

EI-1356

DOTTIE WINNICK

BIRTHDATE: OCTOBER 12, 1908

INTERVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 26, 2004

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

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RUSSIA, 1920

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RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Today is December the 26th, the year 2004. I'm here I Merrill Gardens in Tamarack, Florida and I'm here with Dotty Winnik, whose maiden name was Rudinsky when she came through Ellis Island at twelve years of age, from Russia. And also here is her sister, Eva, who was going to be interviewed after this interview. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I want to say I'm very delighted to be here with both of you, and I'm looking forward to hearing about your story because I know there were some parts that weren't that pleasant. So we'll start at the beginning.

If you would say again please for the tape, Dotty, your birth date.

WINNIK: October 12th, 1908.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

WINNIK: I was born in Russia in the city of—near Kiev. It was called Bellia Tzerkof.

LEVINE: Do you know how to spell it?

WINNIK: In English?

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: B—I'll spell it. B-E-L-A, Bela, I-A. Belia, Tzerkof, I never spelled it.

EVA: T—

WINNIK: T-Z-E-R-K-O-F, Tzerkof.

LEVINE: Okay, good. Okay, and did you live in Belia Tzerkof—

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Up until you left for the United States?

WINNIK: Up until we left, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Okay.

WINNIK: It had a beautiful big--

LEVINE: [unclear]

WINNIK: Beautiful home. A beautiful home. It was a large house and inside it was built—we had a basement. You could—nobody could see it. It was covered up because we had pogrom there. The soldiers came in and they were killing the people. So when we heard or a sound that sounded like there was going to be a war, we all ran down the basement. We had a Frigidaire with food there. We didn't know how long we were going to stay and we used to close it. You could not see anything, that there was a basement down there. Otherwise, they'd come down and kill us.

LEVINE: Wow, and do you remember running to the basement?

WINNIK: Yes, that I remember. We went down there. It was closed up. You couldn't see that it was a floor, you know, and we'd stay there for a while. We didn't know how long we would stay there, and then when we heard a sound that was quiet, was finished, we came out. We looked out the window. Dead people in the street. You know, it was a terrible site to see for children.

LEVINE: Sure.

WINNIK: We were scared. We were crying. We saw people laying dead there.

LEVINE: Yeah. Wow. So why don't you say your mother's name?

WINNIK: My mother's name was Clara.

LEVINE: Clara.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: And do you remember her maiden name, by any chance?

WINNIK: Pearlman.

EVA: Pearlman.

WINNIK: I think it was Pearlman.

LEVINE: Pearlman, and your father's name?

WINNIK: Was Isaac.

LEVINE: Isaac, and were you the oldest child?

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: And then came Eva.

WINNIK: Right.

LEVINE: And there—were there other children?

WINNIK: Yes, there was another sister. She was five years younger than I am.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and what was her name?

WINNIK: Sally.

LEVINE: Sally. Okay, so when you came to this country, you came with your mother and father and—

WINNIK: Three children.

LEVINE: Three children, uh-huh.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, do you remember life in Russia besides the pogroms? What—what—what kind of a childhood did you have?

WINNIK: It was a nice—nice. We had a grandmother living with us.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: I think she lived with us forever. I didn't—don't remember my grandfather. He died many years before that, so we don't remember him.

LEVINE: Well, what about your grandmother? How—what memories do you personally have about her?

WINNIK: Oh, I remember her. She wasn't that old. She walking with a babushka on her head and also her daughter—that was my aunt—living with us for—and it was a nice life.

LEVINE: Was this your mother's side? Your mother's mother?

WINNIK: My mother's mother and her sister. We were living together. We had a good life. My father was well-to-do.

LEVINE: What did your father do?

WINNIK: He was selling material.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: Yeah, he had a business for himself. First he was selling for different people. Then he had a business for himself and he did, and they had money. Then we were always talking about going to America. "We want to come to America." We were children. We enjoyed listening about America and then we decided that one day we were going to go, and we did.

LEVINE: Now did—was there—were there any family members already in America?

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Who—who was here? Who did you know that you could—

WINNIK: We had an aunt here. My father's sister. She was a dress designer. I don't even remember her name.

LEVINE: Wow.

WINNIK: She wasn't famous. She was a dress designer. She was married and I think she sent a visa. I think so. She sent a visa for us to come, but that I don't remember.

LEVINE: Yeah. Where was your aunt settled in—in America? Where did she live?

