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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH

MRS. ANASTASIA BOSIK

AUGUST 18, 1976

TRANSLATED AND TRANSCRIBED BY

MRS. NATALIA B. MCDONOUGH

JULY 19, 1977

Interview with Mrs. Anastasia Bosik

2200 Garfield Ave.

Gwinhurst

Wilmington, Delaware

August 18, 1976

Interviewer: Mrs. Natalia B. McDonough

Q: When were you born?

A: September 28, 1894. In Galicia, Ukraine, in the village of Hudichi, near the town of Dobromil. The city of Premysl was about three hours away on foot. We used to go there for holidays occasionally.

Q: And your parents were born in the same area?

A: Yes.

Q: What occupation did your father have?

A: He had a small farm and he worked the farm. He had no horses, but did have cows and grew everything for the family. He could just barely feed his family. And that's how people lived over there; not so richly as nowadays in the United States. But when I came here first, life was hard here too. At four o'clock in the morning the milkman brought milk with a horse drawn carriage. The baker delivered bread by horse too. They used to put their deliveries by the door on the steps and no one would take them. Everything was good. But then it deteriorated.

Q: Do you remember how much land your father had?

A: There were four of us, one brother and three girls including me. My father had about three morgens of land.

Q: That wasn't very much land.

A: No, but he had a very good garden, and sold things like plums. He used to take fruit to Premysl and sell it there. We had some pears too, but hardly any apples.

Q: Did you have to work?

A: Not very much. I herded the cows in the field while they grazed. I rode a horse and had a good time riding him.

Q: Then you were on horse back and took the cows out away from the village to the grazing area?

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: Did you attend school?

A: Yes, I went to school for six years.

Q: That's a long time!

A: Oh, no. Other children went to school longer and learned a profession. They used to have these big books for us to learn from. But I had no mother. I don't even know what her name was. I don't remember when she died. My father taught me my prayers and raised me. He took me to church and to school. He said his prayers every day and told me to do the same.

Q: Were you the oldest?

A: No, I was the youngest. I had an older brother and two older sisters. They were all in America; so was an uncle. They wanted to bring me over, so my father sent me.

Q: How was life in the Ukraine different from life in America

A: Oh, it was very difficult.

Q: Did your brothers and sisters have to work too?

A: My brother was a soldier for seven years. Then he came home and got sick and died. My two sisters were married but they are already dead. They had no children, so now I have no one over there.

Q: Did you keep in touch with your family after you came over?

A: Oh, yes. My father wrote to me. And I sent money home, but it wasn't much because I didn't have much. When I came, I had only four dollars in my pocket. I came straight to Wilmington when I came. I was very young. But they didn't send me to school, oh, no. They sent me to work, to a cigarette factory! No, it was a cigar factory! I worked all day and earned \$4.85 per week. My job was to flatten out the leaves.

Q: In what year did you come to America?

A: 1910. Between August 15th and 20th. I don't know the exact date. The ship I came on was called Victoria.

Q: Where did you leave from?

A: From Germany, let me think what port that was. I forgot.  
Oh, it was Hamburg.

Q: How did you get to Hamburg?

A: We came by train from Peremysl.

Q: Did you make any stops between Peremysl and Hamburg?

A: No, but we had to wait for the ship a little while. We were on the ship eleven days.

Q: That's a long time.

A: Oh, yes! and the ship was full. I said to myself, if I have to return, I'll never go back by ship. I'd rather walk! There were storms sometimes. One time they were having a party and the music was playing and everybody was dancing. It was sunny. And then all of a sudden one end of the ship went way up and then a huge wave came and got everyone all wet. They got us inside real fast and bolted the doors. Everybody was screaming.

Q: Did this happen very often?

A: The whole eleven days.

Q: You must have had very bad weather!

A: I don't know. The sun was out when you were on deck, but down below you couldn't tell how the weather was. It was kind of dark down there and we lit candles.

Q: Mrs. Bosik, do you remember how you first heard about U.S.? Who told you about it?

A: My sister had gone to the United States and another person from our village. Oh, yeah, my sister and a man from our village and he wrote that it was nice here. There were many people here from our village.

Q: What was their reason for coming over here?

A: To earn a few pennies. At home everyone was poor. Whoever had a lot of land had it good. But if you had only two or three acres, you could hardly exist. So they went

to America to make some money and send it back. But at first it was hard here, too. A man would work in a factory for nine dollars a week! But then life was a lot cheaper. Bread was seven cents a loaf. Milk was eight cents a quart. Everything was cheap then. Now it's all different.

Q: Who paid your passage over to America?

