

EI-922

JACK STEARN [possibly STERAN]

BIRTHDATE: MARCH 20, 1913

INTERVIEW DATE: AUGUST 3, 1997

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 84

RUNNING TIME: 1:01:43

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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RUSSIA, 1920

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RESIDENCES:

- **RUSSIA: KOVEL, VOLYN OBLAST**
- **US: CANTON, OH**

LEVINE: —1997 and I'm here in Canton, Ohio with Jack Babe [ph] Stearn, who came from Russia at the age of six years in 1920. At the time of this interview, Mr. Stearn is 84 years of age, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Well, I'm delighted to be here and I'm really looking forward to your story.

STEARN: Well, Janet, thanks very much. All of a sudden, it seems like [chuckles] strangers and was strangers come into our life. You are it. Yes.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Well, I'm glad to be here.

STEARN: Yes, same. My pleasure.

LEVINE: Let's start. If you would say for the tape your birth date and where in Russia you were born.

STEARN: Well, I was born in, should I say, Kowal. Kowal is—we always said Kovel [ph]. It's Kowal — K-O-W-A-L, the way we look at it, this map. We're looking at the map at the present time and it's K-O-W-E-L.

LEVINE: So it's—the w is pronounced like a v [unclear].

STEARN: Yes, and over here it says Kovel, yeah, like a v – I said.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: In the other one K-O-W-E-L. And it is just west of Kiev—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: —and west of the Dneper River, is located in central Volyn Oblast. It's in Ukraine and USSR—USSR on the Turja River.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. And what date were you born?

STEARN: What date? March 20, 19—I thought it was '13 but the way it's [unclear] '14. So either way, it—

LEVINE: You've always gone by 1913 so let's just do it that way.

STEARN: I was always 1913, right.

LEVINE: [laughs]

STEARN: It was given to me—given to me as—when I was going to school so that's what—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, we'll take that date.

STEARN: All right.

LEVINE: Now, did you live in Kovel up until you left—up—your first six years, were they all in that same town, or did the family move around before that?

STEARN: Well, as you know, my dad left there. He didn't see me till I came to America. My dad didn't.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: So my mom had to move around. She used to tell me the Kossacks are just bad as the communists and what have you—used to be. And she had to hide. Used to be in a little *shtot* (city) —you know, from place to place and, which, naturally, well, the Jews were—weren't treated in a proper way of matters.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So in other words, your father must have left roughly six years—or—or five or six years—

STEARN: Six years, before—

LEVINE: —before—

STEARN: Before—that's right. Before—

LEVINE: —everybody else.

STEARN: That's right.

LEVINE: Before you and your mother and—

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. And then when your father left, how did you get along, you and your mother and your—and your brothers and sisters?

STEARN: Well, my mom had to get a—well, she had relations there and the relations were pretty—pretty well set and they—the way it's—my mom used to tell us about her uncle and her brothers and so on used to [unclear]. And they were pretty well set until one of them was killed on a road. He was a sales [unclear] mill—at some mill—flourmill, what have you. So she had it tough.

LEVINE: You mean he was killed—

STEARN: She had it tough after. Killed during—

LEVINE: —in an accident or—

STEARN: No, killed during—

LEVINE: A pogrom or something?

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Or an attack?

STEARN: Otherwise, there—his trips out of town.

LEVINE: I see. I see.

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: So your mother's name?

STEARN: My mom's name is Rebecca Kruk—K-R-U-K. It was her maiden name.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And your father's name?

STEARN: Gershon—G-E-R-S-H-O-N. Gershon Stearn.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: And it's S-T-E-A-R-N I have here but I believe the way they spelled it coming in is S-T-E-R-A-N.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: So at that time, I know, not only our family but others, they spelled it—when they came here they sort of spelled it one way or the other.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay, well, we'll put it down as both. So if anybody's looking for this interview, they'll be sure to find it. Now, tell me a—about your grandparents. Did you have any contact with either set of grandparents when you were a little boy before you came here?

STEARN: Not that I know of. No, not that I—I can't remember any. No.

LEVINE: How about your memories of Ko—Kovel or—

STEARN: Kowal—

LEVINE: Kowal or—

STEARN: Kowal—

LEVINE: —or moving around, whatever.

STEARN: Yeah, Kowal. Not very much. No, not very—

LEVINE: Anything—anything that you can remember about Russia?

STEARN: The only thing though is when I got on board the ship and I was sicker than anything – gosh, yes. In fact, my mom thought they were going to send me back, the way I was real sick. And you know, how when you get—at that time in Ellis Island, you know, they check you pretty good. And Mom was very much afraid.

LEVINE: Do you know what you had?

STEARN: No. Well, I was very sick, had a fever and—and now, we were in the bottom of the ship all that way across.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, do you know why it was that, well—well, first, let's say you had sisters and brothers in Russia. What were their names, from the oldest on down? You were the baby but—

STEARN: Well, Goldie was the oldest of the sisters.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: I think she was about six years—five or six years older than I was.
Yeah, six years older. And she was a—two years older to my brother.

LEVINE: And what was his name?

STEARN: Is—Isador.

LEVINE: And then the next one?

STEARN: And the next one was me.

LEVINE: Oh, so there were just the three children and your mother—

STEARN: Three children, right.

LEVINE: —who came together.

STEARN: That's right.

LEVINE: Now, did you travel alone or with the—

STEARN: No, we traveled with my aunt—most of them has passed away. My aunt
and my uncle that had the meat market, had meat market with my Dad.
He assisted, should I say and he was—

LEVINE: You mean in this country or in—

STEARN: In here, in this country.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

STEARN: After we got—yeah. Over there, no, I don't remember anything.

LEVINE: No. Do you know what your father did over there before he came over here?

STEARN: No, I don't.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you know why your father came when he came?

STEARN: Well, to make it easier to get—in fact, the—some of the relatives then, you know, gave him money so he could go and get a start here and then send for his—rest of the family.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, do you—

STEARN: That's what my mom told me he said.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you know if your mother's family and your father's family had been in that area? Like, their parents? Maybe their grandparents—or had they come from someplace else?

STEARN: That—

LEVINE: Do you know?

STEARN: That I couldn't tell you.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: No.

LEVINE: Yeah, I was just wondering.

STEARN: Couldn't be as [unclear]. I know that Dad—well, his people in there—I know that they were—the way it says here, they were pretty well—got along pretty well. See, here it says. I look back here and I see Gershon married Rebecca—that's—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: —my mom and dad—in Kowal in 1906.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: So—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: She was 16 and he was 23.

LEVINE: Oh, hmm.

STEARN: They were married for 56 years. There was a wonderful golden wedding anniversary party for them.

LEVINE: Hmm. Well, I—getting back to that period of time, did you have many aunts and uncles—

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: —around?

STEARN: See, like the parents of Gershon—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: —my dad, were Yitzik Stearn and Sarah. Gershon's siblings were Esther Gelowitz [ph]. She died. She was from Newark, New Jersey. Esther Gelowitz and her family passed away.

LEVINE: I see.

STEARN: I noted -- Esther Gelowitz, Rivke Stearn, Elke Stearn.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, it's not—I think it's worth noting—

STEARN: Go ahead. Go ahead.

LEVINE: I think it's worth noting that there is this booklet on the family that if—you know, if somebody wanted to contact you and you wanted them to see it, they could—you know, you have a lot more information—

STEARN: Okay.

LEVINE: —than we're going to cover here.

