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# Interview with Thomas Lengal About His Ethnic Background (FA 601)

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April 17, 1994 with Betsy Adler interviewing Thomas Lengal for the EthniCity Project.

**Adler:** Okay, could you please state your name, and age if you don't mind, address, occupation and ethnic affiliation?

**Lengal:** I'm Thomas Lengal. I'm forty-nine. 3313 Crown Crest Road, Lexington. I'm a branch manager of industrial supply company, Buckner [?]. What was the other question?

**Adler:** Ah...ethnic affiliation.

**Lengal:** We're Russian Slavonic background. My mother was born here. She was...

**Adler:** Born here, meaning?

**Lengal:** In the United States. Uhhh, her parents were from a Slavic area, then Austria-Hungarian Empire. My father was born over there. in actually, the, ah, Carpathian-Russian area. The language that they spoke was primarily Slavonic but they did converse and understood Russian except for the Moscow and far north dialects that they had a tough time with.

**Adler:** And what was your mother's name?

**Lengal:** Kiupinski. K I U...

**Adler:** K I U...

**Lengal:** P I N S K I

**Adler:** And your father?

**Lengal:** What was his name?

**Adler:** Yeah.

**Lengal:** Lengal.

**Adler:** Well, I wondered because you thought that it had been changed.

**Lengal:** No, I've got the Lengal downstairs, prayer books that came over from the old country where my grandfather had written the name in. But it, there were so many names written in there, when he was trying to write it in English versus in his \_\_\_\_\_ [?, sounds like "sarilyic"] and I've had people look at his sarilyic and they can't figure out what it is either. So, we don't know. It's, the best guess is something like \_\_\_\_\_ [?], the conversion that he had had no vowels in it, a lot of g's and y's but a very short name for Russian.

**Adler:** Uhhh, okay. And what languages did they speak then?

**Lengal:** My dad could converse in the lower Russians and of course, Slavonic. My mother spoke Slavonic but growing up in the western part of Pennsylvania, she also spoke

Italian. She spoke Polish because there were all ethnics and you had to learn to converse with them. So, actually she was quite linguistic, if you want to say.

**Adler:** Uh-hmm.

**Lengal:** I don't think she could read any of it but she could converse.

**Adler:** Did you grow up learning any languages?

**Lengal:** No. Now, my father really didn't promote and the reason was his parents, uhmm, didn't, uhmm, speak English and they wouldn't let the kids speak English, so, in the house. So, he had a real problem in school cause he went to public school. So, he did the flip side of that. In fact, the church that we belonged to had Russian classes and my older sisters had to sneak to go to them to try to learn the language so the old man wouldn't know. But, and it also gave them an edge because then they could speak privately in front of us and nobody knew what they were saying. Could pick up some words but not many.

**Adler:** That's what my husband's parents did, too. So, where were you born then?

**Lengal:** I was born in Baltimore.

**Adler:** In Baltimore. So, they, your mother was in western Pennsylvania.

**Lengal:** They were both, they both... my grandfathers, and I'm not sure which was which, but both of them, one was a carpenter and one was a blacksmith for the coal mines in the area near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. It's a heavy bituminous coal area. Lived in company houses, that type area. My oldest brother who is sixteen years older than me, when he was twelve developed osteomyelitis. At the time nobody knew what to do with it and the only place that at least had something, it's own efforts toward osteomyelitis was John Hopkin's in Baltimore. So, we moved to Baltimore so that my brother could get some sort of medical help. And that's where I was born. But the rest of them was all born... There were seven children.

**Adler:** What was it like growing up in Baltimore then? Was it in an ethnic...?

**Lengal:** No, no, just the opposite, the ethnics were all around us but it really was diverse. Uhmm, and again we moved there not knowing anybody and I think had we had the opportunity, say, to move into an ethnic area, maybe a Russian area, may have, but I don't think they even knew if one existed. The St. Andrews which is the church up there that we went to, ah, was a Russian church but it was established in 1945. I was born in 1945 so, it was one of those things where, ah, there wasn't even a local orthodox church on that side of town where they could go until St. Andrews, cause I think they moved there in like '43.

**Adler:** Okay, what kind of, do you, and then, you went to school, and did you, you didn't have any ethnic upbringing in Baltimore.

**Lengal:** Well, in a way, yeah, see, I was a Russian. My two closest friends, one was Italian. He was first generation American. The closest friend I've ever had was Greek and he was first generation American. So, in that sense, it was like, the, ah, ah, ah, the ethnic upbringing wasn't so much Russian that was in my house but you interacted with the Italians, the Poles, the Greeks. And when you went to their house it was like going back into Italy because his parents, John's parents, the Italian fellow, didn't speak English. Bill, the Greek, his mother spoke broken English but his father didn't speak English. So, yeah, it was very ethnic, but not, in terms of living in a Russian ghetto, so to speak. And...

