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LUISA ZICHLINSKY

BIRTH DATE: APRIL 14, 1923

INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 15, 1996 and MARCH 21, 1996

RUNNING TIME: 1:16:15

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

INTERVIEW LOCATION: NEW YORK, NEW YORK

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: ANN BOLAND 7/2003

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: DOUGLAS TARR, MAY 2006

ISRAEL, 1952

AGE 29

PASSAGE: not recorded

PORT: ELLIS ISLAND, N.Y.

RESIDENCES: TURKEY: TAKERDAG and ISTANBUL

ISRAEL: JERUSALEM

U.S.A.: BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

LEVINE: Today is March 15, 1996 and I'm here in the apartment of Luisa Zichlinsky who came here from Turkey in—

ZICHLJNSKY: From Israel.

LEVINE: Oh, from Israel. Was born in Turkey but came here from Israel—

ZICHLJNSKY: From Israel.

LEVINE: --in 1952 when she was 29 years old. Let's see, we're here in on East 86th Street today and I want to say that I'm looking forward to hearing all about how you happened to come here

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and the whole route of it. If you would start on the tape by saying your birth date and where in Turkey you were born.

ZICHLJNSKY: Yes. I was born in Turkey in Takerdag. It's a small town close to Istanbul and I grow up in Istanbul.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Can you spell the name of the small town Takerdag?

ZICHLJNSKY: Yeah, T-A-K-E-R-D-A-G.

LEVINE: And that little town is near Istanbul?

ZICHLJNSKY: Yes, and I grow up in Istanbul.

LEVINE: Okay, so when did you leave Takerdag?

ZICHLJNSKY: I was a little girl. When I was a little girl. I was maybe six years old or so.

LEVINE: Do you have any memories of that little town?

ZICHLJNSKY: Sure I have.

LEVINE: What do you think of when you remember it?

ZICHLJNSKY: I was born there and we had a beautiful home out front of the ocean and from our window we used to see the boats come in from Istanbul. And we had gardens and we went to school, to Turkish school there and we were five children.

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LEVINE: Now what did your father do?

ZICHLJNSKY: My father has a fabric store, manufacturers.

LEVINE: Even when you were a little girl at six years old?

ZICHLJNSKY: Little girl, yes, fabric store, but it is very clear to me what happened to the whole market burned over-night. My father's store and a lot of stores and we used to see from our house, it was a tall house, the flames.

LEVINE: This was when, this was—

ZICHLJNSKY: When I was a little girl in Takerdag.

LEVINE: Now, what is your father's name?

ZICHLJNSKY: Moses.

LEVINE: And it was De Funes[?]?

ZICHLJNSKY: De Funes[?].

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

ZICHLJNSKY: Cimbul. C-I-M-B-U-L. Cimbul was my mother's name.

LEVINE: And did you have any sense of why did that fire happen?
What was happening?

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ZICHLJNSKY: It was an accident. Wasn't a [?] fire. It was a very big tragedy.

LEVINE: So it sounds—

ZICHLJNSKY: So therefore the business went off, we had to move so we went to Istanbul.

LEVINE: I see. Well, it sounds as though you were very comfortable as a family.

ZICHLJNSKY: Very good. We were five children, we grow up together, loving family.

LEVINE: And can you name your sisters and brothers and where you are in the birth order?

ZICHLJNSKY: My, the oldest brother's name is David, was David, is passed away in Israel, and my, the second one was Clare, my sister, and the third one was Regine, my other sister and [little?] Lizette and Shlomo. Shlomo was another brother. Unfortunately I lost everybody in Israel except I have a sister and a lot of nieces and nephews in Israel.

LEVINE: That's Clare, that's the one that—

ZICHLJNSKY: Clare passed away.

LEVINE: Oh Clare passed away.

ZICHLJNSKY: Regine is alive.

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LEVINE: Regine. Okay, well, can you describe, now you say you went to Turkish school, were there Jewish schools, was there a Jewish population—

ZICHLJNSKY: Very big population of Jewish, and then when Israel needed us, we all start to go to Israel. At first my brother went, the younger brother with a group, and he got hurt in the [war?] which he used to limp with a foot. And being that he was there and then [immigration?] time came, we all went to Israel. A lot of Jewish people went to Israel to help and we were staying at the beginning in tents, as immigrants. Immigrant camps which the English had left Israel and left the army camps, the army camps became immigrant camps. So at night I was going to learn with the little girls, a little [?], Hebrew, and in the daytime I was a kindergarten teacher. Daytime, with all the immigrant children because I spoke the languages to [register?] the children because they, once they were born in Israel knew only Hebrew and I knew five languages (laughs).

LEVINE: Now when did you, you left for Istanbul when you were six years old and how long did you stay in Istanbul before you went—?

ZICHLJNSKY: -'til 1949.

LEVINE: Ah ha.

ZICHLJNSKY: 1949 we went, I went to Israel.

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LEVINE: I see. Well, let's, before we talk more about Israel, let's talk about life in Istanbul when you were growing up.

ZICHLJNSKY: We were growing up, it was a little bit, a fear from the Turks, the Jewish people, the Greeks also they were, they had fear from the Turks. And we got very, we were friends with the Greeks and there were lot of Armenians, therefore we used to talk few languages. And we had a teacher who taught us French, came to the house and taught us private French. Well I had lost my father when I was very young.

LEVINE: How old were you?

ZICHLJNSKY: I was either, probably ten years old. I was very young when I lost my father and my mother brought the five children up by herself.

LEVINE: How did you get along after your father's business burned?

