

EI-886

ETHEL MARIAN [PH] HOROWITZ WEINSTEIN

BIRTHDATE: MAY 13, 1912

INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 17, 1997

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 85

RUNNING TIME: 57:48

INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

RECORDING ENGINEER: PAUL SIGRIST

INTERVIEW LOCATION: SOUTH BOUND BROOK, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:

POLAND, 1921

AGE: 8

SHIP: LAPLAND

PORT: WARSAW

RESIDENCES:

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Saturday, May 17, 1997. I'm in South Bound Brook, New Jersey and I'm here with Mrs. Ethel Marian Horowitz Weinstein. Mrs. Weinstein came from Poland in September of 1921. She was eight years old at that time. Present—we're in Mrs. Weinstein's living room. And present also is her son, Barry Weinstein, her daughter, Phyllis Weinstein, and a family friend, Mary Demarc [PH]. Anyway, thank you for letting me come out. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date, please?

WEINSTEIN: March 13th—

SIGRIST: And the year?

WEINSTEIN: The year—1912. Why—why can't I remember? [chuckles]

SIGRIST: March 13th, 1912.

WEINSTEIN: Right.

SIGRIST: Where in Poland were you born?

WEINSTEIN: Well, it was near Warsaw. I mean, near Lemberg [PH].

SIGRIST: Lemberg.

WEINSTEIN: Lemberg, yeah. That wasn't far from Warsaw, about 20 miles away.

SIGRIST: Did it have a name, the—the town or the village?

WEINSTEIN: I—that, I don't remember that.

SIGRIST: That's okay.

WEINSTEIN: I don't.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what it looked like, the town?

WEINSTEIN: Well, it was a small village and—and you—and the people—you know, all kinds—you know, all nationalities and we—we just lived there. You know, my mother and the five children, till the war broke out. I mean, that's what I remember mostly.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the house that you lived in?

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe that for me?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, it had a—a thatched roof and we just had two rooms and seven people.

SIGRIST: What was the house made out of?

WEINSTEIN: That I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Well, you remembered the thatched roof so [unclear]—

WEINSTEIN: Well, that's about all because—

SIGRIST: [laughs]

WEINSTEIN: —because we had—when, during the war, a bullet went through one—whatever they call—you know. So it knocked it off. So then I

remembered. You know, that stood in my, you know, my mind through all these years.

SIGRIST: The bullet went through the thatch in the roof, right?

WEINSTEIN: It wasn't the bullet; it was more of a bullet—

SIGRIST: [unclear] something? Some kind of artillery?

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: You said you had two rooms.

WEINSTEIN: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where the cooking was done in the house?

WEINSTEIN: In the kitchen. We had just that—in that room in the kitchen. That was one room and then the—we had two rooms for—you know, like two bedrooms [unclear].

SIGRIST: How was the cooking done?

WEINSTEIN: By—I—

SIGRIST: That's okay. [chuckles]

WEINSTEIN: No, that I can't—

SIGRIST: It was a long time ago. [chuckles]

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: I understand.

WEINSTEIN: That, I couldn't—that's—that's too early in the—you're asking me about the four or five years before. But, you know, I was only eight when that happened.

SIGRIST: Do you have memories of World War I?

WEINSTEIN: That, I have enough.

SIGRIST: Could you talk a little bit about what you remember happened during World War I?

WEINSTEIN: Well, we were right on the borderline with Aus—I don't know who Austria—we were right—the Russian—on the borderline. We lived on one side of this and then the other side was the borderline of—you know, of the—of the next town there. So—and then we had soldiers quartered, about 12 of them, in the house. We had to do that. We—we didn't have no room for them. They used to sleep on the floor. And they—they were very nice. They were very good to us. You know, they used to, like, go out at night and sleep. By day, they—the—you know, you—they'd be shooting or—and by night, when—after they got through, they'd come, you know, home and they'd—and they—even sometimes they stole from other people some food and they gave us, because—because I was in the—in the cellar. You know, they had the shelter there in the cellar there. Not only I, but all the people around there, so—so they used to, you know, help us out with the food there. And—I mean, during—when they had [sighs]—

SIGRIST: Take your time.

WEINSTEIN: [sighs]

SIGRIST: I think you're still a little geared up. [chuckles] Just—it's all right.

WEINSTEIN: I am.

SIGRIST: Just relax. You'll be okay.

WEINSTEIN: Oh—

SIGRIST: You're talking about the soldiers and the soldiers were in your house.

WEINSTEIN: Right.

SIGRIST: And you said that they were good to you. They stole food and gave them to—were there any—

WEINSTEIN: Right.

SIGRIST: —other ways that they were good to you?

WEINSTEIN: Well, that was most important thing because we didn't have—we didn't have much food there because they were fighting all around there. And we—we had—we ate potatoes three times a day. We

had that. And whatever my mother—at night, when—they had a garden in the summertime, so she'd go out at night, you know, pick it. And, you know—and that's what we'd eat. But the food was scarce then.

SIGRIST: Did you—did you ever witness any kind of fighting during the First World War?

WEINSTEIN: No. The only thing, when we were in the cellar there one day and they were—I guess they were fighting not far from us. So—and there was a man there that—he was—he wasn't married and he was afraid that they'd come and, you know, steal some things from him. So he—he went up from the cellar, you know, up the steps. And when he got on the threshold, s—as he was going to open the door, he opened it and he got a bullet right in his head. And naturally, he was dead instantly. And he—he rolled down just like a, you know, a black rag there. And the—the people—mostly, it was women and children, small children, and then they all—they started scream, you know, to see him, you know, being dead and all. And then they all ran out again, you know, on both sides of him, like. They ran out so—and I didn't have nobody with me. I was alone there because my mother was—wasn't in there with me. So then—then when almost all of them went out, so there was one left there, so they picked me up and they put me, like, on top of him like, you know, sit on the horse there and till they all left. And then, of course, I was crying. Oh. Then somebody took me out, you know, pick—I was the last one to—to be picked up. And that left an awful impression, even all these years. And—

SIGRIST: Being such a small child during that time—

WEINSTEIN: I—eight years and I was small, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah, very small. How do you—do you remember how you felt about—about those circumstances, having to live through those experiences when they were happening? How—how did you feel, as a little girl, being in situations like that?

