

EI-588

ROSE TOBIAS SHAW

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POLAND, 1930

AGE 10 YEARS

PASSAGE ON "THE SS GEORGE WASHINGTON"

PORT: GDYNIA, POLAND

RESIDENCES: STUTTGART, GERMANY, RUDA PABJANITZ (village outside of LODZ, POLAND and HARLEM, NYC; THE BRONX

LEVINE: Today is January 20, 1995. I'm here at the Ellis Island Oral History Studio with Rose Tobias Shaw, who is here visiting New York from London, where she lives. Mrs. or Ms. Shaw?

TOBIAS: Mrs. Mrs.

LEVINE: Mrs. Shaw...

TOBIAS: Yes.

LEVINE: ...came from Poland to the United States in 1930 when she was ten years of age. Well, it's a rare pleasure to have you here today...

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...someone living outside of the United States...

TOBIAS: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: ...who came through Ellis Island.

TOBIAS: Yes.

LEVINE: Why don't we start at the beginning? If you wouldn't say where you were born...

TOBIAS: Right.

LEVINE: ...and your birth date, please?

TOBIAS: Right. I was born September 7th, 1919 in Stuttgart of Polish parents - Polish-Jewish parents - by the mere fact that my father ran away from military service in Poland, because for a young Jew to join the Polish Army was worse than death because it's a continuous torture. They don't kill you quickly. And my father left Poland for Stuttgart and my mother followed him. They married in Germany, and three children were born there - myself, I'm the oldest. I had a brother, Nathan, who was the middle, and my sister Anne, who lives in New Paltz, New York. My brother, unfortunately, died in Poland. We

lived in a village outside of Lodz, which was called Ruda Pabjanitz. It was a small town. I don't know why my mother chose to have us live there because...

LEVINE: Could you spell that, please?

TOBIAS: Yeah, I think it's spelled R-U-D-A P-A-B-J-A-N-I-T-Zed, I think. I think. This was af...in 1927, my father went to America, where his older brother, David, had already immigrated. And he sent for him and he was going to...my father was going to send for the family afterwards. So when he went to America from Bremen, we went back to Poland because our grand...my maternal and fraternal parents were...grandparents were in Poland. And they lived in the ghetto. It...Baletter Platz in Lodz and around Baletter Platz were the...was the ghetto. And around the ghetto were the mills where most of the men and women worked, because Lodz was a great textile town, a great textile industry. So, as I said before, why we lived outside of town in a little village...I remember going to school and I still have photographs and I was...I and another girl, Dora, - God, I don't know why I remember it. And we were the only two Jewish children in school and all the boys, you know, with their crewcuts. They were all bare feet, except for us. I can't remember if the girls were bare feet, but we all had braids. And the Galech and the priest, it was a Catholic school. And we lived there and my father...I can't remember now whether he sent us ten dollars a week or ten dollars a month, but whatever, that made us rich.

Perhaps that's why, because we had...I can't remember whether we had a house or a flat or an apartment. And...but in the apartment, we had a wooden stove that was lit by setting two pieces of straw alight. Unfortunately, my brother's nightshirt caught fire and then I remember he went to hospital and, as I now understand, gangrene set in and they had no cures. Anyway, he's buried in Poland and in 1930, my father sent for us, so there was my sister, Anne and myself and my mother. I think there was something then called...you would know better than I, the 2% Johnson Quota Law, probably named after a Senator or Congressman, whoever passed it. I think what it meant is that 2% came from Poland, 2% from Russia, 2% from Ukraine, and Hungary, Romania, wherever. And in 1930, we left Lodz, went to Warsaw, I seem to remember, by train. Went to Gdynia or Gdansk. I don't know which it's called now, which was a port. We took a small boat, I seem to remember, to join the S.S. George Washington, which I remember we said "S.S. George Washington, United States Lines," that's what we called it. And we landed in New York. Perhaps we made one stop in Southampton, England. I can't remember.

LEVINE: Well, before we talk about this country, let me just go back and fill in. What was your father's name?

TOBIAS: My father's name was Faivisch, which was Americanized to Phillip.