ZICHLJNSKY: We all work, we all went to work, I tutored children at the school in Turkish and my sister Clare was a they call it broderie, she used to make embroidery, she made a living with that.

LEVINE: Is that a Turkish word, broderie?

ZICHLJNSKY: Broderie is French word.

LEVINE: French.

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ZICHLINSKY: Yes. Embroidery in English. So my sister Regine became manicurist, she make the manicure. My two brothers were in shoes, they used to make shoes. Not the repair shoes, new shoes. My older brother used to cut the top of the shoes and my other brother helped him, the two of them, at the same time we were going to school.

LEVINE: You mean, after, when your father died and you were ten, you were still going to school?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes.

LEVINE: And then, like, how did your mother support everybody up until they were able to work?

ZICHLINSKY: It was no help from the government. We were right away working. We all were making a little money, we didn't live as a, before we came to Istanbul we live like the wealthy people and when we came we left everything we came to, we didn't, we weren't wealthy. So whatever we made we support ourselves and support my mother because with five children she had a lot of work in the house to do. In Takerdag when we were younger she had two maids to take care of the children to take care of the laundry and everything, we didn't have washing machines that time.

LEVINE: So did your father ever start another business once the family moved to Istanbul?

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ZICHLINSKY: Yes he did. But it was, he used to go to the people's houses and sell fabrics, yes, this is what he did. But he had a heart attack and died.

LEVINE: So then, even though you were young you were working as well as going to school.

ZICHLINSKY: Very young. I had a, I went with a good recommendation letter from Istanbul to Israel because I was always with children and then I went to, I learned to sew, I took sewing lessons and I used to sew also. Make dresses, make.

LEVINE: You've lived now in several places—

ZICHLINSKY: Yes.

LEVINE: How do you, how was living in Istanbul compared with other places you've been?

ZICHLINSKY: It was comfortable for the wealthy people, put it this way. And we had the fear of not being late out. My mother won't let us go out late, we have to be home a certain time. And one of my sisters got married there, Regine got married and my brother David got married in Turkey but we went, we were single, Clare and I and Shlomo were singles when we were in Israel. Shlomo went as a teenager, the young one, got married in Israel but we were singles when we went.

LEVINE: What was the fear of the Turks, what was it that you feared could happen?

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ZICHLINSKY: It can happen in any place but we were afraid, we were young, we were afraid they may hit us. We used to hear on the radio, we used to read on the paper that something happened, so it was a fear like any place else.

LEVINE: So, what kind of a school did you go to in Istanbul?

ZICHLINSKY: Turkish school.

LEVINE: Always Turkish school?

ZICHLINSKY: Turkish school.

LEVINE: Were the Jewish people living there observant of the religion?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes. Yes. We went to school. We fast when it was to be fast and we, all the holidays, we kept our religion, and then the Turks didn't like that we used to say that we were born in Turkey but we were Jewish. And another thing, I was, we weren't Turkish citizen. That's important. We were Spanish citizen. My family was Spanish citizens, we were born there. The reason is, the, from the great, great, great fathers that came from Spain remained the, we are from that people, and remained the citizenship and so my grandfather didn't want to change the citizenship, my father didn't want to change the citizenship, it was optional, if you didn't want to change you don't change. So we were Spanish citizen and the other thing is that the army was very rough in Turkey so my brothers, my father didn't go to the army.

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- LEVINE: How did they get out of it?
- ZICHLINSKY: Because only the Turk citizen goes to the army. If you are Turkish citizen you go to the army, not if you are not.
- LEVINE: Were you friendly with Turkish people?
- ZICHLINSKY: Very friendly. I worked for the Turkish people. I had the children from the Turkish people.
- LEVINE: And how were the Greeks? Were the Greeks sort of on a par with the Jewish people as well as—
- ZICHLINSKY: They're very good friends. There is, the Jewish people in Turkey, you won't even know they are not Greek, that's how good Greek they speak. They speak fluent Greek, my mother used to speak Armenian, because she grew up with Armenians, and she used to speak Armenian. There are a lot of Armenians in there, Turkey.
- LEVINE: Yes, so were you aware of, well of course the Armenian Genocide would have been before you were born. Is that--?
- ZICHLINSKY: Yes. They remain there. They remain in there.
- LEVINE: Okay, how about pleasure, when you lived in Istanbul, can you remember what people did to have a good time or what kinds of entertainment?
- ZICHLINSKY: Yes, they had night clubs. We went dancing, to, we went to fairs and shows and we went to the movies, of course it was

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in English and we have to read the titles, it was very funny, it was very, very cleverly done, Laurel and Hardy picture in Turkish, very amusing. And we used to walk, take walks. On Sunday morning we used to get dressed and we used to take walks because everything is closed and we used to see people coming from churches, there's a lot of Greeks, lot of Catholics, lot of, so this is what, and we kept company among ourselves, my sister and I went for a walk, my mother took me, mostly I was the youngest, I went with my mother to the movies.

LEVINE: Now when you went like when you—

(Interruption: phone rings)

ZICHLINSKY: Oh.

LEVINE: We're gonna pause. Just leave it.

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming now after a telephone call. I was asking you about when you had, when you socialized and had fun and you did things for entertainment. Were you mostly keeping with yourself, like the Jewish people in one group, the Greek people in another group, the Turks another group, or not?

ZICHLINSKY: Mostly, if we had a party in the house for instance, the Jewish people. With the Jewish. And sometimes we used to invite the Greeks and in we had, my brother had nice friends, Turkish friends. If they invite us, we went to them

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too. They weren't bad, they were good people. We liked each other.