**Adler:** What kind of, how did your family when you were growing up practice, maintain the Russian?

**Lengal:** No. Everything that we did that was Russian revolved around the church. Everything that I do to carry on the quote tradition is revolved around the church and the programs at the church. We go to an Arabic church or \_\_\_\_\_ [Antioch, ?] if you want to call it, the religion's the same and in this particular case, and we went to the Greek church here, too. They, everything promoted to keep your own thing going, so to speak. Everything we do that is Russian or Slavonic, more likely, has to do with church holidays, church festivals, Orthodox. I dare say, but I'm the only one that writes eggs in the family. My brother, Mike used to write them. In fact he introduced the Episcopalian in Las Cruces, New Mexico to the Lengal quote designed egg. And they used to do hundreds of them down there in the Episcopal Church. There was no Orthodox church. But I'm the only one that continues to write them and, of the children, Charlie's children, my Dad because of the church. Now, he has, my brother, Mike has two sons that are into their thirties and they write eggs. It's, theirs is more carrying on the tradition that brother, Mike, started and how long they'll hold on to it with that meaningful relationship for those eggs, I don't know. From what I understand they are quite good at it. But so, they're doing it for a different reason. But the rest of my brothers, well, I've only got the two brothers that are still alive. Two sisters.

And it was primarily a manly thing. And I don't mean it as a sexist thing but the guys wrote the eggs, you know. Carolyn does the \_\_\_\_\_ [?, Paska, counter 124] the same as my mother did.

**Adler:** Did she learn from your mother?

**Lengal:** Right. We carry our basket like my parents did to get food blessed. Just little things like that but it's almost always church related. And the only Russians I know in this town are the ones that go to church. Cause, we don't speak the language so, we'd have a difficult time and, you know, my background is strictly with church Russian not some sort of cultural thing.

**Adler:** Okay. So, the church, in terms of maintaining Russian... I just want to make sure I've got this clear. It's really the church is the major focus of your ethnicity as well as your religion. They are really sort of closely intertwined. If you didn't have the church do think there are aspects of your ethnicity that you would maintain, like your brother?

**Lengal:** Well, maybe if we had moved here like he moved there and there wasn't an orthodox church, it's possible that I would have held on to some of it. You know, if I was going to a Baptist church, more than likely an Episcopalian church maybe I would have hung onto it but I don't know. And there's a, there's so little that we carry on that I would consider Russian, you know, or Slavonic.

**Adler:** Well, what do you, what traditions do you carry on?

**Lengal:** We drink latka [?]. [laughter] Really, other than this Easter time, okay, that's really the only time we do anything that I would consider Russian. Yeah, we eat \_\_\_\_\_ [?, sounds sort of like piogies, counter 149] all year long. And occasionally, she'll make what I would consider Russian, it's a Russian bread that has potato mixed in it that she'll bake every once in awhile. But other than the food part, we eat a lot of pork and a lot of potatoes and a lot of cabbage. Again carry-overs. I didn't know what asparagus was until I was old enough to go buy them because we never had that, you know. The horseradish, it's almost like their mustard, so to speak. Put horseradish on everything. But other than the food part, very little.

**Adler:** What did you eat growing up?

**Lengal:** We were poor first off, so, we ate a lot of pork and chicken. I never had as a kid what I would consider steak. If she did buy beef, she would usually put it in a sauce and chop it up and stuff like that. Grilled steak was non-existent. But chicken, pork were the main meat stays. Potatoes and cabbage were heavy on the vegetable end and to us a salad was occasionally like in the spring of the year you'd go out and pick dandelions. I told the girls that work for me about dandelion salad, grinned [?] but it was something we had maybe twice a year. In the spring, again, lettuce was kind of a foreign thing until I got older. We used to eat a lot of endive

and things like that which I don't even know if you can buy in a store anymore. But, but again since it was... there was a big spread in the family, I don't know what, cause by the time I knew what was going on, my three older brothers were gone.

My grandmother lived with us, well, in fact, she died in our house. I think she was like eighty-six. My mother's mother or my father's mother. There's pictures I have here somewhere. But she was cute. She smoked a pipe. And the story my mother tells of her, they had moved to Baltimore and she was sitting on the front porch smoking her pipe. And, of course, she had her bonnet on and always, I've never seen a picture of her, I don't have that many, but without an apron. She always wore an apron. So, my mother went out and told her, she said, we're in the city now, you don't smoke pipe in the city. It looks funny, people will laugh. So, she preceded to pull the apron up over her head and there were these billowing smoke coming out of the side of the apron. The old lady wasn't going to give up her pipe but she conceded she wouldn't let people see her. But she was apparently..., again, she died before I was, I don't know if she died before I was born, but she died before I knew her. And she was the kind that when my brothers would say the prayers, if they squemmed [?, squirmed] she would go and get some dried corn. I don't know where she got it in the city. And made them kneel on it as punishment for not doing it the right way, see. So, she was a tough old bird. I'm glad she wasn't around when I was around. [laughter]

**Adler:** Right. You must have a lot of family stores about her.

**Lengal:** Well,...

**Adler:** Family character.

**Lengal:** She, well, my brothers, of course, were there with her and actually my brothers in their earlier years spoke Russian because of her living with us. You had to. But when she left they eventually lost the language because there was no place to practice it, so to speak. My parents wouldn't talk to them in Russian. They would only talk to them in English. But I really didn't know any of those people, the grandparents because they were all gone.

