

EI-144

ETHEL DOMERSHICK PINE

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RUSSIA, 1921 SHIP: WHITE STAR LINE

AGE 8 RESIDENCES: RUSSIA: NESHEVITZ US: BROOKLYN,NY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here today with Ethel Domershick Pine and I'm in her home in Florida. Mrs. Pine came from Russia in 1921 when she was eight years old. Today is May 7th, 1992.

PINE: Right.

LEVINE: Okay. I'm very happy to be here, and I'd like to start out by asking you your birth date.

PINE: I was born June 11th, 1913.

LEVINE: Okay. And what town were you born in?

PINE: Well, Neshevitz, the town of Neshevitz.

LEVINE: Could you spell that, just for the tape.

PINE: Neshevitz. N-E, how did I spell it there? N-E-I-S . . .

LEVINE: N-E-S-H-E-V-I-T-Z.

PINE: That sounds like that's right. I don't know.

LEVINE: Okay.

PINE: I never spell it the same way twice because I really don't know the real spelling of it, and spelling's a funny way. Everybody spells it differently. So that's it.

LEVINE: That's good enough. Okay. Do you remember Neshevitz?

PINE: No. I don't remember it too much. My mother had there a dry goods store, and she worked all day long, and I was with her in the store most of the day. And what I remember mostly is, that was during World War I, and we had different soldiers coming in, the Germans and the Russians was there, of course, and the Polish in and out. And one day we'd get up, it was called Poland, you'd get up the next morning it was Russia. But the day it was born it was Russia, so I'm a Russian. That's how they differentiated. So that's the way it goes. But there was nothing pleasant for me to remember. The only soldiers that were very extremely nice to us were the Germans, believe it or not.

LEVINE: And how were they nice?

PINE: They used to give us a lot of goodies. They used to give us food, they used to give us honey, they used to give us jam and cookies. I don't know if they just gave it to chosen people, but I was one of the lucky ones. They used to give me a lot of those. And when I read about the Holocaust and all that I couldn't understand that they should

turn about and do what they were doing. It's almost unbelievable. It seems to me a different grade of people got in there, just a bunch of animals, and that's it.

LEVINE: So did you go to school at all?

PINE: No. No schooling whatsoever there. We didn't have any schooling. It wasn't compulsory as it is here in the United States. And when I came here of course I went into school immediately.

LEVINE: Well, now, in this town, was it a big town? Was it a small village?

PINE: No, very small, very small, extremely. It was like a forest, more or less. It was just very little people in there. They had their one butcher and one dry goods store. It was like you see here out west, the stores that you, when they had the covered wagons or something, on the same order, you know, small little district. Nothing much to talk about. All right.

LEVINE: Was it a farming district?

PINE: Mostly farming, that's right.

LEVINE: What kind? Do you remember what . . .

PINE: They didn't do so much products of selling the things. It was mostly for their own use, or they brought it into town and sold it to the people that didn't farm, or they were carpenters. My grandfather was a blacksmith, so we were considered middle class because we had our own home, we had our garden in back, but we didn't depend on

that, because grandpa made money putting shoes on horses and all that. So we were middle class people, so we got along very nicely.

LEVINE: I see. Was your, was that your mother's father or your . . .

PINE: My dad's.

LEVINE: Your dad's father. And so did you have a lot of extended family?

PINE: No, no, no, no. I just had a great-aunt, the aunt that raised my mother, because my mother was an orphan when she was about ten years old. So my great-aunt raised my mother, and that's the only relatives that we had. She had two sisters, but I don't remember them too well. They did not live where we lived. They lived in another town, a different city. I really don't remember them at all, because I didn't see them, so I couldn't remember them.

LEVINE: Did your grandfather, did you have a grandmother?

PINE: I had a grandmother and grandfather. We lived with them.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. And what were they like?

PINE: They were very nice and charming, yes. My grandfather had a great sense of humor. My grandmother was very strict. With him I could do anything I want. That was his princess. (she laughs) So if I had any problem I went to him. I knew where my bread was buttered.

LEVINE: So, and your grandmother?

PINE: She was very nice. She didn't deprive me of anything, but she made me see the light of things, what are right and what are wrong. And if I did something wrong she just reprimanded me. She never hit me. She'd sit and talk and talk and talk, and I used to turn my head back and forth and say, "What the heck is she talking about?" And go in one ear, but some things remained, retained.

LEVINE: Can you remember any of the things that she was strict about?

PINE: Not really, no. She told you you have to be good, you have to respect people, you shouldn't judge people what other people say, judge them on their own merits and color and things like that. We're very democratic in that way. If you are Gentile or anything we didn't care. As long as you were a nice person. If you were a mensch, you were a mensch. That's the way we were raised, and that's it.

LEVINE: There were no colored people in your village, or you didn't know about.

PINE: No, no, no. But Mom, when we came here and when I first saw, my mother says, "They're just people like you. God loves them like the flowers. You have all kinds of flowers, you like them, they all smell nice. Even the stinkweed is nice if you look at." She says, "Yes, and you have to respect people the same way. Don't look on their colors. See what they are." And that's the way we were raised, and that's the way I practice, and that's the way I brought up my children.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you have brothers and sisters?

PINE: I have two sisters and one brother.

LEVINE: And were they born also?

PINE: No, no. They were all, I was the only one that was born in Europe. My father left when I was six months old, and I didn't see my father until I was eight.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you didn't remember your father at all.

PINE: No. Anybody could have come over and said, "I'm your father," and I wouldn't know any better. No, I didn't know that.

