

EI-066

SAMUEL NOAH RUBIN

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1993

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 2/1994

RUSSIA, 1919

PORT: ANTWERP

AGE 10

RESIDENCES: STAROBIN; BROOKLYN, NY

Oral Historian's Note: There is confusion within the interview concerning Mr. Rubin's arrival date in the United States. While "1919, age 10" was supplied prior to the interview, Mrs. Rubin later states that the family arrived in January of 1922. Perhaps 1919 is the date Mr. Rubin's family initially left Russia. Mr. Rubin claims he doesn't remember. Mrs. Rubin frequently interjects throughout the interview. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 2/8/1994.

LEVINE: It's about a quarter after three in the afternoon.

Mr. Rubin came from Russia in 1919 at the age of ten. So

Mr. Rubin, can you tell me what town you were born in in Russia.

RUBIN: I was born in a small town what you call Starobin.

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

RUBIN: S-T-A-R-O-B-I-N. Starobin, plain. But I spent most of my time with my other grandfather, and he lived in town.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of that place?

RUBIN: Yeah, sure. Kapicheck. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

RUBIN: K-A-P-I, K-A-P-I, Kapi, check. C-H-E-C-K.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, you spent most of your time in your boyhood?

RUBIN: I spent most of my time with my other grandfather.

LEVINE: Now, when you lived, did you live with your mother and father first?

RUBIN: Uh, well, uh, my father left when I was about three years old. I didn't remember my father. I didn't remember him at all.

LEVINE: Now, so in other words your mother was, your father left, so then instead of staying with your mother you went to your . . .

RUBIN: My father left Russia because he didn't want to join the army. He did not want to go and join the army.

LEVINE: So then did he come to the United States?

RUBIN: Yes, he came to United States.

MRS. RUBIN: I can explain it.

LEVINE: Okay. So your father went to the United States.

RUBIN: Yes.

LEVINE: And then you went.

RUBIN: After, my mother had a sister who married wrong. She moved away somewhere, God knows where, and she needed help. So we went there to help her. My father, I mean my mother and my brother and myself.

LEVINE: Where did she go?

RUBIN: I don't know. I don't remember the town.

LEVINE: So you went there to help her. And then what?

RUBIN: And then, the end of the First World War broke out, broke off. My mother decided to come to the United States.

LEVINE: This was now, the Second World War was over by then?

RUBIN: No, no.

LEVINE: Now, what made your mother decide to come?

RUBIN: What made my mother? After so many letters from my father she couldn't refuse him. (?)

LEVINE: I see. Now, how did she feel about coming?

RUBIN: She, as a matter of fact, she had a coat. Inside was beaver. She intended to give it to my father as a present, but it got lost somewhere, I don't know.

LEVINE: Was she sorry to leave Russia? No?

RUBIN: What?

LEVINE: Was she sorry to leave Russia?

RUBIN: Uh, well, no, she wasn't sorry to leave Russia because, I hated Russia.

LEVINE: Yeah. What did your mother do for money while your father was here?

RUBIN: My mother peddled a lot.

LEVINE: Like what?

RUBIN: You know, she went from different town to town, and she sold goods for us to go to Chader. You know what that is?

LEVINE: Seder.

RUBIN: Chader. C-H-A-D-E-R. And that didn't do any harm. It didn't do any harm. Of course, when we came to the United

States we had to enter school, we found it very easy.

LEVINE: Oh. I see. Now, did you know any English when you came?

RUBIN: No. Absolutely not. Nothing. The only thing I know, I can remember, is when I said, we came on the ship known as the Finland.

LEVINE: Finland.

RUBIN: Yep. God knows where it is now. It's in the junkyard by now. I told the people aboard ship that the next day we're going to see the Statue of Liberty. And everybody got dolled up, and they yelled and they, "Hurrah, hurrah."

LEVINE: Well, tell me first more about Russia. What do you remember about it?

RUBIN: Russia, I don't remember very much about Russia. The only thing I remember is where my other grandfather, that lived in Kapicheck.

LEVINE: What do you remember about Kapicheck?