WEINSTEIN: Well, I was very sad. You know, we—we were afraid. Most of the d—days we were afraid. Every day, we were afraid because they—of—you know, of the fights that went around us there. And even my—I had a—a sister that was—let's see, she was 13. And then we—we had some young fellows. You know, they were 18, 19 years old and all the—

SIGRIST: Are you talking about the soldiers who were in the house?

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

WEINSTEIN: And so when they came back from—from war, all day from shooting, so—so anybody that had children, especially a daughter—so they would hide, you know, from—from the fellows there. But with me yet, they didn't have no—I didn't have no problem. [chuckles] They wouldn't want me, eight years old. But my sister—so my mother—we had the—like, the room was like a attic. So every night, before they'd come home, my sister would go up there. S—she—you know, we were afraid.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm.

WEINSTEIN: Because they'd go home—I mean, they—after they—they'd fight there. They'd drink, you know, and all. And they were all—all after the—the girls, you know. So at least she was safe.

SIGRIST: What was your sister's name?

WEINSTEIN: Beatrice.

SIGRIST: Beatrice. And she's older than you.

WEINSTEIN: She's dead.

SIGRIST: But I mean she—she was an older sister.

WEINSTEIN: Oh, yes. Yes, I was the youngest.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

WEINSTEIN: [unclear]

SIGRIST: How many children?

WEINSTEIN: What, that we had?

SIGRIST: Yeah. How many children?

WEINSTEIN: Six.

SIGRIST: There were six. Can you name everybody for me?

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Oldest to youngest?

WEINSTEIN: Five of six. One died. From the oldest, Helen—Helen, Beatrice, Saul, Irving and I.

SIGRIST: So you're the youngest of the children.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And what was your mother's name?

WEINSTEIN: Horowitz. They were cousins.

SIGRIST: H—your mother's maiden name was Horowitz.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was her first name?

WEINSTEIN: Rose.

SIGRIST: Rose. Is—was that her name in Europe or was that an Americanized—

WEINSTEIN: Americanized. The name—

SIGRIST: What—what was her name in Europe?

WEINSTEIN: Rayza [PH].

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please? [laughter] Here we go with the spelling.

WEINSTEIN: Ra—I don't know.

SIGRIST: Well, just say it one more time slowly for me.

WEINSTEIN: Rayza.

SIGRIST: Rayza.

WEINSTEIN: Rayza.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What do you know about your mother's family background?

WEINSTEIN: Nothing. I didn't know any—

SIGRIST: Anything about her growing up or her—

WEINSTEIN: No, not—no, because it was during the wartime. I mean, I was—they didn't talk much about that then, you know. Like today, the children know everything. To—not then. They never spo—spoke and told them stuff, you know.

SIGRIST: So you didn't really know much about where your mother came from and that sort of thing.

WEINSTEIN: No, the same place. She came from—it was called Golizia [PH]. You know, Golizia.

SIGRIST: Sure.

WEINSTEIN: And that's where she came from too.

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

WEINSTEIN: Phillip.

SIGRIST: Phillip Horowitz.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You said they were cousins so, obviously, they met, you know, just being within the family and—

WEINSTEIN: Being in town. It's a—it was a very small town there.

SIGRIST: What did your father do for a living in Europe?

WEINSTEIN: He used to work in the market. He used to go out, you know, and sell his wares in the market.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did he sell?

WEINSTEIN: Th—that I don't know.

SIGRIST: You don't know?

WEINSTEIN: No, I wouldn't know.

SIGRIST: You mentioned earlier that it was your mother that you came with to America.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Where was your father?

WEINSTEIN: Here. He was in America.

SIGRIST: Do you know when he came to America?

WEINSTEIN: No. All I know, that I only knew him—I didn't know him. I mean, I was 10 months old when he left—when he left to come to this country. So—

SIGRIST: So you never saw him till you got here—

WEINSTEIN: Right.

SIGRIST: —is what you're saying, yeah. Do you know where he went to live in the United States?

WEINSTEIN: Jersey City.

SIGRIST: Went to Jersey City. And what did he do when he got to Jersey City?

WEINSTEIN: He was—he worked in brass, like a welder, because he made—used to make candlesticks. You know, those—he worked in that.

SIGRIST: You said brass?

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, he—no, we had, like a brass candlestick.

SIGRIST: [unclear].

WEINSTEIN: Yes. So he worked that. He was a welder and make—made them, you know.

SIGRIST: Can you describe your mother's personality for me?

WEINSTEIN: Well, she was a very, very nice lady. She was very generous and she helped everybo—she helped people, you know, in Europe there. And we all lived like a family, you know, even the neighbors and all. We were very close there.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me about some of your mother's responsibilities around the house when you lived in Poland?

WEINSTEIN: Well, mostly, what stood in—what stood in my mind was the war because they used to—when the—they had the—they called up the women to pick—for the trenches, because all the men were in the army. So the women had to do the men's work. So, you know, when they helped build the trenches and that's what the women had—had to do. They—young or old, you know, they got them all to do that. So she—

SIGRIST: And your mother did this?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, they got—they got her to, even with the small children. You know, they made 'em go. It wasn't—it was very—it wasn't—it wasn't good. I mean, it—you know, to—

SIGRIST: It's a very difficult time.

