

**EI-73**

**ROSE BROOK FEINGOLD**

**BIRTH DATE: FEBRUARY 6, 1908**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

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**RUSSIA, 1922**

**AGE 14**

**SHIP: "THE AQUITANIA"**

**PORT: CHERBOURG**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **RUSSIA: KARELICH; NOVOGRUDOK**
- **US: CLEVELAND, OH**

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here with Rose Feingold in Pembroke Pines, Florida and it's August 25th, 1991 and it's late afternoon. Rose came from Russia in 1922 at the age of fourteen.

FEINGOLD: Yes, at the end of '22.

LEVINE: At the end of 1922.

FEINGOLD: It was December 23rd, '22--something like that.

LEVINE: Okay, so it was December. 1922.

FEINGOLD: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay, well, it's very nice to be here, Rose--

FEINGOLD: Yes.

LEVINE: And let me ask you. first, where were you born?

FEINGOLD: I was born in Russia.

LEVINE: In what town?

FEINGOLD: It was a very small town. The name of it was Karelích.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

FEINGOLD: Well--

LEVINE: Make a try at it.

FEINGOLD: K-A-R-E-L-I-C-H, I guess, Karelích. And then we moved. When I was about a half a year old, we moved to a larger town, which was called Novogradok, a translation from Russian which meant the "new city."

LEVINE: And what was your birth date?

FEINGOLD: My birth date was February 6th, 1908.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, when you were born, did you have brothers and sisters?

FEINGOLD: I was the first one was born, and then my mother had the little brother, who died at the age of less than a year. My mother had a son that was my little brother, so I remained an only child.

LEVINE: I see. What was your father's name?

FEINGOLD: My father's name was, the English name?

LEVINE: Well, maybe both.

FEINGOLD: Isador Don Brook, B-R-double O-K.

LEVINE: Okay. And your mother's name?

FEINGOLD: Sarah Frieda Brook.

LEVINE: Do you know her maiden name?

FEINGOLD: Yes, let's see, oh, I have it written here someplace. Should I go and get it?

LEVINE: If you think of it later on well--

FEINGOLD: Turetzky.

LEVINE: Okay. So you grew up as an only child in this place, the "new city?"

FEINGOLD: Well, I wasn't there all the time. I have a very long history, a very interesting history. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: Well, tell me about it.

FEINGOLD: Well, when I was about four years old my father left, my father was a teacher, my also was a teacher. He went to the United States and we were supposed to follow him very shortly afterwards, but the First World War broke out. So we remained. And my father came from Ukraine. So when the war broke out they were coming closer to us. It was coming from our side where we were, so we moved to Ukraine where my father's home was, my father's parents lived. And they lived in a town named Snovsk, S-N-O-V-S-K. It was near a large city named Gomel, G-O-M-E-L.  
(pause)

LEVINE: Okay. So you and your mother went to your father's parent's house.

FEINGOLD: House, that's right.

LEVINE: In the Ukraine.

FEINGOLD: And we lived there. And then--

LEVINE: How long were you there then?

FEINGOLD: Well, let me tell you the whole story (she laughs). Then the Communists came into power, when I was nine years old. And, at that time, we lived in the small town--there were laws in Russia--the czarist laws. The Jews

were not allowed to live in small towns and not in very large towns, either. I don't know where they expected us to live. (She laughs.) But anyways, we went to visit, from my grandparent's home, we went to visit a sister of my father's, who lived in a very small town. And we stayed with her, I don't remember, maybe a half a year or more, and what we had to do is hide during the day time and come out for some fresh air only at night because under the czarist's rule, Jews were not allowed to live in that town. And then when the Communists came into power, as I said I was only nine years old, and, of course, we celebrated. It was a world celebration and--I remember, me asking my mother; and I thought it was only for the Jews; it was something that they did for the Jews, because Jews were finally allowed to live wherever they wanted to and it was supposed to be wonderful. So, we all went out and we celebrated when the Communists came into power and I remember saying to my mother--so many Non-Jews in the village celebrating, too--so I said, "What are they celebrating about? It's only good news for the Jews." (She laughs.) You know, it's funny, it was so many years ago. I think of things. Then--

LEVINE: How did your mother respond? Do you remember at all how she thought about the Communists coming--

FEINGOLD: Well, she knew the truth. I guess she answered me that it wasn't only for the Jews. And then we remained under Communist rule and my father was in the United States but we didn't even hear from him anymore. And we finally received some kind of, a post card, that he's in the United States and he wants us to come there. And we couldn't get out of Russia, but suddenly they had some sort of a ruling that those people that came from what was our part, Novogrudok, where we lived before Poland took over or they gave it to Poland. So those that came from that part of the country

could go back. You know, they made a rule like that, that Russia let those people go back to their home towns. So, and from there we could go to the United States. So, we packed up and we went back to our home town.

