

EI-410

SADIE WEINSTEIN (WEINSHTEIN) WINTER  
BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 20, 1907  
INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 13, 1993  
RUNNING TIME: 48:40  
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE  
RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY  
INTERVIEW LOCATION: ELLIS ISLAND RECORDING STUDIO  
TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1996  
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 7/2009

RUSSIA, 1921  
AGE 13  
SHIP: GOTHLAND  
PORT OF EMBARCATION: DANZIG

RESIDENCES: YAMPOL  
CROWN HEIGHTS, WILLIAMSBURG, NEW YORK

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.  
I'm here today at the Ellis Island Oral History Studio  
with Sadie Winter. Today . . .

WINTER: Excuse me, Sadie Weinstein.

LEVINE: Uh, Sadie's maiden name was Weinstein . . .

WINTER: Oh, that's better. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: And her name now is Winter. ( she laughs ) And, um,  
today is November 13th.

WINTER: Right.

LEVINE: 1993, and Sadie is, um, eighty-six.

WINTER: Right.

LEVINE: She came from Russia in 1921 when she was thirteen years old. Well, I'm very happy you were able to come here today.

WINTER: I am, too. It's nice to meet you, honey.

LEVINE: Okay. Why don't we start at the beginning. If you would say your birth date, and the town you were born in.

WINTER: The state is Yampol, Y-A-M-P-O-L, Belina [ph] Gubernia, if you know what that means. That means the, uh, like Brooklyn, New York.

LEVINE: ( she laughs ) Okay.

WINTER: And, uh . . .

LEVINE: Your birth date.

WINTER: You want . . .

LEVINE: The date of your birth.

WINTER: The date of my birth is August 20, 1907.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, did you live in the same town the entire time until you left for the United States?

WINTER: No. We were supposed to come here in 1914 and the revolution broke out, and we were seven years wandering from one town to another until 1921, 1920, rather. We got our notices, the affidavit, to be able to come to the United States.

LEVINE: Okay. So then let's talk first about those years up until 1914, so that, your first seven years.

WINTER: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh, what were they like? Do you remember?

WINTER: They were like, the Jews were never liked. I went to school there. It was a Russian school, but the Jews were allowed to go in there, but they weren't treated as giving them the authority or what they're worth it. They were second, second people coming in. I'll give you an instance, for instance, when I was there, they called it the third grade. And we were together, Jews and Gentiles together. I was very smart in math. I must have been a smart kid, I don't know. I must have been a smart kid. And I had all the good marks there

to be able to go into the next class. With me were a lot of different children, and they had lower grades.

They passed, and me they didn't pass because I was a Jew. All right?

LEVINE: Were there many Jewish children in the school?

WINTER: Uh, not many, not many. Because it was a small town, and as far as the, uh, population is concerned, we were surrounded by different villages, surrounded that little town. And mostly were Gentiles. But, frankly, we were. I don't mean that they were enemies with each other, or fighting with each other. In fact, when we had the revolution, and, uh, they, they came in all different types of soldiers, groups of soldiers used to come in, and they wanted to have the women, and they wanted to, uh, have the boys, and the children they used to scare the parents that they were going to take them away. So what happened, my parents and the, my older brother and my kid brother, myself, was chased out of the house by the parents, that they shouldn't be home, because they said they're going to take away all the children. And coming there, coming out from the house we couldn't go in it too far, but we had a lot of Gentile people that lived around the

town in the villages, the small little villages. They took us in, and for three days they never, my parents didn't know where we were and what went where. When it got a little quieter, we were running by foot. We went out, and we met some other people that were running from different parts of that town, and, uh, for, I don't know, five, six days, my parents didn't know where we were and what we were, and we came to a different town that was populated fifty-fifty or so on. And, uh, we stayed there, and it took us about two to three weeks until we got together with my older brothers, and I had a sister. And my sister, we went away there, and then my parents got to know where we were because otherwise they didn't know for five, six days where we were. Now, the rest of the, the Jews were always afraid and always frightened, and always belittled.

LEVINE: Was that true before 1914, even before 1914.

WINTER: Even before 1914, the Jews always were businesspeople.

LEVINE: What did your father do?

