

EI-749

HERMAN MOSKOWITZ

BIRTHDATE: MAY 19, 1914

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 23, 1996

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

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CZECHLOVAKIA, 1929-30

AGE: 14

SHIP: AMERICAN

PORT: HAMBURG

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Okay, today is May 23rd, 1996 and I'm here in Florida at the Bermuda Club.

MOSKOWITZ: The—the condo—the co—condo called Bermuda Club.

LEVINE: Right, the con—

MOSKOWITZ: And the area is 61st Avenue, Tamarack, Florida.

LEVINE: Tamarack, Florida. And I'm here with Mr. Herman Moskowitz, who came to this country. He left in—with his family in 1929 and they arrived at Ellis Island in 1930.

MOSKOWITZ: '30, yeah.

LEVINE: Early in '30.

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: And he was 14 years old at that time.

MOSKOWITZ: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: The family came from Czechoslovakia and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. And I'm delighted to be here. So I'm looking forward to whatever you can remember about your experience coming here. Let's start—if you would say for the tape where in Czechoslovakia you were born and what day and year.

MOSKOWITZ: I—I don't remember the day but I was born in Konus—K-O—it's a little town but there's about 25 Jews live there. The rest of them are a hundred Christian.

LEVINE: And how do you spell it? K-O—

MOSKOWITZ: K-O-N-U-S.

LEVINE: Konus. And you were—your birth date?

MOSKOWITZ: I—[chuckles] that I can't—[unclear].

LEVINE: Okay, we have it here as May 19, 1914.

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, 1914. You can look back on it but that's not so—

LEVINE: Were there records about your birth date or did you have to sort of decide on one?

MOSKOWITZ: We didn't have to decide. We had a record.

LEVINE: You had—

MOSKOWITZ: Everything was recorded—

LEVINE: I see.

MOSKOWITZ: —over there too, because Czechoslovakia was a democratic country. Masaryk [PH]—when I was born Masaryk went in—in as president.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: [unclear] Masaryk.

LEVINE: Yeah.

MOSKOWITZ: He was a American general and he took over after the war.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: He took over as president. Until I came here to this—to United States, he was still president. Then we started the war and his son took over.

LEVINE: I see. And what do you remember hearing about him as president? What kinds of things do you remember?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, the way—way I remember, he was a nice—he was good and the Jewish people at that time were all business and business. And he worked out the—they—they made the country beautiful, which you would [several words unclear] what beautiful means. Beau—Czechoslovakia became a beautiful state because when I came here be—when I came back here, the time I came in the '30s, they already build—we used to go horse and wagon, buggy rides, all the time. And from where I came they had airplanes, like they had to go to a market, which they took day with a wagon. It took a half an hour with a plane. So you know it must have made [unclear] the Jewish business people the country were now quietly beautiful, quietly fast, I want to say.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. You had airplanes in Czechoslovakia?

MOSKOWITZ: Yes, ma'am.

LEVINE: Wow.

MOSKOWITZ: They had a [unclear]. It took—it took a half a day to go from [unclear]. But the—by airplane, it took no time because they—they—Jewish people business. They went in—in—on a market, like every Thursday, every Thursday, every Monday they went to market buy horses, buy cows, buy sheep, buy flour, buy this, buy that. And they—it would—took them better time with airplane.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: So when I came here they already had that established.

LEVINE: Wow. What do you remember about market day from when you were a little boy?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, market days, it's a little rough.

LEVINE: Rough?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: H—how so?

MOSKOWITZ: Huh?

LEVINE: How do you mean, rough?

MOSKOWITZ: You know, the—the way you look at it, you know. One cheese, one [unclear] and one this and one that. That's always been that way.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: You understand me, what I mean?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MOSKOWITZ: I can not go into too deep in that.

LEVINE: But in other words, you're saying, like, bargaining is what—is what people did?

MOSKOWITZ: Of course. That's the main thing. Well, the che—who's cheaper gets the bargain and who is more, sometimes they straighten themselves out and sometimes they don't.

LEVINE: Well, now, were you personal involved in—in, like, going to market?

MOSKOWITZ: No, I had to go to cheder [PH]. I had to go to cheder. We went to school yet.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So you never went?

MOSKOWITZ: No, my—my father and my—my father [unclear]. He would.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

MOSKOWITZ: Max Moskowitz.

LEVINE: And your mother?

MOSKOWITZ: Ida Moskowitz.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

MOSKOWITZ: Ida Markowitz [PH]. My mother was—got married to her in this country.

LEVINE: Oh, but her—her maiden name was also Moskowitz?

MOSKOWITZ: Markowitz.

LEVINE: Oh, Markowitz. Uh-huh, I see. So—so when you came to this country, how many children were in your family?

