

EI-394

CELIA KRUTOLOW ENTIN

BIRTH DATE: MARCH 2, 1901

INTERVIEW DATE: OCTOBER 4, 1993

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 1:29:29

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: PETER HOM

INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: JOHN MURIELLO, 4/1996

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: IRV SILBERG

THE UKRAINE, 1913

AGE 12

SHIP: "THE GROSSER KURFURST"

PORT: BREMEN

RESIDENCES:

UKRAINE: KALERKEA

US: New York, NY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's October 4th, 1993, and I'm here at the Ellis Island Immigration Studio. I'm here with Celia Entin, who came from the Ukraine in 1913 when she was twelve years old. I want to say that I'm very happy that you were able to come today, and I'm really looking forward to the story...

ENTIN: Well, I'm saying that I'm meeting a very pleasant interviewer and I'm very happy about it. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, good. Well, let's start at the very beginning, and you tell me your birth date.

ENTIN: My birthday is March the 2nd, 1901.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

ENTIN: I was born in the Ukraine, Russia. And Ukraine is the --- Kiev is the capital of the Ukraine.

LEVINE: And what was the name, was it a little town?

ENTIN: It was a very, very small town. There were just very few Jewish families there. And the, but the only, I was never outside the little town. Never until I traveled to the States.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, tell me about the, did, did it have a name? I mean, was it a big enough place to have a name?

ENTIN: Yeah, sure. It had a very hard sounding name. Mestechko means town, village. Mestechko Mokrea Kalerkea [ph]. Kalerkea. But then they shortened it, the people from our town, and they called it

Kalerkea, so they knew that all the, the people that came from our town, they're Kalerkea. They are the Kalerkea.

LEVINE: I see. Could you spell that?

ENTIN: K-A-L-E-R-K-E-A. Kalerkea.

LEVINE: Okay. And...

ENTIN: And then in Russia, they used to say Klyucharki. Klyucharki

LEVINE: Oh.

ENTIN: That was the town.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, in Kalerkea were there, were there other families...

ENTIN: Yes.

LEVINE: ...besides the Jewish families...

ENTIN: Very few.

LEVINE: ...or was it strictly Jewish families?

ENTIN: Very few Jewish families. But we had one synagogue, and one bath house. (she laughs) And no school. No school at all. The only place we used to go to, it was the kheder, you know, the, the rabbi, the beginners, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: That's the only place we had to study. There was no place to, until I was ten years old. Should I continue?

LEVINE: Well, well, let me ask you this. Were there, were there schools for the non-Jewish residents of the town?

ENTIN: That's what I want to tell you. You see, when the school was built, I was ten years old, and they only accepted one percent of Jewish children. And I was lucky. I did get in. But when, at the end of the week, when Sat-, before Saturday they told us, they notified us that whoever doesn't come on Saturday shouldn't come on Monday. You know Sa-, the Sabbath. So my father wasn't very religious, you know, we were - we were secular Jews. And he said, and we were so hungry for learning to, there was no place to study, he says if you want to go, go. So I went. And I happened to make a very good student. And, but it just happened that we came in September, and Christmas came along. You know. So when Christmas came along, they gave me the most important poem to recite around the Christmas tree.

LEVINE: This was, this was in Russia?

ENTIN: Yes.

LEVINE: In, in the Ukraine.

ENTIN: I'm trying to tell you.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

ENTIN: And the, the poem was --I was so anxious, you know, and I studied it, and I knew it forward and backward. But two days before Christmas they took away the poem from me and they gave it to a non-Jewish child. You can imagine how I felt and how my father felt for me, being that he allowed me to go on the Sabbath. And I was terribly, but to this day I remember the poem word for word.

LEVINE: Would you say it?

ENTIN: Yes.

LEVINE: Go ahead.

ENTIN: V shkole shumno razdautsa begotnia I smex detei  
Znat oni ne dlia ucheniya sobralis sevodnia v nei  
Net, roshdestvikaya elka v nei sevodnia zashena  
"Bistro toi sego naradnoi" detok raduet ona  
Sdes loshadka, tam luchek,  
Vot sheleznaya doroga, vot ohoti "chereshog"  
A fonariki, a svezdi, chto almazimi goryat,  
A orehi zolotiye, a prozrachni vinograd  
Budte vi blogislavenie, vecher dobraya ruka,  
Ubirala etu elku, dlia malutok bednika,

Now should I tell you?

LEVINE: Yes.

ENTIN: It tells the story about how the, why the children gather there. It, it was Christmas, the birth of Christ. And everything is decorated and everything is beautiful. And then she begins to tell on every little item that's hanging on the tree. Here is a, a train, here is a, grapes, here is, you know, all the things that are hanging on the tree. And the stars. The stars are beautiful. And then the, then the, thanks the audience. And this was arranged for the poor people, it says.

LEVINE: Oh. Now, were the people there, they were Russ-, Russian Orthodox? Is that, was that the prevalent...

ENTIN: They were the Russian Orthodox.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: You know, it's hard to, to explain the right way, you know, you know, to translate.

LEVINE: Yes. Yeah. So what was the feeling generally in the town between the Jews and the...

ENTIN: It wasn't a happy feeling.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And we, you know, at that time, I wasn't born yet, but they used to tell the story how the news came from town to town that they're going to, they're coming, and like the, what do you call them, like here, the...

LEVINE: You mean like the Cossacks?

ENTIN: Not the Cossacks. But just the -- tramps, you know, the fellows, you know, how do they call the, I forget.

LEVINE: The...

ENTIN: All right. Whatever they call them. They, that they're going from town to town, and they're wrecking and burning houses, and, and tearing, you know, bedding and, they would, they're making a pogrom. They used to call it a pogromstikes Pogrom. Pogromstikes. So they tried everything. And my father was very young at that time. He came, he was only forty-five when he came to this country. And at that time he was very young. So they got together a few fellows. And they decided to, to do something to dissuade them, you know. So they, they ca-, they went and they bought a big barrel of herring and a, a bag of bread, and cigarette, packs of cigarette. And there was a bridge to go across to go to the town. And just as they were supposed to come into our town over the bridge, our men stood on both sides and they handed out to them cigarettes and bread and, and what do you call it?

LEVINE: Herring?

ENTIN: Herring. And they marched through the town and nothing happened. And we never had a pogrom in our town. But we had plenty. Every day when they went from the fields, they were bringing potatoes or beets or whatever they had on their, on their wagon, they would throw it in the, the Jewish windows. And we got away with a couple of broken windows, but we never had a pogrom in our town. Because we had some fellows that were young and strong, and they were on the lookout. And then they, they would get news from other towns, you know, that they were there, they were here, you know. So they, we never had a pogrom.

But they did, my father used to tell us about a story, the way, when my oldest sister was about sixteen years old, so there's a pogrom. And they notified them from the other town that the pogromstikes were coming. So they took all the, all the girls of that age and they sent them away to another town. And they, you know, in order to save them. And that, that's how they did. They were always in fear. They always lived in fear. You never knew when. They would, they would come and destroy and, and burn and, and so you, how could you live in a place like this. And then the children grew up, grew up, they had no place to

study. There was no chance of any education at all. There was only one man in town that used to teach to write, to write a letter. That's all. And when I, when I was four and a half years old my mother died.

LEVINE: Oh. Tell me what your mother's name was.

ENTIN: Bella.

LEVINE: And her, her maiden name?

ENTIN: Povlatzky.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

ENTIN: Povlat-, P-O-V-L-A-T-Z-K-Y. Povlatzky.

LEVINE: And, and your father's name?

ENTIN: Hy-, Hyman. "Cheskl [PH]." "Icheskl [PH]."

LEVINE: That was his last name?