LEVINE: So your mother was actually carrying on a business.

PINE: She had no choice. Dad expected me to come here after he settled here, but World War I broke out, and he couldn't do anything about it. My mother could have, when World War ended in 1918, my mother could have come here immediately, because she is a citizen of the United States. She didn't have to wait for a visa. I, on the other hand, had to touch American soil to become a citizen. Now, how could I get to American soil if I can't leave Russia. So Mom said, "I'm not leaving you because I don't know what's going to happen, like what happened to your father." So she waited almost two years until I was able to get a visa to come here. It wasn't her. And then when we arrived here my mother could have gotten off the boat immediately because she was a citizen of the United States. I wasn't. I had to touch the soil, and I couldn't touch the soil until they permit me on. So then we got off on Ellis Island and it was, it's really something. It looked like a great big barn to me, today, you know. It was

overwhelming. It was so tremendous. And people were crying and people were talking, all kinds of languages. It was really confusing. And then finally we come to a place where this one examined you. I went through a physical and psychiatrists and all that. They all examine you, you know. And I passed. And then they wanted to see if I'm intelligent enough, and a guy comes over. Naturally they had an interpreter and instead of speaking to me in Yiddish and saying to me, "Look, I'm going to ask you certain questions, you answer me." So he picks up three fingers, so I go to him like this (she gestures). He goes like this (she gestures), I follow his motion. So my mother says, "You know, if you're not going to answer him and you're not going to talk to him, they're going to ship you right back to Russia and I'm staying here with your father." So I started talking to him, I says, "You want me to answer you?" He says, "Of course." I says, "You're stupid." I says, "Don't you know you have three fingers?" And then he asked me to multiply things like that, which we taught in the house. So he says, "Oh, you're all right." He gave me a slap on the back and I almost broke my neck. I was very tiny when I came here, but I developed very quickly. So then a lot of children got chalk. Some green, some red, some white, and they were held back for certain things and some were shipped back, but they were retarded or they were mentally unbalanced or they were sick. But if I didn't open my big fat mouth I wouldn't be here today. No, it's silly. Why doesn't an interpreter tell you, "I'm going to question you, and answer me." He picks up three fingers, so I show him I got three fingers, too. (they laugh) My mother one day killed me. She says, "I shouldn't have said anything. I should have left you there." I says, "You couldn't live without me. You slept with me so many years." She says, "I can sleep very well without you." (she laughs) So we had a lot of fun in our own little way.

LEVINE: Okay. Let's go back to when you were leaving, when you finally did get the visa.

PINE: No problem. Of course, there was a lot of crying from my grandmother. My grandfather had passed away, and my great-aunt and uncle, of course, cried because she says, "We'll never see you again." Which is understandable. And I remember going and I held onto my mother, and that's it. But I don't remember what port I came in. I do know the, I came in on the Cunard Line, which is an English line, and it was the White Star line, the boat. That I know. I remember it very vividly. But what port I left, for the life of me, why I happened to think of it the other day, I haven't got the slightest idea. But I'm going to look it up and see. I couldn't find out if I get a hold of the ship, the English, they'd tell me. I could find it out very easily. I can pursue it.

LEVINE: I'm afraid we're going to pick this up. (referring to a noise Mrs. Pine is making)

PINE: That's me, you're right. That's me.

LEVINE: Let me just ask you. When your father went first, how come he decided to go, do you know?

PINE: Yes, yes. My father was in the army with the Russian army, and there was rumors that a war is going to break out. My father was, he didn't have it that bad in the army when he had to serve, and everybody had to serve in the army. And he was a blacksmith, and he used to make tools and things, and he was a very essential man for

the Russians, or anybody for that matter, because he was very good with tools. When he heard rumors, he says, "I'm going to leave, because I don't want to go back in the army." So which way he went, I don't know, but he left for America, I think, the same night that he spoke with my mother. He left the same night. Luckily he did. Two days after they closed all the borders, he could have not left. So he left just in time, my dad. And then he couldn't correspond, but he was very liberal with my mother. He used to send her checks now and then and things like that. But they couldn't communicate with one another or write to one another because the mail didn't go through.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that he said or got passed along to you from your mother about the army, about being in the army?

PINE: No, nothing else. The only thing he said he did not care to stay there because he didn't want to go back to service. That's the main thing. And he says it's very hard, they would have sent him up to Siberia. That's where he did all the work there, and that's where he was stationed when he was in the army, and he didn't feel like going back. He says, "I don't want to." So he says, "Why should I stay here?" And he never thought that he wouldn't be able to take Mom or me. He figured once he gets to America, and my dad made money. He made money because he worked for Bethlehem Steel during World War I. They felt he was very essential and he did a lot of work there, and he was very capable. So they kept him there, and that was it, and then he got his citizenship papers, and then he got Mom and me over.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you and your mother left what you packed, what your mother and you packed to go with him?

PINE: What she bought, he told her, "Buy yourself a fur coat." And she says, "I don't want a fur coat, but Papa said to buy a fur coat." So she went ahead, she bought a Persian lamb coat, and she wanted it like I wanted (?) now. But she bought it, and she says, "Ah, okay. If I'm going to wear it, you wear it." She says, "Oh, it's tiny." I says, "Yeah, I could use it for a blanket." And she just took a couple of things that she had, very little Mom had. She only had two suitcases, that's all. She didn't have too much, Mother. And whatever she had, like little silverware or anything, by the time we came to the United States we had nothing for the simple reason every time we went to immigration we had to open up our luggage and look, and every time she went there was always less and less and less. And she says, "You know what? I have a good idea just to throw it away and they'll have nothing to steal." By the time Mama came she didn't have, just our clothing. That's, oh, P.S., persian lamb coat. That they couldn't take. It was too big. She had it on her arm. She was dragging it all along, and that was it. No, she didn't have anything of any value.

