

EI-580

NAME: SHIRLEY KATZ

BIRTHDATE: MAY 20, 1908

INTERVIEW DATE: DEC. 6, 1994

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 85

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

RECORDING ENGINEER: NONE

INTERVIEW LOCATION: WORCESTER, MA

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: REBECCA MCCLURE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

COUNTRY: POLAND

AGE: 19

SHIP:

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I am here with Shirley Katz at her home in Worcester, MA. It is December 6, 1994. Now, you would be -- uh -- how old are you today?

KATZ: Today I am 85

LEVINE: 85 years old -- O.K -- at the time of the interview. You came from Poland in 1929 via Cuba.

KATZ: Yeah

LEVINE: You were nineteen years old going on twenty

KATZ: Yeah

LEVINE: [talking over Katz] O.K. well, I am very happy to meet you. I am looking forward to anything you have to remember.

KATZ: [first few words garbled] so many times when I was tied down with business and with children and I couldn't live, I couldn't go.

LEVINE: O.K. well, lets start at the beginning tell your birth date for the tape.

KATZ: My birthday?

LEVINE: Birthday

KATZ: My birthday is May the 20th

LEVINE: And you were born in 1908

KATZ: Yeah

LEVINE: And where in Poland where you born?

KATZ: Well, it was a little town before Vallcha [ph] Satuvna [ph] and there my mother she had six children. My father was a good tailor and the people that gave him work didn't have no money so they took him to the machine and I had an older brother and they both worked together. And they instead of giving them money they gave them food and that is why we always had a lot of food in our house. A lot of people -- we helped out neighbors and somehow we went on. But my father had all his family here in the United States so they said Solelish [ph] why are you gonna stay there? The children have no future, the schools are all catholic schools and they didn't let in any Jewish children, so we have a problem to get education. We couldn't get it so we had Russian refugees

teach us. So, my father and mother hired them and they were teaching us Polish and Jewish.

LEVINE: In your home – where did they [Katz speaks over Levine]

KATZ: Yeah, yeah, they came into our home and they were teaching us for quiet a few years. We learn polish, Jewish, and we were reading and writing and when we get a little older they took my father to the United States and then he was there a few years and the family started asking him why don't you bring your family. So we started to get a permit from Poland for coming through the United States, but they stopped the immigration, but through Cuba you could you could still go in. So, my brother was eighteen going on nineteen so right away they take him to the military for soldiers and my father didn't want my brother should go for a soldier so he send him away to Cuba and he was there. He married in a Poland, before he left and then he took his wife there. From Cuba we could go in , but the United States they didn't let us go. So my father sent us money and we went into Cuba – my mother with five children - and we were there for almost not quiet a year and we came in through the United States – my mother with the five children. My father had a home prepared and soon as they went off the boat they all become American citizens because we were underage.

LEVINE: Your father was a citizen?

KATZ: Yeah, yeah and my father show us, took us home and he said children I think you have to start to go to school. The first thing they want us to learn English and we went to school and I was going, I was nineteen going on twenty. I got a job. My father had a friend and he took me into Edison light factory and he taught me how to work and the first week I work there they handed me a check of twenty dollars. All America belonged to me. I brought a check and I gave it to my mother I says go buy food for the children. And I worked for

quiet a while, they liked me. I tried to learn fast to do the work right, you know, and that man says 'My Jewish name is Shengle [ph] don't be afraid to ask me questions' so he stayed and he showed me how to do it and I did it wonderful and they liked me. I was young, I wasn't as, eh, like now you know? I had blonde hair and I was – uh, I think I shrunk a little.

LEVINE: What was your personality like?

KATZ: Very good, very good. I was always the friendly person I loved people, even in Poland we had friends. If we didn't have the teachers we went into the library and people helped us with books. I read so many books while I was there. Here I try to read some books. I have Jewish books, I have Jewish paper, I read.

LEVINE: What, what language were you speaking in Poland?

KATZ: Jewish and Polish. I still remember Polish, but I never forgot Jewish and they came back in our mother's house for the real Jewish culture house. She went to buy chicken and the shurechut [ph] killed them, you know, and we always have a beautiful Jewish home. Friday we all had a Shabbat, you know. But since they died - my father died first, my father died young. He worked very hard, but he was a very good father.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

KATZ: Soliesh [ph] in Jewish. Here they called him Isreal, uh no, no Isador. Very nice.

LEVINE: Wait, excuse me. [talking in background]

KATZ: When I left Cuba I left a friend. Now we were going out since I was in Cuba, almost a year. He was from Vilna [ph]. His brother had a shoe factory and I worked for them and we were really very young. So, I said 'look I am going to go in and work and make a little money and come back and marry you'. He didn't want me to go away but I had to go in, you know. So I came back and maybe six months or eight months I was there. I went back and I married him. We married in Cuba and then it took him not even a year and he came to the United States.

LEVINE: With you? You came together?

KATZ: Yeah, no, no, no I came first and then he came.

LEVINE: Oh you married him and then you came back.