LEVINE: But as far as the laws or as far as the treatment that you got being in Turkey but not Turkish citizens, was there any difference there?

ZICHLINSKY: My brothers had a very big problem. Not being Turkish citizen and working. They had to pay certain money, that you, if not Jewish, Turkish citizen you can not have good business. But they still didn't change the citizenship. We went to Israel with a Spanish passport.

LEVINE: Now you mentioned earlier that they needed you in Israel. Is that why the family went to Israel when they did?

ZICHLINSKY: First of all my brother was living in Israel already. He was married, had two babies, and we wanted to go to Israel because again, it was some kind of anti-Semitism in Turkey, we wanted to be free. And there it was, we had more freedom in Israel.

LEVINE: And so do you remember leaving Istanbul?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, sure. That's something.

LEVINE: What was that like?

ZICHLINSKY: We were in the boat. The name of the boat was Anna Maria[?]. And it was a lot of people on the pier saying good-bye to us because the boat stayed by the pier the whole

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Saturday, the whole day. And it was very difficult in the boat, very crowded it was like, looked like an army boat with few beds one on top of another. And I said how am I gonna sleep like this down below. I went upstairs, higher, and I saw a doctor. I said would you like me to help you with the patients. If somebody gets hurt I can give you a hand with ... Yes, he said next to my room is another room, you can take that room. And when I was down below there was a couple with two babies. They were crying, the husband and wife, this is the way we're gonna travel it was a very, because it was immigration. I said to the doctor I saw is a couple of beds, I have family downstairs, can I bring them? "Bring them." And those people will never forget in their lives the favor that I did. And I was bringing the patients to the doctor, bandage or, and baby was born in the doctor, in the boat, they put the name Anna Maria[?] because it was born there. And we took from one of the beds a drawer, this was the crib for the baby. It was such a good experience, and I was young, so it was very big experience traveling from Turkey to Israel.

LEVINE: When you left Turkey and your family left Turkey, did you bring a lot of things with you, take a lot of things with you to Israel?

ZICHLINSKY: Well, I, in Turkey, was supposed to get a trousseau and whatever I had and I went, I bought a new quilt, a new blanket we took luggage and everything was in the boat. When we came there everything was one on top of the other where we land in Israel. And when we came to Israel from the boat and the pier, they take you under a tent and they

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put you [?] they disinfect you, and then they put you in a immigrant camp and all the luggage was one on top of another. You have to go and choose your own and there also, it was tents and it was barracks, so I found an empty barrack. I brought that family with the two children and they used to write to Istanbul to say that young girl save our lives.

LEVINE: So, so, you really, could you use your things, I mean, once you got there you were in tents, were you able to unpack your things and use them?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, sure, the tents, they gave us beds in the tents, they took care of us very nice, [?], but I wrote a letter to my mother who wasn't there yet. "Whatever you do, don't come." My mother and my older sister were in Turkey yet when I went. I went by myself. "Because we are in tents." But my mother wanted to be with the family and my sister came, my sister find right away a job, when I came to Haifa, when she come to Haifa. But my brother, my older brother, my younger brother, was from the army and went many years before us. But my older brother was before me in another tent, so I was with them. My brother and his wife and their three little girls, the younger one, she was not nursing.

LEVINE: And what were some of your first impressions of Israel?

ZICHLINSKY: It was very, we were in the boat and we were coming down and I thought that I want to see my brother there in the pier but my brother was working and was, he had treatments to his foot. The impression was that, very good feeling, like a

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freedom, very good feeling, and but it was a little depressing because we didn't have a house to live and we didn't have food. We had to go to the kitchen and be on line and take whatever they give us so then my mother came and she start to do something with flour, bake. But it was hard for my mother in the tent also. After that they gave us little houses to live, we move from there and with all that experience in Israel, with all that and Israel doesn't snow so often. After, every few years they have a little snow, in Jerusalem. That year that we were in the tents it snowed and some of the tents collapsed from the heaviness of the snow. This is very, and I was working with the children. They are, we were near a town that they used to make the wines and the fabric of wines and we took the children with the little horse, donkeys and carriage. We took the children from the families and we brought them to the families who have houses in the little towns and they stayed there, the children, until everything was fixed in the camp. When we went to pick them up to bring them to the mothers, the children didn't want to come. They find [?] and they find toys and they were very comfortable so that experience also we had. (Laughs). That's when we arrive in the beginning.

LEVINE: Now how many years were you in Israel before you came—

ZICHLINSKY: About four years.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you think of that as one sort of phase or chapter in your life?

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ZICHLINSKY: Of course, I was in the army, in the reserve. Yes I registered. You registered at the army and I had a job that was about, almost like the army because I was in the immigrants' camp working with children, and when we had rainstorm or something, they used to send a soldier, a girl soldier to help us. So I was, besides my mother was religious so I was a reserve I wasn't, I had to go once a month and say I'm here because they take the reserves when they need it very badly and I was working with the children in immigrant camps, this was fine.

LEVINE: Do you think your sense of identity as a Jewish person changed as a result of living in Israel and being a part of this country?

ZICHLINSKY: No it was the same thing, we still went to shul [school] there. We still fast when it was to be fast. We still celebrate the holidays. It is very nice to see the Yemenites, are colorful people. They celebrate differently you know from all over. The immigrants they got together there, each one has different ideas, different type of food, cooking, different clothes, it was very interesting. It is.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, what made you decide to come to the United States?

