

EI-301

EVA GOLUB LEIBOWITZ

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, Ph.D.

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RUSSIA, 1910

AGE 5

SHIP:

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

- **RUSSIA: TYZCZN**
- **US: BROOKLYN, NY; MARGATE, FL**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

LEIBOWITZ: Glad to know you.

LEVINE: Thank you, thank you. I'm here today with Eva Leibowitz --

LEIBOWITZ: Right.

LEVINE: whose maiden name is Golub.

LEIBOWITZ: G-O-L-U-B.

LEVINE: It's April 26, 1993, and I'm at Eva's home in Margate, Florida. Eva Golub came from Russia in 1910 when she was six years old.

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah, going on seven.

LEVINE: Going on seven. And I wanted to say that I'm very happy to meet you, and I also want to say that Eva's friend, Lee Lipshitz, is here also with us today.

LEIBOWITZ: Okay.

LEVINE: So let's start at the very beginning.

LEIBOWITZ: Okay.

LEVINE: By your giving your birth date.

LEIBOWITZ: My birth date?

LEVINE: The day you were born.

LEIBOWITZ: I only have the date as you have it. See, my mother never kept complete records. She knew our birthdays in conjunction with a holiday. It was like the fifth day of *Iyyar* (Hebrew month), or something like that. She never kept exact records of her babies. She probably made up the date

coinciding with the time of year, what holiday was at that time

LEVINE: So what holiday w—

LEIBOWITZ: [Superposed] So I really don't know. Huh?

LEVINE: Do you know what holiday you were born near?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah, Thanksgiving.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, you had put your birth date as November 26th.

LEIBOWITZ: Right, that's Thanksgiving. Us--- not always on Thanksgiving Day, but that year, it --- that was the day that I was born. That's what I ---my mother told me.

LEVINE: Okay. And that was 1904.

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now. Do you remember the town where you lived before you came to the United States?

LEIBOWITZ: The only thing I remember is it was called Tyzcyn, Tyzcyn. I would spell it T-I-C-H-E-N. I don't know --- if it sounds the way it's spelled. That's all I can remember about it.

LEVINE: Do you remember the town? Do you remember what it looked like? What

do you remember from when you --- before you came?

LEIBOWITZ: I remember we lived in our *shtibel* (cottage) ---- we called it a *shtibel*. It had a flat roof and most of the things were made of some kind of stone. The chairs and, the table was wood, of course. And my -- we lived with my grandmother, my mother's mother.

LEVINE: What was her name?

LEIBOWITZ: Her name was Mikhla.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

LEIBOWITZ: It's M-I-C-H-L-A, I think. Does that sound like Mikhla?

LEVINE: And her last name? Your mother's maiden name? Do you remember your mother's maiden name?

LEIBOWITZ: My mother's maiden name, yes, was Madonic, Madonic. I know I had, when I got to a bank to open an account, they want my mother's maiden name. So that was my grandmother's name. I never knew a grandfather. He died before i knew him.

LEVINE: I see. What do you remember about your grandmother?

LEIBOWITZ: I remember she used to bake bread to sell. That's how she made a living.

LEVINE: Do you remember what the bread was like?

LEIBOWITZ: I don't remember exactly, all kinds of bread ---*khali* (holiday white bread) mostly. *Chali, kikhlakh* (cookies) --- things like that.

LEVINE: Did she bake it in the home?

LEIBOWITZ: In the home, yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember the stove, or the oven?

LEIBOWITZ: It was a great, big stove, very big. I don't ---- I don't remember too much about it.

LEVINE: Do you remember what it was fired with? What, did it use, wood or coal, or?

LEIBOWITZ: Not coal, that I know, not coal. I really don't know.

LEVINE: Now, was it, you said a *shtibel*?

LEIBOWITZ: A *shtibel*, yes.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

LEIBOWITZ: Huh?

LEVINE: Can you spell *shtibel*?

LEIBOWITZ: *Shtibel?* C-H, C-H, *shtibel*. C-H-I-B-E-L. I think that's -- would be the spelling for *shtibel*.

LEVINE: Was it . . .

LEIBOWITZ: It's like --- it's a house.

LEVINE: Was it a house made of stone? Was it a stone house?