LEVINE: How would you spell Faivisch?

TOBIAS: F-A-I-V-I-S-C-H.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

TOBIAS: My mother's name was Yetka, Y-E-T-K-A, and in America, it became Yetta.

LEVINE: And how about her maiden name? Do you remember that?

TOBIAS: Klutzkowski. Yes, that was her maiden name.

LEVINE: K?

TOBIAS: With a k. K-L-U-T-Zed-K-O-W-S-K-I.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you were in Germany up until 1927?

TOBIAS: No. Yes, perhaps '28. I can't remember how long we remained in Germany after my father left for America.

LEVINE: Do you have any memories about life there?

TOBIAS: No, not...I just seem to remember there was a fountain with a statue with a silver cup and where people could drink water. Why I have that memory, I haven't a clue.

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: Yeah, nothing, nothing dramatic took place at the fountain or to me as a result of drinking the water (she laughs).

LEVINE: (She laughs)

TOBIAS: But then I...

LEVINE: And so, but both sets of grandparents were in Poland.

TOBIAS: Were in Poland, yes.

LEVINE: Do you have memories of them at all?

TOBIAS: I don't have memories of my maternal grandparents. I don't know why. I just don't. But I have memories of my paternal grandparents - my grandfather and my grandmother. I'm told I look like my grandmother and I have some photos of my grandmother. It's difficult to tell the color of her hair, because she's wearing a sheitl. That's a wig, you know, like all Orthodox women did in that day.

LEVINE: Can you remember any experiences with her or where they lived or...?

TOBIAS: Well, yes. They lived...they lived in Lodz in the ghetto, and I remember when you went into their house, it had an arch. And then there was a cobblestone courtyard and all the apartments, the stairs leading up to the apartments were around there. And I think we had cousins also living there and Ruda Pabjanitz was not that far from Lodz. I remember I once walked it. I followed the trolley car line and so it was...it wasn't very far. And it was, you know, totally Jewish. I can't remember any Gentiles living there.

LEVINE: Was living in the ghetto, at that time, a benign kind of existence? I mean, was there any negative attached to...?

TOBIAS: No. If there was, I was too young. I was too young to be cognizant of it, you know. It's the only thing I knew. And I remember all the wonderful food we used to eat...oh, you know.

LEVINE: What do you...

TOBIAS: Oh.

LEVINE: Which one...what foods do you remember?

TOBIAS: Well, I mean, you know, the tzimes and the cholent. And the Friday before sundown, my grandmother used to go to the baker with a pot of cholent and take it and take it out. It cooked overnight and then it was taken out after sundown on Saturday, and we ate that and all the sweet dishes with it. And the gefult...you know, very much what you have here now. Even gefulte fish, which comes out of a jar...

LEVINE: (She laughs)

TOBIAS: ...but you know, it was made. And since the Cuisinart came into existence, I can make it, too, because I don't have to stand and chop. You know, just put it in. I think they were lighter than my mother's or grandmother's.

LEVINE: (She laughs) And how about aunts or uncles, cousins?

TOBIAS: Yes, I had...yes, I had aunts, uncles. I had cousins. I can't remember what they did, what my aunts and uncles did. And we were a close-knit, close-knit family spread out. I had a beautiful cousin who very soon after we immigrated to America, she and her boy friend - he wasn't her husband yet - immigrated to South America, where they became multimillionaires. It's extraordinary. They went to Sao Paolo.

LEVINE: Oh.

TOBIAS: Yes.

LEVINE: Now did you have communication with them?

TOBIAS: Oh, yes. I still do to this day.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: She's dead and she was so beautiful. She looked like an American film actress called Margaret Sullavan.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Had the same hairdo, you know, a bob. They all...all my cousins bobbed their hair and one sister went to South Ameri...to Brazil, Sao Paolo.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Another sister went to Argentina, who didn't fare as well, but Sarah, the sister who did well, she took care of the sister in Argentina and eventually brought her to Brazil, where she died.

LEVINE: Oh.