MOSKOWITZ: When I came to the—there was nine. But we went twice to the Council. Once we went and my older brother was—he's deceased. My sister—one I'm talking about—Hawaiian Gardens, she came at him three months before us, because we were delayed by the Council. Somebody squealed and they sent us back. We had to go back. So those two didn't want to go back. The one says, "I had enough. I'm going to America." So this—they came before us.

LEVINE: What do you mean, somebody squealed? What—what—h—why were you sent back at that time?

MOSKOWITZ: You want to know the truth?

LEVINE: Yeah. [chuckles]

MOSKOWITZ: Listen, my—my sister was married with my brother-in-law. And my mother—my mother was afraid—there was four girls [unclear] married them off. But she married them off. They is nice boy. [unclear] boys and he was a blacksmith but educated. He was—his father could have been a rabbi. And somebody wrote in that—to the Council that she was married and she had names of the Zebowitz [PH], not Moskowitz. So they didn't let us through.

LEVINE: So your mother said that she wasn't married because she couldn't go through if she was married?

MOSKOWITZ: Because she was married, she couldn't go through.

LEVINE: Oh.

MOSKOWITZ: Because a different name. We—she had—she—she was in our papers the same as we were, Moskowitz.

LEVINE: I see, uh-huh. Now, your father had gone before? Your father had gone to this country before the rest of the family. He was already in the United States.

MOSKOWITZ: He—he was—he came in 1918.

LEVINE: Ah, okay. So now—

MOSKOWITZ: Af—after—when did the war start?

LEVINE: Uh, let's see. Yeah, then. Eight—1918.

MOSKOWITZ: My sister was born in this country, my oldest sister.

LEVINE: Oh.

MOSKOWITZ: I told you my mother and father got married here.

LEVINE: Now—so, in other words, your mother went back?

MOSKOWITZ: It was bad time. It was hunger years over here. And my father says, "I got property there. I'll send your bags there. We'll [unclear] your property and we'll—we'll make a go of it."

LEVINE: I see. So your sister came back with your mother?

MOSKOWITZ: My sister came back with my father over here. My—my father was a chaperone to my sister to take her here. That's how he was able to come, 1918. There was always a reason. There was always closed doors for everyone. So he came back with her. And that time they were building a [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: And he had a landsman [PH] [unclear]. He was the builder. And he gave my bricks [chuckles] to carry up to the floor—to the floors, bricks. Young—as a young man and a—a provider, he had to be the first one. He had to be the first one to go on the ladders.

LEVINE: So he carried the bricks up?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, he carried the bricks up. Yeah.

LEVINE: Hmm. So—so he stayed here then and he was here for—in 1918. He was—he was here over 10 years by the time you and the rest of the—

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, about. Yeah. I'm learning from—from that thing, he became a mason.

LEVINE: Oh.

MOSKOWITZ: Cement mason. And then through the time he came back, not wanting to come to live in America. So—so he came back carrying with the money—all the money with him. And the friends, they robbed him, because he was in the building line. He'd built in Welfare Island. He built a hospital. Him and Silverman built a hospital in Welfare Island.

LEVINE: Welfare Island?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, just—just in Hoover's time. But Hoover [unclear] it's not—he was—he lost \$2,000 there. But it's not the [unclear] that they lost, just time. It was bothered with the [unclear], you know, the war that came up. And they had to have special—special time to fill in the cement.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: In that time, they—they all went out on strike. All the people went out on strike. And he lost over \$2,000. And he never went—he couldn't pick himself—you heard of Strom [PH]. You heard of Fishman [PH]. You heard of these big shot. He knew all them. He knew all of one hand but [several words unclear], the other way. [chuckles] He said, "That's life."

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Wow. Wow. So he was—he became a—a well-known builder?

MOSKOWITZ: He was well—well known [unclear]. He knew—he knew from Canarsie [PH] all the way down too because I was with him. I, personally, worked with him from the—till I went to the Army. Thirty-eight was hard time. He couldn't get no job over here, a very hard time. And you know that. And so I helped work so till finally, thank God, my younger brother—well, he passed away. He was mechanical-klined and he bought a car. And I learned how to drive the car—'29 Ford. I learned how to drive and I was able to drive my father daily to—to—to the Canarsie and all over Ocean Parkway and all over the sidewalk. In—in—in—in one builder build a—some buildings in—where was it? In Flatbush. And he was doing the [unclear] work. There were the—the—how you call—the cement work [unclear], you know. The steps—the steps and—and the

drives and the sidewalks. He was doing [unclear]. We [unclear]—we [several words unclear].

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh. Okay, well, let's talk first about life in Czechoslovakia, what you remember. You—you were in an orthodox Jewish family there.