WINNIK: In New York.

LEVINE: In New York, uh-huh.

WINNIK: I don't remember the street.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

WINNIK: In New York.

LEVINE: Yeah, and can you remember thinking about your mother and father, how—do you have memories of them as a little girl up until you were twelve?

WINNIK: Yeah, wonderful.

LEVINE: In Russia. What kind of memories do you have?

WINNIK: Such loving memories. They were so loving. I was married, seventy-six years and I learned from my mother, and she—as soon as we got to America, she got sick and died at the age of forty-two.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: She died at forty-two.

LEVINE: Wow. Wow. Well, what was she like? What was her personality?

WINNIK: She was so good. My father, they always loved each other. They were so loving, all the time.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: That's what I learned from them.

LEVINE: That's wonderful.

WINNIK: When I tell people I was married seventy-six years, they couldn't believe me. "Seventy-six years married?" I said, "That's what I saw in my house."

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

WINNIK: I saw lots of love.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family when you were growing up?

WINNIK: Religious, we believed in God, but we didn't observe too much, you know. My father went to schul. [PH]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: My mother did, but strictly religious.

LEVINE: Yeah, do you remember what you did for enjoyment? What—what kind of things did you do?

WINNIK: We used to play lots of cards. We'd take cards and put them up like a little house, build a house and then she'd come over and knock it down. [Laughs] Or my other—and we had fun. We played dolls. We didn't have too many toys. Not like now, the children, they have everything. They're spoiled.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: But we appreciated everything.

LEVINE: And what was—what was the town like? Do you remember, was it a small community?

WINNIK: There's a small town. We were right near a big city, Kiev, and we used to go to Kiev. We had relatives in Kiev. My father's sister lived there, married sister with children and we used to go there a lot.

LEVINE: What was Kiev like, do you remember that?

WINNIK: Yeah, I was maybe ten years old then. It was beautiful. Yeah, a beautiful city.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: And—

LEVINE: Were you like in a farm area or what kind of an area were you in?

WINNIK: No, it was not a farm.

LEVINE: It was just a smaller town.

WINNIK: Yeah, a smaller town. Yeah.

EVA: Do you remember the name of it?

LEVINE: You'll get—you could tell next time, Eva.

EVA: Excuse me. I'm sorry.

WINNIK: I said it was Belia Tzerkof where we lived.

EVA: Yeah, she said it.

LEVINE: Yeah, so [unclear].

WINNIK: Of course.

LEVINE: And do you—and, ah, let's see. How about your mother and father, do you remember like what they did for enjoyment, as adults?

WINNIK: The family used to come together. We used to go visiting. That's about all I remember. Visiting. Lots of family.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And did you go to school?

WINNIK: Yes, I learned Russian.

LEVINE: Oh, you learned Russian.

WINNIK: Yeah, I learned—

LEVINE: What did you speak in the home? What language?

WINNIK: We spoke Jewish.

LEVINE: Jewish, uh-huh.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: And—and so but—so when you went to school, you learned Russian?

WINNIK: Russian, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: I know a few words of Russian, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah, and the—tell about school. Like compare school in Russia to school when you got here.

WINNIK: I don't remember the school.

LEVINE: Oh, you don't remember?

WINNIK: I don't remember the school.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

WINNIK: But I remember going to school.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: And I liked it. I don't remember.

LEVINE: Well, you came—you must have—you must have been in Russia when the Russian Revolution happened.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Did you have any ex—personal contact, any experience with that?

WINNIK: That's the only experience we had was going down and hiding.

LEVINE: Now, did you have to do that very often?

WINNIK: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: And my mother used to say, "I'm going to be happy to eat a piece of bread and water, just to be in America, be away from here."

LEVINE: Oh, so that was the reason the family wanted to come.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: To get away from the pogroms. Is it?

WINNIK: Yes, that was the reason.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

WINNIK: When we went, we had an agent take us.

LEVINE: Oh, tell about the agent, yeah.

WINNIK: Yes. My father had to pay an agent to take us to a certain city. I don't remember which city, and before we prepared, so what are we going to do with the money? We had to take some of the money and sew it in our dresses, in the bottoms of our dresses. They put the money in and sewed it around so they shouldn't find it. We should be able to come with some money there. But they did that, they put money in our clothes, and first we sent—first our grandmother went. Shouldn't—but we had to cross the—we were together, but we had to cross the border. The grandmother went first with my aunt, so they had money with them, and they went through, nobody touched them.