STEARN: See. Like, the parents of Rebecca were Jacob -- Yankel. That's parents of Rebecca, my mom's—

LEVINE: Right.

STEARN: —parent—were named Jacob or Yankel Kruk—K-R-U-K, see.

LEVINE: So—so you were probably named after him.

STEARN: After --yeah.

LEVINE: Right. Okay.

STEARN: And all Rebecca's siblings were Miriam Kruk and Goren, Rachel Kruk [unclear]. One of 'em's supposed to be living in Santos, Brazil and so on but you'd see ----.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, we'll—we know that you have that information but let's—

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: —focus on you and your personal experience—

STEARN: All right.

LEVINE: —here. So, okay. Any other things—aunts and uncles you remember when you were in Russia?

STEARN: No, I don't.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: That's something I don't remember.

LEVINE: And you have the sense though that, after your father came here, you and your mother were—and sisters—sister and brother were, like, running and hiding and—

STEARN: Well, it seems about—that's what Mom used to tell, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: Right. And my brother.

LEVINE: And your brother. So now—

STEARN: Isador.

LEVINE: Isador. Now, when you—when—what happened? Did your father send the fare for the—

STEARN: Yeah, my Dad sent us the fare to come—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: —to come here and he made enough, I suppose, here to send for us.

LEVINE: And, of course, you—he left—he left before World War I and you left after World War I. And that's probably why.

STEARN: Right.

LEVINE: Because the war was in the middle. Right.

STEARN: Right.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: Right.

LEVINE: Well, now, do you remember leaving the town and—and traveling to Amsterdam? You mentioned Amsterdam where you left from.

STEARN: No, I don't. I don't.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: I really don't. Huh-uh.

LEVINE: But do—do you know the name of the ship?

STEARN: Yes, we have the—my dad traveled on the—to New York City on a S.S. Kursk—K-U-R-S-K.

LEVINE: And how about you and your mother?

STEARN: And it sailed on July the 8th, 1913. See, that's a couple months after—

LEVINE: Now, wait a minute. He was already here though, right?

STEARN: Yes, he—

LEVINE: So I think—

STEARN: It sailed—yeah.

LEVINE: Well, that couldn't have been him then. That might have been the ship you took.

STEARN: No.

LEVINE: Because in 1913—

STEARN: The trip I took was '20. 1920 I came here.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. He came the year you were born, 1913.

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: That was right, okay.

STEARN: Right.

LEVINE: So then how about the ship you and your mother and—and brother and sister—

STEARN: Well, okay. That was [Mutters]—on the S.S. Lapland—L-A-P-L-A-N-D from Antwerp.

LEVINE: Okay, great. From Antwerp? Oh, so it is from Belgium? It's not—

STEARN: It's in Belgium?

LEVINE: It's not from Amsterdam; it's from Antwerp.

STEARN: Antwerp.

LEVINE: Okay. That's good.

STEARN: It says Germany—

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: But that isn't Germany. No.

LEVINE: No, it's Belgium. You're right.

STEARN: That's right. Grandma was very seasick on the boat. Golda remembered—that's my sister—remembered the special clothes she had for this trip. [Chuckles]

LEVINE: Hmm.

STEARN: She was able to wash these clothes on the boat. Grandma had a pretty piece of velvet, was going to use to make a hat but the velvet was still on the boat. [Chuckles] It says Rebecca's sister—that's my mom's sister—Miriam Goren, that came with their family and her three children.

LEVINE: How do you spell Goren?

STEARN: G-O-R-E-N.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: And journeyed with the Stearn family. Miriam's children—that's my aunt's—were Esther at that time. It's Es—E-S-T-E-R—A., it says there—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: —10, Chaja—C-H-A-J-A—8, and Yankel, 6.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: The S.S. Lapland arrived at Ellis Island on August the 14th, 1920.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: The manifest reads as follows. It says. S-T-E-R-N, Rebecca, mother.
Children, Lima—that's Goldie.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: L-I-M-A. She was 11 at that time.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Isaac. That's my brother, Itzik —Isador—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: —9; Jakow—J-A-K-O-W—on the board it — 6. Rebecca was 34 years
old, 5, 6 tall, brown hair, brown eyes. Housewife of Kowal, Russia.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Birth date was January the 1st of 19—1890. She can read Hebrew and
can write. Her mother was Edja Kruk of Kowal. Husband paid for her

passage and she had \$55 in cash when she arrived. Children had \$20 in cash. Destination was 907 Cherry Avenue, Canton, Ohio.

LEVINE: Wow, uh-huh. Okay.

STEARN: That's the same place where my aunt lived in that—

LEVINE: Your Aunt Miriam?

STEARN: —that Goren Meat Market. Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Well, we'll get to that part.

STEARN: All right. Rebecca and Gershon worked hard all their lives but always provided—had always provided a warm home life.

LEVINE: [unclear]. Okay. Well, can we—can—we'll go now from your memories, okay, coming into New York? Do you remember that?

STEARN: Yes, I can remember comin' in to New York. And at that time my mom was very careful regarding—she told me later about my sickness and so on and afraid that the doctors would send me back and so on. That was one of the big worries of people coming in to Ellis Island at that time. And she told me we was down in the--- down in the ship—on the bottom of the ship all the way across and that I was the one that was really sick.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: And—

LEVINE: Do you recall—?

STEARN: —I can recall the place in Ellis Island with that long, wooden benches—long ones. And we was altogether; we didn't want to move away from Mom or the family—either one of the family, Goren or Stearns. And I can remember her buying me a—something like a—hmm, like a Monkey. Pull on the string; the monkey goes up. One of them small playthings and I can still remember that very well, that.

LEVINE: And she bought that at Ellis Island, do you think?

STEARN: At Ellis Island, she bought it.

LEVINE: Huh.

STEARN: Yeah, they sold different toys and what have you. And the next thing I can remember that we were going on a train from New York to Canton, Ohio. And they had people from Canton, Ohio and so on to make sure that we's getting on the right train and what have you and that, you know, we got there. And I remember people at the train station waitin' for us to get there. We had—we had no – s--. I know there was quite a few people around the train to—

LEVINE: To receive you.

STEARN: —to welcome us.

LEVINE: To welcome you.

STEARN: Receive us and so on and—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. What was that like? Was your father there?

STEARN: I'm sorry.

LEVINE: Was your father there?

STEARN: Was my father there? Oh, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: What was it like for a six-year-old to see his father for the first time?

STEARN: Well, that's—

LEVINE: Do you remember that?

STEARN: I can't remember that real well.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: I know there was my dad and I know he was quiet. He was a little bit quiet of people.

LEVINE: Yeah, huh.

STEARN: Very quiet. And my uncle came there and that's—he could greet his family too.

LEVINE: Oh, I see because it was his—

STEARN: Yeah, the same.

LEVINE: It was his wife and children.

STEARN: Yeah, it was wife—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, same thing.

STEARN: —and his three children too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And this was your father's brother? Or no?

STEARN: No.

LEVINE: Your mother's brother.

STEARN: That was my mother's sister. No, the one that we—she—

LEVINE: Oh, it was your mother's sister.

STEARN: —married Goren—

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: —was a sister to my mom.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. Now, why did your father and your uncle go to Canton, Ohio? Do you know?

STEARN: No, I don't. I don't. I never—we've discussed it sometimes [unclear]. He always brought up the subject there of people that my uncle knew.

LEVINE: Oh, who had—maybe were here?

