**EI-094**
**ESTHER ZAMARCHOVSKY ( changed to "BROTER" ) HORWITZ**
**BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 14, 1911**
**INTERVIEW DATE: 9/24/1991**
**RUNNING TIME: 1:00:24**
**INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.**
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**INTERVIEW LOCATION: BRADLEY BEACH, NEW JERSEY**
**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1993**
**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 7/1993**

**RUSSIA, 1922** **PORT: AMSTERDAM**
**AGE 10** **RESIDENCES: RUSSIA: ARININ**
**US: TOLEDO, OH**

**Oral Historian's Note: Mrs. Horwitz's husband interrupted the interview several times by entering the room and making a great deal of audible noise. This can be heard on the recording.**

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Tuesday, September 24th, 1991. We're here in Bradley Beach, right down by the ocean, with Esther Horwitz, who came from Russia in 1922 when she was ten years old. Good morning.

HORWITZ: Good morning, Paul.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Horwitz, can you please give me your full name? Include your maiden name in that.

HORWITZ: My name as it is right now would be Esther, Esther Broter Horwitz. "Broter" was the name that was adopted in this country, as the original name in Russia being Zamarchovsky.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

HORWITZ: Yes. Z-A-M-A-R-C-H-O-V-S-K-Y. My father came to this country in 1914 and, of course, he could speak no English at all. When he came to Ellis Island and he was asked what his name was, he did not know what the question was. Standing by another lady who had come with him on the ship, they said to her, "Is this your brother?" And I guess he nodded, and they put on "Brother." Eventually the H was taken off and it was made into Broter. Then when he became a citizen he said he could have changed it back. "But," he said, "it's much easier to spell Broter than Zamarchovsky." And so that was my maiden name.

SIGRIST: I see. What is your date of birth, please?

HORWITZ: August 14th 1911, possibly 1912 or even maybe 1913. There were no birth certificates. However, my father had registered me in school as 1911. So that is where my records are, what my school age is.

SIGRIST: I see. Since you've mentioned your father a little bit, let's talk about him. What was his name?

HORWITZ: His name was Alek Broter. There's a picture of him on the wall.

SIGRIST: Alec, A-L-E-C?

HORWITZ: Well, he spelled it A-L-E-K. However, in Hebrew it would have been Hillel, H-I-L-L-E-L. However, I have, sometimes he was called Alex. So that, but he never went to Alexander. It was either Alek or Alex.

SIGRIST: I see. Was he, what did he do for a living?

HORWITZ: When he was in Russia, he worked for a wheat farmer as a bookkeeper or an accountant. He himself was very educated in Hebrew and the Jewish religion. When he came here in 1914, he had been on the last ship coming to this country before communication was cut off. War was on and the factories were booming. Therefore he got a job as a factory worker. And he made good, he, when we came here he had a home for us, a two-family home that was in Toledo, Ohio, and some money in the bank. So then when we arrived in 1922, however, he was a peddlar, a horse and wagon peddlar, clothing, stuff like that. Because he had gotten sick while he was working those four years. T.B. was prevalent at that time. And although when we got there he was cured, he was much thinner and he was told not to work inside again. So when I came here to this country he was peddling with a horse and wagon.

SIGRIST: What was he like as a person? What was his temperament?

HORWITZ: All I can say is he was the most wonderful person in the world. He was a real saint, a real angel. Physically he was six feet. When he came to this country he said, "Six feet, two hundred pounds." We attended the regular holidays, of course, and our home was a kosher religious home, which was prevalent for all immigrants at that time.

SIGRIST: Well, in fact, I never even did ask you the name of the town that you were born in.

HORWITZ: Oh. I was born in Arinen which was five miles away from a large beautiful

city called Kamenitz. Kamenitz.

SIGRIST: Can you spell both of those, please?

HORWITZ: Arinen I would say is A-R-I-N-E-N. Kamenitz, Kamenitz, is still on the map. It's a large, uh, city. Kamenitz, K-A-M-E-N-I-T-Z. If you wish me to go further, as far as our little town . . .

SIGRIST: Yes, please. I'd like you to describe it. Did you live in that town for that whole duration of time?

HORWITZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yeah, sure. Please describe the town for me.

HORWITZ: The whole town must have been, was about only three streets long. We lived in the main street. My Aunt Frieda, my mother's sister, we lived with my aunt and my grandfather. She had like a little pharmacy. I don't believe she was a pharmacist, but she had boutique material. And in the back of this house there was a grocery store that my grandfather handled. Of course, I understand it had been before the war kind of a busy place. Mondays and Thursdays were market days when the people around there in the country part would come in and do their shopping. But when I was there it was much quieter. The town had one synagogue. It isn't very clear to me, I must have been in there a couple of times. I remember playing with a friend, children my age, across the street. And they had parents, but I never seemed to really feel I missed a father because I never remember him leaving. There had been a picture on our wall of

him, and he had a beard and when we received a picture and in a letter after the war, he was bald and beardless and thinner and, but it was the most amazing, wonderful thing to know that I had a father who was in America and that he planned to take us out to this country.