**Adler:** And then your wife learned to cook from your mother?

**Lengal:** Uh-hmm.

**Adler:** She learned to cook the Russian things.

**Lengal:** Right.

**Adler:** Did she sit down with her specifically and write down recipes or how...?

**Lengal:** Well, in some cases, see, my mother was not a recipe person and the, you know, when her recipe for paska was start with ten pounds of flour, see. And you know, get thirteen eggs or something like, so, she was used to bake in bulk. I mean when she would make the kalachy which is the poppy seed rolls or the nut rolls, or prune rolls, ah, she literally baked them for three days and we had a whole basement full of these things because we ate them, she gave them to everybody she knew and it was kind of her time of the year. This baking thing, whether it was Christmas baking or Easter baking. So, it was difficult to get directions from her because she used such great quantities and... but usually the way Caroline, I believed learned was because she watched her and asked questions. She helped her. We dated for five years before we married so, she was around this baking. And she took an interest. A lot of my other sister-in-laws didn't and so, the old lady, my mother, didn't care to tell them. You know, [laughing] if you weren't interested then why help you. So, I'm fortunate that my wife did learn. Actually she bakes bread as well as my mother ever did and my mother was a tremendous baker.

**Adler:** Uhhh, so, what kinds of things, I suppose I should talk to her about the cooking end of it but what kinds of things does she make then that she learned.

**Lengal:** Again, like the pastries, we have a little cookie that we make with... and we don't even have a name for it which is unusual. Russian's have names for everything. We just, we call it the nut cookie. And it's pastry dough with ground nuts that have been mixed with egg whites and a lot of sugar and it's actually almost spread on like peanut butter because it's that texture. And she's got a recipe for that. And the kolachys which were are mainstay, in fact, the only, except for cake and \_\_\_\_\_ [?, counter 235] that was our dessert during the whole time. Of course the paskas, and then this special bread, I don't know what that's called either. There's a name for it. But, there is a, mostly the breads. We had a, when I was a kid growing up we had a persistent lent. We followed lent tight in my house. I mean, there's beans and sauerkraut in there, that's leftovers. She loves this stuff. I hate it because we had that three times a week during lent. Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays we had beans and sauerkraut and endive. Not much substance and you get to hate things like that.

**Adler:** Now, why, \_\_\_\_\_ [?, counter 247] gave me some beans and sauerkraut soup. What is it with beans and sauerkraut? [laughter] Why are beans and sauerkraut as opposed to something else which could be vegetarian?

**Lengal:** Well, again, there was cabbage.

**Adler:** Was the time of year that fresh cabbage wouldn't be available or is it another way of serving cabbage?

**Lengal:** Why, I don't know. I know that, for us to have sauerkraut on the table as a vegetable, didn't have it. It just didn't exist. But to have beans and sauerkraut as a lenten dish, actually the lenten dish that happened all the time. She makes a soup. My mother never made that. That soup's actually quite tasty. My mother never made that. It was just strictly the pinto beans with sauerkraut mixed in and then she put tomato paste, or tomatoes in it. Just something to make it different.

**Adler:** Did you have a special bread when you had that too? Any special kind of...

**Lengal:** No, normally, we, and again Jeanette would... we used to eat matzo with this and of course, because of the time of the year with the passover close by, my mother used to buy matzo.

**Adler:** She didn't make it.

**Lengal:** No, no, no, but there were crackers we would eat with it. But no special, I don't know of any special lenten breads that she made. The problem is when you don't put eggs and you don't put a lot of things in it, ah, you can usually shoot the bread through a cannon, you know, by the next day. So, I don't think she messed with it only because we didn't eat it all up. It was garbage. And then we used to have matzo. Again a big Jewish community in Baltimore and it was readily available and very lenten. I'm trying to think. A lot of potatoes, potatoes with sauerkraut sometimes. A lot of cabbage and potatoes, uhmm, very bad mix.