KATZ: Yeah, yeah he had to wait a certain time. So, anyway when he came in he lived with my father and mother for a while, but a job he could sew the shoes, you know, like the tops. But, for one we were always in New Jersey, all the family was in New Jersey and he couldn't get a job there. But he had to travel to long island to get a job in his line. He didn't make much, I made more then he you know. So, anyway first thing my father says to Louie 'got to become a citizen'. So, he did the first year he was here he became American citizen, you know. And we worked for a while and then my father says 'kids you don't grow, go to business' so I says 'we have no money'. He says don't worry your father is behind you. So, he gave us a little money. We bought a candy store. I had the two girls, you know, and it was not easy. We worked very hard, but we tried to make a good living and raise the children nicely, you know. Anyway, we had one store wasn't so good, the second, we sold them. And then we had a very good store to buy in a small town in New Jersey. So, [garbled] that served us candy and all kinda stuff so Louie says to him 'you know Marty I have a very good store to buy but I have no money, come on' so

he says 'Louie, sit down. How much do you need?' He said 'a thousand dollars'. He wrote a check right away and he gave us -- he trusted us -- and we bought a store and it really was neglected with a jukebox with [garbled speech] and we got, we got -- come on, Rossie take Solomon away -- and [garbled word] kids grow older they helped us a little. It was law they used to stay till [another speaker interrupts]

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [first words garbled in background] That's Shiva [ph] she wont bother you.

LEVINE: She's playing with the wires, that was the --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh --

KATZ: Yeah

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Come on Shiva [ph]

KATZ: Spritz a little water on her, she'll get it [in an aside to the unidentified speak]. You know we bought that store, we struggled for a little while and then we worked it up and made a nice big beautiful store. The kids got older and they helped us now from Kearney, New Jersey -- I'm stuck -- and we made a nice living, to send them, we were surround with schools. All the kids from school came to us for lunch and then -- uh -- grow a lot of cake ? they teach us. I used to be the cook and make all these meals. My husband was by the register. The kids helped a little, you know, when they got older. The high school was right in back of us, no? So, and we worked together for quiet a while. We were there how many years Ros [PH]?

ROS [PH]: We were there twenty years

KATZ: About thirty years

ROS [ph]: Maybe, yeah

KATZ: We send the kids to college, we paid. We bought them cars. They got jobs, she was a social worker and my younger one graduated to be a teacher – and Mel, what did Mel?

ROS: He was a chef from [garbeld name]

KATZ: He, he went to a big college to Massachusetts and he took up economics and soon he finished the college he got a job. They all worked and they all helped and there come a time that they were tired of - - we were there for more than thirty years - - we made a lot of money there, no?

ROS: Yes we did Ma.

KATZ: And we were so busy, you have no idea.

LEVINE: So it was more than a candy store, it was –

KATZ: No we had, no, we had everything that wholesaler supplied us with everything – toys, and candy, boxes cigars, boxes candy, and the people they were very good we stayed till twelve o'clock to sell papers and everything. We played around we got a little tired, you know, it was not an easy job. We were so ambitious to make money so we had to do it and with three children. Six o'clock my husband sent me home with the children. They did there homework, they prepared their clothes. We managed, you know and the family also used to help us. And then my father passed away he was only fifty-nine, no sixty-nine and Mother remained alone. So, my husband says 'look Shir we can let mama stay alone, let her - - we only had five rooms. My son had one room, the girl -- and a living room, and a dining room, and a kitchen, but it was

right in back of the store. It was convenience for that. So, we took my mother into my house. My son gave up his room for Grandma and he would sleep in - - [garbled aside] - - but anyway we managed and we went on and on and we helped my mother. My husband was so good to her. I can't begin to tell you, she was five years with us. She had sugar diabetes and she died, you know. So, anyway the family we were always together. A holiday was always in our house. We were the one, we the one the family should come. So, we never [] we took out our bed and we made a dining room and everybody was together. We lived a very happy life and the children were so good helping us, you know. So, my Rossy [ph] she took up journalism, she was so good, but a teacher at this college told have you got a rich father could help you? You have to go and go and go. So she gave it up and the best thing she did she became a social worker. She was the head of the bunch there. She was good, you know, they're very clever in school and the other one too and my son was very, very good and he was graduating they picked him up from the national foot company to come and be their salesmen, you know. And he worked there for a long time the meet a very nice girl and he married and she had a cousin and they took him in, in the real estate business and he is still there and my two daughters workin for him. He used to be very good, so when my husband reached seventy he says 'you know Shirley I am going to sell the store I'm tired of it.' I says 'Louie I didn't want to sell it because we made such a good' – we paid for the kids college, when they come out of college we bought them cars, we paid for them cause they have to go to work, you know. So, anyway I says 'Louie you sure?' I still didn't want to get rid of it. So, anyway he says 'I am too tired. I can't work anymore. If I [garbled] to twelve o'clock at night, but later on when things got really bad out we closed ten o'clock, nine o'clock as soon as the papers come in and that is how we worked and we made a lot of money. And my son was in real estate and I loved to go to Jersey Shore for a little rest, so he went away and find a house there. He says 'Ma I took a trip to Bradley Beach' -- I loved it there, you know, and the kids too -- 'I saw a house. You and Daddy go and see it and if you

like it we'll buy it. ' I came into the kitchen, it was a nice big kitchen. I didn't look for the rest. It was a new house, but the builder he got tired of it and he want to go where the rich people live, you know, different town. So, we bought it, for forty thousand. He want forty-two I says you want cash so my son went with us. He put our pride away ten thousand dollars and we paid the rest and we live there maybe eleven twelve years. We had such a good time there. The whole town was always in our house 'Shirley you have a cup of coffee?' Any event to shul in the money. He used to come back and bring three or two people 'Shirley make a breakfast for them' you know, poor people, but nice religious people and he was very active in that shul you know, it was a orthodox shul but was near, not to far from us. We could walk over there on Saturday Shabbat we went always to service and we lived a very happy life, but then they add a health club and we join in there. So, the man says 'Louie what are you doing so your sugar diabetes?' He said 'I didn't even know I had sugar diabetes' and he got, and he was a big smoke. I says let me stop smoking. He couldn't stop and it was his pleasure I didn't want him to do. He got very sick and he passed away and he was only in his seventies. So the kids come up, are you gonna be alone in the house. Sell the house and come and live with us. So, I'm here only, I think, about 5 years, but you know when you get older you can make friends like when your young. I don't know here I belong to the JCC and I join the temple and we went there for lunches, you know. Me cause they didn't have time, but lately this year I didn't feel good. I went for an operation on my stomach. The upstairs I fell down, twice, I broke a little this one, I hurt this one, but this year a whole year I'm home I can't go out, you know. And I'm getting a little older too, but I don't want to face it, but the Poland I never want to go back.

