

EI-603

SARAH (SOURIA) SHOWA BAZ

BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 15, 1906

INTERVIEW DATE: APRIL 27, 1995

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INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

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SYRIA VIA JAMAICA, 1910 AND 1914

AGE 4 (1ST TRIP)

SHIP: NAME NOT RECALLED

PORT: BEIRUT

RESIDENCE: ALEPPO

US RESIDENCE: UTICA, NY

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, April 27th, 1995. I'm in Utica, New York with Sarah Baz. Mrs. Baz came from Syria in 1910. She was around four years old at that time when they came. I also want to say present is, is Mr. Zogby, who has been with me all day helping with the Lebanese interviews. He is one of our interviewees, interviewed last July. Mrs. Baz' daughter, Laurice Moses is also present in the room. And another family relative, John Moses, is also present in the room. Anyway, thank you for letting me come out, and can we begin by you giving me your birthdate, please.

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BAZ: It's (unintelligible). Huh?

SIGRIST: It's August 15th, 1906.

BAZ: Okay, I'll say.

SIGRIST: Okay. (he laughs)

BAZ: Dear Jesus, I forget.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me where in Syria you were born?

BAZ: In Aleppo.

SIGRIST: And just tell me a little bit about Aleppo at that time.

BAZ: I don't know, my sweet. I can't remember nothing. That's...

SIGRIST: Do you remember your parents talking about their life in the city, what, what...

BAZ: Their, my grandfather used to make medicine. You know, quinine, and he used to, like a tonic. And he used to cure. And he had a, a big store in, in the downtown in Aleppo. He used to sell goods. And, and I, I don't remember Dad because I was small when Dad came here. Dad left us. I was about a year old. And he came to, to America. Him and my brother Naim. My brother was older than, he's the oldest one. So he stayed for a while, and they were there, and this, this young

man came from, to Aleppo, Syria, wanted to get married. Is that, and so when he saw my sister, the one in the, he saw my sister, he wanted to marry her. He was American citizen. So my mother said, "All right." He said, "You want to marry him?" So they got married. They got married and, and he brought her here to America. In the meantime my mother decided, well, my father is here in Utica, him and my brother. And he's working, the poor thing worked in the knit mill for five dollars a, a week. Sixty hours. In the meantime he's (unintelligible), so my mother said, I guess this new son-in-law, the son-in-law gave her money, and we came. Here we came, we landed in Ellis Island. I don't know how many days on the boat third class. We're all poor people. So we came to Ellis Island. In the meantime they examined our eyes. Mine all right, my mother all right and my, my sister, Fanny, she's all right. Only my sister Nabeeha, had they called her, she had trachoma in her eyes. They, they, they wouldn't let her come into America. So what are we going to do? So, I, we had a brother that lived in Jamaica. Kingston, Jamaica. In the meantime, so we waited, and we send my sister, they send my sister back instead of back to the old country, they send her back to, we sent her to Kingston, Jamaica to my brother. All right. We got there. We stayed here about a year and we couldn't leave the young girl by herself with my brother. So we, we moved to Jamaica. We were there four years in Kingston, Jamaica. In the meantime when we, we moved there, we didn't want to stay, because there were all colored people, and there was nobody that we knew. We wanted to come back to America. So we came back to America, and my father, poor thing, had a colored man carry his bundle and walk the streets and, from one house to another and sell goods to live on. So, so, and then my sister, we, she came, no, they sent her back again. They wouldn't take her because she's got

trachoma. Here in the meantime we came. We, we stayed in Jamaica four years I told you, and we came back to Utica. In the meantime my sister, Fanny, and I would sit and, and learn my, and help father to get the American citizen. In between Arabic and, he used to trans, so he learned. He got his American citizen paper. So then he went back to, to Jamaica. He went to back to Jamaica. In the meantime my sister was living with my brother. I don't want, my brother was kind of very strict, and the poor girl would cry day and night. He wouldn't let her go out or anything. So one of the neighbors had sent a letter to my father, say that your poor daughter is, is like jail. Your, your, your son won't let her go out, or. So Dad went, after, he got his citizen paper and he went to Jamaica. He went to Jamaica and the doctors in Jamaica couldn't, couldn't help her. So he, you know, one doctor said to him, "Mr. Showa, you know what you should do? Go back, go to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. There's a hospital there that they would help you, they would help your daughter cure her eyes." So my poor father went. He took her to Port-au-Prince, Haiti to this hospital. And this doctor told, the doctor says to him, "I'm black, but my hands are white. I will try and, and help her." And, and he did. In the meantime he helped her, and my dad brought her back and right to, in Ellis Island she came through.

SIGRIST: All right, can we just pause...(break in tape)...Okay, we're now resuming. Mrs. Baz, can we go back a little bit? This is a very complicated and very interesting story. I want to ask you what your name was when you were born.

BAZ: Thouria Showa.

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SIGRIST: And can we, amongst everyone in the room, come up with a spelling for this? Souria [sic]. Mr. Zogby, yes? Audibly?

ZOGBY: T-H-O-U-R-I-A.

SIGRIST: T-...

ZOGBY: H.

SIGRIST: T, T like in Tom, T-H.

ZOGBY: Yeah. T-H like in "THUH". (he pronounces "TH")

SIGRIST: "TH" (he pronounces "TH")

ZOGBY: O-U-R-I-A.

SIGRIST: And the last name was...

BAZ: S-H-O-W-A. Showa.

SIGRIST: Showa.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And did your mother ever tell you anything about your birth?

BAZ: No, dear.

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SIGRIST: No.

BAZ: Nothing.

SIGRIST: Nothing. What was your father's name?

BAZ: Anthony.

SIGRIST: And...

BAZ: Anthony Showa.

