

January 29, 1992

Meir and Bob interview Savta Annie

Bob: This is Meir and Bob talking to Savta Annie. What's the date today. Today is January 29, 1992, and Meir is going to start off with some questions for Savta Annie.

Meir: What brought your original family members to this country?

Grandma (misunderstanding the question): What brought my family to this country?... Hal, Grandma Frances...

Bob: Meir wants to know what originally brought members of your family to this country. Why did you and Grandpa come to this country, for instance.

Grandma: Who could remember? That's my brother and my sister. That's all. They brought us to the country. My brothers and my sister.

Bob: So your brother and sister came first?

Grandma: Oh yeah. They was here first, sure-

Bob: Who were they?

Grandma: My sister!

Bob: Which sister?

Grandma: My real sister. My real sister.

Bob: You had two sisters, right?

Grandma: One sister's in Florida, and one sister died. That's all.

Bob: Yeah: And it was which sister who brought you over?

Grandma: Clara.

Bob: Clara.

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: And your brother? Which brother brought you over?

Grandma: Eh, that was Sam and Harry.

Bob: Sam and Harry.

Grandma: Yeah. Both, yeah.

Bob (to Meir): Do you know who Sam is? Grandma's brother Sam was Josh Kuzon's great-grandfather. That's how you're related to Josh Kuzon... That's O.K., what's your next question?

Meir: What language did your ancestors speak?

Grandma: What English?

Meir: What language.

Grandma: Polish. Jewish. Now in American. Now English. Now in American.

Bob: Grandma, when you were born, born in your city, the city of Bialystok...

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: Was it part of Russia at the time, or was it part of Poland?

Grandma: That was Russia and Poland, was together. Who could remember?

Bob: You don't remember.

Grandma: I don't remember. How could I remember?

Bob: So you spoke Polish as a little girl?

Grandma: Yeah.

Meir: From the time of your birth to the time you were approximately twelve years old, where did you live?

Grandma: I lived in Bialystok. I was born in Bialystok.

Bob: Can you describe the street that you lived on and the house that you lived in?

Grandma: I was eh where the shul is, where the big shul is.

Bob: Your house was close to the big shul of Bialystok?

Grandma: Sure.

Bob: How many shuls were there in Bialystok?

Grandma: Only one shul... the rest was like... what do you call this..

Bob: Shteebels?

Grandma: Not Shteebels. Like eh de Kodimoh... eh

Bob: Synagogues?

Grandma: Synagogues, yeah.

Bob: So there was a big shul and smaller shuls?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: And you lived close to the big shul?

Grandma: We was close to the big shul.

Meir: What...

Grandma: Fifty Jews got killed in the shul.

Meir: What...Did you live in a house or an apartment?

Grandma: I lived in an apartment.

Meir: Was it in the city or...

Grandma: In the city.

Meir: Did you have a room at all to yourself or did you share it with someone else?

Grandma: We was all together in the same room, the rooms... yeah.

Bob: How many people were sleeping in the same room?

Grandma: In the same room, we were about four people to sleep.

Bob: Who?

Grandma: My sisters.

Bob: You and your sisters, that's three.

Grandma: Three? And somebody else.

Bob: Did your brothers sleep in the room too?

Grandma: I couldn't remember. I couldn't remember. How could I remember such things?

Meir: What about outside your house. Did you have a big or small yard? What games did you play there?

Grandma: I didn't play there. I went to school. See, to the Jewish school. See I was busy to go to the...

Bob: Can you tell Meir a little bit about the school you went to and how many years you went to it?

Grandma: I was about three years in school, a Jewish school.

Bob: How old were you when you started?

Grandma: We started, we was about ten years old.

Bob: And you went till you were about thirteen?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: So that was the only school that you went to?

Grandma: That was the only school, a Yiddish School, that's all.

Bob: And what did you learn in the school?

Grandma: We learned Yiddish. Yiddish. Mostly Yiddish.

Bob: Uh- huh

Grandma: Mostly Yiddish.

Bob: Did you study religious subjects in school? Did you study?

Grandma: No. Just Yiddish.

Bob: To learn how to read and write?

Grandma: No, just Yiddish...boys...that's why ...to read and write, sure

Bob: Can you explain to Meir what the difference in education is from, girls and boys were?

Grandma: The same thing, the boys...

Bob: The boys only went for three years, too?

Grandma: The boys were there too. After they were Bar Mitzvahed. And they went to school, that's all.

Meir: In these early years, did you go exploring in the woods or construction sites or any other things?

Grandma: We went to the woods to look for some woods to heat up the house, to make warm the house, that's all.

Bob: You gathered wood...

Grandma: Woods, yeah. We was there. We was, we was picking woods to heat up the house. That's all, because we didn't have no heat, that's all.

Bob: So you heated your house with wood?

