

EI-518
BETTY (REFKEC) YUDELEVITCH TISCHLER
BIRTH DATE: JUNE 7, 1907
INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 4, 1994
RUNNING TIME: 39:38
INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PhD
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1998
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CORINNE BROWN

RUSSIA, 1924
AGE: 17

SHIP: A WHITE STAR LINE SHIP
PORT: HAMBURG
RESIDENCES:
* RUSSIA: BRESTLITFSK
* UNITED STATES: FAR ROCKAWAY, LONG ISLAND; BROOKLYN, NY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I'm here in Far Rockaway, Long Island, New York with Betty Tischler who came from Russia on September 24, 1924. And she was seventeen years old at that time. Today is August the 4th, 1994, and Mrs. Tischler is eighty-

TISCHLER: Eighty-seven.

LEVINE: Eighty-seven years old.

TISCHLER: I was in June eighty-seven years old.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Well, you look wonderful, and I'm very-

TISCHLER: I'm a great-great-grandmother.

LEVINE: --happy to be with you. A great-great-grandmother. Wow! Okay. Well, let's, let's start at the beginning, because I know you have a lot to say.

TISCHLER: I have a couple of pages here.

LEVINE: Yeah, okay. Tell first, for the tape please, your birth date.

TISCHLER: June 7, 1907.

LEVINE: And where in Russia were you born?

TISCHLER: Brestlitfsk-Bresk-Brestlitfsk, Russia.

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

TISCHLER: It's a boundary of—not far from Russia—Russia. There was a—
It's the boundary of—there's another—I forgot already. There's another
country—there's another country there, Cabrin [ph]. And there was
villages around there. We was around it. But the most important thing
was the war. Whenever we have a war in Russia, it always comes to
Brestlitfsk, to that boundary.

LEVINE: Brestlitfsk?

TISCHLER: Brestlitfsk. B-R-E-S-T-L-I-T-F-S-K. Brestlitfsk.

LEVINE: Okay. Did you live in Brestlitfsk up until you left?

TISCHLER: I was born there.

LEVINE: And did you stay there till you were seventeen and left?

TISCHLER: I was stayed there till was—I was seventeen years.

LEVINE: Oh, good. Well, then, tell me what you remember about
Brestlitfsk.

TISCHLER: Well, I remember when—I remember my father, my mother and my
great—my greatmother, my great-grandmother, my-my aunts and uncles, they
were all killed out. But my father went to the—went to the United States
when I was about eight, nine years old. He left us because he had a
sister in Chicago. The sister took his mother—he went with his mother
to—to the United States. So his sister brought him over. When he was—
when he filled out the papers to bring us, the war came out for the First
World War. That was Russia and Germany was fighting and we couldn't.

And we went through hell. My whole life was there. I wrote
my whole life in here. We went through hell. They killed—they killed my
grandmother, my grandfather. My grandfather was in the United States, he
came back to see us for a visit. He couldn't go back already. He died
of hunger. When he died, we found a piece of hard bread was under his
pillow because he was saving the piece of bread for the next meal. We
went through hell. I was left—we were left and my brother, my sister and
me were left, three children. And—

LEVINE: What do you remember about your great-grandfather?

TISCHLER: My great-grand—my—my grandmother lost—lost her husband. My
great-grandfather, he was thirty-eight years old when he—when he fell off
a building. He was a builder. So he fell off, and he got killed. And
my grandmother was all her life she brought up the children. She was—she
never remarried. I never remember—I don't remember him because she was
telling us [not understood] when he died.

LEVINE: This is now your grand, did you say you had a great-
grandfather?

TISCHLER: A grandfather.

LEVINE: A grandfather. He died. And what experiences do you remember with your grandmother?

TISCHLER: My-grandmother was in Europe. And we-the United States. Well, she went-

LEVINE: With your father.

TISCHLER: My father took her to the United States.

LEVINE: I see. So you didn't have, when you were in Russia-

TISCHLER: My mother. My mother's mother, that's my other grandmother. My mother's name was An-

LEVINE: What was your mother's name?

TISCHLER: My mother's name was Annaka-her maiden name was Anna Hannah Kirschenbaum, Kirschenbaum. That was her maiden name.

LEVINE: K-I-R-S-C-H . . .