LEIBOWITZ: Uh, I don't, no. I don't think it was stone. Maybe cobblestone. There was a lot of cobblestone in the street. That I remember, cobblestone.

LEVINE: Can you describe any?-----

LEIBOWITZ: I remember once there was a fire.

LIPSHITZ: It's equivalent to a hut. I

LEIBOWITZ: remember once it was a fire broke out, and I remember my mother taking the bedding and putting it into a big sheet and throwing it out the window to protect it, to save it, and we all got out of the house. It was tru--- probably the stove erupted, you know, from the baking of the bread or something. Funny the things that you remember.

LEVINE: Yes. What else do you remember?

LEIBOWITZ: Nothing, really.

LEVINE: Well, what was the inside of the house? Was it one room?

LEIBOWITZ: No, it was more than one room. Maybe two rooms, not much more.

LEVINE: And windows, had windows.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about the house? How it was decorated, what kind of furniture you had?

LEIBOWITZ: I don't remember.

LEVINE: Now, who lived there?

LEIBOWITZ: At that age maybe I should. I only remember my mother and my brothers and my grandmother, because my father had already left for America. He preceded us, went to America like five years before we followed him.

LEVINE: So you didn't remember your father until you got to America, then you met him.

LEIBOWITZ: My father? Sure, I remembered him, certainly. I was little.

LEVINE: He must have left when you were about one year old.

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah, right, yeah. Maybe I didn't remember him. My brother certainly didn't know him; my brother that was born while my father was away. He left my mother pregnant. And he went to find a home for us --- New York, went to New York.

LEVINE: Do you know why he left Russia?

LEIBOWITZ: He wants – for –to bet-- to find a better life for us.

LEVINE: What did he do in Russia before he left? Do you know what he did for work?

LEIBOWITZ: Not really. I think I, I think they were talking that he went --- he left at that time to avoid going into the army. And, you know, I have an older brother who's still living. The two --- my two brothers that came with us are both still alive. I lost a younger brother, but my older brother and my brother that follows me, he's still alive. I spoke to him yesterday and told him I was going to be interviewed about Ellis Island. So it was very nice, but he couldn't, it's too much for him to drive from Delray Beach to come here.

LEVINE: What is his name?

LEIBOWITZ: My brother? Irving.

LEVINE: Irving. And what is your other brother's name?

LEIBOWITZ: It used to be Barney. Now it's --- then we came to this country, it became Barry. And my brother Irving, he used to be Izzy. Izzy became Irving, and Barney became Barry.

LEVINE: And your mother's first name?

LEIBOWITZ: Sarah.

LEVINE: Sarah. And so you just, when you were in Russia you just had Barney and Izzy and you.

LEIBOWITZ: Right, yeah.

LEVINE: And your mother and grandmother living in the ---

LEIBOWITZ: Right, right. My grandfather, I never knew.

LEVINE: Did you have other relatives nearby?

LEIBOWITZ: There were some. They were cousins. But I don't remember being ---- I remember meeting them when I came here, some of our cou --- the some of our cousins. They're no longer alive now.

LEVINE: You don't remember them from over there.

LEIBOWITZ: No.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember any, any religious observances in Russia? Do you remember any, anything you did that had to do with religion?

LEIBOWITZ: I know that still my mother and my grandmother used to light the candles Friday night. They used to have cooked --- I knew they went to services, I don't remember. But I know they observed and kept strictly kosher.

LEVINE: Do you remember your older brother?

LEIBOWITZ: My older brother? Of course. I keep in touch with him. He's in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Was he learning Hebrew in Russia?

LEIBOWITZ: Yes, sure. Not the younger one, he was too young yet. But the older one was in Hebrew school.

LEVINE: So did he attend a regular school, your brother in Russia?

LEIBOWITZ: You mean, yeah. Whatever they were teaching them at that time. It wasn't English. I don't think it was.

LEVINE: Do you remember . . . ?

LEIBOWITZ: Maybe he learned some Russian. He knows a little more Russian than I do.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the town where you lived?

LEIBOWITZ: No, not really.

LEVINE: Was it a, was it like a farming place, or do you know . . .

LEIBOWITZ: More like a farming place, yeah.

LEVINE: And, let's see. Do you remember any of the foods that your mother cooked that were Russian?

