EI-679
SADIE WISHNICK
BIRTHDATE: MARCH 12, 1905
INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 30, 1995
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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE
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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE
TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

POLAND, 1913
AGE: 7

SHIP:
PORT:
RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Today is September 30th, 1995 and I'm here in Lake Hiawatha at the home of Sadie Wishnick. Sadie came from Poland in 1913, when she was seven years of age, and I want to say, I have the feeling you remember a lot, even though you were young. So let's start at the beginning, Sadie. If you would say your name, when you were born.

WISHNICK: My name was Sarah Beila. Sarah, S-A-R-A-H and Beila, B-E-I-L-A.

LEVINE: And your maiden name?

WISHNICK: Acronowicz.

LEVINE: Okay, and what is your birth date.

WISHNICK: March 12, 1905.

LEVINE: And where in Poland were you born?

WISHNICK: I was born in Bielsk, B-I-E-L-S-K.

LEVINE: And you left Bielsk about a year before you came to this country.

WISHNICK: About, yes.

LEVINE: And where did you go?

WISHNICK: Oh, I went to Ahla. This is the town my mother was born in and brought up, and since my father left Bielsk to come to America, my mother wanted to be among her own people and we went to Ahla.

LEVINE: And Ahla is in Russia?

WISHNICK: Yes, the same area. If you want to know, it's called Grodna. Grodna Giberna. Shall I spell it?

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

WISHNICK: G-R-O-D-N-A, G-I-B-E-R-N-A. Giberna. The best I can do.

LEVINE: That's fine. Okay, well, what are your earliest memories when you were in Bielsk?

WISHNICK: Well, my father was called a balla-galla, that's a man who today we call them those who deliver stuff from the docks, like the docks. Longshoreman. He was that type of a man. He would go to the—they didn't have anything but trains, and a train was called a bon, B-O-N, and he would go to the bon, pick up the merchandise that had to be sold in the stores, and he would—and he would linger there. This is a very good business. Very, very good business. So this is what I remember and—

LEVINE: Did you ever go with him to pick up—

WISHNICK: No. To work? No, no. I stayed home with my parents—with my mother. My mother was a very good woman, a pleasant person who loved her children and not only was I born—was I there, but I had a sister—wait a minute. A brother, Morris, then was Maisha—shall I tell you the Yiddish name? M-A-I-S-H-A, Maisha. Then I had after him came a sister Elkaleah, E-L-K-A-L-E-A-H. Elkeleah. Then I have a sister Anna, and all of us were taken, when I was seven years old. Well, my brother was five. My sister Elkeleah was about three, and then my sister Ann—no, and I'm sorry. My sister Anna was not taken. She was in my mother's stomach. My mother was pregnant with her. When my father left, my sister Anna was not born yet. She was born in Ahla. We were all born in Bielsk, but she was born in Ahla because my mother was pregnant and she

went to where she was born, a little town near Bielsk, not too far away.

Okay, now, well—

LEVINE: You were the oldest, then.

WISHNICK: I'm the oldest.

LEVINE: Tell me your mother's name.

WISHNICK: My mother's name was Kali, K-A-L-I. Kali.

LEVINE: That was her first name?

WISHNICK: First name.

LEVINE: And her—

WISHNICK: Washovski.

LEVINE: Her maiden name?

WISHNICK: Yes. Washovksi—you know how to spell Washovski. Yeah, so my mother took us all and we went to Ahla because she had nothing to do there anymore. My father was gone. He went to America, not because my mother wanted to go, so thank God he wanted, so we avoided her being in the war because next year was the war, and he went to America because his father wanted it. He was in business with his father in Bielsk. They were partners in the business.

LEVINE: Did they employ other people?

WISHNICK: No, just them two. So they were in Bielsk and my grandfather—say his name?

LEVINE: Yeah.

WISHNICK: Label. No, my grandfather—my father's father. My mother's I know very fast. My father's, Hashel. My father's father, Hashel, he was a very stubborn man. He got what he wanted and he decided. He had three—my father had three sisters here. Three? Three sisters and two brothers in America and the oldest sister decided she wants her father to come to America. Sent his father a ship [unclear]. That's a—you know, I guess everybody knows—it's a ticket to go on the boat, and he decided he's going to America.

When he decides he's going to America, he says, "And I want you to go with me," to my father. My mother didn't want to go, but my father went and then the man always takes over, so they went to America. Okay.

When they came to America, my mother's father and mother, her whole family was here already in America, excepting for one uncle who was a rabbi and he said in America the ground is strafed. You know, if I say strafe, you know what I mean?

LEVINE: Say on the tape what you mean.

WISHNICK: It means it's not kosher. He was a rabbi and a very, very religious rabbi and he wouldn't come to America and he didn't.

LEVINE: Is that your mother's brother?

WISHNICK: My mother's brother.

LEVINE: But your mother's mother and father were still in—

WISHNICK: America. My mother's—

LEVINE: They weren't in Ahla?

WISHNICK: No. The only—no, they were gone, but my mother had aunts then. My grandmother's sister, a sister and everybody. You know, she was born there, so it was like coming home again, and that's where she stayed until my sister Anna was born. Until she was born. After she was born, my father was here in America and he couldn't be without us. He was very, very lonesome and when she was about two years old, that's when he decided we should come to America.

My father came to America, he did not have a trade. He did not know what to do because driving he couldn't. He didn't understand the language. He couldn't take a horse and wagon and go here because he didn't know the streets and all that. So since the whole family was in the needle trade, they decided the easiest thing for him is t become a presser. The one who presses, and that was his trade already. He was a presser of children's clothing. He was a presser.

Okay, now, my father being here, he was very lonesome and my mother's whole family was here, excepting for one brother, the rabbi, which I just talked about who wouldn't come to America. Regardless of what they tried and how they talked to him, he wouldn't come.

Now, then my—then my father insisted that we come to America. He—of course, he was very poor because not having a trade, he couldn't earn much. Which even those with a trade at that time. So he earned very little, but when he came to America he went to my mother's parents. Their names were Hanah and Label Warsofsky. Do I have to spell them? Hanah is H-A-N-A-H, and Label is L-A-B-E-L. Label Warsofsky, and they had—

LEVINE: Spell Warsofsky.

WISHNICK: W-A-R-S-O-F-S-K-Y, Warsofsky. Now, they had here with them two—living with them, two daughters. Yes, they had living with them two daughters. One was Ida and the other was Ethel, Annya Ethel. Ethel, okay. We're in America, so we can talk English names, right?

LEVINE: Okay.

WISHNICK: Sure. We didn't call them anything but the English names when we came to America. We came with Jewish names, but they had English names. Okay. So when we came to America, this is my grandmother and grandfather and they helped my father. He stayed with them and he could save as much as he could save from his wages that he got. Excuse me. He saved, and they gave him money and they sent for us. So we started to leave. My youngest sister, Annie was born in Ahla and when we left with her, she was two years old. My mother still nursed her, thinking if she's going to go on the boat, where's she going to milk or anything for her. Which was a bad thing for her because she drank—she couldn't eat. We all didn't. No, the youngest ones not, but I, my mother were always laying down sick on the boat. It was a big trip. I don't remember how many months—a month maybe it took. I don't know years ago how much it took. I was a child, could I remember?

All right, so we were on the boat and then—so this, yeah. But yet in my mother's family there were two more people. They were six. No. Oh, wait, the brothers left Europe. There was my Aunt Becky, married. My Uncle Jake, married and then—

LEVINE: And there were the two sisters that were living with your grandparents.

WISHNICK: With the parents were two girls.

LEVINE: And then the rabbi and your mother.

WISHNICK: The rabbi, that would make five. Where's the sixth one.

LEVINE: No, that's six.

WISHNICK: Huh?

LEVINE: You got two married.

WISHNICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Two living with their parents, and then your mother and the rabbi.

WISHNICK: Oh, I always forget my mother.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

WISHNICK: Because she's my mother, how is she a sister? Okay, yes, there were six. Okay, if you want the names of my uncle here, one was Becky. The woman that was married. Her husband was—Hyko. We called him Hyko, and then there was my Uncle Jake and his wife was Hava. Somehow we called them like by their Jewish name. Have. So those were the two married and the rest were single, besides my mother.

