

DP-34

MILTON SHATSKY AND MAX SHATSKY

BIRTH DATE: 1920 and 1913

INTERVIEW DATE: JUNE 25, 1989

RUNNING TIME: 55:00

INTERVIEWER: ANDREW PHILLIPS

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEW LOCATION: LOS ANGELES, CA

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1989

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1995

TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

POLAND, 1925

AGES 5 and 12

SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

PHILLIPS: This is Andrew Phillips, and this is an interview with Milton and Max Shatsky. This will be interview number 408 [DP-34]. It is the 25th of May, 1989. It's Thursday. We're beginning this interview at about 1:30. Mr. and Mrs. Shatsky are from Poland. Which village are you from?

MAX: Village?

PHILLIPS: Yes. This is Max's voice.

MAX: Yeah. Kachen.

PHILLIPS: Could you spell it?

MAX: K-A-C-H-E-N.

PHILLIPS: Okay. And what year, Max, were you born?

MAX: 1913.

PHILLIPS: And Milton?

MILTON: 1920.

PHILLIPS: And what year did you immigrate to the United States?

MAX: 1925.

PHILLIPS: Okay. All right.

MAX: Uh, Milt, he was born, you were born in Kovel. Now, does it make a difference which?

PHILLIPS: You might as well say where he was born.

MAX: Yeah. He was born in Kovel, K-O-V-E-L, Poland. Yeah.

PHILLIPS: Could we start by, perhaps, uh, either of you gentlemen can respond. Maybe I'll ask you first, uh, Max, what your father did for a living in Poland.

MAX: He was a, uh, trader. He used to go to little countries, not little, little villages. Pick up livestock and sell it to a packing house or whatever it is. He travelled with a horse and buggy from little villages. And as he picked it up and was able to sell it to other people.

MILTON: Well, he didn't sell it immediately. He, uh, he kept the livestock and, uh, in pasture, I guess, and fed them. And after some period of time. Wasn't that it? Or did he sell on . . .

MAX: He tried, the calves. It was actually calves. He did have, like, a cow or two at one time where we lived, which was a customary thing for the people that lived in that place, in that area. But most of the time he bought and sold, able to turn it over as he went along.

PHILLIPS: Do you remember what life was like back in, where did you actually live? Did you live yourself on a farm?

MAX: It's, you can call it, it's like a farm. I'll put on one, uh, not a joke but one, uh, whatever it is. When I came to this country, when we came to this country, I went to school. They were teaching Abraham Lincoln, where he lived. So I says to the teacher the best I could, I says, "Hey, I just come from there." I lived like that in the 1920's, the early '20s. We lived in a house like Abraham Lincoln lived in 1850. Seventy-five years later, in those days, if you know what I mean. So if you say a farm, it as a farm or just a house here, a house there.

PHILLIPS: Tell us what it looked like.

MAX: Four walls. There were some houses, I remember, we didn't even have, uh, floors on the ground, one of the early memories that I remember. It was built, we moved in there. We had a little oven made out of clay, and that's where my mother baked, cooked and everything else. You heated during the wintertime, and that's the way, then. As we moved to the town where he was born, we got, we had two rooms instead of one, for all of us. And that's where we lived. It's like in, uh, when you read history today, over one hundred years ago, in fact, today it would be one hundred and fifty years ago, and we lived it that time there.

PHILLIPS: What do you remember about those times, Milton?

MILTON: Well, certainly not as much as Max does. I was five years old when I came here. But I do remember playing

outdoors. Uh, I do remember my grandparents, grandmother and grandfather, my mother's parents, both very elderly. I remember what appears to be a funeral that I attended. A Catholic funeral, non-Jewish. We're Jewish. And, uh, being just over-awed by it, by the customs and by the colors and so on. I remember more about some of the things about the ship that we came over on than I do about activities in Europe.

PHILLIPS: Can you perhaps, then, while we're back in Europe, perhaps Milton maybe then, because he was older at the time.

MILTON: Max.

PHILLIPS: Max, rather, could address those questions with more memory. A little bit more about what the atmosphere was like for you, and for your parents, uh, was it very difficult for your parents? Do you remember if it was hard for them?