LEVINE: Why is that?

KATZ: Because it hurts so much at that time the Catholics and the Jews were against each other, very much, you know. Especially we lived in a small town, but we had like forty families and we were all the Jewish people, all in business.

LEVINE: This was in the town?

KATZ: Yeah

LEVINE: And the farms were around the town?

KATZ: Around the town, yeah, but my father had to go and leave us home. He had to go out and make a living and bring us food you know, so, but then the family send the money and he went - -in the best thing – he came to the United States, you know. We were older. My two brothers – yeah – my two brothers went to day school, they made, eh, public school and high school.

LEVINE: In this country?

KATZ: Yeah, yeah in this country, but we didn't have money to send them to college. But they all worked they all have jobs and here I was saddle with my children and I gave them the best I could. We couldn't get the education like my children could and they were willing to work , you know, and really they were very good and that's how we [word not clear]. This one got married, my son got married and the younger daughter she had a nice boyfriend and she finished high school so she wanted so much to go college. So, Evon [ph] talked of marrying but she says if you want to wait until I finish college then I'll and he didn't want to wait – nice boy – and since then she never find another boy like him she gave him up. She goes out [words garbled] but she's also very close with my son. The two of them they all together they getting along fine. Plus, in real estate lately wasn't too good, you know, but a still my son has two children in college. One went out – one is graduating this, the

daughter, and the boy, brilliant, eh I want to show it to you. He made, eh, for the first year – he went to Worcester College and he made his first year a scholarships and he paid his own tuition.

LEVINE: Wonderful

KATZ: A lady just – a lady came over to my grandson and said: ‘Yeah, Aaron, my son went into this school and he took up music like you and he looks like you’ and she handed him a check of two thousand dollars. He kissed her and he said anytime you want to see me you welcome but he goes now to Massachusetts College for Music. Great musician – he writes music and sings and he, I think he make his own song up and the school called him the second Elvis Presley. [words garbled] she took away the book . I have his picture.

LEVINE: O.K. we’ll look later after the –

KATZ: Yeah, in the book, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

KATZ: And he is a great musician.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

KATZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Let’s go back to when you were living in Poland for a minute. Your father’s name was Isador and your maiden name?

KATZ: Shandel [ph]

LEVINE: Shandel. O.K. now, um, what was your mother's name?

KATZ: Ena, Ena

LEVINE: E-N-A?

KATZ: Ena like you don't say Ena.

LEVINE: And how about her maiden name? Do you know what that was?

KATZ: On my mother's? Ena – oh, oh wait a minute. I forgot. You mean like her second name?

LEVINE: Her, yes before she married your father.

KATZ: Oh, I think Hachmark [ph] or something like that. See, I forgot.

LEVINE: O.K.

KATZ: Really

LEVINE: That's alright. What about your brothers and sisters. What were there names?

KATZ: Well, uh, they also – I was older than them.

LEVINE: You were the oldest?

KATZ: My brother was the oldest, you know. I was the next and my two sisters they were two years younger than me. One was her Ester and one was Sarah.

LEVINE: And what about your brother's name?

KATZ: My brother his name was Eitrich [ph], Eitrich [ph]. That's the oldest one. One was Seimech [ph] and the other was Manlow [ph] – the youngest one. The eldest one is still alive. He lives in Florida. He lived there with his wife and because she was sick so they moved away from New Jersey to Florida, but she died and he is over there – he comes once and a while to visit us you know. But nobody of us went back, only one sister went back.

LEVINE: Why did she go back?

KATZ: I didn't like it. I hated 'em because they refused us education and they were a little against the Jewish people at that time. Now they say Poland changed just like any other country changed its religion not to be so much against each other, you know. So I think but I would still not go. I went away I said goodbye forever, you know, because they hurtin' us. [words garbled] and we could go to school and learn a little Polish, you know, but they had at that time religion in the school, you know, and they didn't want to mix with Jewish people or the Jewish children. So, we had like our town belonged to us because we had all business, you know, all the Jewish people were in business. Now I read in the Jewish paper that the Polish people asking the Jewish to come back because they were the business people you know, they had like in Vaucher [ph] a maursher [ph] covski [ph] gats [ph] all beautiful windows with beautiful clothes with fur coats with everything but as they start running because know [word garbled] coming so they all got little rid of their business and they run away whenever they had a chance, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember, ah, anything about the First World War?

KATZ: No, I don't think so.

LEVINE: No, do you and do you

KATZ: I must have been a child in the First World War.