WEINSTEIN: During the war, yes. There was nothing to eat there and, you know—

SIGRIST: What about—

WEINSTEIN: We were afraid.

SIGRIST: What about running the household? How did—how did your mother—first of all, is she—where is she getting any money? Does she have a job or—

WEINSTEIN: No, what my father could scrape—you know, worked. He sent the money to—to us.

SIGRIST: And what about some of what she had to do around the house to run the household? What were her chores in the house?

WEINSTEIN: Nothing. Just take care of us and, the summers, she had—she—you know, the garden that she tended it so we should have enough to eat, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you have any other family members in this town?

WEINSTEIN: C—an aunt and uncle.

SIGRIST: On what side of the family?

WEINSTEIN: My father's.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of those people?

WEINSTEIN: Yes. They came—[clears throat] excuse me. They came here the same time we did. But they didn't live near us, you know. It wasn't a walking distance because there was no—you couldn't travel. They—everybody went on [clears throat]—on foot. I mean [unclear].

SIGRIST: So the aunt and uncle really didn't live that close to you.

WEINSTEIN: No, no. We didn't see them. Very seldom, we saw them.

SIGRIST: What about grandparents? Did you have any grandparents in Europe that you remember?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, my grandfather.

SIGRIST: On which side of the family?

WEINSTEIN: My mother's.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your mother's father?

WEINSTEIN: Well, he was very nice. He died when he was 94 and he—he was a scholar, you know, in Europe there. He used to teach other—you know, the Bible or something like that. He was—that's—

SIGRIST: Do you remember anything—do you remember any experiences you had with him, visiting him or doing something with him when you were a little girl?

WEINSTEIN: No, because he didn't live near us and was all walking. There was no place that you can ride on a—so I—I didn't see much of him that—because, don't forget. That was during the war. That was four years of war—more than that—in Europe. So that just left me like a, say, four-year-old. Because if I was born in 1912—when did the war start in Europe bef—

SIGRIST: 1914.

WEINSTEIN: Yes. That's why, you know, from '14—that would make me, what? Two—two years.

SIGRIST: Two.

WEINSTEIN: And then we had war quite a few years so I was, you know, six and then, you know, till we got ready to come here. I was eight years old.

SIGRIST: Uh-hmm. Do you remember when World War I ended?

WEINSTEIN: Do I remember? No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you found out the war had ended?

WEINSTEIN: It's a good question.

SIGRIST: You—you may not know it.

WEINSTEIN: No, no. I—I don't. You know, the—

SIGRIST: Do you—during the period when there was war—I mean, this has obviously made a lasting impression on you. That—that's what you remember about growing up in Europe—

WEINSTEIN: Mmm.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing anything during the war that you had never seen before? Something that was new and different?

WEINSTEIN: O—only the soldiers because we—we lived in a village. We didn't see any—it was farmland, like. We didn't see any, you know—anybody. But during the war, that's what—when—you know, when they all came over, the soldiers that were—that were in our house there.

SIGRIST: You said that they were nice to you, you said.

WEINSTEIN: Yes, yes. They were very nice to us. They were. But they used to come home, you know and bring—because there was no—they'd bring sugar or—or potatoes there. And they were very good to us.

SIGRIST: Who was expected to feed them?

WEINSTEIN: Not us. We didn't feed them. They probably had a place where they—you know, where the sol—where they go to eat. But they didn't have no sl—they didn't have no place to sleep. So—

SIGRIST: So they were all over your floor that time.

WEINSTEIN: That's right.

SIGRIST: Where did you all sleep if they were all over the floor?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, three or four in the [unclear] [chuckles] together, you know. We had the two beds and that was—because we—they h—they were on the floor. We couldn't do much, you know. No, it was very—it was tough.

SIGRIST: During that time, did your family have a religious life of any sort? Were you able to practice your religion during the war?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, whatever was in the house but, I mean, we didn't go out. I didn't anyway.

SIGRIST: You were a Jewish family?

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Was there a synagogue in town?

WEINSTEIN: No, they had to walk about three miles.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of—of going to the synagogue?

WEINSTEIN: No, then it was the boys. No, the girls didn't. My brothers went to school, you know, to—but that was only for the boys. The girls weren't supposed to know anything. [chuckles] You know.

SIGRIST: But did that actually keep them from learning?

WEINSTEIN: No, no. They—the rabbi came to the house. The teacher came to the house, you know, to teach—to—not only my brothers but all—you know, that's how they did it. They [unclear]—

SIGRIST: But what about the girls? W—was there a way that the girls could learn how to read?

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read and write?

WEINSTEIN: I—I don't think so. I don't think so because we taught her how to write her name here. You know, then—then she became a citizen too.

SIGRIST: But that wasn't till actually—

WEINSTEIN: Till later on, yes.

SIGRIST: —[unclear]. Yeah. Was there anything that you remember doing for your own enjoyment? For—for your own entertainment as a little girl?

WEINSTEIN: There's nothing—

SIGRIST: Things were not good, I realize.

WEINSTEIN: No, there was nothing there. No.

SIGRIST: Did you have a toy that you remember of some sort? Or did someone give you something that you can remember?

WEINSTEIN: No. I had my sisters and brothers.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What about—what about a holiday celebration? Do you remember, for instance, celebrating Passover in Europe somehow?

WEINSTEIN: No, because we didn't—because there was nobody there. I mean, the kids were small and my mother had to go, you know, to earn a living or something there. So it—it's nothing.