MOSKOWITZ: Well, I was a child. I had to learn the [unclear]—the—the school—the Jew—mostly the Hebrew. And it's not like today. They all want to be lawyers. We couldn't [unclear] so much that we had to be workers. But my father came here in 18—we worked together. We had to help out each other to survive.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: So we worked together so, while we not in school, we help my mother to—like at the farm. We had a field there, bring in the potatoes, bring in the—bring in whatever was necessary, food for winter and this and that. This is just what we went through.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. And what do you remember about the cheder, about going to school?

MOSKOWITZ: Cheder wasn't like—like here.

LEVINE: What was it like?

MOSKOWITZ: It was very rough, first off, because we had to know the—we had to know—every Thursday they listen. They want to know word by word what you learned through the week. So we had—didn't have no time. We had two weeks time before the holidays. Summertime [unclear] we came in eight o'clock summertime talking—well, vacation time we came in eight o'clock and we sometimes left home 10 o'clock at night by kerosene lamp.

LEVINE: Wow. And you had to memorize word for word.

MOSKOWITZ: We had to memor—we had to learn. We had to—we had to know because our lesson every Thursday and now you got [unclear].

LEVINE: Were you a good student?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, I wouldn't say I was a [chuckles]—I was a good—I was a—I learned the hard way.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

- MOSKOWITZ: I learned the hard way. You had to learn, you had to learn.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And did—now, that was the Hebrew school. Did you go to any other school?
- MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, we had that Czechoslovakian school there. We went there too. [telephone ringing]
- LEVINE: Whoops. Okay, we're going to pause here.
- MOSKOWITZ: Excuse me.
- LEVINE: Okay, we were talking about life in Czechoslovakia. You went to a Czechoslovakian school too.
- MOSKOWITZ: Yeah.
- LEVINE: What was that like? What do you remember about school?
- MOSKOWITZ: Well, we had to also learn [unclear]. We learned [unclear] and Hungarian and Ru—and German. All these languages we learned in Hebrew—mostly in Hebrew. But we had to learn amongst all—all nation. So we learned.
- LEVINE: How did—how was it between—you said there were about 30 Jewish families—
- MOSKOWITZ: Yes.
- LEVINE: —and about a hundred—
- MOSKOWITZ: Christians.
- LEVINE: —Christians. How did they get along?
- MOSKOWITZ: Like always. Like you see it's going on today, that's what it—was been.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm.
- MOSKOWITZ: We got along.
- LEVINE: How about as children in school, like? How did you get along?

MOSKOWITZ: Before that, better. We didn't—we didn't—we wasn't [unclear] to them before [unclear].

LEVINE: Mmm, uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: But they had to learn. There's not—no—you know, between me and you, it's—it's like we going on [unclear] here. It's jealousy in degrees. It's been always before we came, is going to be after we come. They're always jealous. As I said, my father went in business, bought this and bought that. He was talking about—about the business world. And they didn't—the [unclear] depend upon the [unclear] so much, the outcome. Depending upon a [unclear] is not a—it's—sometimes it's good. Sometimes it's a good [unclear]. It's a [unclear]. So it's hard when you do a little business with it, it comes a little easier.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So—

MOSKOWITZ: This is the life.

LEVINE: Were—were any of the Christians—the Christian Czechoslovakians—were any of those in business? Any of them? Did they have businesses too?

MOSKOWITZ: Mostly where we come from, they had old—old farm.

LEVINE: Old farms.

MOSKOWITZ: Old farm. They didn't know much—they didn't know much better. Like my father had dealt with flour and dealt with plums, summer when plums go up, pears, apples. And—and Christmas time, geese. Geese was the—you know, you—you stuff the gee—goose and make—make it fat and then you bring it to market and sell. This is how the survival of a Czechoslovakian. That's where the Jewish had the—[unclear] go [unclear] out of—out of—jealous about it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Do you remember any religious observances in Czechoslovakia?

MOSKOWITZ: Hmm?

LEVINE: Do you remember observing your religion there? Any kinds of ceremonies, or any kinds of festivities or anything surrounding the religious practice?