ENTIN: That was...

LEVINE: Your maiden name?

ENTIN: ...the Jewish name. My name, my Jewish name is Celia Krutolow. But my father's name's, first name is Cheskl Krutolow.

LEVINE: And did you have brothers and sisters in...

ENTIN: I had...

LEVINE: ...in the Ukraine?

ENTIN: I had four sisters and one brother. I mean, three sisters and myself. We were four girls and one son.

LEVINE: And what were your sister's names?

ENTIN: There was Rivka, one of them that we left her there. She was married and then we never saw her again. There's an incident that I have written that I could never forget the incident. So the, the one brother, when the, you see, I can't tell you everything, you know, because I have to start from, from below.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: You know?

LEVINE: Well, this is a story about...

ENTIN: This is a story about my, the way I began to, when I lost my mother. That's when I remember, from there.

LEVINE: I see.

ENTIN: I remember the morning, you know. And when I was four and a half years old, my mother passed away. And when she passed away I can still remember the morning, the way she woke up and she called my sister to come and, and stay with her. So my eldest sister came and stayed with her. And right there and then she died, just after my sister came. And my father went and he took me, and I could hear the screaming and crying. My father wrapped me in a blanket and brought me into his brother, that was my uncle, brought me in there, and left me there because there were children there, some young children.

And that's how I remember the, and I even remember that when nightfall came, and we were still, they didn't come back. So I got out. It was very, very cold. I walked out without my coat, and I walked back to the house. I was only four and a half years old. And when I came there, in Europe they used to bury at night, too, in the evening. When I came there I see an aunt stands there, and when they saw me she picked up her shawl, you know, I shouldn't see, they were just bringing out the, yeah, and the funeral was taking place. And then, from then on my father used to take me every day, he used to bri-, wrap me in a blanket and bring me into my uncle's house, so that I can play the day with the children. There were children there. The son lived with them.

LEVINE: Oh.

ENTIN: And a rabbi used to come in every day to teach them because it was winter. The winters were very severe. And they, he used to come in and teach them. And one day when my father came to pick me up I said, I asked him if I could study with them, too. So the rabbi said, "Sure, she can study." And he sits me down, and he says, shows me alef, beys, gimel -- you know, A, B, C, D. And they -- then he gets me in the middle. And I said, "Beys." He said, "Oh, she'll have a good head." (they laugh) I remember everything that just the way, and then that went to every day my father used to bring me in there. And in the spring, they, my s-- I went with my sisters to the rabbi's house. And that's the only education that we could get. There was nothing. And my brother, being that, you know, we were left five children, my father re-married. So when he re-married things weren't, weren't too good. The...

LEVINE: Were you the baby?

ENTIN: Yes. I was the youngest. My oldest sister was sixteen. And she, she was left with all the children. So one day, I didn't know anything, but one day I see a wagon come over to our, our house loaded with furniture. And, you know, I didn't know anything. My sister knew. And when my sister saw that, she began to cry and all the others began to cry. My father had me - re-married. He went away to another town and he re-married. But his children -- he took care of to his dying day the way he took care of me.

LEVINE: Well, who, so Rivka was your oldest sister.

ENTIN: She remained in Europe.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then...

ENTIN: I have to tell you about my sister, how she remained. And we, she was already married when we left.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, what were your other sister's names, just...

ENTIN: One was Cherna [PH], Cherna. And one was Mintzi [PH], Minnie. And my brother Yoel.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

ENTIN: Yoel. It's Y-O-E-L. Yoel.

LEVINE: Okay, so, so, you, did you have any celebrations, or any kind of...

ENTIN: The only, the, we, we never knew about birthdays or anything. The only thing, everything revolved around the synagogue. You know, any holiday, my father happened to be the Gabbai, [honorary officer] you know, of the synagogue. So when it was, you know, like this time of the year, Simkhas Torah, we used to go to the synagogue, and we'd go with lights and lamps and celebrate, because the town had no lights or lamps.

LEVINE: Can you remember that? Can you remember doing...

ENTIN: Oh, sure. I remember when my sister was married, I was only about six years old.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And they, she made, she would -- made all the clothes for us, my sister. She made the dress for me, and she made my hair, and put it up in braids. And I hated curly hair. (she laughs) And I was so unhappy when I saw the frizzy, frizzy hair. And I even remember the dress. She made a pink dress for me with ruffles and...

LEVINE: What, and what, can you describe it? What, what, what did it look like, the dress?

ENTIN: It was...

LEVINE: The style?

ENTIN: It was, you know, the belt here. And it was with ruffles all around. And on the edge, lace. And here it was like three tier, you know. It was a lot like this here. (she laughs)

LEVINE: And...

ENTIN: And that wedding was outside the, the synagogue. The, the, the khupa [wedding canopy] was outside the synagogue.

LEVINE: And what, do you remember the wedding dress your sister wore?

ENTIN: She wore a dress. She happened to marry a fellow, that, you know, Europe, she was very beautiful, and they kept on sending match makers to my father's house for, you know, for, with the, with the bridegrooms. But she wouldn't marry just anybody. She was really beautiful. So one day somebody said that one soldier returned from he-- from the army, and he came home with beautiful stuff. And he, he was, his father was a tailor. And he came home with so many beautiful, he was somewheres there in, down near Vystok [PH]. It was some, near, near Siberia he was stationed. And he brought back such beautiful things. So being that he was a tailor he made the, the, all the clothes for her. He made the whole, you know, he made the wedding gown. It was sky blue. It wasn't white. It was beautiful. And he made for her, he went took my father and he went to another city, and they bought, he brought velvet, like plush. So from that he made for her like a, a cape. They used to call it a ratanda [PH]. You know, it was, it had no arm, no sleeves. But it was belted. And, and she wore a little, tiny, little muff. And she was so beautiful.

LEVINE: Oh. So she, did, was it customary for the daughter's families to give dowries?

ENTIN: (she chuckles) You ses-- also, well, being that he was already through with the army, they considered him a catch, you know, a good catch. So they came, they arranged, his father and his brother, no, nephew, came to visit us one day. And we prepared, you know, you know, all kinds of refreshments. And then, we didn't know anything, but they told us, the family that they demanded a nadn. you know, a dowry. So being that, it happened that they both stuck on each other right away. (she laughs) So he called her, he called her aside, and he spoke to her. And we -- then we found out that he is going to put down the money for her, saying that my father gave it. (she laughs) And he's, you know, you're looking over there, is somebody there? Oh, he is? (she laughs)

LEVINE: So, so, your, your sister's...

ENTIN: My sister, she...

LEVINE: ...husband-to-be put the money up?

ENTIN: Yeah, put the money. And then he made an appointment with her. We didn't know. He made an appointment with her to meet her in the marketing place where they, all the stores are, you know, in the center of the village they have stores. And he, she got dressed up with a, with a beautiful suit. And my brother being, my brother had gone away already to a big city to work. So he sent her from there a tiny, little, seal, black, little pill box hat, and a little muff, and a narrow scarf that you throw over like this here. (she indicates) And she wore it dressed up like this here. (she laughs) When the dresses were long, you know, to the floor.

And she went to meet him. But she didn't tell us. She made up an appointment with him. And then when she came back, she, he brought her back, and she came back laden with gifts. And then we found out that, what happened. That he wants to marry her, and he's going to take care of her, and he'll take all the money that, that they, that he gives, and he's going to take my father and her to another city, and buy everything. He even brought fur. You know? Fur, for lining, to line that sleeveless coat. And she got married. And that's was, and then she had a baby. And she, he rented. That was very something new, you know, he rented an apartment. A man had built a big house, and he rented an apartment for them. Nobody had big houses. Everything was little, little cabins. Little shacks.