WINTER: Uh, we had, we had a certain kind of machineries that used to take the, uh, the raw grains and so on and had

the machine that worked around with horses, and it became like, uh, rice and so on. That was his business with the machinery. We had, in front we had a store. There that store carried (?) from A to Z, everything. Before that my mother used to bake bread and sell it to people that, not everybody used to bake. It was a hard time.

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

WINTER: Freida, Froddle, Freidel, Frodda. I don't know.

LEVINE: And her maiden name? Do you know?

WINTER: Pardon me?

LEVINE: Your mother's maiden name?

WINTER: It was Goltzman, G-O-L-T-Z-M-A-N.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

WINTER: Weinstein.

LEVINE: His first name?

WINTER: Wolf, W-O-L-F.

LEVINE: And did you have grandparents?

WINTER: No.

LEVINE: In Russia?

WINTER: No. I didn't know my grand, I was named after a grandmother. That's all I know, but I never saw her.

LEVINE: And how about aunts and uncles?

WINTER: Aunts and uncles, I had an aunt here, and five uncles here. My mother's brothers and sister. They're the ones that took us to, they sent us the affidavit to come to the United States, and they're the one that kept us up by, until we settled a little bit, and I went to school. My kid brother went to school, naturally, and, uh . . .

LEVINE: How about in Russia? Did you have any other family there?

WINTER: Uh, no. Not that I know of. Because since 1914 we weren't ourselves. We were living in different towns. So maybe we had, in different parts of Russia, cousins or so on. I never knew anybody.

LEVINE: How about before 1914? Do you remember the house you lived in?

WINTER: We lived in a house, a one walk-through house, from one street to the other street. That's how long the house was. And in the back we had a, uh, the machinery there that my father used to make the, uh, from the skins of the, the horses, they used to make wool. There was a certain machine, with horses, used to go around, because there they didn't have electric. In Europe we don't have electric. We had the lamps.

LEVINE: Kerosene?

WINTER: In the summer vase, and that's how the life is.

LEVINE: And so you, can you remember, could you describe the house from the outside, what it looked like?

WINTER: If you take a, uh, what do you call those houses that you, it's on one, on the ground. There's no floors to walk up. That wasn't there. Uh, it had, uh, three bedrooms. In the front how you walked in was like a store selling the rice and the barley and whatever, because my father wasn't that (?). And then it was a dining room. They used to call it a, I forgot already. ( she laughs ) Uh, and a stove, but the stove was a regular oven. There was no stoves there like you had the gas or electric.

LEVINE: It was built into the wall?

WINTER: That's right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And it was, what did you burn? Wood?

WINTER: Who?

LEVINE: Did you burn wood in the stove? Wood?

WINTER: Wood? Yeah, sure. They used to chop wood. We used to get the wagons of trees and cut them up, and (?). To tell you the truth, that I liked it or not, I can't remember it.

LEVINE: Do you remember any food, any dishes that your mother cooked?

WINTER: She cooked it here, the same thing. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: What?

WINTER: You know, I mean, the borscht, and the pot roast, and whatever you want to call it. It was the same thing here. The only thing there, the butchers are different than here.

LEVINE: How so?

WINTER: Well, because there it's a smaller, first of all, it's a small town. Secondly, it's a smaller way of doing things. It's not sterilized, doing things, and so on and so forth. You don't live, it's maybe healthier, I wouldn't say no, because you've got the proof of the pudding that the people that come over from different parts of Russia and so on are healthier than people here in the United States. However, I don't know, maybe it's the air that was so good that kept us up with rosy cheeks, and hair was up to here.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you looked like as a little girl?  
Could you describe yourself, what you were like?

WINTER: Well, I had, I was much stouter. That is, I was a plumpy girl, and I had black hair with braids, thick braids. My eyes were much bigger and black, attractive. Teeth, I didn't have such a good teeth, because when I came to this country on the boat I had a toothache and my cheeks were swollen from it. Uh, I personally don't remember how I suffered on that little, on that boat. Because that boat was three weeks on the water, and it had only one chimney. The name I still remember, the Gotland, G-O-T-L-A-N-D.

LEVINE: Okay. Before we talk about the boat, first, uh, what about religion? Was your family a religious family?

WINTER: Jewish, yeah.

LEVINE: You observed religious . . .