ZICHLINSKY: I had an aunt here. My mother had a sister and she wrote such a letters that was very touching. She wrote, they were lost the two sisters for many years. They didn't know each other's telephone. I mean, it was not telephone, the addresses. They were lost and when we went to Israel my

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brother was working in the government, through the government, find the sister in America, in the United States. And it was very glorious thing that they found each other. The way she put it I'll never forget it in the letter and they used to write different kind of language, like the, it looked like the Arabic, the old Turkish.

LEVINE: Your mother and her sister wrote that.

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, the old Turkish. It look like Arabic and but my mother went to, when we came three o'clock in Turkey from school, she went to learn the modern Turkish. So she says please send me a branch of your tree. My mother wrote to her that our own Mary in Israel all I have is Lizette, that she, that I work and I live with my mother and I take care of her and I support her, send her I want to see a branch of your tree, This is the way she put it and it took me very long time to get a visa. Very long. They don't give a visa so easy, you have to [go and plea your return?], and I used to go almost everyday after kindergarten--I was working kindergarten--after kindergarten to the consulate with a different letter, a recommendation that I am going to come back. I was working in the kindergarten, I have a mother whom I take care. It was unbelievable that they couldn't give me a visa. One year it took me and then I was going to Berlitz to learn English. I didn't know a word of English. And when I went to Israel I didn't know a word of Hebrew. So.

LEVINE: So you had to have people write letters saying that you would come back?

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ZICHLINSKY: Since from here, the cousins they sent affidavits. They said that my aunt was very sick. She wants to see me which was the truth and I met my husbands parents in Israel. They live not far from us, I met them, they also give a recommendation letter because they were business people there. They had factory with partners and—

LEVINE: This was like a character reference that you would come back—

ZICHLINSKY: Right, yes, that I am an honest person, that I have a job in Israel, that I want to come. It was very, very difficult to get a visa and when I used to go again to beg them to give me a visa they used to laugh at me. And one day I was going to Tel Aviv, in Israel you could stop a car and take you wherever you going, at that time there was no fear. It was an ambassador from Spain that was leaving Israel with the children and the wife and he took me and where are you going he said. Very nice, ambassador. I am going to get, to try to get a visit for the United States and it's impossible.

(End of Side One)

And what do you do? I take care of children, I said they're in kindergarten. It will be nice for you to teach my children a little bit of Hebrew or so. It was exactly one year from the day I start to get the visa. And I went there again. The secretary and the ambassador from America, the United States, are laughing, she came again. I said look, my aunt is very sick, I want to see my aunt and I will return. And the phone rang, the ambassador. The ambassador told them

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that she's an honest girl, let her go and she'll come. I got the visa. It was a miracle.

LEVINE: I think we're gonna pause here so I can put the money in the meter and we'll resume.

ZICHLINSKY: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming now, after break. So once you got the visa, then—

ZICHLINSKY: Then I was very happy. Then I have to go to the agent. First of all I ran home very happy to my mother, hug her and kiss her, I said I'm going to your sister. And they were ready to receive me, in the United States, my cousins and my aunt and I went to the agent to get a ticket. The American, the agent was American ticket that I want to get. I had made a passport and in Israel I changed my nationality from Spanish citizen to Israeli citizen. And I went to get a ticket. They told me that you going to the United States, you cannot buy ticket with Israeli money. So I had to find a tourist that I had come near my house and I could change with her, with that person, the money to get the ticket with the American money, with dollars. We weren't allowed to have dollars come and only ten dollars when we came. So then I have to get a release from the army. I went to the army. They gave me a paper of a release that I'm going. And it took a little time till all the procedure was done. By the time I was ready to come, my aunt passed away! Because it took a year till I got that visa and they don't believe me that my aunt is a sick person, she has heart problem and she wants to see me I

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never, my aunt passed away. So but my cousins were willing to take me in their house.

LEVINE: So do you, when you left for the United States you were feeling that you were coming for a short time or how long did you think—

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, I figure I'll come, I come for three months, and the visa was for three months and then I can go back. At the same time, my husband that I didn't know was gonna be my husband then, came to see the parents were in Israel because his sister used to live in Israel and he came to see the family in Israel and then he left. The day that he was leaving, I had a cousin of mine, my cousin that came to Israel they knew each other, my husband flew from Israel and had to give the luggage to that girl, my family. I went to Haifa, to the pier and her name was Shirley, he gave the, it was with his aunt, he gave a luggage, this is when I met him, this is when I met him when he was, I have a picture, a pier in Haifa pier. But a couple of days after he left, it was nothing that we, I wasn't, I didn't come to get married, put it this way, but I came to see my family. But he was corresponding with me that year. We correspond like friends—

LEVINE: This is before you met, you were corresponding?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, we were corresponding, but nothing kind of serious, we used to write the Hebrew, like the letters of English, English letters. But it wasn't anything serious, so when I came by boat it was other people there that they know, that his family

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knew, they were with me. It was an older couple, very very wealthy. They had a few houses in Israel, and they came to see the nieces and nephews here and a young girl. And we are coming now from the boat to the United States and on the pier the mother and the son is waiting for the luggage that my cousin had brought for them, put it in the boat. And when I'm coming up, my husband to be, Elliot, [?], said why are you coming up from the boat with the policeman, what did you do? Where is the policeman I said to myself. Behind me was a policeman escorting. I wasn't familiar with the policeman in the United States. I didn't know how they looked, I didn't even know, that, I was so happy that I am in the United States after a year of struggling, I didn't realize that it was a guard next to me. I said I don't know. And he approached him and asked him, "Oh," he said, "they're gonna go to Ellis Island," and the wealthy couple Elba, was with me. I wasn't alone, it was a few, they put us on the bus and they took us to Ellis Island. And we're seeing New York from the bus window.