Grandma: With wood, we was going in the woods to pick the wood, going on the shoulders and heat up the house.

Bob: From what you told me, your father was a relatively well-off man. Why was that the children had to go, you and your siblings...

Grandma: Because was a wartime, was a wartime...

Bob: Oh, it was wartime.

Grandma: Was a wartime, sure.

Bob: World War I?

Grandma: Sure, the first World War.

Bob: How old were you during World War I?

Grandma: I was a kid, I was there about 10 years, ten, twelve years.

Bob: What was that like, being in World War I?

Grandma: They was fighting, we hear all the shooting...

Bob: Was there fighting near Bialystok?

Grandma: They was fighting around there, we hear the shooting.

Bob: Were ever in danger from the shooting or the bombs?

Grandma: Many times. Many times there was shooting, we went to the basement to laying...

Bob: You had a basement in your house?

Grandma: Sure, we had to go to the basement. Was there, you know, a little like, you saw the shtotzieger, a big...

Bob: Shtotzieger?

Grandma: Yeah, a shtotzieger, a big, what you saw it...

Bob: That's a clocktower!

Grandma: A clocktower. They used to blow the horn, you know to go in the basements...was a fight. We was going the basements.

Bob: Was there any bombs dropping on the city during World War I?

Grandma: Oh yeah, that's why. That's why we went to the basements.

Bob: Uh-huh

Grandma: See, we couldn't go on the top because on the top they dropped the bombs, we could get killed. That's why in the basement we was alright.

Bob: Were there people that you know who got killed from the bombs?

Grandma: Who remembers?

Bob: You don't remember.

Grandma: That's what I have to remember? Believe me, plenty people got killed. Plenty. They thought it was a church...a barracks. They throwed some bombs on the shul.

Bob: The soldiers barracks threw some bombs on the shul? On the big shul?

Grandma: On the big shul, they thought it was barracks, that soldiers was there.

Bob: I see.

Meir: Did your mother spend time with you, listen to you, teach you things?

Grandma: I couldn't remember darling. I couldn't remember my mother. I was six years old when my mother died. I couldn't remember.

Bob: Do you know what your mother died of?

Grandma: She had cancer.

Meir: Did your father spend time with you?

Grandma: Oh yeah. My father spent all the time with us.

Meir: What was your parents' major focus in life during these years...getting by...

Grandma: We had property. We had property. My father.

Bob: You said your family had property. What kind of property did they have?

Grandma: Building. We had buildings. Brick building.

Bob: What kind of buildings?

Grandma: Brick buildings. People was living...

Bob: Residential buildings?

Grandma: Sure, regular buildings.

Bob: Were they near your house?

Grandma: We was living there, too. Sure, brick buildings.

Bob: So your father was a landlord?

Grandma: Sure. My father he was building the buildings, himself.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Not himself, with people. See...people.

Bob: Meir, do you have any other questions for Grandma?

Meir: No

Bob: Do you want to listen while I ask some more questions?

Meir: No

Bob: O.K. I'm going to ask Grandma some more questions. Thank Grandma.

Meir: Thank you Grandma.

Grandma: Your welcome. My pleasure darling. My pleasure.

Bob: Do you mind if I ask you some more questions?

Grandma: Sure.

Bob: I know that you don't know what your birthday is, but did your parents ever tell you which time of the year you were born in?

Grandma: No. I made up my mind. Because my mother died...I was six years old, six, seven. My father says, if you make up your own mind, that's all.

Bob: So you don't know what time of the year you were born. And you were born in Bialystok?

Grandma: Bialystok, yeah.

Bob: Is there anything...

Grandma: We all born in Bialystok.

Bob: O.K. Was your father born in Bialystok? Do you think?

Grandma: This I couldn't remember.

Bob: ...or did he come from another city?

Grandma: No, I think my father was born in Bialystok too.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: My mother was born in a small town.

Bob: In Vashlekov?

Grandma: In Vashlekov, yeah.

Bob: Did you ever go there to visit, to Vashlekov?

Grandma: Oh yeah, we used to go all the time.

Bob: How far away from Bialystok was Vashlekov?

Grandma: Seven miles. Here is miles. About seven miles, eh...

Bob: Kilometers?

Grandma: Seven miles...Seven vicrats. Seven miles.

Bob: Seven miles?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: And who lived in Vashlekové?

Grandma: My mother was born there in Vashlekové, and my grandmother.

Bob: Did your grandmother live in Vashlekové?

Grandma: Yeah, they was living in a small town.

Bob: Uh-huh. And did other relatives live in Vashlekové, do you remember? Uncles and aunts?

Grandma: No.

Bob: They lived in Bialystok?

Grandma: I don't know.

Bob: Uh-huh...Did anyone ever tell you anything unusual about when you were born. Did anyone ever tell you a story about when you were born?

Grandma: Never. My father didn't know it. He says make up your own mind.