STEARN: Yeah. Yeah, that my uncle knew—lived here. And they knew that my uncle was a butcher at that time.

LEVINE: So what did your father do when he—when you got here, what was your father doing for work?

STEARN: Well, he was in with my uncle on the meat market busi—you know, in the store. Should I say the store? It was a small store, kosher meats.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: Yeah. [Chuckles] It was a kosher meat market. South Cherry was a Jewish district.

LEVINE: Oh, it was? Uh-huh.

STEARN: Yeah. I know they had one other meat market, kosher market, Cohen's. There was Cohen's and Goren's.

LEVINE: So there was quite a—an immigrant community of Jewish people—

STEARN: Yeah, there was—yeah, quite—

LEVINE: —in Canton, Ohio when you got here.

STEARN: There was quite a few when we got here, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: I think there was two *shuls* (synagogues) that—I don't know about—well, there was a temple but I didn't know too much about that. But I knew the orthodox *shuls* were at South Cherry around old—

LEVINE: Huh.

STEARN: —wooden structures.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about that meat market that—about the store? Do you remember, I mean, anything about it?

STEARN: Well, I knew that my dad also drove the small little wagon—

LEVINE: To deliver?

STEARN: —to deliver the meats, 'cause he took me on a few rides on the horse and buggy.

LEVINE: Well, do you remember getting used to having your father in your life?

STEARN: No, Mom was always my—Mom was [chuckles] the boss.

LEVINE: [unclear]

STEARN: She was, you know—Mom was—she knew several languages. Oh, yeah. She was—and I noticed that in the book here she come from a pretty, well, decent family too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, what was spoken at home? What did your mother and father speak at home?

STEARN: Well, Yiddish.

LEVINE: Yiddish, uh-huh.

STEARN: Yeah, they spoke Yiddish and very little English. My Mom, later on, got to be pretty good [chuckles] in—at that also. She was—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Yeah, she was pretty good. She had—she had a very—seemingly, good education, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, how about you with the language? Do you remember learning English? What was that like for you?

STEARN: Well, it seemed pretty easy the way—yeah, the way—first thing I got was when—gosh, first year in school some of the kids from South Market School, from the South District School got to know me and took me downtown to sell papers. [Chuckles]

LEVINE: Okay. Tell about that. Tell about how you got started selling papers and—

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: And were you seven years old then?

STEARN: I was about seven years of age.

LEVINE: [unclear].

STEARN: And they took me downtown to sell papers. And penny apiece and I can remember a fellow that was in charge of the papers was a Mr. Frank Fish, a Jewish fellow—was in charge of the papers, a repository there, and trusted us with the papers. And we'd sell them and then—and then here was my mom looking all over for me after school. I didn't come home. [Laughs] And that when I did come home she give me heck. Yeah, she give me the devil. Oh, yeah! Telling me, "Got to tell me where you're going, and this and --"—yeah, she was right. She was right, yeah. We lived on 11th Street Southeast right by the school so, oh, about three, four blocks away. The school was South Market School where mostly—well, there was Polish kids and there was Jewish kids. And there was German kids, Italians. There was all involved—Italian people involved in that area.

LEVINE: Did—did the Jews and the Italians get along?

STEARN: Oh, yeah. We got along good. In fact, most of them is the ones that took me downtown to sell papers. [Chuckles]

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. So tell me about the selling of the papers. Like, what did you do on a given day when you were little and you would sell—?

STEARN: Well, little and selling papers and made half a cent on each one. So if I bought home 20 cents or 25 cents, gosh, that was a lot of money in them days—and gave it to Mom.

LEVINE: Now, what would you do? Would you go pick up a bunch of papers and—

STEARN: Yeah, they would trust me. There was a fellow with a cart, pushcart [unclear]. And he was in charge of the circulation. In them days, there was street sales, a lot of street sales. Route carriers would sell—sell them. They was mostly out with the street sales --- mostly around town and around business districts and what have you. And that's where we—where—and they'd give us a corner. They'd give us a corner, say, the post office or just next door or something. And you're not allowed to go around selling on their corners. See? You're supposed to stay where they tell you to in them days. And that—that went on and we got to be friends with many, many people as kids. And my brother—my brother, same thing. See?

LEVINE: Oh, he sold them too? Isaac, isn't it?

STEARN: He sold—oh, yes. He sold the papers too there. He was—he had a good head on him too. And so here's what happened later on. My brother and his partner, Julian Coursey [ph]—Guido —Guido Coursey and my brother, Isidor, took over charge of the newspapers when they was, oh, 18 and 20—I guess 17, 20—18 and 20, yeah, because my brother was killed when he was 20 years of age in an accident—auto accident. And Guido Coursey—him—he was also killed in the same accident. Both of them.

LEVINE: Wow.

STEARN: And the fellow driving the car, who was from Akron at that time—they had a furniture manufacturing truck moving. It was a furniture truck, a big furniture truck. And two of them were killed, my brother and him,

both in the front seat. The driver had a broken finger. And so here, the brother—I took my brother's place.

LEVINE: Well, tell me what Guido and your—and—

STEARN: They were in charge of the newspapers then.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: Later on. That's—this happened later on. But as far as us, well, we still sold papers and we—we got more than sell papers. You know, them days you go down. There's certain trains, Pennsylvania train, Lake Erie train and the Baltimore train, the different sections. So what we done, even when was 10, 11, 12 years of age, we're down there gettin' times of the train coming in, see.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Of the train coming in from each section, see. And we carried baggage, see—very little taxis or anything like that. You know, there was—so here we'd snatch your bag. I'd get—so we carried these uptown for these people.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: And they'd give you—

LEVINE: Be carrying the—to where they were going?

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: Wow.

STEARN: Downtown. They used to go downtown to the hotels, see. That's le-- for business people like that, they was—we carried them uptown. So sometime we'd get 15, 20 cents or 25 cents for carrying a bag. Especially I could get some of them—woman—saleswoman from New York or Chicago—Chicago. And they—naturally, they would go to these stores, like Stern [Not understood]. They would be sales representatives from big—from these dress companies or other—suitcases, what have you—package. And we carried their articles uptown.

Because each one—we knew Lake Erie was the closest one. That was about five blocks away from town. The Pennsylvania Railroad was about nine blocks away from town. And the Baltimore was about, oh, 9, 10 blocks from each section. And we knew what—the times of the trains coming in. That was part of it, see. Now, a lot of times we wanted to make some more money. And we got a little older; we got a little smarter and we're—so we used to sell chewing gum, buy a whole package of gum—otherwise, a carton. And we'd pay so much for a carton. Well, we'd go in front of a theater and sell them the chewing gum. A nickel for a package, five sticks in the pack. So we made, well, I guess 30, 40 cents per carton. We'd sell more than a carton. So that's means of making a living one-way or the other. We done it hon—honestly.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STEARN: Everything was in an honest manner we sell.

LEVINE: Well, now, the money you made, what did you do with it?

STEARN: Took it home.

LEVINE: All of it?

STEARN: Yeah, took it ho—took most money home. Except on a Sunday, Mom would sort of give you the money, go to the theater.

LEVINE: Like the movies? Is that—or—

STEARN: Oh, yeah, 10-cent movie.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Yeah, movies and every—sure, there was movies then. And buy taffy --- I'll never forget, a nickel's worth of taffy. So things like that. My brother, God bless him, he was done all right too. You know.

LEVINE: He was doing the same kinds of things.

STEARN: Yeah, he was—

LEVINE: [unclear].