TISCHLER: E-N, A-N, ca-you know, baum, B-A-U-M. Yeah.

LEVINE: And, so you remember your mother's mother?

TISCHLER: Oh, I remember her when she died.

LEVINE: What was, tell me.

TISCHLER: She died, she died. I remember having-When, when we were going one day-I was a little girl, so we-we were going. We were starving. So I said to her, "Come, Bubba. Let's go to a village where there's-there's only-no-not Jewish people. Only, you know, the Gentile people. And they'll give us bread, they'll give us potatoes if they'll see somebody, you know, that's begging." We beg-I begged. So I went there, and they gave us some. They used to say, "Where's your father? Where's your mother?" So I used to say (Russian). "My mother died," and the [not understood] is, "My father was killed." That's what I told them. So they gave me food and everything. So there was a sack, so I-I took it one side, and I bend it one side here and one side the other one, and I was going with my grandmother.

Enid came-Enid came in-you know, a Russian-a Russian Cossack [ph] with a-at that time, the first- the first Russian people-the First War-that was the First War, they came with the-with the knives, you know, and with the-with the-with the horses. So while we were walking on the road, they came with a horse and my grandmother got scarred so she fell off in the side of the-

LEVINE: Like a ditch?

TISCHLER: In a ditch, yeah. And when we took her home already she-she lost her mind. And we didn't even have-and we were in a village because

they burned our town. We didn't know where to go. So she—she was sleeping on hay. We didn't have nothing. So each—my mother used to go over to her, and she used to itch worm from her body. She used to drag the worms out of her body because there was no medicine. We didn't have nothing. We were happy that we were alive. We used to be [not understood] the boards, you know, from—from the floor, and we took out, and we made a ditch. And we were there when they used to come in. So they used to see people, they killed us. You couldn't even [not understood] was like that. We couldn't even holler. That's what we went to.

I used to take my brother, and I used to go with him after the summer, you know—after the winter, so there's people that they—they plant potatoes, you know. We went—we went there like, in a village, so there is—there's like a fog so they don't take out the potatoes in the summertime so sometimes they leave it for the winter. They don't care. So I used to take out that frozen potatoes with the worms and I brought it home. Then we used to make it with hot water because you squeeze it-- and you see that.

LEVINE: Is that how your grandmother got the worms?

TISCHLER: This how my grandmother—because she was laying—she was laying, she didn't have—we didn't have no pillows. We were laying in the straw. So the straw—her body gave away, deteriorated, you know, without medication, without anything. And I had—my grandmother had two daughters yet. She had three daughters with my mother, but she had two daughters. So the other daughter, the younger one, was eighteen years old. She was swollen from hunger. She used to sit outside and pick the worms and eat the worms. We went through so much. It's unbelievable, unbelievable.

LEVINE: Now, this wasn't the Russian Revolution. This was the First World War.

TISCHLER: The First World War, yes, the First World War, yes.

LEVINE: So you were, you had to leave—

TISCHLER: They called it the First War. They called it—not the Second, the sixth war—they called it not the second war—he was [not understood] the Second war —that was left yet, they killed them out.

LEVINE: Yeah. So in other words you, you had to leave your home, and you were on the run?

TISCHLER: My father—after that—after that, so one day we were sittin' there—we did not have to eat. We lived about a block away from the armory, you know—from the armory because we didn't know where to live. So we—we saw a broken house and we were there [not understood] night—night. We were so hungry. It was on a Friday night. So I said to one side—I says down there in the armory on one side was the Russian the other side was the German and they had the horses. They fed the horses bread, potatoes, peels from potatoes, you know? They—they had that to eat. So I—so I said to my ss—I—I said to my mother—I says, "I'm going

there." I says, "If I'm going to die, I'm going to die." I says, "We are starving." You know?

So I went there and I went into—I went into a-a-a-a room there where they keep the horses there. So I saw hard bread. I saw the hard bread. I put it in a sack. And I saw potatoes, the peels from potatoes so I put it in a—so I was running. So I fell. I fell. So the—so I made noise. I fell over a box. So they thought that somebody's coming to fight from this side, you know? So I started running and I ran out of the—and then the Russians, they started in with the Cossacks, you know, with the—with the big knives, you know—

LEVINE: Describe what they looked like.