- MOSKOWITZ: With—remember the—our—our tradition. Our tradition, religion.
- LEVINE: Was there anything different there than—than, say, after you came here to this country?
- MOSKOWITZ: Well, it's—it's no different. The world is [unclear]. It's no different. The only thing is the—like, you come in. There's so many people from throughout the world [several words unclear] this and that. We learned one thing in our own—our father's ethics. [several words unclear]. All Jewish are—are friends [unclear], supposed to be. They're not supposed to be strangers to another one. And over—over here, I learned different. I learned [unclear] and [unclear], Hungarian. All sorts of things. That's the different [laughs] [unclear]. I did not know the—in—in my [unclear]. We didn't know that.
- LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So all the Jewish people really were friendly and stuck together in—in your little town?
- MOSKOWITZ: Well, they—we were—we didn't have no problem because poorness is very problem-some.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm.
- MOSKOWITZ: They had to do with them amongst themself. Like—like here, like they had [several words unclear]. One don't want to know the other one and we can't help one—another one. And that's the story.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. The—okay. How about food? Do you remember any particular kinds of food that you had in Czechoslovakia that you particularly remember?
- MOSKOWITZ: Well, we had [unclear] from everything because we grew the—the cucumbers. We grew the [unclear]. We grew the—the [unclear]. We grew everything. We grew—we put away. We saved from year to year. My mother, she rest in peace. She was ba—baking Friday—from Friday to Friday. She bro—she took her own breads about six farms, and—and it was—it was from one week to the other week. And that's what it is. And then we—you know, when you sell the chicken, you sell the meat, you have to [unclear] for the Satu—keep it only for the Saturday.
- LEVINE: Oh.
- MOSKOWITZ: But anyhow, we always said for the Saturday she can—but they didn't eat during the week. Meat was very seldom—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: —because they wanted to sell the—like, the—the cow had an offspring. They sold it; they made money.

LEVINE: Now, let's see. Do you remember when—around the time you were leaving, wh—what prompted your leaving at that time? Why did the family leave when they did? 1929. Wha—why then were you able to leave?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, our time came up for the—from the—

LEVINE: Quota.

MOSKOWITZ: —quota.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: And we were called and we were growing—we were starting to grow up. Each one had his own way to go. So we had to do—do—do something to better ourself, because of we would have to go in the army there. We'd have to go in the army here. So we came d—we came and the quota came in. And also, my father was here. My father traveled four times the ocean. He came to [unclear] thinking that he's not going to come back [unclear] for them. But when they robbed him, he came—he came as a poor man. And [unclear] and he couldn't stay back. So he says, "From now on," he says, "I must stay here." That's—that's—that's what I remember.

LEVINE: Where was he robbed?

MOSKOWITZ: In France. In France.

LEVINE: When he was on his way?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah. See, the—see, the majority—how you call it—the transport people [unclear] left on Saturday. He says, "Why should I—I'm here. Why should I go—leave on Saturday?" So he went out to the hotel and they—and they noticed and says, "We know you come from America. You're American. You got money." So they cu—he had sewed it in here and they cut it out and they—and they took the money.

LEVINE: Hmm, wow. So they cut it out of his jacket.

MOSKOWITZ: No, his under [chuckles]—

LEVINE: His underwear.

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, wow. So then he said he's going to stay in the United States.

MOSKOWITZ: Then he came back and was very—it was hard to survive, hard to [unclear]. The [unclear] needed [unclear]. They needed this; they needed that. And they demanded. While—while you're small, whatever, you put on it. You wear it. But when you bigger, you're going to go somewhere already, you had—we had [unclear]. You had [unclear].

LEVINE: Ah, now, say what it is.

MOSKOWITZ: We—we had [unclear]. Not far from [unclear] there was a tow—there was a—there was a—I forgot the second town. The third town was [unclear], a bed, a little bed. And all these—all these [unclear]—all these people from the [unclear], from the [unclear], all the [unclear] were down there, the [unclear] or [unclear] somewhere down there in those bed. And there was a very wonderful thing there. They—they worked it out. They [unclear] beautifully. They light it up so beautiful at [unclear] it wasn't even funny. All these—people where we have—we had a lot of people say, “[several words unclear].” You should see how beautifully they light up all the—all the [unclear] all the time. All the time they came; it was beautiful. And they had—they had a good time. They had a wonderful time because they were treated beautifully. They were taken care of beautiful. They had the money. They [unclear]—they had the money. They were taken care of very, very nicely. And we came. We were in the army so we went down there. We went down through—you know the reason? You know why they called where the lawns are—where the lawn—where the—where they grow grass?

LEVINE: Yeah.

MOSKOWITZ: There was a [unclear]—there was a [unclear] that run down through that—through that place. And we went down as small children. So we—we watched—we watched from [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So then your father sent for you. Your quota came up.

MOSKOWITZ: Quota came up.

LEVINE: And you tried to—your mother tried to put your sister on because it was the quota for the whole family.

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah. Yeah, she went too. She went too.

LEVINE: Your father was already an American citizen.