STEARN: Well, he was smarter. Well—

LEVINE: He was older.

STEARN: He would tell us how to go sh—go to—for—in front of a movie, which ones was going to draw the most people, and sell chewing gum. And otherwise—and my sister, she would—she was the oldest and naturally - -- Mom would have her around the house and so on. And then she got a job later on when she was about 17 or so, and she worked at the watch

factory. I remember, Ham—not Hamilton but it's the [unclear] Hampton [ph] Watchworks, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: And she worked there, you see.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: Well, when you first arrived, did—did your—did Goldie and Isador and you go right to school?

STEARN: Yeah, we went to school.

LEVINE: And what was that like?

STEARN: [unclear].

LEVINE: What was school like here? I mean, were—

STEARN: Huh?

LEVINE: Were the teachers nice to you? Were—were—

STEARN: Oh, people were nice, yes. People were nice to us. There wasn't, quite, hatreds around. Later on in life around here ---- Like I remember different series of kids would sell papers and we were friends, very good friends. See?

LEVINE: Were you ever treated like a greenhorn? Were you—were you, like, made fun of because you couldn't speak or—

STEARN: Well, a lot of times it was --- but—but nothin' that I ever thought they was doing something that—that I would get mad about, no. I thought I was treated very well — I thought by the people and by the other kids. Later on, I—sure, I got into fights.

LEVINE: What—what would—you be apt to get into a fight about? Do you remember?

STEARN: Oh, I can ---- it's very --- oh, different corners. Like I said, different corners. You get on somebody else's corner and dare sell papers on my corners --- oh, we'd fight. And then, later on, I boxed, boxed, yes —

LEVINE: Oh, how did that start?

STEARN: That start—well, one of my friends learned how to box and they were— some of my friends were trainers.

LEVINE: How old were you then?

STEARN: We was about 15, 16.

LEVINE: So would you go to a gym?

STEARN: Oh, yes. We went to gym, sure. And we got a good start there of learning how to defend yourself and—and all that. And—and it's like everything else. We always are afraid, maybe, of a certain kid, see. Then we try him out and win. [Chuckles]

LEVINE: Then you weren't so afraid—

STEARN: Never—never would the kid—

LEVINE: If you beat a kid, he wouldn't [unclear]—

STEARN: Oh, yeah. That's—that was it. See, that was it. Then other kids would see it and they'd take you in among their friends. Oh, you know, it was—"He won." You know, "He's a good kid." But anyway, that's the way kids were, you know. And I was friendly with most ---. At times, you get—the one—things I can remember is go swimming with other kids. And we weren't allowed to go in because we were Jews or some other nationality that's out—oh, yes. In some of them places we—

LEVINE: What kind of place was it?

STEARN: 'Spick' swimming places. You know, well—

LEVINE: In a pool or a lake or—

STEARN: A lake.

LEVINE: And you couldn't go in because you were Jewish?

STEARN: No.

LEVINE: Wow.

STEARN: Oh, yeah. That was—that here a long time ago. Sure. I can remember. I—a lot of people say about Mars [ph] Lake but I can't remember being turned away at Mars Lake. Turned away right—Lake Able [ph], different places, outskirts. But—

LEVINE: Hmm.

STEARN: But we were turned away.

LEVINE: Can you remember, like, any instances of that happening to you?

STEARN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: That you went to go swimming and—

STEARN: Yes, that happened to me at that time as a young kid, 13, 14 years of age. You know, you—

LEVINE: Do you remember what you thought or felt or --?

STEARN: No, I didn't—thinking because they was—they warned me. People warned me about going here, going there. Yeah, that was very—but that was very seldom.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STEARN: That was one place where I was—stood away from there. But otherwise, in different places, like Marsh [ph] Lake and so on—and we had our own amusement park system here. But—

LEVINE: Were there other groups that were prejudiced against—in that way?

STEARN: I'm sorry. What?

LEVINE: Were there other groups that also couldn't go in certain places? Can you think—?

STEARN: Oh, I suppose. Sure. Would be—

LEVINE: I mean—

STEARN: That—it's usually they look at the skin and see someone of dark-complected [unclear], like—

LEVINE: Sicilians?

STEARN: Well, Syrians too. They've got — or any—

LEVINE: But I mean from Sicily, let's say.

STEARN: Oh.

LEVINE: The Italians from Sicily?

STEARN: Oh, that's—sure. [Unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: I mean, they—so they said, "Oh, we have memberships only."
[Chuckles] And we knew better.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. Hmm.

STEARN: But it was then. Heck we had where years ago I can still remember when I'm selling papers downtown and the Ku Klux Klan had parades. Right, had parades downtown. And I can remember a couple of police officers at that time being Klansmen and walking in a parade.

LEVINE: Do you—were you aware of Ku Klux Klan activities? Any activities around Canton?

STEARN: Well, but they—people would tell us. I mean, what—what they—they don't like this and they don't like Jews. They don't like --- they don't—they don't—they don't like any foreigners. That was the Ku Klux Klan.

LEVINE: Did they ever do anything? Like, did they ever kill anybody—?

STEARN: Well, no—

LEVINE: —or beat anybody?

STEARN: No, not that I know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: But after awhile, after we got a little stronger, more and more --- then, that's when the town sort of saw its ways. And any time we saw --- like these officers that was Klan, that was the end of that. Yeah, we can look back and see a lot of that, you know, because in that time, even officers—you know, police officers are supposed to be pretty cordial and what have you. But later on, it got to be that -- oh, some Italian people got on the department and many others, you know, from different nationalities and so on. But still, you always had that feeling. You always had that "I can look back." I'll never forget that long.

You know, this one incident I had on the department when I was on the police department. We went to—I'll never forget that. We went—played --- oh, we had — the YMCA would leave us in free, police officers. And

we played like—like, this one game was volleyball. And choose up side and so on. This one guy, be all over the floor. And I would say, “Ernie, play your position. You know, you’re all over the floor.” “Why I had --- dirty Jew.” Yeah. Open handed. I hit him; down he went. Now I said, “We’ll go downstairs, put the gloves on. There’s a small room in the Y.” And I was going to kick the heck out of him. And he was a big fellow, like 200 pound and that’s a – that does right there. But he wouldn’t go.

LEVINE: You, by now, were what?

SREARN: Then ---

LEVINE: In your 20s or 30s?

STEARN: Well, no. I was about, oh, 26, 27 years of ---. When I got on the department, I was about 23 or 24.

LEVINE: How did you happen to go on to the department, the police department?

STEARN: Well, it was one of them things, like after being in charge of the newspapers for certain—I was—I—we took—my—my brother passed away and so did Coursey. So Joe Coursey took his brother’s place and I took my brother’s place, the paper system. See, in charge of the newspapers. So we’s in charge of papers and Joe got muscular dystrophy but he still worked. He had to have a chair and so we came around and worked—put him in his car or what have you.

LEVINE: What were your duties, like, being in charge of the newspapers? What’d you have to do?

STEARN: The duties were handling papers. Let's see. We been --- get the salary from the repository, the newca — the newspaper. We'd get a salary and sometimes on a commission too. It all depends on the sale of papers all day. I can remember some of the big sales papers. Gosh, like when that Lindbergh baby was found murdered, we sold thousands and thousands of papers. There was a big extra [unclear]. But—so we looked back and then it was 1937 — about that, 1936, '37. I was in charge of the papers on—the newspapers—kids coming in to check in. And they'd go into the circulation department where we was at -- inside the building. And we checked the kid in --- see how many papers you sold, this and that. And then -- so we cashed kid in.

