EI-106
ESTHER ZARKIN ROSOFF
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RUSSIA, 1914 **RESIDENCES: RUSSIA: LUSK**
AGE 7 **US: BOSTON, MA**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Esther Zarkin Rosoff. I'm in Brookline, Massachusetts, at Mrs. Rosoff's home. And it's October 6, 1991. Mrs. Rosoff arrived at seven-and-a-half years of age from Lusk, L-U-S-K, Russia in June 1914.

ROSOFF: Right.

LEVINE: I'm very happy to be here, and we'll begin by my asking you your birth date.

ROSOFF: December 2nd, 1906.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, were you born in Lusk?

ROSOFF: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you lived there for the . . .

ROSOFF: For the whole time, because my father's father, mother, and he had three brothers and a sister, all lived there. And so he was the first one, even though he wasn't the oldest, he was the first one that told his father that he wanted to go to America. And his father said, "Why? Aren't you happy here?" He said, "No. I can't make a living for my wife and my children because I don't know enough Russian, and when I went to go to one of the schools they wouldn't take me because I was Jewish. So I am going to Boston, America. My wife has a sister that's married and lives in Boston, and she wrote to her and said I could come and sleep on a folding bed in the kitchen. And that's what happened. That's when he left. He left before I was born because my brother was, his birthday was December 1901. They were married in December 1900. So he stayed here for the four years, and then he came back to Russia and I, and my mother, naturally, became pregnant and I was born. Then he came again. I don't know exactly whether I was three years old or four. I don't remember. But when he went back the third time he told my mother that when he saves up enough money to bring her and the son and his daughter he will send them tickets. And that's how we came here to Boston. But, actually, we came to New York in the . . .

LEVINE: The boat?

ROSOFF: In the ship. And he must have taken a train and came to New York, because he met us at the gates. That I remember. And at the gates, I don't know whether I remembered, but my mother said, "That's your father." And I was all excited, and I started to yell. And the man that was interviewing my mother asked her a few

questions and she answered. Then he turned to me and said, "What's your name?" And for a minute I was bashful, I suppose. So my mother said, "Esther." And he says, "No, I want her to answer." And I said, "My name is Esther." And, of course, it took a while. I don't know whether it was an hour or more to go through the customs at that time. And when everything was ready my father took us on the train and we came to Boston. And our first apartment was at 37 Joy Street. That's right near Myrtle Street, near the Statehouse. And there when I grew up a couple of years later I used to go rollerskating around the State house in Boston. And I went to the school on Myrtle Street. My brother, at that time, even though he didn't know English, he was bar mitzvah at that time. And he was a smart boy, and he took an exam, and they accepted him in Boston Latin School. And from there he wanted to go to Harvard but my father, he was accepted, my father didn't have the money. So he went to, he graduated English high school, and by that time he decided that he would like to be a pharmacist, so he went to the pharmacy school in Boston, graduated with honors, and the rest of his life he had a pharmacy. Met somebody in Pennsylvania, and that's where he settled. And he has one daughter, and now has three grandchildren and the third one is a boy that's going to be bar mitzvah in a couple of months, but my brother isn't here. So that takes care of my brother. As far as I was concerned, I went to the school on Myrtle Street. And at that time they had groups at the very beginning. Three, four in one little group, four, five in another. And as you, you know, got to understand the English language, they would promote you to the next group. And so in Baldwin School, I was there for four years, and we lived at 37 Joy Street. My father, I didn't tell you anything

about my father.

LEVINE: Go ahead.

