

**EI-1340**

**ISABEL BELARSKY**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE**

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**HISTORIAN'S NOTE. Also present along with Bertha Crystal, is Isabel Belarsky, and David Damischek [ph]**

LEVINE: Today (beautiful) is August, 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004. I am here in Battery Park City (yes) with Bertha Crystal, Isabel Belarsky, and (David Damischek)[ph] David Damischek[ph], and were all here to talk about Bertha and her family who visited Ellis Island--did not come through Ellis Island, but visited. And among the people they greeted at Ellis Island was Isabel Belarsky, and her father Sidor. Who's music we just heard. Uh--Bertha Crystal is 96 years old at the time of this interview, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Maybe we could start at the beginning if could say please your birth date and where you were born.

CRYSTAL: I was born (coughs) July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1908 in Philadelphia.

LEVINE: And what was your mothers name?

CRYSTAL: My mother's name Lifcha[ph] Lifshitz.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And your father?

CRYSTAL: My father was Gershon--Sh-his last name was Schwartz-Schwartz.

LEVINE: Ok, and where were they born? Your mother and your father.

CRYSTAL: Well uh, my father was born in uh-Romania. It--it was called Bessarabia.

LEVINE: Bessarabia, and it became Romania.

CRYSTAL: Romania

LEVINE: Uh-huh and...

CRYSTAL: And Uh-Lifcha[ph] was born in (in Kryzhopol) Kryzhopol it's a (same place where my father was born) village-it's really a village town (in the Ukraine) uh-in the Ukraine.

LEVINE: Okay, and uhm-now hold on were your mother and father? Were they married here or did they--

CRYSTAL: They were married there.

LEVINE: There.

CRYSTAL: Yes.

LEVINE: I see, and when did they come to this country do you know?

CRYSTAL: I think it must have been about 1899, about that.

LEVINE: So it's conceivable--

CRYSTAL: But my father came first--you know the custom was for the man of the family to make a home for his wife he came first with his eldest son and they found a-a- lovely h-h-ouse, and they furnished it they had all prepared for my mother to come here with her step children, they were not her children. And she had her own child a year old baby...when she came.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So it's conceivable then that your mother and father came through Ellis Island since it was open at that time, or you don't think so?

CRYSTAL: I don't know. I'm not sure.

LEVINE: Ok and...

CRYSTAL: They had their *landsleit*[countrymen] in Philadelphia, and they came to Philadelphia. They didn't know anyone and in-uh-in this country except the people who came from their home town.

LEVINE: I see, so it's possible they actually came into Philadelphia that's a possibility.

CRYSTAL: I think they did

LEVINE: Uh-huh okay. So uh what did your father do in the old country, and then here.

CRYSTAL: I don't know in the old country I think he would--his father was a wine maker and I think that he would manufactured certain material that were used for building, that was his-ah-he was very good at building too, he knew a lot about putting up structures.

LEVINE: And then...

CRYSTAL: And uh-in this country he came-became connected with a-a-shop that sold uh-who-that made uh-suits, men's suits, woolen suits. And he would buy the-what do they call the materials, the wool that was uh-that was cut off and he had a contract to sell them-sell it. So he had a contract with them to buy it, and a contract with people who bought it from him. In fact he had a-fr-a-partner, he-my father was a very good in-uh-arithmetic so he took care of the books and he managed it, but he had someone, a younger man who helped him.

LEVINE: Uh-huh and so did you grow up in Philadelphia?

CRYSTAL: Yes I did, until I was nineteen when I came to New York.

LEVINE: When you think about your childhood and growing up in Philadelphia what are the things you remember most about the place, or the community.

CRYSTAL: We grew up in a part of Philadelphia a very old part of ne-ne-near the Delaware river, and I was the youngest of the five by half brothers and sisters and then we were four in our family my mother's children. So I was spoiled youngest children-child of nine children. But it was a very happy childhood cause we lived near the Delaware River my mother would take us to-a-for-a boat ride ever-almost-every summer every day during the summer. We would go to a place on the other side of the Delaware River, it was part of Ne-New Jersey, and we'd have a picnic. We would have sandwiches, and something delicious--soups to eat. There was a play ground it was very very nice, and having a sister who's only two years older, was very nice. I always had companionship and I was always taken to meet all her friends--she was very proud of me, and she would show me off to all her friends. It was eh-her little sister.

LEVINE: And what was your temperament as a child growing up? How would you describe yourself?

CRYSTAL: I think I was--A happy child as I am now I accept hardships, and I didn't know that I was poor, that we had very little cause everyone was at that time. All our friends were we weren't any worse off than the others I never thought of myself as a poor child. The only thing I didn't like was my mother's clothes we--were which she never went out and bought traditional clothes for a young child, except shoes she would buy very good shoes, but she would use her old cl--ka her old ss--skirt and I still

remember that ugly brown skirt, with strips of tape fr-from the top to the bottom. Ah-she made it over for a dress for me, and a ugly dress, I was-- nobody dressed that way. And she would give this--I would--she would wash it of course, but I used the same dress everyday that I went to school, and I was clothes conscious. I was not happy about that, and she did not speak English.

LEVINE: What did she speak?

CRYSTAL: She spoke Yiddish, my father spoke Yiddish, and when I wanted to when I spoke English to her she says speak o--she would say speak only English to me. She didn't want me to speak Yiddish, I would speak to Yiddi--Yiddish in the house but she sto--she wanted to learn English, so she did as well as she could as she did to learn to speak Iddish--English. She even learned, went to school at night learned to read and write English, and she'd go travelling around by herself. She was not fearful she--even we were older-she even bought a business, she bought a store in another part of Philadelphia and she-she was a business woman.

LEVINE: What was--

CRYSTAL: (interject)Very aggressive.

LEVINE: Uh-huh what was--

CRYSTAL: And she helped her step children, one of the chi-there were five of them one of them wanted an education don't you think she borrowed money from her *landsleit*[countrymen] and sent them to school. So she paid for him, and she brought her younger brother Benjamin to this country, she helped him come here and I suppose she made a home for him and his

wife for a little while. His wife couldn't handle it when she had two children who had the measles. She brought them to our place my mother who had nine children take care--brought them to my mother to take care of. So my two cousins were in the same bed with my sister and me and it was wonderful we didn't mind getting--having the measles.(laughter)

CRYSTAL: It was a wonderful experience. When our friend was knocking at that door wanting to come and play with us, we says no, you can't play with us we have the measles! And we were so happy about it. (laughter)

CRYSTAL: We said it with great pride.

LEVINE: Well now why did you happen to leave Philadelphia when you were nineteen?

CRYSTAL: Because that's where the *landsleit* were. (laughs) She didn't know anybody. We didn't have any relatives in this country. No one.

LEVINE: (laughter) So when you left--

CRYSTAL: But she did have *landsleit*.

LEVINE: In Philadelphia

CRYSTAL: That's what they were called. Yeah, in Philadelphia. There was no place else in the country. Then she had a younger-another brother, who was born of a-her father married again, and his wife died in childbirth. Who do you think brought up the little baby, my mother. She had her three brothers, her father, now she had her baby. And she took care of him-his name is Nokim[ph] he came here with a wife-and he had his little-there child was born just about block and a half away from where we lived, and

I loved that baby, little Lina[ph]. I told uh-(laughs)my cousin here how I picked up this baby from that little bed, and I-and I-and they-I was only about four years old and everybody starts yelling. Put her down! And I just dropped her I go so excited (laughter) and I dropped the baby, but she was fine. She was so close the ground, and so was I so she couldn't have hurt herself, but she grew up to be just fine. She became an artist in fact. (laughs) She became a sculptor. Sculptress (laughs)

LEVINE: Where did you go when you left Philadelphia?