A: My sister sent me the ticket. It cost eighty dollars; I know because I sent it back to my father. For every American dollar we had to pay four of our money in those days. The money we used back home was called Renski.

Q: When people from the old country used to come to America, did they intend to stay here, or?

A: Oh, no! They returned. They just went to earn some money. A lot of people came back.

Q: What did they do with their earnings?

A: Oh, they took it back and they could live on it, buy things. We had to pay taxes over there too. The government was Catholic, Polish. But it wasn't bad over there. I don't know how it was for old people, but for me, it wasn't bad.

Q: Did they buy land with their money?

A: If they earned enough, yes, they did. They bought their land and continued their lives there.

Q: When you were coming over, did you come with someone?

A: Yes, there was another girl and a boy from our village. The girl got out in Philadelphia and the boy and I came to Wilmington. But he died a long time ago. He went back to the Ukraine and died.

Q: The ship you came on was called the Victoria. Do you remember what nationality it was?

A: No, I don't remember. But if we left from Hamburg, it must have been German.

Q: What language did the personnel on the ship speak?

A: I don't remember.

Q: You got off the boat at Ellis Island?

A: Yes, we came directly to Cassengard.

Q: Did anyone meet you in New York?

A: No, we went on to Philadelphia. I was expected there.

Q: How did you know how to get to Philadelphia?

A: Oh, they showed us. I just told them I wanted to go to Phila., and they told me how to get there.

Q: Were these officials of some sort?

A: Yes, they were. They gave instructions to everyone, checked people's health and such.

Q: What happened to people who were sick?

A: They were detained in New York, but I don't know where.

Q: Were they kept there until they were well?

A: Yes.

Q: What were your first impressions when you came to U.S.?

A: Oh, it seemed bad. I was disappointed. The old country was a lot better. When I went to work and came home on the street car one time I got dizzy and when I got off, my head was spinning and I didn't know which way to go. But later I learned. Then I went to work; there were some girls from a neighboring village who took me to the factory with them. When we got there, they disappeared. Then this one girl came to me and asked if I wanted a job. I told her that some other girls had brought me but then they scattered. This girl was German, but she spoke Polish; she took me over to the boss, and helped me. He sat me next to her on a machine and slowly I learned to operate it and work. So I worked in the factory until it moved to Philadelphia. Then I couldn't go there and got a job in a factory where they cured skins. But I only worked there one day. It smelled so bad! Then I went to work for a private family.

Q: When you found your first job, was it your sister who found it for you?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: How did you locate your second job?

A: Oh, people just told me to go there. A lot of the other girls were going there, so I just went with them.. But it was too smelly. So I went to work for this Jewish family. The Jews were very nice although I didn't want to eat w with them. Oh, yes, the Jews were very nice. I earned eight dollars a month. They had a lot of fruit in the basement. They had a furniture store. They were away all day in the store and I stayed home. I had to do the laundry and they showed me what I had to do. I liked it there. Then I went and got married.

Q: How did you find this job with the family?

A: Oh, people took me there. There were a lot of our people.

Q: Was there a whole Ukrainian community?

A: Yes, there were a lot of Ukrainians, and everyone spoke Ukrainian.

Q: How did you learn English?

A: I went to school. But this was only after I got married. I went in the evenings, two hours a night three days a week.

Q: How did you meet your husband?

A: Oh, there were a lot of us here. And there was no one to keep an eye on me and I was dumb, so I got married.

Q: How old were you when you got married?

A: Oh, seventeen. When we were about to get married in 1912 everyone said the priest wouldn't marry us because we were so young. But he did. A priest from Chester came because we didn't have a priest of our own at that time.

Q: Was your husband Ukrainian too?

A: Yes. He had two brothers and an uncle here, but his father went back to the Ukraine. At first, my husband made



twenty five cents an hour, and he worked twelve hours a day. That's how they worked here at first. At first we lived in a room and then we rented a house for twelve dollars a month. Then we took in boarders; they paid us four dollars a month. I had to do their laundry with this machine. I was sorry we had them and cried, but it didn't help, I still had to do it.

Q: When you rented out rooms you also had to do the boarders' laundry and feed them? You had a lot of work!

A: Yes, yes I had to do all of it and it was a lot of work. But my husband didn't like the idea very much either, so after we had our first baby, we moved to an apartment. We lived there for a while, and then we rented another house. In twelve years we had six children. And then I said no, no more. If it kills me, I want no more children. It wasn't so easy in those days. I did a lot of laundry. And the irons in those days, they were the kind you had to heat up by putting them on a hot stove and then iron with them. And the landry had to be done by hand. It wasn't as easy as it is now. But the good Lord helped me and I won't forget His help.