ROSOFF: When he came here and he stayed with my aunt Finkelstein, who was his sister-in-law, my mother's sister, he didn't know what to do because in Russia he made the phyl, the lecterns that you put on your head and you're very religious. My grandfather was a rabbi, and he had four boys and one girl, and my father was the third boy. And so it was a very religious home. And so he said, "I've got to learn something to get a job." And so he looked around, and my Aunt Rose, that was her name, Rose, tried to introduce him to a few people. My father was very good with his hands all his life. He lived to be ninety-six. And he got a job in a place where they were sewing caps. You know, in those days, 1914, 1916, the men wore mostly caps, not hats, but caps. And so he learned. He was very good at it. And in about five years he felt that he could really do it himself. So he wrote to one of his brothers, the next one older than he, and he, of course, had a family with two daughters, and he asked him if he would come to Boston. He would help him, and take him into business. He explained to him what it would be, and even though he wasn't as anxious as my father was, he came here, and they lived, when they came in he got them an apartment in Dorchester, which is Massachusetts. And he had three children, two girls and a boy. One of, the second girl is still living now, and she lives in Michigan somewhere, my first cousin, Jenny. So he took them, he showed them how to make the caps, but he also taught him how to cut the material. And my father showed him, he made, you know, it was in sections, the

caps were in sections. So it took six or eight sections around with a visor. I remember when I was very young after school I used to go and they had a snap machine, with the visor had to be snapped, I used to do it. So anyway, he taught him how to cut it, and my father bought an electric machine, showed him how, and he opened a place himself in Edinburgh Street in Boston. And they made pretty good, you know. And they made livings. And we were still in the West End, and he used to walk from Edinburgh Street to Joy Street on his lunch hour, have dinner and walk back. And in the meantime, after I think it was four years, my sister Evelyn, who is gone a long time now, she was born there, right on Joy Street. And we lived three flights up and had one of those fire escapes, you know, that in case of a fire you go down into an alleyway. Anyway, by that time, a few years later, my father felt that the shop was going well and he was making a living and he had first ten people, then twenty people, and he had a marvelous hands. So that if he got somebody that was, that really wanted to learn, he would teach him. And so by the time, oh, I should say, should I say about twenty years later he had fifty machines and help. And he bought a little house on Glenway Street. We lived on 137 Glenway Street in Dorchester, a two-family house, and we lived on the second floor. My mother, when she was single, was a dressmaker, a very, very fine dressmaker. And so she used to make my clothes, or if somebody wanted to come in and she'd do some, you know, alterations for them, she'd earn some money that way. And we lived like that for quite a while until I was, I graduated grammar school, and when my father bought that house on Glenway Street I was ready to get into high school. And at that time they had seventh, eighth and ninth grades together, and three

years of high school. So I already was ready for the ninth grade. So I went into the ninth grade, and then I transferred to Dorchester High School, and that's where I graduated in 1925, June 1925. My brother, who was naturally older than I was, was going to, was through with Latin school, and he went into that pharmacy college. I think it's still here in Boston. And I graduated the high school, I really wanted to go to B.U. I didn't know what for, but I said I would try it for a year, but things at that time were, it was 19, well, the Depression started in around 1926 slowly, and I got through in 1925, graduated high school. My father said, "I'd love to send you, but I can only afford to send one. And since he's a boy and he's older, I can't do it." So I wasn't angry. I used to go into his shop, do his bookkeeping, and use that snap machine and help him out, and I earned a little money that way. He'd give me an allowance. And then I used to come in, I didn't come in regular time because I wasn't in a hurry. Plus the fact there wasn't a whole day's work for me. So one morning coming from Glenway Street I took the streetcar going into his shop. I bought a paper every morning. It was around eleven o'clock. I was reading the paper. And I see it said, "Bookkeeper Wanted." Well I was good with figures in high school too. I took everything that was required of me there, the bookkeeping, the French one year. What else did I take? I didn't take Latin because that was the college courses, but I took everything that was related to the bookkeeping department. So I said, "Well, I'll try it." And it was a raincoat manufacturing place. So I went up. It was one flight up. It was past City Hall going towards North Station. I got off at the last stop, and I walked down. And this man's name was Max Frelack, the owner. And he had a partner, but he was younger, so he