MOSKOWITZ: Y—yeah. My father was American citi—as I said, he came as a chaperone to—to—for my sister was born here.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: My mother was here in 1907.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

MOSKOWITZ: And that time was very hard time. She was even working as a maid. It was—it was three, four dollars a week and—and was so hard that my father says, “I can’t take care. I’ve got property there.” My father was a businessman in—doing it before the war. He had—he had a [unclear] and a—in the woods. And the forest, the—one of the magnate bought off the whole forest as he but a railroad from [unclear] to [unclear] to run—to—to chop the—the—that wood down.

LEVINE: I see.

MOSKOWITZ: But he had a—he had—he had a cantina there, made lots of money. The [unclear]—[unclear] being in the army with the children, he had money left.

LEVINE: Did he go into the army?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, they took him in the army. Yeah, they took everybody in the army.

LEVINE: Do you remember—were—you were born when the First World War first broke out. Do you remember anything about the ramifications of the war or anything? No. So—so your father was in the army for awhile before he left?

MOSKOWITZ: Before—yeah, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving?

MOSKOWITZ: Now, that—that was Austria-Hungary.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: Franciosa, it was at that time.

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving your little town?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, I remember leaving. Yeah.

LEVINE: What—what do you remember about when you left, when the family left? Do you remember any incidents?

MOSKOWITZ: N—no, I [several words unclear]. It was a—just saying goodbye and that's it.

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents there?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, I have grand—I had grandparents.

LEVINE: Do you remember them? Do you remember doing things with them?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, yes. My—my grandfather was a strong, husky man. He was also [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh.

MOSKOWITZ: He was also here in the United States. [chuckles] But then he came [unclear] and he came here. He had—he couldn't have any—didn't know nothing else. So he was telling—call up five [unclear].

LEVINE: He was—

MOSKOWITZ: Carrying coal.

LEVINE: Coal.

MOSKOWITZ: They had the stoves at that time. So he was carrying it for—for [unclear]. So he got disgusted. He says, "To hell with America." He says, "I'm gonna—I'm gonna shut my heart over that." And he went back. He didn't want to stay here.

LEVINE: Did you ever do things with your grandfather? Do you remember him in any ways?

MOSKOWITZ: Yes. Well, we had to remember him because we were born—when we were born we lived 26 adults in—three in a room and a half.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: [unclear] adults in a room and a half. And we were already about six, seven children. So you see the difference now with the [unclear]. They want this. They want that. And what it is they don't get to get anymore.

LEVINE: So h—who were all the adults?

MOSKOWITZ: Hmm?

LEVINE: Who were all these adults living in that one and a half rooms? Was your aunts and uncles and—

MOSKOWITZ: A—uncles. Uncles—all [unclear] old people that helped out. They had to—had—I had a servant to help—help them bring me the horses and this and that. It was a very—it was a very [unclear]. So the war broke out. He came and he went back to the army so they had to look for—like, like you say, they had to make a living. So—so they was getting—working with tobacco. Over there they had to—during the wartime, they bought—they [several words unclear] of tobacco. So he and a cousin of mine, they went for the tobacco. And she was a lady. She had no—she couldn't—so they—oh, they didn't have no bridges there. They just had a log going through. The wall that came over the log and she was afraid to go. She says, "[several words unclear] take me." So he had to take her and the tobacco. He had to carry her across. It—so it was rough. It was not so easy.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: So do you remember then when—when you left, traveling from the little town to the port where you left from?

MOSKOWITZ: They didn't go—they didn't go—they did—they—we said goodbye from the—the town we were, because we had to go with the wagon to [unclear]. In [unclear] we took the train. We went to—to [unclear] Prague.

LEVINE: To Prague.

MOSKOWITZ: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And then where did you leave from?

MOSKOWITZ: Hamburg.

LEVINE: Hamburg. Did—did you remember anything about the time from when you left your town until you got to Hamburg?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, we had a lot of—you know, a lot of—my younger brother lives in Boca over here now. When we left we wanted to put us—put him on the side by the door. On the way—on the way down though, door opened up and he screamed, gave us like a scream that [unclear] in the train.

LEVINE: Your brother.

MOSKOWITZ: My—my kid brother. He lives in Boca now.

LEVINE: And then do you—do you remember—did you have examinations when you got to Hamburg?

MOSKOWITZ: We had examination in Prague.

LEVINE: In Prague.

MOSKOWITZ: Everything went through—through Prague when, before we got the visa, examinations, examination and IQ and everything else.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything in particular about those examinations?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, the—the way I'm telling you. When we came to the—to become American citizen on the boat. That time was the I—was the law on the boat. We also went through the same thing, IQ.

LEVINE: And did you know any English when you were coming over?

MOSKOWITZ: No.

LEVINE: No.

MOSKOWITZ: No.

LEVINE: So do you remember the boat that you—that you came over on? Do you remember in particular anything about that?