CRYSTAL: Oh I moved to New York, and I became secretary to my uncle Benjamin.

BELARSKY: The one that brought us to America.

CRYSTAL: Who was-he started-uh-he was the originator of the-of the cooperative Utah-Utah Poultry Producers Cooperative. And he had place for me in his-place down in Greenwich St. Not very far from here, and I came to a girls hotel on Eighty Third Street, it was so nice. Near Riverside Drive, and I had ready made friends I didn't have to know anybody else, but I had friends there.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of that hotel?

CRYSTAL: Oh it was not a hotel, It was a-It was a place. Simmons House. It was a Simmons House on Eighty Third Street. I think between West And-West End Avenue and the-uh Riverside Drive-and-drive.

LEVINE: So you came here...

CRYSTAL: (interjects)I was very happy there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh and then you worked for your Uncle Benjamin?

CRYSTAL: I worked for him for several years until I became, very pregnant.

LEVINE: (Laughs) Oh, I see.

CRYSTAL: (Laughs) And I had to leave. And my son was born.

LEVINE: Uh-huh Okay well um-how did you meet your husband?

CRYSTAL: Oh that's very complicated (laughter)

LEVINE: Um--woops.

CRYSTAL: He came to visit some friends in a place where I was staying. On a place about fifty miles from New York, I was uh--commuting I liked the country, and the trees, and the woodland, and one year a friend of-I was living with-and I—rented a house in the-the-this large hotel, and we commuted back and forth. She worked for a large corporation in New York, and I worked for the Utah Poultry Producers. And that's where we lived. And his came to visit-friends of his, someone who was working on a-uh-a project. That was started by my uncle, a-uhm camp for children and adults. It was very interesting that the camp-the camp children lived with their parents, in their bungalows. All the bungalows around this—swimming pool-lake, there was boating and swimming and tennis courts. Just everything to make them happy, there was a large auditorium where they had their entertainment and concerts and dances. And-uh...

BELARSKY: And that's where we came to...

CRYSTAL: You stayed at Pine Lake Park.

BELARSKY: Pine Lake Park.

CRYSTAL: It was called Pine Lake Park.

LEVINE: Where was Pine Lake Park?

CRYSTAL: It was uh-halfway between...

BELARSKY: Near Peekskill.

CRYSTAL: uh- Near Peekskill, south of Peekskill, New York.

BELARSKY: Near Shrub Oak...

CRYSTAL: We used... Yeah

BELARSKY: and Mohican Colony in that area.

LEVINE: Uh-huh okay so...

BELARSKY: (interjects)And Benjamin Brown owned that ca-camp.

CRYSTAL: Well he didn't-he was the chief owner.

BELARSKY: Yeah the chief owner.

CRYSTAL: Investor, but my mother had saved up money-she was a business woman. She bought and sold property in Philadelphia. She was not a-you know backward woman. And although she wasn't born here she didn't know perfect--she didn't know that much Span--she didn't have any schooling in this country at that time, but she invested some of her

money that she made from her businesses and buying and selling property in this Pine Lake Park. And she lived on it for the rest of her life. She had enough money to live on.

BELARSKY: Is that so. I uh-

CRYSTAL: She was very independent.

BELARSKY: I didn't know sh-

CRYSTAL: Yes, she was very independent. Of course he was a-largest. He had uh- another friend Shine. Mr. and Mrs. Shine they were there.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Abe[ph] Shine was what I-took us all from Ellis Island

CRYSTAL: An-uh woman by the name of Beatrice who was another investor, there all-there were the-they were former sort of a corporation.

BELARSKY: (interjects) See its-its why, its both of us It's why its...

LEVINE: Uh-huh well now um- did families pay a certain amount of money, to go there for the summer? With their families.

CRYSTAL: Oh we had a-I had a-enough money to pay for my bungalow. We rented a bungalow. When I went there for the summer.

LEVINE: No but I mean, In other words it was a business that your uncle, and your mother, and Mr. Shine.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Yes.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Oh yes.

LEVINE: So people's families would pay.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) We paid, We paid to go there. And the-they paid depending how large their apartment was, there little ho-bungalows, and some bungalows had just two apartments, and some had four apartments. We had just a bed room and a living room and a large porch. It was lovely.

BELARSKY: (interjects) It's a bungalow-a small bungalow with a porch-and with a furniture. Yeah

CRYSTAL: But some were larger, for a larger family with lots of a children-more children. But the children all attended camp activities

BELARSKY: (interjects) We had. I know I was a counselor there in the kindergarten, and then one year I was in the office. I worked eh-during the day.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Do you remember it? It was. I remember when Sidor gave a concert one the-Saturday night. Every Saturday night there was something.

BELARSKY: (interjects) I have-I have all those uh- originally pro-uh-brochures from it. From 1932 up to '38, and '39-'40 at home. When I worked in the office I took all these..

CRYSTAL: Did you work in the office there?

BELARSKY: Yes.

CRYSTAL: Oh. Ok.

BELARSKY: And I-I had 'em home with all the pictures and ph-photographs, and uh-uhm-I was a counselor and then-the in the camp. I was a counselor a couple years.

CRYSTAL: Oh that's wonderful you were a counselor there.

LEVINE: Well let's back up a second to before Isabel and Sidor came here. How was it that you were connected with their coming?

CRYSTAL: Well because I was secretary to-of-my Uncle Benjamin. Uh the time that they arrived at Ellis Island, I was notified to--and my uncle was in California. Attending the marriage of his daughter. Lillian, in California.

BELARSKY: Who's still alive and--

CRYSTAL: And I was the only one. I had a sister-older sister. Who worked in-for attorneys, but I was the only one who knew what to do. (laughs) I was the one who--I knew I needed some money to get them out of Ellis Island. They slept over night. The-she and her father and her mother, and I had to get someone.

BELARSKY: (interjects) They needed five hundred dollars--Benjamin wasn't there to give the bond.

CRYSTAL: I had to get some bonds, posted for them to leave Ellis Island. Well I got somebody by the name of-I think his name was Bresowitz[ph]. I knew the name I knew he was a banker, and he was a friend of Benjamin's and I sent him to Ellis Island to post bonds to get them out. I brought them to our place, we had an apart-my sister this friend, and I had a little apartment on Fifteenth Street, east of Union Square. It was an elevator apartment, and we gave them our apartment to use. And the three of us

registered at-at-a little hotel. The Albert Hotel, in the village some place.  
And they stayed in our apartment.

BELARSKY: But this Bresowitz[ph] wasn't the one that got the money, because he was-had an appendix attack, and he was in the hospital, and he gave the money to your mother. And your mother had that--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) My mother was in-at a hospital when they arrived. She had fallen off a trolley car step when-she (laughs) from a bus-and she was hospitalized, and she had a broken shoulder. So she was not there, she was in a hospital.

BELARSKY: Exactly, so then she-you got Abe Shine, who was the partner in the Bungalow colony[sic] he's the one that--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well, I took you and your mother and your father by train. I went took the train with you-the three of you. I pursted[sic]-purchased the tickets. I got off at Harmon, New York.

BELARSKY: That was already in-about when we arrived, but, but Abe Shine.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) That's when you-when you arrived. I had-I had to take out of the city. You we're not allowed to stay in the city.

BELARSKY: (interjects) I know so we were..