Okay, now, when we came to this country, we came to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Well, first let's talk a little bit—anything you can remember. Before you went to Ahla, when you were in Bielsk, do you remember the house you lived in?

WISHNICK: In Bielsk? Oh, we lived as actually I think we rented the house. It was a house. Yeah, a house. We rented a house, while we were living. I was born there. My brother Morris was born there. My sister Elsie was born there. All of us were born there. All three of us were born there. So we had a house.

LEVINE: Do you remember the community at all where you lived?

WISHNICK: I was seven years old. I remember the community. It was nice. I don't remember. Really don't. I can't, you know, describe it because I was really too young. I actually left two years, you know, then I was five. Five years you don't know so much, you know.

LEVINE: Do you remember, were you in a Jewish section of town? Were there other people in the town? Or were they all Jewish or what?

WISHNICK: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah, it was all Jewish. Our area was Jewish, but we weren't all Jewish. There were Christian people there, too.

LEVINE: Did they mix? Was there bad feeling?

WISHNICK: Oh, we dealed—we had to deal with them. They were the ones who were farmers and things like that. We had to buy from them. You understand? But I can't because at five years, you don't take in so much.

LEVINE: Was this—was Bielsk a small town? A city?

WISHNICK: It was bigger than Ahla. If there's a very big town who everybody knows, Bielastuck. You heard of that, right? This was like the next town to Bielastuck. Like Bielastuck is bigger then Bielsk. Bielsk is a—it wasn't a small town. Now, Ahla, that didn't even have a train coming into Ahla, but you see, Bielsk did have a train. So it was a bigger town. It was almost a city. It was a city.

LEVINE: A small city.

WISHNICK: Bielastsuck is a city. This is a city, but a small one, and Ahla was like a village, you would say. Very small place.

LEVINE: Were your father's mother and father in Bielsk? Well, your grandfather was there.

WISHNICK: Now wait. My mother—my mother's father. My parents were already—no, my mother's parents were in America. When I—in fact, there was a picture of me which I can't find. They showed me. I was just born and my grandfather was in America. From my mother's side I'm talking about. He was in America. He was the first one to go to America, I think from almost the whole town. He came here, I don't know what year, in the '80s.

LEVINE: Well, he was already here—

WISHNICK: Yeah, 18—

LEVINE: When you were born in 1905.

WISHNICK: Yeah, and he was here before that. Now, he came to America. Now let me speak about this grandfather. He went to America. I have an idea. Everybody was very poor. Money there was very little of, but my grandmother had a brother—brother? Yeah, was her brother, yeah. My grandmother had a brother living in

Baltimore who was quite wealthy. At the time expecting he was wealthy. I have a good idea that he was the one—you know, I couldn't remember that many things because I was too young. So he sent my grandfather on my mother's side—let me say my maternal grandfather, he sent him a ship's card, which now I don't have to tell, you know what it is. So he got the ship's card to come to America. My grandfather was a very good tailor. My grandfather Label was a very good tailor. He came here. He had a job and he saved up money and he came back to Europe to—Ahla? Bielsk?

LEVINE: Ahla.

WISHNICK: Yeah, he came back to Ahla because his wife and children were in Ahla, but my mother—yes, she got married in Ahla. Now, he came back to my mother's wedding. See, that was a trip he took from Europe [sic] to come here. All right. When he came back to Ahla to her wedding, and after she was married, he went back to Europe. He went back to America.

Now, when my mother got married, you know, Europe when you have to have a dowry. Nadin, they call it. Well—

LEVINE: How do you spell what it is? Spell nadin.

WISHNICK: Yeah, N-A-D-I-N, nadin. You have to have nadin—you can't get married. Well, poor people get married. They were poor, but still if you haven't got it, they make with charity. The husband must get a dowry, okay? Nadin. Now, my mother—yes, so then he planned to go back to America, my grandfather. He wanted to come to America, then bring his family out. So when going back, it was kind of tight. He didn't have money already. He went to my mother and says, "Lend me the money. I'll send it back." My father wouldn't give it. [Laughs] He wouldn't give it to him. My mother was ready to divorce him.

LEVINE: So in other words, your grandfather gave the dowry.

WISHNICK: Right, he brought it for him.

LEVINE: He brought it. Which was money?

WISHNICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then he gave it, but then your father wouldn't give it back.

WISHNICK: He wouldn't give it. He said, "No, I don't give," and he wouldn't give. Actually, it's the one—he was the holder of it because it's

him. That's the way it worked back then. So anyhow, he wouldn't give it. So my mother was very upset. She trusted her father. She knew he would send it, but he wouldn't give it, and she was ready to divorce him, but, okay, Europe, you don't allow a divorce. This is how it went on and he got money otherwise. I don't know which way or how and he went back to America.

LEVINE: Okay, now switch to your father's mother and father. Now, your father's father—

WISHNICK: My father's—my father it's different. My mother had a mother and father. My father had only a father because his first mother—his mother died. I'm named after his mother. You know, the Jewish—well, you're Jewish aren't you? So in the Jewish religion, you got to name after the person died. When his mother died, I wasn't born yet. Then right—my grandfather—my paternal grandfather had three wives. The first one was—yeah, the first one had me—had my father and his sister and a brother. Three children came out of—well, the sister's name was Elkie, E-L-K-I-E, Elkie, and my—the brother's name was Newnie, N-E-W-N-I-E. Well, however. His name was—now, let me see. Okay, that was Newnie and then there was a sister. Yeah, a sister.

LEVINE: And your father.

WISHNICK: Maybe there was only these two, Elkie and Newnie.

LEVINE: And your father.

WISHNICK: Huh?

LEVINE: And your father.

WISHNICK: That was my father's brothers. For my father had in America a sister Elkie and a brother Newnie.

LEVINE: Right, and he made three. He was the third child of that first marriage.

WISHNICK: Yeah, he was the third child. Right. Now, there was another marriage. Then he had a stepmother. My father had a stepmother. He loved her like he loved his mother. So when the both of them died, I think the stepmother must have died in childbirth. She had a twin, two girls. So these two girls—so, when his stepmother died and I was born, they named me after two people. Now, I'm named my father's mother, Sarah and after his step mother, Beila. That's

why I'm Sarah Beila, and my father loves his stepmother. He loved his mother, too, but he was very young when she died.

Anyhow, my grandfather married again. I can't remember whether he married in Europe or even came to America and got married. Couldn't because there was another child born. [unclear] very old. [Laughs] Maybe he did get married in Europe and brought this third wife with him to America, okay.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember that grandfather in Europe? Do you have any memories?

WISHNICK: Oh, I remember both of my grandfathers.

JL; Do you remember in Europe your father's father?

WISHNICK: My father's father, yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember about him there?

WISHNICK: Wait a minute. My father's father? Yeah, I remember him.

LEVINE: He was a longshoreman, right?

WISHNICK: Huh?

LEVINE: He was a longshoreman with your father.

WISHNICK: Right, he was the longshoreman with my father and from Europe I remember him vaguely, but when I came to America, I had two grandfathers, which I know very well, you know. When my first—when my mother's—the both of them died already when I was married. So it was, you know.

LEVINE: [unclear]

WISHNICK: So I know them pretty well, you know.

LEVINE: Well, first let's say any other memories you have of first Bielsk. Do you remember, what, any celebrations there? Any rituals or observances?

WISHNICK: I was too young. I remember going to schul, mama taking me and all that, but I was too young to remember, you know, very much of what happened in Europe. I vaguely do remember like we lived in a house and it had a stove. You know, like you see, fireplace, and the whole wall was stove.

JL; Was stone? Was it a stone fireplace?

WISHNICK: Stone? I don't know. I don't know what it was built of. Probably, you know, like a fireplace. You see, this and then they had cement. I don't know what was there. But what I remember was it was open and when they cooked, you saw the fire, and they put their utensils right—I mean the pots and pans to cook, they put it on there, you know, and it cooked. Now—

LEVINE: So that was the stove? The fireplace was the stove?

WISHNICK: Was the stove for everything. For warmth, for everything, and then in between they had like a shelf. You know, like you see these things? It was an open thing and we'd lay there and warm ourselves. It was a wonderful thing. That's what I remember. Not much do I remember because I was too young. I don't know. Today maybe the children are smarter. They go to all kinds of school. We didn't. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Well, do you remember anything about Ahla, that little time that you were there?