LEVINE: So how did it work, when you went through, like, the immigration, and they checked the bags, were you standing right there?

PINE: I didn't leave my mother if they hollered "fire." No, I didn't leave my mother.

LEVINE: But how did they come to steal from the bag. Were you right there?

PINE: No. We were there. They opened it up, and this one looks, and that one, and they go all through your clothes. And some of them are so fast that you don't even notice it. You know, the ones that, the honest person don't know how it's done, but

when Mom did get back to the hotel, or wherever we were staying she said, "Isn't it funny?" She says, "I had three of these, or four of these," and so on. And finally, before we knew it, we came maybe with one. I don't remember. We didn't have anything. Mom didn't have any jewelry or anything like that, so.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you actually left the little town of Neshevitz?

PINE: Neshevitz? We probably left there some time in August, I think, the first week in August. By the time we came here it was the 21st of September, but we had about ten or twelve days voyage on the boat, on the ship, I should say.

LEVINE: When you left you left by, when you left the village did you leave by horse and wagon?

PINE: We left by horse and wagon, then we got to a train and we got on the train and we rode all the way by train. That's what we did, yes. My uncle, my great-uncle took us to the station.

LEVINE: Okay. And you remember the name of the ship?

PINE: Yes, the White Star Line.

LEVINE: Okay. And was there any checking of you before you got on the ship?

PINE: No. They just, they checked us, but not that thoroughly. You know, they looked in your eyes and then they looked in your ears, nose and throat, but nothing, just general checking that anybody, even a nurse could do. It wasn't any, just to see,

probably, if you have red eyes, you know, pink eyes, I should say. Maybe that's what they were checking, which at that time I didn't know. That's all. Just, you know, they looked at your skin to see if you had any skin, but nothing much. Very easy.

LEVINE: And do you remember what it was like being eight years old and leaving? Was it the first time you had been out of your little village, I mean, when you went to Warsaw and then you went . . .

PINE: I didn't go anywhere. No, that's all. That was the first time out of the town, that's the first time. But I had a ball on the boat.

LEVINE: What was that like?

PINE: Oh, I had a great ball because I must have been a big yenta, little yenta. I was tiny. People thought I was younger than, I was eight. They might have took me for five or six, you know what I mean? But there's a big difference between eight and six, you know what I mean, at that stage of the game. And I never ate downstairs. We came third class. But I went up to first class. I thought, well, beneath my dignity. I used to go up there and they never stoppedcare. me, you know. And they, there's a certain people. Everybody wanted me at their table, and I didn't care wherever they went. I used to have the most delicious meals. My mother used to have herring and potatoes all the time. (she laughs) And I used to, and they used to give me goodies to take down, cake and things. I used to give it to my mother, and she used to say, "I wish you wouldn't go. I worry about you." I says, "You have nothing to worry about me. Nobody wants me, they just want to feed me, that's all." So many times she'd go looking, but

she couldn't go up there. And they wouldn't stop me. They figured what could a kid do, you know. And they thought it was kind of cute the way I used to sneak around. They used to, I didn't, today I realize they probably saw me, but I thought because the way I'm going I can't see them or I'd go like this, they can't see me. But technically speaking they did see me, but they figured what am I going to do. So I'd take a cookie or something. But the rest of the children were good. They stayed with the mother. I was the only one that was so aggressive. I thought there was something good up there, so I went. And that's it.

LEVINE: Well, did you stay in a cabin?

PINE: We had a cabin. Mom and I had a cabin.

LEVINE: Just the two of you?

PINE: Just the two of us. It was a very tiny cabin, and it was bunk, you know. And I slept on top and Mom slept on the bottom. It was comfortable, but it was nothing luxurious. We had a little, I don't even know if we had a place where we, we must have had a place to shower because Mom wouldn't let me go to sleep without a shower, so we must have had a small little cabin, you know, a shower place, and we used to shower, and that's it.

LEVINE: I see. So this was not steerage, but it was down on the ship. Is that where the cabin was?

PINE: Yes. It was the lowest parts, like when you go today travelling you have an

upper class. I don't mean class, it's what you pay.

LEVINE: Right.

PINE: You're on the upper, you're up. And then you go right. How many people say, "Oh, I had a terrible trip, I was right over the motors." So that's what we had.

LEVINE: I see. And were there steerage passengers on that ship, that you recall, all in one place without cabins?

PINE: Oh, no, no. They all had cabins. To my knowledge everybody had a cabin. Nobody slept outside like you see in the movies or anything like that. Maybe when they, during the war or something, but when I went it was past the war. We all had cabins.

LEVINE: There were, in the steerage, in the hold of the ship, there were often like a dormitory where everybody was in one big space, but you don't recall that on the ship.