LEVINE: Before you talk about Ellis Island, how about the trip over. What was, what kind of boat was, I mean what were the accommodations on the boat, what kind of a passage was that for you?

ZICHLINSKY: It was very beautiful boat, luxury, with theaters, with good food, but the water was very rough, people were getting sick in that boat, because I came in November, before Thanksgiving. And the excitement in the boat also was very interesting. They choose the new President when we were in the boat. It was just when they named who will be the

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new President of the United States, it was President Ford, no, no, it wasn't Ford, no.

LEVINE: Eisenhower.

ZICHLINSKY: Eisenhower.

LEVINE: Eisenhower.

ZICHLINSKY: Eisenhower, yes, they all applaud, they all start to sing because Eisenhower was the new President.

LEVINE: Now, were these people, were a lot of the people United States citizens who happen to be coming across?

ZICHLINSKY: No, the Israelis, from Israel. They coming to visit Isre--, the families.

LEVINE: I see.

ZICHLINSKY: And the young girl that was with me, I mean I'm saying that it was with me, but we were in the same room, was a student. They all didn't know why we are going to Ellis Island by the boat, the party, the excitement, it was President Roosevelt finishing.

LEVINE: Did you know anything about the U.S. Presidents at that point—

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ZICHLINSKY: Sure I know. We know about the bridges when they were built, that the one was building one of the bridges in the middle of building died and then the son took over, father, the father died, the son took over, this I know from my mother used to tell us. You know when we were little. We didn't have television, we used to listen to my mother when she talked to us when she told stories.

LEVINE: Can you think of any other stories about the United States that you were told before you ever came here, that would have shaped some of your ideas?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes. Yes. Again, my mother knew too much (laughing). Yes, we knew about the cowboys, and she says, when I came to America, don't go to where the mountains where the cowboys are because they can carry guns. This is dangerous, she was telling me. Yes we knew about the, we knew about Colorado, because we knew the world, we knew the town of Colorado. So we knew a lot of things, we used to hear, and we saw in the movies.

LEVINE: So, a lot of people that came on your ship were also told that they were going to Ellis Island?

ZICHLINSKY: Not so many, a few people. They didn't tell us. They didn't tell us where we going, I didn't know where I was going. Just escort us.

LEVINE: So why did it turn out that you had to go there?

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ZICHLINSKY: We didn't know, when we were there, my cousins, I was very much impressed, the first thing I was impressed in Ellis Island, the telephone book. I never saw such a thick telephone book, and this is the first thing I wanted to find because I wanted to call my cousin and I find their number, Friedman was the name, and I call her, I can't believe about that book. So I said, "We are in Ellis Island." She says, "Don't worry, you will come out." She gave me patience. "I'll call you again tomorrow." And the next day, I spoke again, I spoke again, "Are you nervous, are you depressed?" I said, "Why should I be, I am having a wonderful time!" They were laughing because this girl doesn't have fear. "What are you doing there?" I said there are some Japanese young boy and I was young, we playing ping pong to spend the time and then what is in the big tables there are huge very big puzzles. Every once in a while we put a few pieces. The food is delicious. At the time we didn't have so much meat in Israel, it was shortage of meat, and I said, today they served veal cutlets. I remember my first meal, veal cutlets. They were so delicious. The food is very good. I am not bored. I am just giving patience the girl sleeping with me, my room was upstairs. Now it's an office, Ellis Island, they make it an office. It was upstairs. My luggage went straight to the cousin's house, the address was there, and the girl is crying and I am giving her patience. I said why are you crying, we are gonna go out soon from here and the old people, they got, they were very upset. The older couple and they were crying and also, but they went before me, out. Cause one was a student was a little easier and the others they show how wealthy they are in Israel [?]. They wanted to make sure and why was a week there and one day my

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cousin came to visit me and from [Hamas—phonetically correct, but probably intended to be HIAS.] a Jewish organization. A woman was coming every day to visit me, what a wonderful feeling. She used to ask me, “Do you need any money, your cousin sent you ten dollars, would you like to ...” “No,” I said, “I don’t need any.” They give us everything here, it’s so beautiful here, and we used to go outside the building, walk around the fence and we used to see New York from far but we can’t get in. (Laughing). It was the lights at night we used to see, it was very entertaining to be there, I wasn’t complaining but when it came a week I want to get out. Until the family, the last day, they took me in a small room, there is a court, a courtroom, there is a judge and they have a lawyer and they ask me all kinds of questions.

LEVINE: Do you remember them?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes. Why did you come here? And I told them, my aunt called me to come and I came to see my aunt, unfortunately my aunt passed away so I’m going to the daughters, the cousins. That’s why I came, and I wanted to see America, I wanted to see United States. And all the money that I work, I saved for that [vacation?]. And the other questions was what kind of work you were doing in Israel. Finally they put a bond. If they didn’t put a bond I wasn’t gonna come out. They put a bond.

LEVINE: Who did that?

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ZICHLINSKY: The family, five hundred dollars bond, so, they showed the bankbook to them. They put a bond and then they were able to release me from there. But it was a man there from Russia that was for years there and never went out. An older man.

LEVINE: Did you know his story, what was happening with him?

