

EI-307

NISSIM OJALVO

BIRTH DATE: FEBRUARY 2, 1902

INTERVIEW DATE: 4/28/1993

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

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TURKEY (SEPHARDIC JEW), 1920

AGE AT IMMIGRATION: 18

PASSAGE ON: *PATRIS*

PORT OF EMBARKATION: PIRAEUS, GREECE

RESIDENCES: IN TURKEY: TIKERDIE

IN US: NYC, LOWER EAST SIDE

Oral Historian's Note: Mr. Ojalvo is the brother of Edward Ojalvo, Interview EI-308. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 8/29/1994.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service,
and I'm here today with Nissim Ojalvo.

OJALVO: Ojalvo.

LEVINE: Ojalvo. And we are here at Mr. Ojalvo's home in Miami
Beach, Florida. Mrs. Sara Ojalvo is here with us.

OJALVO: One second. I want you to know, Mrs. Sara Ojalvo is
here, but she's my other wife. My original wife died
about twenty years ago.

LEVINE: Okay. Fine. We can talk about that.

OJALVO: Yeah, yeah. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off
mike)

LEVINE: Now. I want to say that Mr. Ojalvo came from Turkey
through Ellis Island in 1920 when he was eighteen
years old.

OJALVO: Yes.

LEVINE: And I want to say that I'm very interested to hear
your story.

OJALVO: Okay.

LEVINE: And I'm very happy to be here, and why don't we start
at the very beginning. What is your birth date?

MRS. OJALVO: Your birth date, February . . .

OJALVO: 2/2/02. February 2, 1902, okay?

MRS. OJALVO: 2/2/02. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Okay. And where were you born?

OJALVO: I was born in a city . . . (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard

speaking off mike) (he addresses his wife) Let me answer it, honey. I'll explain why. The name Rodoshto is a Greek name, but now it's name is Tikerdie.

LEVINE: Could you spell either of those words?

OJALVO: Surely. Can you get me a pencil? See, the Turkish word is Tikerdie. It means, Tiker is a name, die is a mountain. From the mountain of the kerdie. But the Greek people who used to be before, they used to call it Rodoshto. See, this is . . . (he pauses to write)

LEVINE: Okay.

OJALVO: This is the Turkish name, and this is the Greek name. Now it's called under the Turkish name, Tikerdie.

LEVINE: Okay. Tikerdie.

OJALVO: Tikerdie.

LEVINE: Okay.

OJALVO: It's two words in one. Tiker means the name of a person, die means mountain. Okay.

LEVINE: Okay. (a train is heard in the background) Did you live in Tikerdie the entire time until you left?

OJALVO: That's right. Of course, I went visiting sometimes to Istanbul, but mostly I was there. And I was educated in a Jewish school which was supported by the French Jewish Alliance.

LEVINE: So you went to a Jewish school.

OJALVO: They used to call it Alliance Israeli. They used to teach . . . (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) They used to teach . . .

MRS. OJALVO: French.

OJALVO: First Spanish, which was the language that we used to use in Spain. Then Hebrew, that's two, Turkish, that was the three language, and French. Those four languages.

LEVINE: Well, first let's begin. Maybe you can tell me how your family, which was Jewish, came to live in Turkey.

OJALVO: Well, our ancestors, about five hundred years ago, they used to be in Spain. And it was a time how the Jew, the inquisition, and they tried to reform them,

so many of them, they changed, they became Catholics, and many of them, they went away to the Turkish government, which opened up the arms for us when we went there living. Because no, there was no persecution, persecution, and they used to take good care of us.

LEVINE: So your family moved from Spain to Turkey at that time.

OJALVO: To Turkey. That's right.

MRS. OJALVO: He was born in Turkey.

LEVINE: Yes. And you were born in Turkey.

OJALVO: Our family, our ancestors, yes.

LEVINE: Now, in Turkey, did you have a grandmother, a grandfather?

OJALVO: That's right, yes.

LEVINE: What were their names?

OJALVO: Well, through my mother's side, my grandfather's name was Joseph.

LEVINE: And his last name?

OJALVO: And his business was used to buy eggs from the people that come from the small villages and imported to Istanbul. That was his job. You understand? And my grandfather from the other side, at that time, I don't remember much. I was, when he died, I was only about three years old. I don't know much about it. So he had, my father had one, two, three, three other brothers and two sisters, which also they used to live around there, in Turkey.

LEVINE: Now, your mother's father, what was his second name?

OJALVO: Chiprut.

LEVINE: Could you spell that?

OJALVO: Yes. C-H-I-P-R-U-T. Chiprut.

LEVINE: Chiprut. And that was your mother's maiden name.

OJALVO: That was my mother's maiden name. Also, he was descended from those Jewish, from Spain, from the Inquisition.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember your grandfather? Do you remember any experiences that you had with him as a child?

OJALVO: Oh, yes, yes, yes. During the Balkan War, my father came to the United States. In the meantime, my mother, with the four children, which three brothers and a sister, we were left over there. So, and also my grandfather, and my father was in the United States. He used to send all, so much every month, to be able to support it. Then we had the Balkan War in between. Then the place were closed. There was no money coming in. So my grandfather used to help us out, and also I had an uncle that is, my aunt's, that's my brother's, my father's sister, two sisters. They were there, they were married. They used to help us out, too. They used to lend us money. Then if the war was over, everything was okay. That Balkan War only lasted nine months. Then it come the World War. When the time started the World War, you see, that one lasted a long time. In the meantime I was graduated from grammar school, and I'm supposed to go to high school. There was no high school there. If you have money, you could go to Istanbul, you go to a high school. So then my teacher say, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you private lessons," to me he says. "Okay." He came here for a

week. He thought he was going to get bread. When he see he wasn't getting, he quit. So, therefore, my mother put me over there in a trade school, in a trade place. I used to work in shoes, a shoe factory, a shoe store. Over there there was no factory unless, let's say, a person opened up a shop, he get three, four fellows working for him. We used to go take the measure, and make the shoes to order, okay. In the meantime, when the World War started, the one that used to be high up . . .

MRS. OJALVO: The foreman, the foreman.

