

EI-516

HELEN GOLDBERG SKOLNIK

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD

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TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

POLAND, 1921

AGE 20

PASSAGE ON "THE RYNDAM"

LEVINE: Okay. This is August 3, 1994, and I'm in Massapequa, Long Island, New York, with Helen Skolnik, who came from Poland in 1921 when she was twenty years old.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you came through Ellis Island then, and you, uh, stayed there for a few days.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. And, um, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I see you have a lot to say, so we'll start at the beginning in Poland, and then we'll go right through what happened in your life. First let's start, if you tell me your birth date, the date you were born.

SKOLNIK: I don't know the exact date.

LEVINE: Um, I have here on this questionnaire March 15, 1901.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: That was when. Okay. Now, where in Poland were you born?

SKOLNIK: Keltsa[ph]. Keltsa[ph], Keltsa[ph].

LEVINE: Do you know how you spell it?

SKOLNIK: Keltsa[ph]. K . . . I don't know how to spell it.

LEVINE: Okay. Keltsa[ph]. Did you live in Keltsa[ph] up until the time . . .

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: When you left for this country?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. I was born in Keltsa[ph].

LEVINE: Okay. Tell me about Keltsa[ph]. What kind of a, was it a big town? Was it a small village?

SKOLNIK: That's right, a big city.

LEVINE: It was a big city. And, and, um, what was your father's name?

SKOLNIK: Isadore.

LEVINE: Isadore. And his last name?

SKOLNIK: Goldberg.

LEVINE: Goldberg. That was your maiden name.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was your mother's first name and her maiden name, do you remember?

SKOLNIK: My mother's name, Geityl[ph], but I don't know the second name.

LEVINE: The maiden name. Okay. And, uh, you had brothers and sisters in Poland?

SKOLNIK: Yes, I had.

LEVINE: You, were you the oldest child?

SKOLNIK: I am the oldest.

LEVINE: Okay. And can you tell me your brothers' and sisters' names that came after you?

SKOLNIK: After me?

LEVINE: Yeah. You were born first.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then who came next?

SKOLNIK: Joe, huh? No. Joe.

LEVINE: Joe, and then who? Let's see, I think you have this on here. Um, Harry?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, Harry.

LEVINE: And then Tilly?

SKOLNIK: Tilly, yeah.

LEVINE: Willy.

SKOLNIK: Willy.

LEVINE: Molly?

SKOLNIK: Molly.

LEVINE: And Hilda.

SKOLNIK: Hilda.

LEVINE: Is that a, is that all your brothers and sisters?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were you closest to any particular member of the family?

SKOLNIK: Yes. I stayed in my Uncle Louie's house.

LEVINE: In this country.

SKOLNIK: In this country. Of course, he took me to work from his house.

LEVINE: Okay. But when you were a little girl and you were growing up in Poland . . .

SKOLNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember the house you lived in there?

SKOLNIK: The house, what?

LEVINE: The house where you lived when you were in Poland?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. Well, it's not a bad house, because my father was a tailor. He needed, uh, a couple of rooms for fitting, for working, so it wasn't a bad house.

LEVINE: So he had a couple of rooms in the house that he used for a shop.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, um, did you have grandparents that lived around where you lived?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. I had grandparents living further by the border, by the German border.

LEVINE: Did you ever visit them?

SKOLNIK: Yes. I visit them when I came to the United States.

LEVINE: Oh. But when you were a little girl, did you see them?

SKOLNIK: No.

LEVINE: No. How about your other set of grandparents? Did you see them when you were a little girl?

SKOLNIK: No, I was always busy helping my father.

LEVINE: I see. What did you do to help your father?

SKOLNIK: I was sewing.

LEVINE: Oh, you were sewing. Were you making clothing?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, my father was a man's tailor.

LEVINE: So you were sewing, what, men's clothing?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. He gave me the part that had to be done by hand,

but he had machines that he worked.

LEVINE: So what did you do? What parts had to be done by hand?

SKOLNIK: Certain parts you've got to baste out first. You know what basting means. And then, then it's all basted. You've got to go to the presser, you've got to go, a whole thing that has to be finished already. I used to help him.