TOBIAS: And the other cousins were killed during the war. Two of the children went to Israel. They...they just managed to make their way to Israel and I think joined the British Army and then went back to Israel where - they're no longer alive - but where their children live now. I have quite a large family in Israel, you know, as do most people, I think.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: And, of course, my grandfather or, you know, everybody was killed. So, you know, we got out in time, I suppose, without planning. And, of course, at my age, I felt no anti-Semitism, perhaps because I was always in Jewish circles, even this little town where we lived. Outside the school, there was a community and we had a rabbi and, you know, all the shops we went to were run by Jews. The butcher I seem to remember was a Jew because he was a great...a great friend of my mother's and I always suspected she had a little romance with the butcher. Well, she was a young woman, I mean, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, but you were going to a Catholic, a Polish Catholic school?

TOBIAS: Oh, yes, it was the only school in town, so I had to go there. Yes, I had to go there.

LEVINE: And did...and did you learn Polish?

TOBIAS: Oh, when I came to America, all I spoke was Yiddish and Polish. Oh, yes, yes.

LEVINE: And...well, German. I suppose Yiddish is pretty close to German.

TOBIAS: No, I didn't speak...my mother spoke German because of the years that she spent in Germany. No, I didn't speak...I didn't speak German.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: But now when I used to have to go to Germany, I could get by. I could get by. Between the German and the Yiddish, I made myself understood.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And can you remember any things that you and your sisters and your mother did for enjoyment while you were in Poland?

TOBIAS: Well, my mother always fancied herself a bit of a singer, so she was always a member of some choral society, which when we came to America, she continued. I can't...we went to the movies a lot, because in town, we had...in our little village, we had a movie theater. And I first became acquainted with the American film stars. I remember Barbara La Mar and Billie Dove and Conrad Nagel. See, because we had some money, you see? So we could spend it on these so-called frivolities.

LEVINE: Well, was that unusual to have a movie theater in a small, little village?

TOBIAS: Ah, I don't know because I never went to any other small...I never went to one of the...another small village to see what they had. But when I would go and visit my parents, when my mother would take us, her...my grandparents...we would go to the movies in Lodz and there were many, many movies. Lodz was a very sophisticated city at that time. You know, it had boulevards and hotels and fancy shops, I seem to remember.

LEVINE: Could you say what your idea of America was like probably formed a lot by the...

TOBIAS: Oh, the movies. Absolutely. Absolutely. See, also what the people didn't know what America was like. It was the golden Medina that we were coming to. And, of course, we came in the middle of the Depression, you see? We moved to Harlem and to a walk-up flat three flights up. And my father barely scraped a living, but somehow we survived.

LEVINE: So you were actually living, in a way, better in Poland?

TOBIAS: I would...yes, yes, yes. Absolutely when we lived in...yes. We had...no, it was terrible and I remember when I got to be about twelve or thir...I mean, by then my sister and I were in school. When I got to be about twelve or thirteen, I used to wish my father had a city job like a street cleaner, where at least he could earn steadily ten dollars a week. I mean there were weeks when he didn't earn that much.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: So, of course, the cost of living was less, but still everything is relative (she laughs).

LEVINE: Right. Well, is there anything else about life in Poland, any things that you remember when you think of your years there that come to your mind?

TOBIAS: Not really. I just remember that life went on in the courtyard, particularly when it was warm. Everybody's windows were open and, of course, all...we weren't allowed in the street. All the children played in the courtyard because, you know, they had horses and trolley cars and motor cars. And I had some friends, and I always think of a girl - I think her name was Lotte. And we were going to America. We had ahead...this was when we were going to America. We knew we were going, so we moved from this small village back with my grandparents. And I remember she came to stay with us and we were going to America and she was going back to Leipzig and...with her parents. That's where and she probably didn't survive.

LEVINE: Can you describe yourself as a ten-year old, that...what you were like, (unintelligible).

TOBIAS: Oh, yes. Yes, I can, yes, I can. I had tremendous vitality, tremendous energy that my mother had no comprehension of. She didn't know...so I was the bad girl. My sister who's quiet, she was the good girl. I was wild. I was wild, you know. I would, my mother said, she used to walk with me and I would pull girls' pigtails. I don't remember that.