MAX: Uh, I always think back to those days. We didn't know any better. That's what we had, and most of the people that lived there had the same thing. Like I said before, during the summer we used to, we took our shoes off, and didn't put them on until fall. That was in spring. We went to sleep when it got dark and woke up when it got light, with the sun. No electricity, no running water. We had a well where we used to go and get a bucket of water. Uh, let's say, an outhouse we had in the back of the house somewheres, and this is the way we lived, because everybody else lived the same way those days. And I remember it well because, uh, like I said, no electricity. We didn't, there was a few houses that did have it that used to go on, they had no switch in the house to turn it on and off. It came in from the plant, it went on at six, or whenever, and it went out at eleven. But we didn't have no, none of that, none of those pleasures, when we were kids in Europe in the 1920's, early '20s, before we came here. Uh, I remember also we used to buy a sack of potatoes, and my father used to dig a hole, put them away, so we can have them for the winter inside the ground. And as we needed it we dug it out. It didn't freeze. And this is the way we lived. And somehow, we didn't, we didn't know any better. There wasn't anything around to learn to be any better. We did go to school, by the way. All the children, my parents made sure, that we go to the schools. That's something they felt was needed for us. They didn't have no education. They were self-taught, whatever they knew. But we kids, my older brother and myself and I had a younger brother and a younger sister, who are deceased now. We all went to school at one time or another, as we became four or five years old, till we came to this country.

PHILLIPS: What about the foods, the actual food you used to eat?

MAX: I remember visiting my grandparents. My grandparents, that's from my mother's side, they lived in a smaller town where there was just his house, my grandparents' house, and an uncle of mine, the only two families living there. They used to slaughter a lamb or a calf and use the forepart, that's the one, and that's what they had for meat for weeks at a time. And, uh, the other part they used to give away because they were, like my brother said before, we were Jewish and religious, kept us from eating the other parts in those days. And the food, whatever you bought, in those markets, you went out and bought fresh vegetables, whatever you were used to. Or fresh, that's about all it was. We didn't know from no oranges, watermelon, or any of those fruits. We didn't know anything about them. We just ate whatever there was raised or grown in the orchards or on the ground where we lived. That was the place where I come from. No cars. When we seen a car, everybody stopped to look to see what kind of a contraption that was, till we came to this country. And, uh, and that's the way, the kids came, in summer, like I said, we got out of the house, we walked around. Winter, we did the best we could with whatever clothes we were able to get and we used to walk to school. It was always walking, there was no other transportation, no way.

PHILLIPS: What about the wintertime? How did you keep warm?

MAX: Uh, only the same, with clothing that my parents were able to buy, and also my grandparents from my father's side, they used to send us clothing, a package of clothing, every now and then.

MILTON: From . . .

MAX: From this, from America.

MILTON: Yeah. They were already here.

MAX: Yeah. So they were able to send us packages of clothing that we all, uh, used it. Whoever it fitted, we were seven children, and my parents. So we were all in ages of two years apart and we, if it was too big for one, then the next one, you were able to use it. And also if they could buy, if my parents were able to buy anything, if they had the money, and if the stores had to sell it, they bought something for us.

PHILLIPS: Can you tell me a little bit about why your grandparents were already in the United States? How did that happen, either Milton or Max.

MAX: Well, my grandparents came here before I was born, before we were born. I guess that the whole, the European, Jewish people especially, looked forward to coming to America. They always thought that's the, what do you call it, milk and honey part of the world. And they came out here. My father was not too, or should I say not too, uh . . .

MILTON: He wasn't motivated to come out here.

MAX: He . . .

MILTON: He enjoyed, if you can call it that, he enjoyed his life, it was suited to his personality. But his father, the grandfather we're talking about, came out here somewhere around the turn of the century before any of us were born. In fact he came out here, our grandfather did, before my father was married to my m, leaving his wife back there as so many other tens of thousands did. And it wasn't until several years later that he sent for his wife and a son and a daughter, siblings of my father. And they all came to this country, to the United States, prior to my father's coming. So, and they found, my grandfather must have found some work or some means of livelihood here, came from New York where he had some relatives but wound up in Cleveland, Ohio. And, uh, after he and my grandmother were here some time, as Max has said, one of the things they sent was clothing to us. It was sort of a catch-all type of the clothing, because they didn't know our size or our weight, and they bought what they felt was best suited for us. And that's one of the ways we kept warm or dressed.