PINE: No. The only thing, they came there to eat, you know, like a dining room or something, but they didn't have any meals that you'd go talk. Mostly they gave them potatoes and herring, which they were accustomed to eating at home. But upstairs was entirely different. They had steaks and lamb chops and all that stuff. Which, at that time I was eating it I didn't even know it was steak and lamb chops. But I knew the cake. That I knew, that I knew. And that's it. Then when we landed here it was very nice. When we got into the harbor there, we got in there towards late afternoon. And at night the lights lit up the harbor. It was the most magnificent sight you can see. And they had small rowboats coming into see the men, women, sweethearts, whoever it was

that came to greet the, and Mom took me by there, and she says, "There's your dad. There's your papa." I said, "Which one? There's so many." So she says, "That one." And they send us up, Papa got us a big basket of fruit, and they got it, we got it. And (she laughs) and I said, so she says, "Hug him, kiss him." I couldn't stand him. I said, "I don't want no part of him." I says, "Do we have to go to him?" I says, "Wouldn't it be better if we go back?" She says, "No, we're staying here. This is your home." I says, "Okay." So we get the basket of fruit. I never saw a banana in my life. We had oranges, we had apples, we had grapes, we had pears. I don't even remember, tomatoes we had, but we didn't eat. We gave it to the animals there. So what happened, when I saw the banana, I liked the shape of it, I ate it with the skin. I didn't know. I took two bites, I says, "Ugh." Or I swallowed two bites and I says, "Ooh, God, America. What they pick and eat." And I took it, and I threw it away. So my mother says, "What's wrong with it?" I says, "I don't like it." "So it must be bad. If you're not eating it, it must be bad." I was a good eater. So for years I didn't eat bananas, even though they showed me you skin it, for years I had that taste of the skin, and I just couldn't eat it. And then I acclimated myself and I started eating them, and I love bananas to this day. (she laughs) That's about all. As I told you, the experience I had when I got off the boat, and nothing else.

LEVINE: So the first time you saw your father that you remember he was in a rowboat?

PINE: Yes. He was in a rowboat. Not only my dad. You haven't any idea how many rowboats were there. I wouldn't say hundreds. I really don't know. But I know there

was a lot of them, and I didn't know whether, he says, and I was interested in the lights, it was so fascinating. The lights were so bright, gave a beautiful picture, you know.

LEVINE: Was your father able, he wasn't able to come on to the ship?

PINE: No. Nobody went on the boat, ship. Nobody went on the ship. Everybody was talking from there, and that's it, everybody. But I'll relate to you a funny story. There was some woman there. I don't even know who she was. And she says, "I brought you, I brought you." So my mother says to me, "Ethy, what could she have?" I says, "I don't know. Maybe a Persian lamb coat." I didn't say a Persian lamb coat. I said a fur coat. So she says, "Yeah." And all of a sudden she puts her hand on her bosom, takes out a little bag a little bit bigger than this, maybe three times the size of this, and she takes. I don't know how the heck she, she pulled it out of her bosom. Whatever his name was, she goes, "I brought it, and here it is." And it doesn't go into the boat. It goes right into the sea. I remember her pulling her hair. And I says, "So why did she threw it in." I never thought till my mother says, "She's an idiot." I says, "Why is she an idiot? She got a," she says, "Ethy, do you know what she has in there?" I says, "I haven't any idea." She says, "Jewelry." She says, "Mama, where's your jewelry?" She says, "I have no jewelry." I'm thinking my mother's going to pull out something too. She says, "What possessed her," my mother says, "to throw it down." She was probably afraid when she goes through immigration and they're going to search her, they'll take it away. They would have no taken it away from her because it's her possession. And I don't know what she had. I don't know what happened to that lady. I never saw her again. In fact, I wouldn't have even recognized her if I saw her. She said, "I have it for

you." And she puts her hand on her bosom, throws it and it goes right into the ocean. Isn't that something?

LEVINE: Yeah. So she was going to actually, do you think she was going to give it to you?

PINE: To me? No.

LEVINE: What was she going to . . .

PINE: She threw it for her husband.

LEVINE: She just, to the boat, I see.

PINE: Her husband was downstairs in the, not down, in the ocean there, the Atlantic Ocean there, sure. And I said to my mother, I says, "Mom, where's your?" I didn't know. In my mind if she had it there Mama had it too. She said, "Ethy, you know I have no jewelry." She says, "That must be jewelry. What could she have there? You couldn't bring marks over here. What was she going to do with that? It must have been jewelry. Diamonds. You see, a lot of people, the husbands send them money and things were much cheaper in Europe, and they bought it and they brought it here. They brought diamonds and things. Mama didn't do it. The only thing that she bought was her fur coat, and that was it. Strange things, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

PINE: Oh, yes. It was magnificent, yes. After I was here I went to the Statue of Liberty

several times.

LEVINE: But did you see it when you came in on the boat?

PINE: Yes, yes, yes. It was very nice. Well, that's the whole thing that everybody was yelling. They were all saying, "The Golden Medina." You know, that's what, it's a golden land. That's what they were saying. Oh, yes, everybody. We all said she was a beautiful sight. And that's it. And life rolls along merrily.

LEVINE: And, let's see. Then when you, so, okay. So then you got to Ellis Island after you saw your father and the other men in the boat.

PINE: Yes. The next time I saw him, I couldn't see him again till I went through immigration and I was passed. When I went through all that area Papa was waiting for us in front there where they waited for all the people that went through, and then I saw him. He was a big man. My father wasn't so big. He was about 5'10", but he was muscular and broad-shouldered and heavy. And he repulsed me. I didn't want to go near him. No, no, no, no. Because the people that I knew in Europe weren't like that. His brother was tall, my uncle was a tall guy and thin. My father was shorter than him and he was husky, so I didn't want to go near him.

LEVINE: Your first impression wasn't good.

PINE: No. No, I didn't want to go near him, no. I didn't want to go. And he took us home. He had an apartment for us. We didn't live there long because he thought we should have something better, because our bathroom was in the hall. If we had to

utilize it, we didn't have indoor plumbing or anything like that, and we used to take a bath in the wash sink there. So after six months we moved to Brooklyn, and then we had our bathroom and we had all that. Papa got it for us. So we were happy.