ZICHLINSKY: Because he was communist, they didn't let him go. But that was his story, his. But when I went out to Ellis Island it's very different, much different. Well I saw what happened, people they came as immigrants, how there the luggages are there and how upstairs my room became office and was locked and next to my room it was few beds that people came in abundance, too many at a time, at the beginning of immigration. They had to put them like this, too many people in the same room but I was with the young girl alone, one bed each and the windows were high on the room. Very high. You cannot see the outside. But then—

LEVINE: When you were finally released, were your cousins there, were they in the courtroom?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, and it was an uncle, a far relative, somebody that we know and he came also, that man. And my cousin, the one I was gonna stay with, she was nine months pregnant and she couldn't have come. She wasn't feeling good and that man came and pick me up from Ellis Island and other experience, the train, rush hour, I can't believe. We were just like sardines, one to another (*slapping hands together*). And I said, if I'm going to stay in the United States, and I'm

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going to work and travel every day from Brooklyn to New York, I'm not gonna stay here. I had very bad experience, my first, my first train ride because there in Israel I could have walked to from my house to the kindergarten I walked. So this was my experience and when I came to my cousins they were all waiting for me and one of the cousins said you went through a lot, I'm gonna take you out tonight with his wife. The wife was my first cousin, all the cousins were there and they took me to Coney Island.

LEVINE: Well, how did you—

ZICHLINSKY: The first, I liked it so much. I said they have in Israel something like this they call Luna Park. So they took me to Coney Island and I should be happy, but I wasn't so happy on Ellis Island. They were fantastic, they took care of us, and another thing in Ellis Island that I'll don't forget is the first time I saw in my life television. (Laughing). I never had seen before television and in Ellis Island, I even remember the first program that I saw, it was the mailman, "I'm the mailman (*singing*)," they used to deliver mail for the children and Walter Cronkite, the news. I remember him talking about the news because I learned the English I tried to understand and that was very good experience, I never saw before television. It was on Ellis Island the first time I saw.

LEVINE: Well now, then did you re-meet your husband here? Did you see—

ZICHLINSKY: No, I met him in Israel actually, but it was a coincidence that one of my family was going by boat. He came to give the

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luggage to her and I met them in Haifa in the pier and that was it and then I saw him a couple of more times in Tel Aviv and that was it.

LEVINE: Did you see him here then?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes. I saw him here in the pier that he came to, he wanted to receive the old couple that was in the boat with me, they were friends with his mother and father. They came to receive them too. They were on the pier one day, the mother and the son. Then I saw him a couple of times here and I went my way. I went to school to learn evening classes and I was always with my cousins, my cousins, if I go out I went with my cousins. I took care of the baby that was born. I was in the same house so then for some reason one night he called. The father had bought him a car and he wanted to show it to me. It was close for me to come back. I had my reservation in the boat. I took two ways ticket. They won't let me out from Israel if I don't have two ways ticket. It wasn't that I came to marry him, it was coincidence. It was close to the year and it happened that he wanted to marry me, he wanted to let me go back.

LEVINE: Did you feel that you wanted to stay here by then?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, because I got attached to my cousins and my mother say if you have to stay, stay. But I missed very much my mother, but my mother had four more children there and grandchildren. That my other, my sister Clare lived next door to her, to her and the other sister was still in Turkey, Regine, with her husband and the children. They came after

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many years, they were in Israel. But, I miss, it took me a long time to get used to, I missed the family.

LEVINE: So what is your husband's name?

ZICHLINSKY: Elliot.

LEVINE: And you had children?

ZICHLINSKY: Two children.

LEVINE: And their names?

ZICHLINSKY: Murray. The old one is Murray and the young one is Marlene. Marlene is married to [?], her husband's name is [?], and I have a grandson, brand new grandson, I love him. His name is [Alger?].

LEVINE: [A-L-G-E-R?].

ZICHLINSKY: Yes.

LEVINE: Well, how about, how do you think of yourself now, do you think of yourself as American primarily or how do you think of yourself as far as nationality?

ZICHLINSKY: Jewish.

LEVINE: Jewish, ah ha.

ZICHLINSKY: And I am proud of it, to be Jewish.

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LEVINE: What do you think would you say—

ZICHLINSKY: But American, nobody knows until they come from another country how good it is to be in America! How wonderful it is! You have to have all those experience to see how in other countries people suffer, poverty, lack of speech. You cannot talk free until you go through those countries, you can believe what important is this country, America. It's the freedom, too much freedom (laughing), the freedom of speech, the freedom of being in the United States, the wealth, everything. Look what I went through, all the poverty and everything, in both countries and I come here and I start to help. I became volunteer to help whoever can not afford. To go to the old age home, I have a certificate I go to the senior citizen home to help. I wanted to help the people who could not afford and I became, I didn't work at all for money. I became volunteer in shul (school), I became volunteer wherever they call me because I know the value of not having.

LEVINE: Where did you settle when you married? Where did you settle here?

ZICHLINSKY: My husband was working in Continental Grain Company and he was new. He finished NYU and Business Administration and took a job in Continental Grain Company and I settle in his mother's house, where he was living with his parents and I live with his parents for four years.