RUBIN: Well, he, you know, Jews were not allowed to own any land. So he leased the land from the people that owned it, and made them work for him.

LEVINE: Wow.

RUBIN: (he laughs) Here, I had two big sons, too.

LEVINE: What did he do on the land? What did he use it for?

RUBIN: Well, the main thing was potatoes. (Mr. Rubin and Mrs. Rubin converse off-mike.)

MRS. RUBIN: Your grandfather, the story about the potatoes.

LEVINE: Your grandfathers grew potatoes?

MRS. RUBIN: No, no, no, no. The story that he ate but he never . . .

RUBIN: Oh, I got that written in a book. Would you like a written, would you like me to read for you? You know, we have a daughter that lived in Lexington, Massachusetts. And I tried my best to copy Sholom Aleichem. You heard of him? But it didn't work.

MRS. RUBIN: He started to write a book.

RUBIN: And I started to write. (off-mike comment)

MRS. RUBIN: We could get more out of it. (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. So let's continue where we left off.

RUBIN: You know what a town is? A dorf.

LEVINE: A dorf? Okay. Well, in Kapicheck then, can you remember like the house you lived in there?

RUBIN: Yes, I do.

LEVINE: What do you remember?

RUBIN: I remember we had a large living room where in the wintertime all the goyem used to gather. (imitates men talking) They fought like hell.

LEVINE: Why did they gather there?

RUBIN: Well, they had no place to go. And my grandmother used to bake potatoes for them.

LEVINE: Now, what were conditions like in Kapicheck? What was it like there as far as persecution, as far as economics?

RUBIN: There is no such thing as persecution.

MRS. RUBIN: We were caught in a pogrom.

RUBIN: That was in Starobin.

LEVINE: So in Kapichek then it was . . .

RUBIN: Absolutely nothing.

LEVINE: A pleasant life?

RUBIN: Absolutely, yes. I liked Kapichek.

LEVINE: And you have fond memories of being there.

RUBIN: Oh, yes. I do.

LEVINE: Now, who was there with you?

RUBIN: My grandfather.

LEVINE: And what was his name?

RUBIN: Abraham. And Benseen and Yankel.

LEVINE: And who were they?

RUBIN: They were his two sons.

LEVINE: They were his two sons. And you. So it was the four of you.

RUBIN: And my grandmother, of course.

LEVINE: And your grandma there. And what was her name?

RUBIN: Uh, my grandmother's name. I forgot, too.

MRS. RUBIN: Was it Peshi? No, Peshi was in Starobin.

LEVINE: Now, can you remember what you did there? Did you play?

RUBIN: I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything. I just went along and I made sure that they have enough potatoes on the field where they worked.

LEVINE: What do you mean?

RUBIN: I baked. I baked potatoes.

MRS. RUBIN: They used to make a bonfire for the people who were working and needed some. When he was a little kid he used to watch the potatoes.

LEVINE: I see. So you were working then. You weren't . . .

RUBIN: Absolutely. No, I wasn't, I wasn't.

MRS. RUBIN: You didn't wear shoes.

RUBIN: Shoes, who knew about shoes?

LEVINE: Was it cold there?

RUBIN: Nah. Well, it was cold in the winter time, yes. And when the snow came down it stayed down. No such thing as, in

Starobin, in the first place, in the spring it's known as Starobin Blutus.

LEVINE: Blotis?

RUBIN: Blutus.

LEVINE: Blutus. What's that?

RUBIN: Blutus is dirt.

MRS. RUBIN: Mud, it's mud.

RUBIN: Mud. But when the snow came, enough.

LEVINE: Now, in Starobin who was there with you when you were there?

RUBIN: My grandfather.

LEVINE: And what was his name?

RUBIN: Uh . . .

MRS. RUBIN: That's your father. Motel.

RUBIN: Motel. That's right.

LEVINE: That's your father's father. And what was the last name?

RUBIN: Rubinowitz.

MRS. RUBIN: He changed it.

LEVINE: Okay. So your grandfather was in Starobin and who else?