But see now, the east, the Christmas lent went a little bit different because it was the same type of fasting but when you got to Christmas night, okay, the night before Christmas, then she used to put this spread of the twelve dishes out. And apparently, I thought that was my mother's thing but it isn't because if you talk to any number of people in our church that are Slavonic, the twelve dishes is a common thing. Now, they might not have the same stuff in them. But it was essentially a twelve course meal of lenten stuff. And I, probably derived something about the apostles or something, you know, why the number. But, ah, that seemed to be, I thought it was unique to us but it isn't. It's pretty common across the Slavonic people.

**Adler:** What would you have? Do you remember what the twelve dishes would be?

**Lengal:** Well, she made, a lot of this stuff wasn't good either. I didn't like it. I was a picky kid. Like, I can't think of the name but it's a, she used to get a lenten bread, make it hard,



\_\_\_\_\_ [?, counter 303, "laboyky"] I think that's what it is called. I think, in fact, I've got a Russian cookbook around here somewhere. But then she would scald these small pieces of bread. She actually made them, actually they were about that size.

**Adler:** Like a thumb.

**Lengal:** Yeah, she'd go to the trouble of making these little squares and then get it hard and scald it and then she would mix that...

**Adler:** What would she scald it in?

**Lengal:** Water.

**Adler:** In water.

**Lengal:** To make it soft. And then she would put that into a honey and poppy seed mixture and that was the dish. She used to over, almost like re-fried beans but they were black pinto beans that she would just cook and cook and cook and cook until it became almost again a paste type thing. There was usually a...

**Adler:** Was it sweet?

**Lengal:** No, that wasn't sweet. There was usually a tray with things like olives and celery, you know, that type of thing. There's was cold, cold peas. Uncooked peas. And again the thing there was that the number of peas that you had, you had to say the Lord's Prayer for every one you took. You learned real quick you didn't take too many peas and they would put a couple of spoonfuls on your plate just to make sure that you did have to say some prayers.

**Adler:** Do you know what the significance of that is? Why it's cold peas?

**Lengal:** No.

**Adler:** Was it fresh or frozen or did it matter?

**Lengal:** They usually came out of the can. Well, we were in the city. You have to keep in mind the, the Christmas, not so much, but we did it as a kid and Easter, the reason we take a basket is not only to get it blessed but that's the meal for tomorrow because there is no cooking. So, everything had to be made so that you would eat it cold because there was no cooking and the same thing with... all this stuff was, it was a little bit different because those things were heated. The beans, refried beans mess stuff was hot. But everything else was pretty much cold. Boiled potatoes were kind of luke warm. And the, the really significance of that meal in that Christmas meal was that only family members were allowed. Until my wife came along, my mother actually invite... cause when it was time to eat that meal, my mother who was a very

gracious host and if you ate... we didn't have much but we fed people. But she literally chased neighbors and friends out because that was a family, that was a family thing. You know, the basket that was a family thing. You came home, you immediately partook of the Easter basket before you went to bed which by that time at the Russian church we didn't get home to 3:00 in the morning. The service lasted much longer than the Lebanese or even the Greeks.

**Adler:** What time would it start?

**Lengal:** I, they start here, the \_\_\_\_\_ [?, manten, counter 358] start at 10:30 at night and then the actual service itself starts around 11:30 for the resurrection and then the resurrection service starts and usually here or at the Greek church in town, you're home by 1:30. But back in Baltimore at the old Russian church we started at 10:30 and you got home at 3:30 in the morning. Oh, long, long service. And as a kid, you know, you could hardly stay awake. And if you graduated and you became an alter boy, uhmm, there was no place to sit down. So, you were standing behind the alter ready to do something and that's all you're doing is standing which for a kid that is seven or eight or ten years old, that's a lot of standing. But it teaches you discipline.

**Adler:** What other ways besides the food do you feel like you express your heritage? Or are there other ways?

**Lengal:** I don't think there are. For us there aren't and the, I'm not un-proud, so to speak to be a Russian, you know, I feel pretty good about it. But it's really not that big of a deal with me. I don't think it was a big deal with my parents either. They weren't bustling out that they were Slavic because they considered themselves Americans. It just happened to be a place where they were born. As a kid growing up, now, you have to keep in mind I grew up in the height in the cold war and you were Russian, you know, we,... I don't know how old you are and I know you are not that old but we had these drills where you had to run downstairs and sit on the floor and put your head between your knees in case the bomb came. And of course, being Russian heritage, we had taken a little bit of crap but we never hid from it. Actually, it was kind of neat because our Christmas was a different time than theirs. So, because we were strict Russian and goes by the Russian calendar and I would get an extra two days off than the rest of the kids would. Usually I Easter only coincides every four years so there was a Good Friday I would get off they wouldn't get off. So, there were some advantages. The biggest advantage was most of the others kids' toys were broke by the time I got mine. [laughter - Adler] So, but

yeah, I think, it wasn't that big a deal growing up. It isn't that big a deal now. You know, I'm happy that they got over here. And but I don't know that I'm, you know, proud, super proud or would walk down the street with a flag of my heritage. It's not that big a deal. And it wasn't to my family.