WISHNICK: Yeah, the same thing. They had the same like actually I remember more about Ahla. I'm talking about this fireplace because that's what I remember so much. In Bielsk it's a very—they were more modern already in Bielsk than they were in Ahla. The way they cooked, things like that, I don't—I was too young. But then in Bielsk—in Ahla, I was already older and that's what I liked. I liked to sleep on it. Lay on it. It was beautiful. And the women, instead of playing mahjong, which the women play today, they used to make feather pillows. They used to take the feathers off, flick. Oh, flicken feathem they used to call it. You know, the feathers they pulled off, and that's what you have feather pillows today. You know fellow pillow. The stem went off them and this was their—like today you go to play mahjong with your friend? This is what they did then.

LEVINE: And you call it flick—

WISHNICK: Flicken feathem. Yeah, they used to flick feathers, pull off. Well, this word is also used in pulling the feathers off the chicken when the chicken is sold, you know, after it's slaughtered. We slaughter it. So then you have to take the feathers off and that's what we called flick. But then they also called flick is when they used to take the feather off the stem, you know. Leave the stem, but the

feather—and that's what you have feather pillows out of. And that's what they—I still sleep on feather pillows. So that's what we used to sleep on. We had no other kind of pillows. So that was their socializing was with doing this. I don't know, other things I can't remember, but this I remember and we used to lay there, the kids play on there and do things while they were socializing, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember like the clothing that you wore when you were there?

WISHNICK: I don't know. Dresses, you know. Not special. I don't remember too much then, you know, because I was too young. To me, whatever I wore, so that's what I had to wore. I didn't think it was special. I didn't think it was something to think about and we wore—whatever we wore, we wore. Of course there are pictures, I don't have them, of people how they were dressed at that time of life, you know. They were dressed different. And they combed their hair different. They all were wearing shiekles. You know what a shiekles? Okay, and they were those pretty [unclear]. But this is a much—too much I can't remember. I came to old.

You know, the same person that interviewed me, on the same paper, there are two people that were interviewed from Lake Hiawatha and both of them are gone. They're dead now, and they have in the paper these—I kept that paper. Maybe I still have it, and we were the ones that were interviewed. And it shouldn't be on here one—can I talk about this, too?

LEVINE: Well, what we'll do is if you find that, we'll put it in your file where we're going to put the—

WISHNICK: I'll find it, I don't know. I might. If I look over all my old things, I might find the whole paper. If not, if you get in touch with that paper, they would send it to you from that year, you know. The year of when it was liberty. Liberty year. This is how come I had this done.

LEVINE: Okay.

WISHNICK: Okay. Now, what else? What other questions?

[End of Tape One, Side A/Start of Tape One, Side B]

LEVINE: Let's see. So, did your mother keep a kosher house?

WISHNICK: Always. This is the way everybody lived. There's no such thing like either or, at that time of life.

LEVINE: So, now, do you remember your mother preparing to come to America?

WISHNICK: Yes. There was a lot to do. She had to pack.

LEVINE: Do you know what she took?

WISHNICK: She took—she didn't like to wear shiekle, but she took it along anyway. And she was traveling with two cousins, a young girl and a young girl and her brother, I think, and she thought they'd help her, but they didn't. They were busy finding boyfriends and girlfriends. They didn't even look at her and the poor thing really suffered on the way coming. Yeah, and then they took away one of her baggages and they lost it. That one was her shiekle and a lot of things that she was bringing to America, which made her very unhappy.

LEVINE: Was she bringing the feather bedding, do you remember?

WISHNICK: I don't—I guess yes. She must have because we had them here. Well, they were here. That time they were doing the same thing here like they did in Europe. So probably either she did bring some and then we could get it here because my grandmother must have plenty laying around from where she did. You know, we weren't missing pillows. [unclear] you know, we used to cover the whole thing made with pucke. Pucke—feathers are things you have to do. Pucke is something that comes only out of ducks. Ducks and geese, they have that, the soft part. That was made out of just that. It was delicious. I slept on it for a long time. I think when I got married, I had one yet and then made quilts out of it. That's how much I loved it. I don't know how I got used to the other things anymore. I can't believe it because I never wanted to let go. Well, this is something. What else can I tell you?

LEVINE: Well, how about the leaving? Do you remember the leave taking? Did people come to say goodbye?

WISHNICK: Oh, yes. They came. They cried. They said goodbye. I think they gave her along something. She had a aunt there who was very close to her, her mother's sister, and she was very close to her. She helped her to have the baby and everything. We had a baby. We had, you know, bring a two year old. Here a two year old is [unclear]. Then it was a baby, that's all, and she was nursing her. So you can imagine how hard it was for my mother. Here she was traveling with four children, three children and a baby. Well, the

other one was almost a baby, too. Elkie. She was maybe three years old, three and a half. They were very close, between Elkie and Anya was very close. We're actually—most of us are two years apart, but these were very close. I lost my sister, Elkie. She died at the age of thirty, in America, of course. Left a child of two years. Cancer. So, at that time—well, this is going away already from what we're talking. But otherwise, I also just recently lost a brother. He was seventy-nine—I don't remember how old already. He also died of cancer, but the rest of us are all here yet. My brother Morris is still alive. Then there is Anya and when my mother came to America, she brought four children and she had four children. We were eight.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember leaving Ahla and going toward the ship, the port?

WISHNICK: I remember, but it's not very clear because even at the age of seventy, these things don't enter your mind or you think about.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the ship?

WISHNICK: Yeah, it was a big ship. We were in the hold. Third class I think they called it and pretty bad. We were sick all the way. And my mother was nursing my sister and she looked awful when she was coming off the boat because she didn't eat and nursed the baby. So you can imagine how she looked.

Now, we were on the boat. The doctor examined us, all of us, and I guess we passed because he didn't say anything, but then my mother, you know what these—I want to say bad words. These doctors were? They were looking for money from even these poor people, they wanted money, and my mother had no idea that he would want money. She goes to the doctor and she says to him, "Please give me my papers." "Oh, go, go, you'll get them. Don't worry. You'll get them." My mother took his word. We got off the boat, he went back with the boat with our papers and looking at my mother and looking at us and no papers, they didn't let us in. We got off the boat, we were ready to eat, they wouldn't give us anything. There were benches. You know, I saw those benches. I went especially before Ellis Island was made over. We went on a trip from our Senior Citizen places and I said, "I must see those benches." This is what I remember clearly. "I must go look at the benches. Where is the bench where I got"—we came and they sat us down. Empty. Just us, mind you, and we came there and I walked, and we were starved. The children especially were starved. Mom couldn't care less because she was, you know, but we were starved. All of a sudden we found a piece of bread, a

moldy piece of bread and we divided it among us, just to take the hunger away, and to this day I will never find the taste in any food like I found I that food. And this is what happened to us in Ellis Island. [Crying]

LEVINE: Now, you mentioned that they thought your mother was unbalanced. What did you mean by that?

WISHNICK: I'll tell you. You'll read it there, you'll see. Now, we were, like I told you, she was nursing. She got skinny like a rail. Her eyes were in her head like this and she didn't look right and she had no papers to say she was right. So what did they do? They took her into a place and start examining her and we were there for seven days. They start examining her. They ask all kinds of questions. Of course, she was normal and she answered all the questions. Like they said, "Count to a hundred." She counts to a hundred. She says, "If you like, we used to sing a song in Europe. I can count it backwards for you. And I'll sing you the song." Oh, forget it. Then they showed her pictures. They gave her the third degree. She passed everything, yet because of not having the papers, they wouldn't let us go out and it was terrible. We were so—my mother begged them. She says, "Send me back. I don't mind. I like Europe. Please, send me back." Of course, they weren't sending her back, but here in America. So they were working through a Congressman, I don't know, they managed to get us out.

LEVINE: Your father? Your father-in-law?

WISHNICK: My father, my grandmother, my grandfather, you know, the family here. They were more Americanized of my father, of course. They were the ones who worked on this thing. Finally, we came here.

LEVINE: What do you remember about sleeping at Ellis Island those seven days?

WISHNICK: Well, we only spent—there we only—we didn't sleep there. We stayed there right after got up in that place. Then they took us somewhere. It's very vague to me how we slept in Ellis Island.