LEVINE: And do you remember seeing any kind of violence or any

KATZ: Well, I'll tell you. The most of our young life we used to live in the woods. Was always if not the Russians attacked Poland so the Germans attacked and they didn't want the families to live in their home they send us out to the woods. We lived most of your young life in the woods with no clothes and no nothing, you know, till they stopped the war we went back to our houses. That was our youth and that's how we were raised, but thank god we had good parents and they watched us and we grow up to know for a better life. So, and then we were older and we understand our education means, so, we were so happy that my father went. We know that we have a chance to leave Poland. We couldn't go here we couldn't go there. You have to stay in your own little, uh, like you had, like you had your home, you know. You were afraid at night to go out. People shooting the soldiers and this and that, you know. Was always war between Germany and Russia and Poland and thank god we got to go away and come to the United States. I'm telling you I was so happy I said to my father: 'The best thing you did in your life that you went away and you brought us here.' My father was a very devoted father, you know.

END SIDE A, TAPE ONE. BEGIN SIDE B, TAPE ONE.

LEVINE: Did father ever have to serve in the army? When he was in Poland, did he –

KATZ: I don't think so. I don't know because we lived in a small town. He comes from a bigger town Oslof [ph] and he was learnin'. My grandma had a bakery and the other one next to grandma they all had their own houses. It was a tailor and my father came from this town to this man to learn to be a tailor, but he learn the whole thing –measuring, and uh, make the whole gown or like a suite

or a jacket or warm jacket. He learned all of the – and he was teaching my brother to do the same thing and they both worked together. My brother is a young kid he used to go to hielow [ph] and then come and work with my father, help him doing the work he has to do and that is how we made a living, you know. It wasn't easy and you know Europe they didn't have no movie to go so they were all just home and that is why they had a lot of children – nothing else to do.

LEVINE: What did they do for fun? Was there anything?

KATZ: Uh?

LEVINE: What did they do for enjoyment?

KATZ: Well not much. There was a little movie I think, but they didn't want to go out at night. My parents didn't let us go out, you know, but they had like Jewish clubs and in the library that we used to go they used to have like singing and dancing all the Jewish people were together. Now they say it's different they even marry the Polish girls, you know, the Jewish boys.

LEVINE: But they always kept separately - separate you and the.

KATZ: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: How about your Grandma, what do you remember about her?

KATZ: Grandma she wore a kufka [ph] you know. My mother wore a shietle [ph] and they had a bakery and they sold baked goods and that's how – the men didn't worked there, they didn't have to go to work – so the women had little bakeries and they sold it, how much do you need? And that is how they made a living, you know.

LEVINE: Did you ever do any things with your Grandma? Did you go places with her?

KATZ: Yeah, no, no place to go. Where could we go? We couldn't go anywhere, but I – a lady picked me up from a yald [ph] good store. She says: "Shiendle [ph] Albert, help him in the store and I'll pay her a few.' She gave me eight zloters [ph] or five zloters [ph]. Polish they got the zloty and I worked with her. I was maybe ten years old and afterwards she closed the store I had to go home with her and help her clean her house. I was washing the floors and she was dusting and that's what she gave me eight zloters [ph]. I used to eat with her and she used to like me because I was very friendly to people. I made more sales more than she did.

LEVINE: What was her name?

KATZ: Her name, eh, Golda and her husband he never came into the store. He was going to the, you know, the, eh, calluskutan [ph] and he would sitin' and play a whole day and she and I would stay in the store selling things, you know, but they had one daughter - I don't remember – and then she got married and I was invited to the wedding. They had a nice Jew - they had a nice big home, you know – Jewish wedding with all the Hasidim, you know with a strimul [ph] you should see them. It was a different life.

LEVINE: What was it like – a real Jewish wedding in Poland? When you were.

KATZ: Well, the, the woman dance separate and the men dance separate and they had like, oh, getting' together and jumpin' but not together with the women. All separate like, you know. It was different and when I came here I had to get used to a different life complete.

LEVINE: Can you think of anything else that was different there?

KATZ: There?

LEVINE: Yeah.

KATZ: Well, at night we didn't go out much we were afraid because there were always the Polish with the guns, with the marchin' with the soldiers. So, our parents didn't let us out much. We didn't have much recreation the only thing we had is the library. There we used to meet. There we used to have entertainment and there we all young people got together. Thank God for that and then a lot of books. We had so many good books, you know. I remember I read about Tolstoy, you know and what else a lot. I forgot already, you know. I read so many and a lot of shulumosh [ph] books. I have a girlfriend that she gave me two shulveleim [ph] books in Jewish and I read them and I even worked here in a thrift shop and there were Russian lady and she said: 'Shirley, were can I get I get a Jewish book for my mother?' I says: 'I'll bring you one.' So I used to give it to her and she used to read, but now when I got sick I didn't go – I worked here in the thrift shop – I gonna go back soon as I get back on my feet, you know. I'm going to go back to work. I love to work I don't like to sit home, you know. So, anyway.

LEVINE: You went to libraries and you were with young people in Poland.

KATZ: Yeah, yeah and the Jewish people. I had a boyfriend [words not understandable] from my town, so he says: 'Shirley you gonna send for me?' I says: 'I don't know I can't promise you. I'm going there I'll see how things is gonna be' but then I meet this fellow in, in Cuba and I gave up Thaldarba [ph].

LEVINE: You liked this one better?

KATZ: Yeah, it would be too hard to send the money to come you know and this one was a little different.

LEVINE: What did you like about this one?