WINTER: They weren't restricted that they couldn't look at a boy or the boy couldn't look at a girl, you know what I mean? It's a freer way than it's here, than the Lubavicher here. But, uh, it, Jewish was the only language that we used, or Russian. But mostly it was Jewish that we used.

LEVINE: And how about in school?

WINTER: In school was Russian. I had to go to a Russian, unless I went to a Hebrew school, which girls didn't go mostly to. The boys went, but girls, they went if they could afford to go. And don't forget that we weren't settled exactly to be. Our baggage was in Hamburg, and for seven years we weren't home and we weren't there, so we weren't settled. But we were kids, so we had to go to school, and either they went to Hebrew or went to regular school, and that's how life was.

LEVINE: Do you remember, um, before you, you were unsettled by the war, do you remember what people did for enjoyment? What kinds of activities?

WINTER: Go for a walk or, if not, sitting and telling jokes. I was a kid. Why? Twelve years later.

LEVINE: Do you remember playing at all?

WINTER: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember playing? Do you remember games or playing or . . .

WINTER: How can you play when you were, you were always, since 1914 you were afraid.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

WINTER: We were, Jews, especially girls. All right, I was a kid, but still a girl, you know. We were afraid. If I, when I came to this country in 1921, until 1923 I was afraid of a policeman. When I went to public school and I had to cross the street and the policeman was standing there, I thought the policeman was going to arrest me, because I don't know.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences with policemen . . .

WINTER: No, no.

LEVINE: Or with officers of some kind?

WINTER: The only thing, yeah, see, what they wanted to do to my father, or he wanted to do to the, uh, he killed people in the town there that I knew as a child, this amazed me, no matter how, you're frightened already. But otherwise I was never, never really put to something that I should remember that they did it. And another thing yet, the parents watched the children. If anything was wrong, they knew they wanted girls, even though I was a youngster, but I had my older sister. So we used to, they used to hide us in a room and cover up with a big closet, you know, that it shouldn't look like a room, and that's how we lived for months. I mean, it was a treacherous life. But the only thing is, life is so beautiful that when everything goes a little smoother and better and you're free a little bit, you forget those things. I couldn't believe it, that I was afraid to walk to, to look at somebody or to go to school and the, uh, the planes were throwing down their, uh, their bullets and so on and so forth, but I went to school because the

(?) is so (?), that I didn't mind it. Maybe I mind it and I forgot it already. I have no idea, because time is your healer. And that's all, that's my life, honey. Now I got, God bless them, two sons that are married. I got beautiful two daughter-in-laws, five granddaughters and two great-grandchildren, so why should I complain. So I don't walk so good, I don't see so good now, I don't hear so good. Anything else missing? ( Dr. Levine laughs ) I'm okay.

LEVINE: Tell me anything else you remember. Do you remember any things like with your . . .

WINTER: In what respect?

LEVINE: With your mother and your father, things that you did, uh, as a family in Russia, before you were wandering around after 1914, before that when your life was more stable. Do you remember, uh, doing things with your family? Did you do chores around the house? Did you have certain, uh, duties that you did, or . . .

WINTER: Listen, listen to me, honey. Don't forget, from 1914 to 1920, 1914 how old was I? Seven years? A doll I couldn't have, I was afraid, because I'd be too rich. Play? What is there to play? You're in the sand.

You played and you brought sand. I can't remember those things. And another story, I didn't want to remember any more. I wanted to come to the United States. That was my ambition. Not knowing what, when, what you eat with you. You know what you do. I wanted to come to the United States and be amongst our people, and not to be afraid for anybody. That's all.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about your experience in Russia before you left for the United States, anything that sticks in your mind when you think of . . .

WINTER: We were poor all the time. I lived in (?). I lived all, every Monday and Thursday was a new bunch of soldiers coming in Bolshevik and Menshevik, it's all kinds. And we were afraid, that's all. I know wherever I went, I was afraid. I never was secure. When I went to sleep, we went to sleep with our clothes on, because we never knew when we had to run into a closed room. Even the children, I mean, I don't mean only grownups, children. It's really unbelievable.

LEVINE: So you were expecting to come to the United States in

1914.

WINTER: Yes.

LEVINE: But then you couldn't come because of the war.

WINTER: The war broke out. Not the war broke out, the revolution. And with it you had to close up the ports. Hamburg was closed. You couldn't go anything.