LEVINE: Hm. What was your mother like?

TOBIAS: My mother was a nice enough woman, you know. I mean, she was a nice enough woman. She...she tried her best, but I think in many ways, she was with...she was like me, you know, had a lot of energy, a lot of drive, but it went nowhere because it had nowhere to go, you see. She failed to recognize myself in her.

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: Yeah, so. I left home very early...

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: We just, we didn't get on. We just didn't get on.

LEVINE: And so when, when you were about to leave for America, do you remember what you expected or what you thought before you (unintelligible).

TOBIAS: Well, yes, we were going to the Golden Land, where we'd all be rich and...but, you know, the poverty that we met in America didn't affect me very much if I recall, because we were busy absorbing a new country. Within six months, my sister and I spoke English. I don't know what kind of English we spoke. And I regretted 'til this day that I forgot Polish so quickly. See, my parents spoke the Yiddish at home, so, you know, I can still speak Yiddish, but I would have liked to have had another foreign language, because I'm not very good at languages. And with...'cause I know, subsequently when I went to places like Czechoslovakia or Russia, you know, where they spoke Slavic tongue, words would come back to me. And I know if I went even to this day, I haven't been back to Poland. If I went back, I think I could pick up the language very quickly.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Hm.

TOBIAS: I feel...I don't feel an affinity with Poland, I mean, because they're just hateful people, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: They're all the Slavs and Poles and Ukrainians and Russians, you know, they would like to see us all dead.

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: It's endemic. It comes with the mother's milk. They don't understand intellectually why. They just hate us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: People hate a survivor, you know. They real...they may not hate; they resent.

LEVINE: This is something that you've arrived at later?

TOBIAS: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: At that time you didn't feel any of that?

TOBIAS: Oh, no..

LEVINE: Yeah.

TOBIAS: No understanding, no comprehension.

LEVINE: So were you examined before you boarded the S.S. George Washington?

TOBIAS: Oh, yes, we...yes, we went to the doctor. And I think we got certificates because later on when I read stories of Ellis Island, or when we did the mini-series, Ellis Island, I remember, you know, they were looking for glaucoma or cataracts and the doctors examined you there. No, we weren't

examined on arrival. We were examined at the other end and we came with our certificates.

LEVINE: Hm. And do you remember anything about the voyage that stands out?

TOBIAS: Yes, crowded, because we were four in a cabin. I can't remember who the fourth person was in the cabin. I can't remember if I was seasick or not. And it was just a melee of people and eating, always, you know, eating, eating. No, I...because there was no entertainment. I think we made our own entertainment. We used to sing and I remember my mother singing. We used to sing and kind of dance around.

LEVINE: So you went up on deck?

TOBIAS: Yeah, on our deck, yes. I mean, we never ventured any further. I can't remember how long the voyage took. It must have taken six or seven days then.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Sounds right.

TOBIAS: 'Cause now, it's a five...five day voyage.

LEVINE: And do you remember the ship coming into the New York Harbor?

TOBIAS: Vaguely. I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty. Yes, I remember...but that's all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did it mean anything? Did people, responding to it in any way? Nothing?

TOBIAS: I don't know. You know, a child just concentrates on the little square that you're in.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And how about, then, coming to Ellis Island? What was your...what was your impression coming here?

TOBIAS: Oh, coming here? Well, of course, the building doesn't like as I remember it. Everything's changed (she laughs). My memory of Ellis Island really comes from books, you know, with the illustrations. I just remember the big hall, sitting under the initial T, Tobias, because my father had that...the name was Tobiash, ending with sh. And I don't know, he looped off the h, so it became Tobias. I guess it was easier to pronounce.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: And my father coming to get us. Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, what was that like, seeing your father?

TOBIAS: Well, I see, I don't remember, but my mother says that she had to pull his sleeve and said, "Faivisch, it's us." And she said, "Mir zenen du." And then, of course, after having eaten all the bananas, going to my aunt's house and reaching for the banana, and passing out for twenty-four hours.