LEIBOWITZ: The same cook-- the same kind of food that she continued to cook when we got here, you know, that she was familiar with.

LEVINE: What, can you tell me, describe some.

LEIBOWITZ: She used to make soup and make, she used to make a concoction called *rosel'fleysh* (pot roast) which she continued to do here.

LIPSHITZ: That's meat and beans.

LEVINE: Meat and beets.

LEIBOWITZ: Meat and beans,

LIPSHITZ: Lima beans, and carrots.

LEVINE: And it's a soup.

LEIBOWITZ: Soup was extra.

LEVINE: Anything else that you recall.

LEIBOWITZ: I really don't remember too much about Russia. But I remember on the ship, when we got on the ship – the ---

LEVINE: How did you manage to come? Did your father send money over?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did your grandmother come with you?

LEIBOWITZ: No, she remained there.

LEVINE: Do you remember saying goodbye to her?

LEIBOWITZ: Of course.

LEVINE: What was that like?

LEIBOWITZ: We kissed and we hugged and we cried. It wasn't easy parting, 'cause we never saw her again. And she hated to see us go, but she couldn't help herself --- because my mother's husband was in New York, and she had to go to him.

LEVINE: And how did you, did you know anything about America before you came?

LEIBOWITZ: No.

LEVINE: Did you know what you expected?

LEIBOWITZ: Nothing at all. It was a total, complete surprise.

LEVINE: So do you remember anything your mother packed when you were leaving?

LEIBOWITZ: Oh, yes. Our belongings were packed in those crates, you know, straw ---

LEVINE: Baskets?

LEIBOWITZ: Straw hampers, straw hampers. And the bedding was rolled up in sheets. I remember that. The bundles that we had to take on the ship were rolled in sheets.

LEVINE: Do you remember any objects your mother took, anything else?

LEIBOWITZ: She took, not much. I really don't remember what she took. Probably took some things with her. Yeah, there's one thing, the *shteyse!* (mortar) that I still have and treasure. You know what that is? It's a brass, what do they call it?

LIPSHITZ: A chopper, a chopper..

LEIBOWITZ: I'll show it to you.

LEVINE: Wait, wait, wait, you've got the mike on.

LEIBOWITZ: Oh, I forgot.

LEVINE: Uh, Eva, it's a chopper? Lisa?

LEIBOWITZ: It's something that you can chop nuts in or garlic, things like that, in the kitchen. It clinks when you use it. It has, what do you call it, a pestle. I can't remember the first word that goes with it.

LEVINE: A mortar?

LEIBOWITZ: Mortar and, yeah, mortar and pestle. I got that, that was my grandmother's, and I'm saving it for my granddaughter, one of my granddaughters.

LEVINE: What is it made of?

LEIBOWITZ: Brass, solid brass.

LIPSHITZ: Can I find it?

LEIBOWITZ: No, not here, Lee. If you look in the other bedroom on one of the shelves you'll see it.

LEVINE: So was that one of your mother's prized possessions?

LEIBOWITZ: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: And do you remember her using it?

LEIBOWITZ: Sure.

LEVINE: When you were a little girl?

LEIBOWITZ: She used to use it all the time to chop nuts and chop things in the kitchen.
Onion, garlic, sp -- spices.

LEVINE: Would you say, would you say you were comfortable, I mean, financially,
when you were in Russia?

LEIBOWITZ: I would say we were quite poor.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

LIPSHITZ: [Aside] They're here.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, you can show it to me after we finish with the taping. Okay.
So do you remember any hard times in Russia, you personally?

LEIBOWITZ: No. Personally, I didn't have any hard times.

LEVINE: Do you remember?

LEIBOWITZ: My mother saw to it that we didn't have any hard times?

LEVINE: Do you remember any good times that you could think of, about when you
were still in Russia?

LEIBOWITZ: I really don't. I really can't remember anything. I'm a poor subject, I don't know. [Laughs]

LEVINE: No, no --- it's no ---because it's just as important --- you were only six years old, and . . .

LEIBOWITZ: I remember on the --- on the ship. You know, we were --- we were in steerage, in the lowest part of the ship ----- because we couldn't afford to go where the rich people went, upstairs. We used to look up the stairs; there were staircases in the ship. And well we never got to see the upstairs.