did the hiring. So it was a little after eleven, so I said, "I'm a bookkeeper." He says, "Have you had experience?" I says, "Well, I graduated high school and I was doing my father's bookkeeping, and he's running a shop." And I told him my name. And he said, "Well, I'm sorry. I already hired somebody." I said, "Okay, don't feel bad. Thank you." And I went away. I went to my father's for the afternoon and I did what I had to and when I came home at five o'clock I gave him, oh, he took my name and address and telephone number. My mother, may her soul rest in peace, said to me, "You have a telephone call from somebody." I said, "Who?" She says, "I don't know. I wrote it down in Jewish." All right. I know how to write Jewish because my father felt (she clears her throat) excuse me, that I should know. So I skipped that part because I went to Hebrew school after the grammar. We get out at three thirty. At four o'clock I used to go to the grammar, to the Hebrew school. So I know how to read Hebrew. I don't understand everything. It's impossible for me, but anyway, I can write, I still can write Jewish to this day. And I took the telephone number and called up Mr. Frelack, and I said, "This is Esther Zarkin." And he says, "Yes, I remember you from this morning, and would you come in tomorrow so I can interview you again because I told the girl I hired I don't think she'll fit in." I says, "Okay, I'll be there at eleven." I came in, he interviewed me and hired me. So I stayed there for, oh, I think about three years, 1926 to 1928, just two years. But he was married to a Rosoff daughter. These Rosoff people were, my father-in-law had come a year before we did with my husband, may his soul rest in peace also, and his sister, who was older than he. And there were seven other children that were left in Russia with my mother-in-law, may her soul rest in peace. And they

didn't come until 1921. So they were caught right at the time when you couldn't get any tickets or any way to go to the United States. And he naturally lived with his wife and his sister, no, not his sister. My husband and my husband's sister, who was older, they lived together. And at the time I think that in 1925 things were booming in Florida, in Miami. So they got a little, a few hundreds of dollars together, and they sent my husband down there to see if it was possible to open up a little market. So he went down there, at the time. I didn't know. In 1926 he came back and he came to my brother-in-law, who wasn't my brother-in-law, Max Frelack, my boss. And he walked in and he introduced me to him and I'll show you his picture if you want to see it. He was very handsome, and where he had been in Florida he was all nice and brown. And then a short time after, a couple of months, he started dating me and asked me to go out, and I did. But as the years went on the, in 1926 the United States, everything was getting very bad. And so we used to go together and he'd say, "I don't know what's going to happen. It's, you know, quite bad." But he had one market, and it was called Town Hall Market in Brookline, in Brookline, uh, right on Washington Street, 333. That was his market. And next door was an empty market, so he decided to rent that and also, you know, do something about it. But as far as business was concerned in the United States, things were going down because money was very short and, look, people couldn't get jobs. And so we kept on seeing each other, but he did tell me when things get a little better we will marry. In the meantime, before, we got married on June 17th, 1930. Before that, four years before, so it was 1926, his mother in Russia is a very, my mother-in-law, who is a very, very, well, what shall I say. She was really

very, I don't know whether she had done business when she was single with her family, but she was a very clever woman. And here she had seven children with her, but she dealt in furs, and she saved up enough money, plus the fact that my father-in-law was working, my son, my husband was working, and they sent her money, and she came here to the United States. When she, before she came in, my sister-in-law, Ethel Frelack, who was my sister-in-law, my husband, bought a two-family house on 136 Arlington Street in Watertown. And they took one apartment. My sister-in-law by that time had two boys, two children. That was my boss. And upstairs seven, eight, ten went upstairs into a five-room apartment. And that's how it started. So by, if I married in 1930, by 1929 I got this ring. (she shows her ring) And we were married in a temple. Things were still bad around everywhere, business. And businesses were closing, and my husband had to close that shop. But in the two years that my father-in-law had come here, he took at that time a horse and a small wagon with one of the boys. They would go to the market and buy cukes, and drop them in a barrel with water and salt and garlic and all that, and they'd go to Blugel Avenue, starting from Mattapan, all the way down to Dudley Street. And little by little it did something. My mother-in-law, on the other hand, with my sister-in-law, who were in Watertown, they wanted to do something, they went to Watertown Square at that time and got a barn, an old barn. And they got a hold of, when you grate something, you know, one of those, by hand, you grate any kind of vegetable. There weren't, evidently there must have been electric ones, but they couldn't afford to buy it. And she and my sister-in-law Ethel, in the barn, and one of the boys would buy horseradish, and they would clean it up and make it and