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Because you were-you were enemy aliens.(laughter) You were not recognized as a friendly nation.

BELARSKY: I know. And we had only a six month visa.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) So had to lea-so they couldn't stay at..

BELARSKY: (interjects) But this Abe Shine, who remained in Pine Lake Park all year because he had--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) He was there he had an apartment there.

BELARSKY: (interjects) He had an apartme-he had a bungalow. Winter Bungalow so he came the next day. When he got the money, and hes the one that took us off the Ellis Island.

CRYSTAL: Well I took you to Pine Lake Park on a train.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Yes, the following day.

CRYSTAL: And I still remember your father had a book-a book translating English to Russian, Russian to English, and the whole time were on the train he was studying his book. The translation.

LEVINE: Ok well just um-we-I wanted to say here that we have a couple of interviews with Isabel in our collection, but just for this tape if you could just give a little synopsis of how you happened to come when you did, and the situation of your family coming here.

BELARSKY: Well our coming here was because, this Benjamin Brown their uncle. Who was a brother to my grandfather, as well as a brother to her mother. Lifcha[ph]--Benjamin came to-to Russia with the people from Utah, and President Harris of Brigham Young University to see about, Berbijan[ph] There was going to be a community, Berbijan[ph] they wanted to build a-uh for poor Jews to settle there. They had no water, no uh-agriculture.

Harris was at that time teaching agriculture at Brigham Young University, and Benjamin had that--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) He was the president.

BELARSKY: The president and he had that turkey farm in Utah. So he knew all the Mormons, and he invited some of them to come--there was a commission to go to Russia to see about this land, if it could be possible for them--for the Jews to settle there. And he took about eight or nine people with him. And they came to Russia to see that land--I jumped that part and then Benjamin took Harris, President Harris of Brigham Young University to Kryzhopol to meet his brother, Moische[ph] Lifshitz, my grandfather. And we were all children living in Kryzhopol at that time, and these two men came from nowhere, you know two Americans came and they met us, and the following day or so, they went back to Leningrad. And they heard my father sing in their opera. And Harris thought it was a wonderful idea for him to come to America. So he--Harris was the one that went to the government and got permission for six months--for us to come.

DAMISCHEK: A visa

BELARSKY: A visa, that's all they would give. And they didn't want my mother and I to even come, but somehow miraca-miracle[sic] they--they okayed for us to come. Benjamin was the rich uncle, So he had to supply the money to put us on a boat. The Aquitania, but it was actually Harris who did the work, without Harris all the money would not help--because at that time there was no immigration, in nineteen the end of twenty nine there was absolutely no immigration from Russia. Especially to Jews, I mean it was unheard of. And we left uh--we left uh--Leningrad about December of 1929. Because 1930 uh--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) That's when you were uh--

BELARSKY: New Years Eve of 1930, we were already in Berlin, leaving Leningrad, Warsaw on the train and then Berlin, and there we waited for some money from Benjamin. And then we went to Paris for a few weeks, til the boat left from Cherbourg to America. And hoping to--that Benjamin Brown would be at the pier to take us off, but there was no Benjamin Brown, and that's the reason we had to go to Ellis Island. Uh-waiting for somebody with that money to get us off and that's why--

CRYSTAL: Even I wasn't notified. I was in his office I just took care of it on my own.

BELARSKY: (speaking to DAMISCHEK) Yes, that's what we were talking about the five hundred dollar bond; with out of the five hundred they wouldn't let us off the boat.

LEVINE: Isabel could you just spell the name of the city that you were originally from?

BELARSKY: Well the town was in-in the Ukraine where Kryzhopol. K-R-Y- they spell it differently K-R-Y-

CRYSTAL: (interjects)S-C-H-O-P-O-L Kryzhopol.

BELARSKY: (interjects) O-P-O-L Kryzhopol, It's on the map you know they even have it on the-on the internet-you can-the different spelling Kryzhopol.

LEVINE: Oh ok.

BELARSKY: Uh-you spell it whichever way--it's there-it's on the map-it's a little-it's in between Odessa and Kiev.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) It's a little village town.

BELARSKY: It's in the center-in the real Ukraine, area. Where all these little villages-but Kryzhopol in that area was the biggest one.

LEVINE: I see.

BELARSKY: The train stopped there for two minutes, and uh-uh and my grandfather who will remain there, was a rich merchant, was more than a merchant, he used to deal with uh-sending eggs to Poland, to Germany, That's why the train was stopped there, for him to supply this uh-uh-so my father's father-so he was considered the rich man of that town.

LEVINE: I see.

CRYSTAL: I didn't know that. (laughs)

LEVINE: So now your father, I guess was privileged in the sense that he was able to go, and to study music.

BELARSKY: Well that was another thing, living in Kryzhopol the uh--boys, he was the only son, he had six sisters. They remained in Kryzhopol. But he was sent to Odessa to *gymnasium*[preparatory school] to study. In their-In their high school *gymnasium* so that my mother she came also from-nearby a little town. My her schooling she-her parents sent her to Odessa, and they lived with some family that's-how-it used to be and that's how they met, but my father after going to the *gymnasium*, he used to sing you know in hallways and they heard him, and he was accepted in the Odessa conservatory, and because of the Odessa Conservatory later on he was accepted in the Leningrad Conservatory, even though he was a

jew, and all-because it very difficult to-but they already knew of his singing from-the Odessa Conservatory, he was-got to be known-it was a very good school in those days. The Odessa Conservatory, was a very high level of music. As well as the Leningrad Conservatory where the best-to this day-I mean that's where Heifetz, and Horowitz, and Pitagorsky[ph], and then Millstein[ph] all graduated from the-from the-uh Leningrad Conservatory of Music.

CRYSTAL: Might I interrupt. You know the people from--who live here knew about your father, and how well known he was, when he was in Russia, and they said you know he was known as the second Chaliapin, cause Chaliapin was the greatest basso of that time, and he was—uh--a Sidor was a great basso singer.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Well that's why the..

CRYSTAL: A beautiful basso singer. Beautiful basso singer, he said he was just like Chaliapin.

BELARSKY: That's why the students now-that-were studying Yiddish at the Columbia, want to find all hi-the records and to have to-uh-maybe-uh-uhm what was the word that I said like what Ellis Island has, exhibit of his uh-schooling, and then the present because later on he sang with all the opera companies-out-in-with-in-Brazil-the-Sao Paolo, Brazil. Catalogne[ph] and he sang with all the metropolitan people there. And then he was accepted with Toscanini to sing Fidelio, it's on a CD you know Fidelio, opera. Fidelio was done by Toscanini on NBC eh--radio, in 1944. They broadcast

CRYSTAL: (interjects) And Fidelio, is the only opera written by-by Beethoven.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Beethoven.

CRYSTAL: And he was chosen as a basso singer for Fidelio that was quite an honor.

BELARSKY: (interjects) The Rocco which is a very big part.

DAMISCHEK: He arrived 1930 and '31 and was already singing...

BELARSKY: (interjects) And that was another thing, you know I'm trying to uh-write his memory as a book hopefully, so I called up cal-uh-Carnegie Hall to find out how many times he had his recital. From 1931 to '61 he had twenty two recitals in Carnegie Hall. Recitals means just recitals it doesn't mean it was somebody else-he had a recital only of Tchaikovsky, only of Russian, only of uh-of those years he wasn't known as a Yiddish singer-he gave re-recital in you know singing Chopin uh-arias mostly leader singing for bass. And uh-then little by little he got to be known for Yiddish but for many years he was just known as a Opera singer and singing uh--with different opera companies in South America.