LEVINE: And did you stay in your home town very long?

FEINGOLD: We had to wait for a visa to come to the United States. When I see what goes on now. The Cubans can take Americans as hostages because they're not let in. You don't know what we had to go through in order to come to the United States. And they made laws especially that were against the Jews. The United States made such laws. They were laws like the number of Jews that were allowed into the United States depended upon the number of Jews living at a certain time in the United States, like a percentage of that number. And they figured it out that the percentage should be the lowest number of Jews that were at that time because they didn't want any Jews in the United States. So we finally, after waiting around for a year in Novogrudok, we finally got a visa and we came to the United States.

LEVINE: Now, how did you get the visa? Was your father involved?

FEINGOLD: Yes. The only way we could come is if my father was an American citizen. And, of course, he became an American citizen and he sent for us. You couldn't come without being sent. And then, on the boat, we heard, second class wasn't, they didn't examine, but people were examined to such an extent the third, in the third class that if they had, excuse me the expression, lice, they wouldn't let them in. The rules were so strict. So, anyways, if you're interested, I could tell you more about that story. (She

laughs.)

LEVINE: Definitely. Let me ask you this, what, was your mother teaching during this time at all?

FEINGOLD: Well, she was teaching only with my father (telephone rings). Oh

INTERVIEW PAUSES.

INTERVIEW RESUMES.

LEVINE: --wasn't on just then.

FEINGOLD: Good, good.

LEVINE: Now, we were saying, how did your mother and you live for the time your father was in the United States?

FEINGOLD: Well, this is what I wanted to tell you. First of all, we were in Novogradok, uh, yeah, when my mother's parents arrived, they had a business. So she was business with them.

LEVINE: What kind of business?

FEINGOLD: They had a dyeing business. They were dyeing clothes, And then, after the war, we went to the Ukraine and my mother worked as a bookkeeper and, you know, she got different jobs. And then (pause) that's, oh yes, and this is what's interesting. We lived under the Communist regime. First of all, my father had a younger brother who was, you know, you had to live. There were no stores, we were not allowed any stores during the Communist regime. Everything was communized. No private business.

So, but we had to make a living somehow, so my uncle went and, you know, he got dresses, you know, like a businessman, a rich businessman. And, on the way, they killed him because he was dressed as a rich businessman. They thought he had money. They killed him and that's that. And my mother, the way we made a living that way--we lived like in a small town. So she used to buy foodstuffs. Sugar and salt were very scarce. So she used to buy those things and transfer it to the big city and sell it because the big city didn't have any food. And that's the way we lived. But, she was almost killed on the way, you know. And you had to put it on yourself, like you had to hide the food. You couldn't just take food because you're not allowed. (She laughs.) So she mad a corset out of sugar or salt and then the Communists got a hold of her on the way, in the, first of all (she laughs) oh, I have so--

LEVINE: So many stories.

FEINGOLD: I have so many stories. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: Take your time. It's all interesting. We have plenty of time.

FEINGOLD: We have, yes. Well, some of the stories are such, like I told you, we lived near a large town, Gomel, so my mother used to, got herself, as I told you, a corset of sugar and she wore it on herself and were bring it to Gomel. And we were told, you know, that the Communist soldiers catch you and if they, you know, they find out if you have something, they kill you. So jumped, and I went with her. I was carrying a bag of potatoes to sell. This, I think we were allowed. So I was carrying a bag, a big bag of potatoes. So she jumped off the train and while it was in motion, you know, before the station, because at the station she was afraid of being

arrested. So she jumped off and we were supposed to meet at a friend's house. So, she jumped off and then when I came she was supposed to walk and meet me at the station, you know, in a certain place. But if I didn't meet, she didn't, if I couldn't meet her there, we should meet at a friend's house, far away from the station. So, I finally came to the station, they let me in, even with my sack of potatoes (she laughs) and then, ah, and I look around. I was only about nine or ten years old. I was looking around for her and I couldn't find her so I was stranding there and crying. So a man comes over to me and he says, "Why are you crying?" So I said, "My mother was supposed to be here and she's not here." So he says, "Well can I take you someplace?" So I was thinking to myself, "How can I trust myself to a strange man?" But then I thought, "What chance do I have to get there anyway?" So, I said, "Okay, will you take me to this friend's house?" And he took me and when I came there my mother wasn't there. And this was already about twelve o'clock at night instead of, about, she was supposed to arrive about eight. So, when I came there, my mother wasn't there, so our friend, this, the man of the house, got dressed and went looking for her. You know, different places where he thought she might be. And, sure enough, she was arrested and they almost shot her, until she gave them some money and they let her go, and he found her, and he brought her back. So, this is the kind of life we led under Communist Russia, in the beginning. So what else I have to tell you (she laughs).