So this day — this night, I should say, the big bosses came, must have had a meeting back there. And they stopped to talk to me. “Hi, Babe.” You know, everyone was a—nice fellows. Good—Stuart Brush with the Brushmore [ph] papers. There was Mr. Gastin [ph]. There was—and Judge Votary [ph]. So there was big people and there was head people on the Brushmore papers at that time.

LEVINE: How many papers were you handling?

STEARN: Huh?

LEVINE: How many different papers?

STEARN: One paper, the Repository --- Canton Repository.

LEVINE: The “Canton Repository.”

STEARN: That was the one we were in charge of.

LEVINE: Okay, uh-hmm.

STEARN: And, so, they would talk to me and kid me around. Somehow, they always liked me a lot. And they said, "Babe, this is" — this is Stuart Brush. I remember him very well. I—he was married to—Katherine Brush was married to him. He was a [unclear]—Katherine Brush was a, oh, author or what have you.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: She wrote books on the [Not understood].

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: But anyways, they had talked to me and said, "Babe, why don't you get on the police department? You'd make a good living on the police department, like [unclear]. See -- 'cause you like kids." See he knows I liked kids, actually taking care of kids, you know, since 1930. This is seven years of handling kids. That's when my brother passed away.

LEVINE: You—you started managing with Joe at—

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: How old were you when you started? About 20 when you started—

STEARN: No.

LEVINE: — managing the papers?

STEARN: No, we was about 17.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Wow. Now, with the kids that you hired to sell the papers, were they seven years old too? Or were they older when they ---?

STEARN: Oh, some of the kids was a little older at this date ---. [Chuckles]

LEVINE: That seems so young.

STEARN: Yeah. There was—there was 10, 11, 12.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Yeah, and they were from all nationalities, all different kids.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Can look back and, in fact, later on there was some judges—that later on got to be judges ---- that sold papers for us and so on. But when that—I look back and I—when the fellow talked to me about being a policeman - -- s – stu --and me and others, talked to me. He said, “Oh.” I said, “Oh, you’re trying to get rid of me, huh, Stuart?” He said, “No, Babe. Heck, you could stay here but you’d get a nice pension on the department— police department. And you know how to handle people and kids and stuff like that.” So after awhile I just paid no attention. You know, with— got there and I started talking to a couple policeman ---I can’t – who— here ---what this --- what’s that? Took the examination, passed with a --. You know, let me see. I was fourth—yeah, fourth out of—oh, there must have been about a hundred or so took the examination. You know, for police. In that time was tough days, 1937. Still—

LEVINE: Depression.

STEARN: —Depression days yet, you know. Took the examination and the mayor put on, I think 14 people—14 of us, naturally, got in the department.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: It was very interesting. You know, at that time we started to get cruiser duties and radio system was starting to run. You know, talking through radios instead of calling from different boxes out in the—but this one, we had radios and so on. And here I am on the police department.

LEVINE: Now, did you stay in school for awhile or did you drop out early or—

STEARN: I dropped out, then made it up later.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: I don't—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Yes, I got—in fact, I got my diploma. I'll show it—when I get it here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Anyways—and the—went through that real good and had to go to different schools, you know, naturally through—

LEVINE: The training.

STEARN: The training. This and that, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: And—which was good for me. I had—

LEVINE: Did you like it right away, the police work?

STEARN: Police force? Yes, I did.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: I did—talk to different people, knew them. Got to know them real good, you know. And I walked the beat by myself, walking the beat.

LEVINE: Downtown Canton?

STEARN: Downtown and also Carnahan [ph] District, like where the --- and Greek people and Turks and so on lived. Carnahan District. And—

LEVINE: What—h—what do you say? Carnanda?

STEARN: Carnahan.

LEVINE: Oh, Carnahan.

STEARN: Yeah, that's where more of Turkish restaurants or Greek restaurants and so on—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: People—mostly Greek people lived in that area. Nice people, very nice. We got along real good. And I can still look back and oh, good gosh. Different things that had happened.

LEVINE: Like, p—what comes to your mind?

STEARN: Different thing—

LEVINE: Things that happened?

STEARN: Well, one thing. Walking the beat. Well, that was later on. All that's later on. And walked the beat just before I got married. I come back from service. That's right and then I got put on the beat. But I'll tell about that later on because—

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: —that was, yes, even the Greek people, if you remember that—that they had a doings recently. And there was a picture of my hand. It was one of them thing—I was walking out. I'll tell you right now so about—

LEVINE: Yeah.

STEARN: That came on later on. I was walking the Carnahan beat. I got to about 11th and Carnahan and the there was a tavern there. And I hear a big commotion. There was some bella ---- fella from Kentucky was—we used to call hillbilly Kentuckian but they call us there too, I suppose. But the hell with it. And he was making a commotion and tore up a few things in there. And I came in and saw it. And he swung at me and I had to put him down and called the wagon. We had the box—one of them boxes. We didn't have no radios. We called from the box outside.

That was the Carnahan. Called for the wagon and the wagon come and put—and it had to be in 1948 [unclear], because they—about oh, seven, seven-thirty at nighttime my hand starts swelling up right here. So they took me to Cameracy [ph]. I called for a cruiser to come pick me up and they took me there to Cameracy Hospital at that time, which was at Eighth and Market North. It was downtown; this hospital was.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: And they put it in a cast. So went down there. My wife—well, she—my wife -- my girlfriend until ---. Had my hand back where I said. “I think it’s bad news.” “Oh, no. Didn’t want to leave [unclear].” And I was supposed to get married Sunday -- at the *Shaare Taare* [ph]-- synagogue. And she says, “[Not understood] now I’m gonna look.” She said, “Oh, that’s nothing.” So I got married, nice and white. And my cast was here, this white. [Laughs] Put on the ring. Place was packed. They said it was packed. We had it full.

Anyway, so they remembered --- Greek people -- and they had a picture of me walking down the aisle with my hand in a cast. And recently, a couple years ago they had that—they showed that. That was—we both were invited to the Greek church and showed what the -- they --- Car -- this what happened at Carnahan District. See, because they had the Carnahan District, like a big doings, big, well-to-do people by then from the big Greek fraternity. Anyways, they showed it to us. They showed it on the screen to these people there.

LEVINE: Wow.

STEARN: This happened on—

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: But—and that's the way it was. Then right after that, became plain clothes and then a detective and a sergeant. Then a lieutenant after I got down to the Boys Club again --- after I got to be sergeant—detective. Went around for awhile—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: —a year or two as a detective, plain clothes. And sergeant — 1954, I became sergeant because they put me down at the Boys Club as director of the Canton Police Boys Club. But—

LEVINE: This is while you were a policeman and you were director of the Boy's Club.

STEARN: Yeah, it was a Police Boys Club. See. And the other fellow had retired, the one that was director. It had just started in 1950, but I was in charge of boxing at that time. They'd have me down there in charge of boxing at the club just on a Saturday morning program. And the—so when that fellow left the mayor put me down as—because I got to be a sergeant about then. Because one of the fellows retired, sergeant retired and they made me sergeant. You got time?

LEVINE: No—yeah. Go ahead.