**Adler:** Did they, did they have any, did they maintain any traditional clothing or anything like that that they would wear for special occasions?

**Lengal:** No. In fact, it's funny, again, at St. Andrew in Baltimore, we used to have our dances and what not. And again as a small boy there was always a polka band and that was the first dance I actually learned to do was the polka because at weddings that's all you did, they drank and the polka. But nobody that I knew of ever showed up with a Russian outfit. I mean and this was a church of five hundred families or something like that. I don't ever remember a quote Russian. But what is? You know, the problem with a quote Russian outfit is, you know, is it a Mongolian outfit? Is it a \_\_\_\_\_ [?, counter 433]? Is it something from Leningrad or Moscow or is it Ukranian?

**Adler:** Well, whatever it was nobody wore it.

**Lengal:** No, again, since it wasn't a big deal in western Pennsylvania and it wasn't a big deal in Baltimore, you have to imagine my grandmother, she had five little ones, coming over, going through, what? Three or four, five different countries to get on a cattle [?] boat to get to Ellis Island and no money. You wouldn't do it?

**Adler:** Yeah. What year did she come?

**Lengal:** 19... my father was in her arms and he was born in 1903. So, I'm suspecting it was 1904, or 1905, something like that. But it just amazes me, you know, illiterate, essentially, she probably was. Yet, she's got to get through Germany or France or Spain or some place, she's got to find that boat. It's amazing that they did it and absolutely no money at all. Probably had the boat fare and, I don't know.

**Adler:** So, when they came here were there any family stories about what they did when they came here?

**Lengal:** Well...

**Adler:** Were they sponsored by somebody then or...?

**Lengal:** I think in those days, I don't think you had to be sponsored. You just showed up, they'd let you in because they needed the labor. But, ah, ah, my grandfather, the one on my

father's side because that's the one I'm most familiar with, my grandfather's oldest brother had come over, just to come over, ended up in the coal mines. He sent money for my grandfather to come over. Then they sent money back for their families to come over. They had another brother who had come over, uhmm, but they missed him in New York. So, there's a great uncle out there with probably a whole slew of people with the same genes as I have that we have no idea where they are. He came over, they didn't get the connection and when I say, lost him. They weren't looking for him but he hit New York and then never made it to western Pennsylvania. So, consequently, that whole side of the family is gone. But they came for work and at the time the mines and the mills needed them. I don't know if they had to be sponsored. My father's is funny because somewhere in this house I have his naturalization papers and again, it's funny the naturalization papers say Czechoslovakia. Well, of course, Czechoslovakia didn't even exist when he was born. But he was naturalized in 1937 and our good feelings with the Soviet Union weren't there then either and I think they just decided, well, we'll make him Czech instead of Russian. So, he was actually naturalized as a Czech but I don't know how they got that. But everything they do is all Slavonic Russian.

**Adler:** Did anybody in your family ever do any traditional crafts or anything like that, embroidery or sewing or carving or painting or anything?

**Lengal:** Uh-uh. [as in "no"]

**Adler:** Music?

**Lengal:** Uh-uh.

**Adler:** Did people sing? Or did you sing songs when you were growing up?

**Lengal:** Not in Russian.

**Adler:** You didn't play but you said you danced. So, the dances were polka. Or did you, was there a dance group you belonged to?

**Lengal:** No, no, no, no, whenever anybody got married and there was always somebody getting married, uhmm, you always had a big wedding. It was just a normal thing and we always had a polka band. It was just the way it was. I never went to one of our weddings where there wasn't a polka band, except my daughter's.

**Adler:** What kind of instruments were there then?

**Lengal:** Usually, ah, [pause] well, the accordion, saxophone, there was always somebody who played the saxophone, and somebody might play the clarinet. Very low on drums, never

seen a drum in one of these bands. Usually, maybe two accordions, maybe two or three. Usually a four man band, that type of thing. My group, one would play the accordion, one play the saxophone, we could get rock and rolling anytime we wanted to.

**Adler:** Did you play anything?

**Lengal:** Oh, I played the clarinet in elementary school, that type of thing.

**Adler:** What about, [pause], well, I guess that's about it then. If you, can you think of anything? What am I missing?

**Lengal:** Hmmm?

**Adler:** What am I missing?

**Lengal:** I don't know. The, the other thing is, again, the one side of my family, it's funny, my mother's side of the family, invariably all of them married almost the same ethnic background because that's where they were. And you go up to western Pennsylvania and it just continues on where a Slav marries Slav, marries Slav, marries Slav because that's the only thing that's still around there. And it's only if they get out of the area and meet someone else that they would marry outside of the Russian or the Polish or something like that which I always thought was interesting because it just said they didn't go anywhere. Have cousins, groups of cousins, I'll tell you about first cousins who married people that were the same ethnic background and their kids have now started to marry people with the same ethnic background because they, you know, it was unusual for a Slav to say, marry an Italian. It just didn't happen. There wasn't any bias or anything like that, you just didn't see that many of them, I don't know.