OJALVO: The foreman, which used to teach us how to do the things. So they took him to the Army. And one evening the boss told me, "You come with me." In the meantime, they used to pay me very little. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) It was about, let's say about a dollar a week. He says, no, a dollar a month. Okay. For first you work, you work six months for nothing, then they give it to, while you work for nothing, when it comes harder, they used to make a pair of shoes for you. Okay. Then they used to give us a dollar a month. And at that time when they took my foreman away, the boss told me, "You

come with me." He took me over to a coffee house across, by the water, and by the Marmara Sea." And he say, "You know why I call you over here?" I said, "No." He said, "You know that the foreman went to the army." "Yes, I know it." And he says, "I can get somebody else." He says, "But being that we make very particular shoes, and the foreman was very independent, you tell him, 'Do like this,' they get mad, and things like that. I don't want to take no chances. I want to take a chance with you." He says, "I'm going to give you, instead of one dollar a month," he says, "I'm going to give you one dollar a day." You understand? (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) That's very good, you see. "But you have to do exactly what I say." "All right," I say. And I was there working from the starting out the war to the, the war was over, and he used to give me a dollar a day, and my mother say, "Look. A dollar a day, that's very good," she says. "I got, I want two things from you," she says. "First of all, the dollar a day, before he comes to work you put him in his drawer, on the bench." Make believe this is the bench, you have a drawer, put his dollar a day. It was Turkish money, it was a hundred pieces. All

right. "And then, the second thing," he says, "two days a week he's not going to come very early, he's going to come a certain hour, an hour later, because he has to go to the temple for prayer." During the week he couldn't make it, but during the two weeks, the two days, is the day that he opened up the inscription, he says he has to go to pray in the temple. "Okay, that could be done." So I was able to be, to work there till one day before I left the port.

My sister went to Istanbul, and she made the papers and everything, so we can go over here. That was in 1920. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Wow.

OJALVO: Okay?

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, tell me, what did your father do in Turkey before he came?

OJALVO: Well, my father, what he used to do is this.

MRS. OJALVO: He used to work in the village.

OJALVO: He used to go to a small town to open up a business and everything, but he didn't have an education, much education, and he wasn't doing so well. That was, in

Europe, in a small town. Then he decided to go to a place in Asia. In Asia they call it Viga, the name of the city. And he opened up a small business that was a company that they give certain things to open up the store. Fine. And he says, "You pay me little by little." But unfortunately he wasn't doing so well. Before you know, he was selling, he was eating. So he made enough money to get to the United States, and he thought, and he thought this way I have a chance, with this money that I'm making, I'm going to have the fare to go to the United States. In the meantime, my mother didn't tell me that he went to the United States. He says she tell to her landlady, where she was living, "My husband run away on me." (he laughs) And then she was feeling terrible. "Look," she says, "this man, with four children," she says, "he left the four children, and run away." She says, "That's terrible. That's no good." So meantime my mother used to sew, and my uncle had a store, a piecework place. The Turkish ladies, when it come holidays, they used to buy piece goods, and she used to make dresses, little pants, and things like that. We support ourselves, fine. Meantime, they didn't force us to pay all the debt, because we couldn't, so

they didn't bother us. So about, a couple of years later we went back to Tikerdie, where my grandfather was. And that's the time they started the World War, the big one.

LEVINE: Where was your grandfather?

OJALVO: In Tikerdie, Tikerdie. This one. (he shows her on the paper) See, Tikerdie. That's the, all the Greek people used to call Rodoshto. That's all. That is in the Sea of Marmara. It's a place that all the mountains, the Balkan Mountains, they started to come down, and they come up to the Marmara Sea. When you come to, with boat someplace to go, you could see the sea up, and all the houses around. You understand? So we, I live over there where I was born.

LEVINE: What was it like? Could you tell me more about the city on the mountains?

OJALVO: Yes. It was a good place, and there were different nationalities living there. It was Turkish, Greek, Armenian and Jewish. They had their own, how do you call, churches and synagogues and everything, and we used to have a good life over there. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike)

LEVINE: Did everyone get along there?

OJALVO: Yeah.

MRS. OJALVO: Oh, yeah, yeah. We used to live like . . .

LEVINE: You were there, too? (referring to Mrs. Ojalvo)

OJALVO: Yeah, she was . . .

MRS. OJALVO: The same town.

OJALVO: She was a small town about forty miles away. But it was not the seaport. This was the seaport. Also, about twenty miles away, there was a railroad. The same railroad used to go from Istanbul to Dardena, not Dardena, Edirnopoli, in the, yeah. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) It's close to Bulgaria, yeah.

LEVINE: Well, tell me, did the Jewish people, what kind of work did they mostly do? Was it divided by the kind of work?

OJALVO: Yeah. You see, the Turkish people, mostly they used to work on the land. They used to plant and sell it. Meantime, they used to come from small towns, also.

They used to bring the wheat and other kinds of, breads and other things. They sell it, and take it to Istanbul by boat. All right. And the Armenian people, they used to be tradesmen. They used to make shoes and work with iron and everything. The Greek people used to have stores, and the Jewish people used to have stores. Selling, and manufacturing, too, the Jewish people.

LEVINE: What kind of manufacturing do you remember?

OJALVO: Anything that they need over there. Suppose they want to make chairs, some of them, cabinetmakers. Some of them tailors, some of them shoemakers. They put, let's say, they take a horse, they put shoes on the horse, and things like that. It was, they used to, and also there were people that used to come from Istanbul, and they bring the wheat and other stuff over there. They used to, they used to import it to Istanbul, to other cities, yeah. And also for piece goods, they used to have stores selling.

LEVINE: When you say piece work, is that like a cloth?

OJALVO: Yes, by yard. They buy it from Istanbul, then they sell it in the store, all piece goods over there, all

different kind of material. My uncle used to be in this business, too. In the meantime, my mother used to go to Istanbul. We borrowed money from his brother-in-law, which they had a piece goods store, and buy second-hand clothes. And we used to go twice, once for the, twice a week to the market, to the market, or perhaps sit down on the floor there. She used to buy dresses and things, second-hand dresses and sell them. This way she knows she paid for this dress four dollars, sell it for five or six. And also I was helping out. Meantime, my sister, which was about four years old, may she rest in peace, she, in order that it should be easier for us, my uncle and aunt, they didn't have no children, she stayed in my uncle house, just a one person less to eat, you understand, like your own daughter. And . . .

(Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) And also my sister used to work for my boss in the shoe line. Like sometimes there are some shoes with buttons. She used to make the buttonholes on the leather, and he used to pay, we used to give it to my mother. We all used to pay everything.

LEVINE: Were you the oldest child?

OJALVO: I was the oldest, and my sister was older than me. But my sister was with my uncle and my aunt. And me, I'm supposed to be with my mother, the breadwinner of the house.

MRS. OJALVO: (she laughs) Fifteen years old.

OJALVO: Meantime, still in all, our uncles, we borrowed money from them. But they had a problem. Sometimes the Turkish money was certain amount, like gold, let's say, one lira. It was five dollars one lira. It was time that there was ten. There were sometimes fifteen liras. The money started to get inflated. So meantime every time we borrowed money we used to put it down how much, how much it is. By the end of the war, we owe them three hundred liras. So they didn't know how much it was going to be exactly the right amount of money. So my uncle, he call up one of his friends, let him decide how much should it be. And he called me up, and they decided that it's going to be for all these three, for all this money, all the liras that it borrowed should be three hundred dollars. He sent it from the United States. So when I came over here to the United States I say, "My father . . ." I figured that the place where we worked took so long,

and being that he used to send a certain amount of money every month, he'll have money. When we came I see he had an apartment over in New York, and he put a furniture and everything. Well, by the week, he borrowed everything. (they laugh) He didn't have no money saving at all. So we worked together, both of us. He was working in New York in a factory called Carry's Buildings. When you get off from, I don't know whether you know New York or not.