LEVINE: Did you like doing that?

SKOLNIK: Yes, it wasn't bad.

LEVINE: And how about other, other chores around the house? Did you have other things that you had to do?

SKOLNIK: Well, in the house, I had to help my aunt, helping. She had small children. I helped her when I was home.

LEVINE: Is this your Aunt Sarah? Which aunt?

SKOLNIK: I came with Sarah.

LEVINE: Which aunt was the one that you helped take care of her children?

SKOLNIK: Aunt, uh, I don't know her name. I forgot her name.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you go to school?

SKOLNIK: Yes, I went to school.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about school?

SKOLNIK: We used to learn Polish, Russian.

LEVINE: What did you speak at home? What kind of, what language did you speak?

SKOLNIK: Well, people spoke, uh, Polish, but in our house we spoke Jewish.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you, were you a religious family? Did you observe, uh, religious occasions?

SKOLNIK: Yes. My father was religious. He went to schul. On Friday he packed up everything, and on Saturday he didn't work.

LEVINE: And what would you do on Saturday?

SKOLNIK: Well, we went, we prepared some things for the next, uh, shipment that we made.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. So, uh, do you remember any, uh, religious occasions, like ceremonies or anything when you were there that you did?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, the Pollacks, they, they liked to be happy with that,

because they liked that Poland is really belongs to them, so they were always coming in, and they gave my father some work to do.

LEVINE: Were the, did the Polish people get along well with the Jewish people who were living there?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, they were very happy with us.

LEVINE: So, uh, let's see. Uh, getting back to school again, what did, what did you like about school?

SKOLNIK: Well, first I had to learn the beginning. And then from school I had to go to night school, because I couldn't go away in the daytime. Already I was busy working.

LEVINE: What, how old were you when you went to night school?

SKOLNIK: Maybe twenty-one.

LEVINE: Oh, well, that means you were already here in this country.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: But I'm still talking about when you were in Poland and you went to day school there.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how long did you stay in school?

SKOLNIK: How long? About two years, and then my father need help, so I had to come home and do the help what he couldn't get.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did your sisters and brothers help him, too?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. They were younger, so they couldn't help so much.

LEVINE: Did your mother help him?

SKOLNIK: My mother couldn't help.

LEVINE: She was busy with the other children?

SKOLNIK: They (?). She was cooking, she was shopping.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember any foods, any meals, or anything kind of dishes that your mother made that you remember that you really liked?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. We liked cholent. Do you know what it is? It's special.

LEVINE: Say it again.

SKOLNIK: Cholent.

LEVINE: Cholent, uh-huh.

SKOLNIK: We liked it, since she made it Friday and then put it in

the stove and it stayed overnight, and then on Saturday you ate it.

LEVINE: What was it? What was in there?

SKOLNIK: It could be meat and potatoes and good pieces of chuck, you know?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SKOLNIK: Well, my mother was a good cook. So she cooked very good. But she, uh, didn't have time. She had to go see her, her parents lived in, near the border, near the German border, so she went very often.

LEVINE: Oh. She went all by herself?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did your mother bake bread?

SKOLNIK: She baked, uh, all kinds of rolls and bread, and then they got so short in bread to buy, so she baked more that she'd have for the week.

LEVINE: And do you remember the kitchen of your house? Do you remember the stove your mother had to use for baking?

SKOLNIK: No. We had, we had to bring it to the baker.

LEVINE: Oh, you took it to, so your mother would roll it out?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: In the house.

SKOLNIK: In the house, and we'd put it on plates, and they'd put it in to bake.

LEVINE: I see. So, uh, your mother would roll all the bread out for the week, and take it to the baker? Uh-huh. Any other food that you really liked when you were little?

SKOLNIK: We'd eat a lot of potatoes there. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: How about desserts, sweets? Did you have anything like that?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, they could buy it. Whoever had money bought the sweets. There's a lot of stores there. They had, uh, chocolate boxes, all boxes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SKOLNIK: They had, it was after the war, so right away they brought

in good food.

