Yes. I don't know nothing about — nobody said nothing about Montana before.

Petras, T.: Well, I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong.

Malvin: But you remember it was cold, wherever it was. She talked about it being cold.

Petras, T.: Yes. She said it was cold.

Petras, R.: If you can follow it [Referring to a handwritten narrative he was pointing to]

Malvin: Yes. [They try to match names on the narrative to the family tree chart]

[Inaudible]

[Move back to living room]

Malvin: I have a tendency to stay too long. I don't want to tire you out. So, if you're ready for me to go, I can come back another time.

Petras, T.: Oh, it don't make no difference. I'm not doing nothing. [Laughs]

Petras, R.: We're just now getting into it, so I mean if you leave now, then you have to start all over from where you — and we'll forget where we left off, anyway. Or I will.

Malvin: So why don't we — we move to then, like when your kids were younger and growing up. What was the neighborhood like then compared to when you were a kid?

Petras, T.: Well. I don't know.

Petras, R.: It was always the wrong side of the tracks. When you went to school, you was always out of bounds. [Inaudible]

Petras, T.: Like I said, I didn't ever go nowhere, you know what I mean? Like I — there's was all kind of nationalities. Everybody was friendly. And now, nobody's friendly. You don't know any of your neighbors.

Petras, R.: I know — I know the neighbors, Ma. [Inaudible] I know some of the neighbors — the neighbors is just of like —

Petras, T.: Well, they — they go to work, and at night they got things to do.

Petras, R.: They stay home.

Petras, T.: They just don't associate. You know, like before, they used to be — well, it's still there. That brick building on that, not this side but the next street. Women used to get together in the evenings, you know. Well, the Hungarians. And they'd, I guess, gossip, I guess, that's what they would. But nobody — nobody's friendly no more, you know what I mean?

Malvin: So they just got together to talk and chat?

Petras, T.: Yes, you know.

Malvin: Did you do that?

Petras, T.: What?

Malvin: Did you meet with them, too?

Petras, T.: Well, they were older women. When I was that young.

Malvin: Okay. Okay, when you were a kid, you mean?

Petras, T.: No, no. Younger. When I first married, you know. I was 20, but I mean, they were older women, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Uh-huh.

Petras, T.: Like my mother and his mother and —

Malvin: So, did you go — when they met, did you go with them?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head no]

Malvin: But you knew they were —

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: — just chatting?

Petras, T.: Well, my mother never went. It was just a — I know a bunch of women that did go —

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, T.: — you know. But they all passed away already.

Petras, R.: Not Alice Deniff.

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: Alice Deniff's still here. I mean, she don't live — Alice Deniff. I mean she didn't —

Petras, T.: I mean the old ladies, the Hungarian ladies.

Petras, R.: Oh, yes. Well, of all of them, yes. A lot of them moved away or died.

Petras, T.: They're all — in fact, Lincoln Place, that's all there was was, like I said, Mexicans, Armenians, and Bulgarians, and now it's all nationalities, I guess. I don't know. You don't see, you now.

Petras, R.: Nobody thinks about nationalities any more.

Petras, T.: Different people. Like our kids do. They move out and — the Armenian church, they sold out up here. It was real nice. They used to have funerals I could see.

Petras, R.: And weddings. Yes.

Petras, T.: Different people that come, then, you know, that you knew. But I haven't seen any of them. I think one time they had wedding, they missed, I don't know what nationality they were, but they were all dressed in different costumes. It was interesting, you know what I mean?

Malvin: Uh-huh.

Petras, T.: But now, well this couple that bought this place, they're fixing it up real nice. But it —

Petras, R.: Nondenominational.

Petras, T.: — denomination church. And they don't have too many people coming. It's not like back when the Bulgarians and the Armenians were here, you know. It's just different. The world has just changed different — times.

Malvin: Do you remember going to church when you were a girl and growing up?

Petras, T.: Yes, not here. St. Joseph's.

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, T.: We, I still went to Holy Family. But since I got sick, I didn't go. So they bring me communion to the house.

Malvin: Did your mom and dad go to church, too?

Petras, T.: No.

Malvin: So, did you go with — who did you go with? Or did you go by yourself?

Petras, T.: My brothers used to take me, in the car. They'd come for me.