KATZ: This one I'll tell you. He used – my mother was verasan [ph] she used to cook like suppers and I invited him for supper and he got so close to us that he really says: 'Shirley, would you marry me?' I says: 'I don't know I'm going in now. See how the situation will be with me and we could make a living.' He says: 'Don't worry we'll make a living.' He was also a business man. His parents in Vilna [ph] had a big estate and from, from the older, from their parent and if one day should come here - but they were so religious the father says 'Were so lucky [words garbled] for America.' They didn't want to come here. So, Itla [ph] got arrested then, you know. We tried to locate them. He had a sister in Vilna and she was a teacher. They locate her, not her, in the Holocaust book we find her name that she was a teacher and she was sent from one town to another to teach the Jewish children. But a few years ago my son tried and then we didn't hear from her nothing. My husband if he wouldn't be sick he would go down there. He want to take my younger, my son, and go down and see them, you know. But he was sick and he couldn't travel. Doctor didn't let him travel. So then later on, I think I have the Holocaust book and I lend it to my girlfriend. Did you hear of Ruth Savage? She was a very active because she was young and now she doesn't feel good and we are the best friend and she got Jewish books from me she gave me – and I – and she gives me the Jewish paper. She gets it and then she gives it to me, you know. The Jewish Foreva [ph].

LEVINE: Now you mean?

KATZ: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I go every Saturday to see her. She had a stroke and her feet don't go no more. So, she can't come to see me so I go to – but she was very active in the Jewish community she and I used to teach Jewish children how to read – I knew how to read and write Jewish, you know, and they used

to teach 'em. And now they want her to come back but she can't walk. So, I go to see her. Very, very lovely person, you know and she

LEVINE: She was from town – was she from, uh, Poland?

KATZ: No, no, no I meet her here in the JCC and we become very good friend and I told her that I read Jewish, so I helped her with the children. I read and she – she was born here in the United States– and I helped her, but since she got sick and I got sick so somebody else took it over. You have no connections with the JCC?

LEVINE: [makes sound indicating no]

KATZ: No, nothing.

LEVINE: No.

KATZ: In Worcester?

LEVINE: [makes sound indicating no]

KATZ: No.

LEVINE: I live in New York and .

KATZ: Oh, oh, oh.

LEVINE: So tell, so tell me now um, do you remember anything about dishes, food that your Mother made when you were in Poland?

KATZ: Well, she, she did a lot of baking. Bread you had to bake your own and *challah*. She made a *challah* was that big. You can't get a *challah* like this over here.

LEVINE: About three feet long?

KATZ: Yeah, braided, you know. She used to put in eggs and yeast and you should see the way it grow up. Friday night that *challah* was on the table. My father made *kiddush* and we'd all have to take *mahabrewa* [ph] and take a little wine to drink, you know. My mother used to *benshlicht* [ph] every Friday and all the children had to be around to sup.

LEVINE: What would be a supper? A Friday night supper?

KATZ: Well chicken soup, fish - gefilte fish that my father brought it in and he brought the live fish and brought it and he put it in the bathtub! They used to swim around, you know and my mother couldn't kill them. She says: 'Sholiesh [ph] go and kill the fish cause I'm not going to do it' and then eicht [ph] and white fish and she put it together. It was delicious. You can't get now a piece of fish like that. Fish, chicken soup, and chicken and the *challah* and cake everything she used to bake herself, you know.

LEVINE: What was the house like where you lived?

KATZ: Well, it wasn't too big of a house. They had two bedrooms and a kitchen and at night they put up a folding bed and in the kitchen they also had one bed of my brother asleep in there, you know and we slept on – they had iron little bed and they put it up and we slept two in a bed. But I remember they were all small they had those children's beds, you know and the children sleep there and we slept in the bigger bed. But it wasn't too much room, you know, but everybody had their own little house.

LEVINE: Was it made out of stone?

KATZ: I think of wood.

LEVINE: Wood.

KATZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

KATZ: Every pascha [ph] everything of the house went outside and we painted out the whole house and we put new straw for the children to sleep. Every pashca [ph] you know that was once a year we painted the house and we lived pretty comfortable you know as long as you had food. That was the main important thing, you know.

LEVINE: So you, you, you had local, the things that were grown around the village

KATZ: Uh huh

LEVINE: The kind of farms whatever they grew that's what

KATZ: Yeah, well it was a few miles away but when my father came the load of food came. Then the farmers helped him get a, a somewhere to put it. They dig, the ground, the and they put it in the ground and you could take it a whole year it keep nice and fresh cabbage, potatoes, and uh onions, and they used to bring us eggs. They used - one, one day my father walks in with a cow, a live cow. I says where are we going to keep it and he says don't worry. So we had a little porch and we made it warm and there was the cow. In the mornings my mother went out with a pail and brought the fresh milk and gave every child a

glass of fresh milk from the cow. That was our beginning of the breakfast, you know. She had eggs she had oats from the farm, everything from the farm, fruit, they were so good to us because my father was the only good tailor around that he could do their things that they needed, you know and they loved him, but he went away there for a whole week. He didn't come home at night. Only Friday night he came home for Shabbat, you know.

LEVINE: What would he do when he went away for a week?

KATZ: He was sewing clothes for them.

LEVINE: He would go to houses and he

KATZ: One farmer came and took my father and my brother with a machine and he was stayin' his house and make clothes for the whole family. Even for ladies he used to sew. He sew all our little things you know.

LEVINE: What would you wear when you were growing up? What kinds of clothes would you wear?

KATZ: Well, little skirts with blouses, sweaters, you know. The also the women used to crochet. They made little sweaters so they gave them for the children, some sweaters and they used to bring little leftover material and made us little skirts, little blouses, you know. He used to do the sew and I used to help him sewing up the buttons you know and make button holes. It was a different life. It wasn't easy believe me but we live in a way we remain my mother and the five children and I was helpin' her with the cookin' with the cleanin'. You know how we did our laundry?