LEVINE: Did that happen, I mean, was your mother often bringing food and--

FEINGOLD: Oh, yeah, that's the way she made a living. Oh, yes, and another thing we did id, your nor allowed any stores--I can tell you the whole story of Russia that time (she laughs).

LEVINE: Yes, go ahead.

FEINGOLD: (She laughs.) So we were allowed stands, like in the market place. Each one wanted to sell things had a table and put some things on the table and the peasants used to come from the villages and they used to buy that. And that's the way we made a living. So when my mother, yes, she was travelling and she was supposed to be home but she didn't come back and this was a market day, like we took our tables only on the market day. So I, myself, as a child took out a table and stood there to sell the things, and my mother--

LEVINE: What would you sell. The same things, sugar and--

FEINGOLD: Whatever there was. Whatever we could get to sell, we could get to buy. You know, like the peasants, you see, if they had no money, they used to bring us potatoes and salt and, you know, things like that. And we used to sell them, you know, things like trinkets or things that they could use. Whatever they need. I don't remember anymore, was so many years ago. So I remember that incident that I went out with myself, a child of ten maybe or something like that, stood there and tried to make some money and then I had to put together the table and drag it by myself back home with the goods. That was a life. (She laughs.) And, at the same time, you know, I went to school! I went to Communist school and they used to tell us, "You should write to your--," you know, they knew that there were other people that escaped to the United States. "You should write to your father and friends in the United States, how wonderful it is here. What a free country we have and (she laughs)." And that's the way it was, yes.

LEVINE: Did you believe that at that time?

FEINGOLD: No. I was smart enough to, maybe I wouldn't show anything.

LEVINE: So how long did you stay in school there then?

FEINGOLD: Oh, I went to school, we, my parents believed in education, so I went to Russian school until we left for that part that was Poland. And while we waited that year for a visa I went to Polish school. My mother wouldn't allow that I stay out of school. I had to get an education. So, that's that. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: So, did you have a childhood in the sense of, you know, playing, having friends?

FEINGOLD: Oh, yes, yes, we played as children!

LEVINE: Can you remember anything like what you played or what kinds of--?

FEINGOLD: Oh, we used to play in the street, you know, make crosses or something like that, you know, the sidewalk and jump from one--

LEVINE: Hopscotch?

FEINGOLD: Yeah, something like that, yes. And my father's father was a teacher too. So we lived with my father's parents. So he taught me Hebrew at the same time I was learning Russian while there.

LEVINE: So your whole family then were educated people.

FEINGOLD: Oh, yes, yes. My father, he was one of six and every one was a professional except the one that was killed. He didn't want to go to school. He wanted to be a businessman. So, that's what happened to him. Yeah, that's it.

LEVINE: So then when you were in what was now Poland, waiting for the visas at that time, and you remember at all what you thought about the United States before you actually came?

FEINGOLD: Well, it was our dream to just get to the United States. We were sitting and waiting every day for that visa to take us to the United States. (She laughs.) I remember, you know, we had, I don't know if you know anything about Jewish holidays?

LEVINE: Yeah, a little bit.

FEINGOLD: New Year's is coming up now and there's Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is the holiest day and day you're not supposed to eat and you're supposed to pray all day. And I was, oh yes, I was twelve years by then, so at the age of twelve you were already, you know, men, boys become men at the age of thirteen, according to Jewish law. And the girls become women at the age of twelve. So since I was twelve, I sat and prayed all day at home in order to bring, to ask God to let us go to the United States. That was a dream, our dream. And then when I came to Ellis Island, that's what I said, "Is this what we were dreaming about?" (She laughs.)

LEVINE: We'll get to that. Your mother was religious? Was your mother a religious woman?

FEINGOLD: Yes, my mother and father are religious. They are both Hebrew teachers.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

FEINGOLD: I was never religious. But at the same time, I lived in Israel for twenty years. My husband passed away here at a young age, about twenty-six years ago. And I have grown children and I have a son and a daughter. My son's a professor and my daughter is a public health administrator in a hospital. And I have four grandchildren. One of my grandchildren just graduated from Harvard Law School, magnum cum laude. So I have a wonderful family. Why did I bring them up? (She laughs.)