LEVINE: Yes.

OJALVO: When you come out from Manhattan Bridge, from New York to Brooklyn, the Manhattan Bridge, right in the front, when the cars go out, there is a big factory right in front of you, used to be called the Carry's Building. I don't know whether you know it.

LEVINE: How do you spell it?

OJALVO: Carry. C-A-R-R-Y. And apostrophe S. Carry's Building. So he used to work there. He used to make thirty-one dollars a week.

LEVINE: And what kind of work was that?

OJALVO: My father, metal work. All kinds. They used to get

big metal sheets, like this. They used to put them in a place with a big, he take some kind of a guard, and he makes eight strips. From the eight strips, then he used to take them away in different place, they used to make smaller strips. Then you attach one to another. When you make a box you want to put things, that's the strap, they used to use it. And that's what they used to do that. So I worked over there, too. They used to pay me nineteen dollars a week, till I learned a little bit how to speak all right. Then I say to my father, "My trade is shoemaking. I want to try to go and work on the shoe line." So I look on the paper, I see they're looking for a worker, I used to go there. They used to ask me, "Are you experienced?" "Yes," I say. So soon I started work. After a day they sent me away, they say, "You not experienced. We want experienced." In the meantime I know how it is. In one week I changed three jobs already. I see the way they made it. We used to make similar to that, too. It used to be turning shoes.

LEVINE: Turning?

OJALVO: Turning shoes, hand-turning. Like now, the shoes mostly are pasted, compo, they call it. By that time

they used to, they used to make ladies' shoes turning.

They used to last it on the last, their own way, and sew it, turn it around, and that's the way it used to be with turning shoes. Meantime, meantime, when I went, by the end of the week, to make the story short, so I went to another place, and that was about fifteen people that came for those jobs. And there was an Italian fellow, he made a big speech. And out of the fifteen people we were left five. I don't know what kind of speech it was, you understand, because . . .

LEVINE: He gave a speech?

OJALVO: Yeah, in Italian. He was saying that, "This place, they call it Capezio, and he's making good shoes." He says, "If you're not a good shoemaker, don't waste my time. Go away." I don't know what he say. Then when he get me to work, he sees that (?). (he laughs) Then he tried to tell me, "Didn't I tell you?" I say, "I don't speak Italian." I said, "I speak a little bit English." He couldn't speak much of English, too. He says, "You know the other language that I know? French." "Oh, I speak a little bit French." He said, "I'm going to give you a job, and you can work over here." So he started giving me two or three pairs at

a time, little by little by little, and I worked there about eight months. I used to make thirty, forty dollars a week, very good. Then I started to see that they work other places, piece work and this and that, you make more money, I started changing. To that place, they used to be very, very particular shoes. You couldn't make too many shoes. So then he says, they used to make also ballet shoes, we used to make.

LEVINE: This was Capezio?

OJALVO: Capezio, yeah. So after that I started work practically North Shoes (?) in Brooklyn, in Brooklyn, in New York. So when I was about, about that time I was about twenty or twenty-one, I get married, and we pay all the debt to my uncle and everything, and that's all. And my sister went over to Seattle, Washington, which she had another, I had another aunt which her husband's brother was in Seattle, Washington. She get married over there, and that's the way we started.

LEVINE: Well, now, going back to Turkey.

OJALVO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember, what did you do for fun when you were a little boy?

OJALVO: Oh, fun? Not much.

MRS. OJALVO: No time for fun.

OJALVO: No time for fun. We used to have the Saturday off, of course, Saturday off. After we come out from the temple we used to have our breakfast and we used to get all the friends together. We used to go to places like, they make produce like lettuce. First of the season of the lettuce we used to go there. We buy a lettuce, a piece, see, down there. And eat, then it comes a time that they come the mulberries, cherries, we used to go there. And we used to have also other fun just gathering from school and friends. Everybody had to go to work. And, in fact, we even had a play. They made, the principal of the school, he played, he made the story of the Chekhov and his twelve children and everything, they made the thing. And we used to have dancing. It was a big community, a Jewish community, there. And that was supported by the Jewish Alliance, from France.

LEVINE: Would you say you had a happy childhood there?

OJALVO: Well, it was pretty good, no trouble. We used to mind our own business, and that's all. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike)

LEVINE: Everybody got along?

OJALVO: Everybody got along nice. The Greek people, they go with the Greek, the Jewish with the Jewish . . . (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) And the Turkish with the Turkish, and that's all. But the only high school it was there, it was a Turkish school. So when I started work, I went to the school for one week, and then my mother said, "Look," she says, "your father is in America. What are you going to learn in Turkish high school and all that? I might as well put you in a trade." And that's what it is.

LEVINE: How did you feel about that?

OJALVO: How did I feel? I feel all right, because I didn't have much to say. When you are a young person and there is no other thing to do, no other work, you have to do whatever they tell you.

LEVINE: Was your mother strict?

OJALVO: Very strict, yeah. She was very strict.

LEVINE: In what ways? What would she be strict about?

OJALVO: In everything. She used to say, "You have to . . ." My husband, your father is in America. You're supposed to come over here Friday night. The person said the prayers, and this and that, for me, and everything. And we used to honor them, that's all.

MRS. OJALVO: We used to respect them, that's all.

OJALVO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you have any customs that you still do that you remember from when you grew up in Turkey?

OJALVO: Oh, yeah. Any customs? (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs) Sure. We eat the same, the same kind of meals that we used to make in Turkey.

LEVINE: What kind of meals do you remember?

OJALVO: Oh, we made mostly vegetables, you understand? We hardly eat meat. We don't eat much meat. And we keep our Jewish religion over here. We have an organization over here. Unfortunately, our temple was closed down over here because there wasn't enough

attendance, you understand? And that's all.

LEVINE: Is this, the temple that you have, coming from Turkey, from the Sephardic branch of Judaism, is it the same? I mean, you could go to any Jewish temple and it would be the same?

OJALVO: Yes. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) It's the same reading. But if you go other organization, the Ashkenazim it's a little different for us, you see? Because over there we were very, very orthodox. Over here it's not orthodox. It's more reforms and some of them more strict, that's all.

LEVINE: Now, tell me . . .