that's how the Rosoff Pickles and Horseradish business started, see. And, of course, when things got better they bought an old building, and my husband already was out of the store, so he went in with them, and a couple of the boys were in high school because they were young. One went to college, and one worked for somebody else. After all, there were seven boys. And we didn't move to Watertown. We, when we first got married we moved into Brighton for one year. And when things were bad I couldn't pay the rent, and it was only forty dollars a month. So my dad said to me, "Look, until things get better, you come and stay with us." And they had three bedrooms, so we moved into one of the bedrooms. And down, he took, we had new furniture, so he cleaned up a room in the basement, and we put it down there and we covered it with sheets, and we stayed in their house for two years. And in that two years I gave birth to my son. So then we got a hold of a one bedroom, a small apartment on American Legion Highway, and we moved in there by ourselves, and we stayed there for quite a while. But my dad was a very conscientious person, and on his side where that, the caps already weren't so good, and he we very unhappy. The, what do you call it, people that, you know, what was the name of it? They tell you what to do and how many you can, how many people you can hire, and how many people you can't hire. What's the word that I want? And they were telling him what to do, and he didn't want to take it. So from his fifty machines that he was running it went down to forty, down to thirty, and then the rest of the people struck, see. Only two were conscientious, a woman and a man, that stayed with my father. And by that time my father, while he had the fifty machines and was running and working day and night, he saved up a little

money and because the financial situation in Boston and all over the United States were bad, if you could sign your name and give your word that you would take care of a building, they would give it to you. And when they, you know, when they interviewed my father, he felt, they felt that he was reliable, and so they gave him 100 and 102 Wambeck Street, Roxbury. That's where we were married from. And he had three, six, twelve neighbors. I would collect the money for him. I would make the receipts for him. I'd deposit things, and take care of everything for him. So that went through quite a few years until things got so bad that people couldn't pay their rents down there. So from, if you know the section from Wabeck Street and Harold, right on the corner, 100 Wabeck, my father had saved up doing little things, and he went to 72 and 74 Elmhill Avenue in Roxbury, and went to the bank. I went with him. And I told them how he had this building and people weren't paying their rental. And since this section is a little higher up and people are more progressed, that he would like to leave that building, walk out and he'll give you money every single month as I collect the rent, I will help him. By that time I lived in one of the apartments and helped him along. And my husband was with the Rosoffs and he went on the road. He would go to Worcester, to Springfield. He had to stay over. And whatever that little shop would make, you know, would buy pickles, throw it into the brine, and make horseradish and tomatoes. They did that, too. And so they would take it, and then the next boy, the youngest one, would also, bought a little old car and he would go to another section and sell to stores while my father was moving over to the real estate. And he, if anything was broken he had wonderful hands. Never, how did he know when all he did in Russia was study Hebrew, and his father

