

EI-1357

EVA ROTHCHILD

BIRTHDATE: JANUARY 28, 1910

INTERVIEW DATE: DECEMBER 26, 2004

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 94

RUNNING TIME: 19:21

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE

INTERVIEW LOCATION: TAMARACK, FLORIDA

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

RUSSIA, 1920

10

SHIP:

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Today is December the 26th, the year 2004. I'm here in Merrill Gardens in Tamarack, Florida and I'm with Eva Rothchild, who was born Hava Rudinsky. She came with her family from Russia in 1920, when she was ten years of age. I have just interviewed Eva's sister, Dottie, and so both Dottie Winnik and Eva—Eva Rothchild, who are sisters, both of their interviews will be in the Ellis Island Oral History Collection. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

ROTHCHILD: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay, Eva, could you say again your birth date, please?

ROTHCHILD: January 28th, 1910.

LEVINE: Okay, and the town that you were born in?

ROTHCHILD: Belia Tzerkof.

LEVINE: Okay, and we're spelling that B-E-L-I-A.

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

LEVINE: Great. Okay, and why don't you say for your tape, your mother's name and your father's name?

ROTHCHILD: My mother's name was Clara.

LEVINE: Okay, and it was Pearlman?

ROTHCHILD: Pearlman—I was going to say that.

LEVINE: And your father?

ROTHCHILD: Isaac.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: Rudinsky.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you came to this country, you came here with your mother and father, your two sisters.

ROTHCHILD: Yes.

LEVINE: And it was your aunt, right, who was with you?

ROTHCHILD: An aunt.

LEVINE: And your grandmother?

ROTHCHILD: Correct.

LEVINE: Right, and according to your sister's interview, you—there were some other people from your small town that traveled with you at first? Or you don't remember that?

ROTHCHILD: Don't remember. [Very soft spoken and difficult to hear]

LEVINE: Okay. Okay. Now, when you think back about Belia Tzerkof--

ROTHCHILD: Tzerkof.

LEVINE: Tzerkof, what—what do you remember about it?

- ROTHCHILD: That when I went to sleep, my mother wanted to tell me a little story. I says, "I don't want to hear it. I want to hear about America." [Laughs] Talk about America. [Coughs] Excuse me. Talk about America.
- LEVINE: Did you—did you know people in Belia Tzerkof who—
- ROTHCHILD: Tzerkof.
- LEVINE: Tzerkof—I can't get it right. Who—who had gone to America? In other words, had—were there other people from your little town who had left before you did?
- ROTHCHILD: Perhaps, but I don't recall.
- LEVINE: But you knew about America.
- ROTHCHILD: Oh, sure.
- LEVINE: How do you—how did you know?
- ROTHCHILD: When I went to sleep, I didn't want to hear any stories, as I said. It's the truth. Talk about America.
- LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So--
- ROTHCHILD: [unclear]
- LEVINE: So America was something that people—
- WINNIK: Dreamed.
- ROTHCHILD: Dreamed. Golden Land and—
- LEVINE: The Golden Land, uh-huh. Uh-huh. Okay, and did you go to school—
- ROTHCHILD: Sure.
- LEVINE: In Russia. Yeah, do you remember anything about it? About your schooling there?
- ROTHCHILD: I don't think they allowed two children from a family. Was that correct, Dottie?
- WINNIK: What?

ROTHCHILD: About schooling.

LEVINE: Two children from one school?

ROTHCHILD: Yeah, do you?

WINNIK: We went to school.

ROTHCHILD: We went to school.

LEVINE: You both went.

ROTHCHILD: Yeah, I went, also.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, was it—was it a school especially for Jewish children, or was it a—a mixture? No, you said you spoke Russia—Russian in school. So you had to learn Russian, too, I guess.

ROTHCHILD: A little Russian, but we spoke Jewish mostly at home.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Do you remember anything about observing, any holidays?

ROTHCHILD: Yes.

LEVINE: What did you observe in Russia?

ROTHCHILD: Jewish holidays.

LEVINE: Do you remember any?

ROTHCHILD: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, you fast.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: Yom Kippur you're supposed to fast.

LEVINE: Right. Yeah? Uh-huh. Were the—were the observances there any different from here, that you—that you remember?

ROTHCHILD: I guess so. I guess so.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ROTHCHILD: Perhaps.

LEVINE: Okay, and did you have friends when you went to school?

ROTHCHILD: Sure.

LEVINE: What—what would you do together? What kinds of things would you play?

ROTHCHILD: I have no—I don't remember.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

ROTHCHILD: I don't recall.