RUBIN: Uh, he had one, two, three sisters, I think. Three sisters there. One sister moved to Siberia. She married someone in Siberia. I don't know now. She's living yet or not, I don't know. And the other one, Hashka, she disappeared. Hitler took care of her.

LEVINE: So what happened? What was your mother's name?

RUBIN: My mother's name was Rubinowitz.

MRS. RUBIN: No, her first name. Ida.

RUBIN: Ida.

LEVINE: Ida. And what was her maiden name?

RUBIN: Uh, I got to refer to this. (break in tape)

LEVINE: Okay. So your mother's name was changed.

RUBIN: Yes, from Ida to Alta.

LEVINE: And why was that, why was her name changed?

MRS. RUBIN: Alta means "old."

LEVINE: So why was, tell me why your mother's name was changed to Alta.

RUBIN: Because she was sick.

LEVINE: And what was the idea behind that?

MRS. RUBIN: She wanted to hang on.

RUBIN: The idea was she wanted it changed.

MRS. RUBIN: No, no. She wanted to live longer. For her to live longer, that's why they gave her the name Alta. Alta means old, age.

RUBIN: Alta means aged.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you . . . (break in tape)

MRS. RUBIN: Was her name Fishman, Fisherman, something?

RUBIN: Fisherman was my other grandfather.

LEVINE: So, in other words, by naming, calling her Alta instead of Ida it was that she should have long life.

RUBIN: Longer life.

LEVINE: I see. Okay. Now how about brothers and sisters?

RUBIN: How many brothers?

LEVINE: In Starobin, who was there with you?

RUBIN: Well, I was there, my brother was there.

LEVINE: And what's your brother's name?

RUBIN: My brother's name is Shale.

LEVINE: Shale.

MRS. RUBIN: His name is Paul.

LEVINE: And was he younger? He was younger.

RUBIN: He's younger. Eighteen year, eighteen months.

LEVINE: Eighteen months younger. And so it was the two children.

RUBIN: Just the two of us.

MRS. RUBIN: And then when they came here they had a girl.

LEVINE: Okay. So now tell me, so your father had left for the United States to avoid the army, and then how many years had he been gone when your mother then . . .

RUBIN: He was gone about ten years.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, before he left Russia, what did he do for work?

RUBIN: For work, I don't know.

MRS. RUBIN: What did he do in Europe?

RUBIN: I really don't.

MRS. RUBIN: He was too little.

LEVINE: So then your mother decided to come to be with your father.

RUBIN: Right. This is after her sister gave birth, before the Second World War broke out. We went from Poland, from Russia to Poland, and we stood all night long up here (he gestures) in water.

LEVINE: How so? Where were you? Where was the water?

RUBIN: Who the hell knows. I don't know.

LEVINE: You mean you had to stand in the water?

RUBIN: I was standing. The fellow that took us, the fellow that took us (?), let him stand there.

LEVINE: So you were going, this was en route to Poland.

RUBIN: And then we wound up in Warsaw. But Warsaw, at that time, is supposed to be, I don't know. It's, at that time it was, it wasn't (?). Because a Jew had to be in nine o'clock. The buildings were built like this, (he gestures) three story buildings, three-story buildings.

MRS. RUBIN: They had a curfew.

RUBIN: Huh?

MRS. RUBIN: They had a curfew of nine o'clock.

RUBIN: Curfew, nine o'clock.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So how did that affect you? Where were you staying when you were in Warsaw?

RUBIN: Nalifke.

LEVINE: Say it again.

RUBIN: Nalifke.

MRS. RUBIN: What's that mean?

RUBIN: (he laughs) That's the street.

LEVINE: Oh, the name of the street.

MRS. RUBIN: They were boarders, you know.

RUBIN: You know, Warsaw had a beautiful street by the name of Marshalkovsky, but no Jews allowed there.

LEVINE: So when you were staying were you, tell me the story about why you had to stay in Warsaw for a while.

RUBIN: We had to stay in Warsaw, we had to wait for a passport. But then they passed a law that no immigrants are allowed to live in Warsaw, so we moved to Nova Minsk.