OJALVO: In the meantime, excuse me. Meantime after I, my family grow up and everything, I had an accident in a car. I used to work in a shoe factory. I couldn't turn the shoe around. You see, like over here I had thirty-two stitches. So then I started go my brother-in-law was in the luncheonette business. And I told him, "You teach me how to do luncheonette business." So I went over and worked for him. After that I said, "Now you could, now I'm going to go and open up my business." He said, "We're trying to open up another

one." He says, "Another place, we'll take it a partner, and things like that." So he opened up, and they could keep their own. So my brother, my younger brother, which lives in Boca Raton, and me, two of us, and we are, and my brother-in-law, with his partner, which was his cousin, had another luncheonette. We opened up a place over in New York on 39th Street, The Regent Luncheonette, 515 Seventh Avenue, and we were there from 1939 till 1950. We were eleven years in business. Meantime, that place was the rent, very small, but it was no lease. But we didn't put much money. We put five hundred dollars apiece. We opened up a place worth ten thousand dollars, we only put in two thousand dollars. So they took the notes, they sold it to the bank. In the meantime the bank, and the building didn't even know that you haven't got no lease. We only had thirty days' translation, which we were lucky to be eleven years over there. You understand what I mean? So that's the way they used to be.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Now, could you tell me the names of your brothers and

sister and their ages when you came over?

OJALVO: Yeah. More or less, yes, I could tell you. My sister was about four years, she was twenty-two. And my . . .

LEVINE: What was her name?

OJALVO: Her name was Becky, Becky. And she went over to Seattle, Washington. Her name was Becky Levy. And in the meantime she married, she had two children. Yeah, two children. So after was the Depression over there, they came to New York, and her husband die after he was sick, and he couldn't get much good job, and the two children. One he went, the oldest one, he went to the army. His name was Louie, Leo. And the second one was Morris, and the second one, the second one died. When the second one died, we went over to the Red Cross that time, being we were left with one son only. At that time it was during the, no, no, during that, that somebody that had seven children and they lost them at one time in one boat, and they say, they put in the law when you have one child left they're going to bring from overseas that person. That time this person was in the Philippines. They brought him

back over here, Leo. So this is my nephew, so my nephew, they bring him back. And after, she died. But this fellow is a very well-to-do. In fact, he was a good member from our organization, the Sephardic organization. He went to Israel, he spoke with Shamir and everything in order to get the Sephardic Jews together. You understand?

LEVINE: Now, his name was Leo . . .

OJALVO: Leo Levy, yeah.

LEVINE: L-E-V-Y, or V-I?

OJALVO: L-E-V-Y, Levy.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, so, okay. That was Becky. Then came you. Then . . .

OJALVO: Then another, another one which died about a year ago, he was working here and there. And then the youngest one is in Boca, in Pembroke Pines also. He's retired.

LEVINE: How old was he when he came?

OJALVO: Oh, he was about eight years.

LEVINE: What's his name?

OJALVO: Nine years, when he came. And the other brother was twelve.

LEVINE: What was the name of the twelve-year-old?

OJALVO: The twelve year was Solomon, Sol.

LEVINE: And your other?

OJALVO: And the other one, Eddie.

LEVINE: Eddie?

OJALVO: Eddie, Eddie. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike)

LEVINE: Okay. So, now, tell me about leaving. When it was decided that you would leave, your father sent you tickets, or how did . . .

OJALVO: Well, he sent, he borrowed money from him, and he sent us a certain amount. And the rest of it my uncle gave me the difference, and we pay everything back.

LEVINE: Did you remember packing up? Do you remember anything you or your mother took with you when you came?

OJALVO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What?

OJALVO: First of all, first of all, before we pack them up, on the Balkan border, I'll tell you, before the big war, everybody want to go to Istanbul, like refugees, to run away, because the Bulgarians, they're coming in to my city. But it looks to me that my mother didn't want to have the intention to move away from the apartment. So, all right, she says, "You want to move? Fine." I say, she opened up in the center of the room for a . . . (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) Big blankets and everything, and make the bale so big that you can't take it neither from the door nor from the window. (he laughs) And then she says to us, "God says that we shouldn't move, and stay over here." (they laugh) She was a shrewd, you understand what I mean?

MRS. OJALVO: Four children, where she's going to go? She's going to go pack them up, like the people sleep in the street.

OJALVO: But that thing was over. But when it started the Second World War, being that I knew there was, there wasn't enough kerosene, there wasn't enough water, I

started to prepare myself, say, instead of buying, let's say, to have light, let's say about a quart of oil for the . . .

MRS. OJALVO: Kerosene lamp.

OJALVO: For the kerosene, I say, "This time we'll buy two gallons of oil." That it's going to last. And so much rice, and so much food. This way, in case. We used to make our own bread over there. So this time we prepare ourselves better, but unfortunately the war lasted too long, but we survived, thank God.

LEVINE: What kind of dishes, what kind of foods do you remember your mother cooking over there? (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs)

OJALVO: Well, frankly speaking, our diet is more like Spanish than Greek. We use plenty of vegetables, very little meat, you understand.

MRS. OJALVO: Fish.

OJALVO: And fish. Meats, very, very, very seldom. But we take, like, string beans, peas, potatoes, okra, vegetables. We make all these things. I make my own bread. I make my own rolls here. Because being that

I was, after the shoe business I worked in the luncheonette business. I remember when, may she rest in peace, when my wife died I ask her how to do this, because she died from cancer and she had a long sickness. So I used to cook it for her. And being that I was in the luncheonette business I used to do for her things. So that's why. When I marry her about four, five years ago, I cook, because I'm used to that. I do the cooking, everything. See, watch, I'll show you. Watch, watch. Give me a second.

LEVINE: We're stopping briefly. (break in tape) Okay. We're resuming again. Mr. Ojalvo has just showed me a lot of the foods that her prepared. So if you would say now what it is, these foods that you just showed me, what they were.

OJALVO: Well, the food that we, it's things that we used to eat to our ancestors over in Spain, like . . .

MRS. OJALVO: Not in Spain, in Turkey.

OJALVO: First they used to bring, they used to eat the same thing, all kind of different vegetables, like spinach, okra and squash, leek. All different kinds of foods, we make it. Because our main thing is this, we've got

to have, when we have, in the morning we have cereal and things like that. When it come noontime, we take spinach, mix it up with cheese and eggs and make a souffle. We have prepared it before, keep it in the freezer, and have it. In the evening we're supposed to have something starchy, and also, instead of meat, we have grain, like beans, garbanzo, or other kind of mixed vegetables. Sometimes we call that tululuage. That's a Turkish word. Tulu means all mixed vegetables, about ten different kind of vegetables cooking. We cook them gradually. Things that need more cooking, I start it first, and the things that need less cooking, they go in the end.

MRS. OJALVO: Carrots.