LEVINE: You were saying that your mother and father were religious and they taught Hebrew.

FEINGOLD: Oh, yes. They were religious, yes; but I was never religious. And, in fact, I go to synagogue now on Saturday because I don't know, I just want to be brought closer to the Jewish people because I feel, well, it's a whole story. I told you I think, I was in Israel for twenty years? I lived there and I loved there, but I left my children here, and my daughter began writing to me and talking to me that I should come back home. What would happen if, I'm not getting any younger, I'm getting older. What will happen if I get sick and I have no one there except friends. You can't expect anything from friends. So I decided to come back. I sold my home. And when I came back here, Israel has a beautiful climate, you know, I couldn't live up north with my children, so Florida was the only place that I could live. So, when I came here, I miss Israel. I miss the Jewish atmosphere. So I decided to join a synagogue. And I go to synagogue every Saturday

morning, unless something else happens. And it's really not, I'm not religious because I do not do anything else except go to the synagogue. So, but this is the way I feel, I have a feeling. I love the prayers and we sing a lot of the prayers and I understand because I know Hebrew so I understand the prayers.

LEVINE: I see. So it's part of your life now.

FEINGOLD: Yes, yes, and, of course, I work very hard for Israel belong to N.A.M.A.T.U.S.A., which is the largest Jewish organization. In Israel we have eight hundred and fifty thousand women and, you know, there are many Jewish organizations, but we are the largest and we do all the work, everything that is necessary. We have homes there and kindergartens and high schools and clubs for, and it's not only for Jewish; we have Arab children and women belonging to us, too. It's a labor Zionist organization. You know what that means?

LEVINE: Yes.

FEINGOLD: So, and we also work for this country. We don't only work for Israel. For Israel we work and collect money to help them there, but we work for this country. Like now we support all liberal legislation. I don't know how liberal you are, but I'm liberal. (She laughs.) And we support all liberal legislation. And now, just to show you the things that I do, our main office, which is in New York, sent us a letter stating, you know, that Israel is almost a million people now. And the United States was very anxious, they did help them, help through Russia, you know, getting Russia to let them out, but, the same time, they also told Israel that they will help internationally because Israel is not a rich country. It's quite poor and

when you bring in a million new people, you have to have homes for them and schools and work places. So they asked the United States only to guarantee their loans. They're going to loan money from banks in order to produce all those things, and the United States should guarantee their loan. And Israel has never gone back on their loans. The United States, whatever loans they, the United States gave them, they paid back everything, which is not like, for instance, Egypt, they now gave them a present of seven billion dollars. They told Egypt, "Because you're such nice people and you're friends, so we'll give you a present." Israel, except the sum of money that they regularly get, which is also a loan, they don't, they didn't give Israel. And at the time of this war in, what do you call it? You know, this last war that we had. Israel was attacked. You know that--

LEVINE: Yes.

FEINGOLD: With the missiles. And they lost billions of dollars in homes destroyed and business that they didn't do, they couldn't go to work and they couldn't carry on business. And the United States, instead of helping Israel, paying them back for their losses, they were innocent bystanders, they weren't at war. And they promised to repay them. So far they haven't paid them back anything. So, yes, letter, let's come back to the letters. So the letters that we're sending out to our congressmen and senators is to ask them to vote the laws that are supposed to come up now, for the loan to Israel. That they should not, yes, so now they began saying that we'll guarantee your loan if you do so and so, do so and so. All kinds of--

LEVINE: Stipulations?

FEINGOLD: Yes, stipulations of how they will receive the guarantees. So I ran out and

I distributed about fifty letters and I wrote the envelopes. I didn't leave it to them to look for the names and addresses of the congressmen and senators. I got them and I wrote the envelopes and I asked them to send them to these senators and congressmen. So that's the kind of work I do.

LEVINE: I see. That's the kind of thing you're involved in. Okay, well, let's go back to before you left for the United States and, tell me about your mother. What was she like when you were a little girl?

FEINGOLD: This is my mother. (Showing a picture.) My mother's a very educated and wonderful person. I mean, she was a very intelligent person. Just to give you an example, she died the age of ninety-five and she kept her own apartment until the age of ninety-four and a half. The last half of year, she caught cold or something. She got pneumonia and I took her to my home and she kept getting sick and I didn't have the doctors and nurses care, so I put her into a home where they had doctors and nurses. I used to come to see her, it was in Israel. She lived in Israel too. I also lived in Israel. So I used to come to see her. I remember the last visit. She says to me, she died the same, one o'clock in the morning, you know, and I came to see her during the day. So she asked me, she says, you know, she asked about everybody, her mind was so clear, about the children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, not her children, I'm the only child. And then she said to me, "I heard that Sadat was killed. Is it good for the Jews?" Her mind was so clear that she understood and was interested in the news of the day. So that's the kind of person she was.