SIGRIST: Could we pause just for a second? ( break in tape ) We're continuing. We just paused for a moment, and we're continuing now with Esther Horwitz. Could you please sort of walk me through your house as a kid? How many rooms, what kind of furniture was in the house, that sort of thing?

HORWITZ: Well, as you opened the door, you came right into the little boutique place, a little shop. And then the door to the left was the living room. The next room, walking back, was a bedroom. A room to the right was the kitchen. They had at that time a certain stove.

SIGRIST: What kind of a stove was it?

HORWITZ: Somebody's at the door.

SIGRIST: Oh, we'll pause again. ( break in tape ) We're continuing again. Yes, please talk about the kitchen.

HORWITZ: There was a cement-like oven and you made a certain fire and you kept food up there. I really don't know how that was, but they have a certain song which I, my mother used to sing to me in Yiddish. My only language was Yiddish. And it was about telling a little girl to jump off that oven because it was warm, and she wouldn't

jump. She was offered a little skirt, and she was offered shoes and she wasn't interested until a boyfriend was offered. And then she said she was willing to come out of the oven. ( she laughs ) So, but that, it wasn't a usual gas oven or electric oven or stove or whatever it is we have now. Also in the back of that was my grandfather's grocery store. Also it must have been possibly in the bedroom. I don't know, in the bedroom, or in another back room by the grocery store, a place where you'd take off a certain top and you'd go down to the basement. That's where I was hidden twice at least, when the soldiers came around.

SIGRIST: Now, how many people lived, it sounds like your living space was sandwiched between two stores.

HORWITZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: Basically. How many people actually occupied that space?

HORWITZ: Well, Mother and I lived in one room and there was my aunt and my grandfather. There were just four of us. When my aunt got married they moved, she moved out with her husband, and there was a baby born later on.

SIGRIST: To your aunt?

HORWITZ: To my aunt, yes. I remember also for a while moving away into another street farther back and staying in somebody else's home with my mother. Perhaps because my aunt didn't have a place to move, I don't know. Reasons I don't know.

SIGRIST: I'd like to talk a little bit about your aunt, and I'd like to talk about her boutique. Talk a little bit about her as a person first of all to me. This is Aunt Frieda?

HORWITZ: Yes, or Freda, as we called her.

SIGRIST: Freda. And she's your mother's sister?

HORWITZ: Yes. The youngest sister. My mother was one of nine children. However, when I was born, there were only three children alive. Her brother, who had come to this country, Uncle Ellie, and he had taken my father on. You couldn't just come to this country. Someone had to take care of and bring you out. My aunt, I think, was the most beautiful person that I know. She had, she was dignified, calm, efficient. At the time, would you like me talk about the wedding now?

SIGRIST: Well, I'm still, I still want you to sort of set up this picture for us of your aunt and why she's in business. Because is this not unusual for a woman to be running a business at this time?

HORWITZ: I don't know, except it was like a little drugstore.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did she sell?

HORWITZ: Oh, face powder, perfumes, uh, I don't know if they had tissues. I don't doubt it. I remember especially about the face powder because at one time the soldiers came into the house. At that time I was in the cellar, but they were talking about this. And thank goodness everybody was left alive and they went away, and they were

laughing because the soldiers took the boxes of powder and they just sprayed it over everything. They just had fun, you know. So that was one of the things that stayed in my mind.

SIGRIST: Who was her clientele? Who patronized her store?

HORWITZ: I really don't know that. I don't remember anyone actually coming in to shop. I don't know that.

SIGRIST: Was it Aunt Freda's wedding that you remember?

HORWITZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: Well, why don't you tell us about that since we're talking about Aunt Freda.

HORWITZ: Certainly. I remember Aunt Freda measuring me up for a little gauze dress. And I remember her saying white gauze, that that's the best material she could get during the war. And possibly I had a ribbon in my hair, too.

SIGRIST: What year is this?

HORWITZ: It was still during the war. It would have had to be before 1918. Then I remember the wedding itself where I was dressed up and I was standing on a shelf, it seemed, so I could see above other people's heads, and it was very crowded. It must have been in the synagogue. And there was another child, a little girl about my age, who had been a cousin. I wouldn't be able to identify her, actually, who she was. And we were both laughing and enjoying it. The music, we saw a real Klezmer, that is, the

musicians which they have here in this country, too. And the lights and the music and the gaiety of it all, it was just a beautiful experience. Later on when her little boy baby was born, too. So I kind of tried to help get a little, they had to go around trying to find a crib, a baby crib. There seemed to be no place I guess they could really go. They just bought their material from, somebody's baby outgrew it, they bought it from another family.

SIGRIST: Do you remember Aunt Freda being pregnant?

HORWITZ: I wouldn't have, no.

SIGRIST: You weren't living with them at that time. She had moved out.

HORWITZ: Even if I were, nobody said anything. Children were seen and not heard. I mean, I didn't get that kind of talk, like explanations of things you have now. I wouldn't have noticed if she would have been pregnant. I didn't know. I just know that she had a baby. I came to see her in the other home with my mother, I guess, and I heard the baby crying. And it was just, I heard, you know, something. She didn't have a very easy labor, and that's all I remember really from that situation.