Malvin: Interesting.

Petras, T.: But —

Malvin: Do you know why your parents didn't go?

Petras, T.: [Shakes head no]

Malvin: They just didn't.

Petras, T.: No. They just didn't go.

Malvin: Were your brothers married by then?

Petras, T.: When I went to —

Malvin: When you went to church with them, and they — they would come get you?

Petras, T.: No. No.

Malvin: No.

Petras, T.: No. They were single. In fact, I don't remember too much about my older brother, either. I — I just don't — I know he was — went to school to be a barber. Then he went into Reserves. But, I mean, I don't remember too much about him. Nor the other brother, either. I don't know why. I guess we just wasn't close.

Malvin: But you do remember them taking you to church?

Petras, T.: To church. Just dropped me off. They didn't come in. [Laughs]

Malvin: Oh, really? Oh. Did you go to St. Joseph's before you went to school there?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: What other elementary, or — after third grade, do you remember why you went to St. Joseph's?

Petras, T.: My mother wanted me to go to Catholic school. So — that was a public school and then I went to Catholic school.

Malvin: I wonder if she asked your brothers to take you to — to church, since they didn't go in?

Petras, T.: I don't know.

Malvin: Did your husband go to St. Joseph's, also?

Petras, R.: The church?

Malvin: Did he —

Petras, T.: Oh, after we were married —

Petras, R.: They got married.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: Not before, yes.

Petras, T.: But not when he was a kid. I don't remember.

Petras, R.: Probably didn't go either, probably.

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: He probably didn't go to church, either.

Petras, T.: No. In fact — in fact when the kids were born, I didn't even go too much, cause his dad always wanted to go fishing or hunting, and he took him, and I didn't go to church. And then after awhile, when the kids were born, I started going again. Or we both went.

Malvin: [To Ron] So, what do you remember about —

Petras, R.: My grandparents?

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, R.: I was just thinking that. We'd sit on the side, we had like a little bench, and we'd sit out there all the time, especially in the summertime.

Petras, T.: He had an old big pipe.

Petras, R.: Old big pipe, yes. From Hungary. It was a big one.

Malvin: Oh.

Petras, R.: He used to smoke. Grandma, well, was it around Easter or Christmas she used to make those kolachs. It's a round bread, yellow —

Petras, T.: They called it —

Petras, R.: — honey on the outside

Petras, T.: — Christmas bread or Easter bread.

Petras, R.: It was like Easter bread or something.

Petras, T.: I got — put raisins in it.

Malvin: That with a C or a K?

Petras, R.: It was a bread like.

Malvin: No, I mean, how do you spell it?

Petras, R.: Oh —

Malvin: Start with a K or C —

Petras, T.: Kolach. Look it up in the —

Petras, R.: Yes, we'll look it up in the —

Petras, T.: — cookbook.

Petras, R.: — in the dictionary. With a K, yes, I think.

Malvin: Okay.

Petras, R.: It's in the cookbook, too. I was going to say k-a-l-a-c-s.

Petras, T.: K-a or k-o?

Petras, R.: K-a-l, wasn't it?

Petras, T.: You look in the cookbook, it's easier.

Petras, R.: But you've got the dictionary in your hand, though, Ma.

Petras, T.: [To Malvin] Would you like a cup of tea?

Malvin: No, I'm fine. If you want some, go ahead.

Petras, T.: No. No. I just thought maybe I could offer you something.

Malvin: I appreciate that, but I'm fine.

Petras, T.: Beings you said you — you like — you don't drink coffee. I don't drink coffee just in the morning.

Malvin: I never did get used to it. It smells good, especially —

Petras, T.: I don't even cook it. I take the instant.

Petras, R.: This says a milk loaf, but it's not a milk loaf.

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: It says a milk loaf in the dictionary, but it wasn't a milk loaf. K-l-e- With the accent marks, I mean —

Malvin: Yes.

Petras, R.: You know —

Petras, T.: You know it's in a —

Malvin: So, when your grandfather — this pipe was, what, a couple of feet?

Petras, R.: Oh, yes, one of those —

Petras, T.: Oh, it wasn't that big.

Petras, R.: Yes, it was.

Petras, T.: No.

Petras, R.: It had a big long stem on it, Ma, and then the little thing on the bottom.