LEVINE: And did you have other food, besides that moldy bread?

WISHNICK: No, not until the next day maybe because they didn't give us anything. Everybody went in to eat. Soon as they got off the boat, they all went in to eat. Us, they didn't let go. We had to sit on those benches for somebody to come and take us in, and we were sitting and sitting and dying of hunger. Finally, I don't remember

what. I only remember how we ate that moldy bread, but after that, what we ate and how we ate, I don't remember. So then after that, I really remember very little how we lived—the way we lived in Ellis Island, but my grandmother used to come to us very often. But we couldn't see her. You know, she couldn't walk in and talk to us. We saw her through a gate, you know. I remember one thing. My mother told me that, she says my brother, my brother Morris—excuse me. We were speaking Yiddish. You know, of course, we came here speaking Yiddish and my grandmother came over to the gate and we were talking. She used to bring us—yeah, she used to bring us food. They let us have that, and she came over to the gate and my brother goes over to her and says—I'll talk in Yiddish, okay? [speaking Yiddish] His didn't have laces. They were falling apart. So my grandmother heard the way he calls her "vibel," woman. "Woman, please." He didn't know she was his grandmother, "Please bring me a pair of laces. You're bringing other things, bring a pair of laces." So my mother told me that. Then my grandmother went away crying terribly. Here you have a family, you can't take them home.

Finally, we came home. We came home. Should I talk about America, all right? That's enough about Europe, I think. Well, we came to America. My grandmother and grandfather then, Hanah and Label, my maternal grandmother and grandfather, they were living on Clinton Street on the second floor. [siren] Oh, it's twelve o'clock. I was wondering. So we were living on the second floor. They lived a front—the houses then were built without bathrooms, anything. A bathroom was in the hall and two families used the bathroom. So they lived on the second, that I remember. On Clinton Street on the second floor. They lived in the front. We lived in the back. They took an apartment for us. Two boarders were sleeping on the floor in their house, waiting for us to move in, so they can come and live with us. Boarders.

Then I don't know how they got the furniture and things. I don't know that because it wasn't my thing to know. And then the place was a tomb. No sun, nothing. Black, always black. Then we didn't even have electric light. We had—well, we already had gas. Yeah, gaslight. But you can't imagine it didn't amount to much. So then we decided we can't stand it anymore, so we moved from Clinton Street to Pitt Street. There it was sunshine all the time. We moved on the fifth floor. Fifth floor.

LEVINE: That would be the top.

WISHNICK: The very top. The fifth floor. No more houses were that high. We had all the sunshine in the world, but my mother was already pregnant with my brother Abie—that's the one that just passed

away, I told you. My brother Abie, and she was pregnant with him and she had to walk up five flights and carry packages and all that. it was a little hard. So finally they decided they'll move, and the same Pitt Street, but that was twenty-five Pitt Street, further down. Yeah, where the elevator is. Where the Brooklyn Bridge, that train goes back and forth.

Okay. We lived there for a while and every time we added boarders. We had four boarders.

LEVINE: Now, how did it work with the boarders? They were given meals?

WISHNICK: Huh? No, my mother never cooked. Oh, did she? No, I don't think she cooked for them. They went to restaurants to eat.

LEVINE: But they slept—

WISHNICK: They slept. Slept. Yeah, slept.

LEVINE: On actual beds, or how did they sleep?

WISHNICK: They had beds. We slept on nothing, but they had beds, perfect beds. Imagine four boarders and eight children in four rooms. To do this day I can't picture how we did it. I just can't, but that's how it was. I know it was. Oh, you know—I don't want to speak about that now. Anyway—

LEVINE: Do you know how much they paid, the boarders?

WISHNICK: Very little. I mean, they paid enough for us to live to have a better life. Otherwise we had nothing. My father earned six dollars a week and a family with eight children. No matter how cheap it was, how could we make out and pay rent? We couldn't. So we had to have the boarders and they helped us with paying rent. How much they paid, I don't know. I was never privy to that. Nobody ever told me. You know, after all, I was a child. But enough, I guess just to make do so we'd get along.

So we lived on 25 Pitt Street. We were then already about three more children were born. Yeah, I think all the three of us were born—the three of them were born or maybe not. Maybe there was just Abie was born and then Elsie. Oh, Elsie came with us. Abie was born, and who came after Abie? After Abie came—came Jenny. After Abie came Jenny. After Abie came Jenny, and I think those were the children. But we were four children already, you know, so we had a barber living underneath us. He was going crazy. We were very, very good children. I hope all the children today would be half as good as we were, but we were boisterous.

We fought among ourselves. Never go outside and do any mischief to anybody. We were very strict. My mother kept us very strict, but in the house, we turned the house over. We banged on the floor and he was right under us and he had to work.

So finally we decided to move from there across the street, which was 32 Pitt Street. This was twenty-five. The guy danced in the street. So glad to get rid of us, he danced in the street he was rid of us. Okay, then we moved to 32 Pitt Street. All right, there we moved and lived in 32 Pitt Street and then they needed a janitor, they called it. It's super today. They needed a janitor and the landlord came to my mother and he says, "Look, I need a janitor. I need somebody here to collect rent for me, to rent the places and clean the place. You can have your apartment free." So he did. For all that mind, the apartment free, and my mother took on the job because it was very hard. You know, if my father even brought home six dollars, all of a sudden there was no work. And they called it sack. He was home doing nothing.

So then—okay, so this is how we lived with my parents trying very hard to make ends meet. My mother was a very religious—my mother and father both were very religious. My father, because of my father not wanting to work on Saturday, which then you had to work because no Saturday and Sunday off—but anyhow, my father would almost do it okay because he wants to support his family. My mother was ultra, ultra religious. One day he worked on Saturday, she laid all day and cried. So he gave up. He didn't work on Saturday anymore. Tried for a job where he shouldn't work on Saturday, and he got a job, but he was working very, very hard to support us. Then my mother tried business.

Even then, when we were living I think it was on Pitt Street already, my mother was trying. She thought she'd try to go in a business. It was before we had, you know, the janitor place. So she wanted to go into business. Now, my grandfather, my paternal grandfather had a business on the East Side where the Forbes Building—this is known to everybody, the Forbes Building. He stood there and he sold pickles. Just pickles, and this was a business. Would you believe it today? He sold pickles. So he was selling these pickles before the Forbes, and my father, who was the best son you can know of—today, I don't know, maybe it would still be that way, but years ago you just had to give into the father. But he had that nature, anyway. He wasn't well educated. He didn't have even the Yiddish, you know. He didn't have enough, you know, push with people to put him through. They were worried only to make the money. Like my grandfather didn't care much if my father would learn or wouldn't learn. Where you have other religious people, they give up their life just to learn, you see.

So anyhow, so my grandfather's there with the pickles. My mother came to him and she says to him, "Listen, I'd like to earn more money. I can't make it with my children," and all that. "Would you put me in a business?" she says. "Maybe herring." There was only thing you sold. Wasn't like a store today, you go to a pharmacy, yeah. Not then. Then it was one thing.

LEVINE: This was like a little stand? In other words, he was outside the Forbes Building?

WISHNICK: With a pushcart.

LEVINE: With a pushcart, uh-huh.

WISHNICK: With a pushcart, yes, and he had these pickles and all kinds of tomatoes and all these things, you know, like today. But only that, and people bought. People, to them it was a good thing to walk out and eat a pickle on the street. That time of the year, that's the way it was. They'd buy a pickle, they're walking and eating, like they would eat an ice cream sandwich or an ice cream pop, or something. That's the way they lived.

All right. So my mother came to him and she says, "Look, father-in-law, please help me. I need to make a living and get me a"—so he found—I think—yeah, he found this stand. This was like a stand, you know, booth. A booth, and in it there was a place. I guess somebody vacated it and he put her in there with herring, to sell herring. He wasn't a good father, believe me. My mother's parents, they helped. He wasn't helping. He left it all to them. He didn't care. The truth of the water was then they weren't—parents weren't what they are today. So my mother said to him, "I need money." "Oh," he says, "Nobody ever helped me to get along. What do you want from me? I haven't got anything to give you."