SIGRIST: Talk about your grandfather. Was that your mother's father?

HORWITZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was he like as a person, and what was it like to be living with him as the male in the house?

HORWITZ: He was rather short. He had a white beard. And to me I always thought that's what God would be like, you know, with a white beard. ( she laughs ) He was nice, he was quiet. He was a widower. I think he had two or three wives. I know that, as I said, there had been nine children and my mother had had somewhere a stepmother, and I think that she hadn't been treated quite as well as if it had been a real mother, because she used to refer to her mother, you know, as, you know, as something that she wished would be there, you know. But my mother, that is her picture up there. She combined the beauty of religion, of true religion, of, in a way she would have been the kind that would have been a martyr if it had been necessary. She went to synagogue first. Of course, maybe she had one or two good dresses, you know. The children were first. By the way, I had had an older sister. A little girl had been born and she was about a year old when she got pneumonia. They told me that. And they couldn't get her to a doctor. It was during the war, and that was it. We have a picture. I have quite a few pictures of the family.

SIGRIST: You were a year old when she died, or she was a year old when she died?

HORWITZ: She was. It must have been . . .

SIGRIST: So this is before you were born.

HORWITZ: It's possible I was already born. I don't know that. I know that mother didn't tell my father that Yentela was gone. Because when we came to this country, I remember coming in on the train and he met us in Toledo and he greeted us and kissed us and he asked for her, and then she told him then that she had passed away. So as

you think back it must have been a little heavy-hearted of my mother, too. But she never, some people carry their misery and complain, and she didn't do that.

SIGRIST: How did she support you, or was her father basically supporting you? Did she work?

HORWITZ: Yes. I guess she used to, she was more the person that was the worker in the house. She must have helped a great deal more before me in the grocery, with the groceries. She used to go to Kamenitz, big city, and I think she brought home beads and things, so she would sell that. So wherever she could she made something.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you ever help out as a child in the grocery store or in, nothing like that.

HORWITZ: Nothing. Perhaps on a Thursday, on market day, there might have been someone coming in to buy something. Things were like going down already.

SIGRIST: Because of the war.

HORWITZ: Because of the war, right. And my grandfather was older, and, well, I really don't know as much about Russia as I do, perhaps, of England. We studied so much of that in this country, you know.

SIGRIST: Let's talk about happy things when you were a kid. What was it like being a kid in this little town? Were there games that you played? You said you had a girl across the street who was a friend. You know, you had a playmate there. Talk a little

bit about being a little kid growing up in this town.

HORWITZ: Yes. Even, at that time, we played cards. We played children's games such as pisha pesha, cassina. I think cassina is also well-known in other places. Two or three different children's games. We played ball. My father's family, would you be interested to know about him at all?

SIGRIST: Sure, absolutely.

HORWITZ: They lived in another town where I remember being there twice by train. And that was called Frompel.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

HORWITZ: F-R-O-M-P-E-L. And when I was there on my last visit as a child, one of the gifts that I got, one gift I received was a beautiful orange ball. And when I came home and I banged that ball against the wall, I had no one to throw it to, so it broke in half. And I was heartbroken. ( she laughs ) But anyway, I was never sad. I was, I guess I was rather, perhaps, a little lonely, because there were no other children there. But I didn't realize that. I would like to speak about my father's family a little.

SIGRIST: Sure.

HORWITZ: I remember when I was there my father had an aunt, a sister, I mean, that was my aunt, and she had two girls. I also remember very dimly, my grandmother, a little old lady that was there. When I was there she didn't speak. Maybe at that time my

mother told her, I don't know, about my little sister. I don't know. Anyway, I saw a picture on the wall, and I said, "That is my father." So there must have been a picture on the wall at home. And the little girl says, "No, that's my father." And I realized that the two men were brothers, you see, and they looked alike, you know, with their black beards and so on. So would you like to know what happened to these children that I met now? My, later my Aunt Freda had two more boys. The oldest one became a doctor. The other one was studying to be a doctor, and I'm afraid the younger one passed away as a child. In the other townS, these two sisters of my cousins, the oldest one became a nurse and the other one was studying to be a nurse. But after 1939 we heard nothing, nothing at all. In fact, there was a person right here in this city who was actually an American soldier coming to World War II to help liberate the people. It was in my town. And he said that the town was all blood. Nobody was left. That was at my mother's town, and I suppose that might have been in others. Anyway, I could tell you who that gentleman is. That's the only thing I've ever heard. I've tried to trace them. I couldn't trace anyone.

SIGRIST: Talk about school life.