BELARSKY: Bertha go ahead.

DAMISCHEK: (interjects something that can't be heard clearly)

CRYSTAL: Well when I was in New York, and I fir-Sidor your family first moved there. I had a large acquaintance amongst Jewish artists. People who were connected with the uh--art-uh--people who were either in the musical field--they were known--they were poets some of them--writers and I introduced him to people who were connected with a Zionist group the *Farband*[an association] Others, I knew them they my-friends, uh-Hayim Greenberg.

BELARSKY: (interjects) And they were the one that--

CRYSTAL: He was a very well educated man.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Hayim Greenberg.

CRYSTAL: He lectured and the-navy[sic] he arranged concerts, he arranged lectures and concerts. With-the-the they were lectures in philosophers, and uh-well known uh-leaders--

BELARSKY: (interjects) Well that was the time by nineteen-1934

CRYSTAL: (interjects) And then I-eh-that's what-yes.

BELARSKY: That Einstein was speak-one of the speakers for one of these Zionist uh-programs in Los Angeles, and they invited my father to sing as--just arrived a few years from Russia in 1930.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) He--he sang it—and--uh--Einstein came to the concert.

BELARSKY: And Einstein said after that I only-ill only appear if Sidor Belarsky will appear at that time they were great friends.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) he came to Heights Town[ph] to listen to him-we arranged a concert for him.

BELARSKY: Einstein-we talk about now-Albert Einstein, in those days he wasn't as revered as he is now. You know this is in 1934.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Yeah-but-yeah-but he gave a concert-a concert-arranged for him in New York City and I attended it.

LEVINE: Now wait it was a concert?

CRYSTAL: A concert was arranged-for-especially for Sidor in New York City and uh-many of these people who were connected world of artists--Jewish world of artists attended, and he became very well known. He was well accepted by these people who-uh--

BELARSKY: (interjects) And they became great friends

CRYSTAL: And-uh-he they became his great followers.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Oh yeah, he had his own little--the following.

CRYSTAL: Yeah he had a big following amongst the Jewish artists of that time.

BELARSKY: (interjects) To this day they're-unfortunately they died-dying away.

CRYSTAL: I happened to know many of them.

LEVINE: How did you come to know them Bertha, that group...

CRYSTAL: (interjects) I knew them through Pine Lake Park, where—the--I was friendly with Hayim Greenberg who had a lecture series-my friends arranged this--

BELARSKY: (interjects) Hayim Greenberg was a great philosopher.

CRYSTAL: He eh-Greenber-uh Hayim Greenberg was a editor of the Jewish Frontier at the Kemphfur[ph] and my fri--good friend Shlomo Grazinsky[ph] was the co-editor-assistant editor, in Israel he became uh--he was a uh--journalist. One of the main newspapers in-in Israel.

BELARSKY: These are-There were all the very...

CRYSTAL: I was in that circle.

BELARSKY: Very very uh-uhm-interesting different type of--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) I knew them all. Wonderful group of people.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Like the artists and poets and writers of the very high-high caliber.

CRYSTAL: (interjects)Yes a very high-cali--they--were known as the poets and the writers and there were--and I happened to know people who--were close to these people.

BELARSKY: (interjects) She was very much loved by a lot of the-you see the-she still that way. The men loved her (laughs).

CRYSTAL: (laughing) No, no.

BELARSKY: (laughter) Oh come on. (laughs)

CRYSTAL: (laughing) Nope, it's not true. Nobody even knows me.

BELARSKY: Now I have to go back the way-the second day that we arrived from Ellis Island straight into Fourteenth Street and Bertha--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Yes it was, I was on the--

BELARSKY: Bertha got a-the room for my parents in the Union Square Hotel which was near Klein's[ph].

CRYSTAL: (interjects) That's where--

BELARSKY: Near Klein's[ph] around the corn-around the corner.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Yeah.

DAMISCHEK: (interjects) Here on fifteenth street.

BELARSKY: Fifteenth street, but there wasn't enough-it was one room.

CRYSTAL: (mumbles something) A little elevator apartment.

BELARSKY: But there wasn't a room for me so-I went to Bertha's apartment and that's where I slept-maybe not together but we slept together that first night.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well anyhow.

BELARSKY: and then the next day we uh-they took us to Pine Lake Park, and Abe Shine to his bungalow--which he had it winterized, and we stayed there-my mother and I while my father had to go to Provo, to Utah. He had to go--show himself at the—uh--university, but I remained in February about February nine-tenth because we arrived in America February 8<sup>th</sup>. So this--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) I found an apartment there on second-on the second floor of Second Avenue--

BELARSKY: (interjects) Well that was later the house is still there.

CRYSTAL: (laughs)

BELARSKY: But I went to kindergarten in Croton near Pine Lake Park.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Oh.

BELARSKY: And they used to pick me up. Abe Shine had a uh--uh--lady friend

CRYSTAL: (laughs)

BELARSKY: Who uh (laughs) Who--uh took us--took me to the--uh kindergarten in that--uh--in meh--wasn't the tiny village camp[ph] near Harlem, but very small-and she-an-took me to the principal and I was almost ten years old-big girl-I...and he put me in that kindergarten with the little ones. And uh-I always tell this story when I talk to the children-you know on the Ellis Isle-they-it was in the winter, and during the day they would take us out in the court yard to play (sings)Ring-around-the-rosy you know, and there I was this big girl with the two braids and--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Oh she was beautiful.

BELARSKY: And pink cheeks you know, and when the little ones and when I was doing the-I said-nuh-uh-I said no more I came back to this-Bee[ph] Pearlmen-and my mother-I says no more--so I tell the children that I'm a drop out, from kindergarten!

CRYSTAL: Oh she was a drop out. Oohh-boyy. I didn't know that (laughter).

BELARSKY: I was a drop out from kindergarten, and we stayed there for a little while until you got the-us-an-a an apartment on Second Avenue and Tenth Street.

CRYSTAL: Well--

BELARSKY: And that house is still there. It's-uh-it's-uh very interesting building.

LEVINE: What's its number do you know?

BELARSKY: Well I know the house, it's-uh on Second Avenue on Tenth Street. A corner house, and every time we go there I see the house.

CRYSTAL: Oh you mean where you first came.

BELARSKY: Yeah that was the house.

CRYSTAL: Oh when you lived on this-but-yea-but-be-after you came back from out west I think I-I-got you a second floor apartment and-on Second Avenue and Benjamin came back from California, and he says-he didn't think it was proper because he wanted to you to go-eh-eh Belarsky to get into Opera, and he thought that was a terrible address for him. Second Avenue in that part of town. He was--disapproved but I wanted him to be amongst friends, the Zionists and the artists and all these people--

BELARSKY: (interjects) And at that time they used to be across the street, there was the very famous.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Café Royale

BELARSKY: Café-Café Royale

CRYSTAL: Remember Café Royale?

BELARSKY: Have you ever heard of Café Royale?

CRYSTAL: (interjects) On second avenue on-a-on-a corner of second street and second avenue-second avenue and second stre-twelfth street twelfth street.

BELARSKY: (interjects) It was right across the street from us.

LEVINE: And what happened at that place? Café Royale.

BELARSKY: Café--well we used to go there all the time.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Oh it was all the-artists used to go, there and play chess. That's where my-my first husband was-he used to play chess with all the (laughs)important people. He was one of the best chess players in town.(laughs)

BELARSKY: I used to take a trip there all the time and all the Jewish actors, and...