You couldn't do anything. And the visas couldn't come in on time, because they closed up the, uh, all the, uh, places. We were supposed to come in 1914.

We had all the arrangements. And at that time we didn't need the visa. In 1914 we didn't need a visa.

So since 1920 it started, 1919 it started, but before that they didn't. So what else can I say, the old lady.

LEVINE: So when you were wandering around for those years . . .

WINTER: For seven years we were wandering around.

LEVINE: The way you . . .

WINTER: We got houses. We didn't live in the street. We didn't live with anybody else. We had, we always rented. We always said, because we were in business,

we always had a ruble, not a dollar, in order to rent a house.

LEVINE: So you would go to a town, rent a house, and then you'd be there for some period . . .

WINTER: We were there until, until it quieted down a little bit, and I wanted to go to school, and I couldn't go in that town to school. And, uh, my mother, may she rest in peace, was always out for the children's education. She would do anything, the children should go and be educated. And we were, listen, we were five brothers, had five brothers.

LEVINE: And you had a sister, too.

WINTER: And I had a sister. The sister was married already. So that's what it is. That's the life went on. When I came here I went . . .

LEVINE: Tell me, like, when, would soldiers come into the town? Is that why you would then move on to another town?

WINTER: No.

LEVINE: During those years?

WINTER: Not because soldiers came. The soldiers wanted to ruin the children. It's not because the soldiers are there. And it happened to be that in that town, in that town, we had a lot of little incidentals with people, so that scared the people. That scared my folks. And they wanted us to get out from that town.

LEVINE: Like what kind of incidents would you have?

WINTER: Fourteen?

LEVINE: What kind of incidents would happen that you would move on?

WINTER: Oh, they went and raped the girls, all the girls. They went and they, uh, with soldiers, they went and they made out that they came in and say, "No, mister, you got to go there. (?), you belong there." And they took them to Siberia. And they made slaves out of them, and they really, really came back like old man, and they were young man when they got a hold of him, without any (?). But you got to come, and you've got to come, and you've got to come. And they had the go, otherwise they shoot them. I don't believe that I went through that, even. I can't, it doesn't visualize in my mind that at the age of the seven

years that I went through so much, and yet, and yet I pushed it away from me. I never repeat myself, except I did tell my grandson, the one that wrote in his information about me that, uh, that I couldn't believe it, that I went through. And I laugh it off now, and I'm very proud. I went to school. I went to business school and, uh, thank God I have to, my, this son that's here is an attorney, and the other one is a business manager, so when it's over I had beautiful grandchildren and granddaughters. Why complain? I'm not. I love it.

LEVINE: So tell me what happened. Then you got the visa?

WINTER: Yes.

LEVINE: From relatives here, your mother's relatives?

WINTER: Yeah. My mother's brother, my uncles and my aunt. My aunt was very, very much, the only sister.

LEVINE: And so, uh, do you remember going to the port that you left from Danzig?

WINTER: Oh, do I remember Danzig, what they did to me, to all of us. First of all, they cut the hair. Secondly they looked the, you have to excuse me, if I haven't

got any lice and so on and so forth. Then bathing. Then come back, now they're satisfied. Two days later, go through again, make sure. We all went through hell in Danzig until we came here, until we really got to the boat.

LEVINE: So this was, did they have . . .

WINTER: 19, uh, '17.

LEVINE: Did they have housing for people before they got on the ship where they did all those examinations?

WINTER: They had, they had, uh, like, uh, a little, a little (Yiddish). Little, little rooms, with a small bed, and two people went in there. I couldn't have anybody, because I had (?). So I was by myself in one room, and my mother and father and my younger son [sic] Harry were in a room. And the rest of the boys, I don't know which rooms they had, but that's how they divided it. We all came together on the boat, except my sister, because she was at that time pregnant with the young, with the girl. And, uh, we left in January, and she was already in the ninth month, so she was in Danzig and gave birth, and a month later she came in with her husband and, uh, a little girl.

LEVINE: So, uh, what do you remember about the voyage?

WINTER: The what?

LEVINE: The voyage.

WINTER: The voyage, on the boat? It was a very small boat. I mean, not very small. It must have been about a hundred people, maybe more. But, uh, it had one chimney, and, uh, I had, I told you I had very bad teeth. In fact, you see me now already, I'm the same.