OJALVO: Carrots, carrots, eggplant, celery and, uh . . .

MRS. OJALVO: Squash.

OJALVO: Zucchini, tomatoes, parsley, onions, all these things here, they go into one meal.

LEVINE: And you stew them, or you steam them?

OJALVO: We stew them, little by little, little by little. Then you make enough for two, three days. So, but you

don't eat all these things at one time. What you do is you start first with your zucchini or sometimes artichoke or sometimes, the other thing you have is okra. That's the first one to start it, with your salad. Then you take the vegetables, too. Then the other thing, potatoes or rice, things like this here. Meat, we take, let's say, chicken once a week, or you cook half, half you leave for next week. That's how the meat we eat. That's all.

LEVINE: And how about the bread you made?

OJALVO: Bread. (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs) Well, I started to make bread when my wife was sick many years ago, my first wife. So I used to ask her how to do it, and she doesn't remember. And one time I see the show on the radio, on television, how to make bread. (there is the sound of traffic in the background) And somebody ask how to make challah bread. She didn't know what challah bread was. Another one from the Orient says, "I have Mrs. Grossinger's recipe. I'm going to send it to you," she says. Next week she came up on the television and says, "We got Mrs. Grossinger's recipe." So I put on my tape, why she was giving it. (he laughs) I put it. That was

about twenty-two years ago. Since that time I've been making bread once a week. This is Mrs. Grossinger's recipe.

LEVINE: And it's beautiful-looking bread. And onion rolls.

OJALVO: Onion rolls I learn about three years ago. I went over to my daughter, which she's in, up in the coast, in Los Angeles. So I got it, she got a book for me, a Jewish book, all the recipes, and I copied, and I made it. Once I tried that I liked it so much at least I make about two dozen every week. So we had enough for a week, for the lunch hour we split them in two, put them in the broiler, toast it, and (?).

LEVINE: And how about the desserts?

OJALVO: The desserts, I pick it up myself. Let's say, let's say that there are certain times in the year that you can't get certain grapes or a cantaloupe or honeydew or anything. They have peaches. So what I do is this, I put them in the hot water, peel them up, and cook it. And then make jars, put them in the refrigerator, yeah. So that's the way I do it.

LEVINE: Well, I can say your rice pudding is delicious.

OJALVO: When you're not working . . . This rice pudding, this rice pudding, I used to make it when I used to have my luncheonette over there on Seventh Avenue in New York, Regent Luncheonette. And one time an inspector came in to me and he says, "Look," he says, "very nice, the rice pudding is very good." He says, "You got to put it 'color added.'" I say, "I didn't put a color." He said, "But it's yellow." I said, "First of all, to make the yellow rice pudding, I only put it in a big pan, only one egg, but I pick up the brown egg. The yolk is more yellow. And then," I say, "I don't cook it together. When the rice pudding is finished, I warm it up a little milk, and beat the egg, and put it little by little with that milk, the two get together, and soon I took out of the fire, I put it right on top, and it stays yellow. If I keep it in the fire five minutes more the yellow is going to go away from the rice, but it still (?)." He says, "I don't believe it." He says, he took a sample. And the next day he came to apologize to me. He says, "There is no color added." (they laugh) You understand?
So . . .

LEVINE: Okay, that's great. So you, so, was your mother a

cook? Was she a real good cook?

OJALVO: Oh, yes. We learn it from mother to daughter and things like that, but not the man. The man never used to cook, you understand? The only reason I learn how to cook because my wife had a long illness and I started, and I worked in the luncheonette, which was different way in the luncheonette, but we started to eat Turkish things. Once you start working, automatically it's, you use a little judgment, and that's all. It's done.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, getting back to, before you left Turkey, were you aware when you were there at all about the Armenians, the problems between the Turks and the Armenians?

OJALVO: There was no, yeah, yeah. I was there. It was a time that the Armenians, they wanted liberty. So, for themselves, certain Armenian town. So what they did, the Turks, you're going to cost you money, they pay money. In the end they didn't give them that liberty. They pick up, in every town, how many Armenians there were. They came in the middle of the night, they took them over to Asia part. All right? And they closed

up all the homes and everything with the seal of wax.

They put a wax, and put a seal, that nobody should open up to go in there. And six months later they used to auction all the furniture inside from there.

MRS. OJALVO: And the people, they used to put them on the train. They used to pass some bridges. They used to . . .

OJALVO: They used to kill them. And the same like Hitler used to kill the Jews, the Armenians, you understand.

MRS. OJALVO: They were (?).

OJALVO: They were very, very able people. They were good workers, they used to do good trades, tradesmen and everything. Not only that, not only that, they used to make things how to work easier. They had the tools, like when our mother used to do the laundry there were no washing machines over there. So they used to get up, let's say, supposed, tomorrow's the day of the laundry, they used to get up around three, four o'clock in the morning, make the fire, warm up the water, and then they used to have pails where they stay on the floor and they're going to wash it. But the Armenian people, after we discovered they used to

do a different way. Being that they were tradesmen, they used to work at night, they used to make stands, like this here, and put the pan over there on top and do your laundry standing. So when that time, when they made auctions that time, I was very young. I used to go to the auction. I was about maybe ten years old, and buy the things over there. And I was so young that I couldn't tell, in the auction, the difference between seventy and ninety, you know. Let's say there were, there were some kind of bells and things like that, and I said, what I said was fifty-nine, instead of saying sixty I said ninety, and they gave it to me. (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs) And then I remember, may she rest in peace, my father-in-law, which became after, he says, "Don't you know," he says, "after fifty-nine comes sixty, don't come ninety." I didn't know it. I said, "Ninety." And they left for me, and I figure I'm going to lose money. So good thing I find inside those treasures and everything, I find a cigarette holder which was from silver and what they put it in the mouth something yellow. Como se llama esto? [What is the name of this?] Something . . .

MRS. OJALVO: Cherabar.

OJALVO: Cherabar. I'll show you. Da me la (Spanish). [Give me (?).] You see, you rub it and it looks like a, it catches the wool.

MRS. OJALVO: You know, some people, the Turkish people, they have the . . .

OJALVO: (?) Da me (Spanish). It's some color. (a tapping noise is heard in the background) Amber, amber.

LEVINE: Amber.

OJALVO: Amber. It was a big piece of amber, you put it in the mouth, and the rest was silver. And I was able to catch about thirty, thirty dollars more from that. I made it. You understand what I mean?

MRS. OJALVO: It's like a piece of gold.

OJALVO: Like a piece of gold.

LEVINE: That was in the auction?

OJALVO: In the auction I got it. So they didn't treat them right. But they were very good people. They were educated. In fact, my mathematics teacher over in

Turkey, when I finished up, was an Armenian fellow. He used to speak fluently French, and he was my mathematics teacher, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember at all these Armenians being taken away?