LEVINE: They came, too?

WINNIK: They came through with the money. Yes, they came, through, but then we had to go through, we left the city in a wagon, a horse and wagon. The agent took us and I remember we were riding the horse and wagon, and it turned over. The horse and wagon turned over and we got out. We didn't get hurt and we were riding during the night. We had to leave the city, nobody should see us. We were so afraid. We left the house, we didn't sell it. We left a beautiful home. Just left it there.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you or your parents took with you when you came? Do you remember any things you brought to America?

WINNIK: No.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: I don't remember.

LEVINE: But you left with very little, I assume. I mean you didn't bring very much?

WINNIK: No, we didn't. Just the money we took.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

WINNIK: And we had, you know, quite a family with us to go.

LEVINE: So your aunt and your grandmother, they also came to America?

WINNIK: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: And they lived with us when we came to America.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: It's in Europe, like the families live together.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. So you crossed the border. Where did you—where did—what port did you leave from? Which country did you leave from?

WINNIK: We went to Romania and then we were in a house there some place. The agent took us to a house and we had quite a big crowd of people with us, an aunt and an uncle, and who else did we have? I don't remember. We had quite a few people. The grandmother and grandma. That was before we left.

LEVINE: Did you stay in Romania very long?

WINNIK: Yeah. Before we went to Romania, soldiers—soldiers came into our house and they said—and they took all our things away. Our clothes they took away.

LEVINE: Took everything away because somehow they knew that we had the money there. The agent maybe squealed or something. I don't know what happened and they hit my father. They hit him, and they hit—my grandfather was there, too, or one of the men got hurt. There was another friend of ours also went with us and he looked Christian, so they

didn't touch him. He looked Christian. He was Jewish, but he looked Christian. They didn't touch him, but they hit my father and, oh, when we saw that he was hit, and said, "We're going to come back in a half hour. If we find you here, we'll kill you." They took everything away from us. We had nothing, no money left. So they had to cross the border there. We had to go on ice some place to cross the border, and we took rags. We found rags in the house and we wrapped it around us, and we had to go during the night. We had to cross then because they said they'll come back and if they find us, they'll kill us. We were scared, and we crossed the border. How we did it, I really can't remember exactly. We were children. We were crying and we were scared and we were cold, and we did that. We crossed the border.

LEVINE: And then you went to stay with relatives in Romania, is that what you did?

WINNIK: No, we stayed in a strange house. I don't know how we—how that came about. I don't know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: We stayed there and we had to wait, you know, to go some place else. I think we stayed awhile in Romania. My father had no money, so he worked a little bit. He took a stand and he tried to get material and he was selling to get—make a little money.

LEVINE: Hmm. So—

WINNIK: All the money we had, they took away from us.

LEVINE: Oh, even what you had sewn in your—in your dresses and everything?

WINNIK: Yes, they took our dresses. We found other things to put on. Really, rags we put around us. How we did it, I don't know. That's why we try to suppress it or forget about it.

LEVINE: I see.

WINNIK: It was a terrible thing, you know, for children to go through that.

LEVINE: Well, what courage to, you know, to have to do that.

WINNIK: It was terrible.

LEVINE: So—

WINNIK: When I think of it now, I feel like crying.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. So you—so you must have stayed in Romania. Do you think you stayed in Romania—

WINNIK: We stayed there a little while in Romania. A couple of weeks, I think.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: We stayed in Romania.

LEVINE: And then? And then what?

WINNIK: Then we finally had to go to America. How did we go? I don't remember, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: I don't remember that part.

LEVINE: You don't remember the part about going to the port and getting on the ship? Do you remember any of that?

WINNIK: I remember being on a ship.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: But—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and then anything about the voyage? Do you have any memories about that voyage?

WINNIK: We were happy going to America. Oh, we counted the days until we get to America and we came to Ellis Island, and they kept us there for awhile. I remember doctors checking us out, examining us. I think we had to stay a little while, something to be examined.

LEVINE: Did--

WINNIK: I don't remember exactly.

LEVINE: Did the whole family stay or just some of you?

WINNIK: Yes, the whole family stayed.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: And then we went our aunt that was there and, you know, it's hard to remember some of the things.

LEVINE: So—so then your aunt, you went with your aunt to where she was living?

WINNIK: Where she was living, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: They got us a place, where to stay. We all lived together and then, should I tell you when I got older?