SIGRIST: And what did he do in...

BAZ: Aleppo?

SIGRIST: ...in Aleppo?

BAZ: He was a, a mason. Yamir [PH]. He worked as a mason. They build houses. That's what he did.

SIGRIST: What do you know about your father's family background?

BAZ: Oh, I don't know anything about. Not even, my, I, I remember my sister, Fanny, the one, there's a child between her and me. She's older than me. She would, when we came here she would cry, "Oh, I miss my grandfather." But I, I can't remember anything about it.

SIGRIST: While I'm just, I'm trying to see what you might know from hearing

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other people talk. The grandfather who was mixing up the quinine in Syria...

BAZ: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...who's father was he?

BAZ: My mother, my grandfather, my mother's father.

SIGRIST: That's your mother's father.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know how your parents met?

BAZ: No, I wouldn't know. I mean.

SIGRIST: So your father, your father was a mason in Aleppo.

BAZ: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And your, your not sure of any of his background? Did you ever know his parents?

BAZ: No. No.

SIGRIST: Nothing? He never talked about it?

BAZ: No.

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SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

BAZ: Mary.

SIGRIST: Mary. What is it in, in Syrian?

BAZ: Marroun.

SIGRIST: Marroun. M-A-R-U-M? Marum?

ZOGBY: O-U.

ZOGBY: M-A-R-R-O-U-N.

SIGRIST: N at the end. Okay. And what was her name before she was married, her last name?

BAZ: Gibran.

SIGRIST: Gibran, Mr. Zogby? How do you spell that?

ZOGBY: G-I-B-R-A-N.

SIGRIST: Okay. And what do you know about your mother's background. You know, you told me her father, you know...

BAZ: My mother's background, I guess her, her family, her background, they were well, pretty well off. They had maids to cook for them, and, and

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people to sew for, in Aleppo. And that's about, they were very, in fact the, Mr. Zairby [PH], and he's one of the third cousins maybe of, of my fa, of my mother. He's in Montreal. He's a doctor in Montreal.

SIGRIST: Did, did, were both of your parents originally from Syria, or had their families come from other places?

BAZ: No, darling. All from Aleppo, Syria.

SIGRIST: They were all from Aleppo.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Your grandfather, do you know anything else about your grandfather?

BAZ: My grandfather, I told you, he had a store that sells goods. And these Turkish women would come, and they always had, that's what Ma used to tell me, the veil on their faces, you know. But when they get into the store, they trusted my grandfather. They would take the veil off so they could see what they're buying. (laughter) So this woman, this woman, she kept coming I don't know for how many weeks with the veil on her face. So one, one day he says to her, (Syrian). How would you say in American?

ZOGBY: Swear by the, by the prophet.

BAZ: I swear by the prophet that, take, put the veil up over your face so I could see you, because all the other women, they do. When, when she put the veil over her face over her face, she was the most

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homeliest woman that you ever saw. He said, (Syrian), "Cover, cover. God be, God bless you." That's why she never, she didn't want to show her face. And that's how, so that's how my grandfather, poor thing.

SIGRIST: Well, so you did know some more about your grandfather. (he laughs)

BAZ: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did your parents ever tell you about the home that they lived in in Syria, if anything?

BAZ: Oh, it's a regular, regular, I don't know. A regular home. Nothing special. And they used to, they had like a "blot," [PH] what do you call the "blot," a cement yard. And they said, so when, when, when we came from Aleppo, we came to Utica, and my mother, we lived on the Casey Saloon, on Bleeker, Bleeker and Third Ave., upstairs. My mother thought it was like the old country. She came, and she, when she was because my dead, you know the men, they don't take care of the house cleaning. She start, she start taking these pails of water and throwing. And she thinks she's like the old country that, that, like cement. And Mr. Casey's saloon, they told me that he went crazy. He seen this water coming just like a river. He, he came, "Lady, lady, what's the matter? This is America. You can't do," the cement, the, the all the plaster will come down on top of us. So she didn't know. She thought the water's going down the stairs, she's washing the house. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What did your parents, do you know what year they were married?

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BAZ: No, I, I wouldn't know, dear. No.

SIGRIST: No. How many, how many children did they have before they left Syria?

BAZ: Oh, well, we were, before he, before my dad left he had the boy. He had my, my brother. And so far we were five, five of us? Three girls, Nabeeha and Naima, no, four, four us girls and I, five. In, in the meantime, them days, what'd they, what'd they know? They, they, she had eleven kids. I don't know whether there was other kids between, you know.

SIGRIST: She meaning?

BAZ: My mother.

SIGRIST: Your mother had eleven children?

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: But there were only five that came to America?

BAZ: That's right.

SIGRIST: Can, can you name your brothers and sisters? Do you remember everyone's name?

BAZ: Oh, yeah. Naima.

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SIGRIST: We're going to have to spell these, too. What was the first one? Aime [PH]?

BAZ: Naima.

SIGRIST: Naima. Mr. Zogby?

ZOGBY: N-A-I-M-A.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

BAZ: And mine brother, Naim.

SIGRIST: Naim?

BAZ: I...

ZOGBY: Without the A at the end. N-A-I-M.

SIGRIST: So that's the masculine form of that name?

ZOGBY: Yes.

BAZ: Yeah. Those, those two. The fa, and then my sister Nabeeha.

ZOGBY: N-A-B-E-E-H-A.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

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BAZ: And my, my sister Afeefy.

ZOGBY: A-FEE, A-F-E-E-F-Y.

SIGRIST: Thank you.

BAZ: And Thouria.

ZOGBY: And we spelled her name.

SIGRIST: Yes, right. And you. And so that was the group that would eventually to America? Did your parents ever discuss their religious life in Syria? What, what religion...