TISCHLER: Yes. They—they wore the high hats, and they—they had the big knives, you know, what they—what they call it?

LEVINE: The swords.

TISCHLER: The swords, yeah, the big ones. And—and with the Russians, you know, they—they out to kill—they were out to kill. So, there were ditches, so I ran into a ditch, and he run over me. When he ran over me, I saw my dead grandmother. I saw the way she was watching me. I saw her face. I—I—I didn't know where I was I thought I saw her face. And he ran over there, and he was hollering (Russian). That means th—he—he was cursing me—Jewish—the Jew—J—J—(whispers) Jewish people. Somebody came into my mother and they said, "You know, they killed your daughter. Why did you send her?" She start to cry. While she was crying I came in with a sack. And I was—I was a young child, maybe I was eight or nine years old. All my life I'm that way. I'm a mother. I'm a sister. I'm everything to my family.

LEVINE: Were you an only child?

TISCHLER: No, my mother had another. My—my mother had another daughter and a son (my sister and my brother). My brother lives now in California, and I have my sister that lives in the second building from me, but she's not like—she—she got married—she got married to—to an American fella. I also got married to an American fellow so—but I—I only was married forty-five years to him. I had four sons.

LEVINE: Oh.

TISCHLER: I have eleven grandchildren. Four great-grandchildren.

LEVINE: Well, let's talk, let's finish talking about Russia, and then we'll go to the voyage and all that. Tell me your name when you were born.

TISCHLER: My name when I was born—my mother called me Refkec.

LEVINE: R-E-F-K-E-C.

TISCHLER: Yeah, Refkec, yeah.

LEVINE: And your maiden name?

TISCHLER: My maiden name—my maiden name was Refkec Yudelevitch.

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

TISCHLER: Y-U-D-E-L-E-V-I-T-C-H.

LEVINE: And do you remember your mother's maiden name?

TISCHLER: Hannah Kircshenbaum.

LEVINE: Kircshenbaum, right. Okay. And your father's name?

TISCHLER: My father's name was Simpre [ph] Yudelevitch. Sam Yudelevitch, yeah.

LEVINE: And let's see. So, your brother and sister were also running from the Cossacks?

TISCHLER: We were the same, yeah, we were the same.

LEVINE: You were together.

TISCHLER: That's right.

LEVINE: Wow. So is there anything else that you recall of those years?

TISCHLER: Those years was bitter years. We went through so much. One day we went—we went to—it was Yom Kippur, so th—so we wanted to go to the schul, so we were afraid because they were killing people. We were walking on people, that time. We were walking on—on dead people. They were killed. Just like now when I see—I remember myself and I—I don't even want to watch the television no more because I'm so fed with it, you know? You see, my granddaughter, she filled out. I got more filled out, like—this is a thing that I'll never forget as long as I'm going to live. So, anyway, so—what—what can I tell you? So we went that time—I wanted to tell you—sometimes you forget all of—all of a sudden. So I—so my mother—so I had my sister with my brother and we came. So my father took us over to the—to the—the—to the United States. And—and then, after the war—after the war [not understood] it was quiet down a little bit—we went through—yeah, so we went to the schul. We went to—

LEVINE: This was Yom Kippur.

TISCHLER: Yeah, Yom Kippur. They took out a rabbi with his two sons, with a daughter, and they killed him. They killed him in front of our faces. They killed him. Shot him out. Took him out! Before we went, they took him out, so we went—we ran away. We—they behind us so we have run in ditches. And then the next [not understood] we leaved.

There was a little shack. So there was a woman with two children, a little girl of three years and a baby of eight months. They killed her husband, and she was in that shack. She was—she was standing outside, so while they were killing the people they got her. She came into the house and she had the baby. The baby was—was nursing her breast. And her sister came. She—she knocked on the door, there was nobody. We opened the door, she was laying dead, the little girl was crying, and the baby was right near the breast. Yeah, so, she was dead. That's what we went through, to see so much, so much trouble.

And—and then all of a sudden when we were in the house—when—house—we had apartment, you know—Europe—years ago—that wasn't like today. So—so we had to leave it everything there. We had to leave everything. And we had to go into a temple. So we all went into a temple and my mother was so, so nervous, so she took all—she took us near her and she was holding I think what you roll—what you make cake, you know, with her? She was holding it.