LEVINE: I see. Do you remember the war at all, the First World War, when you were in Poland?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: What do you remember? What did you experience of the war?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, sometimes they used to get very (?) in the streets, and people were afraid to walk, so everybody went home.

LEVINE: And you would just stay at home?

SKOLNIK: Stayed a while, a day or two, and then we'd start out again.

LEVINE: Did you ever see soldiers?

SKOLNIK: Oh, yeah, plenty. A lot of soldiers came in from Germany, and they went in a big city, Warsaw. From Germany they walked, and they, at that time was Hitler. You remember.

( she laughs )

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, this was now the First World War, right? And the soldiers were still coming from Germany, right?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you saw them in your town, in your city?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, yeah. They'd go through the town, to Warsaw.

LEVINE: I see. And how did they act? Did they, what do you remember of the soldiers, you personally, what you saw?

SKOLNIK: No, the soldiers were, they couldn't go out from their line. They had to go with the, with the order where, where they had to go, so they walked, and I don't know where they changed on the way, another way to go. They went to another place, too, and they used to go in place and throw bombs, the Germans.

LEVINE: Did you ever see a bomb, where a bomb had been thrown?

SKOLNIK: I didn't see it, because at that time we didn't go out on the street, you know? All hidden.

LEVINE: And so the soldiers would march through the town?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you would go and hide until they were gone?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were people very frightened at that time?

SKOLNIK: Naturally, they are afraid, because we didn't know them, and they came in with such a splash that we had to hide.

LEVINE: Um, how about, uh, the boys in the town? Were they going into the, into the army?

SKOLNIK: They took them. They don't, they didn't ask. They took all the boys that belonged to the army, the age. They took them in.

LEVINE: When they went through the town?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. They had a lot of noise when they came in. Oh! They cleaned out all the stores, the food. They left nothing in Poland.

LEVINE: Did they break into people's houses?

SKOLNIK: That I don't know.

LEVINE: But they broke into stores, and they just took what they want.

SKOLNIK: The stores. They, they took something from the stores.

LEVINE: Okay. Um, let's see. How about, uh, do you remember any happy times when you were a little girl?

SKOLNIK: I didn't have a chance to be happy or not happy. I had to go to work, and right away we were thinking about going to the United States, and I had to write letters to my

aunt in Cleveland, Sylvie. She sent the tickets, and I went with her sister, and I went, and my grandmother went. We went to Cleveland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember what you knew about the United States? Why did you want to go there?

SKOLNIK: Well, there was a country that it's not like, uh, you can get a job and you run it. You've got to be a perfect, for food, perfect finished. They don't give anybody to work there. Only you've got to be a specialist. It wasn't so good.

LEVINE: So you thought you could work, you could find work in the United States.

SKOLNIK: That's what I thought. My uncle had a shop.

LEVINE: Okay. So you're the one who wrote to your Aunt Sylvia.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then she wrote back, and she sent tickets?

SKOLNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. So do you remember packing up to go?

SKOLNIK: Oh, yeah. We were packing, we were rushing her up to go

as fast as we can.

LEVINE: You wanted to get out of there?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And, and do you remember anything that you or your grandmother or anybody else took with them, that they packed up to take to this country?

SKOLNIK: No. We didn't take much. We had, everyone had a satchel, and we packed up a few things, and we went.

LEVINE: Um, and do you remember saying good-bye to, to people that you knew?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. My father he was right away sorry that I had to leave.

LEVINE: He didn't want you to go?

SKOLNIK: No. But I didn't want to stay more. I was afraid for the soldiers.

LEVINE: So, um, do you remember actually physically leaving? How did you, how did you leave your town, your city? What were you, what kind of transportation did you take?

SKOLNIK: Well, they had bridges, they rode through. They had

communication. They had, I don't know. I don't remember what . . .

LEVINE: Did you go on a horse and wagon? Did you go on foot, or a train? How did you leave your town?

SKOLNIK: We had to go by train to Warsaw.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So . . .

SKOLNIK: And get the visas.

LEVINE: Oh.

SKOLNIK: So at that time we came.

LEVINE: Okay. So why was it decided that your grandmother would go? Why did your grandmother go with you?