So my mother came to her mother and she cried. She says, "I don't know what to do. He don't want to give the money." She says, "You know what? Okay," she says, "I'll go partners with you. I'll give you the money to buy the herring, and when you make profit, we'll share it," and then she had to help her with the children because she couldn't leave the children all day and stay there with her herring. This could have been a good business, but to share a business like that, didn't do anything for either one. You know, if this was a mother today, "Here, child. I got the money, take it. Try. Do good." Then it was different. They were all for themselves like. Children had to do it by themselves.

LEVINE: Where was the herring booth, do you remember?

WISHNICK: On Fourth Street in New York, Manhattan. East Side, Manhattan, Fourth Street. It was a herring booth. Okay, my mother stood it for a while and then she saw it's impossible. My grandmother, she didn't like the idea of having to worry about her children, grandchildren. My grandmother was ultra, ultra religious. She used to feed all the poor people. Being poor herself didn't matter, but she used to go to the—who had meat. It was all pushcarts, you know. Meat and all the old stuff that was left on the pushcart that people didn't sell, she took this for charity. She would even take—she was kosher, so she would kosher the meat, put it in little packages for all these people and send her grandchildren to deliver. They didn't like it. Didn't want to. Why don't they come and take it? "Oh, please, kindela, they're ashamed." She'd say it in Yiddish because she couldn't speak English. "They're ashamed. Do it. Do it. Do it." And what? Who wouldn't listen to grandma? We did. But this is the way we lived at that time.

LEVINE: Do you remember doing that?

WISHNICK: Oh, sure. Me, my younger sisters. They always tell how they said to her—I never said it. I had too much respect, but the younger ones, they said, "Bubby, why can't we"—bubby, bubby we called her bubby. "Bubby, Bubby, why can't they come and take it. Look at what you're doing. Why can't they come and take it?" "Ah, kindella, [Yiddish]" They're ashamed. So what? We wouldn't listen to bubby? We went and we all did everything. You know, we were all very close that way. Then of course mother had to give up that business. My mother had to give it up. She had no alternative.

Then so she tried something else, in the house she was living. There were always stores underneath. There was an empty store. So she tried a fruit store and she's living upstairs, so it seemed to her it would be easy to do. She tried and my father, whenever he had no work, you know, was always home. She had to do something for the children, you know, after all. She'd say to him, "Go down and stay in the fruit store." It was the worst thing she could have done. He knew nothing about money. The women, already when he came, that they could get away with things and there was no merchandise and no money when she came down. Then she had to give that up, too, and I think after that she became a janitor and she didn't do any more of that stuff, which was a little good for her because being a janitor, besides having an apartment free and still boarders, she had money already.

Then when you went to take an apartment at that time, you had to pay [unclear], money for the key. You didn't have to. I mean it was like—what do you call it? Like today, a tip. You tip off, you know. So she would get some money there, and then some

people would ask her to clean the windows. I helped. I was always beside my mother. With everything she had to do, I was her helper, you see, and I was very devoted to my parents. And then, you know, being a janitor, she managed very well. She even saved some money. Then we got older, you know, the children. I was getting ready to get married and my mother thought we should have a nicer house. You know, which boy will want to come into a—so we went—we moved to Henry Street, which was a nicer street. Imagine, we were living on Pitt Street, where the elevator was going all day long. Whoever heard it? You get so used to noise, you don't hear it anymore. Who knew what, an elevator? People, "How do you live here?" "Why? We live there."

Now, my grandmother, my maternal grandmother—yeah, my grandfather died, so my maternal grandmother used to stand under the bridge and sell. She wanted—she was a business lady. She already tried to do business. In Europe she used to make I think candles or she used—or what did she make? No. Yeast. She used to make yeast and sell it, you know, because my—wait. Should I go back to Europe again?

LEVINE: Yeah, go ahead.

WISHNICK: Now, my mother, when she—my grandmother had six children, I told you, right? Now, my mother, when she was eight years old was sent away to a family because it was very hard for her to feed all the children and she was old enough. In that day, she was old enough to go and work. She was sent away to a—

LEVINE: You know, I think we'll pause here and you'll continue the story when I change the tape.

WISHNICK: Okay.

LEVINE: Yeah, just hold it a minute.

[End of Tape One, Side B/Start of Tape Two, Side A]

LEVINE: Okay, we're continuing now.

WISHNICK: With my mother.

LEVINE: This is Tape 2 of Sadie Wishnick.

WISHNICK: Oh, you're asking me now. All right.

LEVINE: Okay, so you were saying that your mother was sent away at eight years old.

WISHNICK: To work.

LEVINE: To work. Go ahead.

WISHNICK: And that was—she was working—let me tell you this. This is not what I can remember. What my mother told me. My mother used to live with me. Every summer she came here for vacation to stay with me, after my father passed away. They lived in—well, I guess I'll tell you that later. Anyhow, she came to me every summer after my father passed away and she stayed with me the whole summer, and while we were here, she was telling me all the stories of Europe. You know, how she was brought up and all this. Well, this is part of it.

Now, she said she was eight years old and her mother sent her away and she was working in a family who had a bakery. My mother was the best cook. The best baker in this world. She was. And the dishes she knew and the things she could make, very few people know and can make because she was always in families who were wealthy, who she could, you know—who she learned from. She was eight years old and she was sent away to this family and besides being up all night and baking, mind you—of course, she didn't do this alone. There was other bakers. She had to sit in the mark. That's like a fair. Excuse me. Like a fair, and sell what she baked. And then, you know, it was in her town and the people would come there. She used to fall asleep. You can't be up day and night, and she used to sit and sleep. So they came to my grandmother and they said to me [sic], "You should be ashamed of yourself, sending out a child out to work. She sleeps there. She can't even keep her eyes open." Didn't do any good. She still worked and she still was with all kinds of families and this is how she grew up.

And then when she was of age, she was eighteen years old when she got married, and then they found my father for her. From Bielsk.

LEVINE: Do you know anything about how they found him?

WISHNICK: Well, it's this way. It's always a schacrum, matchmaker. Well, my mother told me that she had like a second cousin whom she was in love with, and then she thought maybe she was going to marry him, you know. And then all of a sudden he tells her he saw a girl and he likes her, this and that, and she says—my mother was very independent. She says, "You like her, marry her. I don't want to

know from nothing," you know. Maybe he would married her if she wasn't so independent, I don't know. But yet she was independent. She wouldn't have anything to do with him after he told her about another girl. Maybe she was just a passing fancy, who knew. Today it wouldn't mean anything. Then, to her, she was very independent.

So, okay, that was over with. Then of course the schacrum came and they brought my father, and one look at her, she was beautiful. My mother was the most beautiful person I ever saw. To this day, I feel she was. Tiny. There's her picture, she's tiny, and she was so beautiful that from all the movies I saw, and the movie actresses I saw, I thought nobody was as beautiful as she was. In my eyes, I guess. But that's how I felt about her. And he looked at her once and that was it. He wants her and that was it. Well, he wasn't such a bad catch because of a business with his father, you know, and they got married. Then they went off to Bielsk where my father's business was, and they moved into a house, which wasn't their own. I know it was a rental from somebody, and they lived there. I can't remember because after I was born—I was born in Bielsk, but I was born in that house. Just when they got married, immediately she was pregnant and I was born. So how could I remember how the house was or anything like that? That I can't remember.

LEVINE: Do you remember any of the things that she cooked that were from the old country? Even if she cooked them here, do you remember?

WISHNICK: Simmis. She was able to make—she made simmis, which is most delicious. Everybody knows what simmis is.

LEVINE: Describe it.

WISHNICK: Simmis is made with carrots. Carrots and apples and raisins and you put meat into it, and it is—cooks a long time and comes out delicious. [Laughs] So this is one of the things she made. She made, they called it maniata herring. Maniata herring they called it. It's herring in—what do you call it here? The English name for maniata herring? You know, Gold makes it. All these companies make it. Herring in sauce, you know. What do you call it? Yeah, marinated herring. I say maniata, it's the same word.

LEVINE: Okay.

WISHNICK: Yeah, marinated. She used to make it, it was so delicious. An uncle of mine came once to her house and he wanted to take her to restaurateur. He said, "You come with and show him how to make

that herring, and he'll have all the people there." She was also made fish. Now, gifiltafish was out of the question. It was out of the question that she made. Now, she made a special fish, manta. Also marinated fish. It was out of this world and my uncle also wanted to take her to that restaurant, who was his friend, and he'll have the whole world coming to you. That's how delicious he knew it was, and it was.