LEVINE: How did he get so much money? Did he earn that money...

ENTIN: He earned, because he used to make clothes for the officers, you see, in the army. He didn't even, I don't know how long he trained, you know. They, they used them. Anybody that had a, a trade, those were the ones that didn't even go to war, you know. So he made money and he came home with money. But, and he bought material for a wedding gown. And he bought, he brought such beautiful, you know, printed Japanese blouses that you only cut and make. I can still remember them.

LEVINE: Wow.

ENTIN: And that's, that's, so they got married. And they lived in a beautiful apartment. And he bought furniture, you know, armoire, you know, we never knew of a two, one for ladies, one for men's clothes. And furnished a beautiful home. And then she had a little boy.

LEVINE: Now, what was your father doing for work at that time?

ENTIN: My father was making army boots.

LEVINE: He was a shoe maker?

ENTIN: He was a shoe maker, but not like, you know, a man sits, and he had six people working for him. And they used to come and order shoes or boots. Mostly they shipped boots for the army.

LEVINE: I see.

ENTIN: And that's how they made a living. And every, every house, they didn't have, you know, shops. So in the house they made a -- one big room. And, but this, my father, after he got married, remarried, he, you know, he, the family got bigger, so he kept adding rooms. He always built. He was always building. And he could build so much that the middle, center rooms became dark. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Became dark? (she laughs)

ENTIN: Because they kept on adding. You know, there was no plan how to build, you know. But he needed the room for the family, you know. So.

LEVINE: What did the house look like when you were growing up? What was it made of?

ENTIN: Well, when, when my house, I don't remember the old house at all. I only remember that we used to have a, a stove, a brick stove. And on the top you could go up there, and, and lay down. (she chuckles) You keep warm. And here is where, where the opening where you put in the food. (she indicates) This I can remember. And, and on the top, you know, sometimes that was our entertainment, our recreation. (she laughs) Saturday we'd go up on the, on the oven. It was nice and warm there, and we used to take a handkerchief, fill it up with polly seeds and eat. (laugh) That was the recreation. And even the grownup people on a Saturday after the services, after the dinner, they would dress up in there best clothes on Saturday. And where we lived was the straightest street. Otherwise they were like haphazard built houses. But we had our houses new built, newly remodeled. And it was built with a dining room and a living room. Big. And they, we used to, and on our street was the straight street. So everybody would dress up, and go strolling on the, back and forth, and, and eating polly seeds. (she laughs) That was the recreation.

LEVINE: What were polly seeds exactly?

ENTIN: You know, those little polly seeds from, from sunflower?

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

ENTIN: You know what a sunflower?

LEVINE: Yes.

ENTIN: And they get black when they're ripe. They're first green, then they get black, and they get, and you, you, like, put them in something to make hot. Roast them. And that's, they, they have them here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, did people, was it the kind of town where people had enough money so they could have nice clothes, so that they went on strolling...

ENTIN: No, they...

LEVINE: ...they dressed up?

ENTIN: Well, those that had, they would keep it for -- especially for, for an occasion. You know, mostly it was those heavy silk dresses that they saved from maybe the mother or the grandmother. And they would dress up. And it was long and wide and high neck. And I don't know what I did -- I had a picture of my mother with the, with the high neck.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And they, that was, there, there was no, nothing, no movies, no, nothing, no dancing. Dancing, the only time we danced was to a wedding, or to a holiday, a special holiday.

LEVINE: Were there any other, was there any other kind of entertainment? I mean, did you play games as a child? Did you...

ENTIN: We used to play games. On the holiday we'd play with nuts, you know, walnuts. (she laughs) Children found what to do. And then in the spring, when, then comes the story with the, with my school. And, you know, the school was away -- like on a hill. And on the other side was the end of the, the Jewish houses. And there was a gentile cemetery. So we enjoyed ourselves when - when there was a funeral. (she chuckles) I used to love the hymns. You know, the, the singing. The priest and the, they used to go to the funeral with all their banners, and, and dressed up, and they would sing. And there was one man that had a bass voice that I can just hear him. And you could hear him through the town. The town was so small. And they would march after the funeral, and he would sing. And his voice was just like Chaliapin, if you know, there was a Russian singer, Chaliapin?

LEVINE: I don't.

ENTIN: No. You're too young. (she laughs) So...

LEVINE: So he would sing. And you would, you would hear the...

ENTIN: He was, he was so, and the children, our, the Jewish children would stand on the fence and watch, you know, because it was different. It was new to them. And many times I wonder why people can't live together, and they don't have to have the same religion, but they can tolerate each other's religion. Like I, I love the hymns, you know. I love the religious hymns. And you could live nicely and tolerate each other in a, if you respect your, their religion, they respect yours. That reminds me something about my son. (she refers to her son) You know, my son, the old-, this one, when he was ten years old, he had two friends that looked, the three of them looked like a triplet. They were two Italian boys. And they all three had curly hair. And they were the same height. And when I looked down I couldn't distinguish one from the other.

So one day he came home and he said to me, "You know, Mommy, Bobby said that the Jews killed Jesus." So I didn't know immediately what to tell him. In order to tell him what tell him. In order to tell him the right thing, you know, that you shouldn't get a wrong impression. So I said to him, "Do you want to be friends, Zindele [Sonny]? Zindele is son. "Do you want to be friends with Bobby and Carmine? Whatever you do, don't talk about religion. You respect his religion and he'll respect your religion." And they remained friends. And to this day only last week he met two friends of his with the wives. There's Guido, an Italian boy, and they, they still meet. Imagine he's married forty-seven years, my son.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you gave him the...

ENTIN: And they get together with the, and I was always lived among mixed families.

LEVINE: Okay, let's pause right here to turn over the tape, and then we'll continue.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

[long pause]

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming now with side two. So tell me how it was decided that your family would leave the Ukraine.

ENTIN: There, there was a -- things were getting worse. First of all, my family, you know, they're living with the step-mother, and it was getting very hard. We used to have a cow. And she used to take and sell the milk, and tell us that there's no, no milk left. You know, such a trifle things, you know. But things were getting bad, and, and (she clears her throat)...

LEVINE: Do you want to have a drink of water? Did, did your father and step-mother then have other children?

ENTIN: (pause) She had two little girls. And they were beautiful. And things were, one looked like my older sister. And we loved her. My older sister used to sew clothes for them. And things settled down. We thought it was going to be all right. What happened -- after my sister got married, so she moved away, and things started again, you know. So we saw that it was no good. And then there was rumors of a war. You know that was in 1912. The were rumors of war. So everybody was thinking what to do, where can they go, where to run. So somebody came with news that Argentina is gi-- is offering land to Jewish people, to immigrants to come there and settle.

So they got together all the men and also from the other towns, you know. The other towns, the, the people got together, and they had meetings, and they decided what to do, that maybe this is a way out. Maybe they'll get a chance to, to go. So they began to investigate. They wrote and they, they got an answer that they can come and they'll get land, and they can work the land and live there in peace. So they, they got happy, and they decided that they're going to send a few youth, the youth, from the youth, they picked up young men, and they'll send them out there and see what it's all about. So they did, and they sent away those men, young fellows. And they kept on writing letters, and every time a letter came there was a meeting, and they were reading the letters, and they, they said it's wonderful, it's nice, everything is good. So when the people of the town heard that everything is fine, they went ahead and they applied for passports. And they began selling out. They got their passports, and they, for the whole family.