SKOLNIK: I don't know. I don't know the reason. I think they wanted to see who, who was going. We came to, to Warsaw. We went to the consul, so we had to explain this is my grandmother, this is Helen, this is her, and this way we got the visas.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So it was the three of you?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Sarah, your aunt, and your grandmother, and you.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, so did you have to stay in Warsaw?

SKOLNIK: Yes, we stayed, because they, the consul was very busy. He couldn't take everybody. So he gave us a date to stay. So we stayed maybe a week in Warsaw.

LEVINE: Was that the first time you had ever been to Warsaw?

SKOLNIK: I don't have other companies. Yeah. My Aunt Sarah went with us, and my grandmother. Three people, we had.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so did you, so, what was it like staying in Warsaw? Do you remember what it was like in Warsaw? Was that different for you?

SKOLNIK: Warsaw's like, uh, you go out in here, on Fifth Avenue, beautiful stores and everything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So how did you feel about leaving?

SKOLNIK: Well, I had to go, because if not I'll lose a chance. My aunt wanted us to come.

LEVINE: So then you got your visas, and then what?

SKOLNIK: Then we came home and packed up, and then packed to go to the United States.

LEVINE: And where did you go to then, before . . .

SKOLNIK: We went to, no, when you go to the United States you've got to go another way. So we went to Warsaw, and then we passed to, uh, what was it? Not England. To . . .

LEVINE: To Amsterdam? To Holland?

SKOLNIK: Holland.

LEVINE: And you took a train? Did you take a train?

SKOLNIK: Yes. We ride in train, too. But we, right away it was a finish for the war, so they had a lot of chance to ship the soldiers home, so we couldn't go. We stayed in that place, Amsterdam, Rotterdam.

LEVINE: Rotterdam.

SKOLNIK: Yeah. We stayed there a month. And they, they shipped the soldiers home. They gave us food to stay, and they told us after they'll be through with the soldiers, we'll get the visas.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then the war was over?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember, do you remember when you knew that

the war was over, and . . .

SKOLNIK: I remember, yes. Hitler. You don't know about it?

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember, uh, how people acted when the war was over? Do you remember that?

SKOLNIK: Well, some days you couldn't go out in the street. You were afraid to go out. But, uh, they put him in jail, so that stopped.

LEVINE: Okay. So tell me about your experience that whole month. You were a whole month in Rotterdam. What was that like for you?

SKOLNIK: They're very nice people. They gave us food and rest. They got such good food.

LEVINE: And, uh, did you have examinations before you got on the ship?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, you've got to be examined, sure.

LEVINE: And, um, what was the name of the ship you finally got to come here?

SKOLNIK: I don't remember the ship.

LEVINE: Oh, the Ryndam.

SKOLNIK: The Ryndam.

LEVINE: Now, what was that like? Tell me about your voyage on the ship.

SKOLNIK: On the ship. Well, I'm not a big rider. When I ride, I don't feel good. And my grandmother was the best rider. She had everything. And she was glad she goes to see her children, and this was a pleasure.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were you in steerage? Were you down in the bottom of the boat?

SKOLNIK: No, we were up from the bottom.

LEVINE: You weren't.

SKOLNIK: No.

LEVINE: What kind of accommodations did you have on the boat?

SKOLNIK: Good. They, they shipped us in good food, to the time. AT twelve o'clock we had lunch, and later they gave pieces, they gave food. They're very nice people.

LEVINE: So how did you enjoy the voyage?

SKOLNIK: I'm not a big rider. When I ride, I get sick.

LEVINE: So you were sick on the trip?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. I was sick.

LEVINE: Do you remember, uh, when, uh, the Ryndam came into the New York Harbor? Do you remember when the ship came into New York?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: What did you, what was . . .

SKOLNIK: We were waiting for my Uncle Louis Goldberg, he should come pick us up. So we waited, and he came and picked us up, and we went to his house.

LEVINE: I see. Tell me what Ellis Island was like. Can you describe it?