LEVINE: What was it like getting used to being around your father? Can you remember?

PINE: No. I acclimated myself very quickly. I just adjust. Just the first day, just when I saw him. Then when I got off and he took us, I saw the beautiful house he had, apartment, I was overwhelmed, you know. And I watched him and, you know, he didn't, he didn't pounce on me, you know. He just let me go my way. He'd say, "What do you want?" And I wanted to call him, I'd say, "Hmm, hmm, hmm." He says, "Don't say, 'Hmm, hmm, hmm.'" When I call you, I call you Etty. Now, I have a name." So I said, I called him by his first name. He says, "That's not my name to you. That's not my name to you." I says, "Then what is your name?" He says, "You can call me dad or papa." I says, "I'll call you Pop." So after that I called him Pop. He never corrected me. "If you want to call me Pop, call me Pop. I don't care. But you have to call me a name. Don't say, 'Hmm, hmm, hmm.'" I have a name. I don't call you, 'Hmm, hmm, hmm.'" When I call you I call you Etty." My family calls me Etty. So that's how I got, and I just got used to it.

LEVINE: What was he like?

PINE: He was very nice. He was very nice. He had a good sense of humor. He was very nice. He was strict, but he, not in a sense that he punched us, but he made us tow

the line. Only one time he hit me. Only one time. I guess he hit all of us one time just to show that could be done, you know, but after that he never raised a hand. It wasn't that hard. It was just a thought that he touched me, you know what I mean? He gave me one punch on my buttock and that's it. And he says, "Next time I'll give you more." So then I realized. Mom says to me, "You have to listen to Pop. You were wrong." She says, "I'll do the same thing." I says, "Yeah, but you always did it. He has no business doing it." She said, "Well, he has business. I'm your mother, he's your father. If he wasn't your father he wouldn't bring you here." So I says, "Oh." (she laughs) It dawned. "Oh." He didn't bring me for my looks. (she laughs) So we just settled into a regular routine. They have a good sense of humor. And now I have two sisters, and we're very close, a very close family.

LEVINE: Do you think that, can you recall anything about what it was like for your mother having been on her own more or less for all that time and then being back with your father?

PINE: It was hard for my mother for the simple reason my mother had to go to work, and it was hard things. And she only, my mother could have had her own apartment, and I once said to her, "Why are you living with Grandma and Grandpa?" She says, "Because I'm without my husband." I said, "Big deal." You know, to me it didn't mean anything, because I used to have my grandfather and I had my uncle, so I didn't miss a father image. I had it. So I says, she says, "Well, because I'm alone, I don't want Grandma and Grandpa to think I have men coming." I says, "So what if men come?" I said, "It's nothing. So what if uncle so-and-so." She says, "Okay, I can't. I have to."

She saw that I didn't understand what she was saying, so I says, "Okay, then you live here." So we lived with my grandparents. We had our own room, though. Grandma and grandpa gave us a room. They had their room and I had a married uncle, he lived there, and he slept on a cot, and probably we got his room. At that time I didn't realize it. And he slept on the cot, and that was it.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember your mother and father, then, when they were together again? Was that an easy adjustment for them?

PINE: No problem, no. They got along very nicely. No, no. There was no, Mom and Dad. In fact, my sister was born, we came September. The following June my mother gave birth to Selma, which is almost nine months. October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June. Nine months after she arrived. Selma was born the 26th. Mom came here the 21st. So it's just nine months. They had no problem getting on.

LEVINE: And then what were your other sisters' names?

PINE: Very nice. I have a sister Selma, I have a sister Judy and I have a brother Jerry, Gerald. His name is not Gerald, my grandson's name is. His name is Jerome. We never call him that, Jerry. So, we're a very close family, very close.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Now, can you remember, like, from, in your eight-year-old mind, when you

came here, any differences that you paid attention to that were very different here in America than where you'd come from?

PINE: Yes, yes. I couldn't understand how the people had that much liberties. I was walking along with my father on the east side and I saw young people, well, to me they were, today I would say they were probably about eighteen, nineteen, you know. And to me it's, I figured, mature people, and I said, "How do older people like that do what they're doing?" In Russia they couldn't do it. Then we saw somebody take a match and start a fire with paper. I thought it was terrible. He says, "Well," he says, "the police get after them and they lock them up." You know, he's explaining to me. I says, "They shouldn't do it. They shouldn't do it." You know? See, I saw a lot of things that I didn't think was right for them to do. They had a lot of liberties here that they didn't have in Europe. But then you acclimate yourself. You change so overnight that you don't even realize that you fall into the same pattern. You know, it's like a crossword puzzle. You just go through it and that's it. I went to school immediately. I came in September and I started school probably the first week in October or the last week in September I started school.

LEVINE: And what was that like, being in school for the first time?