CRYSTAL: (interjects) That's where they all-sat and concentrated, Café Royale.

BELARSKY: Singers they all hang out-uh-to the very end-they even made a play of it-Café-they made it with Sammmm-Levine-playing-the-pa-they had a bus boy in the-in-that-restaurant. He was the money man (laughs). He(laughs) He had more money than the owners. They used to have a room in the back where they gambled.

LEVINE: Oh...

CRYSTAL: Oh I didn't know about that.

BELARSKY: But a lot of actors would come there to see—we saw John Barrymore, and—and-uh coming to see this Café Royale, it was very very famous.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) And across from the Café Royale was a Yiddish art theatre.

BELARSKY: (interjects) That's right.

CRYSTAL: Maurice Schwartz's theatre.

BELARSKY: Right across the street Maurice Schwartz's theatre.

LEVINE: And can you talk about the Second Avenue, the vaudeville, the um-- Jewish theatre?

BELARSKY: Oh yes, well that was—at that time they must have had ten--twelve theatres having vaudeville and the only one that actually had good theatre was Maurice Schwartz, the art theatre. And then for awhile they have their ARTEF they were the communist of that--that part of the era. ARTEF players, also they had a theatre on Second Avenue and a lot of the uh.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Molly Picon. (laughs) Molly Picon. (laughs)

BELARSKY: Molly Picon had her own theatre.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) That was on Second Avenue too.

BELARSKY: I saw them all, we were very good friends with Molly Picon, and...

LEVINE: Could you say anything about her?

BELARSKY: About Molly Picon? She uh-we first met her in Los Angeles about 1932-'33. She started there with her pianist Abe Elstein. Abe Elstein was her pianist, and a composer most of her material, uh-most of her songs were composed Abe Elstein. He was very talented, and he was her—so--when they used to come to Los Angeles-when-we-moved to Los Angeles '32 to '36. They used to visit us, and then Abe Elstein uh--had lived on Tenth Street and University Place right near me, when-he-he got married uh-Sylvia Riggin[ph] she wrote a lot of the plays, and uh-he-uh-he's very-he was very well known. He was a very good friend to me-and-uhm-but Molly Picon to the very end unfortunately on the end uhm-she became-um-you know alz-al-a-a-I hate that even that word Alz-he got. Alz-ah-heimer.

DAMISCHEK: Alzheimer's.

CRYSTAL: Oh what was she?

BELARSKY: She had the...

LEVINE: Alzheimer's disease.

CRYSTAL: Oh.

BELARSKY: Yeah, and she live-she had a sister.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well that happens to a lot of us.

BELARSKY: And she lives in the Lincoln Center building, but she was appearing til the very end, really through the very end.

LEVINE: What was she like as a personality?

BELARSKY: Oh she was very sweet, very nice and very outgoing. She liked me very much. Um-she-she was a natural you know, very talented.

LEVINE: And how did she handle her fame?

BELARSKY: Very well, very well, she wasn't uhh—she--modest in many ways uhm—the--Jewish--the--the workman's circle every summer would have these Jewish concerts in the park. Here in-in-uh Debrush-Demrush[ph][sic]

LEVINE: Central Park?

BELARSKY: In Lincoln Center in the back.

LEVINE: (interjects) Oh uh-huh.

BELARSKY: And then uh-in West Chester well-by-wester-community and she always appeared there, and when she was already you know--last time--I--she was probably was in the seventies, and she was known-very well known.

CRYSTAL: Oh yes.

BELARSKY: The-the whole world knew Molly Picon, and she had a wonderful husband, Kalich-Jacob Kalich. And they had a good life, they had no children.

LEVINE: Could either of you say anything about Uncle Benjamin? Ho-How was it that he came...

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well he was-a-books could be written about--

BELARSKY: (interjects) Oh Benjamin, no it's impossible-impossible to--

CRYSTAL: Yes he was the one-he created Roosevelt, New Jersey, you know about Roosevelt, first it was called the Jersey Homesteads, but that's another story.

BELARSKY: (interjects) The-There's books about the-the homesteaders.

CRYSTAL: It was close to where our farm was, very he-was-the-one.

BELARSKY: (interjects) And that's where he lived, that-where-that's where the farm was.

CRYSTAL: Yes, and that's and-he really got the money for-he-was-able-to-go-out.

BELARSKY: (interjects) He's the one that built, I went with him at that time. He liked me very much, A-wha-when-came over and when he went to buy the land and in hi-the-homesteaders-I went with him.

CRYSTAL: Oh you did. Mhm

BELARSKY: I drove with him and he--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Some I went him to-to-look for farms.

BELARSKY: And uh-he was married ma-a-few times. And one of the marriages-the original marriage was this Clara—Clara. Who he had these uh-...

CRYSTAL: (interjects) She had-three of her own children. Yeah.

BELARSKY: (interjects)These uh-Lillian the one that got married, and there's still a son now who is-was just [not understood]

CRYSTAL: (interjects) My age. He was just three-year-weeks-old.

BELARSKY: (interjects) In Sarasota I just spoke the other day.

CRYSTAL: He's three weeks older than I am.

CRYSTAL: He's the one who gave me the measles.

LEVINE: (laughs)

CRYSTAL: He and his sister.

BELARSKY: And-uh-he-he at that he bought the land in high-in-near-highsta[cant understand] and had built-how many homes were there originally?

CRYSTAL: About Two hundred, there were a lot homes.

BELARSKY: (interjects) About two hundred homes.

CRYSTAL: And then they built the factory, it was supposed to have been a cooperative-a-clothing factory.

BELARSKY: (interjects) And they had a factory for dress-and they had an auditorium and at that-that's where the famous artist stayed there, when you have-his-pic-pictures here.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Ben Shahn.

LEVINE: (interjects) Ben Shahn.

BELARSKY: Ben Shahn.

CRYSTAL: Was a famous artist, Ben Shahn. That's his picture.

BELARSKY: And he lived there, and he built and-he painted in there-in there auditorium. And uh-people came-poor people I guess-who-and they had their little plot of land, and their homes.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well it was during the depression, people in the large cities.

BELARSKY: (interjects)That's her story.

CRYSTAL: New York and Philadelphia were with-homeless they lost their factory shops it was during the, Great Depression-people-did-lost all their positions, they had no income. That's when (laughs) my hus-and I were married. That's when we had our first child. So I lived through that depressions that's why we went to the farm, and Benjamin was able to get money-they were-they were called the uh-uh-fund for the class-jew-no well it started with the-the West Virginia the uh-miners they were homeless and starving and uh-Roosevelt.

BELARSKY: (interjects) It was during the time Roosevelt and Wallace, I believe that Benjamin went to school with Henry Wallace.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well he went to California-he went to Utah and he was able to get the-the one who was-the secretary of agriculture, Wilson. In Utah he went there and he had his influence and he came to Washington, and he was able to get money to-to create this homestead. They called it the Jersey Homesteads.

BELARSKY: (interjects) It was called the-the Jersey--

CRYSTAL: And there many homesteads all throughout the east to make places for people to work, and find employments-places to live. And they built about 200 families-in Jersey Home-they called it Jersey Homesteads.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Now it's called Roosevelt, New Jersey.

LEVINE: Oh ok.

BELARSKY: And some of the people-Some of the children-but are still there-but each little house was very charming, but just roof no basement, and each one had some--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) They're lovely little houses.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Very lovely homes, and grounds. And then they also had the field where they grew vegetables--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Yeah part of the land was--

BELARSKY: For themselves, and then they had this building, a factory, for uh-ladies coats and--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Yeah, they had the--

BELARSKY: And I had a coat to-fro-there.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) The factory was eh-cooperative.