SIGRIST: To your recollection, do you remember being in contact with your father during the war?

WEINSTEIN: He was here.

SIGRIST: I realize that but I—but during World War I, do you remember there being contact between him and you?

WEINSTEIN: None. You mean with my mother and all—

SIGRIST: Yes, with your mother.

WEINSTEIN: With the family. Well, the only thing, that he send money to—you know, to help—to help.

SIGRIST: Can you remember when you were a little girl how you thought about America before you got here? When you—when you thought about America, you have a father who's in America. How did you think about America before you got here?

WEINSTEIN: That was someplace wonderful where someday we'd [chuckles]—we'd get there. But that was wishful thinking.

SIGRIST: Did your family have a photograph or a picture of your father? I mean, how did you think about your dad, never having actually seen him?

WEINSTEIN: I didn't. I couldn't visualize what he looked like and what—at 10 months, what—what do you know?

SIGRIST: Probably nothing. [laughs] When he went.

WEINSTEIN: Because even that time when—when I came here and I think, like I told you, when I came into Ellis Island there and when I got stuck there and—

SIGRIST: Which we'll talk about in a few minutes, yeah.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah. And when they came, they—after—after my measles—you know, after it was better, so when they came to take me home—so it was my—my brother-in-law and his son, who was 11-year-old, like my cousin. And—and then my father. My father, I—then after I knew it was my father, this man—this older man, you know—he—he looked like 60. [chuckles] He must have been in his 50s, anyway, there. But to me, you know, I didn't know. I didn't know. I couldn't visualize, you know, so—so [chuckles] then you get—so [unclear] came over, says, "This is your father. He came home to take you home." So the two men were standing there so I went to the younger man. And then she took me away. She says, "No, this is your father," the older man there. So that's how—that was the first time that I had met him.

SIGRIST: And what did you think when you saw this older man—

WEINSTEIN: [chuckles]

SIGRIST: —being told that, you know, "This is your dad."

WEINSTEIN: I was disappointed because I expected—because the—the kids in Europe there, they were all—they had young—you know, they were young mothers and fathers there. Because my mother was 35 when she came here. So she was—you know, she was a young woman. So [chuckles]—

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Well, I—let's get you to America so you that—

WEINSTEIN: [laughs]

SIGRIST: —we can talk about all that. What do you remember about getting ready to leave to come to America?

WEINSTEIN: [sighs] Well, was very exciting because in Europe we didn't have much clothes and they used to make the clothes, like, from paper. They'd weave it, you know, from what the—not flax but other stuff that they—that they—that's what we wore, you know. But it didn't—it didn't look like paper. You know, was not canvas [unclear]. But that's what we wore. It wasn't—they were clothes, you know, but then we had to have the pictures made because, you know, we had to—for the passports we had to make.

SIGRIST: To be photographed—

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Was that the first time you had been photographed?

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What do—what do you remember about that?

WEINSTEIN: My sister has [chuckles] the—the picture.

SIGRIST: Did something—does something stick out in your mind after all these years about having to go to be photographed?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, yes. I couldn't—my father sent me a dress from—from America because it was—the other dress, it wasn't suitable, I guess. And to take pictures, so they—they sent the picture. I—I—the dress, I can still remember, is plaid-like.

SIGRIST: Can you describe it for me a little more specifically? It was plaid and—

WEINSTEIN: Oh, a straight dress and a plaid material. I know it was colorful. And—and I was so happy. I was going into the—like in the bigger town to take pictures and all, you know. And then we all took pictures for the—you know, for the—for the—for the passport there.

SIGRIST: Did you have to undergo any kind of medical examinations before you left Poland?

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: What about what the family took? What did your mother pack to take to America?

WEINSTEIN: Very little, because my mother had the—not—well, she had a few diamonds and a pearl—not a pearl—a gold necklace. It was—it was pretty big, about 18 inches there. And—but you couldn't take nothing in. Whatever—you had money or anything, they—they took it away. You couldn't. The o—so she—from the jewelry, so she—you know, she gave one child something and the other and—but no money. You couldn't bring money in.

SIGRIST: What—what children did she give?

WEINSTEIN: My sisters and brothers.

SIGRIST: The sisters and brothers who stayed in Poland or—I—I'm confused. She—

WEINSTEIN: Yes, one.

SIGRIST: She had the jewelry.

WEINSTEIN: She had the jewelry in—before, you know, we left. But she gave them each earrings or something like that, because you couldn't take that. She had some money—

SIGRIST: They—they were coming. Is that you're saying?

WEINSTEIN: She had—you couldn't take no money with you.

SIGRIST: Right.

WEINSTEIN: S—

SIGRIST: I guess I don't understand who's—who is leaving to go to America? Are all the children going?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, yes. We all went.

SIGRIST: Okay.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: S—so she's giving—she's giving the children the jewelry to wear while you're going? This is what I don't understand.

WEINSTEIN: Yes, because they couldn't have no money. We—

SIGRIST: I see.

WEINSTEIN: The only money she could have was to get across with—you know, [unclear]. We—no money at all when we came to this—to America there.

SIGRIST: I see. I—I understand now. What about you? Did you take something that was yours with you?

WEINSTEIN: No.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

SIGRIST: Do you remember the day that you left your village?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, I was—all I know, I was very excited, you know, because we're—we were going away, you know, on the boat and all. And—

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you had to travel to to get to the boat?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, we went to Warsaw. That took a while. And we stood there about three weeks.

SIGRIST: How did you get from your village to Warsaw?

WEINSTEIN: I guess by h—horse and buggy, you know. What else? There was nothing there, no railroads or anything.

SIGRIST: So tell me one more time. It's your mother and how many children?

WEINSTEIN: Five.