So overnight they came over and they put in a bomb in that temple, and the temple started to burn. The whole town was burning. We were running—we didn't know—we lost each other. We lost each other. And I lost—my mother lost her mother. Her father was here in the United States yet, but she had my—my grandmother was with us—with my—with my aunt, with the other daughter—the other girl. So, anyway, in the morning we were looking for people. They were running, you know, they were running, they were running. And they—they were—there—there was a big places, you know—where to run, like country, like country style. It was—we were living in villages.

So, anyway, we met them and everybody was looking on each other. So we found them. A burned cart, a burned horse, burned people—we didn't know what was. It's unbelievable, unbelievable. I get so nervous when I tell the story of my life. I'm here with this country since—

LEVINE: 1924?

TISCHLER: I was married forty-five years. My husband is dead twenty-three years, so it's a long time.

LEVINE: Tell me what the effects of all that, of your childhood, what effects did they have later on you after you came here?

TISCHLER: The effects later that I was very happy and everything—that I could have a—a cup of coffee, a cup—a cup of water with a piece of bread. When I saw the United States and I saw the people, you know my—when my father brought us ha—he was in the market, so he brought us in two rooms. We had—we had gas lights on the—on the door. The—the bath—the toilet was in the hall. We didn't have no bathroom and we had—we had a stove with coal.

But it was so good in the market when I saw people, you know, with—with the pushcarts, that they have the food. I was so hungry for it.

That all my life it kept me that I'm very content with my life. Whatever it is, I'm content. There's plenty trouble in our life. People walks through so much in life, that our whole life is like a book. There's enough pages to write. But I'm content, whatever it is. I said to myself today, "Is a bad day. Maybe tomorrow it's going to be better." I'm older, I don't feel right, I can't feel anything good. I pray to God that I shouldn't feel worse than I feel now.

LEVINE: So do you remember the trip to this country?

TISCHLER: The trip, sure. I have it here, but I can tell it now.

LEVINE: Just say it.

TISCHLER: The trip is we went—my father took us with a boat. We went with the White Star Line—the White Star Line. So we—we were poor. So he took us in the—the third class in the basement. In the basement so, you know, we were—so, you know, on the top, in the third class— (disturbance to the microphone) Sorry.

LEVINE: That's okay.

TISCHLER: On the third class there were rich people. So we used to go—so used to come up. And, you know. So they threw us down oranges. You're not supposed to go up. And they threw us down cake, and some fruit, you know? And it was so different. We was—we was laying there—we were laying there in—in—inside, you know? We didn't have a place. We were—we were laying. There was a bed here and here and here, you know?

LEVINE: Bunk beds.

TISCHLER: Like in a basement. But we were happy that—that's all my father could afford. He was working. He was in the building line there—was working as a bricklayer. But he was—he was very—he was working for somebody, you know. But that used to didn't make a such a living, and he had his mother with him. But when we came off on the boat—

LEVINE: Do you know the name of the ship?

TISCHLER: The White Star Line. Hamburger—Hamburg.

LEVINE: Hamburg you left from.

TISCHLER: Yeah, White Star Line.

LEVINE: But there wasn't a particular name of the ship? It was that line.

TISCHLER: That was the line that they called it, the White Star Line.

LEVINE: Okay.

TISCHLER: That was the line.

LEVINE: And, so you remember when the ship came into the Harbor?

TISCHLER: We came into the United States, they didn't let us off into the Ellis Island because it was Yom Kippur.

LEVINE: Oh.

TISCHLER: And my father had a--had a--had a cousin, so he came Yom Kippur with a boat. So he brought us pears, and he brought us chocolate. So I said to my ma--so I said to my mother, "You know, Ma? Papa likes us. (Russia)." You know? And his mother was hollering. She says, "You're going there, bring them some challah, bring them some chicken, bring them--" You know. But I was happy to see him. But then when we went into the Castle Garden, you know, and the doctors and everything. Then my brother had a scar on his head, a scar. And he was younger--my brother is younger than me. I'm the oldest. My brother now is eighty years old.

LEVINE: What is your brother's name?