PINE: Well, it was hard for me because it was a language barrier. And I had no one telling me, like they do today, that in Spanish or anybody else, that they have an interpreter telling you this. I didn't have that. I just, just like they throw you into the ocean you learn to swim. But I got it. I lost my accent very quickly. Strange as it sounds, I lost it very quickly, and I learned the language quickly, too. Because I wanted

to. I learned. And the first day I went to school my cousin was supposed to pick me up but she was ashamed to walk with me because she had to speak to me in Yiddish. So she would walk a couple of steps ahead, and I was behind her, but I didn't care. I'd skip along, you know. Those things didn't bother me. And I got into my classroom and they were talking, I didn't know what they were talking about. The only thing I understood is when they did math. They did arithmetic. That I knew. And the teacher would come and pat me on, because I did it right, you know. That's about all. But towards the end of the term I was able to do certain things. I used to read a little, nothing much, but she used to say, "Dress," and then she'd go to me this (she gestures), you know. So I picked it up, and so on and so forth. But when I came out of school that day I didn't know how to get home, and she wasn't there. And every street looked the same to me. I walked around and around and around. But the only thing I did memorize is that I lived at 15 Eldridge Street. So I start crying because I knew I had to go back again, and I didn't know how to get them, I didn't know how to return. So finally I go over to somebody and I said, I couldn't say, "I want," I just said, "15." I had the foresight to say, "15 Eldridge Street." And the party that I asked was smart enough to pick it up that I wanted to go there, and they took me there. (a telephone rings) (break in tape)

PINE: Why did I stop that?

LEVINE: We're resuming now after a telephone call. Let's see. Where were we?

PINE: Oh, I was going to school. I told them I had, I'm at 15 Eldridge Street. Well, by the time we almost reached my house there was my aunt, there was my mother, and there was Kate, and she got a licking that she never got in her life for leaving me. And

she says, "I don't want to have anything to do with her. She's a greenhorn. I don't want to have no part of her." So my mother says, "She's going to outbeat you. She's going to call you a greenhorn in another two months." She says, "Don't you leave her." So I said to her, "I don't intend to go with you. I don't want you to." And I never went back with her to school. I said to my mother, "You show me." And I looked down the street. She says, "Etty, you can't read." I says, "No, but I'll remember the letter." And I counted, I went one street this way, one street that way, one street. And when I got to the school I looked, and after that I went by myself. I didn't have anyone. And when she used to come out, I used to walk out, I said, "I don't know her." I did not speak to her. When I was able to talk I says, "Now you walk behind me. I'm not walking with you." That's being mean, you know. But I was always very independent, always. I just, I says, "I don't want to walk with her. I don't need her." I says, "God is good to me. I have two eyes, I have two ears, and I have a mouth." I says, "You see? I'm a (?)." I says, "The lady brought me to the house, 15 Eldridge Street." (she laughs) And that was it. From there we moved to Brooklyn. We moved to, on the third floor, and we had my sister there and then I think there's a difference of six years between my other sister, and then we had Judy. And my brother was only two months old when I got married. Would you believe it? There's nineteen years' difference between my brother and myself. And that's our family.

LEVINE: How long did you stay in school?

PINE: Well, I graduated public school, then I continued going to high school, but I went to Girls Industrial High. It's right near Boy's, uh, City College there, on Lexington

Avenue there. And I was doing very well. (she laughs) I wanted to be a nurse, and at that time a nurse wasn't a very dignified profession, that was when I was a young lady. So my father says, "Etty, you're very good with math. You go for bookkeeping. Go to a secretarial school." I says, "No." And my father had a Forward there, and on Sunday they used to have their colored page with English caption there. And as I'm looking, I give a look, milliner. I says, "You want me to be a bookkeeper? I'll be a milliner." He says, "God in heaven, what's a milliner?" I says, "A milliner is someone that makes hats." I'm reading. I didn't know myself. He says, "You're crazy. You're crazy. You're capable, you're well, you have a lot of potential. What are you doing?" "You don't want me to be a nurse, I'm not going to be what you want to be. What you want me to be, I'm not going to be." He says, "Okay. If you want to be a milliner." So I used to travel every day from my house, I lived in East Flatbush. We had our own home then. I had to take a trolley car. I had to take a train. I had to get up early. Pop paid the expense, which is true, and I used to go every day there to school, and I did very, very well. Had I graduated, I could have been a teacher there. I only had three months to go. And that summer we went to a wedding, and at that time they only wore hats, in my time. When you went to any affair you wore a hat, even on a Saturday or whatever. So Papa had bought me a beautiful dress. We had to get a hat. So I went to go for a hat, and we went to a store there, which means nothing to you, on Stone between Pitkin and East New York Avenue. And they were so busy there, so I picked out a hat. And Papa says, "Look, hat or no hat, I'm not waiting here. Don't bother me. I'm going home." I says, "Papa, I'll make my own hat." "Go ahead, make." So I go over to the proprietor, I says, "Let me have the hat." I asked her for the material, and I sat down in the corner, I took a scissor and I made it. I got through making it, she looked. She says, "You know, you

made it nicer than my help." Well, I went to school, I did very fine work. I was a copyist, incidentally. That's what I was going for. So she says, "How would you like a job?" I said, "What are you going to pay me?" She says, "I'll pay you twelve dollars a week." A man at that time, in 1928, was making that much to support a family. Twelve dollars? I said, "What do you want me to do?" She says, "What you're doing now." "Great. I'll work. When do you want?" "Come Monday." Papa says, I says, "You see, Papa? I made this hat and I got a job." "Oh, Eddy, come on home. Let's go already. You're driving me crazy." I go home, I says, "Mom." I get up Monday. "Where are you going?" "I'm going to work." "Where are you working?" I said, "I told you, I got a job." She says, "How much are you making?" "Twelve." "Ah, come on, you'll go there, you won't have no job." I says, "Okay. Give me carfare." She gave me carfare. I went, come back, and I didn't come home until late at night. At that time the hours were very late. It was from ten to ten at night. I come home. "Where were you?" I said, "I told you. I went to work." "I don't believe it." So I worked July, August. September came around, I didn't go to school. My teacher calls me up. She says, "Why aren't you coming to school, Eddy?" Ethel, not Eddy. So I says, "I got a job." She says, "You quit your job!" I said, "Oh, no. I'm making twelve dollars a week, and I am not quitting." She says, "Where do you live?" So I told her. She says, "How do you get to your house?" Don't you think she came to my house on a Saturday. She says, "What are you doing?" She says, "In another three months you'll be graduating. You can get a job and be a teacher. Why do you want to work?" "I'm making twelve dollars a week and I can buy this, and I can give Papa the money, we can have. So she says to him, "Mr. Domershick, tell your daughter to go back to school." He says, "You don't know my daughter." So he says, "If you tell her, I think she'll listen, because she's a very