SIGRIST: Five. So—so Mom's taking all the kids.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: How old was the oldest child?

WEINSTEIN: The—no, the—my sister—the oldest one went to—she was here. She came when she was 13.

SIGRIST: Oh, so she's not traveling with you then?

WEINSTEIN: No, was—

SIGRIST: She's already here.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Where is she in America?

WEINSTEIN: You mean now?

SIGRIST: No, then.

WEINSTEIN: Oh, then. Well, she came to my—my sister—see, my father married twice. And I was from the second—second marriage. So his—his older daughter lived here. She was in America, you know. So that's how he came. When he came, he came to his daughter. And then he—he worked there and then he brought us—you know, he brought us over.

SIGRIST: I see. Barry, you can come sit down if you want. You don't have to stand. [laughter]

WEINSTEIN: Oh, I—I got to turn around. My—

SIGRIST: [chuckles] We'll all shift for a minute. All right, so you go to—to Warsaw and you said you stayed there for three weeks.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about the experience of being in Warsaw?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, well, we didn't go out—we didn't go down much. You know, we had to stay in the house because it was still—you know, during the war, it still was—everything wasn't settled. So I was a little nosey and I—I walked out of the—the room there and—and I wanted to look around. I—so I asked about, I want to go in. I didn't know where to go because there was steps. I never in my life saw steps so I felt—I was confused. You know, so I stood there for a while till—till somebody came, you know. I got lost there and was—I was in the same floor but I didn't know where, you know—that was the first time I ever went anyplace. So when I—after they found me—af—that was it. They wouldn't let me out of their sight, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you stayed in Warsaw? What kind of a place it was that you were staying?

WEINSTEIN: It is just the rooms for us, you know, to stay. We were there three weeks.

SIGRIST: Waiting before the ship got there?

WEINSTEIN: Right.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What was the name of the ship?

WEINSTEIN: Lapland.

SIGRIST: Lapland. And where did you go to get onto the ship? Did you get the ship in Warsaw or did you have to go somewhere else to get it?

WEINSTEIN: That, I don't know. Well, I know that we were in steerage.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Did anything else happen in—in Warsaw that sticks out in your mind as—you say you saw steps for the first time. Was there anything else that was—

WEINSTEIN: Well, we went down—outside there. We saw—people were, you know—they used to sell—not the people but the people that were working, they'd sell stuff. And—and they sold everything they could get a hold of because it was very—it was poor there. You know, after the war, everybody was very poor. So they used to sell—one of them s—rags. You know, he'd want—be selling rags and all, everything. Anything to make a living, I guess.

SIGRIST: And that made an impression on you.

WEINSTEIN: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Seeing these people selling stuff on the street.

WEINSTEIN: Right.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, let's get you on the ship. The ship is the Lapland and you were in steerage. Can you describe where you slept on the ship? What did it look like?

WEINSTEIN: Well, that was—that was bad [chuckles] because we were on steerage. You know, you—that's the lowest and then when you're there you can—you can just put your hand out, and you—you touch the ocean. But we were all sick. Everybody was sick on the—they were—the people were just lying around like—I don't know, like

animals. But every—everybody was sick. And the only one wasn't sick was, I had a brother and he was the only one from all—from the whole steerage there that wasn't. So he used to go around, take lemon and go around. That's supposed to be good for your stomach. He'd go around and give everybody, you know, to—you know, it didn't make them better but for three—were on for three weeks. That's kind of—you know, to be on—on [unclear].

SIGRIST: Can you describe where you actually slept, what it looked like, the room, and—and who else was in the room with you?

WEINSTEIN: Well, my mother and my brother and m—my two brothers. You know. They were there and—

SIGRIST: But it was just the family in—in—where you were sleeping?

WEINSTEIN: No, no. The whole—all—the whole people there—there. There was no family where—the family was—you're there. Was just the—the people in—you know, in steerage.

SIGRIST: Were you sick?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, I was. [laughter]

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that experience? How—how did you feel being on the ship and being in that situation?

WEINSTEIN: Sick. Sick for three weeks. You couldn't go anyplace, you know. And of course, a—afraid because, you know, the boat, and whoever saw a boat before? And especially when you can see the waves, how they were—you know, how they were going and all that.

SIGRIST: Do you remember ever being on the deck of the ship for any reason?

WEINSTEIN: What deck? No, there's no deck there. We were in steerage. The first—maybe the first—the—the first—what is it? One, two, three, how they—

SIGRIST: The classes on the ship?

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, right.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

WEINSTEIN: We were the lowest, you know. And—but it wasn't—we were sick.

- SIGRIST: You probably don't remember a lot about eating on the ship if you were sick. [chuckles]
- WEINSTEIN: No, I don't remember. All I remember was being sick.
- SIGRIST: You said that the—the voyage lasted about three weeks.
- WEINSTEIN: Yes.
- SIGRIST: Do you remember when the ship came into New York harbor? Like seeing the Statue of Liberty sort of, or New York for the first time?
- WEINSTEIN: N—no, no. Not when we came into Ellis Island, no. No.
- SIGRIST: That's what would have happened next.
- WEINSTEIN: Yeah.
- SIGRIST: You would have gone to Ellis I—do you remember how you got from the ship to Ellis Island?
- WEINSTEIN: No. All I know is a lot of people, when they got off the ship we all went like a bunch of cattle, you know, to—to Ellis Island to those cubicles there.
- SIGRIST: And tell me—you—how long were you at Ellis Island?
- WEINSTEIN: About two weeks there.
- SIGRIST: Why were you at Ellis Island?
- WEINSTEIN: Because I had the measles. I got stuck. [chuckles]
- SIGRIST: Can you—can you tell me—first of all, where do you think you got the measles?
- WEINSTEIN: Who knows? With all those people—were so many people—so many—you know, that one big room there, that—who knows who was sick and who wasn't?
- SIGRIST: And tell me, you were there for—for a couple weeks. Tell me what you remember about Ellis Island and what happened to you when you were there.
- WEINSTEIN: Was nothing. I was in my room. I didn't go anyplace. The only ones that I'd see were the people that we—you know, the—for breakfast,

lunch and—you know, that come. Otherwise, I was just alone like a dog. You know, that's why all those memories that weren't so—you know—

SIGRIST: You said that you were in your—your special room. But where was that? What—why—

WEINSTEIN: Wasn't there a hospital there?