was, where did he get all this? He would fix bathrooms, toilets. He would fix sinks. He would paint. He would paper. And in that way he only had a colored janitor who would take the rubbish, and he would attempt to all this himself. And that's how we got along. And after, you know, I moved in with them for the two years and gave birth and had my little son. In the meantime he was just marvelous. I don't know how he did it, but because I helped him with the Elmhill Avenue house, he had a couple of thousand dollars. And he said, "On 37 Schuyler Street there's a two-family house, and attics, that are being sold, and let's go to the bank. And if they'll sell it, I'll sign for it, you'll sign for it, Sam will sign for it," that was my husband's name, "We'll take it." And that's what we did. So we moved in. I collected the rent there. I used to go to Elmhill Avenue and collect the rent for him. By that time he was old already and he used to fix the things in the house, that's all. My mother, in the mean time, was a very sick person and she, you know, ailed. So it wasn't good, you know. She couldn't help him much. But she, let's see now, she died in 19, you still have room? She died in 1950. So where he had, you know, the real estate, he said, "I'm going to sell Elmhill Avenue. You stay here in Roxbury. You've got the little house. You've got an apartment for yourself. Sam's making a little living." And I always wanted to go and buy like a farm, but not really a farm, you know, just chickens and a barn. And my sister, who was much younger, had married, in the meantime, all this, and her husband had a shoe retail store in Worcester, and that's where she landed and gave birth to two girls. Those girls now, my sister went very early, and then her husband went. So that one of them lives here in Brookline and one lives a little ways out of town, but they work and they're perfectly okay. And so to

come back to my life, when we, my father wanted this little farm, he called it. My sister from Worcester had gone around a different way in the woods and see. So she saw a little house that's two-family that would be fine for him. And he said he saved up two thousand dollars and he wanted to go there. In the mean time my children already, in the meantime had my son, my daughter got married very young. She's married now since 1956. She was twenty years old when she got married. The following year my son, who's two years older than her, got married the following year. And he graduated Harvard when he got married and went to the Jewish Theological Seminary, and he's a rabbi. He is named after my grandfather, the rabbi, but that has nothing to do with it. It just happened that way that he liked it, and that was his vocation. So now he's, he lives in New Jersey, married somebody that graduated, what do you call it? The college, uh, the name leaves me.

LEVINE: Rutgers?

ROSOFF: No, not, uh, from New Jersey. The college here. She lived in Florida, but she came here to, it leaves me. And he met her and they got married and after he graduated the Jewish Theological Seminary after Harvard he had to go four years there. And he got a job in New Jersey, and they're still there. And they have two daughters and a son, God bless them. So I have seven grandchildren. My daughter got married to a doctor who lived in New York. He came to Tufts Med and she met him. And they married, and he went into the army for two years. My son went into the army, too. After they finished college they had to give two years to the army. So Marty gave two years

to the army and then they got a job in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and they're still there, and they have four, God bless them, four children. Three girls and a boy. One of the girls is here, the oldest granddaughter lives here, and she graduated college. She got her master's already, and it's in the medicine field. And David works for Financial Fidelity. He's married and has two little girls, and I'll show you the two little girls. They're adorable. Then the second girl married somebody in New York and she has two little boys, and they're also, Peter is a Weinstein, and his family is in the financial business, so they live there. And there's another daughter that's getting married in March, so I have a wedding there. And, you know, if I wasn't, I took a down this past year. I wasn't well. That's why I didn't know whether to let you come or not, but today, thank God, I feel all right. Some mornings I get up and I just don't want to see anybody. But I've had so much nachas, and everybody's educated, school, all kinds of, my daughter-in-law who teaches, who's in the synagogue that my son is in, it's twenty-six years, last year twenty-five years they gave them a weekend, like a wedding, and they gave him a gift to go to Israel. This was, he's been there four times. This was the fifth time. Gave him a gift to go to Israel for a month. And she, for her it was Brandeis, she graduated Brandeis, and now since they were in New Jersey and she kept studying and she's the principal of the Hebrew school, but she got her PhD on the side, besides the children growing up, and besides taking care of the house, and besides everything. So I have a very, very intellectual family all around. But unfortunately I didn't. Look, I came right at the time where I couldn't go to college. My father couldn't send me. But that's all right. I kept studying on the side. And I belonged to every organization you can think of. I'm a

life member in Hadassa. I'm a life member in (?), one of the biggest temples in Newton. I'm there forty-nine years, and because I broke my hip and I couldn't drive any more, I had to stop because my son-in-law is a surgeon and he wouldn't let me drive any more. I joined the temple here in Beth Zion. I'm a life member there. I'm a life member in Hebrew College. Oh, and another thing I want, I'm really, not very many people have children like that. That's why I'm really telling you. When my son went to Harvard, he went to Hebrew College. (a telephone rings) To Hebrew College at the same time . . .