BAZ: Oh, no. We're Catholics.

SIGRIST: You were Catholics.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did they ever talk about how they practiced their religion in Syria before they came...

BAZ: No, honey. Their, their ancestors are Catholics for hundred years. You know, years and years.

SIGRIST: But I, what I'm getting at is did they ever talk about a special church that they went to in Aleppo, or perhaps a priest that was important to

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their life over there?

BAZ: No. No, no. Because I, like I told you I was, I didn't, no.

SIGRIST: Right.

BAZ: Only over here, you know, we know here, because I was a young girl. I taught Sunday school in St. John's Church. I taught Sunday school before I got married to Joe.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did, did your parents ever discuss food that they ate in Syria, or, or a story about food that...

BAZ: No, it's the same, us, I think the Syrian people, the Aleppo, they like lamb meat more than anything.

SIGRIST: Tell, tell me a little bit about what Syrian food is. Describe for me different types of Syrian food.

BAZ: Well, they have the kibbe [PH] and the, what, leaves, the grape leaves, and the kibbe and the mishoui [PH]. That means the, the shish kabob, you know, the.

SIGRIST: What do they do with grape leaves?

BAZ: They, they put rice and meat and they roll them, and they cook them. They, they roll them like cig, you know, and they cook them in the kettle.

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SIGRIST: Are there special herbs that you put in these?

BAZ: No, just spices, a little spices, whatever is...

SIGRIST: How is lamb prepared in Syrian cooking?

BAZ: Oh, well, for, the lamb is for the kibbe. You know, we have that crushed wheat that they have, and they grind the, the meat very fine, fine. And they make kibbe out of that. And then, but most of the time, we, we like more kabob, kafta [PH]. I mean like hamburgs [sic] and, and like simmons [PH] is (unintelligible) is shish kabob, you know, roast meat.

SIGRIST: Yes. Is lamb the only kind of meat in Syrian cuisine?

BAZ: I, I think so. I think that's the only thing that they eat more.

SIGRIST: The most popular, anyway.

BAZ: Yeah. In Aleppo, that's, I don't...

SIGRIST: What about for special occasions? For instance like Christmas dinner. What is a, what is a traditional Syrian meal for a holiday?

BAZ: It's all the same, darling. Kibbe and, and chicken, you know, and yebreh [PH], and they have stuff, stuffed squash. The squash that they, they dig it out and they stuff it with meat and rice and spices, you know. There's a lot of different.

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SIGRIST: What kind of bread?

BAZ: Oh, well, they got the, how, how would you call it? They, they have some thin bread, and well, the Syrian people have the, the small loaves. They bake, it's regular bread, only small loaves that they have. And, and they mix the dough. And they take, in Aleppo, my mother said they used to take the, they'd take the dough to the bakery. And the baker, the man in the bakery bakes it. And say if it's ten loaves, he'll take two, three, you know, for his wages. And, because they don't, they don't bake home in, in Aleppo. It's a big city. It's not like a country that they could bake. So they used to take the dough, and they, and they baked them, bread for them.

SIGRIST: What about in America? Did your mother bake her bread here?

BAZ: Sure.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how she did that?

BAZ: Well, I did that, too. I baked...

SIGRIST: Can you explain for the process of baking bread?

BAZ: What do you, why, you put yeast cake, and you put a little oil on your flour, and the yeast cake and salt, and well, I, I mix my dough. I put a little sugar so the, and mix the dough. Sometimes if you want to put a little milk or, or not. You mix the dough and let it raise. And then the next day you cut them up and you, you bake them.

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SIGRIST: How long does bread bake for?

BAZ: Huh?

SIGRIST: How long do you bake...

BAZ: Oh, it depends on how you, if you like it crispy or if you like it, you know. Comes out good.

SIGRIST: Are there special sauces that, that are unique to Syrian food?

BAZ: No, honey, no.

SIGRIST: Any? Nothing. All right, lets, do you want to say something Laurice?

Mrs. Moses: Well, can she...

SIGRIST: Go ahead, say...

Mrs. Moses: Well, you know we used a lot of different sauces like temedhendi [PH], and...

BAZ: Oh, yeah, I know.

Mrs. Moses: ...and lemon sour, you know, like for the yebdeh [PH].

BAZ: Yeah.

Mrs. Moses: Allspice. A lot of nutmeg. A lot of cumin.

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BAZ: Yeah, yeah.

Mrs. Moses: And...

SIGRIST: And what do you put the sauces on in Syrian food?

Mrs. Moses: Well, like that temedhendi, we put it on, when we stuff the...

BAZ: Meat pie.

Mrs. Moses: Yeah, when we stuff the squash. You know, that's kind of seasoning with the garlic and mint leaves. Dried mint.

SIGRIST: Mint? Mint is, mint is an important...

Mrs. Moses: Mint is big, yeah.

SIGRIST: ...herb.

Mrs. Moses: Hm-hmm.

SIGRIST: Okay, good. Let's, let's begin dissecting the immigration experience, because this gets complicated. Your family, your father had come here first, correct?

BAZ: Hm-hmm.

SIGRIST: This was, this was before you did?

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BAZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: And, I'm sorry, can you repeat again how long it when he came before you came.

BAZ: Oh, I, I would say about three, four years.

SIGRIST: And where did he go when he came to America?

BAZ: He came to Utica.

SIGRIST: Why did he come to Utica?

BAZ: I couldn't tell you.

SIGRIST: Did you have family here?

BAZ: No, they had friends. The ones that came from Aleppo was in Utica, and he came. Him and my brother.

SIGRIST: Was there a Syrian community up here?