Petras, T.: [Laughs] I know, but it wasn't that big.

Petras, R.: Well, 18 inches or so. Maybe not —

Petras, T.: I know it was big.

Malvin: So at least a foot. Foot and a half, somewhere in that area.

Petras, T.: When he passed away, my husband gave it to Ann Kovach's kids. They wanted it.

Malvin: Really?

Petras, R.: That's 18 inches there. It had to be at least — at least that, if not — it might have been bigger than 18 inches. Maybe 20, you know. It was pretty long. Cause he used to hang on the wall, and he had two or three of them.

Malvin: Did it have a — a curve on the end, or was it just straight?

Petras, R.: Well, I mean, it come out. It was straight, and then it had —

Petras, T.: It was a —

Malvin: Like a ladle, I mean the shape.

Petras, R.: Yes, like a ladle and then it had a little — what?

Petras, T.: Bowl.

Petras, R.: Bowl, yes. With a little —

Petras, T.: Fancy.

Petras, R.: — little — top on it. I think it was kind of like a little lid on it. Lid.

Malvin: Hm.

Petras, R.: So we had those, and then like I said, whenever her dad passed away, they wanted Hungarian things —

Petras, T.: We don't know what happened to it.

Petras, R.: For some reason they said their grandpa gave it to our grandpa, but I don't remember that part. So they — my dad give it — they came down and asked for it, so they took that, and they had a musical instrument — I don't know what they call it — a zither like thing, a big long wooden thing with the — with the wires, and you — with the strings on it, you push down one thing and you just strum it. Boy he — he'd have a few of those shots of whiskey, boy he'd get down there and he'd play something, boy. And I wanted that, and then they got — gave that away.

Malvin: That was your grandfather that played that?

Petras, T.: Yes. Yes.

Petras, R.: I don't — yes. I tried — he — we got those, like, goose feathers or something, I don't know, they're like quilted — cut it down, you know, on the end, and you push — hold that, like with a key or something, a metal thing, and hold one down and, I don't know, move it or something and the other one, you just strummed on it. That — that big round —

Petras, T.: What'd they call those, ziphos or what?

Petras, R.: Zither or something, I think. Toward the end it kind of, like, curled up and had like a design to it. That was about as big, about that big.

Malvin: [inaudible]

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: It was made out of wood. It was —

Malvin: Was it carved ornately or plain?

Petras, R.: No, plain.

Malvin: Very plain?

Petras, R.: I remember end, maybe both ends had like — it just swirled up. It had like a — curled up like a — like a claw foot type of thing. I mean, it wasn't, it didn't have — not the toes, but it was just kind of rounded up —

Malvin: Right, that shape.

Petras, R.: Shaped that way. Well, the other side might have been straight out. But one, I think you could — you could have hung it on the wall.

Malvin: Did he play that on the porch, too?

Petras, R.: No, just, I remember down in the basement there. So that was the music, I mean.

[Laughs]

Malvin: Did he sing?

Petras, R.: He didn't. I don't think he did.

Malvin: Did anybody sing when he was playing it, or was it just him playing?

Petras, R.: Yes, just him playing. And I don't even know what tune it was. Maybe it wasn't a tune. [Laughs] He got — he got some kind of music out of it. I tried it, it was like nothing.

Malvin: You couldn't make it sing like he could.

Petras, R.: Yes, couldn't — didn't have any — I mean, I could make sound come out of it, but it didn't mean anything.

Malvin: So, when he'd sit on the porch, did he sit and talk?

Petras, R.: Uh —

Malvin: Or just —

Petras, R.: We sat on the side over there, but — Yes, I guess we did, but I don't remember anything we said.

Malvin: And your grandma sat out there, too?

Petras, R.: Yes, right on the side. Oh, yes, then he used to talk about — in the evening in the summertime, the bats or something would be flying around, and then he'd tell grandma that — something about bats get in your hair. And then she'd get all fussed up about it.

Worrying about the bats, you know what I mean? Superstition type thing where the —

Malvin: Was he trying to get her stirred up?

Petras, R.: Yes.

Malvin: [Laughs]

Petras, R.: One of the thing he'd just say to her to get her stirred up.

Malvin: That was his form of entertainment?

Petras, R.: Yes. They lived — they were like very simple.