MAX: My grandparents were, the only thing in life, especially my grandmother, is to bring out her son and his family. That's how we got here. They were the ones who was after my father to make sure, to come out to America. She wanted to see them come here and settle here. The life is so different from what we lived and what they remembered before they left Europe to here. In 1922 we got our passports to come to this country. And as, there's always, every country had a quota, how many people they would allow to come in, let's say, to the United States. On a Saturday, the quota was closed, and our appointment was for Monday. Then we had to wait another year or two, new papers, new everything. And by that time another child was born. And it didn't, it was not until 1925 that we finally were able to move, to make the big move, to move out here. And it was all, my grandparents, I think, especially my grandmother, she wanted to see her son and his family to come out to America where they can be together.

MILTON: Versions that I've heard of it is that, uh, our grandmother's project of getting our family out here

started somewhere around World War One time. But again because of my father's reluctance to coming out here, and other hardships such as quotas, didn't allow us to, and the years went by until some ten years later, and 1925 was when we finally came out here. (break in tape for telephone ringing)

PHILLIPS: We're picking up the interview now. Okay. I think you were talking about your grandparents.

MILTON: Yeah. We were telling how our paternal grandparents were very insistent upon my father and mother and the rest of us coming out here over a period of many years from about World War One time until it finally occurred in 1925 and during that period of the time several children were born and quotas were set, and my father was resisting it. But finally it occurred in 1925 and we arrived here in early December 1925.

PHILLIPS: Could you tell me a little bit of what you remember of that period during the Second World War? I'm sorry, during the First World War?

MAX: Ah, yes. I remember one time my father received a letter from his parents, which were here in this country. I think the letter took almost eight, nine months till it reached us where we lived because it was still during the war. I think it was only four of us were born then. That's before my brother Milt was born. He was born in 1920. I'm talking like, uh, maybe 1918 or '19. That letter came to our place where we lived, and I think it was, travelled for about eight, nine months till we received it. That was during World War One. That's about all I can remember because, as you know, I was born in 1913. I was four, five years old at that time. I still remember when he was born. It was 1920. But somehow I don't remember, all I know is that the, we knew there was a war, that I remember there was a war going on. How much I knew about it was very little at that time. That's . . .

MILTON: Stories I remember, my mother and father talking about World War One included these things. Both Russian soldiers and German soldiers at different times journeyed across the area where we lived. And at various times we would have to be on guard because we didn't know where, uh, our loyalties should lie, with which country. My mother talked about, uh, soldiers coming to where we lived, and at that time she, or she and my father were actually making beer. They learned how to make beer, which my mother did in this country too, and giving it to or selling it to the soldiers. And, uh, it being a difficult time, though, because food was very scarce and as in many other wars prior to that, soldiers or the army would seek out food wherever they could. So food was very scarce at that

time.

PHILLIPS: After the war, you were born in 1920, Milton was born in 1920. Max, you, you were alive. What was your remembrance after the war as it came to a close?

MAX: Exactly where we lived, and so on, we always lived, before Milt was born, in a, uh, village. It wasn't a city, there wasn't anything there. So, actually, we were not too much in contact, but like Milt said, there might have been soldiers travelling back and forth in that area. There was Gypsies travelling all the time with their wagons and families. We didn't know much about it. No radio, for sure, no nothing. Only what we heard, if my father picked it up somewhere in there, he'd walk to the center of, uh, activities in that little place is what he heard from other people. There was no newspapers, no nothing. So only whatever you heard, like he says, from my parents or whatever it was. Not much that we knew at that time. The bigger cities no doubt knew about it and had some inkling there's a war going on in the world because they had newspapers already and everything else. But we didn't know much about it at that time.

MILTON: But, Max, after the war I remember stories about at times how difficult it was because there were certain either discharged soldiers who ransacked small villages and whether it was out of persecution or out of the need for food, people such as us, especially Jewish people, were very vulnerable to these pillages and ransackings. Didn't we experience that, and didn't we hear about others?

MAX: Yes. Only, yeah, in the small towns where we lived, where there was, let's say, uh, maybe eight, six, seven, eight families lived in that little village. Now, the bigger cities didn't have that. When we moved into the town where you were born, we kind of had, it was, uh, you were not afraid that you'd be shot or anything like that.

MILTON: Your persecution was either, non-existent.

MAX: Yeah. It was, that's all from remnants of the different soldiers, different areas where they lived. Where they came from, the little that was in the small villages, where we moved into the town Kovel, where we finally left from there to come to America, that's where we lived later on. Uh, especially as Jewish families, you were free to travel and to go anywhere you wanted. You weren't persecuted.