LEVINE: Yeah, we—I—but do you remember any of your first impressions? When you first came and you were in this brand new country.

WINNIK: Oh, I was so excited. So happy. So excited to be away from what we lived through. It was a terrible thing to live through.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

WINNIK: All the shooting and all the killing, it was terrible. You never thought you were going to come out alive from there.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: So we didn't care. We left such a beautiful home. We left everything. We didn't try to sell it. We couldn't.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: We couldn't go look for somebody to buy it.

LEVINE: Because you had to leave secretly.

WINNIK: No, we had to just leave.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: In the middle of the night.

LEVINE: Right. Right. So where did your aunt live and where did you then live, after you were here?

WINNIK: Well, then we finally got an apartment.

LEVINE: Where was that?

WINNIK: In the Bronx.

LEVINE: In the Bronx.

WINNIK: We lived in the Bronx and then I was—we were there. We got older. We went to school here, to public school. We didn't go to high school. It was public school.

LEVINE: What was it like for you to learn English when you got here?

WINNIK: Well, it was hard to learn, but we learned. Right away we tried to speak English. My father and father tried to speak English and then we finished school. We went to work. We worked in a factory making ties, men's ties. Yeah, my sister and I, and we worked there. We were happy. We all lived together.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: Then we got older.

LEVINE: Yes.

WINNIK: And—I was—

LEVINE: Let's see. So what—was your father able to—

WINNIK: He got a job here.

LEVINE: Was it like what he had doing—

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Or was it something different?

WINNIK: And they loved him. He got such a good job. He worked on 38th Street in Manhattan.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

WINNIK: Selling material, and they liked him so much that [unclear] he got the material and he made—a tailor made his coats and they gave him material.

EVA: [unclear]

WINNIK: They gave him a raise every time because he was very good at selling.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: Yes, and—

LEVINE: And your mother, she—she stayed at home and took care of the children?

WINNIK: She stayed at home, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: But she got sick.

LEVINE: Did they become citizens, your mother and father?

WINNIK: Yeah, sure, they were citizens. We all became citizens, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: And then as we got older, I was eighteen years old, I met my husband. I was nineteen when I met him. I knew him.

LEVINE: How did you meet?

WINNIK: They lived in the same area, same street where we lived in the Bronx and I—I knew my husband there, and I started meeting him and we started going out. For about a year's time we went out. I was nineteen. We started going out and he had a big family here. Sisters, about ten sisters he had. Big family.

LEVINE: Now, had he come from Europe, too?

WINNIK: He also came from Europe, yes.

LEVINE: From Russia?

WINNIK: Yes, from another part.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: And we were going out together. We fell in love. We loved each other and then we decided—I was twenty years old. Decided to get married, so we came to his house to tell his mother and his sister that we want to

get married. They didn't want us to get married because he was only twenty. Twenty-one, and we were young. We looked young, and we loved each other. They said, "No way. You can't get married. You're too young. You've got older sisters." They were all older than him, and we wanted to get married, so we ran away. We ran away off, got married.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: Yeah, so we had two witnesses with us. We went to court. We didn't tell my mother and father. We went to court and we got married and on our wedding day, we rode the 5th Avenue bus. That I can remember like it was yesterday. Eighty—we were married seventy-six years.

LEVINE: [unclear] wonderful.

WINNIK: And they didn't want to—they didn't want to come to the wedding, so we didn't get married, but my mother and my father loved my husband. And we came back and we told them that we had got married. So they called the rabbi. There was a famous Rabbi Katz, it's on my wedding. We had in the house the ceremony, the [unclear] wedding and his family didn't want to know. Well, after we got married, I became pregnant a year later and I gave birth. A year later I got pregnant. My son is seventy—I got to say the right day. Seventy-five years old. Sometimes I say to him, "You're seventy-six." He says, "Mom, did you had me before you got married?" No. [Laughs] And I said to my husband, I said, "Mac, go tell your family that we had a baby." He went, he told them. They became my best friends. They loved me because they saw I was a good wife, good mother. The best of friends and as I got older and I was a blond. I was a little attractive. My husband was very handsome. I'll show you a picture of him.

LEVINE: Okay. Yeah. So what—what—you took the 5th Avenue bus on the day you got married?

WINNIK: And my husband wanted to go to a hotel. I said, "No, we first have to get married in Jewish. Have a ceremony, and I wasn't going to sleep with him. [Laughs] Not like now, right?"