Uh, my cheek was swollen. I had toothaches. I used to walk around with a kerchief to cover up, and my cheeks were like this, you know. But, uh, it was fun.

I couldn't say anything. I couldn't eat anything because I had toothaches. I don't know how I survived, but (?).

LEVINE: Well, do you remember the accommodations on the boat?

WINTER: No, no.

LEVINE: Do you remember the food?

WINTER: No, it was no good.

LEVINE: No good.

WINTER: No. I didn't eat a thing. Because I can't really say no good, no good. But it wasn't like boats are now. They come in with the boat, you sit down by a table and you eat there. I don't remember sitting down near a table, because you came like Nebbishes. Not that we didn't pay our way or something, but that's how it was. We were glad to go in anywheres, as well as to come to the United States.

LEVINE: What about, uh, Harry. He had measles on the boat, your brother?

WINTER: Did he have what?

LEVINE: The measles.

WINTER: The little, Harry. Harry had the measles, and he, he was isolated in my mother's room there, in that little cabin. And, uh, for three weeks, healed him out. Otherwise he couldn't have, they wouldn't have sent him here, sure.

LEVINE: So, in other words, did he have the measles when he got on the boat?

WINTER: No.

LEVINE: No.

WINTER: It came out on the boat.

LEVINE: That's right, that's right. That's why I, uh, I always (Yiddish) him. You imported measles here. Anyhow, life is a, life is beautiful, that's all. I'd better go on the good side, the nice side, and I have no complaints here.

LEVINE: Tell me about, do you remember when the boat came into the New York Harbor.

WINTER: Yes, came in here.

LEVINE: And what, did you see the Statue of Liberty first?

WINTER: Sure. And don't think for a moment that we all didn't bend down and kiss the floor here. Sure.

LEVINE: And what was your impression about Ellis Island when you came?

WINTER: My impression was I couldn't describe it, even, how happy, and how overwhelmed I was, that I could walk and talk, whether it's Jewish or Russian or what, and I'm not going to be told, "Shut up." You know, it doesn't say shut up, it says it in Russian different.

But, anyhow, and, uh, nothing. I mean, I couldn't, once I came here already, I felt I'm free. Now, don't forget, went in here at the 1-A at the age of thirteen. Why? Because I didn't have the language.

LEVINE: Well, tell me first about, at Ellis Island. Were you afraid at Ellis Island?

WINTER: I was frightened for everything. Because of the, I was scared of everybody. Don't you see? I couldn't believe myself that I'm really free. The scare in you is embedded so that it takes years to get it out of you. When I came here, if I saw somebody gave a look at me, I was afraid he was going to kill me, he was going to do something in the beginning. I came here at Ellis Island. I was so overwhelmed. When I saw people and they talked to me, whether in Jewish or it's in Russian, but they spoke to me, or when I came for the interview, I couldn't talk. I looked, I must have been scared like anything. I couldn't tell you. I must have been scared.

LEVINE: And what happened with your tooth, your toothache, when you got here?

WINTER: I had very, my teeth were very bad, in Europe here,

even. But, uh, you know, there's, the small towns hasn't got dentists. So you struggle. You put something on, and this and that, and you let it go, that's all. So when I came here it just happened that the back tooth hurted me so that my cheek got swollen like that.

LEVINE: So did you have your tooth pulled out?

WINTER: Of course.

LEVINE: Here?

WINTER: Yes.

LEVINE: At Ellis Island.

WINTER: Here, here. No, not at Ellis Island.

LEVINE: No.

WINTER: No. My aunt and uncle took me right away out, and then I went to a dentist.

LEVINE: Do you remember your mother being frightened that they would send your brother back?

WINTER: Well, listen. I couldn't say no, because the language was not with us, and to lead them. But the only thing

is, see, my brothers or her sister overheard that just take a day, he has to go through the checkup and see how the measles are and then let him go. So she tried to calm them down. She never showed it. You see me? I'm a little bit like my mother.

LEVINE: In what way?

WINTER: In that right, that I never, I never will give in if I have a little bit in me that I feel I'm right. Let me first find out, you understand? She was not twenty. She was a very smart woman. Not a well-educated. In Jewish, yes, but not well-educated to say that, uh, but she had it in her. I must a little bit got of her, or something like it, that I don't want to give in. I'd give in if I see I'm wrong. I wouldn't say no. But I, I'm a bit myself. Keep it up. It hurts, keep quiet. I'm telling you it, I could go on television.