And they were selling, began to sell out. So everybody was, thought that they were going. All of a sudden we get letters, "Don't move. It's getting worse. Conditions here are terrible. You have to

stand in the field with a rifle. Don't move." So what should they do? Everybody's got, so many people had passports already to go. So they decided to start out anyway, to go to Argentina. To, they'll start out with, they had Argentine passports, so they'll start out, and whatever happens, happens, because there was a rumor of war. (she chuckles) So my father being that he had a new house built, so he sold it to a cousin, with a, with a condition that if he comes back within a year he's got to give him the house back. And being that we couldn't go to Ar-, we decided to go to America. So we couldn't go all of us to Argentina. Being that we decided to go to Argentina, we couldn't all go together, so my mother -- my step-mother and the two youngest children and I were supposed to remain. And...

LEVINE: Was the, was the rest of the family going to Argentina?

ENTIN: Yeah. The whole family was supposed to go together. But be...

LEVINE: To Argentina?

ENTIN: Yes. But being that things were not so inviting, so we decided that some of the children, the little children will remain. So, and they, so I was supposed to remain with my father, with my step-mother and the two children. And my, then when time came to leave, this was a procession that you, you could make a movie out of it. There was, half of the town was leaving. Half of the town. There were wago-, horse and wagons going through like a procession. And people that were going, coming to say good-bye also followed. And we had to go to the next town where there was a train station.

LEVINE: So was everyone walking?

ENTIN: Huh?

LEVINE: Was everyone walking?

ENTIN: They were walking only to, to the entrance to, to the city, you know, to the town, like the border line. And the, the ones that was coming along, they were on the wagon, and the children were, the children and the luggage was on the wagon, and they were walking beside it. And then when they had to say good-bye, my sister came along to go to the train. You know, my married sister.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ENTIN: So she came along to marr-. And when it came to the train, everybody said good-bye, I have, I don't have to tell you. (she chuckles) The crying and the hugging and the kissing and, and there was tears shed. And they said good-bye. And we, we went to the train station. When we came to the train station and the train came along, my sister (pause) -- you know, my father, the, just when I was supposed to say good-bye, my father grabbed me, and he pulled me up on the train with him. And my sister had to say good-bye to me, and she, she, when the, the train pulled away, I saw she fainted on the platform, my sister. And I, and I

was with my father, but I was like in a daze. I didn't know what happened, what was happening to me. But I felt that I was safe. I was with my father. The feeling I had was that I was with my father. And, and my, the only clothes that I was in, that's how he took me. He never intended to leave me.

LEVINE: So where did the train go then?

ENTIN: The train went to, first, the first station we had was Warsaw. And then there was Kiev. And then the, you know, and then when we stopped the first stop that we made, my father took me down, and we went in to buy clothes, change of clothes for me. And they, the passport said the whole family, so the ones that didn't come, they didn't, they didn't have to worry about it but the passport was there for everybody, you know. So that was, that was the, and then we went, then started the trouble. Because everybody was running from all the cities. They were running to -- away, a place to be safe, so, because of the war coming on. And when we came to the first stop where the, where the train stopped we were shocked to see people sitting there with their baggage. And when we talked to them, they said that they're there for weeks, sitting like this. See, they have to sleep on the floors of, any place that there was, because there was such a, you know, surge of immigration, you know. So we went, and then that's how we came. We went ahead. And...

LEVINE: Do you know where those people were coming from?

ENTIN: From different, different cities. They were coming from all over.

LEVINE: Their, their cities were, were, were being...

ENTIN: They were, they were from Ukraine, from Poland, from all over.

LEVINE: I see.

ENTIN: You know, Warsaw is Poland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And Warsaw we saw a different type of Jews altogether. (she chuckles) They were all wearing black long coats with a, with the peyes [side curls] you know, and they wore their little hats. And they looked different than we did. (she clears her throat)

LEVINE: So, where did you actually go to take the ship from?

ENTIN: (she clears her throat) Then when we saw, when we, my father that people were staying there for, for weeks, and waiting to get permission, the permits to go. So he got to work, and he went to try to get in touch with people, you know, to see if anybody could help him. And he was trying to explain to them that all these people are going to the United States. We are not going to the United States. (she clears her throat) We are going to, to Argentina. So that Argentina passport

actually helped us. You know, it took a week. We stayed a week anyway, in that, under those conditions. But it helped. And then when we came to the, what do you call it? The, where you have to pass the, from one city to another. The boundary, you know...

LEVINE: Oh.

ENTIN: You have to pass the boundary. You have to have special permit. But all these people didn't have any permits at all. They, they had to steal across the border. You know, they used to call it ganvenin die grenetz [stealing the border]. A grenetz means a borderline between countries, you know. And they had to steal through. And, and then there were special agents that made money on this. They would take them across during the night through fields and through peasant's homes and. But we didn't have to do it, because we had our passport and we, we took a few minutes, and the next side we were in Germany. You know, we went across to Germany. And then again my father got to work in trying to change the passport, you know, because we, we couldn't, we were going to Argentina. So we couldn't go on a boat to Argentina. (she laughs) And also it took time. And finally we reached the boat. There I have a, I don't know.

LEVINE: Say the name, say the name of the, the ship.

ENTIN: The ship. It, Bremen, the city was Bremen. And the ship was the Grosser Kurfurst.

LEVINE: And did you, did you then have a ticket to go to America?

ENTIN: No. That's where we got we our tickets there. That's where we changed, that's where my father changed it for America, because there it wasn't such a rush, such of a crowd, you know. These people were coming from, from Poland and from Russia, from Ukraine. So there was too many people, so they couldn't get. But when we got to Bremen, that's where we got the, and, but, but we couldn't get what we wanted. And what we got, we were on steerage. You know what steerage is? (she laughs)

LEVINE: You tell me. What was it like?

ENTIN: Steerage? Steerage is like a, a cattle ship. A cattle ship. That they, there's no, there are no cabins. There's only right across the floor and another floor. And that's how you sleep. And there's no, there's, there's no place at all. In the morning we had to get out and on deck, and they had to clean the cabins. Cabin. (she laughs) There were about a hundred people on the -- and the smell, and the, and the, it was overbearing. It was terrible. And when we were on the, we were on three weeks.

LEVINE: And what was the food like?

ENTIN: The food was, we were just like prisoners, go there with tin cans. You know, the second class or first class, you know, they're served at tables, and here we had to stand in the morning in line, and with, with tin cans. But my father, as I said he was a mixer, and he

would, he made friends with, with people, and they use to bring him all kinds of goodies, you know, from, for us, you know. And...

LEVINE: You mean people, people from the kitchen or people from the other classes?

ENTIN: Some from the kitchen.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

ENTIN: You know. They used to bring us all kinds of goodies and food. And we used to share it with our co-travelers. And it was, but, and then one day we stay in line as I mentioned it, and there's, they were giving herring. So one man wanted another piece of herring. So he said, "In Wasser warfen, und die Juden nicht geben." They'll throw it into the ocean and they wouldn't give it to the Jews. (laughs)

LEVINE: Was there anything else that happened aboard ship on those three weeks that stands out...

ENTIN: Well, on ship, in spite of the fact that, that he, that things were bad, the young people would get together on deck and sing and, and dance, and they would over--. You know, they were friends, they were young. (she laughs) They didn't know about worry.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ENTIN: They were friends all over. And then there was something else that happened on the ship. (she laughs) I forgot it. Did I mention anything here?

LEVINE: Well, were you examined on the ship?

ENTIN: Before we got, before, I forgot...

LEVINE: Yeah, go ahead. Say that.

ENTIN: See, that's the most important. I forgot.

LEVINE: Uh-huh..

ENTIN: You know, before we boarded the ship we were examined and vaccinated. And there when they examined my brother, his eyes, he had bad eyes. So he couldn't go on the ship. So you can imagine, they separated us. And then, it didn't happen only with us. A lot of people were separated from their families because, and they would put a mark, a chalk mark on their coat so they have to be detained or sent back.