HORWITZ: There was no school life for me because one thing, when it came to little boys it was so important for them to learn Hebrew, to be bar mitzvah eventually. And I don't remember any kind of school life until it must have been about '19, '18, '19. I must have been six or seven, and they had a public school. So I went to that school. I remember going there once or twice, and some of the, there were older children, and they were asked about this and they knew some answers and there was some math I

learned. But when they asked me, I didn't know anything. I felt so foolish, they laughed at me. I says, "I'm not going to let that ever happen again." I come to this country, I'm going to study. I had "A" marks. But anyway, there wasn't so much chance. It was during the war. Things were led down. Maybe in bigger cities there was some more action. But . . .

SIGRIST: Was there a school house, a school building?

HORWITZ: There was a school house, yes. ( Mrs. Horwitz's husband creates extraneous kitchen noise in the background. )

SIGRIST: And was this run by the Jewish community?

HORWITZ: No, I don't think so. I think that children from all over came. From the different countryside, Christians and everyone think were there too. I just know there were an assortment of children. And it was learning math, arithmetic and I suppose some spelling or something.

SIGRIST: I'd like to talk, actually, speaking of the Jewish community, was there a large Jewish population in this town?

HORWITZ: No. There wasn't a large population anywhere. There were only about three streets.

SIGRIST: Oh, it was a very tiny town.

HORWITZ: Yes.

SIGRIST: But were there other Jews in the village?

HORWITZ: Yes. They were all Jews. Only the Christian people were living outside the town. They were in the country. We call that a dorf. That is like farmers.

SIGRIST: A dorf.

HORWITZ: D-O-R-F. A dorf. Those were the farmer people, yes. And I suppose that's one of the reasons when my father was working was for a farmer at that time, a wheat farmer.

SIGRIST: I see. We touched a little bit on this before, talk about the raids on the town and the effect it had on your family or on other families that you may have known.

HORWITZ: Of course, what I remember is in the World War II. ( Mrs. Horwitz means World War I. ) In the pogroms, that had been before, I guess, they were pretty bad because that's one of the reasons, it must have been like 1907 or '08 when my uncle possibly at that time went to this country. He had a choice either to go to Israel or go to America, and he went to America. Now, in my own case I remember something interesting. I do remember airplanes flying over our head. I do remember soldiers going by in cars, automobiles and laughing and throwing candy to us, and that was nice. So we'd go over there. They were good soldiers. We'd go out. They just had some fun, and we'd get some candy. The other thing has been, I heard excitement, "Oh, my goodness, the soldiers are coming." And they put me down in the cellar. So the first time it was completely black. I mean, I had no idea. I must have walked down a few

steps. I don't remember that. I just know that the door was opened like a sewer thing, and I walked down, and I was scared. So my mother said, "Don't be afraid, God is with you." And actually even to this day I don't have fear. I have no trauma which I, but the idea that God was there, I knew that that was it. So I always feel that with God you don't have to be afraid.

SIGRIST: Were people hurt during these raids, though?

HORWITZ: Well, eventually we weren't hurt ourselves. My mother, I heard my mother tell about somebody, soldiers running after her and she, and at risk of her own life got her into the house. I suppose like other places there was, there were injuries, of course, and there were, there were rapes, I suppose, and it was war. Then another time I have here on the list about getting an infection on my foot. In the summertime we used to run around in the outside barefoot. Well, one summer playing outside I must have hurt my foot, my right foot. I do know the next thing I was in Kamenitz at a doctor's. We had no doctors in our town. And I was on the table being examined and I don't know what the doctor said, but my mother said, "Oh, no." Evidently I had gotten an infection and the doctor might have wanted to cut my foot off. So, anyway, they put on a cast on me, and the next thing, I didn't play any more, I sat on the stoop for the rest of the summer because I had a cast covering my toes up to my knee. I also remember getting the cast taken off and a lighter one put on.

SIGRIST: Was that the only sickness that you had or a family member had?

HORWITZ: Well, no. The reason I'm mentioning this as important about the soldiers.

I wasn't getting off the subject so much. During the time, I must have had the cast off already possibly when the soldiers came around, and mother said, "Let's go. We're going to run to our cousins in Kamenitz." It was, as I said, about five miles. I knew I had taken that trip before. I says, "I can't do it. Put me in the cellar." So I was put back in the basement and I guess she must have gone on, whatever. Regarding, oh. I don't, I must have had measles, but I don't remember that part. All I remember is my mother gave me mashed potatoes made with butter and nothing ever tasted so good as those mashed potatoes. I guess I hadn't wanted to eat for a few days while I was ill, and she sighed a sigh of relief because finally I was able to eat and coming back to life.

SIGRIST: Were mashed potatoes a delicacy there? You know, what kinds of food did you eat? What was edible?

HORWITZ: Well, there wasn't that much choice of food, especially during that time. Well, the usual is I guess beets, you know, borscht. And potatoes, that's a staple over there, and, of course, there were chickens, chicken soup, of course.

SIGRIST: Did you keep kosher?

HORWITZ: Oh, yes, yes. Everybody kept kosher.

SIGRIST: Was there a butcher in town?