MOSKOWITZ: Not to my—because we went on—we came in the rough time of the season. That time is the roughest time. And [chuckles] the first two days were all right. It's after that they got sick, very sick. The rest of the time we were sick so don't—don't remember that.

LEVINE: Okay.

MOSKOWITZ: It was very rough to come to at that—at that time.

LEVINE: And that was the American?

MOSKOWITZ: Uh-hmm, that was the American.

LEVINE: Okay. How about when you came into the New York harbor? Do you remember that part?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, well [chuckles] it was something new. We were stretching our eyes on to see what—where we are and was new to us because we came from a—a little town to a big city. [chuckles] Everything changed. I was saying. But we learned. We learned.

LEVINE: Do you remember Ellis Island? Do you remember your impression of it?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, Ellis Island was like going through, like—like in the army. Going through the inspections and everything else. And that's the Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Now, did you have to stay there at all? How long were you there, about?

MOSKOWITZ: I think we were there about 24 hours. That's all. We didn't have to stay. We had our—everything was kosher.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did your father come there?

MOSKOWITZ: Hmm?

LEVINE: Did—

MOSKOWITZ: My father came, yeah, with a car and took [unclear].

- LEVINE: And what was it like seeing your father now that you were all in America?
- MOSKOWITZ: It was—well, we had—don't give a second thought when you're the young at that time, you know. It goes away very—it was like new—new things all over again.
- LEVINE: Now, can—could you describe yourself? Like, what were you like as a 14-year-old when you—when you came to this country? What—what kind of a—of a young man were you?
- MOSKOWITZ: I can—I can describe myself. I was ready to go and pick up whatever I lost all my—through young years.
- LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were you looking forward to coming to this country or not? Did you want to come?
- MOSKOWITZ: We had—we had to come because there's no future down there. We were—we are not—we are not [unclear] occupy to do fieldwork or anything else because, through our education, [unclear] didn't know this thing. We had to have something, some change made.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm.
- MOSKOWITZ: We had to go to the deal. We had orders about waiting for the quota. You come to the quota the—the legal way and it was rough enough.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So when—when you got—when your father met you and you left Ellis Island where did you go?
- MOSKOWITZ: He took an—he took an apartment at 42 Ambersted [PH] at Pittcon [PH] Avenue. You heard of Pittcon Avenue. Pittcon Avenue time was built like Fifth Avenue. I was—I just met today a guy. He comes around the neighborhood. By the way, I went to see [unclear] Jewish. It was de—delicious. It was delightful. But is memories.
- LEVINE: Uh-hmm.
- MOSKOWITZ: All memories. I seen the same. He plays Menasha [PH] [unclear]. He shows the way Menash [unclear]. I seen him in the Hopkissen [PH] Theater and he—and he's—Menasha was Menasha. That's all. It's memories, all memories.
- LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: [unclear] but he's a very good actor, this guy, [unclear] Hoffman.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: A very good actor.

LEVINE: Now, in Brooklyn near Pittcon Avenue, was there a lot of Jewish theater at that time?

MOSKOWITZ: No, we had two theaters. There was Pittcon and there was Palace. Yeah, and then there was a Jewish theater, Rolland [PH] Theater and there was Hopkissen Theater. We had [unclear] plays.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: And that's all there was.

LEVINE: And—

MOSKOWITZ: And we didn't have time to go. When you had to work in the field you had to have—you have to go. You have to do whatever you have to do. We—but ours wasn't so much [unclear] there over here, because you didn't have so much and we didn't need so much. When the eyes are so much open, you—you want everything. Are you—

LEVINE: D—do you remember any things, like when you first came to this country—any things that really struck you as new and different? Any kinds of this that were new to you that you particularly noticed?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, I don't recall that so much because the main thing is—was to be fat. [chuckles]

LEVINE: To be fat. [chuckles]

MOSKOWITZ: To be fat.

LEVINE: What—what—was the whole family thin when you came?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah. We were all together, yeah.

LEVINE: So everybody wanted to eat.

MOSKOWITZ: Eat, that's it. So it was hard way to go and—and get at that time. It was after Hoover's time. It was hard to earn a dollar. So we all

helped out. We worked with my father many years till I went to the Army and, thank God.

LEVINE: Now, did you go to school when you came here?

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah, I went to school. Yeah. I went to Public 175 from Brooklyn in [unclear] Avenue and Briston [PH].

LEVINE: And—

MOSKOWITZ: And Dumond [PH].

LEVINE: And how did that school compare with the school in—in Czechoslovakia?

MOSKOWITZ: The—the education is the same. You have to—you have to learn.