TISCHLER: Louie, Label[ph]. So, anyway--so they didn't let him go. They didn't let him off.

LEVINE: So you got into Ellis Island and they didn't want your brother to go. He had a scar on his head?

TISCHLER: A scar, yeah. And they didn't let him off. I started to cry. And I cried, and I made such a commotion there that everybody was looking at me. I says, "You're not going to let my brother here now." I says--at the time, I says--and I spoke Jewish because I couldn't talk English. I says, "The time that I went through there," I says, "we came there," I says, "from fire, and now you're going to leave my brother here." So he said, "Only for a day or so." I says, "No." It turned out they got together and they let him go. They let him go with us. We came out. And then we went into a--into a street. They took us into an apartment and to the market, you know? Terrible, the worst, the worst! We had to walk about the third or fourth floor, you know? And, oh, no water, no ni--nothing. The hot--there was no hot water. You had to make hot water yourself. It was a coal stove. And then like this from place to place. He--he took us into another apartment, it was a little bit better. So then my mother gave birth to my sister. She gave birth in--

LEVINE: And your sister's name?

TISCHLER: My sister's name is Frieda Siegel [ph]. She lives--she lives now in North Carolina. Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, let's just back up a minute. Tell me everything or anything you remember about either the Statue of Liberty or Ellis Island.

TISCHLER: When I came down t--I saw the Statue of Liberty I laid down on the boat and I cried because I l--I knew a lot of people, I heard a lot of people. I'm a listener. If I listen something I wouldn't forget and I

know it. I don't forget it if it's something important. And they said that when you see the Statue of Liberty you see—you see everything in your life is gonna be good. It's gonna shine—it's gonna be—and I says, "Mama, look, the Statue of Liberty!" And I kiss—kissed the floor.

And I love the United States. There is nothing—there's no—there is no other country in the whole world you can have good goods and everything. No matter how bad we are here, we love it here, because people that can't afford—if you had a mouth, they'll help you. You know what I mean? You can never go hungry. I see—I see there's a lot of Russian people coming here. They fix up the apartments. I see on my floor—beautiful, beautiful. They like—they don't like no old pep—no stuff no more. They fix up beautiful.

So what's wrong with the United States? Now they're going through—it's just too bad that now we're having—now we're going through a certain session that the people are losing their jobs, there's people with families, there's people—they're losing everything. They're closing up. Business [not understood]—business is not so good. But what can you do? We gotta be happy. As long as we have a roof over am head and we have something to eat. We don't have to have steak. We can eat something else.

LEVINE: Yes. What about Ellis Island? Can you describe what it was like for you?

TISCHLER: Well, when I came into Ellis Island, we sat by one table—sat about a block away—one table—was one table. And they gave us food—they gave us food. And the time that they gave us food, I looked at it. And they gave us with a spoon. So I didn't even know how to use a spoon, how to use a fork. You know what I mean? I came to this country, I didn't even know how. When you go someplace—and it was so beautiful. We were there three days. We slept upstairs. They gave us rooms—they gave us rooms. And we slept upstairs. And they gave us—they gave us coffee, cake in the afternoon. And they told us when they going—when—one day if my father's going to take us home. It was just beautiful. It was beautiful.

When I go now—I went there a couple of months ago, I kissed everything. I didn't want to go home. I says, "I'd like to stay here." And I—and I showed my friends where I was. I showed my friends where I was in—in there—in the little—there was a little—there's these old little shoes was laying there. There was a little shoe laying there. I says, "You see?" I says. I says, "This is a remembrance from the Ellis Island." It's so beautiful. They fixed it up so beautiful. I was there a whole day. We came by boat. They took us from here. It was just a nice remembrance.

I love the United States. There's nothing like the United States. My children, they go over. They go sometimes for trips. They go for tours. They—they says there's nothing like the United States.

LEVINE: Do you remember the reunion with your father?

TISCHLER: When I—when my father took us home and brought us down here—down in the [not understood]—it was beautiful. To us, it was a palace. It was gorgeous. Who cared about the toilet, about the bathroom. Where we have, we never had a toilet. We used to go in the outside. It was terrible, what we went through, you know? It's—it's—it's unbelievable, it's unbelievable what we went through. And so when he brought us up and we went to a market and he showed us everything.