LEVINE: Why don't you tell that story? Remember the first one?

TOBIAS: Oh, yeah, oh. As I said before, because of the ten dollars or the ten dollars a week or the ten dollars a month that my father used to send us, my mother could go into Lodz where they had specialty shops. And she bought pineapple, bananas, oranges, and brought them home, so that my sister and I were used to them. And I loved bananas. And when we got on the boat, they would serve fruit at the end of the meal and the majority, I would say, had never seen a banana before, much less eaten one. And they also thought it wasn't kosher, so I just ate up all the bananas. And then after my father recognized us and picked us up and took us back to his aunt's house, his brother's wife's house - they lived in Coney Island and the home had a big bowl of fruit where the banana was on top. And I reached for the banana, took a bite and passed out. I was out for twenty-four hours. They sent a doctor, which I don't remember, and they told him what I did. And well, now we know I had too much potassium. I overdosed on potassium. And I never ate a banana or a banana split or anything with banana flavor until about nine years ago when my husband was taken ill. And the doctor said to him, "You need potassium. Take the banana. Eat the banana." So, in order to help him along, I ate bananas, and I discovered I like them. So I don't gorge on them anymore, but I have things with banana flavor and I've had a banana split, so that's my banana story.

LEVINE: (She laughs) So when you left Ellis Island, how did you get to your uncle's house?

TOBIAS: I can't remember.

LEVINE: And where was it?

TOBIAS: It was in Coney Island, not Brighton Beach. It was Coney Island.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then did you stay with your uncle?

TOBIAS: Oh, no, no, no. We didn't stay. Then my father took us to the flat that he found for us in Manhattan.

LEVINE: I see.

TOBIAS: I can't remember how we got there either.

LEVINE: Do you remember any things that struck you as new and different....

TOBIAS: (She sneezes)

LEVINE: ...those initial days in New York?

TOBIAS: Well, not one thing partic...everything was new and different. Everything was new and different. But I can't say that I was taken aback by anything. I don't know. I think I had no period of adjustment. (She coughs) Excuse me, it was like (she coughs) when I left England. When I got married, I married an Englishman and went to live in London in 1961. I had no period of adjustment there either. I just fell in...I adjust very quickly to surroundings, climates, except heat. I'm not comfortable with heat, so the London climate, the English climate, suits me perfectly. Yeah.

LEVINE: Where did you go in New York in Manhattan then when you...

TOBIAS: Oh, we lived on 102nd Street. 102nd Street. They...we were enrolled in the public school and we were also enrolled in a school to continue our education in Yiddish, to read and write.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: It was, I think, a Communist (she coughs). My parents were very left wing. I don't think they were intellectual communists because they were emotional Communists. A lot of people were because in those days, particularly in the Depression, Communism seemed to offer the only alternative of a better life for the working man.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: And so I went to Yiddish school. And I used to be able to write. As I haven't used the written word (she coughs). You know, I can read headlines in a newspaper. But I speak it. When I go shopping in London, we have these religious communities and I follow the women around to hear them speak Yiddish, because they really speak it still brilliantly, and I hear words that I haven't used for years.

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: And, oh, we went to the school and we went to the American school, and learned to speak and read and write. My mother also went to night school to learn, and she ended up being able to write in English and speak English. And I graduated public school. That was P.S. 72 in Manhattan. And then I went to Julia Richmond (she coughs) for a half a term, six months. And then we moved to the Bronx. And I was enrolled in Julia Richmond...in James Monroe high school, where I went for a year. And I just had to go to work. First of all, my mother forced a commercial course on me and I kept failing in bookkeeping and until this day, I can't add. And she wouldn't let me change to a general course, to an arts course, so I left. And I left and I was determined to have a better life than she or my contemporaries had - how, I don't know.

LEVINE: Okay, this is a good point. We're going to stop here and turn the tape and will continue in a minute.

END OF SIDE A

START SIDE B

LEVINE: Okay, this is Side B of the interview with Rose Tobias Shaw. And you were saying that you were somehow going to have a better life...