STEARN: And they made me sergeant and in charge of the Police Boys Club. And we got the club with boxing. We had a machine shop. We had a wood shop, arts and craft. And then later on -- after we got different things started with so many kids in the club --- then I got so many that we even had a waiting list for the Boys Club. It seems only [unclear]. And so

then we started — I'll never forget this woman — Jewish woman says — I was walking down there and she says, "Why don't you, Babe, start a choir?" I said, "What do I know about music?" She said, "Oh, you —you know, you've got that woman who'll take over the directorship." She was a teacher—that she'd do. So I started it up. The first thing, we started with what, 10, 12, 20 employees. We had 60-boy choir and I'll show you pictures of it.

LEVINE: [unclear].

STEARN: White and black. Terrific. We went all over, sang. The PWS [ph] in Cleveland and many other big places. They invited us. I think I got some in here --- of places. Then later on, gentlemen—a Mr. George Duvel [ph], who's -- heads up the People's Bank here in Canton—he was chairman of the bank—came out of that. He saw the choir sing that thing. He says, "Babe." He says, "Come up here. I want to talk to you about — in my office." So I went up there and they said, "Why don't you start a band?" I had no instruments—nothing. "I can't." He says, "Don't worry about in—I'll buy everything you want."

The first thing he bought us was a new piano [unclear], then instruments. [Unclear]. Then the first thing we wanted to do is, "Well, what about the uniforms?" You know, for the time being I told him we'll get—went down to Richmond Clothes and got them blue shorts, white socks. We had black shoes with them. He had—we silk-screened our shirts, white shirts with blue. And that says Police Boys Club Band in first—[Aside, noise]. This—I can remember this so well. After about several months we had about 22, 24. So we knew two songs. And at that time the Carnation Day Parade is being held right now in Alliance, Ohio, just 20 miles from here. And they wanted us. I said we only knew two songs.

LEVINE: Do you remember what songs they were?

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

STEARN: “The Old Gray Mare” was one of them and “Cherry Pink” was the other. Two songs. And my assistant, Ralph McCauley [ph], and I carried the banner. Big blue banner [unclear]. The banners was worth more than most of the uniforms. [Chuckles] But anyway, came to—and we carried the banner. And every other block they changed the song, you know. Different song. [Laughter] So we carried it. Oh, I was — so here, now that band is well known. It’s now in Madison [ph]. We did have it here for a while. But couldn’t—at that time, we couldn’t keep up with it. You know, them bands grow and they cost a lot of money.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: So the band is 120-piece band. Well, yeah, that’s—they played the other day in Masseem [ph], 10,000 people with—had 10 different—from different cities come in. And they have first, second, third, fourth, fifth so—and they were number three. They—out of 10 bands they were third—drum and bugle competition. That’s—you ever hear of competition – the bands?

LEVINE: It’s a drum and bugle band?

STEARN: Yeah, that’s the one that we —a drum and bugle band.

LEVINE: Wow, that’s wonderful.

STEARN: And they've been—oh, heck. The band has been there, I would say fifty—oh, it's about thirty years.

LEVINE: Wow. What—when you think back of coming to this country as a six-year-old and starting out a new life, do you think being an immigrant—as a little boy, do you think that made a difference in who — who you became or the kind of person you became?

STEARN: It — a lot of it did. A lot of it did because I get along with people—get along with the other kids. See, like, they took me a pal — kids in the river know me from the school — took me up there to hustle papers with them. And they [unclear] [chuckles]—and they took me in as one of the kids and—and were nice companionships and so on.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Sure.

LEVINE: Yeah. What are you proudest of? What do you feel most satisfied of—all the probably wonderful things that you've accomplished?

STEARN: One of the big things is with kids --- at the Police Boys Club. And at the Police Boys Club it was kids and dealing with them, you see. A lot of them, sure—kids are not always good. They're bad too. It's how you treat them. You can holler at them one minute, put your arm around them the next, walk down—walk with them and so on, buy them a bottle of pop or something, but have a good feeling with them. That was one of the big things in life was having a—like, I look back at different things like this here. I look back. President McCuny [ph] got me in with the—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, oh.

STEARN: —with the different ones that [unclear].

LEVINE: That's wonderful.

STEARN: These are the ones get --- picked out that month.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: So I was very much honored to --- that's with the big ones.

LEVINE: Now, how do you—how do you feel about a Ru — the Russian or the Jewish side of you—and compared with the American? Do—do you—do you think about that at all or—

STEARN: Oh—no, I've always been, naturally—I belong to the Center but I don't go there because I've got — there's club the way it is now. It's a community center. You see, it's—they've named it after me. The Babe Stearns—

LEVINE: Really?

STEARN: —Community Center.

LEVINE: Wonderful.

STEARN: See.

LEVINE: Now, do you—

STEARN: See, looking back—

LEVINE: Did you run for public office as well?

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: Okay.

STEARN: So after—after—I'm looking back. After 42 years of police work—counting—counting service time, so I retired. And they had a sheriff that was—or should I say the other sheriff, a Greek fellow—Popadopolis [ph]—very nice guy. A Greek fellow. This fellow beat Popadopolis. I don't know how he beat him but—and he was no good. He was—I have to say to them, he was always—well, sometimes I wondered regarding Klansmen and what have you. The Birch Society, what have you ---- different things----- that was—and the people wanted me to beat him because he had beaten their favorite, George Popadopolis, the time before. And so they said, "Well, Babe will"—I was Democrat—and "Babe will"—so I talked to several and I talked to the group here, asked them now how many supported. "I don't want you guys coming in to support me now and later on drop me." You see. So they supported me all the way. And I can remember that again was even money and all that. And I beat him by 25,000 in the senate.

LEVINE: Wow.

STEARN: It was—yeah. I can look back and see the background—

LEVINE: Well, how long were you sheriff for?

STEARN: I ran one time after that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: So I was sheriff eight years. I didn't want to run no more. I retired.

LEVINE: That's when you retired.

STEARN: That's when I retired. I don't want it --- time's enough. I wanted to spend some time home too. And so here I backed my sh — my chief, Bruce Umbleby [ph], who's the sheriff now — at that time. And they thought, "Well, everybody will start running again since"—and I backed him. I says, "You people trusted me." I had a big thing and I had it on the radio and so on. I says, "You people trusted me with your kids at the Boy's Club. You people trusted me as your sheriff. Now, trust me one more time with my chief, Bruce Umbleby, as your next sheriff."

LEVINE: And he got it?

STEARN: Yep. He won. And then they tried — the Dem — Republicans tried to beat him. But he beat them again so he's been there two times and he'll go for one more time.

LEVINE: I see.

STEARN: [Not understood].

LEVINE: Okay. We're going to pause here because we're at the end of this tape.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B] [BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A]

LEVINE: Okay. This is the beginning of tape 2 and I'm speaking with Jack "Babe" Stearn here in Canton, Ohio. And maybe I could ask you a couple of questions that occurred to me and then if there's anything—

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: — more that you'd like to say. It sounds like the paperboy—I know you're a member now of—what is it—Old Newsboys Club?

STEARN: It's Ex-Newsboys.

LEVINE: Ex-Newsboys.

STEARN: Yes.

LEVINE: How—how did—what—what influence do you think it had on you, becoming a newsboy, and then your brother's death, and managing in the newsboys and all of that?