BELARSKY: Everything was cooperative.

CRYSTAL: And even the hou-and the if-they even made a cooperative store there. Where people bought their produce-you know their things, their meat, fish and their vegetables. And I was-I don't know what I-I wasn't even living there, but I would go to the supermarket, in--nu (laughs) and price all the different items that they would be selling so they have an idea how much to charge for everything. You know the produce and the canned stuff, and the-and I had a whole list and gave it them in the store, the cooperative store so they would know how much to charge every item.

BELARSKY: (interjects) And this Benjamin used-uh.

CRYSTAL: I was-uh-I was a part of a committee, would do-I was doing all kinds of funny things.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Janet asked about-Janet asked a little bit about Benjamin to begin with, when he was married to this Clara, and he had uh-two sons and a daughter. The one Lillian in California, they're all alive and Biff[ph] who is 96, and a son Saul. But they separated, even before we came to America, and when he had that farm. It was called Clarion--farm, in Utah.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Oh that was the Clarion Col-you ever hear of the Clarion Colony in Utah?

LEVINE: No.

CRYSTAL: That was-that was the name of it.

BELARSKY: (interjects) There's a book about it.

LEVINE: Well how did he come to go to Utah, Do you know?

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Yeah.

BELARSKY: Because of this...

CRYSTAL: (interjects) He went there to start a-a cooperative colony there.

BELARSKY: (interjects) The co-op. He was always-always was a co-op cooperative turkey, his turkey the Norbest Turkeys.

CRYSTAL: Yeah.

BELARSKY: But the turkeys were raised in Utah, and that's how he got involved with the Mormons.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well this was before the turkeys, it was chickens.

BELARSKY: That's before.

CRYSTAL: The be-first it was chickens, the turkey cooperative came later.

BELARSKY: (interjects) First it was chickens. Uh-uh and while he was at this uh-uh-farm in Utah, he met some woman, and they had a child. And this is-the child and she died I believe--at birth.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) She died, yeah she-she had tuberculosis.

BELARSKY: And his wife, Clara raised--took the baby.

LEVINE: Oh.

BELARSKY: And she raised the boy for awhile, until they sent the boy to Pine Lake Park, when we came to this bungalow I already found Eugene, living with Shine, and his lady friend Bee[ph] who was also a little bit of a gir--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Shine was no-Shine was--there was another woman Beatrice Pearlman.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Beatrice. Who was also...

CRYSTAL: (interjects) She was related to the uh-the-uh Moishe[ph] he was uh-Mush-ma-ma[ph].

BELARSKY: (interjects) a little bit of a friend Benjamin, you know. So they were raising Eugene, when Eugene graduated uh--high school in Peekskill High--I went with Benjamin to--the--to--his graduation, he always took me along—ya--know. Now after awhile uh-he-after a few years he married again, Sarah. When they already had the-uh-home in Heights Town. Sarah came there and Sarah had--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Two boys.

BELARSKY: Two boys with him. And by the way all these children from different--are all intertwined--all friends with their children—and--to this day—when--when Bib[ph] the original son, Bib[ph] had his uh--ninetieth birthday he invited all of them to his uh-what-eh-uh--

CRYSTAL: (interjects) You mean Bib[ph] Brown did.

BELARSKY: And to all them-to they were all there, his step brothers and there were-but very unfortunate he died very young.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) He was only-yeah he was very young. He was only about fifty five.

BELARSKY: (speaks softly) He died.

LEVINE: Now did the bungalow colony near Peekskill, Was that-was that over when the cooperative in New Jersey started?

CRYSTAL: (interjects) No-no-no I think...

BELARSKY: (interjects) No it remains.

CRYSTAL: I don't know what-what-it-is-it's called Pine Lake Park, and they-there was a large area...

BELARSKY: (interjects) No it remained. A lot of people. The bungalows remained and a lot people in that vicinity bought land, and built their own homes.

LEVINE: I see.

BELARSKY: Because most of the people that lived their during the summer time, were all well to do, there were doctors and lawyers and...

CRYSTAL: Gina[ph] It is very funny-eh-my second husband I met much later, he was there at Pine Lake Park with his wife, and two children at Pine Lake Park,

and they had a bungalow there, and I didn't know him that was much later, and he didn't know that there was a colony- a bungalow colony before- there was a natural lake on the way from the main road where the trains came in, to Pine Lake Park there was a we called it the uh--it was-they just had a couple of bungalows one was built for Benjamin, for my mother, and the friend of his. And there was a natural lake and they-going to Pine Lake Park You didn't even know there was a bungalow there, but I used to go there to swi-I took my friends who visited me for the-uh-from New York for the weekend I walked them to down to-the main road so they could take their train and then I walked the three miles back to Pine Lake Park, but I we--stopped off there to-you couldn't see that there was a lake-that was-uh-off the road. I was so warm, and I got-off my clothes and that's when I went swimming. There was a big smooth where the water would-there was a waterfalls. And I took my shoes and my clothes and put there on that nice clean lut[ph] and I jumped into this nice cool water. And big lake and even made a little picture cause I loved it so much, with the trees...

BELARSKY: (interjects) Yeah I know by the...

CRYSTAL: and around-and I-and I-I saw-as I jumped in the lake there was a snake there. A big flat black snake--and it followed me around, I swam all around the lake, and where ever I went the snake went--and I told my friends about it when I lived in Florida, they said-and I said it smiled at me--it seemed so friendly.(laughter) He loved my company, and I liked him.

BELARSKY: (laughs) Oh berth, Shes...I told (laughs)

CRYSTAL: I was so lonely-all alone, and they said the snake never smiled-I said yes that smiled-(laughter) he liked me--I can tell he liked me, he was smiling all the time that he swam with me. And I knew that--I knew about snakes

that they do not hurt people, they do not bite, they don't not poisonous--so I felt very happy.

LEVINE: (interjects) Happy. (laughs)

CRYSTAL: I said goodbye.

BELARSKY: (interjects) The sna-you were-you were the snakes type. (laughs)

CRYSTAL: I said goodbye to the snake (laughter) I-I-got dressed I-I-funny-my friends didn't believe me that he was smiling all the time.

BELARSKY: (interjects) I told you Janet.

CRYSTAL: He followed me, he liked me, he didn't bite me. That's all. Just wanted to (laughs) tell you about that snake. (laughs)

BELARSKY: I knew a man who was sent to--to Heights Town to do a story about Benjamin Brown, he gave it up (laughs). He sto--He eh--to the farm he gave it up because it was so-he was so involved.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Oh Finkler[ph], you mean Finkler[ph]?

BELARSKY: Eh?

LEVINE: Finkler.

BELARSKY: He was so involved, I mean to go--to find out about Benjamin his life was so involved--there was so many things, he was a socialist.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Well there was a book called Roosevelt, New Jersey.

BELARSKY: Yes, there was a book--in—the--la-Roosevelt, New Jersey and uh--

CRYSTAL: Somebody who lived th--lived there wrote it.

BELARSKY: And they made a documentary—Roosevelt, New Jersey. I saw that one on television.

LEVINE: Now was Sidor in any way connected with that cooperative?

BELARSKY: No, no. no no.

CRYSTAL: No it had nothing to do with it, he was just a musician.