LEVINE: Yeah, right. Right.

WINNIK: So we came home and we told our parents and we stayed in the house. We slept in the house. We were married. In the same apartment with my father and mother, everybody. And what else do I remember? I remember the summertime when we were still living there and I think I

was pregnant. We went to the Catskill Mountains. My father and mother, and we went with them. That was our honeymoon.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

WINNIK: Sort of.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, and did you stay living in the Bronx?

WINNIK: Yes, we lived in the Bronx for awhile. Then my husband opened up a little store, a fruit store and he was selling—selling, and we were so happy. We loved each other very much.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and did you have other children or just your son?

WINNIK: And I had—I had my son. My mother got sick. She loved my baby. He was a baby and she loved him so much, and she didn't live to see him grow up. She died, and then I had another child. I have two children.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

WINNIK: My son lives in New York in Manhattan.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, and the other one's down here in Boynton Beach.

WINNIK: Lucille. Yeah, Boynton Beach.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Good. Well, let me just backtrack a little.

WINNIK: My son would be excited, if I could tell him. I don't know if he's in the house.

LEVINE: Well, you know, when I get back to Ellis Island I'm going to make copies of the tapes.

WINNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: So he can definitely listen to you telling your—your story.

WINNIK: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: How about when you first got here, do you remember being treated like a greenhorn? Do you remember kids teasing you or any of that kind of thing?

WINNIK: Sometimes. Sometimes they did. Sometimes, yeah. sometimes.

LEVINE: Did you miss anything about Russia or you were just happy to be away?

WINNIK: Just happy to be away because we had such bad memories.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

WINNIK: Yeah. We remembered so much. You know, I've forgotten some. It's eighty years.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about values or attitudes that your mother and father had, that they tried to instill in you?

WINNIK: Only to be good and to be honest and to be kind. And when I moved to Florida, I took my aunt, who is a widow in New York and she was alone. Her husband passed away a few years. We were very close with her. She says, "You're moving away too far and I'll be alone here." I said, "You know what? I'm going to have an extra bedroom and a bathroom. You can come live with me," and she lived with me for a year's time without any money. For a year's time. She says, "Can't I pay you something?" I says, "No. No," and she got her social security, my aunt. She was—she was a little older than me, about five years older than me. Social security. Says, "I'll give you something." So, "Give me twenty dollars a month. Would that make you feel good?" She said, "Fine."

LEVINE: Ah.

WINNIK: So she paid me twenty dollars every month when she got her social security and she lived with me for about a year's time. She got sick. She wasn't well when she moved with me, and she only wanted to stay. She had a daughter living in another city, in Pittsburgh. I better not—

LEVINE: But—but she wanted to be with you in Florida?

WINNIK: With me, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: So she stayed. Then she went to visit her daughter. She wasn't feeling well and they sent her to Virginia. Her son lived there and then she went to a nursing home. She passed away.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, you were good to her.

WINNIK: Oh, I missed her so much. Everybody thought it was my mother because I treated her so well, you know, and I loved her.

LEVINE: Was she—is she the one that came with you?

WINNIK: Was my fathers—yeah, she was my father's sister.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: And she was very close to my father. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: She's the one who came together with us. She wasn't married then. She was a young real. Really young. She was young.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: About five years younger than me. Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, let's see. Is there anything else you can think of that has to do with starting over again or do you—do you think coming to this country made a difference in your personality, in the way that you see things? Do you think coming here and starting over again as a twelve year old—

WINNIK: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: How do you think it affected you? Can you say anything about it?

WINNIK: It's good in effect, in a bad way. In a good way.

LEVINE: In a good way?

WINNIK: Yeah, we loved it.

LEVINE: Well—how?

WINNIK: We loved it here.

LEVINE: Oh, you were very happy just to be here.

WINNIK: So happy, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: We went to the subway. Went to work in, you know, the subways and we liked it. We made friends. We enjoyed living here.

LEVINE: So you were in New York the whole time, up until you came to Florida?

WINNIK: I lived in New York and then I lived in California for five years.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

WINNIK: My other sister lived in California. She lived there for about twenty-five years and she had a business there and we had a candy store in New York.

LEVINE: Oh, where was the candy store?

WINNIK: In Queens.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

WINNIK: So for about twenty-eight years we [unclear]. We had a candy store. Just my husband and I worked together.

LEVINE: So did you live in Queens when you had the candy store there?