LEVINE: All right. Let's see, so do you remember your grandmother?

ROTHCHILD: Yes.

LEVINE: How do you remember her?

ROTHCHILD: She used to wear a kerchief on her hair.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ROTHCHILD: And she was just a lovable person.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember any particular foods that either your grandmother cooked or your mother cooked when you were a little girl?

ROTHCHILD: She used to—she used to cook a lot, my grandma.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: I think.

LEVINE: What—

ROTHCHILD: I think she used to cook a lot.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of your favorites of what she cooked?

ROTHCHILD: I don't recall.

WINNIK: Knishes.

LEVINE: Knishes. Do you remember knishes.

ROTHCHILD: Some odd things that not everybody makes it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Do you remember any trips that you made?

ROTHCHILD: Excuse me.

WINNIK: Careful.

LEVINE: To—

ROTHCHILD: I wanted to blow my nose.

LEVINE: Okay.

ROTHCHILD: Excuse me.

LEVINE: Sure.

ROTHCHILD: [sniffing sound]

LEVINE: Eva, do you remember any trips to Kiev as a little girl?

WINNIK: No, she never went. I did.

ROTHCHILD: I don't recall, no.

LEVINE: Oh, only Dottie went. You—you didn't go. Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: I don't recall.

LEVINE: Okay, and how do you remember the house you lived in or the little town? What do you remember about it?

ROTHCHILD: I was so very young.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay.

ROTHCHILD: I remember crossing the border?

LEVINE: Oh, how do you remember that?

ROTHCHILD: We had to wait until it froze and we had to walk on ice. Ice across from Europe to America—to Romania.

LEVINE: Romania.

ROTHCHILD: Correct?

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember any of the pogroms when you had to go down into the basement?

ROTHCHILD: Yes, used to hide there. Makes me cry. [Starts crying]

LEVINE: Hmm, yeah.

WINNIK: [unclear] remember that. Bombs going off [unclear], hear that.

ROTHCHILD: Makes me cry.

LEVINE: Yeah. So when you crossed over the ice and you went to Romania—

ROTHCHILD: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about that time in Romania before you left for America?

ROTHCHILD: Very little. Very—very little.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. How about the ship, or the passage to America, coming here? Do you—

ROTHCHILD: We were all sick. I think we got sick. [Laughs] Right, Dottie?

WINNIK: What?

ROTHCHILD: We got sick on the boat.

WINNIK: Yeah, we got sick a little bit.

LEVINE: Yeah, were you down in steerage? In other words, were you down in the bottom of the ship where there were lots of people? Do you remember that?

ROTHCHILD: It's hard to remember.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about the Statue of Liberty? When--when the ship came into the New York—

ROTHCHILD: Oh, we were thrilled to see it. We were thrilled to see it. We all applauded.

WINNIK: It was a dream.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Okay, and then Ellis Island. Is that anything that you—sticks in your mind?

ROTHCHILD: I remember [unclear], yes. They had to check us out. Yeah. In fact, I think we had some operation on our eyes, something on our eyes.

WINNIK: [unclear]

LEVINE: They checked your eyes?

WINNIK: Checked for glaucoma.

LEVINE: Right.

ROTHCHILD: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah, and then you were there for a few days, do you think?

ROTHCHILD: I don't think how long we were there. I don't think—

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving Ellis Island?

ROTHCHILD: Just very faint.

LEVINE: And you got to the Bronx, I guess, is where your—is where your aunt was, in the Bronx?

ROTHCHILD: Something like that.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did—so do you remember, like there was some kind of a—

ROTHCHILD: Happy.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ROTHCHILD: Very happy to be here in America.

LEVINE: Yeah, and did you have like a dinner or some kind of a welcoming—

ROTHCHILD: Well—

LEVINE: I imagine, yeah.

ROTHCHILD: I guess something, but I don't recall.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, so how about learning English? How was that for you?

ROTHCHILD: Oh, we couldn't wait to go to school.

LEVINE: Really?

ROTHCHILD: And learn. Sure.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ROTHCHILD: We used to speak it on our house, English.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ROTHCHILD: Yeah, we tried so hard.

LEVINE: And then when you went—yeah. Yeah. When you got to school, did you—did you—what did you encounter? In other words, were children teasing you or—

ROTHCHILD: When I took a book, I didn't know which book to take out. I used to look at the color of the cover, to take a book out. I didn't know which book to take out, and I tried so hard to learn. I'll never forget it. My mother went to school. It was Mother's Day or whatever it was, and she made so much about me. You know, such a good student and trying so hard. [Crying]

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh. Uh-huh. So at first you didn't understand anything, I guess.