Q: It doesn't look like all that work did you any harm!

A: I learned slowly and on March 11, 1929 I got my citizenship papers. Mr. Synczyszyn was my witness; There was another one, but he died. His name was Michael Cross. And that's how life went in those days. I was real happy to get my citizenship papers. The children went to school, then I got a job with DuPonts. I worked there fourteen years. I worked at night. I had to get all their clothes ready for school in the daytime while they were at school. Only the littlest boy wasn't in school yet then.

Q: Then your children were very little when you started working?

A: Oh, yes. I worked from five to nine. I swept, and washed

the sinks and glasses. Early in the morning I was up on the thirteenth floor at six o'clock in the morning. I had thirty nine rooms. I had to dust in the mornings.

Q: This must have been in the hotel?

A: Oh, yea, it was in the DuPont Hotel. I worked there for thirteen years non-stop. I got paid. My first paycheck was eight and a half dollars. But then later they raised it to fifteen. But I quit anyway. My husband was always after me to quit; he always said I should take care of the children instead of working. But by then they were all married except for two girls who were still at home. The boys all got married young. One of the girls didn't get married until she was about thirty-eight and the other, until about thirty-five or six. When I had a paycheck, I bought everything for the children and gave them a quarter a week spending money. There used to be a Jew who came out from Philadelphia and he sold children's things -- dresses, blouses, fabrics, everything. He used to come with a push cart, but later he came with a car, always right after payday. It was so nice! I paid only a dollar down and a dollar a week. I bought fabric, too and sewed clothing. But when I was at work, I didn't miss a single day for ten years. But one time I overslept. We lived right next to a Catholic church, and I woke up one day and heard the bells ringing. I looked at the clock, and it was six o'clock already and I was still in bed! So, when I went to work at night, Mr. Cloud, my boss, only joked, saying whoever slept in the morning had to sleep at night, too. The work was different from the way it was today. The boss lady used to check the work and make sure there was no speck of dust anywhere. Oh, there were lots of our women working there.

Q: Did you know any of the people who came here (Wilmington) back in the Ukraine?

A: Oh, I just knew some of the people from our village, but they scattered to Philadelphia and all. Just a few stayed here and you could see them when you went to church, but I never had time to visit them at home or anything. Oh, no, I didn't have time for that! I would just rush out to the store now and then, and cleaned my house quickly, even so, sometimes I didn't get to bed until two in the morning. Just keeping the children in clean clothes for school was a job, but, thank God, we survived it all.

Q: How did you come to Wilmington from Philadelphia? Did you get Married in Philadelphia?

A: Oh, no. We came straight to Philadelphia from New York. We got married in Wilmington. Somebody met me in Philadelphia and took me straight to Wilmington. My husband was already living there.

Q: Do you remember where you lived when you first arrived?

A: At first I lived on Lobdell Street, then on Taylor. Lobdell is where I lived before we were married. It's near Heald Street. Then after we were married, we moved to Taylor Street, on the other side of the bridge. That was close enough to Heald Street that we could walk to church.

Q: Was there some sort of community life around the church?

A: Yes there were two churches on Heald Street, one on either side. Sometimes members of the two parishes had fights at night in the street. They called each other names, too. We went to the one that wasn't the "katsapi" church. That's where we were married and all our children were christened there (ed. note: the Catholic Ukrainian). And then our church changed over more to the "katsapi" kind, but the Lord is the same in any church, you know.

Q: Then you started out in the Catholic church?

- A: All our children went to school there too. All the people beyond the third bridge sent their children there.
- Q: But now you are in the Orthodox church, aren't you?
- A: Yes, we were advised to go there. And then they built a new church on Philadelphia Pike, but people don't want to go to church so much these days.
- Q: But a lot of people do go, especially recently when that nice young priest was there.
- A: Oh, he prayed hard for everybody. Some people liked him and others didn't and if they didn't, they didn't go to church very much. I don't know where he is now.
- Q: Aside from church, were there any other organizations in the Ukrainian community? Oh, they used to have picnicks, but mostly outside somewhere, but now they have them right here.
- Q: When you first came over, did you ever have the impression that people took advantage of you because you didn't know your way around or the language?
- A: The people were very, very nice. I only lived among the nicest kind. Some people said there were some people who weren't nice, but I don't know of any. And I never lived among Ukrainian, either! First we lived among Americans on Taylor Street, then we moved to Twenty-sixth Street, and there were hardly any Ukrainians there. And on Thirty-second Street, the people were especially nice, but we didn't live there long because my husband died. He was never sick before. At the end, he worked all week, had Monday off, and died of a heart attack. He was sixty one when he died. He was very young when he came to America. When he went to work for the railroad, he told them he was three years older than he was, because they didn't want to take people as young as he was. We were in our new house only two and a half years. He really liked it.