MILTON: Well, what about the incident which actually resulted in my not being born in the village where all the rest of you were born. Why did we leave that village?

MAX: Okay. It was, uh, the summer of 1920. Uh, our father went to a, uh, temple, a synagogue, a couple miles away. There wasn't a synagogue, there wasn't enough people to support one. So they used to travel from different areas to come to that one synagogue. Finally these, uh, they called them belachoftses [ph], came there and they said, "We want all of you to go home. We want your money or your gold. The Jewish people have gold, or money." And they shot a few of the people there. My father came home. That afternoon, it was the Jewish New Year, and we grabbed a few pillows or whatever was able to carry, and we travelled for two weeks at night and hid in the daytime till we were able to come to Kovel, a bigger town, where we were protected, where, those things didn't go on there. That's when you were born.

MILTON: My mother was pregnant with me at that time.

MAX: She was in her ninth month.

MILTON: And I was born at the end of this so-called journey escaping from the potential in our village, ransacking and pillaging.

MAX: That's like, they had pogroms. Like you read, like people read about today.

PHILLIPS: Can I just go back over that truck noise in the background, could you just say that again?

MAX: Sure.

MILTON: What occurred then was similar, very similar to what was shown in the, in the movie Fiddler On The Roof. Very much so. And people who saw that movie, knowing our family and knowing some of the stories we tell about it, said, "Now I understand what you mean when you describe what happened to your family during, right after World War Two [sic]." It was just that way. We had to leave because of the . . .

MAX: The Bolsheviks. Yeah. The belachoftses [ph].

MILTON: They're these discharged soldiers, or these, uh . . .

MAX: They came into our house where we lived and they, uh, my older brother, who's deceased, and I, and my sister, were next door, and they thought that was a Jewish family living there, and he, one hit him in the forehead here, that he had a mark all his life. Because then they said, "How come they're in that house? They don't belong there." So we lived it, we seen it. That's why some people, if you read about it, it's hard to picture the way things are. And for two weeks we travelled by night and hid in daytime. That was just before my mother gave birth to Milton.

Then we settled in a bigger city, which there was enough people living there with some, these guys, they call them, uh, what should I say, uh, they used to call them murderers. That's actually what it was. They didn't come to cities like that. There was already police protection, which we didn't have in our village. No police, no nothing there.

PHILLIPS: So this was after the First World War.

MAX: Right after the First World War.

PHILLIPS: There were marauding groups of soldiers from different, I mean, you called them Bolsheviks.

MAX: Bolsheviks, there might have been Polish soldiers or German soldiers. All . . .

PHILLIPS: Russians.

MAX: Right.

MILTON: I think only my parents would know, and they can't tell us which they were. But it really didn't matter whether they were ex-Polish or ex-Russian or ex-Lithuanian soldiers, they were for whatever reason, they were out to, uh, get food and get everything they could, and robbing and killing didn't stand in the way.

PHILLIPS: Tell me about the Gypsies that you mentioned briefly.

MAX: They used to, the Gypsies, I remember seeing them travel, as many as twenty-five, thirty caravans. They would travel from little village to the other one. They would also rob people, if you're not careful. That's the way they lived. They never had a, uh, what you call a place to lay their heads on. They just travelled around, and that's the way, the "wandering Jew." Because we tried to find a place where we can be safe, and we did travel from smaller cities to smaller villages to the bigger city, and that's the way the Gypsies did. And we used to hide, or stay away from them, because they said, "You got to be careful or you're going to be, they'll kill you." They'll do anything to pick up money. And like my brother Milt said, it was almost like an animal looking for food, for clothing, and that's the only way to get it. That's the only way to get it.

MILTON: But the Gypsies weren't, uh, they didn't cause any physical harm, did they?

MAX: To some degree, you know what I mean.

MILTON: They did, too?

MAX: To some degree, but not, their biggest thing was to steal, and that's, you know, they'd travel from village to village. They were here today, gone tomorrow, and so on. And that's the way they lived. In those days, that was right after the First World War. And, uh, I, 1918, 1920 until, they never came to the big city because there was protection there already, there was police, there was courts, there was everything else. But the little villages didn't have that.