BAZ: Yeah, there was quite, quite a few, I guess. Not too many. Because when we went to Jamaica, like I told you, I, I wouldn't talk Arabic. My mother would run, I had curly blond hair. And she would talk Arabic. I, my father didn't put me in the English school. I said, "No, no good, Syria. No good." I, I wouldn't talk Arabic. So I didn't talk much until when we came to Utica, in the Mets [sic] building on Bleeker Street

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there a Kassabs [PH], and all the Syrian had come from Aleppo, Syria while we were in Jamaica. And that's how I started talking. So when I came to get married, this old lady got her, I don't know if you, got a hold of me by the ear. She says to me, "Thouria, you're going to get married. Now you talk to your children Arabic." Because she knew I'd nev, I wouldn't talk. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: So your father came to Utica. And, do you know if there was any communication between your father and your mother still in Syria?

BAZ: Oh, yes. You, he would send and tell her, I'm, when I have enough, I'm, have enough money I would send after you. I would send after you. So there goes two, three years until this young man came from, from, you know, to marry my sister. And...

SIGRIST: What job did your father had in Utica at that time?

BAZ: In the knitting mills, the poor soul. So when my mother knew about the American money. So the first pay, when he came, he showed her, your mother that my lady, look. That's my pay. That's how, for sixty hours. She says to him, "Five dollars?" That, Baz? Is that all? Just five?" He said, "Oh, some of them are making four fifty a week. I'm making five dollars. I do more." The poor soul.

SIGRIST: So is your father sending money to Syria, or is he just...

BAZ: No, no. He didn't send no money.

SIGRIST: No. He's just saving up the money to...

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BAZ: To send aft, to send after us.

SIGRIST: Right. All right. Did your mother ever explain to you anything about the journey itself? Like, what it was like to leave Aleppo. How did she feel about leaving Syria?

BAZ: Oh, they didn't mind. There was a, she wanted to be back ho, you know, with, with my brother and my, my father. They, she wanted to come. She didn't want to, you know, stay anymore in Aleppo.

SIGRIST: Did your, do you know if your mother took with her, what did she take with her when they left?

BAZ: She didn't take nothing, the poor soul. They just had an old, I remember she said an old, like a rug that they, they rolled, they say. And they were on the third class...

SIGRIST: On the ship?

BAZ: ...on the ship. And the rain came and that, and that rug, whatever it was all faded and fell on top of their quilts, whatever she had. They were all poor people, poor things.

SIGRIST: Where, where did you get the ship to come to America? What port did you go to to...

BAZ: Beirut.

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SIGRIST: You went to Beirut?

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about the experience from going to Syria to Beirut?

BAZ: No, my darling. All I know, Gina, we came to Beirut. And my mother said, you know, Mike Zalaouh [PH]? Mr. Zalaouh? Mr. Moses. Oh. You know, Mike Zalaouh, don't you?

ZOGBY: Yeah.

BAZ: He, he was a young boy about eleven years old or twelve. And, and he was afraid they wouldn't let him from Syria. So my mother cover, covered him up in the, in the boat so they would see him. The samasrah [PH]. What would you call them, samasrah?

ZOGBY: The agents.

SIGRIST: The agents.

BAZ: Yeah. So they wouldn't see him, she cover him up, and we go to the boat, and the poor boy, he came with us. They, on the small boat from Beirut to the ship. That's, that's that.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit more about this American gentleman who wanted, who came to Aleppo to marry your sister.

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BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Who was he?

BAZ: He was a, Teehan [PH], his name. My, my father knew him.

SIGRIST: Knew him from Utica?

BAZ: We know the family.

SIGRIST: He was from Utica?

BAZ: We know the family from the old country. Even from the old country, his family, back. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

BAZ: So when he came he had, he wanted to get married, and he was an American citizen. So I guess my sister, poor thing, she was maybe seventeen, I don't know, eighteen, I don't know how old. She married him. And, and that was that.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did your mother know he was coming?

BAZ: No, no. He, he came to Aleppo. He was looking for a bride to get married.

SIGRIST: Excuse me. We're going to - (break in tape) - okay, we're now resuming after a small conference. And I just want to say for the sake

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of the tape that John Moses has pointed out that the spelling that Mr. Zogby gave for your first name, could you say the name?

BAZ: Thouria.

SIGRIST: Mr. Zogby spelled it with a T-H at the beginning, which Mr. Moses has pointed is really a high Arabic spelling. But you're really pronouncing it in a, in a colloquial way, and really should begin with an S. Like, not, not a "th" sound. Would you say that that's correct?

BAZ: That's right.

SIGRIST: Say the name one more time slowly for me.

BAZ: Souria.

SIGRIST: Souria. Okay. All right. So, I'm trying to think where we were. The gentleman had come over to Aleppo, and had asked for your sister's hand in marriage. Did you sister have any say in this? Did she want to marry this man?

BAZ: Yeah, I guess she did. She must have marry. Yeah, they got married. There was not, no, no, you know, any, anything said about it to come to America. Especially he was a, a American citizen. That's all.

SIGRIST: How long of a process was this from the time he arrived on your doorstep to the time that they actually married.

BAZ: Maybe, maybe two or three months.

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SIGRIST: Oh, so a little bit of time elapsed.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of the marriage?

BAZ: No, dear.

SIGRIST: Do you, do you, what is your earliest memory? Where does your, your memory pop in?

BAZ: I, the only, the only, the earliest memory that I remember that when, when, when she came, when they came here they live in Utica. And her husband. I remember her husband. Then not even a year she had a baby girl. And that was that.

SIGRIST: No. But I mean your own personal memories. When you think back to your life...

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...what's the earliest thing you can remember in your own life?

BAZ: Oh, what can I, what can I tell you? I went to Bleeker Street school.

SIGRIST: But do you remember before being in Utica?

BAZ: No, I don't remember. No. The old country. I don't remember.