LEVINE: Do you know what was in the marinade?

WISHNICK: Well, you take fish like white fish, cod—no, not cod. Whitefish and Yellow Pike. Those were the two fishes she used, and she would—yeah, she would boil vinegar and she put spices, allspice. Allspice it in it, and then spill it over and of course she used sugar. It was delicious. That's about all I can remember about the marinated fish. She had another dish which is unbelievable, herring. She would take herring and put it in a pot, and put salt—mind you, herring. Put salt over that herring and it had to be a closed pot tight, and boil it. Then she would take that herring out, it had no salt, and marinate that. And the herring used to be so tight, you know, hard to eat like. It wasn't hard to eat, but you felt it like harder in your mouth. It was the most delicious meal you could ever think. With allspice and all that. She knew dishes, I'm telling you, that nobody in this world knows. If I ever told, would you believe that? That you would take herring and put it in a pot and put salt in and cover it tight and cook it. I don't know how long she cooked it, and then take that herring out and have no salt. And the marinate and serve it.

I to this day make fricassee.

LEVINE: Tell how.

WISHNICK: Huh?

LEVINE: Tell how.

WISHNICK: You still want me to tell? I get—well, my mother, at one time we used to get the feet from the chicken. All right, the feet. Not the legs, the feet. The leg part is here, the feet, and that I used to cut up in little pieces. Can't get it anymore. And then take the neck, the chicken, the neck and the gizzard and cut them all up in little pieces and put onions and like carrots. A little, you know, kind of these vegetables that can taste good in them, and boil it.

Now, my mother never put anything in because they didn't know about tomato sauce or tomato paste or that stuff, you know, then. There was no such a thing, but her fricassee's still in my

mouth. She put nothing in, but it came out delicious. Now I do doctor it with these things. I put in tomato paste with everything, you know, and I boil it a long time. Yeah, and then I buy chopped meat and I take the chopped meat and I put onion into it, you know, and garlic. Garlic I put into the sauce, too, and then I put eggs in it, and also a little matzo milk, and then I make little balls and throw it into that sauce. My mother did the same, and throw it into that sauce and that boils altogether. It's delicious. I told my grandson, you're coming. She says, "Give her some fricassee. You'll have a friend," he says.

Okay, so who has it? I gave it all to them. I just made it for the holidays. I make it for the holidays. I make it for Yom Kippur, for Passover. Every six months. You should see my pot. It's a restaurant pot that I make it in, and they have it and my kids are just going crazy about it. My great grandsons, one great grandson one year I said to him, "Brian, I said that was left over, a little fricassee." A little. I says, "Brian, how'd you like?" "You never give enough." "You never give enough," so you can imagine.

Now, the second one over is going crazy with it. I have two grandsons. One is now already an accountant. He graduated college. Second one is going to college now. Those are the two boys. This is the first one and over there is the second one. So they went—so they're so crazy about this dish, you can't imagine. I have a neighbor who used to live here, now takes care of my property. He wanted me that we should go in business with him. [Laughs] That's all I need now. "Let's go, Sadie," he says, and I give it to him every time I make it. "Sadie," he says, "we'll do a great business together." I says, "I'm not about to go in business." That's how he felt about it.

So this is [unclear]. I think I give you enough dishes.

LEVINE: Good. Tell me a bit more. Anything else you remember about the Lower East Side, from when you were there?

WISHNICK: Well, that's, as I told you, we lived in these apartments.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about the pushcarts or the—

WISHNICK: Oh, well, that's all we had. We had—oh, yeah, there were some stores. In front of the stores were pushcarts. The stores were mostly clothing and things like that, but food was all on pushcarts. Now, when we came to this country, it was like during the war, the First World War. Right after we came to this country, you know, the war broke out. Now, you know, everything was bought very, very cheap. For a few pennies you could get a pound, or maybe a penny you could get a pound of onions. For a penny! Pennies, oh,

penny was a very important thing. Now, at one time, it was during the war, things started climbing, you know. So they wanted ten cents, five or ten cents a pound for onions. So the women went and they threw kerosene on the onions, on the pushcarts because they had no business charging them so much money, and they put a string [unclear] around their neck and paraded around the pushcarts to show how they felt about these people, you know. This was one of the—I gave you a good one, right? That was one. Now, what else can I tell you?

LEVINE: Now, it seems to me there was a schul or synagogue on practically every block in the Lower East Side at that time.

WISHNICK: Well, when we came to this country there weren't so many. There was a few, you know, and every had a society they belonged to. Everybody came to America, their town—now, we belonged to the Ahla Society. Bielsk had a society, too, but because my mother—excuse me—was from Ahla and they were the first ones to start the society. My grandfather was practically the first one to come to America from all of them. Imagine, you see, one place. And he was here in the early 1800s [sic] he was here. So this is how they started. These were started. [unclear] they call them, the society. What did you ask?

LEVINE: Did you—well, we were just talking about the Lower East Side. Did you belong or your mother and father belong?

WISHNICK: Yes, my grandfather was the starter so everybody from that little town belonged to the society. The society gave you cemetery. You paid. You paid quarterly. You got cemetery. You had a loan society that used to give you money, loan you money. Doctors came from that society. Now, this society had a schul. Every society had a schul and we had the Ahla Schul, you see.

LEVINE: Where was that?

WISHNICK: That was on Clinton Street. It was in a hall. That was a hall people hired for affairs, you know, weddings and things like that. So they hired a room in that hall, in that catering hall for their synagogue and that's where we used to pray in Clinton Street. Then there was all over the East Side. In Elder Street there was a beautiful, a built up schul. We never had. We used that hall, until as time went on, you know, people moved away and they weren't there. It was disintegrated, but this is the way we had. But you know when it did happen, is actually when I was like married already, every corner, everybody got angry at one another, they opened up a schul. The

stores, that's what they did. It was a schul here, a schul there. All over schuls.

LEVINE: You mean if they were to get into some kind of dispute over the running of the schul—

WISHNICK: Right, they take a few people, start their own, and this is what happened. That was much, much later, but at the time when I came to this country, everybody, every organization had their schul. Either it was built up beautiful, if they were a rich organization. There was one on Elder Street, it was gorgeous. Ah, it's gone already. They don't use it as a schul anymore. They're all going. Everything is—the world, at ninety years—no, not ninety years. I say maybe fifty years since I was married—I was married fifty years. When my husband passed away, I was married fifty-five years, but since then everything has gone like different. Everything has either disintegrated, no more, and nothing is the same anymore, you see.

At that time, we know—like all Ahla Schul, [unclear] Schul, every town that had a name and had a society had a schul.

LEVINE: Do you remember any social life around these societies or schuls?

WISHNICK: Sure. They used to have dances. They used to have every couple of years had a banquette. Our society had a beautiful banquette. In fact, I have a little—what you get—that you drink schnapps from. A little thing.

LEVINE: Careful, you're—

WISHNICK: Oh, I can't move.

LEVINE: Just show me over there, yeah.

WISHNICK: It's a—you'll see, silver that, you know, they gave when you go—now if you go to parties and you come back with something. A schnapps glass, a little glass to drink whiskey. A whiskey glass, and that's what they were, yeah. And then we had movies already. When we came to America, there were movies.

LEVINE: Were these Yiddish? Or these were—

WISHNICK: No, English. We were going to school. We were learning English, and then they had movies here.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about Second Avenue and the theaters, the [unclear] Theater?

WISHNICK: Yeah, we used to go to the theaters to see shows. There was Yiddisher shows on Second Avenue, yes. But I actually grew up. I didn't even feel that I was ever from Europe. You can hear from my talking that I started in 1A and then when I came I was in—yeah, what I didn't want is "Why is my name Sadie? Could have been Sarah." Sarah's a beautiful name, right?

LEVINE: How did you get Sadie, do you know?