LEVINE: [makes sound indicating no]

KATZ: We had to warm up the water on the stove and put it in a big round, eh, eh what do you call it? Balase [ph] they called it. They washed it with a hot water then they took they clothes and they went to the eh, we had a little lake and we rinsed it out there and that's how we did our laundry. How did we get a bath? She used water at night with chisel [ph] and everybody stand and she washed us and that's how she gave us a bath, you know. We, we grew up and was it was nothing – I was never sick a day in my life when we were in the business, but I gave up the store. I'm sick all the time.

LEVINE: What about medical care? In, in Poland? If somebody got sick

KATZ: Well, it was a uptach [ph], uptach [ph] an afelsha [ph] we never had a doctor. My mother had really eleven children but five or six died because we didn't have we couldn't get no doctor no medication. They used to have little uptach [ph] you know and we used to give them cough medicine but something more they couldn't do it so five children died, you know, because of no doctor no medication, but we were lucky because we survived like that, you know, and my mother from so many children thank God she was never sick. She, we were here together for a long time and that's how life when on. We were a really happy family.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you left for the United States? How did you feel when you were leaving?

KATZ: I was glad I was [word garbled]. I was so glad to leave I didn't like there.

LEVINE: And do you remember leaving uh, Soldovna? Do you remember

KATZ: Oh yeah I still remember.

LEVINE: What was it like when you left?

KATZ: It was a small town.

LEVINE: Yeah

KATZ: It was a lot of Polish people that they had business, you know but they had like grocers. They brought their things from the farm to sell. So we used to go out and buy carrots or something you know. They had their own little place where they always used to be in the same place.

LEVINE: These were the Polish people?

KATZ: Yeah, yeah, yeah but some were good and some – we helped neighbors, Polish neighbors with food because if we had a little too much we gave it to them. They didn't have the money to go buy food you know.

LEVINE: Well when you left do you remember packing up to go and leaving the town?

KATZ: Well, dear I'll tell you. They told us if we move from our town near Valsher [ph] we'll get maybe [static on tape words muffled] so we sold our house to a Polish people and we lived in a little apartment near Valsher [ph] we tried to get a visa but we didn't get it anyway until we went out to Cuba.

LEVINE: So what ship did you take when you left?

KATZ: I, I think the name of the ship was Arorya. I think.

LEVINE: And that's the ship that took you to Cuba?

KATZ: [Levine talking over Katz] That's the ship that goes to Cuba from Cuba we took another ship, uh, eh. I don't remember the name, its so long. It was a small ship and we went in, in about two days we were in America.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you got to Cuba? Any things that you saw that were different?

KATZ: Cuba at that time was not Castro, that's Machado and he had it on the American style. A lot of Jewish people, the business people they came into Cuba. You should see the business they had there. A friend of our, my husband, had a friend Sacha and he came and he opened a little store and he got rich because he was the only one.

LEVINE: What kind of store?

KATZ: Leather goods for shoes. All the shoe makers - there were a lot of shoe makers there - they all came to buy the goods from that man, Sacha Epstein. He has a daughter and she still lives - she was born in Cuba - and she married a very nice man and Sacha came here and she and her, her husband's parents came here and they all came from Polish countries but that Epstein he was a friend of my husband he was also at Vilna [ph] and he brought the girl he left in Vilna [ph] he brought her and she had one daughter, brilliant girl. In Cuba you could get education you could get anything and she raised her. She was a music teacher, Epstein. They still in Brooklyn. We went to see her when her mother was coming here they invited us because we were friends so we went to see her. I forgot the number they bought a beautiful house and they are consultants for business, her husband was Eric, very educated man.

LEVINE: What was your experience like in Cuba?

KATZ: In Cuba? Not much you know. Like we know we're not going to remain there but they had Jewish clubs, centers for literature. My husband went up. A girl couldn't go out herself, so he took me out there we used to go to dances there. I was young. I was only in my twenties and he used to bring me home and I enjoyed life there. It was freedom like here in the United States but then Castro took over it changed you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Do you remember arriving in New York on the ship when you came?

KATZ: Yeah, and we went out of the boat people were standing there and greeting us and I says – I think it was on a Saturday – good Shabbat [ph], good Shabbat [ph], good Shabbat [ph] we shaked hands with a lot of people and so many times I want to go and see her but I was so tied down with three children, with the store I could never – then people come in and I wasn't in the store, where is Shirley? You know, where is Shirley? I used to cook. I had a brother-in-law butcher and he used to deliver the best of meat and I used to cook and the people: what have you got today Shirley? I always make every day something different.

LEVINE: When you came into the harbor, the New York harbor. Did you see the Statue of Liberty the first time when you came?

KATZ: We were lookin', we were lookin' but my father didn't let us make a step without him you know and we were so in a hurry. He had somebody that came and pick us up in a car.

LEVINE: Did you go to Ellis Island? Do you remember that part?

KATZ: That be, we looked around all over but they didn't let us a minute out of their eyesight you know because we were young and we were – we had, we

brought some clothes to come in, nice clothes you know and we didn't have to go to the beauty parlor my hair was so curly, blonde you know but now.

LEVINE: Did you, do you think you went to Ellis Island? Do you remember that at all?

KATZ: I don't think it's so many years you know but it's so many time I said to my husband you drive lets go but it comes to Sunday he was so tired so we tried to rest up or we had that, that Epstein, they, and we used to go into New York see a show and go to [garbled hard to understand speech].

LEVINE: Who picked you up? Who met you when you -?