PHILLIPS: So tell me now about your leaving Poland to come to the United States. Tell me the preparation and how you learned that, in fact, you would be leaving your home to travel to America.

MAX: Uh, now, our sister was born in 1923.

MILTON: Frances?

MAX: No.

MILTON: Oh, Hiki [ph]. '25. She was born in June of 19 . . .

MAX: She was born June of 1925. And we bought a little house before, about a year before coming to this country. Also my father never thought it's going to come the day where we're going to leave and come to America. So we had our own little house with two rooms and, like I said, it was the same house that, no electric, nothing at all in there. So then we got, my father went to Warsaw, which was the capital, and the consulate was there. And he was notified to come there to make preparations and fill out whatever necessary papers. Which he did, and he came back, and he says, "We've got to leave here on this and this date in order for all of us to go to America." Well, then it was packing whatever we had. We had one of those, uh, I still remember the big suitcase we filled up. Not a suitcase, one of those . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

PHILLIPS: Continuing now interview number 408 [DP-34]. You're travelling from Warsaw?

MAX: Uh, from Warsaw to . . .

MILTON: Danzig.

MAX: Danzig.....

MILTON: Which is now Gdansk.

MAX: To catch a little ship, that was people from different countries all got there to, uh, to embark on the big

ship. I'll never forget, I looked at that ship and it looked like a, uh, I should say I didn't know any big buildings. It was immense. Immense. And that's, we got in there, it was, I think, on a Friday night, and we had dinner that night. The following morning we were in the water, while we slept in the water. We had cabins on the third, uh, the third floor. What they call, do they call it the third floor, or . . .

MILTON: Well, it was the deck, uh, it was just, was it the one just above steerage?

MAX: Above steerage, call it. But this ship, there was third, there's usually first, second and third. We were on the third floor. There was also a little room with beds, one on top of the other.

MILTON: Bunks.

MAX: Bunks, where two, four, six people slept. Just enough room for one person to sleep in each, in each bunk. And that's the way we were. Then after we got to the Atlantic after a few days, that was the early part of December, and it was a little stormy. Uh, using the word little is not, it was stormy. We couldn't get out of our bunks to even eat. We all got sick, seasick. So my brother Milt, he was small in stature. He was able to get out and bring us an orange, or whatever it is, to sustain us for a day or two until we got well again. And that took fourteen days. The time we left Danzig, or Gdansk, what they call now, till we reached, uh, Ellis, till we reached New York Harbor. Uh, go ahead.

MILTON: The ship journey is something I do remember. What Max just described as my being the only one who didn't get seasick, the other eight were seasick at one time or another just sacked in their bunks. But I do remember marvelling at the, uh, quantities of food that was on the table. We'd never seen anything like that. Huge bowls of bread, uh, hard boiled eggs, uh, what was some kind of cheese, whether it was cottage cheese or something. And, uh, apples or fruit like that. I, we'd never seen anything like that, and I remember just staring at it with absolute amazement.

MAX: Complete different life, because there we got up to eat three times a day. Like breakfast, lunch and dinner. Well, we didn't know from that. There was no such a thing. I'll go back now. When we lived in Europe, my mother used to bake bread on Friday, and it would last us until the following Friday. There was no such a thing as stale bread. This is what there was, and whatnot. My older brother George, one time we ran short and we, my parents sent him to the bakery to buy a loaf of bread, let's say, on a Thursday, till my mother baked again on a Friday. Well, he never

smelled bread that fresh and that good. By the time he came home, three quarters of the bread he ate up. (he laughs) Because we never tasted anything like that. Never seen anything like that. And this is the way we lived, like I said, my mother baked on Friday, and that bread, or whatever it was, lasted so many days. There wasn't too many open markets, and there wasn't too much money available to buy all those, uh, call it necessities or luxuries, whatever it was. Now we can go back on the ship, that's fifteen days that we travelled. Well, the kids had a, the kids, I mean, my brothers and sisters, we had many a time we went through the swinging doors, we used to put our finger in there and see what would happen. We never seen that. We got our nails jammed off.

MILTON: A couple of us got our fingernails ripped off because of it.

MAX: It was so many different things, like my brother said, about the eating part, unbelievable, the way food was available, which we didn't know from those things. Till we got to Ellis Island and we seen, we all ran on the rail to watch the Statue of Liberty, which we heard from different people, whatever it is. And that's where we got off. And it's just about a week before Christmas, wasn't it?