LEVINE: What do you remember about steerage?

LEIBOWITZ: I don't know. I remember people were laying on top of one another.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember anything else about the voyage?

LEIBOWITZ: No. We enjoyed standing at the side of the ship looking out until we spotted the Statue of Liberty. Everybody jumped for joy. We were all happy and running and it was very exciting, very thrilling, the first sight of land.

LEVINE: What was the name of the ship? Do you remember that at all?

LEIBOWITZ: You know, I spoke to my brother yesterday and he said, "You know, I have your passport." When he came over here, but he's got it, I haven't got it. He said he would send it to me, but I don't have it now.

LEVINE: Okay. We can maybe get that, that would be nice to know what the ship was.

LEIBOWITZ: He said he would send it to me.

LEVINE: Good. Okay. So did you remember any examinations before

LEIBOWITZ: Yes.

LEVINE: you left?

LEIBOWITZ: Before I left, no, but I remember us being examined on the ship. We got vaccinations. They took all kinds of --- gave us all kinds of tests to make sure that everybody's healthy --- that we won't bring any diseases into the, --- into America.

LEVINE: Do you have any recollection of how long the voyage took?

LEIBOWITZ: I think it took about two weeks.

LEVINE: Was it exciting being on the ship?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah. You know, we were children; we had a lot of fun.

LEVINE: Do you remember clothing? Did you have special new clothes to make the trip, or do you remember anything like that?

LEIBOWITZ: I don't remember whether we had new clothes or not.

LEVINE: And do you remember Ellis Island?

LEIBOWITZ: Yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember?

LEIBOWITZ: Well, the excitement when we landed, and we were running from, we had to go to different divisions to be examined by doctors and make sure that we're in good health. Otherwise, if we weren't, they wouldn't let us off the ship.

LEVINE: So was . . .

LEIBOWITZ: When we got off the ship, there was my father standing and waiting for us. That was exciting.

LEVINE: Do you remember your reunion with your father?

LEIBOWITZ: Sure. We kissed and we hugged. We were very happy to meet one another. He met his younger son for the first time, which he never knew him before.

LEVINE: Did your older brother remember your father?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah, I imagine so, sure. I remembered him, too.

LEVINE: Oh, you did, too. Okay. So did you have to stay at Ellis Island any length of time?

LEIBOWITZ: No, no. We landed, and my father took us right away to Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Do you remember how you got to Brooklyn from Ellis Island?

LEIBOWITZ: I think we went by trolley car. They had trolley cars in those days. My father had an apartment all ready for us on Par--- Prospect Place, in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Do you remember what it looked like, the apartment? Could you say what was?

LEIBOWITZ: I think it was four rooms, or something like four rooms. A kitchen, a bedroom and a living room. Two bedrooms, I really don't remember too much about it.

LEVINE: Do you remember how it struck you, I mean, having come from where you lived in Russia, and coming to . . .

LEIBOWITZ: We were all excited. We thought it was marvelous. It was wonderful. A new land, new adventures, new everything. And my mother registered right away in school, took us to school and got us registered.

LEVINE: And do you remember what you thought about the we---- you hadn't been to school in Russia.

LEIBOWITZ: No.

LEVINE: So this was your first. Do you remember anything about school before you knew how to speak English?

LEIBOWITZ: Well, I remember that the, uh, the boys, you know, the schools were segregated. It isn't --- wasn't like today. The boys were one side --- the girls were another side. You couldn't ---- if I wanted --- some times my mother would give me a message to bring to where brother, I had to get permission from the principal to go to the boys' side to deliver a message, or to see my brother.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences learning English?

LEIBOWITZ: Not, it was --- we ---we just took it in our course. It wasn't too difficult. We took it as we went along.

LEVINE: And how about your mother? Did she learn English readily, or . . ?

LEIBOWITZ: No, she took her time. We used to ---- in the house, as we were growing up, we spoke ---- they spoke to us in Jewish. We would speak to the ---return talking to them in English. That's how they learned English, speaking to us. My father had a job. The reason he was here so long is because he was very religious and every time he got a job, ----- he used to be a clothes presser, a presser. And the end of the week would come around, and he wouldn't work on *Shabas* (the Sabbath), because he was very religious. So they fired him. So it took him a long time to find a job. He finally found a job that he could work only the five days and not have

to work on Saturday. He never worked on a Saturday.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else that struck you as very different in America when you first came here?