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

RUBIN: Nova Minsk.

LEVINE: Oh, Nova Minsk, okay, uh-huh. I understand.

MRS. RUBIN: M-I-N-S-K.

LEVINE: So you moved to Nova Minsk and probably there were a lot of immigrants there.

RUBIN: Huh?

LEVINE: A lot of immigrants were in . . .

RUBIN: Yeah. There was quite a few immigrants there, but we lived in a place where, it was a religious place. I didn't like

it very much.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family before this?

RUBIN: No, I wasn't.

MRS. RUBIN: Your mother was.

RUBIN: Yeah, my mother was, but not me. I was never religious.

LEVINE: So what about your mother. Was she religious when she was in Nova Minsk?

RUBIN: Uh, I don't think she was. She didn't go to shul there.

LEVINE: What did they do there?

MRS. RUBIN: He told me a story. See, I remember the stories. He doesn't remember them. He told me that they lived in this place where . . .

LEVINE: Do you remember anything religious that your mother was involved in in the old country?

RUBIN: No, she wasn't involved in any religion.

MRS. RUBIN: She was religious here, Sam. She started . . .

RUBIN: She was . . .

LEVINE: Oh, she became more religious after, maybe. Okay. So let's say that, now, you were in Warsaw, and you had to stay in Nova Minsk in order to get your passport.

RUBIN: Right.

LEVINE: And how long did that take?

RUBIN: It took about six months. From Nova Minsk we went to Belgium.

LEVINE: After six months in Nova Minsk?

RUBIN: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was that like?

RUBIN: Huh?

LEVINE: What was it like in Nova Minsk? What was your life like?

RUBIN: Nova Minsk I didn't care for very much.

LEVINE: What was going on?

RUBIN: I don't know. I didn't like the Jews there. I had no use for them.

LEVINE: Were there mostly Jews in Nova Minsk.

RUBIN: Right. But Belgium was a very clean town, and every morning they used to go out and wash the sidewalks.

LEVINE: Now, why did you happen to go from Nova Minsk to Antwerp?

MRS. RUBIN: Because that's where the ship was.

LEVINE: You were leaving from Antwerp?

RUBIN: From Belgium?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MRS. RUBIN: Belgium. Antwerp.

LEVINE: That's where the ship finally went from.

RUBIN: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. Now, did you stay very long in Antwerp, in Belgium, before you left?

RUBIN: Uh, I don't know how long we stayed there. I really don't know.

LEVINE: Okay. So were you able to speak and everything to

people when you were waiting for your passport?

RUBIN: Oh, I spoke a lot. I spoke a lot.

LEVINE: Yeah?

MRS. RUBIN: What did you speak? Russian?

RUBIN: I spoke everything.

MRS. RUBIN: What did you speak?!?

RUBIN: Russian, Jewish, Russian.

LEVINE: Okay. So now, okay. Now, it's you and your brother and your mother, and you have your passports, and you leave from Belgium.

RUBIN: Right.

LEVINE: On the Finland? Is that what you told me?

RUBIN: Finland.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, what was the ship like?

RUBIN: The ship was, like I said, it's probably in some junkyard now.

MRS. RUBIN: Come on.

RUBIN: It's not very good. We went on the third class.

LEVINE: Does that mean you had a cabin, or you were steerage?

MRS. RUBIN: Steerage! No, it was steerage.

RUBIN: No. Steerage.

MRS. RUBIN: Everybody was sick when he was running around.

LEVINE: So you were the only one . . .

RUBIN: I was running around. I was cheering everybody up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you, how long a trip? Do you remember how long?

RUBIN: Well, it took us about a month.

MRS. RUBIN: When did you leave? Because you came January, 20th of January, 1922, January.

LEVINE: January 1922 you arrived in the United States.

MRS. RUBIN: Right.

LEVINE: So you were leaving maybe in December of 1921.

RUBIN: Maybe. I don't know.

LEVINE: So can you remember anything else about being on the

ship? What was that like?