**Adler:** Okay.

**Lengal:** I'm not a really good ethnic person to interview because we don't...

**Adler:** [laughs] Well, tell me about the eggs, the writing eggs. You said that it is sort of a male thing in your family. Are there other forms of cooking.

**Lengal:** Well, only because... let me get something, if I can find this book. See, this, these eggs I showed you here are the Ukrainian, the top drawer.

**Adler:** Ukrainian. And you said that you had an uncle?

**Lengal:** There's a whole group of my family up there and these are actually cousins, I have no uncles that are still alive, who do those. They did those. But when we are talking, we're talking primitive, [laughter - Adler] okay. Now, this \_\_\_\_\_ [? counter 584, "pishchulk"]

**Adler:** Now, how do you spell that?

**Lengal:** This pishchulk here, uhmm.

**Adler:** What does that mean?

**Lengal:** I think it means egg writer or something, I don't know. This pishchulk was owned by my grandfather. It's just a piece of stick with a little metal point that has enough of a shape that it sucks up the hot wax and holds just enough of it so that you can make a line with it. It's not a real fine line like those things are. Yeah, I don't know how they do that. It's amazing. But, and this is nothing more than a straight pin that grabs just a little bit of wax and then you, I,...

**Adler:** Yeah, that's I can figure in there. [?, unsure of this sentence]

**Lengal:** And this one is nothing more than, again, a piece of tubing that sucks enough wax and keeps it hot until you put it on the egg.

**Adler:** Uh-hmm, now, did your grandfather made these?

**Lengal:** Yeah, I'm sure he... yeah, these are all from...

**Adler:** Well, they've lasted a long time.

**Lengal:** But, and here's my wife was trying, she got off, she tried it with a brush and of course, the brush melted. [laughter] It put more on, see.

**Adler:** There's a reason for tradition. [laughing]

**Lengal:** That's right. And we did, the designs I'll do, the same five or six designs my father did, I'm sure his father did. Very little variation. The quality is somewhat, my father was an excellent egg writer. I'm not. But, ah, it's something you do around Easter. You know, whether they are good or bad, you do them. Depending upon my mood, while the wax is flowing, I might do a dozen. I might do a half a dozen. Those five or six designs will be in the basket even if there is one of each.

**Adler:** Uh-hmm. Now, how many would your father do?

**Lengal:** Dozens. I mean it was a, when I got older what would happen was, Charles, my Dad, would be doing his and he'd get up and Mike would sit down and then he would get up and Fuzzy would try to do some but he was terrible.

**Adler:** Is he your brother?

**Lengal:** Yeah, Mike is good. Fuzzy couldn't keep a straight line. Joe wouldn't even bother. Then I would sit down and then the process would start over. Cause there was only space for one person to write and as he got older he didn't like to do as many. He didn't have the

patience to do them, didn't want to do them, but they had to be done. So, we'd get there and write them, see. Then he would determine the color and he would determine how many colors we'd put on them, see. So, you had to be cautious if you started filling in and he wanted the multiple color then you had to do it over again because he decided he wanted a red and blue or a purple and green or something.

**Adler:** Would you have to melt the wax off to start over? Would you scrape it off?

**Lengal:** Oh, no, see, once it's on, it's on. You can't, that's why, I don't ever use that one because it has a tendency unless you are really still, it will drop a blob where you don't want it and it usually does that when you are three quarters of the way finished. So, you've ruined it and now, you've got an egg that you can only show on one side.

**Adler:** One side. [laughter]

**Lengal:** But, Mother stayed out of it.

**Adler:** Would she be baking at them time? Was that part of the reason she didn't do it, or...?

**Lengal:** No, no, you had to be finished before that time because we took over the stove. We were boiling eggs. We had eggs in the oven keeping warm because the wax flows better. Then the whole kitchen table was full of colors, you know, to dye them. So, no, she stayed away from that, that end of it. She didn't want to have nothing to do with it.

**Adler:** Now, is that sort of traditional for women not to do it and the men do it or was that in your family?

**Lengal:** No, I thought it was strange because just one of these eggs was made by a cousin, but a female cousin.

**Adler:** One of the Ukrainian ones.

**Lengal:** Right. Which I thought was interesting because that was something, I don't know of any females, not just in my family but in our family, the big family that ever did that stuff. My sisters, I mean even Carolina, you know, but Rose Marie and Mary Katherine hated it cause the front of them was...