Bob: Were you named after a relative?

Grandma: Sure, after somebody. I don't know.

Bob: No one ever told you who you were named after?

Grandma: No. Never. Well, in the other time it was different, old fashioned people.

Bob: Yeah?

Grandma: That's all, Bialystok see.

Bob: Do you think perhaps you were named after your father's mother?

Grandma: I don't know.

Bob: Uh-huh. Do you know who Clara was named after?

Grandma: No, I don't know. Nobody.

Bob: Was your name always Chaïke, or did you have a second name?

Grandma: No, just my name Chaïke, that's all.

Bob: Was that a nickname or was that...

Grandma: That's my name. See, they used to tell me...here they told my Ida.

Bob: Ida?

Grandma: Yeah, in Europe, they used to call me Chaïke.

Bob: Uh-huh. O.K... Now was it Uncle Sam or Uncle Harry who was the first one to come to this country of your brothers and sisters?

Grandma: Uncle Sam.

Bob: Who was older?

Grandma: Older is Uncle Sam.

Bob: Now, did you have other relatives in this country before Uncle Sam came?

Grandma: My uncle was here...my father's brother was here.

Bob: This is the one who was in Brooklyn?

Grandma: This one was in Brooklyn was living. And my father's other brother was here and he came back to Bialystok.

Bob: And he went back to Bialystok

Scott (coming home from school): Hi.

Bob: Hello!

Grandma: Hi!

Scott: Sorry I'm late, but...

Pause Tape

Bob: O.K.. you said that your two uncles, your father's two brothers were the first members of the family to come to this country. So did Sam, your brother Sam live with them when he first came over?

Grandma: I couldn't remember.

Bob: What was Sam's profession?

Grandma: He was a bricklayer.

Bob: Just like your father.

Grandma: Like my father.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Sure.

Bob: Was Harry a bricklayer, too?

Grandma: Harry, no. Harry was a tailor.

Pause Tape

Bob: You mentioned that you remember your mother's mother.

Grandma: When my mother died, she took care of us.

Bob: She came to live with you.

Grandma: Sure, she took care of us.

Bob: Do you remember any of your other grandparents?

Grandma: That's what I had it...my stepmother. That's all.

Bob: But do you remember your mother's father?

Grandma: This I couldn't remember.

Bob: And your father's parents you don't remember.

Grandma: No.

Bob: Do you remember...how many years did your grandmother, that was Frume, right?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: How many years did she live with you after your mother died?

Grandma: A short time, about six months.

Bob: Only about six months?

Grandma: After, my father got married.

Bob: I see. So she went back to Vashlekov after that?

Grandma: I don't know where she went. I couldn't remember.

Bob: Did um...um...Do you remember anything that your grandmother used to tell you? Did she used to tell your stories?

Grandma: No stories.

Bob: Did she have any sayings?

Grandma: No, no stories.

Bob: Was she busy working in the house?

Grandma: They was busy, we didn't have any time to have any stories. We had a lot of trouble and that's all.

Bob: How did you spend your days when you were a little girl?

Grandma: I couldn't remember.

Bob: Did you work in the house?

Grandma: I went to shuly...I went to school.

Bob: You said you started when you were ten years old.

Grandma: Start there...came home un helping my stepmother.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Helping in the house, helping washing dishes, helping washing clothes, that's all.

Bob: Who taught you how to cook?

Grandma: Myself, that's all.

Bob: Uh-huh. So you didn't learn from your stepmother or your grandmother.

Grandma: The same thing...Sylvia learned by herself. Frances learned by herself.

Bob: They must have learned from you.

Grandma: No, they learned by herself. By herself, they learned. That's all.

Bob: So do you know of any stories that were told to you about your grandparents. Did your father talk to you about his parents?

Grandma: Never. We was very busy. We had plenty trouble...

Bob: What kind of troubles did the family have? I know there was the war...

Grandma: Was pogrons...was pogrons

Bob: Was some of your property damaged during the pogrons?

Grandma: Oh sure, sure. They throw bombs.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Sure.

Bob: Was your father ever hurt?

Grandma: No. We was in the basement.

Bob: Was anybody in your family ever hurt?

Grandma: No. No.

Bob: Were these when you were very little. Before World War I, right?

Grandma: No the pogrons was outside, see. If people they was going, they shoot it, see.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: That's all.

Bob: So you just stayed in your house?

Grandma: We stayed in the house in the basements.

Bob: Uh-huh. Did your father have as tenants just Jewish people, or non-Jewish people as well?

Grandma: Always Jewish people.

Bob: Always Jewish people...Do you remember him conducting his business? Did he go out to collect the rents from the tenants? Do you remember that?

Grandma: I couldn't remember. Who could remember?

Bob: Uh-huh...O.K...How many rooms did your house have?\

Grandma: My house?