OJALVO: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Did people try to stop them in any way or anything?

OJALVO: You couldn't stop them. You can't go against the government. That was the decree that came in.
(Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) Because they didn't like the idea that they're trying to buy a piece of land and have their own kingdom over there. That's about it. Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about your life there, or what it looked like, or how about the house you lived in? Do you remember what that looked like?

OJALVO: Yes, it's a beautiful house. I went after that. I went after everything, it was a nice house, which was left from my grandfather. And we left it over there. We left it over there because my mother had a sister, and give it to her sister-in-law to take care of her.

LEVINE: What was it made out of?

OJALVO: Oh, wood, beautiful.

LEVINE: Was it . . .

OJALVO: Wood, and stone. Yeah, three flights up.

LEVINE: Three stories up?

OJALVO: When I used to go to a small town in Turkey, it was just clay, clay floor and things like that, very bad.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So would you say that your family was comfortable?

OJALVO: Comfortable, but not the opportunity that we got over here. Over here, when I came to the United States, I have one, two, three children, all of them were college graduates. Do you understand? Like my older son, this one here, this one here is the oldest. So he was a college teacher, a civil engineer. He had his doctor's degree. Then the other one also, the young one, he has his doctor's degree in mechanical engineering. You understand? And they all, they all are educated, and it didn't cost me a penny, with the scholarship and everything. You understand? This

one, he was in, he was going to City College, then he joined up the V-12 Program. He became, he was a civil engineer. He was an officer. And then when he came in he was teaching practically in every college over here, he was, in New York. You understand?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, okay, so tell me, like, what your mother packed with her when she left for the United States?

OJALVO: Practically nothing. Just the clothes. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) Clothes, clothes, and, you know, when you come in certain boats, they haven't got no blankets or anything, you take a couple of blankets, two, three blankets. We first stopped, we were from Istanbul and Greece, and from Greece we wait for the boat that's going to come to the United States. Waiting, waiting in the hotel over there.

LEVINE: I see. Was there, when you left the town, do you remember leaving the town?

OJALVO: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: What, was there any people out to say goodbye?

OJALVO: Oh, yes. Then I, not only that, I went after that. I

went after that. I went to Turkey, back again.

LEVINE: I mean, as you were leaving for the United States, was there a farewell gathering, or . . .

OJALVO: Well, yes, the family makes the gathering, that's all, and you go.

LEVINE: And then how did you get to, where was it, Patras?

OJALVO: Patras, yes, in Greece.

LEVINE: How did you get there?

OJALVO: From Istanbul, to get the boat to go to the Patrice you have to go to Greece. The one that come to the United States, you got to go to Piraeus. Piraeus, and you take the boat over there. That's the way they make, in Istanbul, the passes.

LEVINE: Did you have to go by train to get . . .

OJALVO: No, everything with boat.

LEVINE: Everything with boat.

OJALVO: Everything with boat. From the (?), we got the boat to Istanbul. From Istanbul we took another boat to go to Greece. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike)

From Piraeus we went to the other place.

LEVINE: I see. Now . . .

OJALVO: Then another thing. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking in Spanish) Yeah, de Piraeus. Then another thing was good, the first time I went over, back . . . (Mrs. Ojalvo sneezes) Vivas. To Europe, the first time we decided to go back to Europe and to Israel and everything, it was my first, with my first wife, because my son was in Holland. He had a Fulbright Scholarship. He was one year over terre. Okay. So we decided we'd take a boat from New York to go first to England, stopped there, then you went to France, and from France, no, not to France, to Holland. From England to Holland. And from Holland, my son was in Holland over there, the scholarship. He drove us to . . .

MRS. OJALVO: To Paris.

OJALVO: To Paris. That was, he bought over there his own car. At that time he bought a Mercedes. I gave the money, I say, "You pay me later on." So he pay me after, later on, when he started work over here. So we went over to Paris, and from Paris we took the Oriental

Express to go to Venice. From Venice we took a boat again to go to Israel. From Israel we took a boat to go to Turkey. From Turkey, that vacation was one of the best, because three months the boats, practically everything.

LEVINE: That's wonderful.

OJALVO: That was when I retired.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, did you have to undergo examinations before you got on the boat?

OJALVO: Yeah.

LEVINE: To the United States?

OJALVO: They check us the eyes. They used to check us.

LEVINE: This was in Greece?

OJALVO: In Turkey. In Greece, they started the examination.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was the name of the boat?

OJALVO: The Patrick, Patrice.

LEVINE: And you left from Paris?

OJALVO: I left from Istan, from Patris, we left from Piraeus,

Piraeus.

LEVINE: Now, tell me about the ship.

OJALVO: Oh, we had very good things. We, no. The ship was good. It was a troop ship. They paint it up and everything was beautiful. But it used to take us, once a week it used to take us out and they fumigate the place.

LEVINE: Were you in the steerage? Were you down in the bottom?

OJALVO: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They used to fumigate and pick up, and they used to go down once a week, yeah.

LEVINE: And what were the conditions like on the ship?

OJALVO: It was very good for me, because they didn't bother me, and we were having fun over there on the ship. It was like a holiday.

LEVINE: What did you do?

OJALVO: Oh, we used to have a group, playing, like this here. You go like this here, everything. Somebody come and slap it. (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs) Now, if you could pick the person who slapped you, he's going to sit,

and they're going to slap on him. If not, you pick him. You pick the other one. So we used to have this way some kind of fun every day, because so many days.

And we used to watch, from time to time . . .

MRS. OJALVO: How long it took?

OJALVO: Seventeen days.

MRS. OJALVO: Oh. I had thirty-one days. (she laughs)

OJALVO: It all depends, you understand.

LEVINE: So, and you said that there were several children born on your ship.

OJALVO: Yes, yes. There was a doctor over on the ship and things like that. And they used to come in, they used to take care of it.

LEVINE: So, and the food, do you remember what you had for food on there?

OJALVO: Yeah. If, anything you like you eat, anything you don't like you don't eat, that's all. But there was plenty of cheese over there. If you don't like it, you take a piece of bread and cheese, and that's all.

MRS. OJALVO: (?) of bread.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is there anything else about the voyage that you recall?

OJALVO: One thing I recall is this. We came to New York Harbor, and it was too late to take us to Ellis Island. They're supposed to take us the next day. And when I used to see so many lights around, we never had much electricity over there where I came from. It was really a beautiful place. And then when you went to Ellis Island they separate the men and the women places, and they were over there some beds, but no mattresses. They give you a blanket, only, on top of the coil you sleep. I don't know whether you've been over there or not. And the one, the one that help out to build that, this renewal, about a few years ago, so my nephew, he's one of the contractors on that, yeah. Yeah. Mr. Levy that I told you, he is a contractor. You see, his job is he makes foundations for big buildings in New York with other corporations. You understand? He is very well-to-do. He also, he is a civil engineer. When he came from the services he started, he went to school and got a civil engineer, and he's in this business.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you came?