LEVINE: How was it for you learning English?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, for us, we went—I went to night school [unclear] and I learned English. And I'm not talk—I [unclear] accidentally because I was [unclear]. I was [unclear] in New York all—with all nationalities. And there I picked ou—I talked a little this. I talked a little that. And that's why my [unclear] is always a little different.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So did you work after school when you first came here?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, I—I helped. I helped. I helped we make a living. It was very rough.

LEVINE: When you first came here, because it was the Depression time, was it—was it as hard a life as it was in Czechoslovakia?

MOSKOWITZ: Hmm?

LEVINE: Was the life as hard as in Czechoslovakia?

MOSKOWITZ: It wasn't as—it was hard. It was hard. In Czechoslovakia I didn't—no, I didn't work. We worked in the field. Here you have to work, like, put in eight hours. Eight hours everyday. Every day you work in the field. If it's too hard you just stop and take a—a break. When you work with someone else, you have to go through the day.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: You know, [unclear] can tell me what the story.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, how did you feel when you first came over? Were you—were you glad to be here or were you thinking maybe you sh—you would be better off back in Czechoslovakia?

MOSKOWITZ: I never sec—second thoughts about here or there. According our his—historic thing, anything in your possession, whatever you possess, you're the richest man in the world. I had a home. I had a roof over my head. I had my three [several words unclear]. Why'd I have to look for more? We're not—we are not—I couldn't be athletic because [chuckles] I wasn't built for it. I couldn't be a lawyer. I wasn't built for it. I couldn't be this. I was—whatever I had to do, I had to do to make a dollar and to—to make my life cheerful. That's all I can say.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Do you remember any—any attitudes or values that your mother or father had that they tried to instill in you? Any ideas about how to live, or how to be in life, or any of those kinds of things that they tried to have you adopt and tried to have you live by?

MOSKOWITZ: Listen, this is—this is over something that comes within you through the life of living. You go—we had a—a shul there in Konus. We had a shul. We went to [unclear] and we had to daven twice a day [unclear], the morning [unclear]. And you learn little by little, mother and father, they can't give everything over, because there's 10 children. [chuckles] You keep—you can be busy with one but you cannot be busy with 10 when you have to supply food.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. So you really learned it from—from your religion you learned [several words unclear].

MOSKOWITZ: We learned, yeah, through the—yeah, from the—you go from—you go to shul and you go twice a day. They have a [unclear] and a tradition.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: I have—I'm not talking about my mother and father [unclear]. They were nice people. They were recognized by the world—all the world. He done business with the world. He was recognized. I can't talk about my father. Can't talk about my mother. She was recognized. And—are you warm?

LEVINE: I'm fine. Are you getting too warm?

MOSKOWITZ: That's all right. It's all right.

LEVINE: We're nearly—we're getting near the end so—

MOSKOWITZ: All right. Because you can put on the—the air conditioner.

LEVINE: Yeah, it will make a noise on the tape.

MOSKOWITZ: Oh, okay.

LEVINE: So we'll—we'll just hold out a little bit longer. Let's see. How—when you look back on the fact that you were born in Czechoslovakia and you came here, you were 14 years old, how do you think about that now? How do you think about, you know, being an immigrant, although you were immediately a citizen because your father was one? But coming here and really starting life over again in a way.

MOSKOWITZ: The m—I mentioned to you about being happy and healthy to—not thinking so much, whatever this is what I'm thinking. You have to go through. You don't weigh. I came here. I was with my father. I worked times—in times I worked for a dollar a day. And it came before the holidays. I was laid off. Of course, I wasn't much—much too happy. But we went through—pushed through the time. We went through the time. It's nothing—nothing—nothing to—just you have to just b—make the time. That's the main thing.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: Well, as a present [several words unclear] who's the same way. You know, I lost my wife in '92. My children says, "Dad, this is going to be the best place for you." What am I going to do? Watch—what am I going to do? She didn't have—for—[several words unclear]. My—they—they never talk—talked about it. I'm on the train. I'm on the plane. You know, we're going to buy you something in—in the—Florida. That would [unclear]. [unclear] I'm going to [unclear] them.

LEVINE: Hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: You can't have it out. That's hard—that's hard work.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. So you've been down here since '92?

MOSKOWITZ: Since '92, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Do you fi—how do you find it down here? I mean, do you find compatible people and—

MOSKOWITZ: Well, they're not—they're not family. They all got their own packages. They got their own problems. And hardly no one ever comes and talks so—

LEVINE: Hmm. Yeah.

MOSKOWITZ: If you don't help yourself with [unclear] he help—tries to help you. You help yourself.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: So I'm getting by. Thank you.

LEVINE: Yeah. When—when you first came to this country and you—your family was—was starting out here again, did the fact that you were orthodox Jewish, did that—did that pose any problems to you?