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SIGRIST: Do you remember anything about being on the ship coming to New York?

BAZ: Well, I used to get so sick. My, they used to tell, and, and a little, a little, they used to tell my mother, throw her off. I used to be, I couldn't eat nothing. I used to keep on vomiting and throwing up. And I couldn't, I don't remember anything on that ship.

SIGRIST: But that you were very sick while you were on the ship?

BAZ: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know if your mother ever told any stories about being on the ship? Did she ever talk about what that experience was like?

BAZ: No. They didn't say. They were all, poor things, they had their, their, they didn't have much to come with, that, you know, that's all. There was nothing.

SIGRIST: You mentioned to me before we started the interview that you, you didn't know the name of the ship.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know how long the voyage took? Did your mother ever...

BAZ: Oh, Lord. My mother said it took forty days, because they stopped in San Domingo, in there. And then I guess the man that owns the hotel,

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or whatever, he, he used to tell them the boat didn't come. There was another boat that they have to take, we have to take to come. The boat didn't come, so he could make money on those poor people. That's what my mother used to...

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: So, so the boat goes to New York first. I mean, this is the first trip, you go to New York is where you land for the first time, right?

BAZ: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then, tell me again, was it your sister that had something wrong with her eyes?

BAZ: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: She had trachoma in the eyes.

BAZ: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then what happened? That was when you came down and ended up in Jamaica, correct?

BAZ: Yeah, then, sure, we couldn't leave her. So we had to go and live in

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Jamaica for three, four years.

SIGRIST: Who decided that you would go to Jamaica?

BAZ: A kind of, my brother was living there in Jamaica, so we're, we're, instead of sending her back to Aleppo to the old country, we thought we'd send her to Jamaica to live with my brother. That's how.

SIGRIST: But, but then it was decided that you would all go to Jamaica?

BAZ: Oh, sure. We couldn't leave the poor girl like, we have to be a, we're a family. We want to be together. So we moved to Jamaica, and my poor father would have a bundle of, he used to sell. He used to have a colored man carry the bundle for him, and, and go from one house to another and peddle, you know, and, and live. So we lived about three, four years.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things would he peddle, do you know?

BAZ: Clothes. Some clothes, whatever it was. Notions, and you know, those, notions stuff, I don't know.

SIGRIST: So your father moved down, I mean, when he came down from Utica, he decided move to Jamaica with you, that you would go as a family?

BAZ: Oh yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes?

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BAZ: We all went together.

SIGRIST: Why was your brother in Jamaica? How did your brother end up in Jamaica?

BAZ: My brother didn't feel good. And, and he didn't like the cold weather. So that's how, he said he would go to Jamaica, and it'll, you know, help him, the heat, the weather was good for him.

SIGRIST: Were there other Syrians in Jamaica?

BAZ: Oh, yeah. A lot of, a lot of Syrian, they're all wealthy. Some of them, even one wealthy fellow, he was a millionaire, wanted to marry my sister Nabeeha. But she, no, she doesn't want to marry anybody. She wants to come back to America with us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything first hand about being in Jamaica? You said you were there about three or four years.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about being in Jamaica?

BAZ: I remember, well, we went to school there. And then we lived on the corner and these men, and, and the Salvation Army would come every Saturday night. Come in front of the house, and they would sing their, their songs, you know. And, and we, we were just, so, the poor things, so, we were that's all. We didn't...

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SIGRIST: Can you describe the house for me that you lived in in Jamaica?

BAZ: It was a nice, it was a nice house, with a garden. And my, we had chickens in the garden, and we had mango trees, and we had, it was very nice. Nice house.

SIGRIST: What did the house look from the outside?

BAZ: Just a regular house.

SIGRIST: What color was it?

BAZ: I don't know what color, honey.

SIGRIST: No. Uh-huh.

BAZ: I don't...

SIGRIST: Do you know how many rooms it had?

BAZ: Yeah. Well, we had three, four, two, three, four rooms. Yeah. We had, and this, this colored man would come, and carry Dad's bundle, you know. But they used to tell him, "Mrs. Showa, don't feed him. After he gets done working, then feed him." So sometimes, there was no frigidaires them days. Icebox. So my mother would for, forget to buy ice, to tell him to go buy us a piece of ice. After she fed, she give him his supper, "Oh, I forgot to tell you, get me a piece." He wouldn't answer, he wouldn't answer. He wouldn't, as though you were talking to the wall. He kept on going. In the morning he'd come to, "What's

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the matter with you? Why didn't you," he wouldn't. As long as their stomach was full, the Lebanese people used to tell my, my mother, "Mrs. Showa, if you want anything done, have it done before. After you feed him, he'd never do nothing." Yeah, that's what they...

SIGRIST: What, was there tension in Jamaica between the black population and...

BAZ: Oh, no.

SIGRIST: No.

BAZ: No, no. No. The poor girl, she used to come and wash the, wash in that, in the yard. And the whole week a shilling. Twenty-five cents is shilling, English money them days.

SIGRIST: What kinds of food do you remember eating in Jamaica?

BAZ: Reg, regular food. Just like any other place. Green beans and whatever. You know.

SIGRIST: You said you had a garden?

BAZ: Chicken. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you...

BAZ: Chicken. We had chickens, and we had eggplant, and we had, I don't know. All kinds of, I for, yeah. Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Tell me what you remember about going to school in Jamaica.

BAZ: Oh, it was, we used to go, it was, we used to go to some Catholic school. We used to walk for miles, go walking to, to this academy, Catholic school. Yeah. It was nice. It was nice.

SIGRIST: Who taught school? Who were the teachers?

BAZ: American teachers, English teachers.

SIGRIST: Well, you said it was a Catholic school...