SKOLNIK: Ellis Island is, you see, when, you see the picture when the hand shows, "This is Ellis Island." ( they laugh )

LEVINE: Did you see that on the boat when you first came in?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what was the big building like where you had to stay until your Uncle Louie came?

SKOLNIK: It was a building that soldiers go through, but they, they took it over because they had a lot of soldiers coming home from the war, so they went through this building.

And then it was quiet, and I was waiting with my grandmother and my grand, and my Aunt Sarah, and we waited for the time that we could go.

LEVINE: Well, how come you had to stay a few days? Why did you have to stay?

SKOLNIK: Because they, it was just the end of the war.

LEVINE: Oh, because there were so many soldiers going through . . .

SKOLNIK: They shipped first the soldiers home.

LEVINE: I see, uh-huh. So then did your Uncle Louie come to Ellis Island to meet you?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. He took us to Ellis Island, and then from Ellis Island we went to his house.

LEVINE: And did you know your Uncle Louie?

SKOLNIK: I remember him, because he used to work for my father.

LEVINE: What was it like seeing him at Ellis Island?

SKOLNIK: He was a good man. He did everything. He made a papers,

he, as soon as he could fix us up we should go, we went.

LEVINE: So, uh, so you, so your Uncle Louie came, and he took you to his house?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And where was this house?

SKOLNIK: On 9th Street.

LEVINE: On the Lower East Side?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And remember what struck you when you first were here, the first few days or weeks, what struck you as very different in this country?

SKOLNIK: I didn't go out much yet. My uncle said, "You sit here. If you want to go, sit outside on the steps, and relax." He didn't want me to go alone. ( she laughs ) I shouldn't lose my way home. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what did your Uncle Louie do?

SKOLNIK: Oh, he did everything. He made the papers, he, and he was, he and my Aunt Sarah, uh, Sylvia, from Cleveland, she did a lot. She sent us money to go to buy things what

we needed, that we would be able to come.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: What was your Uncle Louie doing for work when you were staying with him?

SKOLNIK: Oh, he stayed with, my Uncle Abraham had a shop making clothes, women's coats. So Uncle Louie was working for him.

LEVINE: I see, and was the shop in the Lower East Side?

SKOLNIK: No, it was in, uh, around 14th Street, a little higher up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you stayed around the house at first?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then, and then did you, uh, start to work, or . . .

SKOLNIK: Then I stopped, and he says, "Do you want to come up and see the shop?" Yes, I wanted. So when I came up, they didn't let me go home already. They packed me up with work.

LEVINE: They started you working in the shop?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, uh, and how about your Aunt Sarah? What did she do?

SKOLNIK: She didn't have no trade, so right away she met somebody there, and she got married.

LEVINE: Oh.

SKOLNIK: It didn't take long. She was married, and she moved out of my Uncle Louie's house.

LEVINE: And how about your grandmother? How did she like being in this country?

SKOLNIK: The grandmother went to, uh, Cleveland.

LEVINE: Oh, she . . .

SKOLNIK: To the daughter.

LEVINE: To her daughter. So, uh, so then you went every day to the shop to work?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, every day.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SKOLNIK: As long as the season lasted. Sometimes we stopped

working, there wasn't enough work, so we went home, and cleaned our own house. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: ( she laughs ) I see. Well, how was, how was working for your uncle compared with working for your father? How did you like working for your uncle?

SKOLNIK: My uncle was a designer. He made the designs, and then they gave, gave out to (?), the operators. He had a lot of machines working.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. I see. So he had other people working there, too?

SKOLNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: And how did you like working there?

SKOLNIK: It was nice, you know. It's better than to work in Poland for little nothing.

LEVINE: So . . .

SKOLNIK: Here the unions started at that time to, uh, to pick up, that they shouldn't fool the people, so that was better.

LEVINE: So what did you do, uh, for a social life? Did you, did you go to a social club, or . . .

SKOLNIK: Yeah, you had some clubs, you'd go at the end of the week, we had time. We went for dancing, for talking, and that's the time we enjoyed. But working, it's hard. It was very hard.

LEVINE: So were there a lot of people from Poland who lived near your uncle and who worked for him? Were there . . .

SKOLNIK: My uncle lived already at that time a long time in the United States.