RUBIN: The food was terrible.

LEVINE: Did you bring food with you?

RUBIN: Uh, no. We didn't bring any food with me, with us. The food that they gave you was terrible. I didn't like it. But I always managed to get some different food.

LEVINE: How did you manage that?

RUBIN: (he laughs) Huh?

MRS. RUBIN: From other people.

RUBIN: From higher-class people.

LEVINE: I see. So you had some contact with the people who were in first or second class.

RUBIN: I had contact with everybody.

MRS. RUBIN: He used to sneak up.

LEVINE: I see. So you, okay. You took care of yourself and your family?

RUBIN: And my brother and my mother.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you bring very many things with you?
Do you remember anything that you brought on the ship?

RUBIN: On the ship, all I can remember is my mother wore that
beaver, a coat with a beaver lining. She was going to give it
to my father, but by the time, it was lost. God knows what
happened.

LEVINE: I see. And did you, were there people on the ship
that you met that you have had any contact with since that time?

RUBIN: Well, the people that I met, they were all right.
They were plain people.

LEVINE: Were they also a lot from Russia?

RUBIN: Oh, most of them were from Russia.

LEVINE: So you could talk to everyone.

RUBIN: Absolutely. You know, I used to speak Russian very
well. Now I forgot.

LEVINE: You haven't used it in a while.

RUBIN: I haven't used it in quite some time.

LEVINE: Okay. So then do you remember approaching New York
Harbor on the ship?

RUBIN: Yes. I told the people that we're going to see the Statue of Liberty the next day.

LEVINE: How did you know about the Statue?

RUBIN: I was told, what did you think? I was told that the Statue of Liberty is going to be there the next day. And everybody got dolled up and then they cheered and cheered and cheered.

LEVINE: Can you remember how you felt?

RUBIN: Well, I felt, I felt pretty good.

LEVINE: Can you remember what you expected, like, coming to the United States, what did you . . .

RUBIN: Uh, I remember, I didn't remember my father at all. Neither did my brother. Of course, he wasn't born yet. He kept saying, "I don't know my father. I don't think I'll ever know him." That was on the ship. I said, "Forget about it. Don't talk about it."

LEVINE: So were you looking forward to seeing your father?

RUBIN: Absolutely.

LEVINE: And, um . . .

RUBIN: When we came there we came on the East Side.

LEVINE: Well, first let's get to Ellis Island. Do you remember Ellis Island?

RUBIN: Yes. I remember Ellis Island. We went through Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Can you remember, now, the ship came, you saw the Statue of Liberty.

RUBIN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then you saw Ellis Island. Do you remember any impressions you had about it?

RUBIN: Well, I don't remember any impressions about it, but I knew we had to pass health tests and anything.

LEVINE: Can you remember anything about the medical exams?

RUBIN: Ah, medical exam, nothing to talk about.

MRS. RUBIN: It was short, it was sort of short and sweet.

LEVINE: So did you eat there? Did you have a meal at Ellis Island?

RUBIN: At Ellis Island? My father came the very next day.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. So that's when you first saw him. He came to Ellis Island and that was the first time that you saw him.

RUBIN: Absolutely.

LEVINE: Now, can you remember that meeting with your father?

RUBIN: Well, it was a joyous meeting, yes.

LEVINE: Do you have any remembrances about what you thought when you saw him, or how you . . .

RUBIN: Well, hard to describe, but I . . .

MRS. RUBIN: It is hard, the feelings.

RUBIN: I did, I said before, we moved on the East Side. My father had an apartment on the East Side. My father wound up pressing pants. I have a book by Irving Howe where his name is mentioned there.

LEVINE: So can you remember your mother meeting with your father?

RUBIN: Oh, yeah, sure.

LEVINE: What do you remember about her? Can you say anything about that?

RUBIN: She was very happy to meet him.

LEVINE: And then you went to Hester Street on the Lower East Side?

RUBIN: On Hester Street on the Lower East Side.

LEVINE: And what did you think, coming to New York?

RUBIN: Uh, Hester Street did not impress me.