MILTON: Yeah. A short time before.

MAX: We were there, by the way, about three or four days. There was two of us that were detained. By the way, after we left Kovel, the town we left from to come to America where we lived, we more or less carried cards with us. There was different areas where you were examined by different doctors and stations, and different buildings that you went, from one to the other one. Some places cut your hair. I remember being examined, you had to take your clothes off. Those are the, and every doctor that examined you put a stamp in there if you're okay or there's something wrong with you. That was the part of the trip, as we left Kovel to come to this country, to America.

MILTON: Yeah. We, like others, were examined from head to toe for lice in our hair, for any lesions on our skin, the United States being fearful of allowing people in with any communicable disease. And, uh, as Max said, two of us. Who was it, was it Al and someone else, or?

MAX: I guess me. I used to have, part of my back, whatever it is. They detained us extra because . . .

MILTON: Until they had a more, uh, thorough examination.

MAX: To release us from there. Because an uncle of ours, my father's brother, came to visit us in Ellis Island. And the reason he came, so he could come back with us

to Cleveland. Well, he couldn't come back, I mean, he couldn't stay, whatever it was. So what happened, I'll never forget. He brought us a basket of fruit. He, one of them was a banana. And I think they cut it up into about ten, twelve pieces, and we all got a taste of the banana. We never seen or heard of it.

MILTON: Some of us didn't take the skin off, either.

MAX: (he laughs) And also, there was also, at day you sat around. Ellis Island, I remember, was this way. Where you slept was areas, but then during the daytime it was immense buildings, and all you did was with benches, and swept. One sight, I'll never forget, is when the black people came and they swept the place, whatever it is. Us kids were scared. We never seen a black person in our life. And we kind of didn't know what to say or what to do, you know. When you come from a different, from a country where you never seen one, and you never read about it, you never, nobody even told you about it, uh, you see, we had some kind of a fear. Until we came to Cleveland, we lived next door, they were the nicest people we ever lived next door to, black people. To this day I got a black neighbor. You know, they're the nicest people that you'd want to live next to.

MILTON: I remember parts of the train trip from New York to Cleveland, which then became our home, because our grandparents lived in Cleveland, as did an uncle of ours and others. And we were introduced to chewing gum on that train trip. At least I was, and I think one or more of my brothers or sisters. And we were given the sticks. And just as with bananas, we didn't eat the papers, but I remember, in my case, I just chewed it for a while and then swallowed it. And the people who gave it to us were laughing. These were already people from the United States who were, uh, then after getting to Cleveland, one of the first things I remember, it was absolute magic, was going into a store of some kind where there were a lot of bright lights, and this wonderful smell of chocolate. And somebody had bought me, or given me, a piece of a Hershey chocolate bar. And something about the dark brown wrapping paper, and being unwrapped, and then the silver foil around it, made it appear as if I were in some kind of palace or kingdom. This was the greatest treat in the world, given this chocolate to taste. And I thought I'd never experience anything like that again in my life. It was one of the real high points.

MAX: Uh, when we got to the depot in Cleveland coming from New York, naturally, my uncle is the only one who came to New York. My grandparents stayed in Cleveland awaiting our arrival. Anyway, we got to the depot there, and as we left Europe we had, our mother's

parent, which are our maternal grandparents. My grandfather had a long beard and that's all I knew how a grandfather was supposed to be. We got to the depot in Cleveland, here my grandfather comes in cleanly shaven and I thought to myself that's not what a grandparent should be. Never, my father had a Van Dyke beard, as you'll notice on the picture. As they grew older, most of the people there, at that time, actually grew beards, didn't bother shaving. Well, he was Americanized, my grandfather, my father's father. He comes in, and here comes in a grandfather with cleanly shaven, clean cut, and I figure, when we left Europe from the town of Kovel, there were some people there that told us, "You're going to America, say hello to an uncle of mine. He lives in a..." We thought we'd meet him on the way, we'll get to America, that's where he's going to be, not realizing what America is and how large an area it is, compared to what people were used to, if you know what I mean. That we at the time only knew how it was. Now, after we got here, my father, uh, had no trade, and he couldn't find nothing to do. There was my parents, and seven children, and each one wanted to eat and had to eat. So we had a rough time in America, which we thought was going to be such a wonderful land. So we all had to do as we learned a few English words, we all went to work in different places. A dollar a day, whatever we could find. My older brother, myself, and my younger sister before long went to work. And we also went to school, by the way, to learn how to speak English. And we started, and, uh, elementary schools, so we can, a few weeks to learn as much as we can in the English language.