SIGRIST: Okay, that's what I'm—yeah, that's what I want to know, if it was in the hospital.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember—back up a little bit. Be—when you first got there, you say you remember lots of people—

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —[unclear]. Do you remember them sending you to the hospital? How did they find out you had the measles? What do you remember about that?

WEINSTEIN: Well, before you go and they examine you, that there's doctors there that examined you. And then they said that to my mother and they said that I'd have to stay over, you know. And they all left and I was alone in, you know—in strange land with just nobody.

SIGRIST: Where did your mother stay while you were detained in the hospital?

WEINSTEIN: At my—at my—well, my father, you know, in the Jersey City there.

SIGRIST: So she left the island?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, she and my two—my two brothers. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did anyone in the family stay with you on the—

WEINSTEIN: No, there was nobody. No, there was nobody.

SIGRIST: What—what can you remember about being in the hospital? Do you remember what it looked like?

WEINSTEIN: No, it was just—

SIGRIST: Or what happened to you?

WEINSTEIN: No, was just the room. All I did was look out of the window. I mean, there was nothing—because I was alone, you see. There was nobody there, a relative or anybody, because they don't let your mother stay there or anybody.

SIGRIST: Do they re—do you remember them examining you in any way or any kind of—

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: —medical treatment, how they took care of your measles?

WEINSTEIN: No, that I don't.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a nurse or a doctor who—

WEINSTEIN: I don't remember that at all. All I remember is being there alone. You know, stuck over there.

SIGRIST: What language did you speak at that time?

WEINSTEIN: Jewish.

SIGRIST: Yiddish.

WEINSTEIN: Yiddish.

SIGRIST: Yiddish.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And do you remember being able to communicate with anybody?

WEINSTEIN: Well, they had interpreters there, you know. Anybody that didn't understand—you know, they didn't understand the language.

SIGRIST: Was there an organization at Ellis Island who helped you—you out or your mother's situation in any way?

WEINSTEIN: Wh—what was the HI—Hi—

SIGRIST: The HIAS?

WEINSTEIN: HIAS.

SIGRIST: They would have been at Ellis Island at the time.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, they were there.

SIGRIST: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

WEINSTEIN: Right, yeah. The HIAS. HIAS. Whatever you call it, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you know how they helped out?

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: Do you—so you were at Ellis Island for two weeks. Do you remember being released?

WEINSTEIN: Well, that's the time when I was released, when they came for me.

SIGRIST: That's right, and you told the story about seeing your father.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, right.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Where did you go with your father? Where did he take you?

WEINSTEIN: To Jersey City. He had an apartment for us.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the address?

WEINSTEIN: [sighs] Oh, let's see. No, but I know it was on Charles Street. And then—

SIGRIST: On Charles Street.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, and then they—we were only there for about—in Jersey City about four years.

SIGRIST: On that—in that same apartment?

WEINSTEIN: No, in the—in Jersey City. Then we moved to Newark Avenue.

SIGRIST: But when you were in Jersey City—

WEINSTEIN: Because my father—

SIGRIST: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

WEINSTEIN: He bought a candy store.

SIGRIST: He bought a candy store in—in—

WEINSTEIN: Jersey City in Newark Avenue and we lived upstairs.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. But when you lived—did you live—before you bought the candy store, did you live in the same building for—for a period of time? That first apartment?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, yeah. About two years.

SIGRIST: About two years.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me what that—was it an apartment or a house?

WEINSTEIN: It was an apartment, I guess.

SIGRIST: It was an apartment.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you just walk me through the apartment and describe—well, how many rooms did it have?

WEINSTEIN: Just three.

SIGRIST: Had three rooms.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And what floor was it on?

WEINSTEIN: The first. That was—

SIGRIST: And how were the rooms arranged? Do you remember?

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you illuminated the apartment on the inside? How did you light the apartment?

WEINSTEIN: I think it was gas. They had those gas things.

SIGRIST: Gaslight.

WEINSTEIN: I thought they had—yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember anything about the gaslight or—

WEINSTEIN: No, only that I couldn't go near there because I—I'd get burned or something. You weren't supposed to touch, go near that. I mean, especially kids, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you heated the apartment?

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: What—what was the job that your father was doing when you first arrived in Jersey City before he bought the candy store? How was he making his living?

WEINSTEIN: Well, he was a welder.

SIGRIST: Oh, welder. That's right. You said—

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, right.

SIGRIST: And was he still doing that after you arrived?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, and then after that he bought the—you know, because he had to feed us. You know, he had to—wasn't enough being—working.

SIGRIST: Did your mother get a job?

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: She didn't.

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: Were you put into school?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, yes. I went—oh, [unclear].

SIGRIST: It's okay. Take your time.

WEINSTEIN: Yes, I was eight—eight years old in the first grade.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me about what it was like when they first put you in the school and what that experience was like for you?