And then—yes—he had—he had a sister-in-law that was longer here in this country. So he says, "Do me a favor. Come, and help him buy something for my—for my children—for my greenhorns." So she used to say, "Your greenhorns—my children, they wouldn't even understand what they're talking about." So it worked out this way, that we worked ourself up more. We had more to show, you know. So then my father used to say, "You see, Yenta." (Yiddish) I went to school, my brother went to school, my sister went to school. We were all well-educated, you know? All right, I'm not too much educated, but for my age I think I'm all right.

LEVINE: Do you remember—where, by the way, where was the apartment that your father took you to?

TISCHLER: Georgia Avenue. Georgia Avenue in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Oh.

TISCHLER: Georgia Avenue.

LEVINE: And do you remember in those first few days and weeks things that struck you as new and different?

TISCHLER: It was—it was—when I came it was—I was loo—I—I didn't think—I thought I wasn't alive. I thought I was dead, and I was dreaming. Everything was dreaming. Everything was different to me. And whatever I saw, even the food. Even the food, you know? I saw people with—buying bananas. I went over to a man. I says, I said to him in Jewish—he didn't understand, he must have be Italian. I says—so he called over another woman. She says, "You know what?" She says, "This is bananas. It's very good." So I taste a banana. Since then, I always have bananas in the house (laughs). Because I tried everything. And then I find out there is a kosher place. There's a po—butcher. I took my mother to the—to the chicken market—we went to the chicken market, we went to the butcher. Is—this was my life.

And then when I was—when I came into this country I right away—I wanted to go to continuation school. That was a night school where you're teached in English. And there from them they put me in—into a day school. I went to a day school. So I went to a day school and then they said I should go into—they have a high school—continuation—a high school in Brooklyn. They have—there's a high school. I forgot the name. So also—but I couldn't take it. I went to work right away.

I wanted to go to work. I—because my father was working very hard. He didn't make a good living. So—but the minute—you know, so

whatever I had. So my mother used to give me fifteen cents. So in order to take the bus to go to work I used to walk. So the fifteen cents—so I saved myself up and I bought myself a pair of shoes for a dollar-and-a-half. You know, those shoes—you know. So I tried—this is how we—that's how my father brought us over.

LEVINE: Just take the shoes, for example. Do you remember the first pair of shoes you bought?

TISCHLER: The first pair of shoes was terrible. The first pair of shoes—they have heels—you know, the soles and the heels were wood. Wood! Wood—you know, wood, because they were cheap. The other one was leather. Leather is more—a little bit more expensive. And I couldn't. So I used to wear that—that—that wooden shoes. I used to come home without feet!

LEVINE: What did you have for shoes before that, when you were in Russia?

TISCHLER: Before—before we had the shoes, it wasn't such a—it was like house shoes, you know? With—with—with c—we had cords around, you know, we had to tie them around, you know. And we had holes in it, you know—like—so this is the shoes that we—in Russia, most of the time we were going barefooted.

LEVINE: And when you weren't going barefoot, it was like a rope that you had for shoes?

TISCHLER: Well, the shoes was like with the—like [not understood]. Like a high shoe—like you have push through the—you see—like I got here, you push through—you push through the lace, you know? That's the shoe that we got. That the shoe was for years and years. We—when for a whole week we didn't wear the shoes, we were walking barefooted. We—we used to go to—I used to—I didn't go to school there, but I used to go in the—outside with my mother, with my grandpa—go to take a walk or something. I used to go barefooted. How many times did I come with—with—with a glass in my feet because I didn't want to wear the shoe because I'm going to use them out. I didn't have no money to buy them. I didn't have no money. You see, my father couldn't—he wasn't—he lived in the United States, he couldn't get to us because there was a war going on.

LEVINE: Right. So the first pair of shoes you bought were wooden soles.

TISCHLER: When I came to this country—the wooden sole—and it was open in the back and closed in the front. They—they called it like—(stammers)

LEVINE: Clogs.

TISCHLER: The clogs, yeah. You know who wears that? The a—the people from Pennsylvania.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TISCHLER: The—the—the people—they wear that.

LEVINE: Yes.