HORWITZ: There must have been a butcher in town because the chickens had to be killed a certain way. It was simple food. I know one thing, when I came to this country and I learned about vegetables then I really felt, I had to break the family into vegetable

eating, you know, because that's good for you. Well, the whole hygiene and nutrition, everything, was way back there. But the air was nice and pure, and would you like me to tell you about how scarce stuff was, that when I took a bath in the, took a swim, that is, a bath in the nearby town. So the first time I saw a little piece of white soap, I'd never seen soap before because it was scarce, it was, oh, sugar. Sugar was very hard to eat, get. They used to have, for tea, candies, hard candies. ( Mrs. Horwitz's husband continues making noise in the background. )

SIGRIST: Did you have a bathroom in the house?

HORWITZ: No, no. No, it was outside, right.

SIGRIST: Well, why don't you tell us a little bit about your father coming to America in 1914. The reasons he came and with whom he came. I know you told us a little bit about this, but kind of give us a complete picture. Why did your father decide to come?

HORWITZ: Well, it was because of the pogroms, and, of course, the chance of coming to a land of liberty and a chance to, mostly to see what he could do for the children, to raise their children up in a good country. As my uncle had gone to America, tell him. ( referring to her husband )

SIGRIST: We'll pause for a moment. ( break in tape ) We're now continuing with Esther Horwitz. Her father came in 1914 because of the pogroms. How do you think your mother felt about him leaving her?

HORWITZ: Oh, she was very happy that he came to this country. At the time he left,

there was no war yet. And he planned on making a little money and bringing her out. You know, bringing the family here. However, as I piece things together later, some of the men never called for their families to come. After a while they just, well, they just forgot them, perhaps. I was trying to figure out why my mother didn't mention more often about my dad being in America. So I figured maybe that was it. At any rate . . .

SIGRIST: You think that she might have thought that he might have followed along those lines?

HORWITZ: That, or perhaps simply because you didn't tell the children many things that's going on. Mostly I have, she sang me lovely lullabies, told me beautiful stories of the Bible, and so many of the truths that she said I'm still quoting. I used to think, when I came here, she couldn't talk English, she didn't know the modern ways of cooking, that is, different nutritional values. And I used to think, oh, well, she was, you know, really a generation gap. And yet I find that I am, one thing she said I like to mention that is "all things in moderation, even with religion." You have those fanatics, even among the Jews you have the fanatics to the right or to the left, you know: Either you give up almost everything or else, she was a middle-of-the-roader, like the conservatives, more or less. We lived religiously, but because we were in a town where, in Toledo there were not that many . . .

SIGRIST: This is in Ohio.

HORWITZ: This is in Ohio. Toledo, Ohio. Would you like to know why we came to Toledo?

SIGRIST: Well, no, not yet. We'll get you there. Is your father, once the war is over, is he writing to you or sending money or anything like that?

HORWITZ: Yes. He sent us a letter with a picture of three of the men. Two of them with whom he had stayed together in this, in Toledo. And they had taken a picture together, a regular photograph. It was very happy, a letter, and the attempt that he's going to make to get us out as soon as possible.

SIGRIST: Do you remember this letter coming?

HORWITZ: I remember the excitement. I don't remember actually the letter. I remember the picture. It's in my mind now, you know, the three men. I said, "Which is my father?" Because to me they all looked pretty much alike. ( she laughs ) At that time he was already baldheaded, thinner and clean shaven.

SIGRIST: Which all must have been a shock to your mother really when she saw that.

HORWITZ: Right, right.

SIGRIST: So how, tell us a little bit of the process of how you pulled yourself together, you and your mother, and got, you know, did you get your visas? Did he send the tickets to you through the mail?

HORWITZ: We could not get a visa in Russia even at that time. The only way to get out of Eastern Europe was to go to Poland, for us. So we sneaked across the border.

SIGRIST: Do you remember your mother saying, "We're leaving."?

HORWITZ: No.

SIGRIST: You don't. Do you remember packing at all?

HORWITZ: No. I doubt it, we must have had very little things with us. I remember going on pebblestones, on a little stream of some kind, and then ending up into a house. And then the next thing I knew, we were in Warsaw. Evidently, as I can piece it together, we had gone, I had been told, into a farmer's home. You gave him something for the service, and we stayed overnight. But we had to sneak across the border into Poland, I guess, in order to have a chance to get our visas to come to this country. In Poland itself, in Warsaw, a beautiful city.

SIGRIST: Was this your first time in a big city, in Warsaw?

HORWITZ: That was the first time. In Kamenitz, that's a pretty large city, too. And Kamenitz, at that time, or when I went to visit my cousins there, they had a big apartment buildings, and a courtyard, similar to what my cousins did in Brooklyn when they lived there. But in Warsaw many people made their homes into rooming houses. I stayed in a bedroom in one lady's home. So Mother and I stayed in one bed, and the other bed was another lady and her daughter. Both of us, both families waiting to get our visas to go.

SIGRIST: Now, did you and your mother, were you the only two that left from that town, from your little town, or did other people, were you travelling in a group?

HORWITZ: No. We were the only two that I know of, the only two.

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandfather or to Aunt Freda?

HORWITZ: Yes, yes. I believe they hugged me and kissed me and said we should write. I do remember that, although kind of dimly.