LEVINE: Why?

RUBIN: In the first place it was loud. And you . . .

MRS. RUBIN: You've told me so many times that you couldn't eat enough rolls.

LEVINE: Rolls impressed you?

MRS. RUBIN: They came, the bakery, the rolls. Remember you told me that.

RUBIN: Ah, the bread, we used to.

MRS. RUBIN: (she laughs) He said they saw rolls. They never saw such big rolls in their lives, they . . .

RUBIN: But then my father took us, the following week, to Brooklyn on Ashford Street.

LEVINE: Which street?

RUBIN: Ashford Street.

LEVINE: Eshwood.

MRS. RUBIN: Ashford. A-S-H-F-O-R-D.

LEVINE: Okay. Ashford Street, yeah.

RUBIN: And to us it looked like . . .

MRS. RUBIN: The suburbs.

RUBIN: Suburb is right.

LEVINE: So that impressed you much more than Hester Street.

MRS. RUBIN: He bought a house, his father did.

LEVINE: So you mean you moved a week later?

RUBIN: No. We had to, we had to wait till that fellow, the house cleared.

MRS. RUBIN: He took them to see the house.

LEVINE: Okay. So you, you went, after you were in Hester Street a week, you went to see this house on Ashford Street in Brooklyn. And then how long did you stay on Hester Street?

RUBIN: On Hester Street? Maybe about a month or so. And what impressed me most is the classroom there. The classroom there, they read a lot of different . . .

MRS. RUBIN: He went to Seward High.

RUBIN: There was a lot of different people there that spoke different languages. I said to the teacher once, "How the hell can you understand them?" "Who wants to understand?"

LEVINE: "Who wants to understand?" (she laughs) I see. So you went to school immediately?

RUBIN: Oh, sure.

MRS. RUBIN: They were very strict.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, how long . . .

MRS. RUBIN: They skipped, they were up in junior high.

LEVINE: Tell me how long it took you to learn English. How did that, what was that . . .

RUBIN: When my sister was born, we took her downstairs to play with the other kids. She came upstairs crying. She says, "Nobody wants to play with me." "Why?" She only spoke Yiddish. So I said to our folks, I said, "From now on we speak English

in this family. I don't care how, but we speak English. Now my sister speaks English."

MRS. RUBIN: She was very well educated.

LEVINE: So, in other words, your sister must have already been four or five, right?

RUBIN: She was, she was born here. She was born . . .

MRS. RUBIN: She was born in 1923.

LEVINE: So then did your family speak English then, by that time?

RUBIN: Oh, yeah, sure.

MRS. RUBIN: Lucy was born April 1, 1923.

LEVINE: Let's go back to the school, once you got to this country. What was it like going to school here?

RUBIN: Going to school here was very easy, very easy.

LEVINE: Were the other children in the school also speaking Russian?

RUBIN: No. We learned how to speak English.

LEVINE: You remember learning how to read?

RUBIN: Oh, sure. That and we spoke.

LEVINE: Now, okay. So then were there attitudes or were there ways about, things were done in your family that were carried over from Russia that you can remember?

RUBIN: That, I don't know.

MRS. RUBIN: When they came here they were real greenhorns.

LEVINE: Did you want to become American? I mean, was that part of the whole . . .

RUBIN: Oh, sure, we wanted to become American. Of course we wanted to become American. That's why we learned English.

LEVINE: Did you want to hold on to some of the ways from the old country?

RUBIN: You know, I used to commute with my daughter almost every week. Marilyn. She lived in Lexington.

MRS. RUBIN: Yeah. We used to go there every week. What are you getting to now?

RUBIN: So I told her, I said, "I'm retiring, we're retiring to Florida." She says, "Dad, this will give you a chance to do your writing, whatever you want to write." And I wrote every

President, Vice-President, Senator, Congressman, Representative, everybody. (he laughs)

LEVINE: You mean, about political issues?

RUBIN: Yeah, sure.

LEVINE: Great. Tell me this. Now, you have, you and your wife. What's your wife's name? (to Mrs. Rubin) Pearl. Your wife, Pearl, have two children.