LEIBOWITZ: It was entirely different. The streets were different, the house --- homes were different, 'course. But you learn pretty quick.

LEVINE: Was your mother very happy that she had come?

LEIBOWITZ: Of course. She was a young, she wasn't a bride any more, but she had three children already. I think my mother was eighteen when she got married. So eighteen, she was maybe twenty-three, twenty-four when we came here to this country.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of other people from Russia in your neighborhood?

LEIBOWITZ: No.

LEVINE: No?

LEIBOWITZ: Not too many.

LEVINE: And were you treated badly in any way because you were an immigrant?

LEIBOWITZ: Foreigners, yes. Sure, they used to call us, "Mocky." [Laughs] "Mocky," we were called. And the boys would play tricks on my brothers. You know, they would give them a tomato, which they never saw tomatoes in

their lives. "Put it in your pocket." And then they would go and smack them so the tomato would crush and get it all over their clothes. [Laughs]
I remember those things.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything . . . ?

LEIBOWITZ: We never had a banana. We never knew what a banana was like until we came over to this country.

LEVINE: Do you remember any games that you played as a child?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah. We used to play "potsy" on the ti---, with chalk. We used to mark the sidewalk of into sections. And jump from one side to the other and skip. And the rope, we used to play rope right away, jump rope.

LEVINE: So how long did you stay in school?

LEIBOWITZ: How long did I stay in school? Until I graduated, eighth grade. At that time they didn't have ---- after a while, they started having up to the sixth grade, then they had another four years. But in those days we had to go through eighth grade to graduate.

LEVINE: And then what did you do after you graduated?

LEIBOWITZ: After I graduated public school and my parents sent me to business college for a year, because I had to go to work and help the family. The father didn't have enough; there wasn't enough to feed the family.

LEVINE: By then what was your brother doing, your older brother?

LEIBOWITZ: He had odd jobs.

LEVINE: Was he still living with the family?

LEIBOWITZ: Oh, yeah. He lived with the family till he got married.

LEVINE: So then what was your first job after business school?

LEIBOWITZ: My first job? My first job --- I graduated business school, and I got a job doing bookkeeping. I was sixteen, already.

LEVINE: In Brooklyn?

LEIBOWITZ: In Brooklyn, yeah. I always lived in Brooklyn, till I moved to Florida.

LEVINE: And then how did you meet your husband?

LEIBOWITZ: How did I meet my husband? Very romantic. I met my husband on the Brighton Beach boardwalk. It was a pickup. [They laugh] You know, I recently wrote in ----- I get a --- a ---- what do you call it, I have a subscription to --- called Elder, Elder Affairs. And they had an article in it; they want to plan something for Valentine's Day. And they're asking the reader to write in their -- their stories, married life and different romantic affairs. ---see if they can pick out --- do something. So I sat down and I wrote the time I met my husband, and we ----- I wasn't a youngster, I was an old --- I was considered an old maid because I was twenty-seven when

I got married. My parents thought I was an old maid.

Met my husband on the boardwalk, and I was going to visit my older brother who lived near that area. But it was early, and I decided to sit on the boardwalk for a while before going there. I was going to have dinner with them and stay overnight and spend some time visiting family. And my husband came along, we got interested in one another, and I told him I'm visiting my brother. And we made a date to come back the same place tomorrow. We're gonna go to the beach. And he put a five-dollar --- he put a five-dollar in my pocket so I should be able to rent a bathing suit. We'd go to the beach. And we had a nice visit, and then he drove me home. He didn't drive me home. We didn't have a car.---- went home by trolley car,

And we made a date, and we started keeping company. And he proposed to me after two weeks. We were the same age. It was --- we got married at the height of the Depression in 1932. And I had a forced vacation of a week. They were giving people time off. I was working for B. Altman & Company in the bookkeeping department. So that's how, during the week I went to visit my brother. My husband was coming home from a vacation and he sprained his ankle. So he was home that week because of a sprained ankle. And he came on the boardwalk with a cane. He sat down next to me and I -- we started conversation.