Bob: Yeah. Your apartment.

Grandma: Who could remember these things.

Bob: There was a big kitchen, right? With a big stove?

Grandma: Oh, there? A kitchen and a dining room, that's all.

Bob: That's all?

Grandma: And bedrooms.

Bob: How many bedrooms were there?

Grandma: Could I remember? Sixty-five years I'm here. Could I remember such things?

Bob: Did anyone else live with you and your family...I know your grandmother lived with you...

Grandma: An old lady.

Bob: Who was she?

Grandma: A old lady. What I remember. I was a kid.

Bob: Did she rent a room from you in the house?

Grandma: She rent...They give her a room in the house. I couldn't remember. I was a kid.

Bob: Do you remember her name?

Grandma: Who could remember such things.

Bob: O.K...Did you have toys as a child! Dolls!

Grandma: No we didn't have no dolls. We didn't know how to play with dolls.

Bob: Uh-huh...What did your diet consist of? What did you eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

Grandma: Could I remember what I eat?

Bob: You don't remember?

Grandma: I couldn't remember. What could I remember such things? Foolish things.

Bob: You don't remember?

Grandma: With me that's foolish things to remember these things.

Bob: O.K....Tell me about the time...how you met grandpa.

Grandma: What do you mean how I met grandpa?

Bob: Do you remember the day you met grandpa?

Grandma: I meet grandpa? Which grandpa?

Bob: Your husband...

Grandma: What I meet my...

Bob: Ruby?

Grandma: Ruben?

Bob: Yeah.

Grandma: I meet him when he came from the service. They took him away he was sixteen years old.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: For a brother, they took him. The Russians took him for a service. When he came back from Russia. When they run away. When there was a revolution.

Bob: Did you know him before the war?

Grandma: No.

Bob: So do you remember the day that you met him?

Grandma: That's all what I got to do it. Such foolish things. With me that's foolish things.

Bob: You don't remember the day that you met him?

Grandma: No, I couldn't remember.

Bob: How long did you know each other....

Grandma: Three years.

Bob:before you left Bialystok? Or, before you got married?

Grandma: Three years we was going together. After we came here and we married, that's all.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Such a foolish things.

Bob: Why is it foolish? They're not foolish things.

Grandma: By me that's foolish things.

Bob: When you met grandpa?

Grandma: That's all. I met grandpa, we came to this country, and we married here, that's all.

Bob: Did he ever tell you any stories about his experiences in the war?

Grandma: Because when he was in war, he was three years in prison camp.

Bob: In the German prison camp?

Grandma: In the Russian prison camp. Not German, in the Russian.

Bob: Who did he fight for?

Grandma: He fight for the Russian and the Polish. The Russian they took him. I don't know for who they fighting the other time.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: The Russians was fighting, the Germany was fighting, the Polacks was fighting. Everybody was fighting together.

Bob: So did he fight in the Polish Army or the Russian Army?

Grandma: In the Russian Army.

Bob: Uh-huh. So you think he was in a German prison camp or a Russian prison camp?

Grandma: I don't remember.

Bob: You don't remember. Did he ever tell you about his experiences?

Grandma: We never...

Bob: You never talked about it?

Grandma: We never...we don't want to talk about this.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: We don't like to talk about this.

Bob: You wanted to leave those memories behind you?

Grandma: Yeah, that's all. When he came here there was a revolution. Was a revolution, they killed people in the streets. And the soldiers, they opened up the barracks and they was running home. That's all. There was a revolution there in Bialystok. When they came home. See, they was running barefoot, without clothes, without anything, they was rushing when they opened the...they teared the prisons and they was rushing...the soldiers...the all prisons there.

Bob: What kind of revolution? A communist revolution?

Grandma: No, a government revolution was there. Not a communist, a government revolution...Un they teared the prisons everything.

Bob: Did you always know before...as I understand it before World War I, your, at least one of your brothers. Sam, was already in the United States. Did you always know, have it in your mind that you were going to come to the United States too?

Grandma: We all wants to come to the United States. We always send letter we want to come to the United States. Till Clara send us, my sister, she should rest in peace, she send us tickets and we came to this country.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: She was the only one.

Bob: She sent you the fare.

Grandma: She send everything, she send the tickets.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: What kind of work did she do here?

Grandma: She...

Bob: She worked in a factory? Clara?

Grandma: Yeah. She was working, yeah.

Bob: Did she ever have her own business? Clara?

Grandma: A restaurant.

Bob: A restaurant?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: What was the name of the restaurant?

Grandma: I can't remember.

Bob: You can't remember. How many years did she run the restaurant?

Grandma: How could I know.

Bob: What kind of restaurant was it?

Grandma: A regular restaurant!

Bob: A coffee shop?

Grandma: Everything. Everything. A regular restaurant.

Bob: Where was it located?