KATZ: Well, my husband had here a very rich uncle and when he used to come in the beginning, when my husband came he used to come every weekend to New York for a treat, you know, and we went every Sunday.

LEVINE: So you weren't married when you –

KATZ: Yeah I married I went back to Cuba and I married him.

LEVINE: Oh, but when you first came from Cuba who met you? You came what with –

KATZ: My father, my family.

LEVINE: Your father met you?

KATZ: Yeah, yeah. My father always took care of us you know because alone he says – he didn't drive – they always used to with a train or with a bus.

LEVINE: Where were you living?

KATZ: I was living in my father's house.

LEVINE: Where was that?

KATZ: In New Jersey, Belmont area. I still remember where we used to live there a very nice landlady she had a three family house and they had a big apartment so my father – it wasn't much to rent, you know

LEVINE: Wait, let me, let me just say we are at the end of this tape and I want to stop it and change the tape, so wait just one minute.

KATZ: Oh O.K. alright go ahead. Maybe you want to drink something.

LEVINE: Wait just let me say this is the end of tape one and I'm speaking with Shirley Katz.

END SIDE B, TAPE ONE. BEGIN SIDE A, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: O.K. now we are beginning with tape two and I'm talking with Shirley Katz.

KATZ: My mother, eh, my grandma's son was my mother's brother and he had a butcher. They had a little duplicate house and the brother lived together with my grandma, you know. I mean they had their own little apartment.

LEVINE: Uh huh

KATZ: And he had a butcher store, ayatka [ph] you know in the backyard and he used to kill cows, kosher, kosher butcher for the Jewish family and when he killed a cow and you know the whole, like the liver and the uh,uh

LEVINE: Heart?

KATZ: No, no the liver comes with a lot of things, you know. So he used to take the whole, lingalabel [ph], the ling, the lungs, and the liver and he brought it to my mother [aside to someone else in the room in another language], no, sorry. She used to grill it on the kitchen stove on some coal. She used to grill the liver and chop it up and gave us on sandwiches and the lungs she used to bake like little bulkus [ph], you know, little rows and the lung was inside chopped up with onions and a little shmalda [ph], they used a lot of - my father used to bring also from the farm, uh, gunsilagook [ph] the - how do you call it here – the goose and my mother used to take it to the shriehadesh [ph] kill it and take the fats and make all these cookies she used to bake little rolls and fill with this liver and the lungs, you know. It was delicious. They used to make their own food. You couldn't go out and buy food there you know. That's why he brought the cow home we should have milk isn't that something? And they all survived and thank God I was never a sick a day in my life. A cold sometimes yeah I took out my tonsils when I came here cause there is no doctor there, yeah, my father did everything for us.

LEVINE: Was he a tailor here too?

KATZ: Uh?

LEVINE: Was your father a tailor when he –

KATZ: Yeah sure, yeah. Here he made good money. He worked in stores that they sell all suites, men's suites and when they have to be altered he did the alteration and he got good pay, you know. He worked, since he was in America he worked in one place and that's why we couldn't move away from Newark because all these big stores were in Newark. He was a good provider. He loved my mother. The life it was so beautiful, enya [ph] how do you feel

today? You know, and they were very good parents. You don't find parents like this now. I try to be like them. I was very good to my children and that's –

LEVINE: What did you learn from your parents that you tried to do with your children?

KATZ: Well, I learned a good part of family life to love your father and mother and love your children and that's why we are together. Soon as my husband died my children said Ma, you cannot be alone so sell the house and come and live with us. But young and old I don't think it is a good combination, sometimes maybe I'm wrong, but I can't help it. I'm sick and they have to do so much for me I try to avoid – at night I don't sleep good and they give me sleeping pill and everything but I can't sleep at night. I take one Tylenol a lot of Tylenol sometimes I fall asleep and you know I can't eat much at night I'm getting hungry. So, they give me some crackers I should take with me and my daughter makes me a little milkshake and a little juice and I don't sleep half of the night. I don't know I tell the doctor should give me sleeping pill but he don't want to give it to me, you know. He says it's dangerous. So the nights I don't know I could jump off the roof and that's how it is.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about when you first came, when you first came to this country –

KATZ: [Katz talking over Levine words garbled] every minute and the first thing my father says is go to school. Learn English. I went every night, to night school and in the day I worked. I was the oldest.

LEVINE: What did you do for you –

KATZ: I worked in Edison light factory, you know, to put the vials together and he showed me a few times and he watched me, my father's friend was the manager there. I was lucky, you know and I worked at five and dime the people were very nice to me, really and then I went to work on dresses in

Lighton [ph] and my father says you know children you're not going to grow by working and making the few dollars and you don't make much I have to go every day to New York my mother watched my – the oldest. My father was so crazy about – she had red hair, long hair and I took her to school. She and a little boy won the first prize for beautiful children, you know, and my father loved – she was a baby. If she cried he was before me to see why is the baby crying. I says maybe daddy maybe she's wet, maybe this. He loved her, you know. I was the first one, no my brother Est [ph] eh, he- they had a boy when they were married, you know but she lived with him in Cuba they had a hard life he died when he was a young man from over working himself.

LEVINE: Do you remember the Depression? Do you remember when the Depression, well you came in 1929 so it must have been hard times.

KATZ: People couldn't get no job and he wasn't – but my father always had a job, he always worked, he always brought money and food to the house that we shouldn't be hungry, you know, because he was really he had a good trade in his hand and there wasn't many in the United States that they could take a garment and fix the sleeves, the pants, and if it's busts too big they took it – I don't know [words garbled with static on tape] you know. But he was always a good provider.