- WEINSTEIN: Well, I felt strange because I couldn't speak English. And—but I caught on. And I guess I wanted to learn.
- SIGRIST: Do you remember how you went about learning?
- WEINSTEIN: From school. We didn't have no radio, television or anything. It's—but I did well because I was—the—years ago, they used to have six months. Instead of here, you have a year, we had six months so we used to go, like, from 1A to 1B. And I went to 1A and then I skipped 1B. I skipped because, well, I guess I was a little smarter, [chuckles] you know, to—I caught on pretty quick there.
- SIGRIST: Did anybody ever—did you experience any prejudice when you were in school—
- WEINSTEIN: No.
- SIGRIST: —because you were an immigrant? Like, did anyone make fun of you because you were—
- WEINSTEIN: No to the—yes—n—no. No, not then. Not those years, you know. After the war, things were different, you know.
- SIGRIST: What about your parents? Did they speak English?
- WEINSTEIN: They did a little, but broken English, like—like they even do today.
- SIGRIST: Your father—of course, he'd been in America for a while—did he attempt to help your mother to learn English in any way?
- WEINSTEIN: Not that I remember, no. It was—Yiddish was spoken, you know, in the house there and—
- SIGRIST: You spoke English in your house?
- WEINSTEIN: No, Yiddish.
- SIGRIST: Oh, Yiddish. Yeah. What about when—when the kids were learning English, were you allowed to speak English in the house?
- WEINSTEIN: Well, they were much older than I was so I—they spoke but, I mean, I didn't.
- SIGRIST: You're talking be your parents being older or your—

WEINSTEIN: Oh, no. I mean—

SIGRIST: —siblings?

WEINSTEIN: No, my brothers and sisters there. No, but I picked it up. I—I don't know. I guess in—from school, you know, I used to read and all and—

SIGRIST: Did—did your brothers and sisters get jobs when you first got here?

WEINSTEIN: Well, no, because they were—my brother was 10 and then my sister was, like, two years older. So, you know, we all young then.

SIGRIST: I see. I see. I thought that you just said that they were so much older. I thought—

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: I see. Tell me when—tell me about how your mother adjusted to the United States. Your father's already been here for a while. Talk about how your mother adapted to her new life.

WEINSTEIN: Well, after, when we lived in Jersey City for four years, we moved to the East Side, to New York, in the East Side.

SIGRIST: The East Side of New York City.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah. So there there was spoken—you know, a lot of Yiddish was spoken there and—and Polish. And we lived with neighbors. We didn't know how to speak—we spoke Polish, you know, in Europe there. So—so she got—you know, got adjusted with the Polish people and the Yiddish people. So I don't know if you were on the East Side—well, I don't know about now, but were you ever—

SIGRIST: Where on the East Side were you when you moved to the East Side? What—you know, the East Side is long. Which—which part of the East Side did you move to?

WEINSTEIN: Well, we lived—we moved quite a bit. On Fourth—East Fourth Street.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you were on the Lower East Side.

WEINSTEIN: Lower East Side.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: That's a large Jewish community at that time.

WEINSTEIN: Well, it's not only Jewish. There were all kinds.

SIGRIST: Italians too—

WEINSTEIN: There was Italian and Polish.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

WEINSTEIN: No, there was a whole mixture. It wasn't just the Jewish. No.

SIGRIST: Then am I to believe that your mother had an easier time once you moved to New York than she had when you lived in Jersey City?

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What were some of the problems when she lived in Jersey City? Wh—what was difficult for her?

WEINSTEIN: Well, outside of—she didn't know anything about [unclear]. She didn't speak English. And she was just a homebody. She didn't go anyplace.

SIGRIST: Were there certain ways that your mother maintained her Old World customs when you came to the United States?

WEINSTEIN: No, she adapted very—very well there, you know, to that.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about the Jewish community in Jersey City if— if there was one.

WEINSTEIN: There was but we didn't—that time, we didn't belong to any temple or anything. No.

SIGRIST: What about—how would you practice your religion at home?

WEINSTEIN: Well, what the—what they did practice in Europe. You know, they just brought the—the custom, you know. But—

SIGRIST: Were there prayers that you learned as a child in Hebrew or in Yiddish?

WEINSTEIN: No, girls weren't supposed to [laughs]—

SIGRIST: Right. [laughter] [sentence unclear]. But did the girls learn them later on?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, later on—

SIGRIST: I was wondering if you could say a—a prayer for us in—

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: —Hebrew or in Yiddish or something—

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: —that you remember.

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: Okay. Tell me a little bit about when your father bought the candy store, how did your life change?

WEINSTEIN: Well, then I knew—I knew how to speak English then.

SIGRIST: That's right. You're a little bit older by then.

WEINSTEIN: Right, yeah. And I had friends. You know, it was—and I went to school and that was enough, I guess, for me after the years in Europe. You know, it was all new. It was all, you know, exciting, you know.

SIGRIST: Were there any—did you see anything in America that you had never seen before, like a new kind of food or something like that?

WEINSTEIN: That was later on. But the first few years, no. We were just glad to be here, you know. And it was tough. We were poor, you know. Whatever we had, we were grateful, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you have to work in the candy store?

WEINSTEIN: That was later on.

SIGRIST: That's all right.

WEINSTEIN: Don't tell me she told you that. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: No, no. [chuckles] Who?

WEINSTEIN: My daughter. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: I've never spoken to your daughter. [chuckles]

WEINSTEIN: Oh. [laughter] I mean, that she had that on a note. [chuckles]

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Well, I—I'd like you to talk about it a little bit. How old were you when you first had to work in the candy store?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, that was—I was older.

SIGRIST: I know. How old were you?

WEINSTEIN: Oh, when I went to school. That was in the summertime.

SIGRIST: And what did you have to do?