[end of side one]

[side two begins at counter 29]

**Lengal:** So, I took them. Yeah, I've got the Bibles downstairs that are, you know, worthless, but they are old. But they were his prayer books. So, since I'm the one that quote kept the faith going, I get them. And I was the baby, too. And babies if you word it correctly,

when you are negotiating it when they are dead, is it normally goes to the baby. My oldest brother saying that normally goes to the oldest. [unsure of this sentence, laughter] But yeah, most of the what I would consider church relics are here. But again, I was the natural. Oh, is it \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ [?, seems to be asking someone else this question, can't understand words]

**Adler:** So, what is, what is the practice? You boil the eggs. How do you boil them.

**Lengal:** In water.

**Adler:** In water. Do you put them in... I mean start at the beginning. Do you have cold water? I know there are different ways to boil eggs. Does it matter how you boil them?

**Lengal:** Normally, it's cold water and bring them all, because at the time, I mean there used to be three or four dozen at the time and so you'd have to fill the thing up, you'd put them in and then you'd just bring the water to a boil until you think they're done. Usually when I see one had cracked then they're done. Then you let them cool, but a little bit because you don't want a totally cold egg because the wax just doesn't flow well on a cold egg.

My father's approach was he'd touch them to his chin or cheek and if it didn't burn his cheek, it was okay. Because see, too hot an egg and the wax doesn't get hard and then you touch it and you got...

**Adler:** It runs all over.

**Lengal:** Yeah, then you've got a mess. So, his was the cheek test, he put it to his cheek. Or you keep them, if you're doing a lot of them which I don't do but if you are doing a lot of them you keep them in the oven at a low heat, again, to keep them warm so that the wax would keep flow but not over flow. And then we use regular old Ritz dye or cake coloring and that's what we always used. The old Russians used to boil theirs in onion skins to get the red color. I don't know what they'd do to get yellow. We weren't allowed to have yellow eggs. Father's rule, didn't like yellow.

**Adler:** Well, what colors? Did it end up just being the red and then the egg showing through, is that?

**Lengal:** Well, what happens is if I put this on a white egg, it saves the white. If I dye it then red and then I come back and put some more on, then wherever I put the new stuff it will be red. Say then, if I put it then into a blue to get a blue color; then what you'll have is you'll have a red with a blue outside, whatever you haven't touched wax to. Usually it's, I just stop at two



colors, three colors. If you count white a color. So, we used to, we can get up to four colors that way but you had to start out very low and work your way up as far as intensity goes. Where that Ukrainian egg must have six or seven colors and I have a feeling it's a painted one versus a... Originally, the Ukrainians did it the same way we do them. But their instrument is so much more pointed and you can get really small lines but that thing must take four or five hours to make.

**Adler:** Did you ever want to learn how to do those, the Ukrainian ones?

**Lengal:** No, see, we were dealing in bulk. [laughter] And you just, you wouldn't have the time. You also, we eat our eggs. Anybody that did that and then ate the eggs should have their, a stick poked in their ear, you know. That would be cruel. But our intent was to eat the eggs and cause we hadn't had eggs and that's why they are in the basket to eat them. So, everything that was put in the basket had to be eaten.

**Adler:** You had to eat it that day.

**Lengal:** No, you could save it.

**Adler:** At some point.

**Lengal:** But you couldn't throw it away because it was blessed food, see, so, it had to be eaten. So, if it was put in the basket, you had to eat it.

**Adler:** Oh, then it had to be something that would keep.

**Lengal:** Right, right, right. So, you'd, well, yeah, you ought to come Easter to the church to see the very diversity of the... the Russian food, not Slavonic food, the Russian food, we have a bunch here that, I mean really rich. Ours, none of our food was ever rich back home. But some of those people make some heavy stuff as far as sugary and fatty and all that other stuff. The only thing that we had that was close to sweet that went in the basket was an egg custard that my mother made and that was something she baked it and then hung it outside to dry in a cheesecloth to drain and it took several hours outside just to get all the moisture out of it.

**Adler:** Do you make that?

**Lengal:** No, I didn't like it. I don't make anything I didn't like. Now, I didn't like it because it was suppose to be sweet but it really wasn't or at least what I consider sweet. And she tried it once, cause she was going to do it, you know, the first Easter she was going to do it. She tried it once and it turned out terrible and she never liked it either. So, she tried and it didn't work, so, we don't make it anymore. And again the name, anything has a name and Jeanette

would probably know or Paul Purlock would know or somebody like that. But I don't know what it was called.

**Adler:** Okay. What do you, now, what do you put in your baskets? Uhmm, everything that they put in but, I guess, we, she put a veal pocket in, a stuffed veal pocket. But, what we put in is usually ham, kabasy [?, counter 112], then we have something called ratata [?] which is scrambled eggs and kabasy fried together, of course the eggs. We'll have a strip of butter. There will be, we grind up beets with horseradish, as kind of like the condiment that you put on everything. Salt and pepper, of course, paska, the bread. And we may, and it's an optional thing, we may throw in a dessert. The only thing that isn't in there is something to drink. I think that's all.