BAZ: Yeah, but no. The, the place we used to visit. But the school was a regular school, not a Catholic school.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did you learn in school in Jamaica?

BAZ: Just like any other school. We went, you know, to I think maybe five, six, four or five grades. We went two, three years there.

SIGRIST: What language did they teach there?

BAZ: English. English.

SIGRIST: So, was, was English, so you learned English quite young then.

BAZ: Oh, yes.

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SIGRIST: Yeah.

BAZ: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: What did you do for fun as a little girl in Jamaica?

BAZ: We didn't do much fun, my darling boy. Are you kidding? I never had a doll. This, this man that my father used to buy goods from the wholesale, the Lebanese man, he used to go and buy. So he knew there was a little girl about me. He, "Oh, you got a little girl?" Six, seven years, four years, seven years old? He sent me a doll. That's the first doll I ever owned. What I did, I put a rope, and made, and, two ropes, you know, like this? (she indicates) And put a blanket outside in the yard, and put the doll like a swing. I come to, after another two, three hours I come. Wah [sic]. The eyes went down. The, the heat, the sun is so hot, that her eyes of the doll went, went, fell off, and there was, and, I never, we never had nothing.

SIGRIST: Oh. How did you celebrate Christmas in Jamaica? Do you remember celebrating holidays?

BAZ: Well, they said in Jamaica, I don't, just like any other. We were just strangers by ourself.

SIGRIST: But you said there were other Syrians.

BAZ: Yeah, but they didn't, each one were busy with different, you know.

SIGRIST: You said your father was peddling in Jamaica.

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BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your brother who had gone down before, what was he doing?

BAZ: He didn't do, he didn't do much of anything. He just, you know, maybe, I don't know what, he didn't do much of, he used to help in the store. Work in the store, some, some man. He used to help him.

SIGRIST: What about your mother? Did she get work when you went to Jamaica?

BAZ: No, no, no. No. I, she had my brother, Joe, and us, all us kids. No, she never...

SIGRIST: She didn't work.

BAZ: No, no.

SIGRIST: Tell me about what kind of clothes you wore in Jamaica.

BAZ: Regular clothes. Just like here.

SIGRIST: But what is that? If you could describe what it looked like?

BAZ: Just summer clothes, like, like when we live here. I don't know. All kinds of summer clothes, because it's hot there.

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SIGRIST: Do you remember a dress from you childhood that sticks out in your mind that was a favorite...

BAZ: No, I don't rem, I don't remember.

SIGRIST: No? Nothing? So you think you stayed in Jamaica how long?

BAZ: We stayed three, four years.

SIGRIST: Okay. And then, by then I assume your sister, her eye had cleared up?

BAZ: No. I told you. Because we were in Jamaica, and then we came, came back here...

SIGRIST: You went back to New York.

BAZ: And then they sent her back to Jamaica. And in the meantime my father went back again. Got a citizen paper, American citizen, and went back. Tried again. Nothing doing. So this doctor told him, "Mr. Showa, take her to Port-au-Prince, Haiti." That's how, that's how she got away.

SIGRIST: Do you know what they did to her in Haiti?

BAZ: No. How would I know? Maybe they scraped the trachoma off of her, the eyelid, you know, whatever they, I don't know.

SIGRIST: So, so when did you fin, when did the whole family finally get back to

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America?

BAZ: The whole family?

SIGRIST: Yeah.

BAZ: Well, we were here. Then after three, three, four, two, three years...

SIGRIST: Three or four years.

BAZ: Two, three years everybody got together again.

SIGRIST: And then you went, you took a boat from, from there to New York?
And then...

BAZ: To Jamaica?

SIGRIST: From Jamaica to New York.

BAZ: Yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: You took the ship...

BAZ: Yeah. And, and, and going to Jamaica, when we went, we went on the
boat. Six days, them days, used to take.

SIGRIST: So you remember the, the, the ship from New York to Jamaica?

BAZ: Yeah, I remember.

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SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about that?

BAZ: Nothing. It was just a boat. And my sister, God bless her, she would eat. She would eat like a, and she would come. Said, "Mama, they're eating all the food." I couldn't eat a thing. Even the doctor came, used to give me things that things that I could eat. I couldn't eat anything until I got off the ship.

SIGRIST: What year was it when the whole family finally was together and made it to Utica, do you know?

BAZ: Well, like I told you, four years. Four years. That was 19' what, 1910.

SIGRIST: Well, 1910, 1914.

BAZ: And four years, 1914.

SIGRIST: And what was the first address that you lived in in Utica?

BAZ: On, on Bleeker Street. I don't know the address.

SIGRIST: That was the house, that was the place where your mother was washing everything with the water?

BAZ: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you explain to me how your parents, did your father go back to work in the, in the mills?

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BAZ: Yeah. No.

SIGRIST: When he...

BAZ: My father after, when we came back, he went and he opened a grocery store.

SIGRIST: Where was the grocery store?