LEVINE: I see. But were there other people who had just come to this country that you saw?

SKOLNIK: Yes. But the people had to wait till they brought all the soldiers home. Then they went in the boat to go.

LEVINE: Well, how about learning English? Do you remember what it was like for you learning English?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. I had to go to school.

LEVINE: At night you went?

SKOLNIK: Night school.

LEVINE: Okay. Tell me what night school was like.

SKOLNIK: Night school was a teacher, she makes signs, and this way

she, she, uh, gave us a chance to, to know the ABC's. And we stayed there maybe a half a year, and we learned English.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Good. And then did you become a citizen?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember that? Did you take classes for that, too?

SKOLNIK: I didn't have to take classes.

LEVINE: Um, let's see. So you were, how long did you stay living with your uncle?

SKOLNIK: Oh, my, maybe three months.

LEVINE: And then what?

SKOLNIK: They want me to take the Cleveland, my aunt, but I didn't want to go there. The shops are in New York, it's better to stay in New York. So I stayed with my Uncle Louie.

LEVINE: And then when you moved out, where did you go, when you moved out from your Uncle Louie's house?

SKOLNIK: I moved to the Bronx, from the city to the Bronx. And there I have some people that I knew them from the shop, so I asked them if they can put me in a room. So they

got me a room, and I stayed with them. Nice people.

LEVINE: How come you left your uncle's house?

SKOLNIK: My uncle was moving out already from downtown. He moved someplace in the Bronx.

LEVINE: So did you continue working for your uncle?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: After you moved to the Bronx?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then, um, when did you meet your husband?

SKOLNIK: My husband? I don't know. Because he comes from the same city where I come.

LEVINE: Oh.

SKOLNIK: His mother used to come every time to find out from my mother what's doing, what's doing, where are we? So my mother had to be safe, and he showed her that they're there, they're all right.

LEVINE: So how did you meet your husband?

SKOLNIK: My husband I meet in the shop.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did, and did you, uh, did you like each other right away?

SKOLNIK: Not right away. It took time. I went to school, and he didn't want to go to school. He wanted to work, that's all.

LEVINE: So, uh, so then you started seeing him?

SKOLNIK: Then he wanted to go to school, but he said he'll lose money if he goes to school, he wouldn't be able to hold up for the, for the people, we should eat. So he went wherever he wanted. He always got jobs.

LEVINE: So he was also a, uh . . .

SKOLNIK: He was a tailor.

LEVINE: A tailor. Okay. So, um, then did you, when you got married, did you live in the Bronx?

SKOLNIK: Yeah, for a while I lived in the Bronx.

LEVINE: Yeah. And, uh, who, what are your children's names?

SKOLNIK: My children. Here they are. ( she laughs )

LEVINE: How many children did you have?

SKOLNIK: I didn't have too many children?

LEVINE: No.

SKOLNIK: That's my children. This is my daughter-in-law.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So, uh, let's see, so did you continue working?  
When did you stop working?

SKOLNIK: When did I stop? Maybe two years later when we had a store,  
and I was too tired to work. I said, "That's enough."  
We was staring to get better with his, he made designs,  
he made, he was a good tailor. So he got in a lot of work  
from me.

LEVINE: So you said that was enough.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then you stayed home?

SKOLNIK: I stayed home a while. But I still went to the school,  
I went to him, to help. He didn't want to go to school.  
He (?) right.

LEVINE: So did he learn English, though?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. He learned English. He had to talk right away to  
customers, so he had to go to school first.

LEVINE: So what do you feel very proud of that you did in your lifetime? What makes you feel proud?

SKOLNIK: Proud? The best thing we did, we came to the United States.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah. Do you think it made a difference that you started out in Poland and lived for twenty years there and then came to this country? Do you think that had a big effect on you?

SKOLNIK: No, I liked it here.

LEVINE: You liked it from the very beginning.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you ever want to go back?

SKOLNIK: No. No, I didn't.

LEVINE: So then once you were here, did any of your other, the rest of your family come over?

SKOLNIK: Yeah. Two brothers came, Joe and, and Harry. Molly wasn't even born. I had another sister. That's all.