OJALVO: Yes. After that, after that, when you first come to New York, first you go, you have certain cousins over here, and friends. They take you first to the Zoological Park, Bronx Park. They take you to the Statue of Liberty. They take you to Coney Island and things like that. This, the first month we did all that. After you do that, you forget about it. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Do you remember certain things that struck you as odd or different or exciting?

OJALVO: I used to tell my father, "Over here is wonderful." I said, "One thing is no good." I say, "Everything is cheap the way it is over there. But one thing is no good, the rents are too much." At that time my, my father got an apartment on Rivington and Orchard Street on the corner over there. It was twenty-four dollars a month. Over there we used to pay only three dollars a year. (they laugh) The rents were too expensive.

MRS. OJALVO: The rents were too expensive.

LEVINE: Okay. We're going to pause here for a minute because I need to change the tape.

OJALVO: Okay.

LEVINE: This is the end of Tape One, and I'm talking with Nissim Ojalvo.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: Okay. This is Tape Two now. I'm speaking with Nissim Ojalvo at his home in Miami Beach, and it's April 28, 1993. Okay. Well, let's keep going first about, is there anything else about what struck you as different and exciting or not exciting about New York when you first came?

OJALVO: (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs) The only thing, the only thing I like that New York, when we came in, there was job for everybody. Anybody, if you don't know the language, you understand? So long you are healthy, you could find jobs. And today, unfortunately, there is nothing. But still, I don't say that United States no good. United States was one of the best things.

You get a free education. That's the way, if you are smart enough, you could go someplace, you understand?

It's one of the best places in the world, so long you want to work for it, that's all.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about Ellis Island when you were there?

MRS. OJALVO: He stayed one night.

OJALVO: I slept one night, and I liked it very much. All what they wanted is if you have anybody that can pick you up, because my father, he send certain papers that he's going to take care of it. He came to Ellis Island and picked us up.

LEVINE: What was it like seeing your father?

OJALVO: Oh, it was many years I didn't see him. When I was too young, when you are too young you feel like you're missing so much, but after you get used to. But I remember him very well, because when he left I was about eight years old. He was ten years over here. That's how I remember.

MRS. OJALVO: When you see your father (?) . . .

OJALVO: No, after eight years.

LEVINE: Do you remember . . .

OJALVO: I remember him. I remember him and everything,
but . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember what it was like, the reunion with
him?

OJALVO: Yes. When I was there, the first year and second year
you feel something like part of your body, your family
went away. But after, you get used to. And when he
came in, you understand, you get used to everything.
Then it almost you are grown-up at that time already.

And one thing is good, that everybody, the school
system is one of the best over here. I don't know now
how it is, and the food, nobody can starve over here.

If you want something, taking good care of it. And I
remember when I used to go to night school they used
to tell us that over here it's liberty for everything.

What the rich people can eat you can eat, too, if you
put on your mind. Everybody's alive, so long as you
be a good citizen over here, and that's all. Now, I
was so many years over here, 1920. It's 1993 now, I
never was arrested, and never took something, even

charity, with the exception, with the exception when you were expecting children and you haven't got the money you used to register, my wife used to register over there, and they used to give them the, to have the children, things like that. You understand?

LEVINE: So did you attend night school?

OJALVO: Yes, about six months I went to night school to learn how to go by, to learn how . . .

LEVINE: And at the end of six months, were you . . .

OJALVO: Then I, yes. Because through the French language, it's the same writing, it was easy for me to adapt myself to the English language, yeah. I still speak a little French, I still speak Turkish, I still speak a little Greek, and whatever we know in Spanish, and also in Jewish. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) The only trouble is now I keep on forgetting things. Sometimes on top of my tongue, and I can't say the word.

LEVINE: Well, let's see. When did you meet your wife, your first wife?

OJALVO: My first wife actually is my first cousin.

LEVINE: Did you know her from . . .

OJALVO: Yeah, yeah. She came . . .

MRS. OJALVO: She was born in (?), and she comes (?).

OJALVO: I came August, she came in December, six months later.
And she was my cousin. Her father was my uncle, you
understand?

LEVINE: Were you boyfriend and girlfriend in Turkey?

OJALVO: No, no, no.

MRS. OJALVO: Not allowed to be.

OJALVO: Not allowed too much. You understand.

MRS. OJALVO: Not like over here, seventeen years old they go
with the boys.

LEVINE: So how did you happen to get together?

OJALVO: When I was in Turkey I was too young, and my aunt used
to say, "You better marry her. She is a good girl for
you." And I have certain intuition for her, you
understand what I mean? So when I was, when I finish
paying all my debts and my father's debts everything,

then I said to my mother, "Till now I work for you, now I'm going to work for myself." "What do you mean?" I said, "I'm going to start to collect money, and I'm going to get married." (he laughs) So how was it, you understand? See? Oh, here's my daughter. Watch. This is my daughter. She's in California.

LEVINE: So what was your wife's name, your cousin?

OJALVO: Fanny.

LEVINE: Fanny? And her last name?

OJALVO: Ojalvo also, because her father and my father are brothers. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike)
You understand?

LEVINE: And you had how many children?

OJALVO: I have four.

LEVINE: And their names?

OJALVO: My name? Their name, one is, the oldest, Morris.

MRS. OJALVO: Clara.

OJALVO: The second one is Clara.

LEVINE: Does Clara have a married name?

OJALVO: Yes. She is Friedman, Friedman. Yeah. And the third one is Irving, and the other one died while he was about eleven months old, a boy, yeah. Four children, yeah.

LEVINE: And so you were in the restaurant business.

OJALVO: First in the shoe line, working. And then I went into the luncheonette business in New York. And when I came over here, no, before I came over here I started work, I was sixty-two, I started work, no, before sixty-two. Sixty years old, the place was open up 1950 till 1960, they close up the place. They took that place over. Then I worked for one year or two like this here, part time, then I came over here and was retired for good. Yeah.

LEVINE: So, let's see. Well, if you could think about yourself as Turkish, Jewish and American, what aspects of you would you call Turkish or Jewish or American? What different parts of you are those things?

OJALVO: All what I know is, all what I know, I am a Turkish subject, I was. Then I became an American citizen,

and I believe in the American way a hundred percent.
(Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) Yeah,
American. Because most of my life is spent over here.
It's about seventy years of my life is spent over
here already, and I believe this is one of the best
systems, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Is there anything else you can think of? How
are you enjoying this part of your life, your old age?