obedient girl." He says, "Etty, what would you like to do?" He says, "I think you should go back to school." I says, "You think? Well, I think no." "Well, you're here." Had he said to me, "You've got to go back to," I'm not blaming my father. He didn't have a thing to do with it. I was old enough to know. If I was old enough to know to work and know how to do it, but had he said, "You've got to go back to school I would have gone back, but he didn't use that word, "You've got to." So I went, I was there another two months and she opened up a store for me, and I was making fifteen dollars a week. I did the cutting, I did the sewing, I did everything. After I was there about seven months from the Labor Department came in. Somebody snitched because I was doing so well. See, I was young and I had a lot of fun with it. Whoever came in I had a lot of fun with the customers, and they said, "Oh, go in there, there's a nice kid in there, she's Ethel. Oh, she's a lot of fun, she sells the hat, we have, we laugh, we talk." I was their contemporary. So when the Labor Department came in they asked me, I'm from nothing. I wasn't seventeen years. So he says, "Well, you cannot work." He says, "You get out immediately." I had to close the store immediately, put a lock on. She says, "Why did you tell him you're not seventeen?" I said, "How could I lie?" So I lost that job. I lost the job, so she says to me, "You know what? You haven't got a birth certificate. If your father swears out an affidavit that you're seventeen, they'll take your word for it." We did it! I got back to work. And I worked there. Then something else, I had too late hours, so I went up, I worked up in Manhattan in the District there, and I did very well. I worked for a very nice boss in a factory, and he couldn't see me working out. He says, "What in the name of heaven are you making hats?" He says, "You're so presentable, what is wrong with you?" I says, "I like it." He says, "You're crazy." So every time anybody was missing in the office he used to put me in the office and do the

office work. He says, "Don't you like it?" I said, "Uh-uh, no. I like my hats better." So he used to give me the same pay. He didn't pay the office workers what I got on my pay. I made more there, because there used to be piece work, and I was very fast. So I worked there for a while. Then some guy there that was a buyer, Mr. Garber, came in. He says, "I'll open a store for you." He says, "And I'll pay," I don't remember, a ridiculous price. Eighteen, twenty dollars. I did the buying, I did the shopping. I did all that. So I was then about seventeen-and-a-half. That's what I was, seventeen-and-a-half. And I opened a store and I got a kick out of it. It was Hester Street, around there, downtown. And one time, they didn't have a register there that you put, we had a little box. We put the money in the box. And Friday I, and he used to come the next day, take the money and deposit it, and so on and so forth. He never knew the stock. He didn't know what I ordered. He didn't know, I could have a hat for two dollars, for five dollars, a dollar-and-a-half. He didn't know anything. And if I wanted to steal he would have never even knew. So one time I count my money, and I said, "Gee, according to what I write on the paper I'm three dollars short." I count again, I look on the floor, I look. So one day I came in Monday morning, I says, "You know, Mr. Garber." I says, "This is your money, but I'm three dollars short. I don't know if I gave somebody too much money, or I lost it, or something. I really don't know what happened, but I'm three dollars short. He says, "Don't worry, Ethel. I'll take it out of your pay next week." I didn't say a word. I gave him the money, I gave him the key. And he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm not working for you any more." He says, "Why? I won't take the three dollars." I says, "No, I cannot work here any more." He says, "Why not?" I says, "Now, you wouldn't know whether I'm giving you the full amount or not. I told you I lost the three dollars. I don't like the idea you're taking away my three dollars. So now

you wouldn't know how." I says, "I cannot work." I says, "I'm an honest person." And I says, "If there's going to be a doubt in your mind." I gave him the key, I never worked there again. I looked and I got another job, which was closer to my house. So he says to me, "I don't understand you." I says, "You go home and study it. Then you'll understand. I cannot work here." He had to close the store because he had no one to put in there. Where's he going to get somebody that's going to open the store, buy and make and fix and everything. And I was so damn honest. If I didn't tell him, he would have never known. But I was smart enough at seventeen-and-a-half that if I stayed there he wouldn't be able to trust me, and if I told him, he'd always have a doubt. "She doesn't . . ." So I quit, and I never worked for him, and I worked there. Then I met my husband, I got married, and here I am!

LEVINE: So how did you meet your husband?