Petras, T.: Just led a — led a —

Petras, R.: Homebodies.

Petras, T.: — simple life.

Petras, R.: Common people. I remember going on the streetcar when we used to go to St. Louis, and we'd go across the McKinley Bridge. I don't know. Have you ever been across the McKinley Bridge?

Malvin: [Shakes head yes]

Petras, R.: And you see those things that go off to the side there? That was a streetcar tracks.

Malvin: I'll be darn.

Petras, R.: And you look, there was no railing or nothing on each side. And the streetcars would go back and forth. You'd be looking like, "Am I going to fall off?" And then, when they stopped along to pick somebody up, they had to walk a big way up there, and it was like, "I would never do that." There was like a little landing you walked up, I mean, because, you know, the streetcar didn't go down to the — to the ground. It just stayed on them tracks. If you follow Madison — Madison Street and you go over the McKinley Bridge or something, somewhere down there. You can see how the tracks come, and then they come across. And I think you used to off by — well, it's now the Post-Dispatch building now. Back then it was the Globe. And it had like a subway come underneath it, and that's where you used to get off down there.

Malvin: Did your grandparents go with you when you'd go to St. Louis?

Petras, R.: She used to take me. [Indicating his mother] Go shopping. Remember? Famous & Barr or something.

Petras, T.: I was going to say, do you remember the time I took you to St. Louis and his grandma said, “You’ll never find your way back home.”

Petras, R.: Yes.

Petras, T.: You remember?

Petras, R.: I think it was every time we went. Because you know, everybody just stayed in their own neighborhood. They didn’t really go out and — well, back then, you didn’t have all the highways and all the roads and —

Malvin: Well, and you had all the shops here, too.

Petras, R.: Shops, yes.

Malvin: You didn’t have as much need to go, either.

Petras, R.: There was no such thing as a mall back then.

Malvin: So, did you take all — all three sons when you’d go shopping?

Petras, T.: Did I do — ?

Malvin: Take all three sons to go shopping?

Petras, R.: Just me, I think.

Petras, T.: Just him.

Petras, R.: I don’t remember anybody else going along.

Petras, T.: I don’t remember taking the other two.

Malvin: Was that Famous [Barr, a department store] downtown?

Petras, T.: Yes.

Malvin: That was such a neat store.

Petras, R.: Still the same area still.

Petras, T.: When they were growing up — I don't think we had Ron. Had Joe and John. Downtown, we went shopping, and they were talking Hungarian. John was talking Hungarian, and Joe says, "Don't talk in Hungarian." He says, "You're not supposed to talk it here."
[Laughs] To his brother. I don't think we had Ron. I don't know. So many things I remember, and so many I can't remember, you know what I mean?

Malvin: There are a lot — I think sometimes they come like in little snapshots or pictures of something. And then it kind of —

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: Yes.

Malvin: — brings up something else, so —

Petras, T.: Yes. Yes.

Petras, R.: We used to have that guy come by in the street. Remember? He had that big truck, and he want your knives to sharpen. He'd be hollering to somebody to turn that thing, and make some kind of noise. Remember he used to sell produce or something off the truck? He'd sharpen your knives and axes or whatever? You don't remember that?

Petras, T.: Do you remember they used to have them — when Joe was little they had a pony — some guy with the pony come around and take pictures of them? I got — I got a picture of that, too. The oldest boy. My daughter-in-law has took a lot of pictures, you know, when they were little.

Petras, R.: I think you — I thought I had one on the pony. I think someone took it, because it's not in that box.

Petras, T.: I think I've got that one in the box.

Petras, R.: Yes. Not me, though, I think you've got —

Petras, T.: No. Not of John, either. Joe's the only one. We used to have a pet crow.

Petras, R.: Named Charlie. He had his wings clipped or something.

Petras, T.: Named Charlie.

Petras, R.: They bought him for 50 cents or something.

Malvin: Where did you buy it?

Petras, R.: Oh, they must have gotten it from somebody down here, I don't know, somebody wanted to get rid of it.

Petras, T.: We clipped it's wings and he wouldn't fly away, and just got a pet out of it. Took my — one time, I took my band off, my — and we was teasing him, you know, and he grabbed it, went into the yard, and stuck it in the ground.