So after two weeks, he proposed to me. And, you know, I thought it was kind of too fast. My parents liked him; and I went to meet his parents, they liked me. I couldn't get married so fast -- you know --- without thinking and planning. Anyhow, to cut a long story short, we went by ourselves and we

made arrangements to get married in a rabbi's study. And we called up our parents and invited them to come to the ceremony --- because my family was poor and my father was paying off five loans. And he wanted to take out another loan to make a wedding for us, and my husband said his family, he doesn't want that kind of a wedding. "Let's elope."

So I didn't want to elope. I said, "Your family has nothing against me. My family doesn't dislike you either. Why should we hurt our parents?" So we did the next best thing. We got married in the rabbi's study, and it was just the immediate family came along, and we went back to my house, and my mother had dinner ready for us. We went away on a short honeymoon to Atlantic City for three days. And we were supposed to keep it a secret, both of us. Because in my ---- I don't know in my place if anybody [The sound of thunder is heard in the background.] --- Thunder! This is unexpected. ---. At that time, they needed all the jobs for men, and if any women just got married, she couldn't keep the job. They needed the job for a man.

So we both decided on keeping a big, dark secret, just going away for a weekend. But my husband played me dirty. At the last minute, he couldn't keep it a secret and he told his boss that he's going away and getting married. So they quickly got together, they whispered to one another, and they got together a complete service for twelve, --- Humps and Edward [ph] silverware --- and they displayed it on his desk. And my husband was --- he was a statistician for an insurance rating bureau. And they set it up, but he was so engrossed in his work that he never looked up to see it. They had to call him on the phone to get him to look up to see the display of the little bride and groom and all the silverware displayed.

But I worked for another year, just to our anniversary. Somebody must have snitched, and I got fired the end of the year. So we managed little by little. You know, we worked ourselves up. But I feel that every time a child was born, or any time on some occasion or my husband got an increase, God was good to us. So, anyhow, I wrote in, I wrote my life story into that Elder Affairs, and it took quite a few months. I happened to notice -- I forgot all about it --- it looked like my name in there, and sure enough there was my article at the top of the page, evidently. And they apologized. They said, they explained in the heading that they asked the na--- the readers to write stories. And they got so many that they couldn't afford. They apologized. They couldn't put in --- they selected only a few. But mine must have been so good it was up on top. [Laughs]

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Very romantic, it is.

LEIBOWITZ: So that's how I met my husband.

LEVINE: What was your husband's first name?

LEIBOWITZ: Philip.

LEVINE: And was he . . .

LEIBOWITZ: I loved his name, and I loved everything about him.

LEVINE: What was he like, you know? What did you like about him?

LEIBOWITZ: The first thing I liked about him that he kept his --- to the minute. If he said he was going to come six o'clock, he would come six o'clock come high hell. Nothing would stop him. He came promptly at six. He was a man of his word. He was gentle, he was kind, he was considerate. So you couldn't help but like a person like that.

LEVINE: And was he also someone who came to this country?

LEIBOWITZ: He also came to this country, yeah. But he came much later than I did. He came --- I think it was 1923. I think he was seventeen when he came over.

LEVINE: Where was he coming from?

LEIBOWITZ: He was coming from Poland. And he had learned a trade in Europe. He was, he graduated from pharmacy. He was supposed to be a pharmacist. And when he came over to this country, he couldn't speak English, but he went to a drug store to look for a job. And they gave him a job answering tel --- he called people to the telephone, because very few people had phones in those days ---in 1932, that was. And, no, no. That was before 1932, before we got married. He said, "I'm --- that --- not for me. I'm not going to settle up just answering telephones, calling people to the phone." So his uncle that took him over here knew somebody who worked in The National Bureau of Casualty Underwriters. He said, "You've got to give my nephew a job." He couldn't even speak English, and they gave him the job. So that --- but he was educated. He was going to St. John's

College for extra courses at the time I met him. And he got the job. He wasn't there very long before he became in charge of the division. And that was the only job he ever had.

LEVINE: Did he become a citizen?

LEIBOWITZ: Oh, of course. Gave it the [Not understood]. As soon as he was able to, he became a citizen.

LEVINE: So then you stayed living in Brooklyn.

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how many children did you have?