TOBIAS: Yes.

LEVINE: ...than the people that were around you.

TOBIAS: Yes. I had a lot of energy and attack and I was motivated. And I used to be a very good dancer. And I used to win dance contests, and so then I decided to perhaps do something with the dancing. And I went to learn ballet and modern, but very early I learned that I had no elevation and no coordination, and I didn't want to end up being the last girl in the third row of some touring company of "The Student Prince." And I had no money. I had left home by this time. I was sharing a flat with four other girls on West Forty-Seventh Street, across the street from the Police Station. And through my dance

classes, I began to meet people in the theater and I began to have serious relationships with men. And remember I had no academic background, so I really began my education and I used to...well, actually, my education began before when I still lived at home. I had one hour to travel each way on the IRT, and I would just read and read and read and read. And I always carried a dictionary because I didn't understand a lot of words.

LEVINE: Was your reading in any particular...?

TOBIAS: I read the classics.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: I read the classics. And then I...you know, I would hear people talking and I would go to the library and get the books. I couldn't afford to buy books then. And I knew I couldn't make a living as a dancer. And while I was taking classes, I worked at Kresge's, I worked...I was a waitress. I was a waitress in summer camp and I just did all kinds of menial jobs to support my classes. But once I knew I couldn't make it as a dancer, I just decided that something had to happen. And through someone, through someone, through someone, I met somebody in public relations and I got into that. And I couldn't write, but I was a very good ideas person, so they took me off the writing and I fed ideas. And then through someone, through someone, I got into CBS as a floater. You know, I would relieve people who were ill or on holiday or whatever, in all departments. And one of the departments I relieved was the casting department. And I liked that and they liked me, so they said to me when an opening comes, would I care to join them? And I said, "Yes." And then, so I worked at CBS in the casting department. And through another, I can't remember how, I met someone from the American National Theater and Academy and they were going to Europe with "Porgy and Bess." They were doing a world tour and they asked me if I wanted to come and do their public relations. Because if they had me, I think they only paid me a hundred and fifty dollars. This was in 1954. And if they had a union person, they were going to have to pay like three hundred and fifty. So I traveled all over the world with "Porgy and Bess." And then when I came back end of 1955, I had no job, no money because I spent all my money in Europe. I thought, you know, when am I going to, you know, be here again, so...

LEVINE: Now what were you doing when you were on the traveling with "Porgy and Bess?"

TOBIAS: Well, I did their PRO. I went ahead of the company and set up, as we were sent by the United States Department. It was called the USIS, the United States Information something. I went ahead, arranged with the embassies, always a reception with the Ambassador and made up lists of people, you know, to invite. I traveled ten days ahead of the company to all these places and, of course, we covered the globe. We were in Paris...France for three months and Italy for three months. We went to Yugoslavia, Egypt, to Israel, Holland, Belgium, you know. It was a fantastic trip. Anyway, when I came back, I had no work. And I had sublet my apartment to two girls and they wrecked it, so whatever money I made, I had to spend fixing it up again. Anyway, I went out to the airport, to LaGuardia, to see someone off to California, and I ran into somebody who was at...had been at CBS, were...was now a producer at a film studio and he asked me if I wanted to come and work for him. So I said, "Sure." And when that was over, I got another job with another company. And now we are in 1960, when I met my husband.

LEVINE: In New York?

TOBIAS: In New York. We got married and in 19...March, 1961, I went to England.

LEVINE: How did you meet him?

TOBIAS: Well, he came over in a play, "The Hostage." And I met him at a party backstage the first night. And it was love at first sight.

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: And then we got married, and I was married for twenty-five years before he died.

LEVINE: And what was his na...his full name?

TOBIAS: His name was Maxwell Shaw. Yeah. And he gave me a choice. He said, "Do you want to live in New York, or do you want to come to England?" And I knew my marriage didn't stand a chance in New York because I had so many pulls, you know, from people, things... England, though I used to be sent to England by the organization I worked for. I used to go every year for two weeks, you know, to see all the theater. In England, I would have to depend on him. I had nobody there. I knew some people, but, you know, nothing. So that's what we did.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: And it was his home. I did the Biblical thing. "Whither thou goest, I will go."