BAZ: On Bleeker Street.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

BAZ: A little grocery store. And that's how, that's how, every, my, my, my dad had a potbelly stove in the middle of the store. And I, in the meantime, I worked in the tailor shop sewing. And I used to come from work, pass by, because we only lived two, two, three blocks away from the store. I used to stop to the store. I said, "Mama, is there anything for me to take home?" To carry. She'll have a basket. That's how my, my Joe, Joe used to sit behind the potbelly stove, my husband. And never think nothing of it. So my father says to him one day, "Joe, will you please take two bags of flour to my daughter?" The daughter Nabeeha, she had seven kids. But she had two, three kids that time. They were poor. "Will you take them, that bag, couple bags of flour for my daughter?" He said, I don't know where you daughter lives." He says to him, "Thouria will go with you and show you." I hopped on the truck, on the real truck, and I went. We, we took the, the flour, and I came back. On Christmas, we lived in a four, five family house. On

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Christmas, bam, boom, boom, the door was banging. I opened the door. It was Christmas, couple weeks before Christmas. I opened the door. I said, he had a box. I said, "What, I didn't buy nothing." He said, "Oh, the Christmas rush. There's no name. That's the address." So, I said, "All right." He left the box. I opened it. It was a brown coat with all these buttons. So when my mother came I said, "Ma, I don't know nobody. Who would send me a coat? Must be the only one that I know is Joe." So, "Oh, I'm not poor. I don't need his, I'll go to the downtown." I bought a silk shirt and tie and cuff links. I figured the coat cost about twenty dollars them days. And I'll send it. He had a place on Whitesford Street. He was selling, started to sell eggs. I said to, I went to the post office. I said, "Please, I want to send this to Joe Baz on Whitesford." He said, "But I don't want to put my name." He said, "Oh, Miss, you have to put your name, because it's the Christmas rush. You'll, you'll lose him. If you, if you, it'll get lost." So I said, "All right, I'll put my name." So poor Joe came. He said, "Thanks for the gift." I said, "Thank you for your gift." He said, "What gift?" Oh, my God, it was a mistake. The, the box belonged to another family upstairs. He made the mist, that's how we started. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: That's how, that's how you began with your, your husband to be.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you got married?

BAZ: I must have been about eighteen, nineteen. Nineteen, I'd think.

SIGRIST: Do you know what year it was?

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BAZ: 1923.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you know the date, the month and the...

BAZ: The date exactly, no, 1923.

SIGRIST: It was 1923. I want to back track just a minute and ask you what it was like for you to go to school here in Utica. Did, did...

BAZ: Oh, wonderful.

SIGRIST: Did they put into school?

BAZ: Oh, yes. I went to Bleeker Street school, and then Berndigan [PH] school, to, yeah, I went.

SIGRIST: Did you, did the kids ever make fun of you because you were an immigrant?

BAZ: No. I was proud to be a Syrian. I used to tell, "I'm proud, well, what do you mean?" No, nobody did.

SIGRIST: Nobody did.

BAZ: Only the way they live now, nowadays. We didn't have no rubbers, no nothing. Poor thing, we used to freeze to death. We didn't have, we were all poor people. I'm not ashamed. That's why if you got money, "Oh, they got money." They're, they got their nose stuck up in the air.

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Don't forget what you were.

SIGRIST: Was there a favorite subject that you had in school here in Utica?

BAZ: No, no. Regular. Just, no, nothing.

SIGRIST: Is there a teacher that sticks out in your mind?

BAZ: No, honey. There, of course, it was late years ago. I can't...

SIGRIST: A long time ago.

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, your parents could read and write? Could...

BAZ: My, my dad did.

SIGRIST: ...could your parents read and write?

BAZ: My dad, Arabic, yeah. But my mother, no.

SIGRIST: Did your father or mother make an attempt to learn English?

BAZ: Yeah, they learned a little bit. Yeah, they...

SIGRIST: Where did they learn their English?

BAZ: With us. Us children.

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SIGRIST: But, I mean, did they learn it in Jamaica or did they learn it here in Utica?

BAZ: No, here. Or maybe a little in Jamaica when he went peddling around. Must be. Yeah, they, they learned a little bit.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, of course, your father has a business, right?

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He has a grocery store...

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...so he's got people coming in...

BAZ: Oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: Who were your father's clients? Who were coming, what, what kinds of people...

BAZ: Oh, the Italians and Syrians. That's all there were. That's all there are. There wasn't much, you know, difference. Italians or Syrians. We were all together, the same.

SIGRIST: Were you ever embarrassed that you had immigrant parents that spoke with accents and...

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BAZ: No. Oh, no, no. No. I wasn't, we weren't, we were proud what we are. That's nothing. But, see, this old lady started to smoke on the street. And then another said, from Aleppo she was. And another one, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself, you're smoking?" She said to them, "No, me no shame, I smoke. Shame, you. You kiss each other on the street like dog," she told them. She said, "We're not, that's nothing if I'm smoking." (they laugh) Yeah.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, did your parents want to become citizens?

BAZ: Dad did, sure. We all, we all come, became citizens.

SIGRIST: Did he do that before you came, or was this after you got here?

BAZ: No, no. After. After.

SIGRIST: Can you explain to me a little of what...

BAZ: Well, we would sit. My sister and I would sit at night, and, and, you know, tell him whatever we could read to him. And he would write the constitution. He would write in Aleppo. And then he went and, he learned a few questions, and he went and he got his first American citizen paper. That's all.

SIGRIST: And then that was when, you became a citizen on his papers?

BAZ: Yeah. Sure. But...

SIGRIST: Did you ever take out your own papers?

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BAZ: I did. I did. I took out my own papers, too.

SIGRIST: And how old were you when that happened?

BAZ: Gosh, I think 1933. I think.

SIGRIST: Tell me about, you said your parents learned a little bit of English to get by.

BAZ: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: In, when you were in school were there other, were there immigrant children that you remember going to school with?

BAZ: Oh, I can't remember, dear, all these years. No. We were all immigrant children. Italians and Syrians. We were all foreigners.

SIGRIST: Was there a large Syrian population here in the Utica area?

BAZ: No, not too many.

SIGRIST: No?

BAZ: No. There weren't too many. There was quite a few.

SIGRIST: Did the Syrians socialize with other immigrant groups.

BAZ: Not too much. I don't remember. No, they had their own.

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SIGRIST: When you were in America in those early years, how did you entertain yourselves? How would the family...

BAZ: What, what entertain?

SIGRIST: How would the family have fun together?