Grandma: In Brooklyn.

Bob: In Brooklyn? Do you remember the street?

Grandma: That's all what I have to remember. Streets. In Brooklyn.

Bob: O.K. Um. So you went to school for about three years?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: And there were just girls in your class?

Grandma: Girls, girls. Separate from boys.

Bob: Did your brothers go to yeshiva at all?

Grandma: I couldn't remember.

Bob: You don't remember.

Grandma: No.

Bob: Did your brothers know how to read and write in Hebrew?

Grandma: I don't know.

Bob: O.K.

Grandma: They was both in this country. How did I know?

Bob: They were a lot older than you were?

Grandma: Sure. They were older, sure.

Bob: Yeah. Um.

Grandma: Clara went to this country. They took her over. Clara was too this country. She was about fourteen years old.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: My brothers took her over to this country.

Bob: She came over when she was fourteen?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: Um. Do you remember when you were growing up in your father's house, do you remember any special holidays or celebrations...

Grandma: Sure.

Bob: ...that were very special? What was the most special thing you remember about holidays and celebrations...

Grandma: Was Pesach, Rosh Hashana, You Kippur, that's all.

Bob: What was your Pesach like? What was your Seder like?

Grandma: A regular Pesach, like here.

Bob: Was it just your family members, or did you have other people in your house?

Grandma: Who could remember.

Bob: Uh-huh. Do you remember asking the "fier kashas"?

Grandma: This...I was...you know I was a kid, we was glad we had a piece of bread to eat.

Bob: Were you really hungry a lot of the time?

Grandma: Plenty times. Believe me, they give us a half pound of bread.

Bob: Bread was rationed? Food was rationed?

Grandma: Oh yeah, sure. Everything was rationed.

Bob: Uh-huh. So the rich were no better off than the poor?

Grandma: Sure the rich one because they had money, they bought everything, they had plenty. Even my tante from Israel, she had plenty in the basement. Yeah.

Bob: This is Malka's mother?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: She lived in Bialystok?

Grandma: Yeah, she was living in Bialystok.

Bob: Did she live near you?

Grandma: No.

Bob: What was her name?

Grandma: Zlotke.

Bob: Zlotke.

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: She didn't live near you?

Grandma: No.

Bob: Did you used to go over her house a lot?

Grandma: Plenty. They have, they used to we didn't have no challey, bread. She had it, you know she was talking with us. She used to grab it, she used to see us through the window, we coming, she used to grab it, and hide it a challey. To give us a piece challey. Because we couldn't get no challey, no bread, nothing. Just a half a pound bread for a person.

Bob: Did you get potatoes? Did you get vegetables?

Grandma: We used to go in the fields, barefoot. The frozen potatoes. With the skin to eat it.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: To cook it with skin.

Bob: Those were very difficult times.

Grandma: Oy-Yoy-Yoy. I don't want to think about this what we went through. Believe me.

Bob: So how did you feel when you came to the United States?

Grandma: Oh, I bend down to soon I came down from the boat, I bend down and I says God bless America. Believe me, everybody, everybody says like this. They laying on the floor and saying God bless America.

Bob: Do you still feel that way about America?

Grandma: About America? God bless America, believe me. If not America, the whole world would starve. America helps everybody. And God forbid, when anything would happen to America, nobody would look on them. That's all. America's too good. She's with open hands, America.

Bob: So, did you remember any, did your...um during um...what your Shabbes table was like in your father's house?

Grandma: Oh sure. My father used to bring a man when he didn't have nothing to eat. He used to take him to the mikveh, you know what a mikveh is?

Bob: Uh-huh. Sure.

Grandma: And give him a bath there in the mikveh. And (unintelligible) my father was a very tzedakah man.

Bob: Uh-huh. He gave a lot of tzedakah?

Grandma: A lot of tzedakah. My mother used to give people what they didn't have no place where to eat. Frigid'tse-nacht, Friday night she used to have a man to eat by in our house. And Shabbes one man...

Bob: Are you talking about your mother, or your stepmother?

Grandma: My mother.

Bob: Do you remember your mother?

Grandma: Sure I remember. Yeah, sure.

Bob: ...even though you were six years old.

Grandma: Sure I remember my mother.

Bob: Do you remember anything she said to you?

Grandma: (pause) I remember when she die. She says, we was kids, this I remember she says: well, I'm dying (unintelligible), she says vidul and she's...

Bob: She says what?

Grandma: Vidul. You know, she was praying before she die.

Bob: A vidul.

Grandma: Vidul.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: And she turn the face to the wall, and she...

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: This I remember.

Bob: That must have been very difficult for you as a young child.

Grandma: Yeah, believe me. Was a Shabbes.

Bob: On Shabbes?

Long Pause

Bob: Do you remember your mother's funeral?

Grandma: Oh yeah, sure...sure, we was kids.