LEVINE: Wait! (break in tape)

ROSOFF: Her position now is the president of an Eye Bank in Ann Arbor.

LEVINE: Oh, wonderful.

ROSOFF: Besides that, you know, my son-in-law is so, the surgeon there, since they left the army, that's where they went and they're still there. Coming back to my son, I want to finish there. He graduated Harvard. He was going to Hebrew College. It's down the street here on Beacon Street. He was valedictorian of his class, and they gave him a trip to Israel. And from Harvard he went to, while he was going to Harvard, he went to the Hebrew College. He'd have to, he'd leave the house at seven in the morning, go to classes at Hebrew College, at Harvard. He'd come back here at three in the afternoon to the Hebrew College and he finished the four years, both colleges together.

LEVINE: Wonderful, wonderful. Let me ask you just a few specifics. Do you remember anything of your little town in Russia?

ROSOFF: Only that where my grandfather lived, and the wide street, and going back a couple of streets there was a market, and there were little, little, uh, what shall I say? Just small stores. You'd go up a couple of steps and they'd sell potatoes, and the next one would sell onions, and the next one was selling bread, you know. No, bread, not bread, they'd bake their own bread. Flour, and they would sell materials. Materials all over, because everybody was, my mother made all my clothes, her clothes, anybody that wanted. They'd make their own things. They'd bake their own bread. They'd bake their own cakes. They'd, noodles. When my mother came here, when we came here in 1914 at 37 Joy Street, we had a wire. What do you call it? When you open the window you could go on a case . . .

LEVINE: Screens?

ROSOFF: To walk downstairs. We were up the third floor, and there was a stairway to go down in case of fire. So there was a little, oh, probably a 15 x 20 thing. And my mother bought big, big, uh, crockery things. She made sauerkraut herself. She'd make sweet and sours and put it in there all covered for the whole winter, and everything was covered. She would bake, her own bread, was nothing, cakes, was nothing. She made her own noodles. She made her own fafel. Everything that now you can go and buy. It wasn't packaged in 1914, '16, '18, and you didn't have the money to do that. So everything you had to do was flour and yeast, and yeast and flour. And you did your

own sewing, and you did your own cooking. And we, at Joy Street we had that black stove with coal and a big chimney. And I wished you could see how it looked. It always shined and had a, it had a finish here and it was always shining. And by three-thirty when I came home from Baldwin School my mother, who had the four rooms, my father's brother, who he brought over, lived in the house. I was in the dining room on a couch, and they had the bedroom. My sister was in a little crib and the kitchen was clean. The cooking was done, the baking was done. All those things. And now all you have to do is, you know, all right. I can't say that I made my own noodles . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

ROSOFF: I bake cake. Now, today, I didn't feel well all week, so I couldn't make it. But you know what birds are? They're long, little pieces with raisins and nuts and everything. I would have made some. My grandson, David, and his wife was non-Jewish. And because she came into the family she changed. And they have two little, two little girls. That's one of them with me standing there. And the older one is over there, the first. That's my first great-grandchild. So I have two great-grandchildren, two great-grandsons, seven grandchildren. My daughter's four and my son's three.

LEVINE: Now, can you remember anything that your mother taught you. In other words, ideas that she gave you, that she thought was important for you to remember or to live by? Do you remember any teachings from either your mother or your father?