Petras, R.: Yes, he'd take money. Anything shiny. Money —

Petras, T.: And then he didn't want you to go by it, you know what I mean? He'd peck at you. He didn't want you to pick it up. Had a dog, jumped on Darrell, this boy, then we got rid of him, because he knocked him down.

Petras, R.: Mr. Smith, wasn't it? Looked like a Lab or a Golden Retriever.

Petras, T.: Mr. Smith.

Petras, R.: But Charlie, though, he used to peck at the women's feet.

Petras, T.: Yes, Charlie.

Petras, R.: They had the what, sandals or something that he used to peck? He didn't like women. Men he left alone, but the women, he —

Petras, T.: He never liked women. He'd always peck their feet. Wouldn't let them go just so far, and that's it.

Petras, R.: Then they sold him for 50 cents or another dollar fifty. That was only for like a summertime or something, the whole — whole time. I remember asking — I don't think Charlie liked me, either, because he would never come around me when, you know, I was trying to pet him or something. He'd always walk away from me.

Malvin: Did they have any dogs? Did your sons have dogs?

Petras, T.: Yes. That's what I say. He jumped on the oldest boy one time, right here, well, it's been quite a while. We had a Chihuahua. We had him for about 13 years. And — but he never was real friendly, you know, towards you. If you wanted to give him a bath, he'd already know. He'd see the towels and —

Petras, R.: [Showing a picture] There's old Charlie there.

Malvin: [Laughs]

Petras, T.: — and the towels, and then he'd hide, and you couldn't get him. Couldn't cut his toenails. He was — he always wanted his way, you know what I mean? He didn't want — you know what I mean? He wasn't a friendly dog.

Malvin: Almost like cat.

Petras, T.: What?

Petras, R.: What are you talking about?

Malvin: Almost like a cat.

Petras, R.: You talking about Poncho — dog.

Petras, T.: And when there was storm, he would come, you know, he'd know. He'd hide.

Petras, R.: Underneath the sofa. Well, not this one here.

Petras, T.: Well, one day, we went, I think we went by my son's house, and it stormed, and we come home, we couldn't find him. And finally found him in the closet, hidden in a corner.

Malvin: [Laughs] So he [referring to Charlie] — you didn't have to have a — he wasn't on a leash or anything? He just —

Petras, R.: Walked around in the back.

Petras, T.: Mr. Smith. No that's the dog. This is Charlie.

Petras, R.: Yes. We don't have a good picture of Mr. Smith. We've got one of him. It's in the attic.

Petras, T.: Yes.

Petras, R.: Not like that. He had his own personality. He was pretty smart

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

Petras, R.: I mean, different things. Then we used to have soda bottles and bricks and kind of like big long oblong thing for our garden with the flowers, and Charlie would get in there and then he'd peck everything. So that's when grandma says, "He's gotta go. He's gotta go."

Malvin: [Laughs]

Petras, R.: So Charlie had to — lost Charlie. Lost Charlie.

Malvin: I had a neighbor when I was growing up, when she would garden, she always had a bonnet on. Did your grandma do that?

Petras, R.: She had that — where's that picture? [Laughs] It's not a bonnet, but. What do you call that? She always had that on, whatever it was. I don't know what you call that, but [showing picture]

Malvin: Did she wear that all the time?

Petras, T.: No.

Petras, R.: A lot of the time she would.

Petras, T.: She didn't wear it all the time.

Petras, R.: Maybe when she was younger.

Malvin: So what else do you remember about them?

Petras, R.: Trying to think.

Petras, T.: [inaudible]

Petras, R.: We didn't do a whole lot. I mean —

Malvin: Well, I was just thinking about them as people.

Petras, R.: Well, Grandpa used to garden. Remember when Grandpa used to grow tomatoes and then when dad took over the garden he didn't want to admit that Dad's tomatoes were better than his? But he always wanted to want to eat them?

Petras, T.: Well, Grandpa didn't never put anything in the ground, you know what I mean?

Petras, R.: Well, he did but —

Petras, T.: And we never had a — had real —

Petras, R.: Big garden.

Petras, T.: — big garden. Then my husband took over, and he used to put leaves and different things in. I used to save all our peelings and stuff. And he'd let it grow to, what do you call it?

Malvin: Mulch?

Petras, R.: Compost.