Bob: When your mother died, were your two brothers still in Bialystok?

Grandma: Only one brother.

Bob: Only Harry?

Grandma: I can't remember. This I couldn't remember.

Bob: How were your...can you describe from what you remember...

Gail: Grandma?

Grandma: Yeah?

Pause Tape

Bob: Do you remember when your grandmother died?

Grandma: Oh yeah, sure.

Bob: How many years later did your grandmother die after your mother died?

Grandma: A short time.

Bob: A short time? Was she a sick woman?

Grandma: This I couldn't remember...She was not sick when she took care of us.

Bob: Um...let's see what else. Was there something on Shabbes that was your favorite thing, something that you looked forward to, did you get a special treat on Shabbes, was there a special something that you looked forward to?

Grandma: We used to get dressed, and my father used to come from shul, he used to sit by the table, eating and benching and that's all.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Sure, we couldn't go away from the table until we benched.

Bob: Did your house have electricity?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: You had electricity? Did your father have a telephone?

Grandma: No telephone.

Bob: He did not have a telephone. Did he own a horse and buggy?

Grandma: No.

Bob: So how did your father get around? He walked?

Grandma: Walking, walking, that's all.

Bob: Were there Droshkies in town?

Grandma: Yeah there was droshkies, but my father had places he was walking.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Yeah, that's all.

Bob: When you think back to when you were a young girl, were there any relatives that you were especially close to, that were especially important to you?

Grandma: Well, in the wartime, this one went there in Argentina, this one went there.

Bob: Who went to Argentina?

Grandma: My father's...nephews, nieces, nephews went to Argentina.

Bob: Your father's nephews and nieces went to Argentina?

Grandma: They're still there.

Bob: Was they're name Leff?

Grandma: No, not Leff. Vinick.

Bob: Vinick? You mean Uncle Jake's brothers and sisters?

Grandma: No, that way they's name too.

Bob: Vinick. So this was...did your father have a sister?

Grandma: I couldn't remember.

Bob: So your father had nieces and nephews whose names were Vinick, who went to South Amer...Argentina?

Grandma: I couldn't remember. I was a kid, how could I remember.

Bob: Why did people choose to go to Argentina as opposed to the U.S.?

Grandma: Because in the wartime everybody was running away.

Bob: Wherever they could get into?

Grandma: Yeah, that's all. Was pogroms. Um in the wartime everybody was running away. See the pogroms was in the city. That's why everybody was running away.

Bob: Did you have any cousins that were your age that you used to play with?

Grandma: I couldn't remember.

Bob: Malks was a lot younger than you, right?

Grandma: Malkin, yeah. Malkin, yeah.

Bob: But did you have other cousins who were your age that you used to play with?

Grandma: Yeah, they's in Argentina.

Bob: These are the Vinicks?

Grandma: No, that's my mother's brother's children.

Bob: They went to Argentina?

Grandma: They's all living in Argentina, yeah.

Bob: So you're saying...

Grandma: Sylvia saw them all, my brother's, the children.

Bob: So you're saying on your mother's side they went to Argentina, and also from your father's side they went?

Grandma: They all went to Argentina.

Bob: O.K. Except Malka, Malka's parents went to Israel.

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: Why did they go to Israel?

Grandma: I don't know, that's why they sold it, eh, they went to Israel. Who knows why they went to Israel. They sold the shop, everything, and they went to Israel.

Bob: You know, we have that picture of you and Aunt...

Grandma: They was digging the ground in Israel when they came.

Bob: Yeah.

Grandma: When they came, they was sleeping outside in tents.

Bob: That's right.

Grandma: In Israel.

Bob: When you uh, before you left Poland, which was when, 1920? We have a picture that you have to me, of you and Aunt Martha going to your mother's grave.

Grandma: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Bob: D you remember that day what happened? You said you had some problems going to the cemetery?

Grandma: Because was the antisemiten, they throw stones. Sure.

Bob: They threw stones at you when you went to the cemetery?

Grandma: Sure. That's right. Me and Martha, we went to the cemetery. You got the picture.

Bob: You gave it to me, remember?

Grandma: Yeah, I couldn't remember.

Bob: Yeah, I have it. Um, um. Do you remember the name of the cemetery? Because there are a few cemeteries in Bialystok.

Grandma: I couldn't remember.

Bob: You don't remember the name. You haven't thought of it in a long time.

Grandma: My mother's there is cemetery.

Bob: Was there a family plot in the cemetery? Was she buried with other members of the family?

Grandma: No, she was buried by herself. She died when she was forty-eight years old.

Bob: Right. Do you remember when you said goodbye to your father?

Grandma: The date?

Bob: No, not the date, but do you remember when you and Martha were getting ready to come to this country?

Grandma: Yeah, we says goodbye. They came to the train. Un that's all.

Bob: Did your father have any words for you?