LEVINE: Well, what happened to your brother?

ENTIN: My brother was detained, and they told him that he, he'll be treated, and he'll follow us in a couple of weeks. But then we felt terrible. We were all crying, we have to separate from my only brother. And my father tried so hard to, yet there was another reason why my

father was rushing to get out. Because my brother was supposed to go into the army. You see, he was twenty-one. He was supposed to go into the army. And there in Russia when you got into the army you can say good-bye to family and every-- it wasn't a three year stint, it was indefinite. So we felt terrible. So my father thought if we go away, we'll be able to save him from the army. So here we come here and they tell him that his eyes are bad, and they wouldn't allow him to board the ship. So my brother, being that he had worked already away from home, so he tried to reassure us. "Don't worry. I was away from home for three years." And now he says, "Don't worry. I'll follow you in a few weeks." And he did. After six weeks his eyes got better and he came ba--in six weeks.

LEVINE: Wow.

ENTIN: So, but that was--.

LEVINE: Well, talking about the dancing and singing on the deck...

ENTIN: On the deck there was singing and dancing. They couldn't, they didn't even know each other's language. But they got along with everybody. (she laughs) They were dancing and singing in, in every kind of language, you know. And...

LEVINE: Do, do you remember any songs from the Ukraine...

ENTIN: Sure.

LEVINE: ...that you knew at that time...

ENTIN: I, I, I, we sing them here in my center in, in, where I belong.

LEVINE: Could, would you sing...

ENTIN: No...

LEVINE: ...one? Part of one?

ENTIN: ...my voice now, no, my voice is very bad now. But poems I remember. Poems from Russia.

LEVINE: Do, would you like to recite one?

ENTIN: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay.

ENTIN: Večer bil, sverkali zvezdi, Na dvore moroz treshal,  
Shol po ulitsea malutka, posinel I ves drashal  
"Boshe", govorit malutka, ya smerz I est hochu,  
Kto sogreet i nakormit, boshe dobroe sirotu?  
Shla dorogoi toi starushka, uslihala sirotu,  
Priutila I sogrela, I poest dala emu,

Poloshila spat v postelke, "Spokoinoe noch"i, promolvila,  
Zakril zlazki I zasnul.l

It says that a young, a little orphan boy was going, it was very, very cold, and the frost was biting. And he was going very lightly dressed. And he says, "Boi-, Boische [PH]," "God, help me. Save me. I have nobody. I have no family. I'm an orphan. And I walk in this - this cold weather. Save me." So one little old lady heard him, and she took him, and she brought him into the home, and she made him warm, and she gave him heat. And he said, "Oh, it's so warm," he says. And, "God bless you." And he closed his eyes and he fell asleep. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Wow.

ENTIN: But in the original language is entirely different.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, well, so, when you got, do you remember...

ENTIN: I, I have a very nice Russian songs, but I can't sing now.  
(she laughs)

LEVINE: Because your voice is lost. Yeah. Okay, well, tell me about coming into the New York Harbor when you were on board.

ENTIN: Well, first of all when we were on board the ship, all of a sudden at night there were began screaming and crying and, and the, the ship hit stormy weather. That was the third day. They hit the high seas, you know. So the, the help was running around and trying to reassure everybody that they should take it easy, we, we'll go through it. And, and the parents and the children were crying and pr-, and all, everybody was standing there praying. The Jewish, everyone in his own tongue, you know. And finally the next day the sun came out, and the youth, the youth was on the, on deck again. (she laughs) And they were having a good time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: But it took longer than it usually used to take.

LEVINE: I see.

ENTIN: We spent about three weeks on the ocean. And then when we finally came to New York they told us that we are nearing harbor. And the, the, everybody got excited. They began to gather all their luggage together, whatever they had, their luggage. They, they used to bring bags, you know, for the-- you think they had luggage? (they laugh) They, you mean, used to took, take along hard baked breads. You know, they were afraid they wouldn't have enough to eat on the, board. And you know what else? They used to take along -- garlic. They said that garlic wards off disease. So they made for all of us little bags on a string. (she laughs) The children wore little bags with garlic on a string.

LEVINE: Someone made them for you before you left?

ENTIN: Yeah, the, before we left. And they also, before they left they used to bake big hard breads to take along.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: I don't even think it was necessary, but that's the way they used to do it.

LEVINE: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty when you first came in...

ENTIN: No, we didn't because it was at night.

LEVINE: I see.

ENTIN: You know, they told us that we're, you know, har-, near harbor, so we, we did, we didn't even want to see anybo-- anything. (she laughs) We wanted to stop seeing water. All we saw was sky and water.

LEVINE: What do you remember? How would you describe Ellis Island?

ENTIN: Ellis Island was, was not very pleasant. (she laughs) That was a very, and I even wrote about it. I said that it's, that it was very appropriately named "The Isle of Tears." Because everybody was crying. They were separate us from family. They, this one was, was with a mark, and this one was a mark. And they, they wouldn't let them come in, enter. And the smell, just as you walked in was center of this stairway, very wide going one way and the other way. And the odor was terrible. It was like moldy. And it was old even then. And we, we, it was, it wasn't a pleasant sight. And...

LEVINE: Were you examined there?

ENTIN: We were examined, yes. We, another reason why some people were detained. They didn't have any, they had to have a certain amount of money. I think fifty rubles. Because they shouldn't become a, you know, a...

LEVINE: A public burden.

ENTIN: ...a public burden...

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: ...to the, so they, they had to have, we had no problem because my father had enough money. He had the money to show, and we were okay. But the others were detained. So with all the crying and crying and crying and that's all they, they did, was cry.

LEVINE: Do you remember seeing anything at Ellis Island that you had never seen before?

ENTIN: Well, we saw big buildings, you know, the, the buildings. And then they, we had to go with small boats. From the big boat, they brought us in groups to the, with small boats. So during that time we went over there, and there we saw the, what -- the harbor, but I didn't, we didn't even, I don't know we even knew anything about, about the Statue of Liberty that time. (she laughs) We were all so anxious to see land that we didn't think of anything else. And then they had to take us to, in spite of the fact that we had family, that we had money, family came to greet us. Distant cousins came to meet us. And they lived in Harlem on 101st Street. And at that time it was considered the, the better neighborhoods. And we came there, and under, we went through the 3rd Avenue El. Maybe you didn't know the 3rd Ave...

LEVINE: I know about it. What, what, what was that like?

ENTIN: It was, it was, you know, open. Some train cars were open. And the, the entrance vestibule was open. And, you know, during the time of rush hour you stood pressed in on the outside. (she laughs) But I mean this, but with me, what me attracted was, it was three o'clock and the children were coming from school. And I envied them so. I saw them coming. They were dressed in little white dresses with little aprons, and ribbons in their hair. And I envied them so, and I, I couldn't wait to become one of them, and to be free. That spelled freedom for me. You know this spelled freedom to, freedom to live and freedom to study. And this, this is what I looked forward to.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And there, when I came then my father took me to register me. And I was very happy. And I still remember the school. It was on 9th Street and Avenue B. And the front of the buil-, it must have been a new building, because in front of the building were the stairs, like instead of a fire escape, individual, they were go-, you were going all the up and all the way down, you know.

LEVINE: They were like black i-, wrought iron stairs?

ENTIN: The, they were wrought...

LEVINE: They were black?

ENTIN: They were metal.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ENTIN: But you could go all the way up, you know, you didn't have go through a fire escape. And then I, I loved it. I loved the school. And we had, I still remember we had a cooking class. So we had to make our own aprons and, and half sleeves, white, to use for cooking. And a cap. And I, they, when it was a fire drill, to me it was like an enjoyment. (she laughs) When there was a fire drill, we all happened to be in the cooking class, and I loved it. (she laughs) We walked down, we walked down and up with our, with our cooking outfits. You know, when you're young everything is a novelty, you know.