LEVINE: Once you got to England, did you continue with your career?

TOBIAS: Ah, yes. Yes, I got pregnant, but I had a miscarriage. And then I could not conceive again and we just decided that wasn't the most important thing. I just, I was never that maternal; I was just so happy to be married to somebody that I was in love with, 'cause I'd never really, really been in love before.

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: Yeah, so I had my "grande passione," yes.

LEVINE: So now your husband then was an actor?

TOBIAS: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: He was an actor for a short while, but then he became an academic. (She laughs) He was too smart to be an actor.

LEVINE: And then you, as far as your own career...

TOBIAS: Yes, well, then when Americans started to come to England to produce for television, they knew where to contact me and they asked me if I wanted to work for them, so I said, "Yes." And I began my career there and now I'm what you call, "The Doyenne of Casting Directors." That means I'm old, yeah.

LEVINE: (She laughs.) Grand Dame?

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: (She laughs) Uh-huh. So...so what...what do you feel most proud of that you've accomplished?

TOBIAS: Twenty-five years of a good marriage.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: That's quite an accomplishment.

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

TOBIAS: So that, you know, I'm really, I'm not interested in men anymore. I'm not interested in having a me...as you Americans call it, a meaningful, or a non-meaningful relationship. That's...I've had it. I've had the best and I don't mind being on my own.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: I'm okay.

LEVINE: What, what is this phase of your life?

TOBIAS: Well, I'm kind of...well, I'm kind of semi-retired, the business kind of retired. You know, it's a young people's business. It's the people who are coming into it now. Remember all the direc . . . I've always worked only for Americans because they kept me busy. They would come over to do things in Europe and they would ask for me. But they're of a certain age, so they don't work as much.

LEVINE: I see.

TOBIAS: Yeah. And so it affords me the time to travel. I've been to India twice. I've been to China. I've been...I go every other year to Israel. I go to France. I have a cousin in France. I go to Italy. I...where else have I been since...(pause). I'm planning, I mean, I want to see Australia. I want to see South Africa.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Love to go to Japan, but it just never seems to be the right season, because it's very humid there. And the...I don't know, time just goes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: I lead, I lead a quiet life in London. I have a little Georgian house.

LEVINE: When you, when you do work, is it in casting? Is that...

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...what your...

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: ...career has been?

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you've obviously settled in in, in London. Do you have any...

TOBIAS: Oh, yeah...

LEVINE: ...ideas of ever

TOBIAS: No.

LEVINE: ...returning

TOBIAS: No

LEVINE: ...to the U.S.?

TOBIAS: No, I couldn't. I could never live in New York again. It's too crowded. It's too noisy, it's too dirty. There are too many things going on. I mean, I look at the papers and there are twenty concerts, eight hundred and eighty movies...it's too much for me. Too many television channels. We only have four.

LEVINE: Hm.

TOBIAS: I'm sure that will change.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: But it's too much. The pace of my life is slower and I like it that way, yeah. No, I couldn't live in New York again. And I was like Miss New York, you know. Anything above Seventy-Second Street was the country.

LEVINE: (She laughs)

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you, you say you adapted easily.

TOBIAS: Very.

LEVINE: Well, you never looked back...

TOBIAS: No.

LEVINE: ...once you, once you....

TOBIAS: Never. Never.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Never.

LEVINE: Ah.

TOBIAS: And I think since 1961, I've only been back four times.

LEVINE: Oh.

TOBIAS: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: So are you an English citizen?

TOBIAS: No. No, I'm an American citizen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Because, you know, I don't vote in the American elections and I don't understand English politics. And I've abdicated in a way, you know. I've done my screaming, my shouting, my marching. Nothing's changed. Nothing's changed. Let the young people, you know, do it now. So it really doesn't matter what passport I have.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: You know, I'm not reactionary, but I went from left to right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Yeah.

LEVINE: Hm. Do you think the fact of immigrating to this country at ten years old and living here and then in England, do you think that has affected your personhood or your character...