ROSOFF: Well, the only thing that I can remember is my dad's always said that your word should be law, and he said, "I don't even have to sign a paper, if I give my word." He said, "Don't ever tell lies. Always be truthful even if it hurts, and even if you have to be punished." He was very strict on that. And as far as my mother was concerned, I don't know what to tell you. She was very talented. She, naturally, came from a very poor home, but she loved music. And I took her to Pops quite a few times. When she worked, when she was single, sixteen, seventeen years old, she had to walk a couple of miles to where she worked as a dressmaker. And she used to walk by, she said, it was ten o'clock at night, coming home. There somebody was practicing a violin and a piano, and she'd stay, she said, "No matter how cold it was I used to stay under the windows to listen to the music." So you have it inside you. I love music. I went to Pops. I used to go Friday afternoon religiously. And then with my husband we used to go Saturday nights. Now when I get a chance I still get a ticket and go. You can't go on the, excuse me, on the streetcar. I'd take a cab. I'd rather go once there than anything else. What else can I tell you? And that's how we brought up our children.

LEVINE: Okay. Do you remember the trip at all, on the ship, that you came over to Ellis Island?

ROSOFF: All I know is that I was sick and everybody else was sick.

LEVINE: Now, were you down in the hold? Were you . . .

ROSOFF: Yeah. We were way down because evidently my dad bought the least

expensive tickets he could buy for the three of us.

LEVINE: So it was, was it a long voyage, do you remember?

ROSOFF: It was three weeks. That I remember. It was three weeks. And then he came to Boston, from Boston to New York to pick us up. He had that three rooms, one, two, three, four rooms, three flights up, in 137 Joy Street. I once was, you know, on the other side there of the State house, and I went up and went down to Joy Street, and stood in front of the building and looked at it and saw all the, in the alleyway, you know, in case of a fire. And people living there, and down the foot of the hill there was a police wagon with horses. There isn't any now. I wished I could remember more to tell you. But it, all I can remember is that both my father and mother, even if they didn't have anything, they tried to make whatever they had, and they said, "Never, never take what doesn't belong to you. Never lie, do those things, you know, and you'll be all right. Even if it hurts," my dad used to say, "you've got to tell me the truth." And that's, evidently my grandfather was a rabbi. He was a very learned man. And he, in Russia, had a very big house. That I remember. The windows used to be very high because from all the four sons that my grandfather had, his mother, her name was Riva, because my sister's named after her, that's how I remember, died. They left all the children from the different families, and we were standing on chairs because we couldn't see over, and the procession of the funeral went by the house and they told us to stay and look at it and remember that that's your great-grandmother that's saying goodbye to you and she's going away. And there were a whole bunch of kids there. So from the upbringing

to my father to me, to my children, that's how they are. I am very, very lucky. My children have never, sure, my daughter smoked for a while, but she doesn't smoke now. But we never had any trouble that, you know, that we were ashamed of. And our name, Rosoff, I don't know whether you know it, is very well-known. There are some Rosoffs, but they're not the R&S Pickle Works. I was going to show you, I have a little jar of horseradish that still goes. If you walk into the Star Market, the Stop 'n' Shop, you'll see a round, large jar of sauerkraut, and it'll say Rosoff's.

LEVINE: So it continues to . . .

ROSOFF: So they, when my husband died a long time ago, he was the president because he was the oldest, plus the fact that I'm not ashamed to say, he was the smartest. Now, the youngest is still living, and there's one, two in between. One lives around here, and one lives in Florida. But the company was sold, but it was sold. At that time I wasn't interested because look, I naturally felt terrible. My husband was sick and died, so but I know the name still goes on, and they sold that name and it goes on the horseradish and it goes on the sauerkraut and on the pickles in the jars. And R&S is, R&S is Rosoff and Sons. See?