LEVINE: Is there anything more that you can remember from when you were a little girl when the two of you were trying to survive in--

FEINGOLD: This was the life, whatever I told you. That's the way we lived.

LEVINE: Can you remember the place that you lived?

FEINGOLD: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What kind of house was it?

FEINGOLD: Oh, it was my grandfather's house. It was a private house, you know, not a very fancy house, we lived in a private house. Most people lived in small houses, their own, in small towns there were no big apartment. So, we lived in that house.

LEVINE: And what was it like when you had to be hidden for that period of time, when you could only go out at night?

FEINGOLD: Oh, that was in my aunt's house, in the village, a smaller village. See this was, where my grandfather lived was not a village, it was a little town, so we didn't have to hide. But over there we had to hide. And they also--

LEVINE: Can you remember what you thought when you were having to hide? I mean--

FEINGOLD: No, we just were not allowed to go outside. And I couldn't go to school so my mother taught me, you know, because I had to study, you know. This was very important to me. So, and then we thought of, you know, Communism came and the world opened up to us, as I told you before. But it didn't turn out that way.

LEVINE: Okay. So when you then were waiting for your visa, when you got your visa then what happened?

FEINGOLD: When we got our visa, we went to the boat and they made arrangements for the trip.

LEVINE: Do you remember like packing to go?

FEINGOLD: Of course.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that you took of your mother took with you?

FEINGOLD: (She laughs.) Oh, the funniest thing is, they said, "In the United States there are no feathers." You know, those days pillows you slept on were supposed to be, they didn't have any plastic like we have now--feather pillows. So we were taking with us feather pillows, such things. And, you know, odds and ends, whatever we had. We didn't know and my mother always believed that she, my father was a teacher here in this country, and teachers didn't make so much money in those days. And, you know, he didn't send us so much money. So, we had to, she felt that whatever we had, we should take with us because we don't know what we're going to find there (she laughs).

LEVINE: I see.

END OF SIDE A

LEVINE: So, can you remember, did you have a lot of things? Did you have like a big trunk or did you have--? no suitcases, but the suitcases were made out

of straw. Did you ever see those?

LEVINE: The baskets, at Ellis Island they have some.

FEINGOLD: Yeah, that's right. So we had a few of those and a few packs, you made, all the things fit into sacks or whatever it is.

LEVINE: And did you take any like (pause)-- Do you remember if brought food for the trip?

FEINGOLD: No, we didn't bring food because we know we going to be on the boat and the boat is food and we were in second class. We said, we were like tourists. We got the boat in Cherbourg.

LEVINE: Now, how did you get from--?

FEINGOLD: From Poland to Cherbourg? I think we went by train. I don't remember, yeah. I think we went by train.

LEVINE: You mentioned something before. You were going second class.

FEINGOLD: By boat, on the boat, yes.

LEVINE: And that was because you were afraid for the—

FEINGOLD: No, no because my father sent us money and he wanted us to come second class because there's a big difference. Second class was just like tourist and you had very good food and very nice room. We had a private room, my mother and I. And the third class was awful, you know, they

packed them together, so many in one room. Yes, another thing I didn't tell you. Finally, when they came to Ellis Island, after sitting there the entire day, they announce they are serving supper or whatever they were serving. So we went in line with everybody and we came to a room with long tables and benches. And not very appetizing, (she laughs) not very nice. And we all sat down at the benches and we had a meal. And then, I think we slept over there too, I don't remember.

LEVINE: Well, let's get back to the ship, when you were leaving Cherbourg. Do you remember, did you have to stay there for any length of time before the ship took off?

FEINGOLD: No, we arranged to come there just in time, just in time.

LEVINE: I see. So then how long a trip was it for you? Do you remember?

FEINGOLD: It wasn't, oh yes, we went on the Aquitania. It was one of the nicest boats there. And it was comparatively a short trip; I think seven days or something like that.

LEVINE: And it was a pleasant trip?

FEINGOLD: Oh yes, it was pleasant because we went second class so it was very pleasant. The only unpleasant thing was when we came to Ellis Island. That was the unpleasant experience.

LEVINE: Yeah, I want to hear, I want you to say about, well let's just say, when you came into New York Harbor, did you see the Statue of Liberty first? Do you remember that at all?