STEARN: Well, that day, if you remember now — well, you couldn't—I'm sorry— couldn't remember that. No, [chuckles] I couldn't say that. Everybody—

LEVINE: [laughs] I won't remem—

STEARN: In our—years ago, Depression came on. Things were rough. You know, how many people could go out with big sledgehammers and get on the railroad and so on? Things were real rough at that time. I remember grown people — oh, people with families selling apples on the street to make a living. Song sheets — different song sheet would come out and these people would sell song sheets. With families—people with families

didn't have jobs and they sold papers. They also sold papers in them days. And I can remember a lot of that, a lot of people.

LEVINE: So in other words, they—were there fathers or heads of families also selling papers during the

STEARN: That's what

LEVINE: --- Depression when you—

STEARN: — that's what I mean. Families, yes. They was—when I was—started. No, I didn't remember any but—

LEVINE: No.

STEARN: —during the Depression came and, oh, yeah—1930—'29, '30, '31, '32— people that had families—no food. They sold papers. They knew exactly also there was selling papers, where to get --- buy for a dime or a nickel, stale cakes. Go into these markets and so on, or old bread, three cents a loaf or something like that. Yeah, in the Arcade Market there was a bakery --- there was a pie day. And so right downtown there was some bakeries. And especially, we look back and I look back. I think it's funny now. I'm buying cream puffs—cream puffs at these stores, especially on a Saturday night. They're not open Sunday and they can't get — and didn't have refrigeration for the cream puffs. Them days it would spoil.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: And we bought them and used to buy for—a nickel or a dime's worth.
We used to have a whole bag full of cream puffs. [Chuckles]
[Unclear]—

LEVINE: Is this Depression time?

STEARN: Huh?

LEVINE: Is that Depression time?

STEARN: Depression time, yeah. There was—yeah, because [Noise] turnin' off
[Aside] ---- several years of them having a lot of times we'd sell out the
one bag and get another bag for home. [Laughs] [Noise]

LEVINE: Now, how did the Depression affect your family? How—how about your
father's meat business?

STEARN: Well, that—no, he—he—at that time, things got tough and he went on
selling racks and what have you. And that—or—on a wagon, horse and
wagon and a—a junkman.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

STEARN: A junkman. I can — still has the horse in the back of — of the house
with the barn and so on. Yeah. In fact, Mom even had a cow in
backyard. [Chuckles]

LEVINE: In downtown Canton, huh? [Chuckles]

STEARN: No, that's not downtown.

LEVINE: No, not down—

STEARN: That's 11th Street Southeast.

LEVINE: Southeast.

STEARN: It's in the—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: —southeast district and—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: And oh, yes. My mom, she was—in fact, she was a very smart woman. She wanted—in fact, on metal—gosh, I remember she wouldn't sell that metal when it was—she—she was like a stockbroker. She kept that metal until it's as high as that barn was — all over. She—and then she would [Not understood] the children there of one of them other friends of hers. You know, there was a charge whoever owned these big company — and find out that everything is good to sell. You know, it went up. It went up and so on. She had the guys come in and — with these big loaders load on the trucks and she sold it as a whole. In many things, like different -- copper and many other things that was sold. When Dad would buy the whole thing as one, she would know where the copper was, think it out the copper, take this, take different things, you know—aluminum and stuff like. Things -- like you have to—that would be worth a lot more.

LEVINE: Wow.

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, how about the boxing? Do—do you—do you think that played a part in your—in your—in your life and in your character?

STEARN: Oh, it was more of, should I say, around town and so on? You know, around different parts of Ohio, different—so on. But around town and then—then they made me, later on, Commissioner of Boxing here and also was state. I was on the State Commissioners too. And—but boxing, yeah. So I was Boxing Commissioner. I was the Chairman of the Boxing Commission here for a long time.

LEVINE: Do you think it was a good thing for a young boy to know?

STEARN: Well, boxing? Oh, yes. To know how to protect yourself, yes. Yeah, from boxing – show on. Yes. To know how but he should know how before he gets his nose and everything [chuckles] broken.

LEVINE: [Laughs]. Let's see. How—now, you said you visited Ellis Island, didn't you?

STEARN: Yes, we was there just a few months ago. I was there months ago, yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, how was that—how did that—how did you feel visiting that place?

STEARN: It's—that's what made me feel a good feeling, especially—a good feeling of seeing how things are at that time, the East Side of New York. And I — and the thing about it, I was through there during when I was in service, see. I was a — there was a fellow named George Pollack [ph]—George Pollack. And I know he had part of a sightseeing trip. I know

that because they always — “Babe,” he said. “Do you want to take a ride around Manhattan?” [Chuckles] You know, he always had tickets for me to go around Manhattan free.

LEVINE: Huh. What—what branch of the service were you in?

STEARN: The Coast Guard in 19 [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, and you were—and where were you—

STEARN: Manhattan Beach.

LEVINE: Manhattan Beach, uh-huh.

STEARN: In New York. That’s—I just about knew where to—to get off at on the Brighton Beach subway train. I — BMT—and I got off, I think, two stops before — Sheepshead Bay.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-hmm.

STEARN: And that was Sheepshead Bay and the next one’s Brighton Beach and then Coney Island.

LEVINE: Hmm.

STEARN: Did you know anything about that?

LEVINE: I know where they are but I don’t travel that route. But it sounds right.
[Chuckles]

STEARN: Sheepshead Bay and I remember Dempsey taking us to Lundy's seafood place there in Sheepshead Bay. I remember [unclear].

LEVINE: Now, did you ever see—did you ever see Ellis Island when you were in the Coast Guard at Manhattan Beach?

STEARN: No, because it was closed.

LEVINE: Right.

STEARN: Right? [Chuckles] I could—

LEVINE: Yeah. You couldn't have gone there—

STEARN: No.

LEVINE: —as a visitor, no—

STEARN: No.

LEVINE: —at that time. And—and—and I—something else I wanted to—to catch up on—

STEARN: And here I passed by a lot of times—you know, I used to take the Ellis — no, not — Staten Island train or so on. And, sure, I was single and I used to have dates and so on. I used to take the train [unclear] for a date. That was a good, cheap date.

LEVINE: That's right.

STEARN: Staten Island.

LEVINE: Makes sense. It would stay at five cents a long time.

STEARN: That's right. [Chuckles]

LEVINE: Did you see Ellis Island from the Staten Island ferry?

STEARN: Sure.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Oh, yes. I could see that. People tell me about this and I said, "Well, one of these days I'm going to come out here and visit it."

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: And then they fixed everything up.

LEVINE: Right.

STEARN: And it—I went up to Statue of Liberty a couple times. You were able to go then.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, I also neglected to ask you; how did you meet your wife?

STEARN: Oh, yeah. Yes, yes. I met her. I was home on leave and I saw her and her sister. And I came over to ask her if she wants to dance. Was—

LEVINE: Were you—were you at a—at a social club or—

STEARN: I was on leave.

LEVINE: Leave.

STEARN: I was on leave. I was in my—yeah, in my service uniform.

LEVINE: And you were at a—at a social—

STEARN: it was—yeah, it was up at the veteran's—it was a veteran's club.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Yeah, and they had band and a dance. And I took her home. She was a nurse. No, she was a — not a nurse yet. She was going to nurse's training. And I took her and I kissed and she slapped me.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

STEARN: She did, slapped me. Ask her. So girls for me. [Laughter] So when I come home from service I saw her again. I was in police uniform. She was nurse's uniform and we went out a couple years together. Yeah, and married her.

LEVINE: And what's her name?

STEARN: But Mom was the one—you know, Mom. Oh, she was eaten. She wasn't — and naturally—but after awhile, oh, she loved her as much as any. Yeah, because she took care of Mom when she was sick and, yeah, [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you feel badly marrying a non-Jewish woman? Did you—did that bother you?