MILTON: One of the things I remember early on, uh, well, very early on because we arrived just days before Christmas, and I never remember, uh, anyone celebrating a Christmas in the old country. First of all, I was that young, secondly we were Jewish and didn't celebrate Christmas. But here it was the United States, a large city like Cleveland. And somehow or other I wound up with one of these little glass, the hollow glass Santa Clauses filled with candy. There again, that was a magical thing. And I thought, again, that was the greatest thing in the world. Uh, I remember a conflict in that there were many people who came to our house where we lived in an apartment house, to see us because we were suddenly here nine people at one time, which was unusual in itself, coming from the old country and coming here and being visited by many people, most of them having been in this country for quite a long time and, of course, smiles and laughter and welcoming. But the conflict was that certain other people, especially youngsters, teased us and called us greenhorns. That was an expression used by a lot of people in the United States, especially those born here, to describe

people just coming over from the old country. And it was a taunting thing, a thing that was meant to get your goat. So I was confused. Here people were welcoming us with open arms, on the other hand others coming around and saying we didn't belong here, or were greenhorns.

MAX: That's, like you said, most of the kids, I think, I remember them, like my wife to this day says, "Children can be very cruel." As you've seen in your day, uh, they like to tease one another. So what they find, you're too short, you're too tall, you're too fat, too skinny, and so on. So that was one of the things, because we didn't understand them until we finally, uh, learned different words every day. We picked it up as we went along. We, I mean, in my case, I had quite a bit of schooling. The only thing I needed was the language to pick up here. I only went to school here for about two-and-a-half years, and I quit. I had to go to work. As soon as I learned how to speak and so on, because all the other subjects I had. Arithmetic, whatever it is, history. Well, history you learn as you, if you read, and whatever it is. So the older ones, my brother, older brother, myself, uh, did Frances graduate high school?

MILTON: No.

MAX: No.

MILTON: Nor did Al.

MAX: Al didn't . . .

MILTON: I was the first one to graduate high school.

MAX: Okay. None of us graduated high school. In fact, we never, I never reached junior high school. I went through elementary school in two years, and I quit. I had a steady job, which I was able to help support the family. Like I said before, my father had no trade. He couldn't speak English. So he just couldn't do anything to make a living. So we all seen that's what we had to do to help support. Uh, it was a rough life. Uh, for a while there, we thought we were coming to America and it would be gold in the streets, laying waiting for you. But it wasn't that simple or easy, especially for our family coming here, which my father was unable to, he was no tradesman, if you know what I mean. He had no trade, nothing at all. And, like I said, whatever he did in Europe, he couldn't do here, because he didn't know where to travel, he didn't know where to go to buy calves, whatever it is, or anything else. So he had to go out and huckster, "huckster" meaning to buy fruit in the wholesale market, and sell it retail to, house to house.

MILTON: Buy it with a horse and wagon.

MAX: Yeah. That's the only way he knew, whatever it was.

MILTON: Yeah. Some of the realities of living set in not too long after we came here, after the initial euphoria of coming to this country and seeing these relatives and being loved and adapted. After this reality that Max is talking about set in starting with my father's inability to get the kind of work that would give him the kind of wages that would allow us to buy food and pay rent and the other necessities. So Max and my older brother George, as he described, very quickly had to start working. They were the two oldest. And there was sort of a joke around, sort of a bitter joke, that we didn't know whether they quit school either because they had to go to work or because they couldn't fit into the chairs that they, that they had at school. The chairs were too small for them, because here they were, uh, in their teens and still with, in the second or third grade, sort of spending a week or a month in each one of the grades as they kept going up, but after a short period of time having to go to work. And that's when it became difficult. Of course, we didn't, as young people we didn't realize it at the time, but looking back at it now from our perspective, I can imagine how my father must have felt being so, uh, impotent in being able to take care of his family here in this land of opportunity, where he could take better care of it back in the old country where there was a lot of hardship and persecution and so on. so it must have been very difficult for him especially. But, uh, as many other families did we, as Max has said many times, we did the best we could. We endured and, like many others, we kept working and working and chipping away at it until even experiencing the Great Depression that occurred not too many years after we got here. We managed. It was a great experience. I wish our children could have shared that with us.