**Adler:** Is that okay?

**Lengal:** Huh?

**Adler:** Is that okay to not have something to drink?

**Lengal:** Well, yeah,...

**Adler:** Do people normally have everything in the basket or not?

**Lengal:** No, I've never seen anybody put, you know, a gallon of milk in the basket. I've just never saw it.

**Adler:** How big are the baskets then? Do people use real baskets or boxes or...?

**Lengal:** Ours is about that big. Not real big.

**Adler:** It's like a big picnic basket.

**Lengal:** A picnic basket, yeah, and you'll see people with picnic baskets, you know, that bring them in. And some just bring a paska to be blessed and others go the full meal. Some have one of these sweet towering things, I've seen those blessed as the only thing they are getting blessed. And we take the same candle every year that we got back in Baltimore, out wedding candles. Again, I guess you're suppose to take your wedding candle and put it in your basket forever, I guess. You only light it for half an hour, you see, at the most. And that's it.

**Adler:** Okay. Well, that's great. I really at this point can't think of anything else. But...

**Lengal:** [says someone's name and asks question to her] You tried to that custard once, didn't you?

**Woman:** Yeah, our first year for Easter. I never made it after that. I felt like I was wasting food. A dozen eggs, and cream and sugar and I just threw it away and said, I'll never do that again.

**Adler:** It didn't solidify or what? It just didn't taste right?

**Woman:** It just wasn't good. It wasn't right at all.

**Lengal:** And we, I didn't like it either. I mean I didn't like it when she made it. Cause you never knew if a bird flew over. [laughter] She dried it outside.

**Woman:** She hung it in cheesecloth. Yeah, Tom's sisters didn't get to learn to write the eggs because they were busy baking and cleaning. They didn't get the fun stuff.

**Adler:** Cleaning. [laughter] Well, I asked why it was a man made...

**Woman:** Oh, they just wanted the two girls to help clean and help bake.

**Lengal:** But the baking was over by that time.

**Woman:** And they were tired, I'm sure. You guys ...

**Lengal:** Yeah, my sisters didn't particularly like the holidays.

**Woman:** Well, they worked hard. They helped, when his mother made bread it was in a big washtub which was purchased for that with twenty, thirty pounds of flour. They would braid and make all kinds of loafs of bread and nut rolls and things like that. She really baked in bulk and you were worn out after a whole day of that. It would start at daybreak.

**Adler:** Oh, goodness. Now, do you do that, bake the same things she did?

**Woman:** The nut rolls, kalachys, it's been a while since I made kalachy only because I'm working.

**Lengal:** And we can buy them at church, too. [laughter - everybody]

**Woman:** His mother learned kalachy the way I learned, big rolls. But when I was home with the kids I did more of the baking. Now, they're gone and we're the only two. But I do make the Easter paska to give away or to eat it thereafter. But she did figure out how to make it, give me the recipe in a smaller quantity. [loud laughter, Adler says something but it is unclear] No way, no way.

**Lengal:** Hell, we would grind nuts for two days because they didn't have choppers back in those days. So, you had to have the hand crank grinder. That and poppy seeds were always a messy thing to grind because...

**Woman:** See, I haven't been able to make the poppy seeds \_\_\_\_\_ [count 186] because that takes the special grinder...

**Adler:** You grind the poppy seeds to a paste.

**Lengal:** Uh-hmm.

**Adler:** Can that be bought.

**Woman:** Well, the only time I made it down here was when a neighbor, she was Polish, and she made a nut roll or poppy seed roll and she got me some of the poppy seed. And that was the only time that I've done it. She got it from a bakery.

**Lengal:** It doesn't grind into a paste, it just grinds to a flakey, fluffy.

**Woman:** Then you add all the eggs, sugar...

**Lengal:** But used to when you ground it, it would generate it's on goop from any moisture that was in it. And as a kid I used to hate that because it would drip on you and felt yuck. And the same way with, again with that type of grinder, it did the same thing with nuts. And she would, I don't know how she got the prune paste. Cause prune was another one. She used to call \_\_\_\_\_ [?, lecwire, counter 202] but we didn't grind that.

**Woman:** Well, she probably smashed it up and then cooked it.

**Adler:** Yeah, mash it like potatoes or something.

**Lengal:** But she didn't do that with the raisins.

**Woman:** Yeah, she just blanched those. You get them soft, a little puffy.

**Adler:** Oooh, I'm getting hungry. [laughter]

**Woman:** Of course, I'll try to be on a diet...

**Adler:** Well, I'll turn this off.

[end of interview]