LEVINE: In Manhattan or—

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- ZICHLINSKY: In Brooklyn. In Brooklyn. I lived with them till I had a son and I didn't have room and we move when my son Murray was a year old.
- LEVINE: And was your husband also coming from Israel when he came to this country?
- ZICHLINSKY: He was [?] born in the United States.
- LEVINE: Oh.
- ZICHLINSKY: Yes. He was born here.
- LEVINE: What do you feel proud of when you look back on your life, what makes you feel satisfied?
- ZICHLINSKY: I am satisfied what I have now, that I didn't have then. I'm very proud of being an American citizen then I became an American citizen. I went to school, I study and with witness I give my test and I became an American citizen, and I come when I go traveling that I have to show passport. I come with my head up that I don't have to be on line for not being an American citizen, [?], because we went to Turkey for our twenty-fifth anniversary with my husband to show him, but it's unbelievable how good people in America have than the others cannot have in the other countries. It's a very difficult life in other countries.
- LEVINE: Okay, is there anything else that you can think of maybe that we haven't mentioned just of starting out in Turkey and then

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going to Israel and then ending up here and living out really, most of your life here?

ZICHLINSKY: My good life was the love of my husband with me and the freedom that he showed me and to bring up my children. They're grown up, then they move (laughing). They went to college, my two children went to college and thank God we can afford to travel and see them and they gonna come for the holidays. But one thing in Europe, the family are more close, they are close to each others, they live more closer, but here they grow up most of them and go far away. That I miss very much. This is the only thing I regret. That my children are far away from me.

LEVINE: Aside from that, how is your life at this stage?

ZICHLINSKY: Fantastic, very good. We go to shows. We see practically every show, because we go with a group, with a lowered price and we travel and I couldn't of dream of doing this in Europe or in Asia.

LEVINE: We are gonna stop here. I want to thank you very much--

ZICHLINSKY: I felt like crying.

LEVINE: (laughing) --for a wonderful story, thank you. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I've been speaking with—

ZICHLINSKY: And God Bless America!

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LEVINE: Luisa Zichlinsky and today is March 15, 1996 and ah at the time of this interview your age is [69?]

ZICHLINSKY: [69.] [Actual age is 72, based on date of birth of April 14, 1923.]

LEVINE: Okay, signing off.

Beginning Tape 2

LEVINE: Okay, today, excuse me, today is March 21, 1996 and this is a return visit to Luisa Zichlinsky who came here, well, was born in Turkey and raised in Turkey but came to the United States via Israel. There were some things that we neglected to talk about, about your life on the first tape so that's why I'm back again. And let's say at the beginning you were saying how people who were not born here can appreciate this country perhaps more than those who were.

ZICHLINSKY: Because it's a wonderful country. We have everything we want in this country.

LEVINE: Okay, and let's go back to, you said you had met your husband, then you married in this country?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, I went, I, when I came, the United States, when it was time for me to go back which I had my reservation in the boat and my return ticket, the original ticket that I came with, the government won't keep me here even though that I have married Elliot. I was married. And I had to go exactly when it was the date of the year. My visa was for three months but

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I was allowed to make every three months an extension. We pay ten dollars and we make another extension, till the year, a year, a day after the year that I was in the United States, I wasn't allowed to be here so we have to follow the rules with the same passport and same ticket. I went to the boat and I returned to Israel and while I was in Israel, my husband which I was newly-wed, did all the preparations, all the paper work to bring me back and it took three and a half months. All the work that he did here to return me to the United States and my mother was of course worrying, thinking maybe I will not go back. I said look Ma, my name changed, I used to tell her, I will go back. And I'm sorry if I get a little bit emotional when I talk about that because my mother is not alive anymore (crying).

LEVINE: Okay, why don't you say your husband's name?

ZICHLINSKY: My husband's name is Elliot Zichlinsky and that's the best thing happened to me in my life that I marry Elliot. He was very good to me, to do everything possible to make me comfortable and learn the language.

LEVINE: He helped you learn it?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, I went to [Erasmus ?] an evening school in Brooklyn to learn the language and Elliot helped me a lot.

LEVINE: And Elliot himself had come to this country or he was born—

ZICHLINSKY: He was born in the United States, Brooklyn.

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LEVINE: Okay, and so, when you came back from Israel after the three and a half months, where did you settle?

(Phone rings)

ZICHLINSKY: Oh, excuse me.

LEVINE: We're pausing.

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming now after a telephone call. Where were you settling then, after you came back from Israel the three and a half months later?

ZICHLINSKY: In Brooklyn, in my husband's parents', my in-laws' house. And I lived there as a married couple for four years, until I had a child and my son Murray was a year old. Then we move to an apartment.

LEVINE: And where was that, where was the house?

ZICHLINSKY: In Brooklyn on Avenue U.

LEVINE: Avenue U? Uh-huh, uh-huh.

ZICHLINSKY: In Brooklyn.

LEVINE: And then where did you go from there?

ZICHLINSKY: From there we took a [?], an apartment to have a child's room and we live there. After two years I had Marlene, my

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daughter, and then we moved to another apartment in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: So you more or less stayed in Brooklyn?

ZICHLINSKY: In Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh, and was there a community of people who had come either from Turkey or from Israel or just a Jewish community that you related to in Brooklyn?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, I was mailing a package to Israel, which I always did to the family, and I met a person who was a member on Sephardic shul [school]. And I said that I missed my family in Israel and I would like to bring it up to children. I am very, I'm occupied with this, I would like to meet some Sephardic people, that they speak my language and they came from where I come from. No problem. They took me to the shul and I became right away a member, which Temple [Torah?] Israel, which I was very active and I was very happy we practically helped build the [school?]. I was active in the [bazaar?]. I was a member who used to rent a bus for Atlantic City and—

LEVINE: Were a number of the people connected with that shul? Were they also people who have immigrated to this country?

ZICHLINSKY: The parents, the younger people were born in the United States, some of the parents and grandparents did come from Turkey.