BELARSKY: No, but if--with Pine Lake Park uh--I have program from '32 they had such great people--Jan Peerce in '33 sang at Pine Lake Park. They had lectures everda—you know every day they had uh—different people came lectured in their auditorium. And...

CRYSTAL: (interjects) Have lectures and concerts.

BELARSKY: And concerts, of course Sidor many times would have a concert there.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) And dance—and dances.

BELARSKY: And uh--we were—every summer they gave us a bungalow, So we were there til almost when—i—til I was about eighteen years old you know we started there early.

CRYSTAL: Oh, what an interesting period.

LEVINE: Very interesting.

BELARSKY: It was an interesting period.

LEVINE: And what was happening in the village, in the lower east side and--.

CRYSTAL: Pardon?

LEVINE: Can you talk more about Lower East side, Manhattan.

BELARSKY: That famous[ph] apartment. Lower East Side.

LEVINE: During those years, what was going on.

BELARSKY: What was happening in the lower east side of that period? In your period.

CRYSTAL: I have nothing to do with New York, the lower east side.

DAMISCHEK: (interjects) I can tell you (coughs) from my own experiences.

CRYSTAL: Your experiences?

DAMISCHEK: My parents, I was born on the lower east side, I don't know if you know it.  
100 Lewis at the corner of Stanton, Stanton is two blocks north of  
Delancey, everybody knows Delancey Street. And-

CRYSTAL: Oh.

DAMISCHEK: We moved to Brooklyn to Williamsburg, we came back again and we—  
lived at 315 Rivington Street—

CRYSTAL: (interjects) No.

DAMISCHEK: Which is one block north of Delancey. It was ninety five percent Jewish, because all of the people that came over from the other side had relatives—cousins, aunts, uncles, and everybody. And they had confidence in living together without being bothered. We had what amount to railroad rooms in a tenement, five rooms straight back like a railroad car, my parents had six children—three boys, three girls. My father and mother made eight we had a boarder who helped pay the rent. (laughter) One bath tub--no shower. A wash tub and then in the back of the house you had a line that ran across to a pole where they used to hang the clothes to dry, out there. We lived on the fourth floor, so you had to walk up all the time—down if you went shopping and we did not know that we were poor.

CRYSTAL: That's right.

BELARSKY: That's what she said.

CRYSTAL: (laughs)Nobody knew they were poor, nobody had money.

DAMISCHEK: We went to school, in fact quite recently Isabel and I went down to the public—we were invited down to the public school that I attended, PS ninety seven on [not understood] street. Bard College has taken over, and they interviewed me as to what proceeded at that time when I was going to school. It became a junior high school and from there I went Suet[ph] Park High School, but the entire area there was it seemed to be all family groups. My grandmother one block away where I could see her every day. My cousins lived two blocks away where I could see them every day. My—my father's parents lived at—on Cannon[ph] Street, my father's sister whe—uh—the cousins they lived on uh—Cannon street

also. My grandmother at ninety nine, my cousins at one ten cannon[ph] street—very very close as I said where we lived—

LEVINE: David, wait a minute let me change the tape were at the end of this tape and I don't want to miss this.

END TAPE ONE. BEGIN TAPE TWO.

LEVINE: Okay, were continuing here on tape two.

DAMISCHEK: Just a slight interruption, when interviewing this young lady here she's ninety six years of age, not ninety six years old. (laughter) The entire area over there I said was Jewish, we lived at Three Fifteen Rivington, going east to the east river at the very corner which was about three twenty one—about three or four houses was one hundred percent Sicilian Italians from Rivington to Delancey to Broome to Grand Street, that was all Italians. And going further down toward the east river was all Irish, over there it was amazing that-they-they congregated together the Italians together and the Jewish all together. Never a problem over there occasionally you'd have a fight with somebody but you didn't draw a knife, you didn't have a gun or anything. The next day you were playing ball together—you going to school together, the fight was all over and done with. So uh-that was it. The east side at that particular time it had a movie house on Cannon street right off Stanton. Three cents admis—two for five, so kids would be standing outside, I got three cents who's got two. I got two cents who's got three. So two of 'em could go in together, and the parents always seemed to give a sandwich or something to the young—to the children that went in the, and at the end of the movie the—one of the officers over there he would say, "same picture over again, side door going out" , but these children they go out, he ate a sandwich over there, they stayed to see the picture again. But Clinton

Street was the main street over there, and there was Paristine[ph] movie house on Houston street, and one block further down was the Odeon[ph] movie house going toward Delancey, and then there was the Clinton movie house between Rivington and Delancey, and then there was the Apollo at Delancey Street where the seventh precinct police station was, at the Williamsburg Bridge. And one block further up at Suffolk St[ph] was the Lewis-Lewis[ph] Delancey Street. And uh—during the depression years they used to give out a turkey to somebody who would win or they'd give—

BELARSKY: (interjects) No they—even in our time.

DAMISCHEK: out some little [not understood]. On Rivington also going between Norfolk and Essex Street there were two movie houses on Rivington. One had a—two on Rivington right near Essex and around the corner Essex Street was the Essex—three movie houses over there. So the people in the area that—they patronize movie houses.

BELARSKY: (interjects) It was better to go to a movie than stay home and walk up—in six—eight people in one room. You know, like in Russia.

DAMISCHEK: To get off that for one moment, I was working in a hotel on Forty Sixth Street it the—originally the NVA Club, National Variety Artists, during the depression years they couldn't keep it up and turned it back to the bank, and along came some family and converted to a hotel. I'll tell ya where it was, East of us the Essex Hotel—the—what—was—it—the—pales—come—on—quickly.

BELARSKY: I don't know.

DAMISCHEK: Essex, not The Essex. What hotel was on forty sixth—with—the—runs through to Forty Seventh.

BELARSKY: Oh, the uh—the—Aster Hotel, or the other one.

DAMISCHEK: No the Aster's up North and [not understood]

BELARSKY: (interjects) The Lincoln?

LEVINE: The Algonquin?

DAMISCHEK: The Lincoln was on Forty Fifth Street.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Come on!

DAMISCHEK: Yo—Your singer had a place there.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Yeah, Mrs. Kramer had the—uhm.

DAMISCHEK: (interjects) Mrs. Kramer had the---

BELARSKY: Uhm—(laughs) Wheres—for the life of me I can't think of it.

DAMISCHEK: That's what's happened to me. Uh—

BELARSKY: Can't Even---the—the—Edison! The Edison! Edison—Edison—Edison Hotel.

DAMISCHEK: (interjects) Edison Hotel. East it was. And west of us was where Barry Rose had the Diamond Horse Shoe, downstairs. The first Israeli night—first of all was the Russian Skaska[ph] was the restaurant in my hotel

there—and then came the first Israeli night club Habibi, and Shoshana Demare[ph] was the featured singer.

BELARSKY: (interjects) He's still alive Shoshana Demare[ph] in—in—in Israel.

DAMISCHEK: So—that was the story for [not understood]

BELARSKY: (interjects) That was an interesting time also.

LEVINE: This is the thirties David?

DAMICHEK: I was there from 1939 to 1953, and then I went to Forty Seventh. I spent twenty eight consecutive years in Times Square, I saw actors starting up, I saw actors going down. I saw musicians coming up, Musicians—it was a tremendous life[ph]. Night clubs were open til four o clock, the restaurants, the cafeterias were open all night. There was always activity, you didn't need any bars on the windows, you never had to worry, no body ever bothered ya, everything went along smoothly.

BELARSKY: (interjects) It was a different era. Completely different.