SIGRIST: What were you thinking during this trek to Warsaw and sneaking over the border? I mean, what does a little girl think about doing this?

HORWITZ: All I thought, really, was wherever my mother takes me that's all right with me, you know. We were nine months in Warsaw itself.

SIGRIST: Nine months waiting for the visa.

HORWITZ: Yes. And at that time my right eye became bad. I went to a doctor there and I had a little operation on it.

SIGRIST: What was wrong?

HORWITZ: I don't know. I know it has always been the weaker eye. Right now it's working up for a cataract, but I'm fortunate the way it is. I wonder if I might have been a little bit crosseyed. That could have been.

SIGRIST: Where did your mother get the money for an operation?

HORWITZ: I don't know anything really about money. There must have been some

money there. If you want to classify different families, I think our family is one of those better-off families possibly. Everybody was poor, but nobody felt poverty. They were all the same. But there was no problem of money. I never felt hunger. I never felt I didn't have enough clothing. I never felt a lack. I always felt part, you know, my dignity was there, just as with everybody else.

SIGRIST: While you were in Warsaw for nine months was there communication with your dad?

HORWITZ: There probably was. I guess so. I'm not aware of that. I do have cousins there, a lovely family there, a husband and wife, and a son and daughter. So I used to take walks over there and I had lunch over there. That, too, we never heard of from them. I know names. Mr. Silverman had, he had a boutique shop. They had all kinds of little dolls and things to sell. I was never in the store, but they had all those lovely little Chinese things, or things, little animals, you know.

SIGRIST: Bric-a-brac.

HORWITZ: Bric-a-brac. I used to love to look at them. Actually I have a picture of both, when we came to this country they sent a picture of each of them. But as I said before they, Warsaw was very bad. But I do remember that was one way I spent my time. I went over there and saw them, did a little shopping. But all this time I had no education as I think back. I really had to do a lot of catching up in this country.

SIGRIST: Could you read?

HORWITZ: Nothing. I couldn't read.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read?

HORWITZ: My mother could read and write Yiddish, and that for women was something special. Also, she could read Hebrew. My grandmother had said, to quote her, that, "My girls as well as my boys are going to be able to write a letter when they go somewhere. They're going to be able to dobbin, or pray, in the synagogue." So they were more educated than many others. People used to come to my mother and ask to have her write a letter because they couldn't write.

SIGRIST: I see. All right. So you're in Warsaw for nine months, and your mother is trying to get these visas to come here. They finally come through.

HORWITZ: Oh, I remember that was a happy day.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about that.

HORWITZ: ( she pauses ) I don't know why it should be so dim, and the passport, the visa, is from Amsterdam. You know, I have it, and I've mentioned that. But I don't recall anything really until I was actually on the ship itself. I do know it was a Red Cross.

SIGRIST: Where did you leave from?

HORWITZ: Well, it says Amsterdam, so it must have been from Holland.

SIGRIST: So you went from Warsaw . . .

HORWITZ: . . . to Holland.

SIGRIST: . . . to Holland. Do you remember that trip at all?

HORWITZ: No. I don't remember. I don't know history. I don't know anything that had to do with geography or history. ( she laughs )

SIGRIST: Well, good. Well, let's talk about the boat, then, since you remember the boat.

HORWITZ: Well, with the boat I remember the rocking, I remember we were in a cabin downstairs. There were two, there was a place for mother to stay, I think, on top, on the bottom. I know there were two beds there in the bunks. I do know that first nobody felt well, but later I felt better and I would be the one to bring my mother drinks. She stayed almost the whole time. As far as I know she stayed the whole time in the cabin, but they used to go up and take a walk in the ship, see it rolling. And I was the healthy one. I was the one who was able to give her things, you know. Of course, the most glorious time, and everybody was on deck, was when we saw the Statue of Liberty. However, we had had a storm. The boat was supposed to take two weeks and instead it was delayed, it took three weeks. So I know everybody was very glad when that storm was over. I remember there was a feeling of relief that all was well. And then as everyone will do, and so we came out and we waved to the beautiful lady out there. There was land. Finally, finally we were going to come to America.

SIGRIST: Tell me about this older couple that you mentioned to me before we started the interview. Where did you hook up with them, and who were they?

HORWITZ: They were on our ship and the thing I remember about them is when we were all standing in line to be examined by the doctor.

SIGRIST: This is at Ellis.

HORWITZ: Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Do you have any memories of them on the boat, or just tell me who they were, or where did they come from. Do you remember any of that?

HORWITZ: They did not come from near us. They were, I guess maybe they might have come even from Holland, because there were different people on the boat. I don't know anything except that how sorry it felt, they're being so nice, when they looked at the lady, who was ahead of me, looked at her thumb and it was black. And they seemed to consult, the doctor seemed to consult with somebody else and looked again, and she was turned down. They had to go back. So both of them were taken out of the line to have to be returned home. And so when we were next and we were all right, that really made me feel wonderful, you know.

SIGRIST: Tell me some more about Ellis Island. As a little, as a ten-year-old kid, what did all that look like to you?