LEVINE: So did you, were you helpful in having your brothers come over here?

SKOLNIK: Yes, we had to help. My aunt from Cleveland, she sent them tickets, and I sent the rest of them money.

LEVINE: So did you ever go to Cleveland?

SKOLNIK: I wasn't, maybe once I was in Cleveland.

LEVINE: Is there anything else that you remember about when you were getting settled in this country and living in this country? Is there anything else that, um, you liked about being here?

SKOLNIK: I liked it right away.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SKOLNIK: Because at that time was going on the war, and when we came here it was nice and quiet.

LEVINE: Okay. I'm going to pause here for a second. ( break in tape ) Okay, we're resuming again. Um, so, you mentioned that you stopped working at one point and then, and then you had a child?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was your child's name?

SKOLNIK: Lee.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And, uh, now you have grandchildren.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: How many grandchildren do you have?

SKOLNIK: You see them.

LEVINE: Two?

SKOLNIK: Two. She got more.

LEVINE: She got one more that isn't here.

SKOLNIK: Four.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, great. And, um, so you, so then you went back to working even though you said it was enough, you . . .

SKOLNIK: Yeah, I had to go back.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, is there anything else that you can think of that has to do with coming to this country? Did you ever go back to Poland?

SKOLNIK: No. My husband went. He was lonesome for his home, he felt, he went to Germany, from Germany the mother came, and they met. He went back to the United States.

LEVINE: But did, but you didn't want to go with him?

SKOLNIK: No. They didn't want to go. They lived in Cleveland.  
They still lived in Cleveland.

LEVINE: After your son was born, then you traveled a little bit?

SKOLNIK: We had to go, because we wanted to live in Mexico.

LEVINE: What was that like, going there?

SKOLNIK: Well, it's a nice country to live, but you've got to have money to stay, and stay out the time and enjoy it, so you go back, go back home to Poland.

LEVINE: So, uh, so when you were living in, in Brooklyn, you traveled then to California and Mexico?

SKOLNIK: I didn't live in Brooklyn, did I? Yeah? I forgot.  
( they laugh )

LEVINE: That's okay.

SKOLNIK: It's a long time.

LEVINE: Yeah, a long time ago. Uh-huh. So what, what would you say, um, has given you a lot of pleasure since you came to this country?

SKOLNIK: Oh, we had the peace of mind, because there was fighting, fighting, fighting. The Germans, they were rough for the

people. It was plenty trouble. But when I left  
Keltsa[ph] it was getting better at that time already.  
I sent for my father.

LEVINE: You sent for your father to come to this country?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And he came?

SKOLNIK: He came.

LEVINE: And how did he like it here?

SKOLNIK: No. He (?) his brother. The same shop where I worked.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So . . .

SKOLNIK: He worked there.

LEVINE: And did your mother come here, too?

SKOLNIK: Yes.

LEVINE: And how did your mother and father like it in this country?

SKOLNIK: They liked it.

LEVINE: So they stayed here?

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. Well, is there anything else you can think of that you remembered from, from the time you were a little girl in Poland? When you think of Poland now, what do you think of?

SKOLNIK: It's not a bad country, but at that time it was wartime. Everything was mixed up.

LEVINE: And how about this phase in your life, in your, in your old age? How do you like this time in your life?

SKOLNIK: This is very nice. It's good to live here. It's better than Poland. Poland is only the rich people live good, but the middle class work hard and they got nothing.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I think we'll stop here. I want to thank you very much.

SKOLNIK: I thank you for taking me for, for this here to remind my head.

LEVINE: ( they laugh ) Well, you did great. Okay. I've been talking with Helen Skolnik, and we're here in Massapequa, Long Island, New York.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And it's August 3, 1994. Helen is, let's see, you must

be ninety-three now.

SKOLNIK: I know my age, ninety-three, yes.

LEVINE: Ninety-three years old, yeah. Okay. And, um, we're here with Helen, uh, two of Helen's grandchildren, and her daughter-in-law.

SKOLNIK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off. Thank you very much.

SKOLNIK: Thank you.