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- LEVINE: And where is that shul located?
- ZICHLINSKY: In Brighton Beach.
- LEVINE: In Brighton Beach, oh. And was there a big ethnic mix in Brighton Beach? Were there lots of people from different places when you were there?
- ZICHLINSKY: Not at that time, now it is, now it's a lot of Russians in Brighton Beach, very nice people.
- LEVINE: Okay. Well then, let's see, we also neglected to talk about on the tape last time how your life has evolved and what you have been doing, volunteer work, charity work, could you talk about that?
- ZICHLINSKY: Yes, because I'm not very active in the temple, but I do go to the home to the Sephardic home. I'm a member there, too, and I took a hobby. I belong in the [Empire?] Quilters group. They call us the [Empire?] Quilters and I quilt. I make some toys for Bellevue Hospital and Mount Sinai and sometimes in my spare time I make charity quilts. And I make quilts and wall hangings for my children and then they, there is a, we enter an exhibit, for an exhibit, and the judges chooses my stuff and it goes to exhibits and that's my hobby.
- LEVINE: And say how you learned originally to sew, I mean how you came to sew.
- ZICHLINSKY: I went to learn to sew in Turkey when I was young, very young. I learned how to sew there and then I took a course

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in 92nd Street Y for quilting and the teacher said it will be no problem for me to learn fast because I knew how to sew. That helped me.

LEVINE: And I have to say that your quilts are magnificent, they're very, very good.

ZICHLINSKY: Thank you.

LEVINE: What, so what else, and you were also named Woman of the Year, can you talk about that?

ZICHLINSKY: Yes, in Temple [Torah?]. They chose me as Woman of the Year because I used to work a lot for charity and I brought, I collect a lot of charity money. I was the treasurer in the Temple and because I was very active they chose me Woman of the Year. They thought I deserve, and it was a very big party in the ballroom in the Temple and all my family and friends came to the party, and the Senator was there and they gave me a clock of gratitude and appreciation and a gold heart as gift with the date on the other side with my name and it was a very exciting day for me.

LEVINE: Just thinking back of the fact of where you started and then living out a large part of your life here, do you think about that sometimes?

ZICHLINSKY: Many times, always is on my mind. Always. What happened in Turkey, how we remained without a father, five children, and we have to do something to support ourselves and my mother and then the experience of going as an

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immigrant to Israel. I think all the time and I do go to Israel often to visit the family and find, discover the changes of the day that I was in Israel and today how different it is, as everything is built and everything is so beautiful.

LEVINE: What do you feel particularly satisfied about in your life?

ZICHLINSKY: My satisfaction is that I married a wonderful man and have a, proud of having two lovely children and nice son-in-law, [?], and now God made us very happy with a grandchild and I love [Alger?].

LEVINE: Wow. Well is there anything else that you can think of that might be pertinent to your coming to this country and changing your life that we haven't already talked about?

ZICHLINSKY: Well the meeting of the nice people in the United States, they have new friends. It is a wonderful thing to know so many cultures. I have friends. When I was taking lessons in 92nd Street that was a girl, Margarita from Argentina who didn't know English so I had to translate what the teacher was explaining in English to her in Spanish. This made me feel very good, that I can help somebody who can't help herself in the class.

LEVINE: And so because you spoke Spanish in your home.

ZICHLINSKY: Ladino. [Judeo-Spanish, spoken by Sephardic Jews in the Balkans, Greece, and Turkey.]

LEVINE: Okay, Ladino.

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ZICHLINSKY: That is my mother language and we used to talk Ladino and I'm still correspond with my sister in Israel and my nieces in Ladino. I still use, my spelling is better in Ladino and in Turkish than English, as much as I struggle to learn good, still when you don't come as a child to the United States is still you cannot, the accent still there.

LEVINE: And how about Israel, did you ever consider moving back to Israel, living in Israel instead of the United States?

ZICHLINSKY: No, because I had my children in the United States and my husband is retired and we are comfortable here. Of course I visit many times, as a matter of fact we planning to go to June again to Israel. I always want to see the family. Sometimes they do come here to visit me and I make them comfortable as much I can.

LEVINE: Well it certainly seems as though you have given back to this country and . . .

ZICHLINSKY: Oh yes. I enjoy making those dolls for the children, the hospital, they call it Surgery Dolls. They are plain white and the nurse draws, either if they have to have surgery in the arm, she draws to the children. Here you gonna have surgery, it's plain, the dolls are very plain so they shall know what to expect. I enjoy doing this and I enjoy quilting for my children it makes them happy. They put it on the walls, they put it on the bed.

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LEVINE: Okay. Well it's been a real pleasure talking with you and I thank you so much.

ZICHLINSKY: I am so glad to meet you. (Laughing).

LEVINE: Thank you. Okay.

ZICHLINSKY: We enjoy very much when we visit Ellis Island recently and I saw all the changes that it was made.

LEVINE: Oh. How did you feel visiting Ellis Island?

ZICHLINSKY: I felt very excited, very emotional, to show my husband where my room was which is an office now. It's locked, and how we used to walk in the garden all around and at night we saw the lights in New York and we can't be there. (Laughing). And I really was so impressed to see the changes and the first time I witnessed what the early immigrants, what they went through how, their luggage was kept and everything. It was a very good experience and I will go again. When friends come from Israel or from abroad I am going to take them to see it.

LEVINE: You let me know and I'll, I'll help you see everything. Okay. Well I have been speaking with Luisa Zichlinsky who came here from Turkey via Israel, and that was in 1952 and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and this is tape two on March 21, 1996 and I'm signing off.