BAZ: The poor things. My, my father was a president of the Aleppo Club. And there used to be just chairs. You'd think they had (unintelligible), chairs. And they would come and, and have a meeting. And, and, and there was what entertainment? Maybe for the holidays they'd get a barrel of beer. You know, a barrel used to be, and celebrate whatever they, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Explain to me what the Aleppo Club was.

BAZ: Nothing.

SIGRIST: What, what was the Aleppo Club. Was this, what, what kind of a club was this?

BAZ: It was, just a regular men's club. They used to have the meetings for the church, and different, there wasn't anything.

SIGRIST: And who could join? Who could join this club? Did you have to be Syrian to join this, this club?

BAZ: Yeah. That's the Aleppo Syrian Club, yeah. And they had the

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Lebanese club, too. The American Lebanese Club. Yeah, each one would.

SIGRIST: Did these, did these, these clubs sponsor dances and social events ever?

BAZ: No, no. Not them days.

SIGRIST: No?

BAZ: They didn't sponsor nothing, poor things. They were all poor people.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about how your family was affected by World War One?

BAZ: Oh, my, World War One. No.

SIGRIST: Was your family affected in any way by World War One?

BAZ: No. No.

SIGRIST: No.

BAZ: Only Joe, well, Joe went 19', he went to the second world war. Not the first.

SIGRIST: Joe was your husband?

BAZ: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: So, you married Joseph Baz. What's his background? What was your husband's background?

BAZ: What do you mean, background?

SIGRIST: Where was he from?

BAZ: He's from Lebanon. He's from Firtei [PH]. Well, I guess he was born in Razizh [PH], in (unintelligible)?

ZOGBY: His parents were...

BAZ: His parents, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, he was from Lebanon.

SIGRIST: And what, what, what attracted you, I mean, you told me the story about the coat and the shirts and everything...

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: ...but what, what was, what was it about him that your really liked? What qualities...

BAZ: Well, he seemed to be like an honest, my, my father went to this priest, and asked him. He said, "My, this, this young man wants to marry my daughter. Father, how was his background?" Because we didn't, he was from Lebanon, you know. Them days they don't like to mix marriages. You got to stick to your own. So the priest says to him, "Oh, he's a wonderful, honest fellow." That, that was that. So we were

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engaged about a year. Then we got married.

SIGRIST: So, so your father was, was willing to, to accept him, even though your father hadn't chosen him.

BAZ: Oh, no. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. They accepted him.

SIGRIST: How many children did you have?

BAZ: Us? Four.

SIGRIST: And what are their names?

BAZ: My, my poor, only son, he passed away, where is that frame?

SIGRIST: There's a picture over here on the table, I see.

BAZ: Yeah, he's a, he, he passed away. I had three daughters and a son.

SIGRIST: And what was every, all the children's names? What were the names of everybody?

BAZ: Well, Laurice is the oldest.

SIGRIST: Laurice, yes.

BAZ: And Rose Marie is next. And Gloria. She teaches in Corning, New York. And Anthony. Anthony was the youngest. He passed away. He had a heart attack and good-bye.

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SIGRIST: Have you ever gone back to Syria?

BAZ: No.

SIGRIST: Did you ever have any desire to go?

BAZ: No. I don't know nobody there, honey. No. Joe went. Joe went in 19, 1923. He went to see his mother. He went four months. He went to the old count, he went to Lebanon to see his mother before, because she always said she wanted to see him before he, she dies. So he went.

SIGRIST: Did he ever tell you what that experience was like? He had been in America for a while. What was it like for him to go back to Lebanon?

BAZ: Oh, he just went, he knows what Lebanon, he came a young man here. He wasn't a, a child. And, but he just wanted to go see his mother, and he enjoyed, you know, the country. And, but no place like home here.

SIGRIST: So he stayed a month and he came back then?

BAZ: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did your parents ever want to go back?

BAZ: No, never had the chance. My poor grandmother said to my mother, "My daughter, good-bye, forever and ever." It's different, honey. It

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used to, forty days on the boat to go. But now they fly back and forth, it's a different world, a different life.

SIGRIST: Did your parents ever give your rules to live by? Did they ever say you should always be a certain way, or always do a certain thing?

BAZ: No, no. I, they didn't have to. They didn't have to tell us nothing. We were good, oh, God bless them. We were a good family. We were good children. Never told us what to do and what to, they knew what they had.

SIGRIST: What kind of advice would you give to young people now about how to live their lives?

BAZ: Dear God, I lived with my poor Joe was in the hospital. I lived with him sixty-five years. The nurses would hug me. "How did you do it? How did you do it?" My dear, you have to sacrifice. I used to talk to them like I'm talking to my children. When there's love in the home, there's love, we had our ups and downs. But you have to sacrifice. He used to say, "Sarah, when we have the money we buy. We don't have the money, we don't buy." Oh, I never, my mother used to say, "If he says the milk is black, you say, 'yeah, Joe.'" I, I want to live in peace. I don't want to argue and fight. And that's how it is. Nowadays they want to get married. They want to live like the Jones. We went to (unintelligible) five and ten. Bought dishes and forks and spoons. We didn't get no silver no way. You have to, you have to sacrifice. You have to take your time and, and, and when there's love in the home, and, everything will work out.

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SIGRIST: Well, I think that's a good place for us to end. Mrs. Baz, thank you very much.

BAZ: Oh, you're welcome. My...

SIGRIST: It's been a pleasure...

BAZ: Same.

SIGRIST: This is a most unique immigration story.

BAZ: My sweetheart. (he laughs) Are you ready for coffee?

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Sarah Baz on April 27th, 1995 here in Utica, New York. Thank you very much.

BAZ: You're wel, my...(tape ends)

END OF INTERVIEW