LEVINE: Okay. Let me pause for a minute here, and we'll turn the tape over.

WINTER: All right.

LEVINE: Then we'll continue.

EI-410/WINTER

WINTER: Go ahead.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Okay. Now we're continuing on side B now. So is there anything else about Ellis Island. How long did you stay here?

WINTER: A few hours, must be about five hours, until we went through the registry, until everybody, of course, uh, it wasn't only one boat that came in.

LEVINE: Was it very crowded?

WINTER: Very crowded. And the thing is the language barrier was a little bit hard, and you didn't know. And children, especially, were frightened, because we went through so much as for a little, that we didn't know who to believe, who to trust, how to work it, you know. And the language was a barrier.

LEVINE: Do you remember, now, what happened when you left here? Who met you?

WINTER: My, my aunt and my uncles. I went with them, and they took me to their house, to the uncle's house.

LEVINE: Who went with you?

WINTER: Uh, my brothers. My four brothers. That's all.

LEVINE: And your mother and father . . .

WINTER: My mother and father remained here overnight, and the following day they came and they met them.

LEVINE: I see. Now, where were your . . .

WINTER: I was in East New York living with my, with one of my mother's brothers with his wife and two children. We somehow made room living on the floor or something. Listen, uh, you know, it's funny, when you go through certain periods in life and you see what is what, you get accustomed to good, and (?), you've got to get accustomed to. But especially not to be frightened covered up a lot, because when we went and laid down on the floor on a blanket or whatever it was, we had a little pillow, and feel that nobody's going to come, and nobody's going to do anything to you, you're satisfied. You kiss the floor when you came to Ellis Island. We saw the Statue of Liberty, we threw her kisses. As foreign as we were, as dumb, as frightened, but this is our land, that's all. You

know, they used to say it. It's God's country. And that's it.

LEVINE: Do you remember your first impressions?

WINTER: I was very amazed and very much an enthusiast. I said, too, enthusiastic in me, and I wanted, and I asked questions. We passed by, and the lights were all on in all the big buildings and so on. I said, "Where am I? What's going on?" And then, listen, this is the thing that that picture I'll never forget going through here, standing and asking me a question. My name is so on. So my, I was like a dumb. I had, uh, Sadie, Sarah, Sarah. I must be Sarah here, not Sadie, I'm sure. And same thing was with my brothers. But the only thing, I was never alone. I always had my brothers with me. First of all, I was the only sister here, because the other one was in Danzig.

LEVINE: Were your brothers protective of you?

WINTER: Yeah. Oh, they always looked up to me. In fact, the joke, they didn't go to buy a suit or a tie unless Sadie gave the authority and say it's good. And I was much younger.

LEVINE: Do you remember the difference in clothing, the kinds of clothes you wore there, and the kind you . . .

WINTER: Oh, sure. From Europe to here? Europe was no clothing. Europe, you used to make skirts from sacks and you used to wear blouses, I don't know what kind. You know, especially from the smaller towns. Maybe in the big cities they still had stores made up some kind of a clothing. But in the small towns, whatever you needed, you made, either you made it yourself or you went to a dressmaker to make you something, that's all. It was entirely a (?), that it's unbelievable. But yet people grow up, get educated. Not in that town. And, uh, they, uh, become professors, not doctors and so on and so forth, bookkeepers, whatever. My brother came, my oldest brother became a bookkeeper there by himself, with the knowledge of taking books from a certain company, and he learned how to do, I don't know, the, uh, the, uh, what do you call the . . .

LEVINE: Accounts?

WINTER: Credit and debit and so on and so forth. I had to think of things. It's not in here. However . . .

LEVINE: Well, do you remember your first day at school here?