FEINGOLD: We didn't see anything. They took us down to Ellis Island. I don't remember seeing anything. They took us down to Ellis Island in a certain ways, we hardly saw the sky.

LEVINE: Do you remember what your impression was of Ellis island when you first--?

FEINGOLD: Very poor, I just told you what happened. We finally came to this room. You know, we went through something, ways, you know, from the ship to the place, and I told you my experience with this dark room, without a chair or a bench.

LEVINE: Well, say that because I don't think the tape was on when you said that.

FEINGOLD: Oh, I see. So when we came into this big, empty room, we were standing wand waiting with, you know, to go some place right away. You wouldn't let us stand there all the time. But we remained standing there for hours. So we couldn't stand so long so we sat down on the floor and I began crying. You know, I was so, a child and I was very unhappy and, but then, and then the experience of going down to eat in that beautiful room. (She laughs), which wasn't very pleasant. And I think the food wasn't very good either. I don't remember that much but I know it was a very un[pleasant experience. And the, finally, my uncle came and took us off the boat. Not the boat but, you know, from Ellis Island. I don't remember, so long ago, whether we slept over in Ellis Island and he came on the second day. I really don't remember anymore. So many years ago.

LEVINE: Did you know your uncle? Had you known your uncle in Russia?

FEINGOLD: No, no, I didn't, no, no. They came to this country many years before.

LEVINE: I see. Did your father come--

FEINGOLD: Yes?

LEVINE: --to meet you at Ellis?

FEINGOLD: No, my father lived in Cleveland and my uncle lived in New York. So they arranged it that they should come and pick us up.

LEVINE: I see. And do you remember when your uncle came? Your mother, did your mother know your uncle or--

FEINGOLD: Yes, of course, her brother, yes, yes. So she recognized him, of course, and I remember that, you know, he finally, they told us someone came, but we were still standing behind the, you know, the gate. And we saw him coming through the gate. So, very happy, we finally arrived. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: So then your uncle went with you from Ellis Island to New York.

FEINGOLD: Yes, he took us to New York but we didn't go to his home. He took us to the train that will take us to Cleveland.

LEVINE: Okay. What was that like?

FEINGOLD: So we were sitting there and waiting and this an experience to tell you the

kind of person my mother was. We were sitting on the station waiting for a train to take us to Cleveland. So a man came around and he was throwing packages, you know, we were all ne immigrants. They think that the immigrants are like, they're animals, they don't understand anything. So he was throwing at everybody packages and the he says, "Ten dollars, ten dollars." So my mother says, "Well, what is this? What do I have to pay for? What did you give me?" Nobody else questioned it but she did. And he says, "That's food." So she says, "I don't want your food. I don't need it. Take it back." (She laughs.) Yeah, that's an experience I had, I won't forget.

LEVINE: Yes, yes. Okay, so then you got on the train and you went to Cleveland.

FEINGOLD: Yes.

LEVINE: And was it a long trip? Do you remember anything about that trip?

FEINGOLD: No, I really don't. It must have been uneventful. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: Okay. And then your father, did you--?

FEINGOLD: And my father picked us up and we came to my father. My father had a nice house in Cleveland.

LEVINE: And do you remember the meeting with your father?

FEINGOLD: Oh yes. I hardly remembered my father, you know, I was four years old and this was about ten years later. Yeah, ten years later. I surely didn't remember him.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you thought when you saw him?

FEINGOLD: Well, what I thought, I was happy to see him. But then, it's funny, that when we came into his home; he had a nice private house in Cleveland. Now it's not so nice. I mean it's a section where now it's down-graded. But it was a very nice house, a two-family house. And he had tenants that lived downstairs and we were upstairs, six-room house. And--what was I going to say?-- I forgot.

LEVINE: That's okay. Well, now, was that a section where there were a lot of other immigrants, also, or not?

FEINGOLD: No, no, no.

LEVINE: No, and what was your father doing then? Was he teaching?

FEINGOLD: Oh, yes, my father had a very big job, a teaching job, in a yeshiva. Have you ever heard the word yeshiva?

LEVINE: Yeah, sure.

FEINGOLD: Yeah, and he was an expert on something called gimora. Gimora is an interpretation of the bible and he was an expert on that. So he had a very big job. He taught until the age of seventy-five. Usually you retire at sixty-five but they wanted him so they kept him until the age of seventy-five.

LEVINE: And then did your mother also teach when she got here or not?

FEINGOLD: No, my mother didn't teach. You know, she had a house to take care of and, but my father didn't make enough there so, I remember we took in a woman and her son. We gave them two rooms. It was a six-room house and we rented out like two rooms. And that's that.