STEARN: No. Oh, no, no, be—gosh, no, because my people the [Not understood] weren't around -- was *shiksas* (non-Jewish girls). [Chuckles] And they were all kind of girl [Not understood] like [Not understood] you know. You had a girl [Not understood], seeing so much. Certainly. And when I was in service, same way.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Yes. I remember George Pollack. He was Jewish. And we -- we went out with different people out there. I was single then, you see, when I was in—

LEVINE: In the service, uh-huh.

STEARN: But I can look back and know. I thought I got the right one. After 49 years — next year it's 50 years.

LEVINE: Ah—ah, that's wonderful.

STEARN: 1948.

LEVINE: I think you did the right thing.

STEARN: Yeah. [Laughter]

LEVINE: Well, tell me your wife's name and maiden name.

STEARN: Her—it's Rosalie Painter was her last—P-A-I-N-T-E-R, like a painter.

LEVINE: Painter, uh-huh. And you—you had children. What are your children's names?

STEARN: And, well, the oldest is Nancy. Nancy is—

LEVINE: Nancy.

STEARN: Haideta—H-A-I-D-ET-A—Nancy, and then Janice. She's in Cleveland. And she's Janice Silver. Her husband's a cardiologist at the Cleveland Clinic. Yeah, so she—and she's an anesthesiologist. Yeah. Yeah, I sent them both to school. One to Ohio State and she went to Cincinnati to finish up on her — from nursing to anesthesiology work — to Cincinnati. And Nancy is — we sent her to Miami U at Oxford for teaching.

LEVINE: Wonderful. So you have two girls.

STEARN: Two girls and one boy.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: Edward. Yeah, him. He's—he's been sick.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: Just recently, last six months — five mon — we hope to beat it. We hope to beat it. Cancer.

LEVINE: Oh.

STEARN: I had it 25 years.

LEVINE: Oh, that's a good—

STEARN: For the colon.

LEVINE: — good omen then. Then maybe —

STEARN: Colon -- 25 years.

LEVINE: Oh. Okay. Well, now, is there anything else that you can think of — I know we could go on for days because you've done so many things—

STEARN: Yeah, well —

LEVINE: But just in closing, rel— relevant to coming as a—as a—as a little boy in a family that was trying to make a better life and—

STEARN: That was — that was the big thing right there. We — when we first came here, naturally it was the idea of finding a house to live in, to — because we stayed at Uncle's house of charity for awhile. [Clears throat] Not long. But we — and we bought a house on 11th Street Southeast. It was a wooden home and—and—but Mom was [unclear]. She bought the house next door first thing [chuckles] also. You know?

LEVINE: She had a business head on her

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: —shoulders, didn't she?

STEARN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STEARN: She had a—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: —beautiful head, huh. Yeah, she had a business head on her shoulders.

LEVINE: Now, was your father a religious—was he—?

STEARN: Huh?

LEVINE: Was your father religious? In other words—

STEARN: Yeah, he was—

LEVINE: —was he reading the Torah and was that part of his whole—

STEARN: Yeah, well, he was—yeah, he was—went to the *shul* (synagogue). Yeah. And I'm not that religious. I go to *shul* every—at the Temple Israel, I go every holiday, you know, so [chuckles] times with—you know, in a different *Bar Mitzvah* (male rite of passage), this, that or so on. But I am not, you know, although I always look back and I say, "I got a contract with above." I says, "Oh, my God, I've got a 16-year contract with"—and I'm not going to break my contract, right? [Chuckles] [Unclear] to 16. So—but that's the way with me. I always like to kid.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: I always kid. I never forget at the—just recently at a banquet I said, “Hey, Jimmy. Send me down the salt, will ya?” He says, “Babe, salt’s not good for you.” “Not good for me? Get my pen, at the age age. Not good for me. That’s good for 16 more years.” [Laughs] I was kidding. I really like [unclear]. [Laughter] That’s me.

LEVINE: You mean you’re—you mean your—your way, you’re going to be a hundred before you—

STEARN: That’s exactly—

LEVINE: —cash in.

STEARN: I got a contract.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

STEARN: Yeah, I look back on—you have cancer. I said, “Huh?” I was out of the Boys Club then. I was [unclear] out of Boys Club when I — yeah, I can remember the doctors — I was supposed to — I had — we had Mighty Mite Baseball in our program at the club. And Cleveland Indians always send me down a speaker to talk, like Bob Feller, one of the big — and this time there was one of the — oh, owners of the Indians at that time was coming down to be the speaker. I got him. So what the heck was it? Oh, then they found cancer and here I am, supposed to be on— doctor says, “Forget about it.” I says, “You’re going to be around here with me. You’re gonna be callin’ ‘em back again the next year. Don’t worry about that.” I says, “You’re a good doctor.” And he—I’m around—

LEVINE: He [unclear]?

STEARN: But I didn't—so what they've done, I still got a tape. Maybe you want that tape. If you sent it back, it was—the—Jim Muzzy [ph], who was sport editor of the—or Clayton Horn [ph], who was publisher. I got books, tapes—

LEVINE: Now, what—what's on the tapes?

STEARN: Oh, it's stating about me—

LEVINE: Oh, great.

STEARN: — when I was — see -- when I was—I couldn't attend that—

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

STEARN: —opening day of the season.

LEVINE: I see.

STEARN: And so Jim Muzzy then took it upon himself to put a tape in the—and then also, Clayton Horn, who was the publisher of The Camden Repository, and a good friend of mine for many, many years — when he introduced me for the Chamber of Commerce Award — see, there was an award, the Chamber of Commerce Award. And he is the one that introduced me and also he taped it for me. And so he gave me the tape.

LEVINE: Oh, wonderful. Great.

STEARN: He gave me the tape and that's—

LEVINE: Yeah, I'd love to copy that and have it in—in your file.

STEARN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

STEARN: Yeah, that would be in—

LEVINE: Yeah, that would be at Ellis Island then. Now, let's—

STEARN: Yeah, if you'd give—send it back.

LEVINE: Oh, I promise.

STEARN: All right.

LEVINE: I promise. Let me ask you one last question. Now that you're retired and, after doing all these wonderful things and taking on all those responsibilities, how is life for you now at this stage?

STEARN: Well, sure. It's kind of [chuckles] slowed down. But I still—on the board of trustees on this new one. They put me on the board. And I keep on but the ---time is my own. I don't have to get up four o'clock in the morning ---- homicide here, homicide there, or people call on the phone. In fact, we've only got one phone, not two or three or so on.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: And it's it.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

STEARN: Phone is busy, forget about—that is it. And we take the phone off the hook and have — but that’s the way I am. I’m not — when I was — naturally, I wasn’t going to take the phone off the hook when I’m sheriff.

LEVINE: No. Uh-hmm. Okay. Well, I want to thank you so much. This has been a wonderful, wonderful interview. I really appreciate—

STEARN: Thank you.

LEVINE: —talking with you.

STEARN: Thank you. But you didn’t get enough of my people. That’s the thing about it. See —

LEVINE: Well, don’t worry. We — we’ll —

STEARN: See, that is the — let me see — representing things that was interesting enough that you would —

LEVINE: Interview — oh —

STEARN: — have —

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I’m signing off. We — I’ve been talking with Jack “Babe” Stearn in Canton, Ohio on — on August 3, 1997.

[END OF INTERVIEW]