LEIBOWITZ: Three.

LEVINE: And their names?

LEIBOWITZ: Their names are Paul, Larry and Michael.

LEVINE: And do you have grandchildren?

LEIBOWITZ: I have six grandchildren, and I have five great-grandchildren.

LEVINE: So when you look back on the fact that you started out in Russia and you came here, what effect do you think that had on your life, coming to a new country and sort of starting a new life here?

LEIBOWITZ: Well, I can't think back that far because I was so little when I came over here. I feel that this has always been my home, my land.

LEVINE: Did your mother hold on to certain customs from Russia?

LEIBOWITZ: Uh, not too many. She quickly acclimated herself to things here in America. She clung to certain things, you know, that you're born with them and you can't change.

LEVINE: Can you think of any of them?

LEIBOWITZ: Not really. She wasn't born with everything in this country. She liked everything. It was an improvement over what she had in the old country.

LEVINE: And, let's see. What did your brother do, your older brother?

LEIBOWITZ: My older brother? [Laughs] My older brother, he did it --I don't --- he couldn't --- he used to travel a lot. And my father tried to get him started in a business. He once set him up in a business in the mountains. He gave him a car and he set him up. Of all things, he opened a butcher store for him. He was running it. But he traveled a lot and he didn't ---- he didn't do very much. He was still living at home when he met ---- I came home one day from school and I asked my mother if I could bring a girlfriend to come and live with us. Because her father, --- she was an only child, her mother died, her father remarried, and she didn't like her stepmother. She was very unhappy at home, so she wanted to come and live with us, because we had a happy home.

And my mother hesitated for one minute, and she said, "Well, I have six mouths to feed, so it'll be seven. Let her come, bring her." So I brought her home, and she lived with us, shared my bedroom. And that was the girl that my brother married. It was very convenient. She was right there. He got up one day and he said, "Well, today is the day. I'm going to toss a coin. Either I get married today or I buy a new car." [They laugh] So it came up heads, and we ran quickly to the license bureau. We took out, they took out a license and they were married that day. And they lived with us, after they had their first child.

Then they had that apartment that I went to visit them when I --- when I got married. So, and my brother's still living. He's, he's not happy about it. Because I lost a younger brother --- next to the youngest --- and we used to be very close, and my brother was heartbroken. When he died he said, "It should have been my --- I'm the one that should have gone. I came here first, so I should have go --- gone first." He calls me up sometimes in the middle of the day and he says, "I called to tell you that I won't be around here much longer." I says, "Where are you going?" "Well, I've been here long enough." He laughs, you know. He says, "It's time for me to go."

LEVINE: So your mother and father had the three children in Russia, and then you had another brother.

LEIBOWITZ: Another three we had here.

LEVINE: Oh, another three.

LEIBOWITZ: Three, yeah. We were six children. And my mother had a boy, a girl and a boy in Russia. We came here, she had the first --- my sister was born --- and then two brothers more.

LEVINE: What was your sister's name?

LEIBOWITZ: Celia.

LEVINE: And did she marry? Did she have a married name?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was her last name?

LEIBOWITZ: Siegel.

LEVINE: Siegel. And then after her who came?

LEIBOWITZ: After her, that's the one that died. He -- that was Sol.

LEVINE: And then after Sol?

LEIBOWITZ: Abie.

LEVINE: Abie.

LEIBOWITZ: And Abie just got his Master's, at seventy-five.

LEVINE: Oh, wonderful.

LEIBOWITZ: He felt cheated all his life. One of my brothers went to college on his own. And the youngest one felt that he -- he was missing something, and he decided he's retired and he's got time on his hands. He went back to school, and he graduated. And he went and he got his Master's and the doctor--- the professor says to him, "Why don't you go further? You're doing so well!" He said, "Okay, I will." So he's going for his PhD now.
[They laugh]

LEVINE: What did he get his Master's in?

LEIBOWITZ: Well, he lives in Connecticut.

LEVINE: What is his field of study?

LEIBOWITZ: History, I think.

LEVINE: Is that what he's gonna get his doctorate in, history?

LEIBOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Well, what about this period in your life, in your life? How do you feel about this time of life?