ROTHCHILD: Nothing.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ROTHCHILD: But I tried so hard to learn.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ROTHCHILD: Americans didn't care so much.

LEVINE: So what happened? How long did it take you before you started to feel a little bit comfortable with the English?

ROTHCHILD: A long time, yeah. Then we started talking it at home, the English.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: Didn't we?

LEVINE: And your teachers, were they helpful to you?

ROTHCHILD: Oh, they loved me.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ROTHCHILD: I was so good.

LEVINE: Yeah, and she saw you were trying so hard, yeah. Right. Okay, so—okay, so you stayed in school and you—you went through—can you say anything about your mother or father or how they adjusted to being in this country?

ROTHCHILD: They were very happy to be in America.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and your father took up selling material again?

WINNIK: He was good at that.

ROTHCHILD: Yes, yes. Had a stand there for years, just selling material. He had a stand.

LEVINE: He had a stand?

WINNIK: In the hotel, no. When we traveled.

ROTHCHILD: Oh, when we traveled.

WINNIK: In America he used to in a store.

ROTHCHILD: Oh, I don't recall that.

LEVINE: Okay. So—so you stayed in school until how long? When did you stop and go to work? When did you stop school and go—

ROTHCHILD: I don't remember.

WINNIK: Graduated.

LEVINE: You graduated.

WINNIK: Public school.

LEVINE: Public school.

ROTHCHILD: Public school I graduated.

LEVINE: And then you went with your sister?

ROTHCHILD: To go to work. We went to a tie place. I used to make ties, so we went to a place to work there, the two of us.

LEVINE: And what was that like in the tie place?

ROTHCHILD: We worked hard. [Laughs] We worked hard.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. You never did work at home? In other words, you didn't take what they called home work, sewing?

ROTHCHILD: I don't think we did.

LEVINE: No.

ROTHCHILD: I don't think so.

LEVINE: No. Uh-huh. So you—so you had to take the subway and go with your sister, right?

ROTHCHILD: Yes, we went together.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, and how long did you stay doing that? It was a long time?

ROTHCHILD: A long time.

LEVINE: A long time?

ROTHCHILD: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then did you get—were you still working then when you got married?

ROTHCHILD: No.

LEVINE: No. Did you have another job before you got married?

ROTHCHILD: I had a store. Didn't I have a store?

WINNIK: Yeah, she—

ROTHCHILD: Spotless Store.

WINNIK: Yeah, a cleaning store she had.

ROTHCHILD: A cleaning store.

WINNIK: Cleaning store.

ROTHCHILD: Yeah, I franchised it.

LEVINE: Oh.

ROTHCHILD: Yeah, that's my—

WINNIK: That's when you were married, because she was married [unclear].

ROTHCHILD: I franchised the store. You know what franchise means?

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, tell me how-first how you met your husband? How did you meet him?

ROTHCHILD: I don't recall. There was a bunch of fellows. We met a bunch of fellows and I met him and I think he asked me for my phone number. Something like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: And it started from then on.

LEVINE: Now, did your husband come from Europe?

ROTHCHILD: Russia. Yeah.

LEVINE: He came from Russia, too?

ROTHCHILD: I think—believe so, didn't he?

WINNIK: Yeah, I think he did. Or was he born in this country?

ROTHCHILD: I think he might have born over here.

WINNIK: He was born in this country.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, but he had a cleaning store?

ROTHCHILD: No, I did.

LEVINE: Oh, you did. So—so tell me about that.

ROTHCHILD: He had his own job. I don't recall what he was doing.

WINNIK: Talk to her.

ROTHCHILD: I don't recall what he was doing, what sort of work. But I franchised a store, Spotless store and I made extra money.

LEVINE: Good for you. Yeah.

ROTHCHILD: I was a good salesperson.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. You took after your father, I guess, huh? Yeah. So—so did you keep the store for quite a while?

ROTHCHILD: Quite some time.

LEVINE: Where was it?

ROTHCHILD: In Queens, I believe. I think in Queens.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and so you—you and your husband worked together or just you?

ROTHCHILD: I did.

LEVINE: You just did and he worked in another place.

ROTHCHILD: His own job.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: I don't remember what he was doing. What kind of work.

LEVINE: And did you have children?

ROTHCHILD: Sure.

LEVINE: How many children?

ROTHCHILD: Two boys. Carl and Bill.

LEVINE: And after you had the children, did you continue to work or did you—did you stop working at the cleaning store?