TISCHLER: But I got used to it, you know? Then when I start working I-I find out there was--there was a place--there was a place and not far from us. He buys shoes--he buys shoes from--from the manufacturer. People--that is--they bring back the shoes, you know. They used to get a dollar a pair of shoes. So--but, my God, I bought myself a pair of green, a pair of red. I was in style, you know? So my father used to say to his--to his sister-in-law, "You see? You said your--your children--my children are green. Look at them!" Because we tried to work ourselves up because we went through so much in life.

LEVINE: What did you do for your first job here?

TISCHLER: My first job I worked for candy--made candy fillets. Candy factory. So we worked--in my, you know--I wrapped candy, you know? So when it came--I'll never forget. When it came from Pesae [ph], so the same candy. He tells me to put a label in--to put a label on the box, "Kosher." I says, "Mr. Gold--" and it was on Georgia Avenue--Georgia and [not understood]. I says, "Mr. Gold," I said, "that's hummous [ph]." He says, "Close your mouth. Mark it." Yeah. "Greenhorn." He used to call me greenhorn. "Close your mouth." So I worked it. And then the second job I worked by--by underwear. I used to work by underwear. I cleaned it and I packed it. Then (stammers) --then during this war, you know, (stammers) I had a sick husband and he never made a living. And I had small children. I had to go to work so I worked in a factory. I worked by a needle trade.

LEVINE: By what?

TISCHLER: A needle trade in the garment center. I belonged to the Amalgamate. I get a retirement. I worked thirty-five years in the shop, on the machine. I made--I made uniforms for the soldiers and ties and everything.

LEVINE: So, how did you meet your husband?

TISCHLER: My husband--I was about eighteen years old. So my husband--my--my father had a cousin. So she had a daughter. She used to go with her daughter to the country. So she used to say, "You know, my Refkec [not understood]." She worked so hard. It's a pity. She's got a vacation. At that time--vacation--I didn't belong to the union and they didn't pay enough vaca--"Take her." That time was about nine dollars a week, so my father gave her the eighteen dollars, and she--I went with her to a country there, it's (Yiddish). Years ago, you know, everything was sheep, you know? It was in a very small place, it's not fancy, no music, nothing. The woman was cooking for us.

So my husband at that time he was hacking. He used to take people to the country. He was born here. He was an American man. So, and then they had a mock marriage, so they had a mock marriage. So I p--I--I--I was standing--I made myself like a--a groom. You know, I was a groom, and he watched the mock marriage. He watched the mock marriage,

and he was keeping company with somebody. He was engaged to a girl. And he says, "From where you're coming?" I—I am, you know—I was—I was a nice—I was nicer than now. I weighed ninety-seven pounds. I had long hair. Now I'm an old lady already.

LEVINE: You look great.

TISCHLER: So—so, anyway, he says, "Can I take you home?" he said to me. So he took me, I says, "How much do you want?" He says, "I'll take you home, and then you'll give me the price." So he took me home, and I lived already in a nicer apartment. We had my father. My father bought furniture to pay out two dollars a week, you know—by Mullen's [ph], maybe you heard about it. And we had steam and we had electric and it was nice. More (Yiddish), you know? You understand (Yiddish)? It means, like, possible, you know. So he came up and he wanted a drink of water. So I went to the sink and I gave it to him. What am I going to do? So he says, "Can I call you?" I didn't know. Good looking man. So—so while he was walking, so hes—he tripped. So my sister said, "Somebody, you're going to meet somebody." He says, "Oh, yea." He says, "I'm going to meet somebody, and that will be somebody." He met me in the country there and I met him. He broke up the engagement with that woman—with that girl, because he said she wanted too much in life.

And when he came in and he saw my family, he saw my grandmother, he saw my father. So, you know, it's a family and a closeness, you know, no monkey business. And he, he had a father and mother, they were very religious. His mother used to wear a wig. His father was with a beard like that. And he started going with me. He didn't have a trade, but he went.

I went with him for about six—six months and he bought me a watch. That's an engagement—so that was an engagement. We made in Jewish an engagement. In six months—about six months after that, we got married.

LEVINE: What was your husband's name?

TISCHLER: Max.

LEVINE: Max.

TISCHLER: Max Tischler, yeah.

LEVINE: And what did you like about him?