LEVINE: I see. And then you went to school?

FEINGOLD: And then I went to school. At the age of fourteen I started the first grade. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: What was that like?

FEINGOLD: Well, I was with little children and my, you know, my name was--I remember this--was Brook. So I remember the teacher said to me, you know when I gave her the name, she says, "Brook, that's not a Russian name. Must have been Brokowsky." So I said, "No, Brook is a Russian name and it's a very famous name. Some very famous people had that name." And then I, it took me--

LEVINE: Who did, did you know, I mean, who were the, what did that name mean to you, having that name?

FEINGOLD: That name meant that we were a very nice family and some very important people have had that name. And it took, how long? After a few months I got into the fourth grade. I skipped right away because they saw that, you know, as soon as I learned some English, I knew all that stuff. I didn't have to study that. And it took me a very short time and I finished the grammar school. and I got into high school.

LEVINE: And then did you stay going to high school in Cleveland?

FEINGOLD: No, what happened was that I, we moved. My father and mother got divorced because they were separated so long. And, in fact, my father was seven years older than my mother and she was his pupil. So, but my mother has gone through so much during those years that she grew up and he couldn't accept her as a, he still felt that she was his pupil and his little girl. And she was very independent so they decided to get a divorce. And we moved to New York where my mother's brother's were. She had another brother there, too.

LEVINE: And where in New York did you go? Do you remember what part of town?

FEINGOLD: Where was it? Let's see (pause) oh, wait a minute, Brooklyn, I think. But we didn't live there very long. My mother moved away. She was looking to be independent. She wanted to get a job. So we moved away to the Bronx. And I began going to Morris High School. And then I went to City College. I graduated from City College.

LEVINE: And did your mother then find a job?

FEINGOLD: Oh, yes. She was working and she was supporting us because when they divorced, my father didn't support us anymore. She got, I think, a thousand dollars or something as a settlement (she laughs) because he didn't have any money. And she worked as a saleswoman. And she did whatever should get. She made a living for us.

LEVINE: And did you ever see your after that or not?

FEINGOLD: I did see my father afterwards, when my son, I was married and I had a five year old son and my childhood friends were in Cleveland. So one of them invited me to come to visit her, during vacation time. I don't remember when, summer I think. And I came to visit her and my father was in Cleveland, so I got in touch with him.

LEVINE: Was it good to see him after all that time?

FEINGOLD: Yes, of course, but he was married already and, you know, it wasn't the same. But he was very nice. In fact, I, we went out, you know, the group of girls that we were, that we knew each other from the childhood on, went to the country together. We had a reunion. So, I left my son with my father and he took care of him. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: Oh, nice.

FEINGOLD: It's interesting how you remember those things, isn't it?

LEVINE: When you went to City College, did you, was that something your mother was very proud that you were able to do?

FEINGOLD; Well, but I went to City College, I started it before I was married. But then when I got married, I thought it was, you know, such a responsibility, although I had a two and a half room apartment, that how can I go to college be a, you know, married woman conducting a household. So I stopped. And then I went back to college after my son was about five years old and I sent him to private school, so I went back to college.

LEVINE; And then did you, what did you study? Did you use--

FEINGOLD: Yes, I got a B.B.A., Bachelor of Business Administration.

LEVINE; And then did you work doing business work?

FEINGOLD: Yes, of course, I worked as a bookkeeper; by the way, I learned, within that curriculum, I had a year of accounting, so that's how I learned my bookkeeping and, when I started going to school, I became a bookkeeper. I used my accounting as bookkeeping.

LEVINE: Are there any ways that you are now or that your mother kept that were from the old country. I mean, even though you became Americanized and you were here, were there--

FEINGOLD: I doubt it. I doubt it. The only thing, I mean, my mother spoke English and we (pause), I mean, there isn't really very much difference. The only difference is that the Communist government was different as far as, you know, earning, a professional or whatever it is. You are, you know, not allowed to have your own business. Rate is communized. Otherwise, we got into American life very easily. The only thing is that I was not, I never accepted the status quo. I was a rebel. Even at the age of fifteen I used to stand on the street corners. And I remember the Sacco-Vanzetti case. Have you heard of it? It's not your-- But I was fighting against that case. You know about that case?