MAX: Not that they should live that way, if you know what I mean. There's, you wouldn't want to see it again, like I said. But it's a good experience. You learn a lot from it. Like I always said, especially our immediate family, our parents, or my, our parents never insisted that we go out to work and help to support the family. How should I say, we were old enough or wise enough, whatever, we seen that, hey, there's younger mouths to feed, so we all went out, as each one became twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old, each one of us tried to hustle, or get a job, bring in a few dollars to the family, so we can help support, feed. The biggest thing was the feeding of the family. You know, there's nine mouths to feed. So, uh, you know, you don't, like Milt said before, people came to visit us to see seven children and their

parents come all together. That was almost unheard for. Usually the father, I mean, the male used to come out here and bring out his wife and a few children. But in our case it was my grandparents that wanted to see us out here, and we, all of us, they didn't want their son only to come out, they wanted their son and his wife and children to come out here, all of us. And it took some money from my grandparents to bring us all out here.

PHILLIPS: In Cleveland, did you live in a Polish community?

MAX: No. It was a, uh, mostly Jewish community, mostly Jewish and Italian.

MILTON: It was pretty mixed. Yeah. We never took a poll, but I would say, maybe not the majority, but, uh, close to it, were probably Jewish families, at least in our relationship. But there were Catholics of a variety of different backgrounds, from Italy and, uh, Bulgarians . . .

MAX: Russians.

MILTON: There were blacks, there were a lot of Irish people around.

MAX: Coming back to what you said, we lived near a Polish area. After living in this country for a while, I asked a Hungarian person, I says, "How come," I says, "when the Hungarians get together they only speak Hungarian? They don't speak Jewish or they don't, I never hear them." So I asked him, "How come?" I know my, in my case, I never spoke English to my mother, only Jewish. That was my mother's tongue, if you know what I mean. That's the way we were raised and brought up. Now, the Hungarian, and maybe Roumanians, if you've heard, through the years, spoke only Roumanian or Hungarian. He says to me, "Look," he says, "our parents and grandparents were born there, so that's all we know." We actually, our family and similar families, we were actually were what they called the wandering Jew. We never lived long enough in Poland, or, we lived part of Russia, part of Poland as the wars, from the First World War to the second, it changed. We actually were what they call "the wandering Jew." We didn't live too long in one place. We were either driven away, or we found a place where we were accepted, whatever it was. Even in the villages sometimes we weren't accepted. So that's why, when you asked did we live in a Polish area, my parents spoke Polish. All of us spoke only Yiddish, what you call, uh, Jewish.

MILTON: We do know that many Poles, for instance, who came here during the same years that others came here, did congregate in what were called Polish neighborhoods or Polish areas. And, uh, they did that, just as we did,

to be with your own kind. You felt more secure, you felt more comfortable there. And they had that much in common. With Jewish people it was different. Although they were, uh, citizens, if we were allowed to be citizens, of Poland, we were also Jewish people, and that was our strength, or our security. So Jews of Polish background and of Russian background and Hungarian and Czechoslovakian, and so on, all lived pretty much in the same area. So there's that, uh, that type of difference. A point here, Max was talking before about the need for young people to go to work at an early age. Our family was not alone in this. There were many others who were faced with the same needs, and who did the same thing. So we didn't think that we were that unusual or that, uh, that much in need. Many of our friends were doing the same thing, and that's the way we related.

PHILLIPS: Okay. I think if there's anything else that we should say. Otherwise we'll wrap it up.

MAX: Well, we moved from Cleveland to Los Angeles. Uh, and different times, as early as 1929, my older brother moved out here ten years, you came here ten years later.

MILTON: 1939.

MAX: Yeah. And then Al came here right after you.

MILTON: 1940.

MAX: '40. We all moved here, including my parents, all moved out to California. And whoever's alive are still living in California with our children, grandchildren. We haven't reached any great-grandchildren yet, and that's where we are today. And I guess that's it. I hope it covers enough. Whatever it is, it'll be good listening to it, how to say, when we sit down and listen to it. Uh, we, I think we brought out all the different points how we lived from the day we were born until this day.

PHILLIPS: Okay. that's the finish with Milton and Max, who you just heard speaking last, Shatsky, interview number 408 [DP-34]. Thank you, gentlemen.