WINNIK: We lived right in back of the store.

LEVINE: What—what section of Queens?

WINNIK: I think it was 43rd Avenue.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

WINNIK: 43rd Avenue. You know, we've lived here already about thirty years in Florida.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: So even that I forgot a little bit.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about in the Bronx, do you remember what section that was when you first went to the Bronx?

WINNIK: Ah, can you mention some streets, maybe I could remember?

LEVINE: I can't remember streets in the Bronx.

WINNIK: We lived in the Bronx—

LEVINE: There's a very well known huge Y street.

WINNIK: I forgot the streets in the Bronx.

LEVINE: Yeah, I guess I'm—I can't help you either.

WINNIK: I can't remember the streets.

LEVINE: So—

WINNIK: We lived five years in California. We had a coffee shop there.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: My sister's husband lived in California, opened up a coffee shop and they always wanted us to come out there. So we left the candy store. [unclear] then it turned into a bad area, so we left it, and I wish we didn't. I wish we would have taken some of the comic books. I would have been rich now. [Laughs]

LEVINE: That's true.

WINNIK: Yes. We left everything. We went to California and we stayed awhile with my sister until we looked for an apartment. Right around the corner we moved, near here. We're a very close family.

LEVINE: Yes.

WINNIK: Very close.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So why don't you say the names of your children?

WINNIK: My children? Al. Al Winnik and Scott Winnik.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and you have grandchildren?

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Any great grandchildren?

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Oh, good for you.

WINNIK: Robert—I can't think of their names. Robert is my son's son. Robert. Is the one who is a detective in the police department, and Steven Winnik. He works for the—

EVA: UPS.

WINNIK: Not UPS, the other company.

LEVINE: FedEx?

WINNIK: Federal Ex. He works there. He's got two children. He's got a little girl, Jessica, thirteen, and a little boy, Matthew. I think he's eight.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Wow. Well, what do you feel very proud of that you've done in your lifetime?

WINNIK: Very proud?

LEVINE: What makes you feel satisfied that you have done?

WINNIK: Well, my marriage was so wonderful. I was—you know, I was talking to the manager here, to Sid Rosenberg, and I was telling him we were not rich, but we were rich in love. We loved each other, but I cry. [Crying]

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. Well, you had a wonderful, long marriage.

WINNIK: See his picture?

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, well, why don't we finish—

WINNIK: I'm trying to.

LEVINE: Because you're—you're hooked up here, and then you get the picture.

WINNIK: Oh, okay.

LEVINE: Was there anything else that you can think of, Dottie, that maybe we haven't covered that has to with—with coming here?

WINNIK: And I'm very.

LEVINE: Either you or your family.

WINNIK: I'm very proud of my son, Al.

LEVINE: Yeah?

WINNIK: Very proud of he accomplished.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. Yeah, and your mother and father, they were—they were very happy to have come here? Yeah.

WINNIK: They were so happy to come to America, and unfortunately my mother got sick and at that time they didn't have the medication they have now.

LEVINE: Right.

WINNIK: To help her.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: She passed away.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: At the age of forty-two.

EVA: That's just forty-two.

WINNIK: My father remarried.

LEVINE: He did?

WINNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember anything about the Jewish theater? Did you or your family—

WINNIK: The Jewish theater?

LEVINE: Yeah, 2nd Avenue.

WINNIK: I had—my grandfather, my father's father married somebody who was in the Jewish theater. Married somebody who's daughter was in the Jewish theater.

LEVINE: Oh.

WINNIK: And I can't think of her name. Betty I think it was. Oh, it's many years. She's probably dead already. Who knows.

LEVINE: Yeah, but was that something that the family would go to?

WINNIK: Yes. We loved to go to the Jewish Theater, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: And how—

WINNIK: Molly Pitkin.

LEVINE: Yeah, Molly Pitkin.

WINNIK: Oh, I used to see her. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: And I remember another actress, used to make you cry.

LEVINE: Oh.

EVA: Jenny Goldstein.

WINNIK: I think her name was Jenny Goldstein.

EVA: [unclear]

WINNIK: I think so, yeah.

EVA: Jenny Goldstein.

LEVINE: Yeah, that's right.

WINNIK: We used to go a lot to the Jewish theater, and she used to give my grandfather tickets sometimes, the daughter.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So was there anything else that you did, either you and your husband or—or your family, your mother and father, anything for enjoyment, once you came to this country?