LEVINE: So you liked the fact that you had to walk outside in your cooking outfit? Is that...

ENTIN: Yes, we walked outside.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And back again. And then, and in the class I had a very old teacher. First we were -- like we had the foreign class. But then we, we learned the language. They called that a foreign class. Until we learned the language. When we learned the language then they classified us according to -- because arithmetic is the same all over, and other things, you know, so that we, and our understanding is different, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences learning the language where, you know, something happened where you really felt you were understanding it...

ENTIN: No, no, no, no. I took to it like, like a fish to water. (she laughs) It, every two months I was put in a higher class. Two months, I knew the language, and then they put me in a class with children that spoke English. And then twice a mo-, a season I, be skipped. And I, and I loved it. I loved school. And the thought alone that you could, you can learn. You can, you know, there was no place to learn anything where I lived. We didn't know anything. The only thing I knew was when they, the beginning of the Hebrew.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else that when you first came here struck you as different, something that you hadn't ever seen or heard before?

ENTIN: Well, first of all, my father used to take me with him to synagogue every Friday. Every Saturday and Friday. And, and Sunday he would take me to the movies. I never even went to a movie. And you know, I still know the movie. I think it's still there. The Proctor on 23rd Street.

LEVINE: Oh.

ENTIN: The Proctor Thea-, movie. And I, he used to take me every Saturday to the movies. He didn't let me out of his sight. He always watched me.

LEVINE: Do you remember what kind of movies you, you saw at that time?

ENTIN: No. No. The only thing I do remember is when they took me from class to, from our class, they took us to Washington Irving High School to see a movie. That was the first time I saw a movie. And the movie was, they was loggers. They was chopping down trees and sending them, trimming them, sending them down with this, with the river. And they were standing with poles and, and directing them. And I was sitting

there, that was the first, the beginning of something. I sat there in the dark, and I took notes. You know? And I took notes. And when we came back to the classroom, the teacher asked what did you see? And this one says a river, this one says a -- but I told the, I had the whole story about the movie. And from then I made a habit of taking notes. To this day. I take notes wherever I go. When I hear a joke, when I hear a story, when I hear, I, I take notes. And when I, in the center that I belong we have classes. Different classes. So I used to go, I go every. Now I don't go since I haven't been well. But I used to go daily. And I used to take Jewish notes.

LEVINE: Okay, we're going to have to stop here because the tape is out. But we'll continue on another tape.

ENTIN: Okay.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE                      BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

ENTIN: We had to write...

LEVINE: Okay, let me just introduce that were starting now tape two. And I'm here with Celia Entin. And we're about to, well, we've already arrived in the United States, and you're talking about school. Tell me what it was like living on 10th Street between Avenue's B and C in 1914, right?

ENTIN: 1913.

LEVINE: 1913.

ENTIN: It wasn't too happy. It wasn't one of the best places to live for anybody. It was in back of a store, in back of a shoemaker's store.

LEVINE: Tell me about what happened with your father as far as working when he came here.

ENTIN: Yes. When my father came here, he went to, they advised him, the Lantslaytim [countrymen] advised him to go into a factory, a shoe factory. And when he came to the shoe factory he was there one week, two weeks, he couldn't take to it, you know, the discipline and the, and the way they were locked in. They couldn't go whenever, every minute they was watched. And so they advised him to go and take, rent a store, and do shoe repair. What else can he do? He only knew about shoes. So he went and he took a store, and in the back they told him you'll be able to live. So it was some living there, you know, the, the, with the wooden floor on the ground floor, and the, the furniture -- beds. That's all we had. And...

LEVINE: Compare, compare where you lived there with, with the place you had lived in the Ukraine.

ENTIN: In, in Russia we had a new home, a new house. And my father had a cow near the house, and we had chickens, and it was like living,

living. But here it's some comparison. The girls, when my two sisters went to work in the factory. And, blouses. That's the kind of a shop, factory that they had the triangle fire. And they, and I went to school. So I used to go to the butcher shop and order meat, so that I picked it up on the way from school, and I made, I was the cook. I made supper for my father and for my sisters. And...

LEVINE: So how did your father feel about, about having...

ENTIN: About this, he liked it for, for one reason. He was his own boss. He never worked for anybody. And he had all his Lantslayt, his old friends from Europe. They used to get together. If I - one lived on 11th Street, everybody lived on 11th Street. (she laughs) If I lived on 10th Street, everybody lives on 10th Street. And I, he had his friends. And then he began to go to shul, and synagogue, and there he made friends. And he, he liked it because he was free to do what he wanted. But then the war started in 1914. A year later the war started. And my brother was, in spite of the fact that he's rejected in there on the ship, they, he was, went, had to appear before the board. So we were, he was aggravated. He worked at that time in Bridgeport, Connecticut, my brother, with a custom tailor. You know, I feel terrible that my voice is so bad. (she clears her throat)

LEVINE: Oh. You want a little, here's a little more water. Would it help?

ENTIN: [long pause, she drinks] So. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So your brother was in Connecticut.

ENTIN: So he worked in Connecticut. In Bridgeport, Connecticut. And we were here. So when he, my father was very much worried about him because he had to go to the draft board. And, you know, here he got him out from Russia, and here had to go to the draft board. And then he, he, the war started, and you couldn't get in touch with anybody. You couldn't communicate with family. My sister was left in Europe, and we were worried about her. My step-mother with the two little sisters were left there, and we couldn't get in touch with them. This I used to write to them and send them money. But later on, they -- we couldn't do anything. So my father took it to heart and he was getting sick.

And, but when my brother went to the draft board he was rejected anyway because of his eyes. So that was, and then my father took sick, and he had a heart attack. He couldn't get in touch. I didn't tell you, but what happened with the, he took all his money before the war started, and he sent whatever money he had, he sent it away to Russia. To the Russian bank because Russia you get double the dollars. And everybody, all the Lantslayt, everybody, the immigrants, they did the same thing. They think they'll come to, back to Russia, they'll be rich. You know, that's where the people used to go back and forth to America.

LEVINE: Did your father think he would return?

ENTIN: Yes. He, in fact he gave, he sold the house to my cousin...

LEVINE: Oh.

ENTIN: ...for a year, so that in case he comes back within a year, because he knew he wouldn't like it here. He only wanted to settle the children that they should be here, they're grown, they'll get an education, they'll, they'll get jobs and they'll work. So then, but, it didn't turn out like that. And they -- you know what the immigrants used to do? You know, the paper money wasn't worth anything. They used to go around with valises with paper money, and, and, and exchange it for, for silver or gold, you know. And, and all the money they had, they sent to Russia. And when the war broke out and the revolution broke out, the money was nothing. So he lost everything. And this he couldn't take, and he got a heart attack. That was four years after we were here in this country. He got a heart attack and he was gone. So my sisters took me away from the store and, to live with them. And I lived with my sisters all the time.

LEVINE: Where did you live then?

ENTIN: On 9th Street. (she laughs) 9th Street, my mother-in-law lived there, my, everybody lived there. And my, being that my sister was married to my husband's brother.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ENTIN: When we were very young. My, when my mother-in-law came to this country a year after us. And she came here, and my sister was already married to her son, her oldest son. So I was like one of the children in the house. And I was always in my mother-in-law's house. She was like a mother to us. But I was very young at that time. When my father died I was sixteen. And I didn't even have a, a teenage life, you know, like other girls at that age, because I was in mourning and I was, didn't go anyplace. So my mother-in-law was my - my mother.

LEVINE: So, so how long did you stay in school?