WINTER: I was crying. Because they, I went down to the first grade. One and one is two, and two and two is four, and I came here and I knew algebra. But the only beauty part of that is that I had my cousin with me, a girl, and I don't know how they spoke it or something, but the assistant principal in public school in Crown Heights, in Williamsburg, P.S. 16, got a liking to her and spoke to her about me, because they saw that I was crying. So she made up at her that I should come after school with her, and she'll give me a sheet of paper with spelling words, fifteen words, twelve words. And the following day I used to go in again, and she used to listen to me and, uh, saw that I was wanted, because I couldn't say two and two is four, when I knew algebra. So that's how I went, in six months I went up to the fifth grade, and I went to summer school, and I, then I went to the sixth grade. And I graduated in two-and-a-half years.

LEVINE: And then what did you do after that?

WINTER: I went to business school, to P.S. 4, downtown, in New York, on Pitt Street, and I took up bookkeeping,

stenography and typing. I was fifteen years old already, going to be sixteen.

LEVINE: And then did you get a job?

WINTER: And then I went to work, and I worked in a small place for twenty-five dollars a week. And, but it wasn't a regular double-entry and so on, regular bookkeeping books. We had a big ledger, a big, uh, general ledger. So I, uh, I worked there for about six months or so, and then I, I couldn't take it. It wasn't to me, bookkeeping, and it wasn't to me nothing. It was on 9th Street downtown here. And then my folks needed me in the store in order to write up the, uh, orders, the grocery orders, because we used, to people used to come and make an order, and then they had to deliver it, and get paid, not just by the weekly, so they need like a little single-entry bookkeeping in a big book, so I was the bookkeeper.

LEVINE: So your father and mother opened a store?

WINTER: My father and mother was in the store.

LEVINE: And it was a grocery store.

WINTER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And where was that?

WINTER: And my brother's, where was that? The first one was in Crown Heights, a very big store. They opened up, and they made a stand outside with barrels of herring. You know what it is? All right. So my father, that was my father's business, the herring outside. And years back you were allowed to put out a stand with eggs, boxes, the cases of eggs, the crates of eggs, you know. So my, uh, brother, my older brother, used to stay and sell eggs there by the dozen, half a dozen, whatever it was. That was the business in the beginning, until they learned the language. My kid brother went to school, too. In fact, he went to college, and then he didn't graduate with anything. Anyhow, he didn't want to. He got married fast.

LEVINE: ( she laughs ) Were your mother and father happy that they were here?

WINTER: Yeah. My mother, every time we spoke she said, "I got to kiss the ground being in by Uncle Sam's country." This was her expression all the time. God bless Uncle Sam. So I can't, if we want anything to be saying, "Oh, I had Europe so good, and look what I have here,"

there's no such a thing for us to say, because we would be liars. If maybe we would have lived not expecting to go to the United States in 1914, it would be different. But those seven years, we went through not having a home, and not doing this, and not knowing where, and our heads were here. Not my head maybe, because I was too young to need anything, but, uh, my folks were really very anxious to come to the United States. And she was very, my mother especially was very thankful that she's here, very happy. And knowing that the boys could go to college without being afraid because they're Jews.

LEVINE: Where were your brothers' names?

WINTER: The older brother was Morris, then is Sam, then is Dave. Now, this one I have, yet, thank God, I have Norman, and I have Harry. So that's the five brothers.

LEVINE: And your sister?

WINTER: My sister's name was, uh, Anna.

LEVINE: And her married name?

WINTER: Her married name was Lieberman.

LEVINE: And so did all your brothers and sisters stay in New York City?

WINTER: Uh, yeah, sure. We all lived in New York City, in Brooklyn or in Crown Heights or something, but in the United States. But my sister, uh, died very early. She left the two girls, the one that was born in Danzig, and the one that was born here, when, uh, she was about thirty-eight. And she left two little girls. One was two years, two-and-a-half, and one was one year old. I at that time was a youngster, too, who lived with them. They lived in, uh, in a big, in Crown Heights. They have the railroad flats, and we had the railroad flat. In the front rooms was their rooms. My, uh, brother-in-law and so on. A lot of water went under my skin. Oh (?). However, I'm thankful that I can still joke around, and I'm very proud.

LEVINE: Tell me, what are you proudest of?

WINTER: What?

LEVINE: What are you most proud of?

WINTER: I'm proud of? I'm proud of the family (?), because I

have a beautiful family and a respected family, and I personally am very proud of myself that I kept myself, no matter how hard or easy or how I, uh, my desire didn't go through and so on. But I swallowed it, and I said it could be worse, and I'm better off, and thank God as long as I know that I could go and become a bookkeeper and go to work, I'm very happy. And I am not, I never complained.