Grandma: He was crying.

Bob: Cuz you were his last children to go. Besides...from his first family.

Grandma: Yeah, that's all. Yeah.

Bob: So, you wrote to your father for many years, afterwards?

Grandma: Oh, sure. I used to work and send money there.

Bob: Uh-huh. How were things for him during (between) the two wars? Were they able to make a living at that time?

Grandma: A little living. My father was too old to make a living.

Bob: Uh-huh. Did you try to convince him to come to the United States?

Grandma: No. He don't want because he says the children is working Shabbes, he don't want to see it when the children works on Shabbes.

Bob: Uh-huh. Was that painful for him to see?

Grandma: To see it, sure. My uncle didn't like it. My father's brother didn't like it.

Bob: What was his name? The one who went back?

Grandma: My father's brother?

Bob: Yeah, the one who went back to Poland.

Grandma: I couldn't remember.

Bob: And what about the name of the brother who stayed here?

Grandma: My brother?

Bob: Your father's brother who stayed here. Who came to this country and stayed.

Grandma: Alter.

Bob: Alter. But you don't remember the name of the brother who went back to Poland.

Grandma: No, I couldn't remember.

Bob: Did your father have any sisters?

Grandma: So far what I know, he didn't have any sisters.

Bob: O.K. I know your childhood was a difficult one, but is there one thing that you remember during your childhood that was a very happy thing? Is there anything...

Grandma: Nothing was happy.

Bob: Nothing was happy.

Grandma: We didn't have nothing to eat. We didn't have nothing to eat. We have to stay in line for a half a pound bread with cartons, and that's all. We have to go in woods to get some wood to heat up the house. Yeah, we had a life. Was some life.

Bob: Do you think it was always that way for the Jews in Poland and Russia?

Grandma: No. Just the war, in the wartime.

Bob: Before the wartime, things were better?

Grandma: Was better, I was a kid. Was in the wartime.

Bob: Do you remember the name of the ship...

Grandma: Suskana.

Bob: Susquehanna?

Grandma: Susquehanna.

Bob: Was it an American ship?

Grandma: I don't know.

Bob: Suskana? Susquehanna?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: O.K. And was it Susquehanna I or II, or just Susquehanna?

Grandma: That's all.

Bob: And you get said in 1920?

Grandma: 1920.

Bob: That was from where?

Grandma: From Germany? From Germany.

Bob: Danzig.

Grandma: From Danzig, yeah. Danzig, till we came...

Bob: What time of the year was it?

Grandma: 1920!

Bob: Do you remember, was it spring? Summer? Fall?

Grandma: No, summer.

Bob: It was that you left, the summer of 1920.

Grandma: Sure.

Bob: How long did the voyage take?

Grandma: How could I remember.

Bob: Who was with you on the trip?

Grandma: Eh, Martha, my sister.

Bob: Just you and Martha?

Grandma: Just me and Martha.

Bob: When you and Grandpa met each other in Bialystok...

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: What was your courtship like? What sorts of things did young people do together?

Grandma: Nothing.

Bob: Before they got married?

Grandma: Was going out?

Bob: Where would you go out?

Grandma: We used to go in temple, we used to go, was a garden what Saturday was playing music there.

Bob: What was the name of the garden?

Grandma: Grodskol Garden.

Bob: Grodskol Garden?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: Was that, that was just for the whole town?

Grandma: Was Shabbes, everybody used to go Shabbes, dressed up. Goyin used to play there, not Jews. Cost you three “kopkes”.

Bob: Kopecks.

Grandma: Yeah, to go in. Friday, you have to buy the tickets.

Bob: So you bought the tickets ahead of time.

Grandma: Sure, to go in.

Bob: Did your father have a problem with you going to listen to music on Shabbes like that?

Grandma: My father never go, just the young generation.

Bob: But he let you go.

Grandma: We was going. He was buying friday the ticket un we go.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: With my husband, with pa.

Bob: What other things did you do?

Grandma: Nothing.

Bob: Did he ask you to marry him? Grandpa?

Grandma: I came to this country, I married. I didn't want to get married in old country.

Bob: Did he ask you to marry him in the old country.

Grandma: He wants I should marry in the old country. I says no.

Grandma: Because they wouldn't let us in. They wouldn't let me in. They wouldn't let Pa in.

Bob: If you were married?

Grandma: If you were married, sure.

Bob: Why is that?

Grandma: That was the rules...

Bob: You could get in as single people, but not as married people?

Grandma: That's the rules. Because mine family send it for me, and his family send it for me, that's why.

Bob: Uh-huh. His family sent for him?

Grandma: Yeah. That's why. See, they wouldn't let us in if we get married. I wouldn't be able to come to this country. That's why we not married there.

Bob: How long did you know him before you knew he was the man you wanted to marry?

Grandma: Three years I was going with him.