ROTHCHILD: Oh, stopped working.

LEVINE: You stopped. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Now, did you stay in—you moved—did you move to Queens from the Bronx?

ROTHCHILD: I don't recall.

LEVINE: Okay. All right. How about you, do you remember your mother and father, things they tried to teach you? They wanted you to—

ROTHCHILD: I know at night when I went to sleep, I only—[starts crying] Wanted to talk about America.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah. How about the values they had, the attitudes they had? Did they want you to become Americanized? Did they want you to—to—did they keep any of their ways from the old country or did they drop those ways and—and become more Americanized?

ROTHCHILD: Whatever they were, they were just my light.

WINNIK: They became Americanized.

LEVINE: Yeah, they wanted you to become Americans, right?

WINNIK: Sure.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: Excuse me.

LEVINE: Yeah, that's okay. Let's see. How about, do you think your personality in some way has been changed by the fact that you started out in Russia and you came here?

ROTHCHILD: I loved it here.

LEVINE: You loved it right from the beginning? Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: I did.

LEVINE: What did you like when you were—when you got here and you were still growing up—

ROTHCHILD: I was very young.

LEVINE: Can you remember any of your favorite things?

ROTHCHILD: I was very young.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: I was really very young.

LEVINE: Yeah, what did you do for enjoyment after you came to this country?

ROTHCHILD: I can't think of it. I can't think.

LEVINE: Okay. Do you remember the Jewish Theater?

ROTHCHILD: Not too much, really.

LEVINE: Second Avenue?

ROTHCHILD: I remember—it's on my mind, but not too clear.

LEVINE: Yeah, but not too clear. Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: Clear.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Let's see. And how about your life, when you think back on it, what makes you feel very satisfied?

ROTHCHILD: To be in America. [Crying again]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. So you mentioned earlier that for a long time you didn't even want to think about coming here because it was painful, right?

ROTHCHILD: Very painful.

LEVINE: I mean what you were running away from was—was painful. But now you—you feel that you can—

ROTHCHILD: Very happy here.

LEVINE: Yeah, that you had a good life and you lived your life out here. Yeah. Okay, is there anything else that you can think of that—

ROTHCHILD: You would like to—

LEVINE: Do you have grandchildren?

ROTHCHILD: Sure, I have children. Carl and Carol.

WINNIK: What?

ROTHCHILD: I have grandchildren, I think.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WINNIK: Her memory's not so good, a little bit.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: Memory's not too good.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so now you're in Florida.

ROTHCHILD: Yes.

LEVINE: So how is this time of your life?

ROTHCHILD: I like it here very much.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ROTHCHILD: I love Florida.

LEVINE: Good. Good. Okay, is there anything else you can think of that maybe we—

ROTHCHILD: You omitted?

LEVINE: That I didn't think to ask you.

ROTHCHILD: I can't think—

LEVINE: That you might think—want to say.

ROTHCHILD: I don't know.

LEVINE: Okay. Anything, Dottie, that you can think of that maybe popped into your mind?

WINNIK: [Laughs] My mind is going to explode. I got so much on mind, Janet.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

WINNIK: So don't ask.

LEVINE: Okay. All right. Yeah, well, you—you've suffered a loss.

WINNIK: If I think anymore, it's going to go haywire.

ROTHCHILD: Explode. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well—

WINNIK: I had to take care of my husband a lot.

ROTHCHILD: Yeah, she had her hands full.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, I want to thank you both. I think it's very nice that you're here together.

WINNIK: Thank you to you.

ROTHCHILD: It's a pleasure to have met you.

LEVINE: It's a pleasure to have met you and I thank you so much.

ROTHCHILD: You're quite welcome.

LEVINE: And I will be sending you the tapes of the interviews.

WINNIK: Send it—my son has the, you know, it can show it—

LEVINE: Yeah, on his website? He has a—on the computer. You mean?

WINNIK: Oh, I think they have one because his wife was—she had a birthday when she was sixty years old. They made a surprise party here in Florida in a night club. They took the whole room, a surprise party.

LEVINE: On that night.

WINNIK: And he had entertainments. There were like Los Vegas entertainments all over. Nothing out, it was just a thing, you know. What a show they put on. So he's got everything on tape and he shows [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, great.

WINNIK: You feel like you're at a table.

LEVINE: You're there. Yeah, oh, that's great. Okay, well, thank you again.

ROTHCHILD: You're quite welcome.

LEVINE: And now I've just been speaking with Eva Rothchild, who started out as Hava Rudinsky in Russia and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]