LEVINE: Was your mother happy in this country?

KATZ: Oh yeah, she was happy as soon as we came into Cuba, you know. Cuba was also on the same system like America but when Castro came in changed all like the Russians, you know. But I think the Russians go now back to normal life, don't they you think so?

LEVINE: Hopefully, yeah.

KATZ: I read all the papers and I love our President. I think he's the greatest.

LEVINE: Why do you think so?

KATZ: Uh, you don't think so?

LEVINE: Yeah, I think so too. Why do you think so?

KATZ: I think because he does a lot for the old people and the youngsters. The youngsters should follow him and go to school and not be in the street shootin' people like they do now here in the United States, you know. With guns, they try to collect the guns I read all the papers.

LEVINE: Do you think there have been other Presidents you have really liked besides Clinton?

KATZ: I liked Roosevelt a lot. If not for Roosevelt they wouldn't have the social security and that's why I really admired him, he left something good in this country and believe me when I was in the hospital and everything was covered through Medicare I was so happy. I got these glasses last week I have to go for an adjustment. Two dollars in the follow up clinic, you know. I had mine for quite a few years so he says don't forget you have to come every year, no every two years, and pay only two dollars but I have to go for a little adjustment. Here is bothers me. And you couldn't get in any other country old people like they are getting here and that's why I am very thankful, you know. I remember I here have two aunts and two uncles and my grandpa from my fathers side was here too and my grandma was a very active lady so she worked in a Jewish, eh, old age home. She was old but she could do things. Friday night I had to go and help her cover all the table with white cloth and put on the light. The people who stay there come and they bench there Friday night for lacubish [ph] Shabbat, you know and I helped her and don't dare you

come and not bring Grandma a present, you know. We didn't have much money but we brought her some fruit, oranges, apples but my grandpa died first. He was such a good man. All the family was really good to each other and helped each other. They lived in a different town, Ostrof [ph] was not too far away from Laus [ph] and we always used to go and see them. And they were in Poland.

LEVINE: Do you remember any times with your Grandpa when you were in Poland?

KATZ: Oh yeah my grandfather used to work in a beer garden. They used to produce the beer. A factory that they made beer.

LEVINE: A brewery uh huh.

KATZ: And he used to deliver them to the town that we used to live in Soldovna [ph]. He always used to come in and stay with us. He took one grandchild and worked for him [words garbled], you know, and my other sisters too, but one of my sisters died and one lives in North Carolina with her daughter. I was – they were here they come in here in the spring to visit me. She has a very good daughter. She keeps her in a – it's like a home for the old age and she pays her rent and they cook – eat there at restaurant and everything. She also had very bad arthritis all her life. Me thank god I was never sick a day in my life, you know.

LEVINE: Do you think that the fact that you came here as an immigrant, the fact that you started out in Poland and then you came

KATZ: Yeah

LEVINE: Do you think that made a big difference for you?

KATZ: It made a lot different. It give us courage to go to school, to learn English. In one year we were all talking English, reading and writing, you know? And work. I always got a job. People used tell me: Oh, how you getting a job? I says I go in and tell them I want to work. I didn't care what it was – in a factory here and there, you know. And I always used to work, but only for a few years. My father was smart and he send us to business. My other sister's husband was a butcher. Also was a good life. He made – they had their own house, you know, and they lived very nice. She had also two daughter. And he died of the – the disease, the Alzheimer's disease like Regan. I read about him. Regan could afford, but my brother-in-law couldn't afford. So, anyway, he died a young man, you know.

LEVINE: What do you feel proud of? That you did?

KATZ: I feel proud of the freedom America has. They tried that all the people should have a home, food, and if they can't get somebody provides it for them, you know. Especially, when I was in the hospital so many old people sick and Medicare provides and pays, me too. I was there and now they send me a nurse. While I was there I got a little pimple on my back and they tried to get rid of it. They still come with medication [words garbled] and they treatin' it every day. How did I get it? They. . .it was one nurse – she was a mean thing – she was a retired nurse and she says you have to go and sit in that chair, the reclining chair, she put me in there for five hours. And while sitting there and I couldn't move I rubbed me a little and I can't get rid of it. I can't sit down much so the nurses come into the house. I didn't want to stay in the hospital. They come into the house and they treatin' it. She says it gets smaller, but it takes time and I got to have patience for it, you know. So, I am sufferin' with a little pimple in the back. Would you like a little drink? A little soda?

LEVINE: Um, O. K. [Katz talking over Levine]. Well is there anything else you would like to say before we close? Before we finish?

KATZ: Well, I think, I can't think (laughs). I was so sick, you know, being in the hospital. I came home. I says thank god I am home. So, I'm helpin' the kids with making dinner and I go with them shopping. They don't know what to buy because I always used to take care of the cookin' and shoppin' and I used to go out on Tuesday to the Temple Emanuel for a lunch, you know. But I couldn't go this year. I, my feet don't go.

LEVINE: Well I want to thank you very much. This has been a wonderful time (microphone noise). I thank you. I hope you feel better soon. So you can go back out [Katzs talking over Levine]

KATZ: I hope so. I have to see you again, maybe.

LEVINE: Thank you.

KATZ: I want to show you. The Jewish paper I got. You want to see it?

LEVINE: Yeah, O. K. Let me just take the mic off. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I have been talking to Shirley Katz and this is the end and we are on tape two and I am signing off.

KATZ: Now if you come next time I'll be maybe in better shape and I'll talk to you. I have books I want show you I have eh . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