HORWITZ: Well, it was a big, big room, lots of benches, a lot of people. And as we were sitting there, they showed us a movie. It might have been Charlie Chaplin, a black and white movie, the first one I ever saw. That was really thrilling.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

HORWITZ: And then somebody walked by, a black gentleman, and I had never seen a black person in my life.

SIGRIST: What did you think?

HORWITZ: I didn't know what to think. I guess Mother didn't know any more than I did, and I didn't ask too many questions. I mean, I wish there was more communications, you know. We just were doing our best. But we had problems because many people got off to go, they got off to go to New York. We had to go on to Toledo. There was not enough money for the train. There was supposed to have been a check sent to us for the train fare and it didn't come through. So a telegram was sent, and I remember Mother talking to somebody, and then we had to wait overnight.

SIGRIST: At Ellis.

HORWITZ: At Ellis, yes, until we received the check, and then we got on the train.

SIGRIST: What was sleeping over at Ellis like?

HORWITZ: As far as I remember, we just stayed on the bench. We just slept on the bench. Nothing really bothered me, as long as Mother was with me, and it was an adventure.

SIGRIST: Did someone come to meet you?

HORWITZ: When we came to Toledo, Ohio.

SIGRIST: But no one met you at Ellis?

HORWITZ: No, no. We were supposed to have gotten on the train and then had been, either, why, I don't know. Whether it was because he couldn't get out of work, I don't know. I just know he met us in Toledo when we got off the train.

SIGRIST: What was the train ride like to Toledo, going through a country you've never seen before?

HORWITZ: The whole thing is dim. I don't recall. I just recall meeting my father then.

SIGRIST: This is at the Toledo train station.

HORWITZ: In the Toledo train station.

SIGRIST: What was, well, my goodness, what were you thinking when you saw your father for the first time, the first conscious memory?

HORWITZ: Well, the first thing, I was disappointed. I thought I was going to have a man with nice curly hair, you know, a nice strong man, and here he was bald-headed and kind of stooped over, you know. And he was a little disappointed too because my little sister wasn't with me, you know.

SIGRIST: How about your mother? What was her reaction when they met?

HORWITZ: Well, it was a happy reaction, you know, they kissed each other and I don't remember just how we got to the house, but it was a very lovely home. It was a nice section of the city then.

SIGRIST: Did he own the whole house?

HORWITZ: Yes, yes. When he worked in the factory, he bought this two-family dwelling. We lived upstairs for a while. There were five rooms upstairs and six rooms downstairs, and the downstairs was rented. The backyard had two lovely rose bushes and a beautiful lilac bush. We had an apple tree and a walnut tree. So that was our nice backyard.

SIGRIST: How long did you live upstairs?

HORWITZ: Possibly three years or four years.

SIGRIST: So, a substantial amount of time.

HORWITZ: Well, when my sister was born, I have a sister born in this country, then, yes. Then we moved downstairs, and then we rented the upstairs.

SIGRIST: Did you have your own bedroom when you lived upstairs?

HORWITZ: Uh, yes. There were two bedrooms. I had my own bedroom when we lived upstairs, and later downstairs I had my own bedroom, too. But when things became kind of bad, and after 1929 the savings was all gone. Fortunately FHA let us keep the home, so we didn't lose the house, thank goodness. So we had roomers, so

one bedroom was rented out, and my sister and I shared the living room. That is, the living room was made into more of a bedroom.

SIGRIST: Talk about those first couple of years in Toledo being this little girl from Russia with not much education, talk about going into school and having to function in a social situation.

HORWITZ: All right. I'm glad you brought it up. We must have gotten here a month or two before Passover because it seemed to me shortly after I was here the Passover came along. Because I was too, it was too late in the year for me to go to regular school. I didn't know a word of English. They had a special class for immigrants. The majority of the people in Jefferson School in that class were teenagers, and mostly Japanese or Chinese. There were, in fact, two little brothers, Chinese children, I think, and myself. There were only the three of us, three children that were there. They didn't bother much with us, but I, because they knew the others would have to go to work soon and we would have our education later on. So I used to say Jane and, uh, John or whatever, I used to, they'd give us little readings to learn the element of English, and also I would want to show off that I knew something, so I'd go to the blackboard and write down some of my math, two and two is four, or whatever. But it was kind of a lost time in some ways because I really, they weren't doing that much for us. And it was okay. There was nothing else they could do. They put me, the first grade I went to was the second grade. And you must realize being ten I was quite old. My clothes were rather old-fashioned. My dresses were a little too long, you know. So I have had, I had a long time, an inferiority complex, that's what we used to call it. However, I studied