TOBIAS: I don't know.

LEVINE: ...in any way...

TOBIAS: I don't know.

LEVINE: ...that you can think of?

TOBIAS: I don't know. Look at my sister. She's completely different than I am. No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: I, I don't think so. I have no hang-ups, you know. I don't remember ever being abused. Everybody is being abused now. They think back, they're abused. Everybody is sexually harassed. When I was a young girl, if I wasn't sexually harassed once a day, I'd go home and stick my head in the oven.

LEVINE: (She laughs)

TOBIAS: What's the matter? I'm losing my sex appeal? You know, nobody tried to feel me up or give me a goose or give me a kiss. I mean, these women are crazy. They're...what's sexually harassed? You either say, "Yes" or "No." I've never in all my experience, all my life with men, I said, "No." That was the end of it. Now men were no different then than they are now. I think women are. Women are more aggressive. I'm not a feminist, I should tell you. Women are aggressive, they're loud, they're vulgar, they're pushy. I like a feminine lady, a feminine woman. I mean, I was always liberated, so I never had to seek to be liberated. I made my own liberty, I made my own liberty, but really, some of the women that I run into in New York...I don't know, maybe the rest of America isn't like that, they are, you know, spare me.

LEVINE: Hm. Well, aside from some hang-ups of changing countries, do you think you've drawn on that any way in your work, you know, the fact up uprooting and settling in.

TOBIAS: No, no.

LEVINE: No?

TOBIAS: It's just a progress. That was my life. I can't say that one thing affected me more than the other.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: I'm...I have no hang-ups about anything. There must be something wrong with me.

LEVINE: (She laughs)

TOBIAS: You know.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, I think what you...I mean, obviously you don't think it's important to have those hang-ups (she laughs), so...

TOBIAS: No, it isn't. I mean, you know, life is difficult enough. It's difficult getting a taxi. It's difficult for me to get shoes because I have a wide foot. I have to get a size C width. You have aches and pains. I mean, why inflict all those other things on you?

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: You know, there's fighting all over. It's in your living room. There's blood in your living room every minute of the day. There are people starving. I'm not going out to save them. There's nothing I can do. They elect the people who forced those things on them. But you know...

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: I'm not saying, "So they deserve what they get." But, you know, people allow themselves to be led around by the nose.

LEVINE: Is there, is there anything, any project, or anything in particular that you would like to do...

TOBIAS: No.

LEVINE: ...that you're looking forward to doing?

TOBIAS: No.

LEVINE: The traveling...

TOBIAS: Just traveling, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: Traveling.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: That's all.

LEVINE: Okay, well is there...if there's anything else you can think of...

TOBIAS: No, no, no. I can't. And don't get me started on the Royal Family.
(She laughs)

LEVINE: (She laughs) Oh, is that, is that an interest? I mean, is that something you follow closely or...

TOBIAS: I follow closely because they live on my money.

LEVINE: Ah.

TOBIAS: You know that by the sheer accident of birth, these mental cripples live a lavish lifestyle that I and others, because I pay taxes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: You know, they are mental cripples and that goes from the Queen down. Diana's a bimbo, Charles is useless with that Camilla. I mean, he's a joke.

LEVINE: (She laughs)

TOBIAS: And Edward would rather wear women's clothes. And Andrew is, oh, I don't know. And Princess Marg...I mean, they're useless. They contribute nothing to the country, nothing at all, nothing at all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

TOBIAS: They're illiterate, they're, you know, their feet never touch the ground because they don't come among people. They come among their own like. They don't know what's going on in the real world. Why, I loathe them, I really...not in my lifetime, but I think the next lifetime, I think will be the end of the British monarchy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, well...

TOBIAS: Oh...

LEVINE: ...on that...

TOBIAS: (She laughs) Note?

LEVINE: ...on that note, I want to thank you...

TOBIAS: Rule Brittania!

LEVINE: ...very much for a very interesting interview. I've been speaking with Rose Tobias Shaw and it is January 20th, 1994, and we're here at Ellis Island. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

END OF INTERVIEW
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