ENTIN: In school, I stayed until I graduated. (she chuckles) I even had, I even had my graduation dress stolen, and, in that back apartment on the store. I had a graduation dress, and it was stolen.

LEVINE: Was there a lot of that going on?

ENTIN: What?

LEVINE: Stealing? Was...

ENTIN: No, no, no. That was here in this country.

LEVINE: Yeah. But, I mean did...

ENTIN: No, but they were just, it was back of a store. Maybe we left a door open. And my dress was stolen. (she laughs) I had to

borrow a dress. And I was so unhappy, I had to borrow a dress, a dog dress, for my graduation.

LEVINE: Well, did, did you take a job after graduation?

ENTIN: After graduation I took a job. There was a neighbor. We had a neighbor, and he had no children, and he took a liking to me. So he says, "Cinkile [PH], I'll get you a job." And he took me up to a place where they taught me how to, to a dress shop, where they put the blouse and skirt together. They call 'em draperer, a draper. She'd put it a dress on the figure, you know, a manikin, and she would drape it together. Then they would come and take it and stitch it. So that's the job he got me. And they were very good, because he had no, no children, so the husband and wife were very good to me. They took me to Coney Island. (she laughs)

LEVINE: So then how did you meet your husband?

ENTIN: My husband was, was in the house. (she laughs) He was only a year older than I. And I was, four-- I was sixteen when my husband died, when my father died...

LEVINE: Father died.

ENTIN: ...and he was seventeen. So he took charge. He took over. He took charge of me. All that time he, from that time on he took charge of me. But when we got older he couldn't become serious because he had two older sisters. Years ago you couldn't marry before, especially a son, couldn't marry before the older sister. So my husband used to have always a joke about it. He used to say, "For seven years, we played around just like that. For four years, we were-- we were officially engaged. And for forty-eight years we were married." So it's a lifetime. I spent a lifetime with my husband, from the time I was thirteen and he was fourteen.

LEVINE: What did you like about him?

ENTIN: Well, from, from my husband I didn't write much. I didn't write much after a lot. But not about my life here in this country, because it was too painful to talk about.

LEVINE: What, what was painful about it?

ENTIN: The, the whole of losing my, my father after four years. He went through so much to get us out there, and we should have a better life and better education. And here he, four years later we went through the war, the war broke out, then four years later he died. So, you know, I, and I didn't have, my life was began to go, the, with my husband. We had a very good life together. We had a wonderful life together.

LEVINE: What was your husband's name?

ENTIN: Kalman. Kalman. Charlie.

LEVINE: Charlie?

ENTIN: Yeah, Charles. Charlie. And his Jewish name was Kalman.

LEVINE: Kalman. Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And we had a very good life together.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: We had, you know, he went to work, he went to night school. And he went to work...

LEVINE: Did he also come from the Ukraine?

ENTIN: He came, my father and their, his father knew each other from Europe.

LEVINE: I see.

ENTIN: (she chuckles) And, and in fact when they start-- started to talk, they, he, he lived in my father's house. They rented, when they moved from the other town where they lived, they moved into my father's house because my father had a big house. So that was another family. And his brother, the one that married my sister was born in my house. (she laughs) And they got married right...(she laughs)

LEVINE: Wow. Well, now, how many children did you have?

ENTIN: Well, we had, I had only two sons. Two sons.

LEVINE: And their names?

ENTIN: One is Harvey and one is Marvin. Marvin is the older. Marvin and Harvey.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: And now I have, God bless them, I have four grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

LEVINE: What, what changes have you seen in your life. Are there, are there any things that you would mention that have really made life different for you?

ENTIN: From Europe...

LEVINE: Yeah.

ENTIN: ...or, or as a married...

LEVINE: Either, either from Europe, or...

ENTIN: ...from Europe, or...

LEVINE: ...or since you've been here.

ENTIN: Well, from Europe, well, that life was more, more secure. I mean, in, in America, when I came here it was more secure. Children could, could study, they could travel. In Europe even if a fellow already went through school, you couldn't go to a higher edu- higher education, because Jewish people weren't allowed to live in the big cities. They had to have special permits. You know, you know who used to get the special permits? Big businessmen that used to travel for business. They, they called them "Peri Guildi kopertz [PH]." Kopertz is a dealer. And Peri is first class dealer. And he was able to, to live in a big, to go to a big city. Not to live there, to travel, to do business. But otherwise, the, the people, nobody could live there, they had to have special permits.

LEVINE: What effect do you think it's had on you having come here as an immigrant when you were twelve years old? How did that effect you?

ENTIN: When I was, for me it didn't, no, I was happy as a child. I went to school and I jumped rope, and I, and I didn't even think what, that I had to go to take a shower in the, in the fire house. I didn't think it was a tragedy. I didn't even know that I was an underprivileged child. They took us for an outing to Van Cortlandt Park, I remember, to the, to the high school to see a movie. And, but the only thing is that I lost my father, you know, and, and everything that he strived for was lost, you know. And the, and my sister, when I was able to correspond with her yet, she used to write, "Papa, come home soon, because the year will soon be up, and you wouldn't be able to get the house back." You know?

LEVINE: Did your step-mother and, and the two young children, did they come here then?

ENTIN: No...

LEVINE: Oh, they never came...

ENTIN: ...they didn't, they never came here because...

LEVINE: ...because your father had died.

ENTIN: No, no. Not only because my father died. Because the war broke out.

LEVINE: War was begun. Uh-huh.

ENTIN: I couldn't even get in touch with...

LEVINE: Hmm-hmm.

ENTIN: Later on when I was married already and I had children, I tried to get in touch with, no, that was before. I tried to get and find my sister. I tried in every way to find my sister. I got in touch with

different Jewish organizations. And finally I went and I wrote a letter. I saw in the Communist paper, the Freiheit an address. That anybody who wants to, who is looking for family should write to them. And I gave an address. So I didn't tell anybody about it. And I went and I wrote a letter. And, to her. And that letter I put into the letter to the organization that was searching for family. And I forgot all about it. It took about nine months. Nine months later.

At that time my sister was very sick, and she didn't even know what I was telling her. And I get a letter from this, from my sister. My sister's handwriting. Can you imagine? I, my sisters's handwriting. And I also got an answer signed that I received it, you know, that she received the letter, and I received hers. So I didn't know what to do. What should I do? My sister is in, laying there in a coma. My brother is in Bridgeport. And there was nobody to, to tell the news, that, that I got news from family. So finally I, I saw C.A.R.E. You know, C.A.R.E. that sends packages? C.A.R.E. I called C.A.R.E., and I told them the story, and they said, "I'm sorry, we don't send to individuals. We send only to C.A.R.E., and C.A.R.E. distributes." So I'm lost again. I didn't know what to do.

I started looking in the Jewish newspaper. And I saw in the Jewish newspaper where you can send packages of used clothing. And I did that all by myself. I was a young girl. And I, and I went and I called them up, and they said you can send a certain of weight, forty pounds, or a, but used clothing. Everything has to be used and washed and cleaned. So, I went, started, you know, collecting, and I wrote her a letter. And, being that I could get a, I got an address. And I found her in the same town that she lived. You know? And you know why she was there and why she wasn't killed. Because her sons, she remarried, and she had four sons in the service. And they transferred her. Wherever the, their company was shipped, they took her along and they, and she went with them.

LEVINE: So then did you keep up a correspondence with her

ENTIN: No, I kept up a correspondence, I sent her packages, and then I lost her again. And I lost her again, and I began searching again, and finally again I found her. I located her. She...

LEVINE: This was after World War Two that, that...

ENTIN: Huh?

LEVINE: ...did you lose her during World War Two?