hard, I had B's. I learned English, you know, as much as I could. And but I got, I was a nice little rosy-cheeked child when I got here. Later I became quite pale and Mother took me to a Dr. Piliad. I can't, I don't know why I remember his name, a very nice doctor. And he recommended that I should go, and this was the happiest time of my life, to a place where I gained more than I can tell you of American culture, of humanity, of everything. As I said, at that time in the '20s there was this situation of T.B. So they had a tuberculosis hospital out in the country, like. They also had a fresh air school. They took children from six to fourteen. If you had T.B. you didn't go there because you could infect others, but if you were close to it, if you were run down where you might get it, that's where you went. And that's where I went for about fifteen months. And when they told me I was well enough to go home I wasn't that happy. ( she laughs ) We had all kinds of books to read. You know, all the little classics, Five Little Peppers And How They Grew, The Secret Garden. I wish they would put them on television more. Also we had three meals a day. They were balanced meals. Now, they say about cigarettes. At that time, in 1924, '25, we were told cigarettes are bad for you. No cigarettes, no alcohol. That was bad for you. So it's not something that was that much hidden from people who knew about hygiene. So we had, as I said, on Wednesdays we had a movie. The Kiwanis Club came there every Wednesday and showed us a movie in the school, black and white, of course. It was our treat. And also Wednesday for lunch we had ice cream. That was nice. I must have been there maybe six months or so when they started another program, and that was for posture. They had a lady, and she came to different schools. I don't know how it was in New Jersey, but I think Ohio did fine. They would take pictures of you that came out black and white, silhouettes. And then your posture would be from A to D. The best posture, perfect, and none of the

children were perfect, accordingly. So if you were B you were all right. I was a C. Then we were given exercises to take care of the posture. Certain exercise with our arms. We also had to breathe in to a big glass bowl of some kind. We'd breathe in to see how much breath we could give, or the strength of our lungs, I guess. And so with those exercises, this might have been started let's say in October and in June once more we were tested. The same lady came back, the teacher came back, and again silhouettes were taken and I came out A. A lot of us came out A, but we knew how to stand up straight and take care of ourselves.

SIGRIST: So not only . . .

HORWITZ: It gave me a big, big boost.

SIGRIST: Sure. Not only did it sort of assimilate you into American culture, but it gave you a great confidence.

HORWITZ: There I also had a chance to play with blocks. There were toys. There were, we sang around the piano, all kinds of songs. The lady, Mother McLain, we called her. She was sixty, a heavy woman. She told us once she was two-hundred pounds. She was just an angel. She would play backgammon with me, and sometimes I would beat her. I did all right. All in all, with the songs, oh, yes. I also made an extra grade. I made a third and fourth grade in one year. So when I came back to my regular public school I, fourth or fifth? Yes. I got right into the sixth grade.

SIGRIST: You were all caught up.

HORWITZ: I was caught up. They used to have grades marked A, B, C, D according to your ability. But they put me into a big class. Miss Escott, also, a lovely teacher. She said she was afraid if I came from there it might be too hard for me to be in the A class. So from then on it gave me that boost. People say, "How come you don't have an accent?" You know? But with the, and, of course, the library. I had to walk a block, a mile from my house in Toledo to the library. But I read up, although I don't have a high school diploma, I read books that were college material. And in high school, well, what really made me, I made a mistake by quitting school, if you wish to know. After the first year, and I took, at that time I think I took six subjects in high school. I always felt I was too old for my class. I said, "Well, no wonder I'm doing good, because after all my brain is more developed, you know." So one thing, my parents never praised me. It's, uh, like maybe the English way, you know, that you don't praise your children. You love them just as much, or you'd do anything for them, it's a different way. Like the Italians, perhaps, are always all over them. And anyway some place in between it's nice. My daughter does much more praising. So a new store opened in Toledo, a McCrory 5 and 10. And I got a summer job. Ten dollars a week, forty-eight hours a week on my feet. Then when September came around instead of leaving it I thought, look, I've got ten dollars. I'll give it to my folks, I can help them out.

SIGRIST: We need to end very shortly, so just tie up the story.

HORWITZ: All right. Well, it's just really that I spent many, about five years in night school to get my shorthand and typing. And I got little jobs in offices. That's what I wanted to do, was work in an office. I never burned my bridges, you know, I always

worked. I got underpaid and overworked. I gave the two weeks notice, and I got my recommendation. I just thought that might be good, not to just drop, I don't like you, goodbye. Because when you get the next job they want to know, and I always had a recommendation.

SIGRIST: That's true. And my final question for you in our last minute or less is are you glad that you came with your mother to meet your father? Has this country been good to you?

HORWITZ: Oh, it's been wonderful to me. Give me another hour. ( she laughs ) I'm laughing, of course. But, it's been wonderful. I had a wonderful job at the Bender's Corporation. I retired after twenty years. It has given me a wonderful hospitalization plan and prescription drugs. I have . . .

SIGRIST: So America was the right choice, then. Your mother made the right decision to come to meet your father.

HORWITZ: Well, I should hope so. I mean, there was never any doubt on that. Let's say it was a right decision of my father even to come to this country and bring us out. Absolutely. I mean, if you let everybody come into this country, you'd have a lot of other people coming in. People are sneaking across. They're risking their lives to come here. It is wonderful.

SIGRIST: Indeed. Good. I want to thank you very much for having us out to your home here right by the beach. And this is Paul Sigrist signing off for the National Park Service.