Bob: No, but how long did you know inside yourself that this is the man I want to marry.

Grandma: I don't know, he was in the war. They took him when he was sixteen years old. They took him in the Russian war for a brother. See, when he came back from Russia. He came back from the war.

Bob: I mean you didn't wanna, the first day you met him you didn't want to marry him, I'll bet.

Grandma: No. No.

Bob: How long did you know him before you decided yourself this is somebody I could marry.

Grandma: I didn't know him before! I didn't know him before!

Bob: No, I mean, once you met him. Once you met him. After the war.

Grandma: I was going a couple years. A couple years. Till we came here.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: My father wants we should get married there. They wouldn't let me in. They wouldn't let him in. If we would marry there. They told us. My brother told us. If we getting married, they wouldn't let us in.

Bob: So you got married in March...

Grandma: March.

Bob: ...of 1921?

Grandma: Yeah. March 14.

Bob: 1921?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: And where did you get married? In New York?

Grandma: In Clara's house.

Bob: In Manhattan?

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: Lower East Side?

Grandma: Yeah. Was a rabbi there.

Bob: Where did she live?

Grandma: She lives in Brooklyn!

Bob: Oh in Brooklyn? Not in the Lower East Side?

Grandma: Yeah, in Brooklyn.

Bob: So you got married on March 14, 1921.

Grandma: Yeah.

Bob: And uh, uh who was at your wedding?

Grandma: Who could remember. Was just the family.

Bob: Clara made the wedding for you?

Grandma: Yeah. Was my husband's family was there. My family, that's all.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: The rabbi came un he married us. I didn't want to have no big ceremony.

Bob: Uh-huh. Why not?

Grandma: Who could afford'er? We couldn't afford'er. Was working in de shop.

Bob: You were working in the shop?

Grandma: Sure I was working in the shop.

Bob: Which shop were you working in, do you remember?

Grandma: With dresses. A finisher.

Bob: Do you remember the name of the company?

Grandma: Who knows.

Bob: Did Grandpa work in a different shop?

Grandma: We was both working in the same shop.

Bob: And you don't remember the name of it?

Grandma: Who could remember.

Bob: How long did you work there?

Grandma: A short time. After we got married, we came to Springfield.

Bob: Why did you come to Springfield of all places?

Grandma: Because Pa opened up the business. Eh, he opened up the business.

Bob: But why did he chose Springfield as opposed to any other place?

Grandma: Because Uncle Sam was a...we don't know from no place. Because we was here and he opened up just a cleaning store. After he opened up a tailor, dresses, making dresses, fixing dresses, coats, suits, we had a big business. You know yourself.

Bob: Yes, I remember. I used to spend a lot of hours in the store with you and Grandpa.

Grandma: Yeah, they came from all over.

Bob: Did you visit Springfield before you decided to move here? Move to Springfield?

Grandma: No.

Bob: You just came here for the first time?

Grandma: I came here, yeah...

Bob: What were your first impressions of Springfield?

Grandma: (pause) I came to Springfield! I don't know, I couldn't remember.

Bob: Was it a pretty city? Was it an ugly city?

Grandma: It was a plain, a plain place, that's all. Because we married there and we stayed there.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: That's all. Un I was living in an attics. I was living, believe me. And working long, knocking on the doors, everybody should give me a suit to be cleaned. A pair pants to be cleaning, knocking all the doors.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: Yeah, when Grandpa opened the business. We was knocking on the doors.

Bob: That was before you had children.

Grandma: Yeah, before, yeah. Knockin', I was living on the attics, on the third floor. (pause) Where's Beth, she went for a walk with the children?

Bob: Yeah, she went for a walk with the kids...Did you and Grandpa have goals together? In terms of what kind of life you wanted to make for yourselves? Do you remember talking about it with Grandpa? When you first got married?

Grandma: We got married. I was living with Grandpa, eh. And I was working with Grandpa in the business. And I was knocking on all the doors, they should give me a suit to be cleaned. That was my life. Till we built up a good business. I was going...

Bob: How long did it take you to build up a good business?

Grandma: About a couple years. Pa want, was a year Pa want to close the door, close the business because we didn't do no business.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: After we decided we gonna knock on the doors to ask 'em for cleaning.

Bob: Uh-huh. Did that work?

Grandma: That worked, yeah. That's everybody...

Bob: Was this just in the neighborhood, around Bloomfield Street?

Grandma: Bloomfield? I couldn't remember where. After, a man came over, a gentile. He says I'm going to give you a break, I'm going to help you, I'm going to give you...eh, customers. Believe me...

Bob: Who was this man?

Grandma: A customer! A gentile.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: He was, eh...something fun Springfield, a (unintelligible) fun Springfield.

Bob: Uh-huh.

Grandma: He helped Pa. He helped Grandpa>

End Tape