RUBIN: Two children.

LEVINE: Two children. And what are their names?

RUBIN: Their name is Stanley and Marilyn.

MRS. RUBIN: I'd say Marilyn and Stanley because she's older.

LEVINE: I see. And do you have grandchildren as well?

RUBIN: Oh, yeah. We have five grandchildren.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, is there anything that you can think of, anything more about Ellis Island, about your experience?

RUBIN: Ellis Island, I really don't know. We didn't spend that much time there.

MRS. RUBIN: Sam, you were only there two days.

RUBIN: Less than that.

MRS. RUBIN: And your father came.

RUBIN: He came there, and took us right away.

LEVINE: And when you got to New York . . .

RUBIN: My father had a lot of pull.

LEVINE: He did?

RUBIN: You know, when we lived on the East Side we saw all these shows, the Jewish shows on Second Avenue because my father had all the pulls.

LEVINE: And did your mother work at all once you got to this country?

RUBIN: No, she never worked. The only time she worked . . .

MRS. RUBIN: Later on, the father went into business. We always had a partner. He was very enterprising. He used to buy delicatessen stools and fix them up and sell them. But his mother, she used to make knishes and sell them. It was a delicatessen store, so he used to bring in . . .

LEVINE: I see. Do you remember the food from Russia at all?

RUBIN: The food?

LEVINE: Yeah.

RUBIN: Potatoes. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Potatoes, that's what you remember.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Now, is there anything else you can think of about your experience coming here, your impressions coming here . . .

RUBIN: It was joyous coming here. It was a joyous affair to come here. I'm glad my mother made up her mind. We couldn't make up our minds. She had to make up her own mind.

MRS. RUBIN: She stalled for ten years. Every time he'd say, "Come honey," she'd buy . . .

LEVINE: So you're glad you came.

RUBIN: Absolutely.

LEVINE: Let's see. Is there anything else that you remember about the old country?

RUBIN: (he sighs) What can I tell you about the old

country?

LEVINE: Or a difference between the old country and being in this country?

MRS. RUBIN: I remember one thing he told me but if they'd want . . .

RUBIN: (he laughs) In the old country . . .

MRS. RUBIN: In the old country they used to sit on top of the stove and warm them. (a telephone rings) (break in tape)

RUBIN: Up on the stove, and . . .

MRS. RUBIN: At the same time we used to knock lice. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: No.

RUBIN: Of course not. You don't know in this country.

LEVINE: What is it?

RUBIN: Lice is a vermin.

LEVINE: Oh. And what? What did that have to do with being on the stove? I missed something here.

RUBIN: Knock lice. That's all.

LEVINE: All right. Well, why don't we . . . (break in tape) . . . that you would like to add?

RUBIN: Well, when we were in Starobin, we went to Chader. You know what Chader is.

LEVINE: Yeah.

RUBIN: And my mother, you know, she worked. She made sure that we go to Chader. And that didn't do any harm at all. When we were in Israel in 1976, I think it was, I had two cousins there. One of my cousins said, "How would you like to see Foya?" That was the teacher. "I would like to." Well, when I saw him, he didn't recognize me now.

LEVINE: He was your teacher from Starobin.

RUBIN: Absolutely. He didn't recognize me, but I recognized him. He was old and gray and he lost two sons in the Israeli wars. It was terrible.

LEVINE: What was it like to see him after all that time?

RUBIN: Well, I would like to see him. He was the mayor of a town, I forget, in Israel. He came to Israel when the Jews worked with a spade in one hand and rifle in the other hand.

LEVINE: So then did he recognize you after you introduced yourself?

RUBIN: After I introduced myself and told him who I was and who my father was, then he says, "I think I remember. I think I remember."

LEVINE: So you remembered him fondly from Starobin?

RUBIN: I certainly do. Well, I came there, so I remember him.

LEVINE: Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I've been talking with Samuel Noah Rubin at his home in Plantation, Florida, and it is June, I'm sorry, it is August 22nd, 1991. Thank you.