WINNIK: When we came to this country, what did we do? Mostly we went with the families. Mostly tried to be with the families. When we first came, we didn't have any friends, yet, you know, so we were stuck with the families, the visits and holidays. You know, my father would make dinner and we'd all get together. It was very pleasant and we didn't look for, you know, excitement. We were just—we were happy to be with the families.

LEVINE: When you were in the Bronx, was there—were—were there mostly immigrant families around in the area that you were settled in, do you remember?

WINNIK: No.

LEVINE: You don't remember? Like when you were in school, were there a lot of children who had come from Europe in your—in your school?

WINNIK: I really don't remember that.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Were—were the teachers nice to you when you were learning English?

WINNIK: Yes, they were nice. They were nice, yes. And we learned English. We had no trouble. We tried to, you know, study and we learned.

LEVINE: You probably learned more quickly than your parents. Usually children do.

WINNIK: Sure.

EVA: More than the children that were born here.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah, I—

[END OF SIDE A]
[BEGIN SIDE B]

LEVINE: Do you remember the pharmacist in your—in your area where you settled?

WINNIK: No.

LEVINE: Is that something that you remember?

WINNIK: No, I don't remember.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay.

WINNIK: [unclear]

LEVINE: And so how—how about is there anything else you can say about when you started work in the—for the—in the tie factory? What was that like?

WINNIK: Oh, we enjoyed it. We enjoyed doing that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was it—was it—was it—what do I want to say? Was it a lot of work? I mean, you had to work hard?

WINNIK: It was not too hard. It was making the ties, putting them together and he liked us. The boss liked us. I think he came over to visit us. He came to visit us.

EVA: He met our parents.

WINNIK: Yes, he liked us. He came to visit our parents.

EVA: And he liked us.

WINNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Very nice.

WINNIK: Yeah, the trouble, it was a long ride, though, with the subway.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

WINNIK: I don't remember. I think it was Brooklyn and we lived in the Bronx. It was a long ride.

EVA: Came to meet our parents.

WINNIK: But we enjoyed working, you know, make a little money, bring it in the house.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: Yeah.

EVA: Very little money.

LEVINE: Yeah.

EVA: Those days.

WINNIK: In that time when I was working, one day I said to my—before I got married, I said to my sister, “I’m not going into work today.” She says, “Why?” I said, “I’m getting married today.” She says, “Oh, my God.”

EVA: She left.

LEVINE: Yeah. So you spilled the beans to your sister.

EVA: Oh, I’m sorry.

LEVINE: That’s okay.

WINNIK: So we got married and the bus ride. I remember, the bus ride I still remember. Oh, it was—

LEVINE: Was this to the courthouse? Is that where you took the bus?

WINNIK: We took the train to the courthouse to get married, and we had two witnesses.

LEVINE: Right.

WINNIK: Friends of ours, elderly people, and then they went away and we went to—I think we went out to eat first, and then we said goodbye to them and we took a bus ride. The 5th Avenue bus. We sat on the bus there, my husband holding me around, and, oh, we were so in love.

LEVINE: Ah, that’s beautiful. Okay, well, is there anything else you can think of relevant to coming here?

WINNIK: No, I can’t.

LEVINE: Or your life later? I think you’ve pretty much covered everything.

WINNIK: I’m crying already.

LEVINE: Ah. Well, I want to thank you for a very interesting interview and I will be sending you the tape, so you can let your family hear.

WINNIK: Okay. I enjoyed talking to you.

LEVINE: I thank you.

WINNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: I've been speaking with Dottie Winnik, who—who came here as Dottie Rudinsky, and she came here in 1920 with her family.

WINNIK: And my name wasn't Dottie when I came here.

LEVINE: Oh, what was your original name?

WINNIK: My original name was Dora. They called me Dina. They called me all kinds of names. Dina and when I write it's Dorothy. When it's my check, when I sign a check it's Dorothy.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

WINNIK: But here they call me Dottie. Like I say, everybody calls me Dottie. Some people say, "Hey, Dot!"

LEVINE: Do you remember—

WINNIK: "Hey, Dot!"

LEVINE: Do you remember how your name got changed? I mean when it went from Dora to all the other names that you've had? Do you remember?

WINNIK: To all my other names. [Laughs] Gradually.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. You were Dora in Russia?

WINNIK: Russia, Dora.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

WINNIK: Okay.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, thank you again, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