PINE: I met my husband, I met my husband in a most peculiar manner. I worked in a store, and I saw a very handsome guy and I flirted with that guy and he came into the store, and I started going with him. I started going with him, and I still see this guy, incidentally, because he's married, he's in the, I married my husband, and he's in the family, so I see him, and we're the best of friends. He married a lovely lady, a beautiful woman, inside and outside. He did very well for himself. So I went out with him a couple of times. Then I met his friends, you know, and I met my husband, I met another couple, and so on and so on. And we went to somewhere's with him, to an engagement party. I don't know whose engagement. They might have just, they had a habit, if someone had an engagement party they invited the whole world. So when they're on

their way back we stop and get the bus. At that time people didn't have cars. We used buses. And he had his cousin with him, and he says to me, "You know, Ethel, I want to walk my cousin up another block." And it just happened that day I bought new shoes, I never buy shoes that don't fit me. That time I bought a pair of shoes because I liked them and they didn't have my size, and my feet were pinching me. I said, "Al, I cannot go with you. My feet bother me." "Oh," he says, "it's only another block." I says, "I don't care of it's half a block. You want to walk with your cousin? Take him up to Pitkin Avenue. I'm not going." He says, "Why not?" I says, "Because I am tired." So he takes me. I says, "Don't put your hand on my arm." I said, "Don't you dare. Keep your hands in your pocket. Don't you put your hand on me." He didn't hurt me, but I didn't like the way he was grabbing me. And a bus came along, and he was a couple of feet away from me. I get on the bus and he hollers, "Hey, stop." I says, "I don't even know him. He wants to pick me up." "Oh," he says, "okay, let's go." See? And we got home, I got home, and the phone rings. And my father was sleepy, he answered the phone. I said, "If anybody asks for me, tell them I'm not home." He answers, "Ethel is not home." He hangs up. He says, "What are you talking about Ethel is not home?" He says, "You're home." I says, "Papa, I didn't want him to know I'm home." He says, "You did that?" He says, "That's a dirty trick." He says, "I don't care what transpired, but don't ever do that." He says, "That's a, he was concerned about you. That's terrible." So he calls again, he says, "You answer the phone, Eddy." I answered the phone, I says, "Yes, I'm home. I have no problem." He says, "I'll see . . ." I says, "No, you're not seeing me any time. Goodbye." And that was it. My husband came, that I should become friends with him. He says, "Oh, come on. What did he do? So he made a mistake. What's the big deal? He likes you." I says, "If he treats me this way now, I'm not interested in him."

I says, "I'm not ready for him, he's not ready. Let him go with his cousin. His cousin is very nice. Let him go with him. Fine." Well, he kept on coming along and coming along. I says, "You know what? Please leave me alone. I don't want you. I don't want him. I don't want any part of any of you." So I just let him go. He kept on calling me. My husband and I didn't bother him. And every once in a while we bumped in. You know, it's like fate. He says, "What have you got against me?" He says, "I didn't hurt you." I says, "If you're related to that Al." I says, "The stone don't, the apple don't fall far from the tree." I said, he says, "What does that got to do with it? It's not a blood relation. He's my cousin, not through choice." So I started going with him, and every time I went he kept on talking, "Oh, go with Al, go with Al." That was New Year's Eve and we were in the movies. He said, "You know what?" He said, "I'm not talking about Al." He says, "You're a nice kid." He says, "I'm going with you and I'm going to marry you." I says, "Okay. You think you're going to marry me, fine, but it takes two to tango." I said, "I'm not marrying you, forget it." So then I didn't see him for a while because I didn't have any intention of marrying him. So then some time lapsed and he came along, and he says, "I'm going to marry you." He kept on saying, "Marry." I says, "Okay, I'll marry you." Jestin'. But he picked me up and he told everybody that we knew that we're getting married. I liked him. He was a very nice person, and if you knew him, he was wonderful. There wasn't one person that knew my husband that wouldn't give a nice word about him. They couldn't say a hair against him. He didn't know the meaning of no. I knew the meaning of no. He did not know the meaning of no. And we got married, and we had a very happy life, a very good life. We have two children. We have six grandchildren. I have a great-grandchild that my husband never saw. She's four weeks old. Her name is Jacqueline Lauren Pine. They named after

Pam's mother, which is my granddaughter through marriage. She lost her father six months after I lost my husband. And Lauren is named after my husband, so we have a name for him, and that's it. That's the end of the story. I had a very happy life, very good.

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you would want to say about your life.

PINE: Well, we were in business for thirty-nine years together. We were in the moving and trucking business. And maybe that's why we had such a beautiful life when we retired, because we were twenty-four hours a day anyway, so there was no conflict with us. If he wasn't in the house then he was on the telephone with me. You had to keep in touch. We had five trucks running. I was the dispatcher from the house. He took care of the outside. I took care of the bookkeeping and all that, and I used to write letters, or whatever we had to do. So he had to keep in contact with me all the time, so we were twenty-four hours. When he got through with work my husband was not the type of a man to go anywhere's. He used to come home, we used to spend the afternoon together, or we went out to a movie together, or whatever we cared to do at that time, or just take a ride. So twenty-four hours a day we were always together, since the day I married him we were twenty-four hours a day. And I'll tell you I still feel his presence. I don't feel he's away. I don't feel that he's away. I feel he's constantly with me. I can't say I saw a shadow of him or I saw him sitting in the, no, not that. But I feel his presence. In fact, when I said that to my doctor, which was his doctor, he says, "Do you feel uncomfortable? If you feel uncomfortable, I will tell you how to get rid of." I says, "No, I feel very warm. Why should I feel uncomfortable?" He says, "And you'll have him

as long as you live." I says, "I'm content." And that's the end of the story. I'm not going to say any more. (she laughs)

LEVINE: That's a perfect place to end it. Well, thank you so much.

PINE: My pleasure.

LEVINE: It's a wonderful, wonderful story.

PINE: See, I can talk a lot. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Yes, you're great. So I've been talking with Ethel Pine and I'm here in Florida and it's May 7th, 1992, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

PINE: Thank you.

LEVINE: Thank you.