DAMISCHEK: It was a wonderful life, I put in fifty one consecutive years in hotels, and I say the first hotel a park—riser[ph] on seventy seventh between [not understood] West and Columbus we had Bob Hope as our guest, he just got married about two years before. He hadn't come in the world as yet. I was working there—Ninety dollars a month! I had one daughter, and I took a furnished room on seventy sixth between Columbus and Amsterdam, so I'd be close to the hotel. I was paying ten dollars a week for a furnished room, and ninety dollars a month amounted to about twenty one dollars a week. So on eleven dollars a week three of us were living, and I did not know that we were poor. That life at that time.

LEVINE: Wait, say your birthday David.

DAMISCHEK: Subways, were a nickel.

BELARSKY: Your birthday.

DAMISCHEK: My birthday, November Four , Eleven.

BELARSKY: He's going to be ninety three November 4<sup>th</sup>.

LEVINE: Wow.

BELARSKY: Young.

DAMISCHEK: I've got a daughter of sixty six, I've got a daughter of sixty eight. Ten grandchildren, four great grandchildren.

CRYSTAL: You did very well.

LEVINE: Yes.

DAMISCHEK: And all of them doing very well. I said—as I told this young lady before—

BELARSKY: (laughs) Bertha—

DAMISCHEK: They've got—my children had my genes—they took my genes—they don't fit them, but they took my genes anyhow. (laughter) And—

BELARSKY: (interjects) Wonderful family.

DAMISCHEK: All of them doing very—very well. Tremendous.

BELARSKY: (interjects) They're a wonderful family.

DAMISCHEK: My—my daughter's husband in California is the chief of the Veteran's Administration in San Diego.

BELARSKY: He teaches at the university.

DAMISCHEK: He's got two daught—two sons. One is a doctor here at Mount Sinai Hospital.

BELARSKY: Yeah.

DAMISCHEK: And the other one is a surgeon out there.

CRYSTAL: My sons, a doctor you know.

DAMISCHEK: And the daughter is—a

BELARSKY: Architect.

DAMISCHEK: Architect, for the Turner Construction Company, and uh-she—

BELARSKY: (interjects) She—nice—nice.

DAMISCHEK: moved from Boston up to Detroit, and they moved her to San Diego, and gave her an increase in salary because it's more expensive living out there, and she has done some remarkable work—everybody—

BELARSKY: It's a nice family.

DAMISCHEK: My son is one of the chief executives at the National Security Agency down in Washington.

CRYSTAL: Oh wonderful.

DAMISCHEK: He was with NASA when the Hubble telescope went up.

CRYSTAL: Now we know who to blame if things don't go right.

BELARSKY: Yeah.

CRYSTAL: (laughs)

DAMISCHEK: He was born in America, went to Stuyvesant[ph] , went to Amherst, had a fellowship to Stanford too, and that's a—

BELARSKY: Yeah, Stanford.

DAMISCHEK: Stanford University out there. Born in America, he's speaks Russian so well that he's the editor and translator of a Russian astronomy magazine.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Well that's his specialty—astronomy.

DAMISCHEK: And during the Cold War he was the one who was supposed to be breaking the Russian codes.

LEVINE: Wow.

BELARSKY: And now he's Chinese—talking Chinese, very unusual.

DAMISCHEK: Like—well—his daughter, my granddaughter just graduated from Smith[ph] this year—several years—four years ago—when she was in her senior year in high school, there was a Spanish contest—which was—

BELARSKY: (interjects) We wanna know about you.

DAMISCHEK: She finished first in the state of Maryland, and Second in the nation—eighty thousand students.

BELARSKY: That's all from that son who—(laughs)brilliant.

LEVINE: So David let me bring this back to Ellis Island—

DAMISCHEK: (interjects) What do you wanna know about me?

LEVINE: Did your mother or father come through Ellis Island?

DAMISCHEK: Yes, they were—what—do—you call it

BELARSKY: (interjects) Castle—

DAMISCHEK: (interjects) Casset—

LEVINE: Castle Clinton.[ph]

DAMISCHEK: Yes, my mother came here at the age of fourteen in 1902. They came from Austria-Hungary at the time. My father came, 1905 but the family knew he should be—in 1909 they were married. That's the story there. My brother who's two years older than I, was a noted Urologist. And he

was in the service and retired as a Colonel and he is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

BELARSKY: With all the honors—we went—with all—the—bugles—and the horse.

DAMISCHEK: The burial, and they fired the guns up, and they folded the flag and gave it to his wife, and all that sort of thing. And uh—what else can I tell you. If you want to get a more detailed account of my youth you just—

CRYSTAL: (interjects) You can make up the rest. (laughs)

DAMISCHEK: Go to the New York Po-Police Department [not understood] (laughs)

BELARSKY: You know we have to—we leaving at—a bus is picking us up at 3:30.

LEVINE: Okay so wait, why don't we—

BELARSKY: (interjects) You can stay here I mean you don't need us—

LEVINE: Well Isabel, maybe before you go is there anything else you'd like to add to what we were talking about, about um-either coming here, and meeting up with Bertha's family, or—

BELARSKY: (interjects) Well I wanna tell you—yes I should-should talk about Bertha. Bertha as you see for yourself is a very unusual woman.

CRYSTAL: Oh come on, don't—

BELARSKY: No she is, because her memory and way of talking—and she's always cheerful, and when I talk to Bertha, she raises my spirits. Her voice, her—the word—the tilt in the voice—and never complains—and people

around her wanna be with her, her family, her nephews from—a—from—a Boston, and their children. I've never seen anything like it, come especially to see Bertha, spend a few hours with Bertha. You don't see this nowadays because most children or grandchildren, the further the way they li—unfortunately they don't call, they don't—with a Bertha uh—they want to be with her, and she has the most unusual son, Hilly[ph], Hilly[ph] Crystal. Who is the owner of CBGB, giving him a plug. Who is the most wonderful human being, beside being a wonderful son. He's very unusual and he-he is does everything—he moved Bertha here from Florida so that he can see that she—has—needs anything, he prepared all this for her before. He bought the furniture—

CRYSTAL: (interjects) You know what he did, did I tell you how he brought me—he wanted me to be here near him, so he—went down by the plane—and then he brought me back here—and he took me to another place, he wanted me to make a choice, I chose this place. Then he went out and he wanted me to be able to move in right away so he went and bought this furniture—most of it. He bought furniture—he bought this—you know an old lady needs a rocking chair—so he bought this rocking chair—that rocks.

LEVINE: Wonderful

CRYSTAL: (laughs)

CRYSTAL: And he bought the table and the chair, and everything—the bed—and the tv—so many things for me—everything so I can move right in. Then he took a plane down to Florida, he rented a truck, he bought cartons—he packed—see the paintings—all my pictures—he knows—that I had a lot of books—books books books. So he has them all in a place in New

Jersey. I don't know—what he—they're still there. And he has all my books there. Oh my clothes.

BELARSKY: (interjects) And then he got her this uh—tape with the uh—books.

LEVINE: Books on tape.

CRYSTAL: But this he—wanted to throw this away—I said No it's a comfortable chair—I want that—this is my—these are my tables—this is mine. But the bed and the chest—very comfortable bed—everything—wonderful that he went to so much trouble.

LEVINE: Yes, we can continue a little bit Bertha, but we're going to stop here.

CRYSTAL: (interjects) That's alright.

BELARSKY: (interjects) Well—why don't you say goodbye dear.

LEVINE: Um—okay. I'm going to close off here for the time being.

END TAPE.