LEVINE: How did you meet your husband?

WINTER: He was a third cousin of mine, all right? It's a (Yiddish). Anyhow, but he didn't live too long either. I was fifty-nine years old when I became a widow.

LEVINE: What was your husband's first name?

WINTER: Abe.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you have two sons?

WINTER: I have two sons, two granddaughters, five great, grandchildren, granddaughters. Two daughter-in-laws, five granddaughters, and now I have two great grandsons and one great granddaughter. I think I got the (Yiddish) right. ( they laugh )

LEVINE: And your sons' names?

WINTER: Is, uh, Jerry. And he's an attorney. And my others, my other son is Ira, and he is a district manager at, uh, the, uh, potato chips, Wise's Potato Chips.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, uh . . .

WINTER: And my daughter-in-laws, the other one was a teacher. Now, and you met her.

LEVINE: Yes, Rita.

WINTER: And my younger daughter-in-law is a graduate too but, uh, she's working, uh, in the, uh, Blue Cross and Blue Shield. So now you got me.

LEVINE: So how are you enjoying this time in your life?

WINTER: This time in life? If only I could go back the six years, since 1987. If I could go back what I was in 1987 I was fine. But since 1987 I went through with myself not, God forbid, that I had a disappointment, but in health. I had the hip operation, then I had the cataract, then I had this side a little bit, and, uh, trouble with the eyes. Tear ducts weren't working, they had to be operated. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: But . . .

WINTER: That affected me. It gave me a little bit discouragement, and it affected my mouth. It must be the weak spot, with my teeth.

LEVINE: So tell me what, the fact that you were born in Russia and lived there for your first . . .

WINTER: Thirteen years, yeah.

LEVINE: . . . thirteen years. How do you think that whole experience affected the rest of your life here in this country? How do you think being in . . .

WINTER: I kiss the ground here. If I could go into the first grade and they want to help me and they did for me, I can't complain. P.S. 16 was very good to me. It brought me out a little bit, and I had a cousin of mine that she lived about a block away from where we lived with her mother, with my mother's sister, and she's the one that used to be my assistant. She helped me an awful lot, because she used to take the paper with the spelling and say, "Sadie, come on." And she used to, so I can't, I can't complain. I have no complaints of the United States that I could have

done and I didn't want to. I did whatever I could, and I'm very proud that I went through life. I had a wonderful marriage. Went through depressions, but I had a wonderful marriage. He didn't know what to do for me. I had wonderful children, wonderful daughter-in-laws, wonderful grandchildren. I myself liked to kibitz, because I was active in Hadassah for fourteen years, and after I got my hip operation, then I couldn't run around. I'm a pioneer for the last fifty years, but never active because I never found the type of a group that I could be. When I was younger, we were girls, and then we got married. We separated into different parts, so we had to break it up. But, uh, Jews I always fade. I was very lucky that I had a few friends that we used to go to see, or the dignitaries that used to come from Israel, and we met them all. And I enjoyed life a lot here. I brought myself up here. I came like, uh, you know, a kid comes, that's all. So, uh, that's my history of my life, honey. And now I'm very proud of myself. The only thing, I'm mad at myself. If I still have a few more years to go, whatever you can't figure out, let me at least have a little bit so it's not the teeth, so it's the eyes, not the eyes. Ah, I'm okay. I'm

okay. Let's laugh it off.

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

WINTER: I'm very proud of the United States. And I'm very thankful that it came to a point that I could come here. And I'm very thankful that I have, God bless them, a beautiful family. Too bad my husband wouldn't live to see it, but he's above and he gives you goodies and he gives you bad, but thank God for the goodies. And that's all. What else can I tell you?

LEVINE: Well, it's really a pleasure talking to you. I want to thank you very much.

WINTER: Oh, it's my pleasure to be here. And don't think for a moment that my kids are not excited of their mother. And I'm very excited with my family. And nice, really, meeting you, sweetheart.

LEVINE: Nice . . .

WINTER: And let's be well and hear good things, and peace on Earth.

LEVINE: Okay. Thank you very much.

WINTER: My pleasure, honey.

LEVINE: This, I've been speaking with Sadie Weinstein Winter.  
This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service,  
and I'm signing off.