He had a garage and everything. We paid \$18,800 for it. So he died, and all the children got married and moved away. Only one boy came to live with me. He was married to a Catholic girl, but they had a misunderstanding or something. They had one little girl. They came to live with me when she was six and stayed with me till she was twelve. She visited her mother every week. Then at twelve she decided she wanted to live with her mother. She went to a Catholic school and to a Catholic church and my son sent her to piano lessons. But the girl wanted to be with her mother. I took her to the Catholic church myself because God is the same in any church. I went when they had Novenas. It was very nice. They prayed in English, and I could pray in my own language. It was very nice. So I told my son that I would sign the house over to him so he could help with the payments and taking care of it, but he said he didn't want it. He had a five thousand dollar car and a good job, but then he started drinking a lot and had an accident. He had a job with the Pepsi Cola Company delivering to stores; then he got a job in the post office delivering packages and then in the office.

Q: Mrs. Bosik, you had six children, three boys and three girls. You told us about one son's occupation. Where did your other children work?

A: One boy apprenticed with the railroad for four years. His father signed him up at sixteen, and that's where he worked. And the youngest son, when he heard that he was going to be drafted at the age of eighteen, he quickly found a girl and went to Elkton and got married to her. She didn't have any parents; she lived with a sister. My son knew her before. I wanted to separate them, but my other son stopped me. Well, about a month after they were married, the army got him anyway. He went overseas for

three years. He was very unhappy there. He wanted to come home, but they wouldn't let him. He was somewhere in the Philippines and Guam. When he came back from the service, he got a job at the Boxwood plant where they make cars and that's where he works. We had a lot of trouble with him. He bought himself a house for \$8,000 and paid it off little by little. He and his wife fought a lot. She died about three years ago of a heart attack. She left four children. Three boys and a girl they had. The girl got married and lives in Pennsylvania and one of the boys is married; another one is supposed to get married soon.

Q: How about your daughters. Did they work outside the home?

A: When the oldest daughter was thirteen, she went to work in a bakery. She earned five dollars a week. She sold bread and cleaned up the store. Then she went to work where they built airplanes. Another daughter was with the Navy. She worked with a lady who showed her everything in construction. They worked in yards in the daytime and then my daughter worked a shift at night. Then when the war came, she decided to join the Navy because her brother wouldn't join up, she said she would make up for him. She stayed in the service for three years. First she trained for a month in New York, then in Oklahoma for a couple of months, then she worked in Washinton. Then they sent her home because she started coughing. She stayed home for a while and then she got married.

Q: How about your third daughter?

A: She got married too. I had a job in the evening and there were only the two of them at home. It was alright until my husband started drinking. Then this boy came to see her all the time. I wasn't much for it, but my husband said he was of a good family. So she saw him a lot and then eventually had to get married at the age of sixteen. She had a baby a month after that. His family didn't like the

idea and wouldn't give him a wedding. He was an only child. But he paid for his own wedding. They had two children together and he became a Baptist and wanted her to become one too. She didn't want to. They didn't get along very well together and after a while they separated. She never went back to him, and eventually they got a divorce.

Q: What occupation did this son-in-law have?

A: He worked on the railroad too.

Q: What did you oldest daughter's husband do?

A: He works at Tidewater, where they pump oil. He's a good worker. I live with him. Last week he worked sixteen hours a day for three days! Some of the other workers don't want to work, so he works. And my daughter works for the DuPont company in an office. She has a good job. And the granddaughter here, I raised her. Her mother would just come home from work and look at her and I did everything for her.

Q: And your third daughter's husband, what does he do?

A: He used to deliver oil and clean heaters. But then that company went out of business, so he retired. He's fifty-five or six years old. His wife doesn't know what to do with him. They didn't have children. She worked in the cork factory but her shop was closed, so she is also retired. She gets \$232 a month. When she gets to be sixty two, she'll get Social Security, but then she'll lose some of her pension. That's the way it has to be, otherwise it would be too much. Oh, life just keeps marching on.

Q: When you first came to U.S., were there other people here from your village?

A: Yes. There were some and some went back and then others came and so on. I don't remember where they all worked, but most of them worked in factories. Only Mr. Kosowsky

had a business, you know, he had a store. There was another one that had a grocery store, but he died. Three weeks ago I got very sick on some coffee and donuts that we got for breakfst. I got medicine, but it didn't do much good. I feel better now and went to church again, but I still feel a little dizzy.

Q: Well, how about listening to everything we recorded?

A: O.K.