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

ROSOFF: That's how they used to say it. R&S, R&S. And they had a large factory, and they made, of course they worked awfully, awfully hard. It's a very dirty business. And first you have to go to New Hampshire to see the growers. And if my husband was

going and my children were older I used to go a couple of weeks with him. Or in Florida you had to go to the growers also, bring them seed, give them money, and talk to them and tell them what to do. And they would ship it by Frigidaire into the company, and that's, mostly this is done during the five summer months, and it goes, it keeps on going, see, through the year. So that the rest of the boys sold, they were on the road, and they sold. And a couple were inside. One had to be downstairs in the basement. One was in the office. My husband was the president. He was in the office, but he was on the road if he had it. At the very beginning he used to go to Worcester, all the way up, and different things and that's the way it went. So everybody had to take a little part of it.

LEVINE: Well, now, is there anything else that you can think of about either what you remember from Russia, or the trip over, or Ellis Island itself? Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came in?

ROSOFF: Yes, yes, I do. I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty. In fact, I saw the Statue of Liberty afterwards, naturally, with my husband, we went. But I saw it, I remember seeing it. That's why I used to say, "When you get time and we can go, I'd love to go and see it." And we did, we went to see it.

LEVINE: Did you know what it meant when you were coming over here when you were seven-and-a-half? No.

ROSOFF: Oh, no. No, I didn't. No, I didn't, really. But the, my mother's sister's home, where my father stayed, they had one son, Finkelstein. He graduated Harvard

and MIT and he was a chemist. So he took me into school the first day here on Myrtle Street, see. And I remember him. And he worked for the government for nineteen years. And then he, you know, got older, and one of his children went to Israel, and then the second one did, so he went there with his wife and he died there. But he was a brilliant person. So, you know, the family, thank God, were all educated and all, well, shall I say higher up. Not with money, but with honesty and with doing things. My husband worked so hard. You know what he did when he had a day off on Sunday? He'd ask somebody in the, you know, the workers, to wash one of the big trucks, delivery trucks, and he'd call people that have small children. I don't know what you call them now, that belonged and never go out of town in the summer, in July. And he'd make up benches for them, and he'd pick them up for the day, and he'd buy them, you know, candy and ice cream and stuff, and take them out. But he had that truck washed and did everything. He was Chancellor Commander of the Pythian office that he belonged to. We did charity work. What can I tell you? I was, I worked for sisterhood. I'm on the honorary board in (?) of Sisterhood. They haven't taken off my name even though I'm not there anymore. Why? Because I was treasurer for nine years. I never took one cent for stamps. That was my contribution. I did whatever I could, you know, to help, because we felt that we were fortunate. Even though we weren't wealthy, I felt that we were fortunate. In having children, folks and all that.

LEVINE: Well, I think this is a good place to stop. I thank you very much for a wonderful story.

ROSOFF: I wished I could remember more. As I close my eyes I see all the stores lined up, you know, one after another. That's what I actually see. And we lived in the back. My grandfather lived here, and he had a, even though he was a rabbi, he couldn't make a living. And one of the very, very large rooms he had a school. And you know how they paid him? One child brought onions, one brought potatoes, one brought something, corn, one brought something. That's how they paid him.

LEVINE: Now, was there an anti-Semitic feeling in the little town you lived in Lusk, or not. Was it a mixed town?

ROSOFF: No. It was, well, that's why my father left. Because he wanted to, he wanted to learn Russian and he wanted to go to school and they wouldn't let him in. See? Now, my sister-in-law, in the other fact, they lived, I think, I don't know, in Minsk somewhere, and they were in a larger city. And when she came here she knew Russian. She could, my husband couldn't.

LEVINE: I see.

ROSOFF: See? And, so he was very upset. And he stayed and stayed and stayed, and he said to his father, "I can't make a living. I've got a wife and a family now. I've got to go to America and see what I can do."

LEVINE: I see. Well, he did very well. Thank you very much. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I've been talking with Mrs. Rosoff here in Brookline,

Massachusetts.