MOSKOWITZ: It was problem-some but then I was—I—I was in the Shavez [PH] and my brother, older brother, he passed away. He never—that's the great of the Shavez. They're always obey—observe the Shavez.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: So whatever—whoever takes his own way, that's how it goes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. Did you meet with any kind of prejudice for being Jewish here?

MOSKOWITZ: I fought my battles all the time.

LEVINE: The same way.

MOSKOWITZ: Well, fought my battles always. I worked between all sorts of nationalities and I—I didn't let myself—I was in the Army. I took my [unclear]. I [unclear] my [unclear] and they respect me. They never chase me away. And the same—the same thing. When I went to work I davened [PH]. I put my [unclear] every day. So the good Lord watched out always. So I—I—I actually don't think about prejudice too much.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What do you feel very proud of or satisfied? What—what makes you feel satisfied about what you've done in your life?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, yeah. One—one thing I feel proud of, I—I worked in Wall Street and I was able to get by with—with ev—ev—works in Wall Street. We had—Simpson Satcher [PH] was a law firm in— Secretary of State Vance came out of there in my time. [chuckles] And I seen him go and I told Secretary of State Vance, “Mr. Secretary. Do something for our country. [unclear] before you [unclear] any other country.” I saw them—the honor guards on the [unclear]. So when he came back, I said, “Secretary Vance. You’ve done very little for us. That’s why you’re back so fast.” [laughs] So he laughed and I laughed. So that’s not so—I feel—I feel proud, even to—even to [unclear] where he go to.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Now, did you personally visit Ellis Island? Is that how you came to—to get this—this questionnaire that you sent back to us? Did you visit Ellis Island?

MOSKOWITZ: I—I was—I think I was there not qu—I was there for vacation. I went to visit my daughter-in-law there.

LEVINE: H—how did it seem? Did you—did it bring back any memories? Or how was it for you to visit there after all this time?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, I was—after I lost my wife, I was a little downhearted. And I didn’t think too much about anything so—

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, do you have—what was your wife’s name?

MOSKOWITZ: May. May.

LEVINE: May. And her maiden name?

MOSKOWITZ: L—her name was Levitan.

LEVINE: L-E-V-I-T-A-N?

MOSKOWITZ: Yes.

LEVINE: Levitan. And how—and did you have children?

MOSKOWITZ: Yes.

LEVINE: How many children?

MOSKOWITZ: I have one son, Joel Moskowitz. That’s the—that’s—

LEVINE: Be careful with the microphone.

MOSKOWITZ: N—oh, oh. That's—that's my wife over there.

LEVINE: Ah.

MOSKOWITZ: [unclear] that's my wife.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: And Joel, I'll—I'll show him later.

LEVINE: Okay, you'll show me when we—

MOSKOWITZ: Yeah.

LEVINE: When we finish. So you have one son.

MOSKOWITZ: One son.

LEVINE: Any grandchildren?

MOSKOWITZ: Three grandchildren. One boy goes to college in Buffalo. And that's the girl. She was bar mitzvah.

LEVINE: Mmm, uh-hmm.

MOSKOWITZ: And I got two sisters here, a sister, Lily [PH], in—in—where is she? That—but did I tell you?

LEVINE: Hawaiian—

MOSKOWITZ: Hawaiian Gardens and a sister—and two sisters in Hawaiian Gardens. And I got—I got a brother in Plantation.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MOSKOWITZ: And a brother in—in Boca.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Okay. Okay, is there anything else you can think of that you would want to say before we close?

MOSKOWITZ: Well, what—what else more can I say? My brother in Plantation was—was last year in Konus. He went to see my grandmother's grave—is still on there.

LEVINE: Oh, and was [unclear]?

MOSKOWITZ: Visited—but it's different now. You can't go through [unclear]. You have to go through Mukatch [PH].

LEVINE: Oh.

MOSKOWITZ: The—the Second World—the Second World War closed up all the—many—many difficult—made many difficult ways of getting to the same place.

LEVINE: Right, right. Okay. Well, maybe I'll get to talk with your—one of your—more of your sisters and brothers.

MOSKOWITZ: Lily.

LEVINE: And we can talk about that.

MOSKOWITZ: Lily.

LEVINE: Lily, okay. Okay, well, I want to say thank you very much for a very interesting [unclear].

MOSKOWITZ: I appreciate it in the—[unclear] can I give you a drink?

LEVINE: Ah, yeah. You can. Okay, thank you.

MOSKOWITZ: Will—

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine. I have been speaking with Herman Moskowitz.

MOSKOWITZ: Herman Moskowitz.

LEVINE: And it's May 23rd, 1996. We're here in Tamarack, Florida and I'm signing off for the National Park Service.

[END OF INTERVIEW]