WEINSTEIN: [chuckles] I wrapped the candy. You know, those hard candies, and also, I boxed the candies. You know, the chocolates, what you have there. And I worked piecework, didn't get much—

SIGRIST: Where did the candy—where did the candy come from? Where did your father get his candy?

WEINSTEIN: No, no. This is when I worked. This—this is not from the store or anything.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you didn't work for your father?

WEINSTEIN: N—oh, no. No, I'm talking about [chuckles] my first job. I thought you were talk—

SIGRIST: Oh. Well, that's all right. Oh, well, actually, I—I'd like to talk about your first job that you got that you were paid for.

WEINSTEIN: Oh, that was—

SIGRIST: That was wrapping candy?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, and boxing. It was at the candy factory.

SIGRIST: Where was that candy factory? Not the address but—

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: —what town was it in? What city?

WEINSTEIN: It was in—now, you—you have heard of Solo, right, in New York there? Soho?

SIGRIST: Soho.

WEINSTEIN: Well, it wasn't Soho then.

SIGRIST: But it was there.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, Green Street and Worcester Street.

SIGRIST: Yes, I know exactly where that is.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, that—were you ever there?

SIGRIST: Yes.

WEINSTEIN: Did you see those—those hundred-year-old hous—not houses, but the factories?

SIGRIST: Oh, sure.

WEINSTEIN: That's where they—they—they made lofts out of that.

SIGRIST: And your job was to wrap candies?

WEINSTEIN: And b—yes, and to box it, you know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you were paid for that?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, eight cents a hun—a hundred. They—in Coney Island, they used to have those boxes of candy there that they gave out. So I think a hu—what did we have? We had to make a hundred boxes for eight dollars—eight cents an hour.

SIGRIST: Eight cents an hour or a hundred boxes of candy.

WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

WEINSTEIN: No, we didn't—I don't know what I made, seven or eight dollars a week there.

SIGRIST: And what did you do with your money?

WEINSTEIN: I gave it in to—to the household, you know.

SIGRIST: And then were you given any money for your own expenses from that?

WEINSTEIN: No, no. No, I didn't. The only thing, it went to the house and whatever I needed, you know, they got it from that money.

SIGRIST: Do you remember buying something that—with the money that you earned? Going out and buying something with—with your own money that you had earned?

WEINSTEIN: Yes. After a few years, I bought myself a coat. That took me quite a while to save up. It was a velvet coat with fur, you know. What they used to wear. That was the only thing that I bought for myself that I worked for. Otherwise, it all went in—

SIGRIST: Well, we have just a—just a couple minutes left. Did you ever go back to Europe?

WEINSTEIN: No. And I don't want to.

SIGRIST: Why?

WEINSTEIN: Even—even if you [chuckles]—even if you booked passes for me. Because all I've had there, I wouldn't—that's why I wouldn't want to go to Ellis Island when my—when they went—you know, the people went. They had a bus, you know, from the temple there. I wouldn't go for that reason, because that left a very bad impression on me. You know, walking in like cattle, the—you know, with—it was very disturbing for me all these years, you know.

SIGRIST: What about your parents? Did either of them ever want to go back to Europe?

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: No.

WEINSTEIN: No.

SIGRIST: Just in our last couple of minutes.

WEINSTEIN: That's all right.

SIGRIST: When did you get married?

WEINSTEIN: 1935.

SIGRIST: And what was the name of the man that you got married to?

WEINSTEIN: Jack Weinstein.

SIGRIST: And how did you meet Jack?

WEINSTEIN: In a club.

SIGRIST: What kind of a club?

WEINSTEIN: Well, what—that you—I don't know. They had—they used to dance there, you know.

SIGRIST: Is this like a nightclub or an ethnic organization or what? Club can mean a lot of different things. [chuckles] A restaurant?

WEINSTEIN: No, that's where they eat. They had a club and that's where they met and they used to have, you know, dancing. And one day, I went in there with my girlfriend and that was it. [laughter]

SIGRIST: And how many children did you have?

WEINSTEIN: Three.

SIGRIST: And can you name them, please?

WEINSTEIN: Norma, Phyllis and Barry.

SIGRIST: Right, two of them are here with us.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: When you think about yourself in terms of nationality, how do you think of yourself? Are—are you Jewish? Are you American? Are you Polish? Are—I mean, how—how do you think of yourself in terms of—

WEINSTEIN: I'm an American Jewish—Poland comes last. [laughter] Because I was born there.

SIGRIST: Did you become a citizen?

WEINSTEIN: Well, I was a citizen. In 1924, they—till 1924, anybody that came in that was under 16, you're under your father's papers. So my—so that's—we were citizens when we came, because the law was changed in 1924, that they made it no more that you could be under—you had to be on your own. But I did the—I—about 20 years ago, I took out my second papers for me, you know, because I knew I was a citizen since I came because my father was a citizen. But for myself, I just—I had taken the citizenship papers for me.

SIGRIST: How did that make you feel?

WEINSTEIN: Good. I—I've arrived. [laughter]

SIGRIST: Well, that's a good place for us to end. Mrs. Weinstein, thank you very much for letting me come.

WEINSTEIN: You're welcome.

SIGRIST: And you became much more relaxed as we went.

WEINSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: As we went [unclear].

WEINSTEIN: Yeah, right.

SIGRIST: And I thank all the rest of you for being so patient.

WOMAN: Quiet.

SIGRIST: And quiet.

WEINSTEIN: [laughs]

SIGRIST: Yes, right. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Ethel Weinstein on—today is Saturday, May 17th, 1997 in South Bound Brook, New Jersey. Thank you.

WEINSTEIN: From a big town to a small town, huh? [chuckles]

[END OF INTERVIEW]