OJALVO: Very good. Look, I want you to know one thing. Life
is a great creditor. It'll give you all the credit
you want, and in the end you pay the interest. They
tell you, "Don't eat that, don't do this." Then you
keep on suffering, and also we pay at my age,
sometimes this, sometimes that. You get a certain
kind of sickness. You got to pay for it, because
that's the way it is. Like about four or five days
ago I had a terrible thing, toothache, like anything.
So I figured if they take the upper part I have no
teeth. Part of I have one teeth is anchored, this
one. What I'm going to do? Good thing that they took
my tooth out, and they put this bridge to the next
one. Thank God, you understand? So you can go by,
but don't expect everything to be perfect, you

understand? After all, it's old age. The only thing I hope is when I die I should be easier the way I came in, if it's possible.

LEVINE: You came in easily? (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs)

OJALVO: Well, I don't remember something, when I came in.
(he laughs) But I wrote, I wrote the paper. When they see that it's no use for me to live any longer, I wrote a living will. I gave it to my doctor. My doctor, one to the other, don't try to hold me too long. Just starve me for a week, I'll be okay, so.
(they laugh)

LEVINE: Okay. So, now, your first wife died of cancer.

OJALVO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then how did you meet your second wife?

OJALVO: Oh!

MRS. OJALVO: (she laughs) In the (?).

OJALVO: The second wife I say, "To be alone is no good." So I married, the other one, may she rest in peace, she come after me, she say, "Don't you want to get married?" "So far," I say, "I have company. I don't

want to get married." Soon I see I don't haven't no more company, I say, "I think I'm going to get married with you." (Mrs. Ojalvo laughs) For two reasons: this way not to be alone, and the second reason, my son used to be a flyer. I used to go all over the world for nothing. (they laugh)

LEVINE: What was your second wife's name?

OJALVO: Oh, Diamante, diamond.

MRS. OJALVO: Diamond.

OJALVO: Diamond, Diamante.

LEVINE: Diamante.

OJALVO: Diamante Cohen, Cohen.

LEVINE: Cohen.

OJALVO: Cohen, yeah. So she live with me about three years. Then I had another friend that we used to play cards together, she used to live over here in the building, on James Avenue. And when I went to visit her the doctor asked me, "You better tell your children to come over because you are very sick, you have cancer."

This and that and all that stuff. I took a pity on

her, I say, "Look," I say, "how about if I marry you?

This will take care of you." And she brighter, she made her eyes bright and everything. "See, I'll marry you," she says. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) And then we get married, but she only live one year. I marry on Christmas, and she die on Christmas.

MRS. OJALVO: One year.

LEVINE: This is number three?

OJALVO: That's number three. Then she want to go to the old age home and everything. She was sick. I say, "You want to marry me?" I say, so I marry her. So we've been married how many years? Five years?

MRS. OJALVO: Six years!

OJALVO: Six years already.

MRS. OJALVO: You never remember. Always you said two years.

OJALVO: The long life, the long life needs to have company, that's all. (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike)

MRS. OJALVO: Four years you live in this house. In my house you live two years.

LEVINE: Well, you seem to be, you seem a good match.

OJALVO: Oh, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: That's very nice.

OJALVO: She's not a stranger to me, you know what,
because . . . (Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off
mike) Because her husband was a brother to my
brother-in-law.

LEVINE: Oh.

OJALVO: You understand?

MRS. OJALVO: The first wife's sister, she was my sister-in-
law.

OJALVO: So I say, "You want to go to an old age home, they
don't want to take you, I'll marry you," I say.
That's all.

MRS. OJALVO: I (?) my husband, I (?) .

OJALVO: This was is cheaper for us. Whatever we spent, half
and half, and that's all. What's yours is yours,
what's mine is mine, and that's all. "All right," she
says.

MRS. OJALVO: (?) use it, then (?). I . . .

LEVINE: Uh-huh. I see.

OJALVO: They ask me, "How is it you got a long life?" The only thing that help you is when you have company. When you are alone, it's no good, I said. So try not to be alone, and if you are alone, try to help yourself, that's all.

LEVINE: Is there any other advice you give to people?
(Mrs. Ojalvo laughs) Do you have any other good advice?

OJALVO: Yes. My good advice is this. If you can do something, worry, you don't have to worry, do it. And if you can't do it, stop worrying. That's all.

LEVINE: That sounds . . .

OJALVO: They want to put a pacemaker on me about twenty years ago. So, I had a friend of mine, may she rest in peace, she tell me, "Before you make a pacemaker," she says, "my daughter comes over here to visit me from New York. Her husband is a doctor, and she had open heart surgery, and whenever she comes over here she

goes to Mercy Hospital where they make a certain kind of a therapy. Try to get in that program." So when I went over to that Mercy Hospital, I say, "You take care of so-and-so sometimes when she comes to Florida." "Yes." He says, "What do you do?" He says, "She comes over here for this kind of a therapy." "What it is?" "You got to make a certain kind of exercise." So they try me in the hospital, they see that I can take that exercise. You go three times a week to the hospital for the treadmill and exercise. They put a transistor over here, and they see for forty minutes three times a week. They did that for one year. And the second year they say, "You feel much better, you come twice a week." And the third time, once a week. After that, later when they cut down all these expenses, he says, "You're not allowed." So I have my own bicycle over here and everything. I do the exercise. And I haven't got no pacemaker for the last twenty years. That's all what it is. And eat the proper foods, and that's all. So far so good.

LEVINE: How about advice to people coming to the country now, immigrating to this country?

OJALVO: They, it's all right, but it's very hard now, because no opportunities the way it used to be before. Before you want to have an apartment, the highest it was thirty dollars, forty dollars, fifty dollars. Now it's seven hundred, eight hundred dollars. How? A young man come out of the school, he even come out of the college, how can he pay the rent? Now it's terrible, too expensive. Before it was easy.

(Mrs. Ojalvo is heard speaking off mike) And most of our jobs, they took it to a different place. You come to the United States there was no such a thing no jobs. Always there was jobs. Over here, they used to make everything over here. Now everything, they ship it over there.

MRS. OJALVO: Everything Mexico and (?) .

OJALVO: When the boss see that's too much taxes, don't do this, don't do that, he goes to Mexico, he makes the factories, or Cuba and places like that, and that's no good. In the long run we pay more for that, because if the people work over here they're going to pay taxes over here, and they don't have to give them relief or anything.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, is there anything else you'd like to say before we close?

OJALVO: That's all. That's all, what I say, and I say I'm very happy, and I'm very lucky that I came to the United States.

LEVINE: Well, thank you very much. It's been most enjoyable.

OJALVO: Okay. (he laughs)

LEVINE: And I want to thank you. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I've been talking with Nissim Ojalvo.

OJALVO: Ojalvo.

LEVINE: Ojalvo. And he came from Turkey in 1920 when he was eight years old. And I'm signing off.