LEVINE: Yes, I do, but why don't you briefly say what it was that you--

FEINGOLD: Oh, well, the Sacco-Vanzetti case was, we had a very awful Secretary of State, I forgot his name, in those days. This was 19, it was before I was

married. I was married in 19-- Well, anyway, it was about, I came here in '23. This must have been a few years after I came here because I was about fifteen, maybe a year after. And, so it was around 1924. There was case of these two Italian men who were Communists and, you know, they were against the Communists. So, they, they made a case against them that they killed somebody. Actually the were absolutely innocent and everybody knew it. And the Secretary of State, Dulles, he was very much against Communists and the people who, the liberal people tried to appeal to him that he should renew the case in order to go over it again to show that they were, and he wouldn't do it. So people who were liberal, and I at the age of fifteen was very much against it, so I was talking to people (she laughs remembering). I remember we had a candy store. This was the way my mother tried to make a living. So she bought a candy store in, was that in the Bronx I guess, yes. And I used to talk to everybody. I was helping out after school in the candy store and I used to talk to people, you know, to do something about it. To propagandize or whatever, I don't know, it was what was available, what kind of defense was available at that time. It was so long ago. But I remember at my age, I was very liberal. In fact, I consider myself a Communist. And I was fighting against all the injustice. I already began fighting at an early age.

LEVINE: I guess that was like your mother (pause) in some ways.

FEINGOLD: Yes, that's right, yes.

LEVINE: And I guess you and your mother were probably Feminists before that term was used very widely.

FEINGOLD: That's right. I was a Feminist at a very young age. And now they're

talking about the Feminist Movement. To me, it is nothing new. We were Feminists a long time ago. (She laughs.)

LEVINE: Yes, yes, well, is there anything else that you can think of that has to do with your being born and living your early tears--

FEINGOLD: In Russia?

LEVINE: And then coming here. Is there anything that--

FEINGOLD: Well, as far as the life there is concerned, it had many dangers, even before the Communists came into power, it was even worse. During the time of the czar there were (pause) gangsters, attacks, you know, the Jews were being attacked all the time. There was a lot of anti-Semitism. And there were; I forgot (pause), Cossacks, there were the Cossacks. You heard of that?

LEVINE: Yes.

FEINGOLD: Yeah, and they used to come and attack, come to the villages and small towns and kill out. It just happened in our town they weren't there. We were lucky. But they used to come to villages and kill out a whole Jewish population.

LEVINE: So you lived in fear because you knew, even though it hadn't happened in your town.

FEINGOLD: Oh, yes, yes, of course, that's right. Oh, yes, we lived in fear all the time. And when my mother used to go on these trips to sell merchandise, sell

food, I was always in fear. I remember at a very early age, I was, I don't remember how old I was, and I was saying to friends of mine--you know, they asked me how I am--so, I looked at my grandfather, my mother wasn't there, my father wasn't there, so I said, "Look, how can I be. My father is all the way away in the United States and I don't know when I'll see him, and my mother's away someplace else in Russia and I don't know if she's alive, and I'm here alone with my grandfather." My grandmother died already. So, I mean, you had to go through such things. So life wasn't very pleasant.

LEVINE: No. So when you first got to the United States, was it a tremendous relief? Did you feel--

FEINGOLD: Well, I naturally, it was a relief, but I didn't live the life of luxury because my father wasn't making so much. So I remember after school I used to work in the department store and then (pause) my mother, education was so important that I had to take piano lessons. So she bought a piano on payments, way out, and I went to work at the school to help her pay it out (she laughs) and I did piano lessons.

LEVINE: Now, did you live better here once you, than you had?

FEINGOLD: Naturally, of course, yes, naturally, because life there, it was no life at all. We were, as I told you a few of the things, there's plenty more going on, but those are the things that I remember.

LEVINE: And I guess now your life is, in a way, very tied to the whole Russian, Jewish, Israel--

FEINGOLD: Well, I feel that the Jewish people should be outside, of being American, they have to support Israel because Israel is, after all, their country too. And we are Americans--I have dual citizenship. I lived in Israel for twenty years, I became an Israeli citizen. But, outside of that, we have this one little country and we have to hold on to it and be sure that it survives because there's plenty of anti-Semitism here in this country too. And, God forbid, something should happen to Israel, our lives here aren't going to be worth very much either. So that's true, a Jewish country and a Jewish hope for a better life all over the world.

LEVINE: Okay, I think that's a good note to end on.

FEINGOLD: Okay.

LEVINE: And I than you Rose Feingold.

FEINGOLD: I hope you (she laughs), I don't know how much Jewish you feel. I probably over-powered you with my feeling of being Jewish.

LEVINE: No, not at all. It's all very pertinent (pause)--

FEINGOLD: Yes.

LEVINE: Especially now. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here with Rose Feingold and I'm signing off now.

THE END