ENTIN: World War Two? That, that was during the war. There was no, no way of getting in touch. So this time I, it was after the war already, and I found her in her own home where she lived before, in the city that she lived before.

LEVINE: Wow. What's...

ENTIN: And she sent me a little picture of her granddaughter.

LEVINE: Wow.

ENTIN: And she sent me a picture of herself and her husband and the four sons. One was in uniform. But she looked terrible. She looked terrible. She, she was, her hair was thin, and, and she looked drawn and, and, you know.

LEVINE: Oh. Well, tell me what, what it is that you're most of proud of that you've done in your life. What makes you feel proud?

ENTIN: I'm proud that I was, I, I was self reliant. First of all, when my husband passed away, I was very much afraid that I'll be dependant on somebody. But it happened so, yeah, because he spoiled me. You know, I was a, for a lifetime with him. And he spoiled me, and I was afraid. I thought the sky was falling when I, he passed away. But I became very dependent, independent, rather. And the children were wonderful. I have very good children. They married very nice young women. And it's like they, they came in as children to my house. And to this day we are just like a, you know, family with children, that they are my children.

LEVINE: Hmm-hmm.

ENTIN: Many times my, that when I say my children, so they, one of them says, "We are, we are married. We have grandchildren." I said, "As long as I still have, you still have one parent, you're children. You're my children."

LEVINE: Well, is there anything else that you would like to say? Maybe, how about this phase of your life?

ENTIN: Well...

LEVINE: How do you feel about this age and stage?

ENTIN: Well, this, first of all, when my, I still have a nice story about my, when I, when my, when my husband was alive.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

ENTIN: You know, when my husband was alive, the children were in the service. They both went into the service. The one was in, in Europe, in Italy. And one was, in the mountain troops. And one was in Korea. So you can imagine I, this is what I went through. With the children I waited through the service until I saw them back well and healthy. And then, I, there was something I wanted to say.

LEVINE: Let's see. You were going to say something about when you were married. A story...

ENTIN: When we, well, we, we moved once, we, you know. Things were, my husband went to, to a new trade. He wanted to work on, he had very good fingers, you know. So he worked on a cap maker. But then he wanted

to go into millinery. When he went, he wanted to go into millinery, the first job he got, so we just got married. So he was afraid, you know, we were moved into a new apartment, a new building, and we were just were married, and maybe we wouldn't be able to swing it. So I said, "Look, now we have no children. Try." So he went and he tried. And the first time he tried he got a job as a designer. (they laugh) On baby caps. Children's baby caps. Infants. And he became a designer. And from there he went to millinery. And things were going very well. That was our best time. The children grew up, and they grow nicely, and, and they, business was good. But then things changed, you know, when he died, and business was, before, just before he died business was bad. And we had to do the, make the best. So we were glad the children were returned home.

LEVINE: Hmm-hmm.

ENTIN: And that made us happy.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

ENTIN: And...

LEVINE: So, how do you, how do you account for the fact that you look so well, and do so many things at your age...

ENTIN: Well, I wouldn't, no, I wanted to tell you that I always wanted to learn. I even wanted to learn to play the piano. So I found out then the Forwards building. You know where the Forwards building is? The Forwards used to be on East Broadway?

LEVINE: I think so.

ENTIN: On East Broadway, there was For-- a Jewish newspaper. It's still in existence. The Forwards. The Daily Forwards.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: I don't think it appears everyday.

LEVINE: I don't...

ENTIN: Well, anyway, I went there and I found out that I could take piano lessons free. So I walked from 10th Street to East Broadway to take lessons. I had no piano. And I told them that I have no piano. "That's all right. Whenever you have a chance you come in and you play." (she laughs) I wanted to learn. Then I wanted to learn Hebrew. So, same thing. I didn't tell anybody anything. I just went and registered. And I went, you know, on Houston Street, there was the National Theatre. Houston and Second Avenue. The end of, of Second Avenue.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

ENTIN: I used to go there and take Hebrew. And then there was, I became friends with a young man. And this young man used to play the

guitar, and he said he's going to teach me to play the guitar. (she laughs) I wanted to learn everything. So he taught me how to play guitar. My husband and I used to play on two guitars. My husband used to play the piano. He played every instrument by heart. Every instrument. And music, you couldn't play two bars, and he'd tell you by whom it is and what it is.

LEVINE: Wow.

ENTIN: That's how musical he was. And to him Toscanini was, there was nothing, if it's not Toscanini it's-- it's no good. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Well, tell me what gives you great pleasure at this time in your life?

ENTIN: This time in my life, after my husband passed away, I was left with a, an Italian neighbor. And she was very good to me, because I was good to her. It was like a return. And she used to come to my house. We used to eat together. But after my husband died, I, the children said there's no reason why you should live here. She, she moved away, too. She moved to, she re-married and she moved to Florida. So I, I decided to move. The children said, "Why don't you move where I live?" I said, "What am I going to do? You're going to stay home with me? I don't want to move where you live, then be a burden?" So, they, they said, "All right, why don't you move back to the neighborhood where you used to live?" I used to live on Bronx Park East. And this, that I moved from, where I moved from, it was an, it was an Italian section. And I lived there for thirty-six years. And during that time, that's the time children went into the service. And we didn't want to move away until the children returned. You know?

LEVINE: Hmm-hmm.

ENTIN: But then, when my husband died the children said there's no reason why you shouldn't live in this neighborhood. Move back to the neighborhood that you lived on Pelham Parkway, because you have a lot of friends there. And we, I moved to Pelham Parkway. And when I moved to Pelham Parkway I joined the Bronx House. Somebody recommended me. And I joined every class. Every group. Poetry session, Yiddish culture class, the book review. Even Friday. I said, "Friday? Oh, no, I can't join Friday. Friday I cook, I wash my hair, I, I can't do that." (she laughs) But when I heard it's creative writing, I joined. So I joined.

And I told them the reason why, they asked me why do you want to join. I said, "I want to learn to express myself adequate-, more adequately." (she laughs) And I, I began, I became active. Every group. I, the chorus, the choral group, the Yiddish culture class, the music appreciation, the, the every class I, I attended, until I got - I took sick recently, you know, about four years ago. And then I cut back. And now I just go. Whenever I feel like I call up and they come with the bus and pick, pick me up. And I enjoy it. And friends. Now, when you're alone, you haven't got, when you don't go you, like this, it's, "Hi, Celia. Hi, Celia." But when Celia's sick. (she laughs) So you're alone.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: But I go whenever, every chance I get. Certain programs. The chorus still. I keep up with the chorus. And after the chorus, I bring my lunch. We have an urn that we make coffee. And I eat together with my friends. And then we have a psychology class...

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ENTIN: ...which I enjoy very much. And there I am quite active.

LEVINE: Well...

ENTIN: I write, I write things and I, I read it to them. And they...

LEVINE: Well, I want to say that's it really been a pleasure to hear your story. I have the feeling there's a lot more that, that, that hasn't been said. (Mrs. Entin laughs) But you're, you're really an inspiration for your age and, and how active and how vital you are.

ENTIN: And don't forget, and don't forget that I, first of all, I also belong to a colony.

LEVINE: A colony?

ENTIN: Yeah, a colony. People that have bungalows.

LEVINE: Oh. Wonderful.

ENTIN: For forty-four years.

LEVINE: Okay.

ENTIN: I still belong. And I, there I was active. There I used to, I danced and I performed and I...(she laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, wow.

ENTIN: ...and I read and I...

LEVINE: Well, okay, we're, we're out of time now. But I just want to say I've been speaking with Celia Entin. It's October 4th, 1993, and Mrs. Entin is ninety-two years old at this time. We're at the Oral History Studio at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service signing off.

EI-394/ENTIN