TISCHLER: He was a very handsome man and he was very good. He was good-natured and he loved children. He loved the family. He—he—it wasn't about him like he was—he could a get any girl. So his family was against. They says, "What are you going out with a mockey [ph]? She's a mockey[ph]! What are you going out with her?" He said, "Don't worry," he said. "She's not going to be a mockey [ph] by me. I'm going to teach her. She's a nice—I like the family, I like the father, I like the mother." You know, my people were very close. Good people, you know what I mean?

LEVINE: When his family called you a mockey [ph], what did that mean?

TISCHLER: That means I'm a greenhorn. I come—I'm come here, I don't know nothing about life. A mockey[ph], that means I know-no nothing. So he says, "Never mind." He says, "That mockey [ph]." So, you know, we got married, and he used to drive a cab-taxi. Years-years ago it was terrible. We couldn't make a living. But—and he used to take me to the country every year. So I used to get my food without money because I used to work and take people to the country here and there. And that I have my son. I got a son of sixty-four years old. I have a son at fifty-four.

LEVINE: What are your sons' names?

TISCHLER: My son's name is Alvin Tischer. He's a grandfather. He's going to have his gre—his third grandchild.

LEVINE: And your other son?

TISCHLER: The other son I have is fifty-five. He's also a grandfather, and he's got a son a doctor—a chiropractor. And I have another son fifty. He's got a daughter a doctor. She works for the cancer research, my granddaughter. Yeah. So, and my baby's coming in today because every year he sends me a ticket if I should come out there. So my children said it's too much for me, you know, with planes with here and there. So he's coming here with his wife. He's going to spend a couple of days with me, but he's going to sleep in the—my other children's house. They got their own homes. They live in Oceanside. So they'll get together. We'll all get together.

LEVINE: It's just about eleven thirty, when you said your son was coming, so maybe we can try to sum up. Let me just say, is there something else you wanted to say?

TISCHLER: No, this is a letter that I got from there. And this is (papers rustling)—that's a duplicate.

LEVINE: Well, tell me what you feel most proud of in your life.

TISCHLER: I feel most proud of—I'm—I'm very happy to live in the United States. I—I pray to God every day that I get up I says, "God," I says, "thank you for making me to be alive and to have a wonderful family." I—I have a wonderful family. I have wonderful children. They take care of me. I have great—I have daughter-in-laws, they're better than daughters. They take me to doctors. They're very interested.

The baby that's coming now, he works for meds—for the medical. He works for doctors, you know. When they operate, he gives them the things and everything, you know. And he's coming with his wife to see me and he's taking off five days just to see me around. And he says, "Mother, I'll take you shopping. I'll take you out a little bit. Maybe you need some clothes." So why is it bad?

I love the United States. It can't be any better. God Bless America. Whenever they come. If they need something—a donation or something. Believe me, I wouldn't buy my own self, but I'll give. I have a granddaughter, she's got a baby herself and she takes care and help the children. She sens [ph] everyone—she sens [ph] [not understood] the children. And we do that.

LEVINE: Yeah, well, I—

TISCHLER: That's my life.

LEVINE: I think you're rich with what you have.

TISCHLER: I'm a very rich woman. Money doesn't count, sweetheart.

LEVINE: Well, I meant by rich—

TISCHLER: In your heart. It counts what you've got in your heart.

LEVINE: Yes.

TISCHLER: That's it. And if I wanna, I can sit wit you a whole day and talk.

LEVINE: I can see that.

TISCHLER: They—they—they had—they had my—they had m—my papers. This is just a duplicate, but they have the original.

LEVINE: Yes.

TISCHLER: I have three papers filled up, everything.

LEVINE: Yes, I know. Yeah. Okay.

TISCHLER: Then I had a letter from them, too.

LEVINE: Yes.

TISCHLER: So, thank you.

LEVINE: Thank you, Mrs. Tischler. I want to thank you very much.

TISCHLER: Nice knowing you.

LEVINE: For a most interesting -

TISCHLER: Any time. Like you need some more help, just get in touch with Carolyn. She'll get in touch with me.

LEVINE: Okay.

TISCHLER: And I'll give you some more.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay. Let me just sign off here. I've been speaking with Betty Tischler. We're in Far Rockaway, New York. It's August 4, 1994, and I want to thank you very, very much. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, signing off.

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