LEIBOWITZ: I feel very lonely. I'm ----in a way; I feel I had a very good life with my husband. It --- our -- close to fifty-six years we were married. We had a

very good life. We traveled a lot. My --- I was very fortunate. My husband had a very good job, a very important job in the company. He was the top statistician, and he was in charge of a lot of departments, and he went on --- ahead --- the insurance companies. They have a lot of meetings and conferences out-of-state, so – and he always took me with him. He was one of the few men that took his wife along every time. In the beginning, there was ---- I had a small child that ---- and I had all three children already, but they were small, when he started going on these trips. But the first trip we went was in Baltimore, and my husband had a sister living in Baltimore.

He says, " We'll go to Sylvia." And we took the two kids, the two younger ones with us. We left them at my sister-in-law's house. I stayed there, too. My husband went to the hotel where the meeting was being held. In the morning they sent a naval cadet officer for me ---- to pick me up, because we're going to be entertained. So we were two women that time, from out of town, and there were eight women that lived in Baltimore that were entertaining us, too. They wined us and dined us. I'll never forget that first trip that we took. It was marvelous. And that's the way it was. From then on we went to other places.

And my husband could choose where he wants to take the committees that he was in charge of. And they used to go a lot to the Pocono Mountains. And one day he decided to take his committee to the Catskills. Well, once they got to the Catskills they would never go back to the Poconos. Because he would make ---- my husband was the only Jew. Insurance companies didn't hire too many Jewish people. Today they hire everybody, colored and Jewish and everybody. But in those days if

a Jew came in asking for a job they always sent them to my husband's division. All the Jews, he hired. So it was, it was very interesting, the places we went to.

Anyhow, when they went to the Catskills, they liked the menus because they could get as much as they want and as much as variety they wanted. And at one ---they always had a cocktail party before sitting down for dinner ---and one of the big bosses, one time he says, "I don't want to go into dinner. I'm enjoying what I'm eating here, and they have more than enough, and I don't need anything else." And then he always had followed by entertainment. The *Goyashe* (Non-Jewish) Hotels that we went to in the Poconos, they had nothing. They don't have any entertainment. They don't have such a variety of food. It's cut and dry. So it was very nice. And we went --- sometimes --- the meetings were always held in May and September, which is the best time of the year as far as weather goes.

And most of them were *Goyim* (non-Jewish), you know. Almost all of them were *Goyim*, but we made a lot of friends. And they used to say ----it was always either *Erev* (eve of) Yom Kipur (Day of Atonement) or over *Pesakh* (Passover), when we were there after *Pesakh* --- they used to say, "You Jews have always such wonderful weather. We only have nice weather, but it's your holidays, it's the best weather." [Laughs]

LEVINE: Okay. Well, is there anything else that you would like to say before we close about living in this country or your life?

LEIBOWITZ: I'm living in this country; I feel this is the only country I ever lived in. I was

so little when I came out here. And I hardly remember anything from the past. So this --- this is my life, and this was my country.

LEVINE: And how did you feel going back to Ellis Island?

LEIBOWITZ: I got such a thrill when I went back to Ellis Island. At that, when I came home from there, I took a pa---- I took a paper and a pencil and I started writing my life story --- so that my children will -- I have quite a few. I wrote it and I re-wrote it, and I gave it to one of my sons. He was going to put it in his computer. But he's, he procrastinates. He didn't do it yet. And I asked him for it back because one of my granddaughters says, "Why did you give it to my dad? You know he'll never do it. It'll just lay there." So I said, "Don't worry. I have the original." 'Cause I scribbled it. So I'm continuing now to fill in places that I could have added more. And then when I go up in August, I'll give it to my granddaughter and she'll do it for me, make a book out of my life.

LEVINE: That's wonderful.

LEIBOWITZ: So the children will have something to look back on and remember.

LEVINE: That's wonderful. And if you would like to have a copy in Ellis Island in our library, we would love to have it.

LEIBOWITZ: I certainly would! I would love to have one copy.

LEVINE: And we would love to have it.

LEIBOWITZ: Absolutely.

LEVINE: Well, I want to thank you very much.

LEIBOWITZ: You're very welcome.

LEVINE: It's been a pleasure. And I've been speaking with Eva Leibowitz, and I'm Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off.

LEIBOWITZ: That's beautiful.

LEVINE: Thank you.