WISHNICK: When I came to this country and my aunts, my Aunt Ida and Ethel, you know, they were the ones who took care of us because what did we know? We came here without knowing the English language. They're taking to me to school. I think it was my Aunt Ida. I says, "Ida, please, I don't want to be called Sarah." You see, the European people, they don't pronounce things right and instead of saying Sarah, Sarah. It's so that they would say in Yiddish, but then in English it would be Sarrie, and I don't like Sarrie. I didn't like the way they said it, actually. Now, Sarrie is a beautiful name and I didn't like the way they said it. It grated on me. So I said to my aunt, "Anything but Sarrie, please." So she named me Sadie, and since my name was Beila, so it was Sadie Beila. Now they call me Sadie Bell. Yeah, Sadie B. Now, I have to be—I used to write only Sadie. Now I have to put a B in the middle.

LEVINE: Do you remember being called a 'greenhorn'? Do you remember anything like that?

WISHNICK: Nah, I was a child. What would they call me greenhorn, if I was a child. I started in 1A and immediately I was speaking English. I happened to be very bright in school. I skipped. Twice I skipped classes, you know.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of immigrant children in your school at that point?

WISHNICK: Sure.

LEVINE: Yeah.

WISHNICK: Practically all of them. You know, they were all coming from Europe then.

LEVINE: And were there any incidents in learning English that stick in your mind?

WISHNICK: I had teachers. I loved them. They always made me a monitor and what could I say? Only one thing that happened to me, I could have gotten out sooner. It was a cousin—we have cousins in Passaic and we went to one cousin's wedding. It was just when I was skipped. I was skipped, but just before school started we went to this wedding and to go then was a trip. Now, I'm living on the East Side. First you took a—supposed to be a car. You know, trolley car. Trolley car, but then the trolley cars were with horses. Came at that time, but very shortly they became already motorized. This trolley car took us to where we got the boat. A boat. The boat took us across the river and then we got a train to Passaic. So that's how we got to that wedding.

Going back, we missed something, and we couldn't get back in time for me to come to school. They called my name in the class that I was promoted. You know, I skipped, promoted. There's no Sadie Acronowicz. Goodbye, Charlie. I lost out. Had to go back to the other class. Somebody else was put in my place. I was very, very upset, you know. So here you got another story. [Laughs]

LEVINE: So how did you meet your husband then?

WISHNICK: My husband, you see, I—when I—we were four girls. No, we were two-six girls, two boys. I was the oldest. As soon as I anything, they were ready to marry me off. They were already waiting. So my father called me [unclear[, an old maid. At sixteen I was an old maid already. Anyhow, they brought me all kinds of boys to get married with and I didn't want any of them.

LEVINE: Your mother and father brought you?

WISHNICK: Yeah. No, schatrunum. You know, they went to them to bring—oh, then it was—then I had an Aunt living in Benson Hurst and she went to a guy who was selling chickens and he was single. He was only about twenty-one or twenty-two. Who knew his age to just anyhow. So she went to him and she liked him. She says, "This is a good one for my niece," and she made me come there for the weekend and we met, and this is how I met him.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, what was it like when the matchmaker would bring you a boy?

WISHNICK: I'd yell and scream, I didn't want. A fellow would come to the house, take me somewhere and that was it. I saw some very nice shows on Broadway with them. [Laughs]

LEVINE: So they would take you some place nice.

WISHNICK: Oh, yeah, yeah. Sometimes. Sometimes I just couldn't stand them from the minute I looked at them. [Laughs] But this is the way it was. So I got married. I actually married like really twenty-one. Boy, I was an old maid. I think so. I'm not sure. I think I married sooner, but I looked at my—that subba, you know, they give you when you get married. Somehow I read, it says 'twenty-one.' Maybe he made a mistake because I don't know. I remember going with my husband, you know, walking, he says how old I am. I said, "I'm eighteen." "I don't believe you." He wouldn't believe I was eighteen because who's eighteen? He felt like he was an old man already going with an eighteen. But anyway, it was that way in that day.

LEVINE: Did you see him a long time before you got married?

WISHNICK: I think we just were about maybe a year. Not quite. Not quite a year. He was very anxious to get married. His parents were from the—my parents were more modern. If you can call that modern, they were modern. His parents were very Europe. All European.

LEVINE: How did your parents become—did they become Americanized, would you say?

WISHNICK: Well, my mother tried to become a citizen. She would have gone through and become a citizen. She was Americanized, believe me. She was so modern in comparison to other people that I know and knew. She was trying to become a citizen. It was very hard for them. They had no education in English at all. Even Yiddish was even hard for them to get. Excuse me.

Now, Yiddish, they still had to pay a rabbi to teach boys and girls. Now, if their amount of money, you know, to spend was so little, guess who they taught? The boys. The boys got the education. The girls, they got nothing. Like my mother—and she learned by going to the synagogue from healing all these Jewesses. She had a wonderful brain. She could add and subtract in her brain. She didn't know how to write it, but she knew how to say it. And so she learned. So you can imagine because it's so hard for her to learn even the Yiddish, how could you expect her to know English? Besides having eight children and boarders, to go—there were places to go to learn, but she couldn't. So the children were trying to teach her to sign her name. Mostly was you have to know how to sign your name. She was doing pretty good, but I don't know, something involved that the husband had to become first and then the wife could become because he was a citizen.

They had that law at that time. My father couldn't. He was way less in—you know, actually, than my mother. He was—my mother was the one who did everything. She raised—my father never laid a hand on us. My mother did. She was the one who raised the children, took care of the house, took care of the finances, everything.

LEVINE: Well, what was your father? I mean, your father had a good position, a good career, you might as well say in Europe. Do you think he was disappointed? Was it a come down for him?

WISHNICK: No.

LEVINE: To come to this country?

WISHNICK: No. No. No, he felt—they didn't know about come downs there. It was the way you lived and that's the way you have to live. It's nothing that—it's not like I was better off and then worse off. I was okay here. I'll do the best I can over there. So it was very much, for my mother, say, this is a come down. She really—she liked it because it was a very good trade that he had, and then all of a sudden she has to come to America, and she knew that she was going to suffer here. My mother didn't have boarders in Europe. She came to America, boarders were waiting. So you can understand, to her it was a come down, but she worked harder than my father to raise us. My father worked hard, too, but he worked only what he could get, you know, and she tried everything under the sun to try and then give us a better life. So this was the way they brought us up. What other questions?

[End of Tape Two, Side A/Start of Tape Two, Side B]

LEVINE: How do you—when you think of yourself as living most of your life out here.

WISHNICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you feel that like coming here as a seven year old, as an immigrant, do you think that made a difference in the kind of person you are?

WISHNICK: Not at all. I never felt—I never felt that I came from Europe. I'm talking about it. Mostly, I can tell you the truth, is what my mother spoke to me and told me that I'm telling you. Otherwise, I would know very little. So, I came. If I entered 1A, the first grade, and I didn't know a word, and I was able to skip, mind you, so I had a

very good head for learning, you know. So I went until high school—no high school. Eighth grade. Eighth grade then.

LEVINE: Then what did you do after that?

WISHNICK: Huh?

LEVINE: What did you do after that?

WISHNICK: I was sixteen years old and I was ready for work. I went and I got working papers. We had to get working papers, and that was in the Board of Health in Chinatown place there, some place there. I came there for my working papers. I, in the whole family—now, mind you, I was the first. I have a birth certificate. All my other brothers and sisters don't. So my birth is legitimate. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Where did you get yours from?

WISHNICK: Huh?

LEVINE: Where did you get your birth certificate?

WISHNICK: My mother came with it. So mine is legit, but if you want to laugh, I'll tell you something. Now, I come with this birth certificate in the—to get my working papers and the guy is out. You know, it's Russian. So the guy is out. You can't. You got to wait. Would I go back? I waited. Guess who came in? A China man. He read my birth certificate and he put it in English, and I have two birthdays, the 12th and the 21st. I did not know which one to celebrate until I met a friend and he told me how it worked in Europe. Now, I was born the 12th, he says, but it was given in the 21st, so you have two dates. How do you like that? So this is how—and this—I'm legit. My other sisters and brothers are all [unclear], and they none have. I don't know why. Since I was the first, should have been the hardest, and I have it.

So this is the way it is, and yeah, so I got my working papers and I went out looking for a job. I went one place and it was a shop that, you know, on a machine. My mother didn't like the idea for me to work on a machine because she said it's not healthy, it's not good, whatever. And I got six dollars, I think, a week, working on a machine. Sewing on a machine. She was afraid I can get hurt or something. I don't know why, but I quit that job. Then I got a job at a factory that made pocketbooks, and I didn't like that one because it smelled terrible. They had all those things. Yeah, all the things they had there. I guess paints, and all things that go with a pocketbook. Then I once made myself a blouse. I did it myself. I

made a beautiful butterfly in front of the blouse. I did it myself. You know, I hand sewed it, you know, and I came up to a place that was an embroidery place and he says, "Who did this?" I says, "I." "You're hired," so I was hired to the embroidery place. Okay. I worked there for a while.

LEVINE: Was this hand embroidered?

WISHNICK: Hand. Yeah, I embroidered them. Hand embroidery. So and then, okay, so I worked there for a while. Then we had a boarder that lived in our house. He was a lonsman—I don't have to spell lonsman?

LEVINE: No.

WISHNICK: [Laughs] In fact, we called him a cousin. He was from my mother's town and he was married. In fact, he might have even had a child and his name was Nathan Kachalsky

LEVINE: Can you spell that?

WISHNICK: Nathan, I don't have spell it.

LEVINE: Yeah, Nathan.

WISHNICK: N-A-T-H-A-N. K-A-C-H-A-L-S-K-Y, Kachalsky. He was just like, I tell you, you would say like a son or something in the family. The—my—he worked in the children's clothing, same like my father and they went on strike. Then after the strike was settled, he said to me, "Now, come, Sadie. I'll put you into the union and you can get a job," and he says, "You'll get a good"—you know, after the strike was settled, they didn't give you six dollars a week. They gave me twenty-two dollars and fifty cents a week and my job was they called it a cleaner. So I had to cut, you know—the operators, when they worked, they leave long cottons all over the place. I had to clean off the whole bag of these threads and that was my job, and I worked on that until I got married. So it was really—it was really a gyp because at the time before the strike, they got a girl for seventeen dollars, and actually if the foreman was smart, he didn't have to take me because this wasn't even part of the union, you know, but I already was a union one and they hired me for the job. They couldn't do anything about it. You had to stay there, and this is how I—and in this job I got married.

I met my Morris. My husband's name was Morris Wishnick and I met him and we got married. We had a beautiful wedding in the Jefferson Hall. My mother was looking for the biggest hall

because we had a big family and she said—and then they started already catered, you know, where you invite only the older people. The children stay home. "Oh, no," she says, "not at my daughter's wedding. I have to have everybody." Three hundred people were at my wedding.

LEVINE: Did you have to have some kind of a dowry or anything at this point?

WISHNICK: I gave him no dowry. He gave me dowry. He was in business. He was in the chicken business. He fell in love and he didn't want anything from anybody. So he bought me a fur coat while we were engaged. What was the name of the coat? Anyhow, he bought me a fur coat which was then everybody envied me because fur coats were [unclear] people and my grandmother knew a furrier and he gave the best. So I had a beautiful—oh, what was the fur? The black fur. All right. So, and of course, when we got married, we lived in a beautiful apartment in Benson Hurst. Got married, we moved to Benson Hurst, had a beautiful apartment. It was a beautiful area. It was near the bay. We used to bath in the bay. Walk to the bay and bath. My sisters and brothers were constantly, cousins, everybody came to me, too, and then it didn't mean anything. Today if you, "They're coming. This, that." Then, you come, you don't. You don't ask, "Should I come?" Today you got to make an appointment. But then you came and you were there, that's all. Yeah, it was—

LEVINE: Did you and Morris have children?

WISHNICK: One child. I had one child. Doris. My Morris wanted to have seven kids. As many as I can have, and all boys. Guess what? He got stick with a girl, and thank you, dear God, from the girl we have three grandchildren. Two girls and a boy. Now, the girls are Linda. Their married name now?

LEVINE: Well, what's your daughter's married name?

WISHNICK: Oh, Schulsinger. Doris Schulsinger, and she married Irving Schulsinger. I lost my son-in-law two years ago. He passed away. So now she lives alone. So anyhow—

LEVINE: She has three children.

WISHNICK: Huh?

LEVINE: There are three grandchildren.

WISHNICK: Three. Two girls and a boy. The two girls got married and they brought me four great grandsons. Sons, no girls. But my grandson, Eddie, he didn't get married. He's already thirty-eight years old. He isn't married. I'm still hoping. [Laughs] And that's the family I have, but one daughter.

LEVINE: And how is this time of life for you? This time of your life, old age time, how is it for you?

WISHNICK: Wonderful. You see how I am. How do you think it is? Should it be good? It's good. I've had—it's your fault. It's your fault. I have this knee was operated on. This eye I have a transplant cornea. Now cataract, and thank God physically all my vital organs are okay. So why should I complain? And I have grandchildren and then my daughter is out of the question. My son-in-law died, was a son. He wasn't a son-in-law. So and my grandchildren, they're the best in this world. Now, my grand daughter, Linda, now I had to for this operation and so much to go, and we have in our township we have two women that take care of people like me. When they have to go to doctors, they come and pick you up in the car and bring you to the doctor, bring you home. They'll do it for me. No, Linda wouldn't let. Whenever I have to go to a doctor, and sometimes I beg off already, you know, and she's a busy person. She, besides having family, you know, two sons and this, she has a business at home. She makes—oh, that you win when you go bowling or things like that. Trophies. She makes trophies and she makes, you know, when you put on—it's a business, but it's at home. She has to be home. I says, "Linda, but you're"—"No," she says, "I'll do everything, but I'm going with you. Don't make any appointments," and that's what she does, and the poor thing, guess what?

Now for this last operation, we have to be in the hospital at eight thirty, I think, that morning. That was Tuesday morning on the 19th of September was my operation. Dr. Shaw is my doctor. He's in Dover. He's in Dover. His office is in Dover. Now, we had to be in the hospital, and I was in Dover General, at eight thirty in the morning. Linda and Eddie—Eddie lives in Cherry Hill. Eddie Schulsinger, my grandson, lives in Cherry Hill and he took me to when I had to have this operation, to Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia. It's close to him. So this operation I went to the Dr. Shaw, the one who is my man for the eyes all the time. So this Dr. Shaw, Linda said, "I don't want to take the responsibility of going for the operation alone. I want Eddie to come." Eddie didn't say nothing and I says, "Why? Why make him spend a day. It's not"—"No, grandma. That's what I want." Thank God. That night, when she was coming. She told me, "I'll come at night." They were both

staying over my house that night to take me to the hospital. She had a car accident. Coming to me, she—a car hit into her car and totaled it and that night I didn't sleep because here I'm expecting her, she isn't here. So Eddie went to the telephone and called the house. They told me she had an accident and they said she's all right. They had her in the hospital no bones broken, but you know, you don't come out of an accident and a total. This man was crazy. He says the car is standing and he goes right into her. Can you imagine?

LEVINE: Okay, let's go back to the immigration part.

WISHNICK: Yeah.

LEVINE: Tell me, is there anything else you can think of that has to do with your coming to this country?

WISHNICK: I think I told you. What else can I say? We came, we lived in the East Side and that was it.

LEVINE: Okay. Is there anything else that you want to say before we close the tape?

WISHNICK: Well, I practically made a—and, okay, I think it's enough for the tapes, don't you? And then I'll give you my life story and if you want—

LEVINE: We'll put it on file.

WISHNICK: Yeah, I have it. I have the whole thing here. It's typed.

LEVINE: Good.

WISHNICK: I will go on more. You have even more than I already gave them because of my eyes, it was very hard for me. You see, I have this eye—this eye had this and this eye. I couldn't see and now, would you believe that I could read the last line. The last line. The girl was amazed. I was amazed myself. I could read the last line.

LEVINE: Okay, well, I think that's a good point to stop.

WISHNICK: To stop. Good.

LEVINE: I want to thank you very much.

WISHNICK: Oh, you're welcome, and I'm glad to have—I'll tell you the truth—oh, I have to show you my—I want to know am I on—in the that I paid money for.

LEVINE: The Wall of Honor. Okay.

WISHNICK: Did you? You said you were going to investigate.

LEVINE: Okay, we'll talk about that now.

WISHNICK: Yeah, okay.

LEVINE: Okay, I'm signing off now.

WISHNICK: Okay.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine. It's September 30th, 1995. I'm here in Lake Hiawatha with Sadie Wishnick and thank you very much.

WISHNICK: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]