

KECK-134

SAMUEL FRANK

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EGYPT VIA TRINIDAD (BORN PALESTINE), 1921

AGE 15

SHIP RECALLED AS "THE MARAVAL"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett and I'm speaking with Samuel Frank, on Wednesday, February 5th, 1986. We're beginning this interview at 10:20 and we're about to interview Mr. Frank about his immigration experience from Egypt in 1921. This is side one of Interview Number 134. Let's start back at the beginning of your story. Could you tell me where and when you were born?

FRANK: I was born in Jaffa, Palestine. I remember my father had a blacksmith shop in Tel Aviv. I do remember because I used to go to the shop and fool around with the horses.

DALLETT: How old, I'm sorry, when were you born? What was the year?

FRANK: 1906.

DALLETT: 1906.

FRANK: April 5, 1906. And I also remember we lived a normal life. My father was well-off and uh, I also remember my mother taking me to the doctor occasionally. It seems I might, must have had trouble with my eye, my eyes. Then out of the blue sky, then she, what do you call, registered me in Hebrew school, and from that time on, all of a sudden I find myself in a ship, on a ship, winding up in Alexandria, Egypt.

DALLETT: Why was it you went to Egypt?

FRANK: Well, I really can't tell you, it must have been a reason because the English, the English army must have drafted my father into the First World War, they promised him the world. So, we wound up in Alexandria, Egypt.

DALLETT: And how old were you when you went to Egypt?

FRANK: Well I'd say about six.

DALLETT: Okay.

FRANK: And then, uh, then while we were in Egypt, my mother, rest, my brother and baby sister about six months old were in an army camp. I was always wondering where my father was, even at that age I remember she took us to this army camp and then uh, he was living among the soldiers, half dressed in army clothes and I remember they were, they were eating lunch or dinner, it was cabbage soup and we were all served cabbage soup. A year later, somebody knocked at the door, of course I missed my father during that first year we were there, and all of a sudden somebody knocked at the door, they walked in and told my mother, "You're husband was killed, he was shot through the heart or--" and there's other things could be said about it.

DALLETT: Please, go ahead.

FRANK: Well, and from then on, my mother didn't know what to do we're all so, winded up she was working, working in an English army camp, in the canteen and they were providing for us.

DALLETT: And did you go to school in the army camp?

FRANK: No, no school, I still didn't go to school yet. I remember, we, uh, we were, we

used to go to the movies, the soldiers would take us, the whole family to the movies, my mother was working in the canteen, then all of a sudden she got word that her sisters are in the United States, and she made up her mind to travel to the United States and I suppose the English Government made reservations for us to move here to the United States, but during, we were travelling on a ship there and this was all during the war, as a matter of fact, we were threatened by German submarines, we were lucky. They didn't do any damage to the ship, they let us go by. Then in Trinidad, I guess, the immigration office, officers, they examined us and I was rejected because of my eye, my right eye had trachoma. So, the immigration suggested, said, "You continue with the rest of the family, and through immigration, this Russian-Jewish woman came over to me, her name was Mrs. Urich, she, she said she'd take care of me 'til my eyes were better and meanwhile I lived with her for six months. I lived like a prince, she was very rich, matter of fact, the butler used to come to take me out of bed, take me for a ride, take me for breakfast.

DALLETT: How was it that she came to your rescue, how did she know?

FRANK: Through immigration, she was Russian-Jew and her husband was a uh, English, he had, he must have had business. So I lived with her and everything was okay, I figured

after six months everything would be okay, they'd ship me back to my mother but she had to travel, she couldn't take me along, she couldn't take me along with so she put me in an orphan home in the suburb of Port of Spain, which is called Taca Rica (?) Orphan Home.

DALLETT: Now, what language would you have been speaking at that time?

FRANK: Right away, soon as, Jewish. If you want me to really say when I came there before that it was Jewish, the kids used to go around saying, "Oh, Jesus, uh, Jews killed Jesus Christ, Jews killed Jesus Christ." But I fought back even though at my age and quiet down and meanwhile my mother was shipped to the United States, it was her only chance, otherwise she'd be stranded in Trinidad for Gods know how long, she didn't want to because her sisters and brothers were all here in the United States so during the time I stayed in Trinidad, at the Taca Rico Orphan Home, once a month they used to take me to Port of Spain, to the eye doctor and he, he used to treat my eyes. What did he do? Or what did they do? They used to scrape it with bluestone. With a

bluestone.

DALLETT: Bluestone?

FRANK: Yeah to try to get the disease out. It must have been pretty bad when they had to do, because they had no, they didn't have, what they have now, like penicillin. Once a month and this was going on for almost four years. My eyes were okay, because finally, well during the time I was Trinidad, that's a story by itself.

DALLETT: Tell me.

FRANK: The first two years, I used to go to the corner three times a day and cry. At night, I used to sleep hearing noises, I used to say to myself, "Gee, maybe my mother's coming for me." See and finally I got used to the, I'm staying with the, there were dormitories for, from five, from six, to twelve and from twelve to eighteen. The first two years I was with the five to twelve or six to twelve and uh, of course, the food wasn't too good, I remember having an epidemic of, I don't remember if it was yellow fever or diphtheria, everybody in the

orphanage sick. people were dying like flies. They were feeding us orange juice and grapefruit. By luck, I was, I got better. Then I--

DALLETT: Did you learn English there?

FRANK: Yes, they used to teach us English, that's what the only thing they taught you there was English. There was school in a big, big house, everybody has separate little classes and the teacher was English. I picked, I loved of course the Bible. But during the first two years it was really sad because I kept thinking of the family, what am I doing here, I started (?) over and over. Finally I start--

DALLETT: Did you write letters and get letters from them?

FRANK: I think I did, I don't remember. I think I did, yes, I think I did and I used to get letters, not too often from my family in the United States, but I know my mother tried hard to get me to come, and uh, so finally I started running away from the, after, no I was around twelve uh, not twelve yet, maybe eight or nine years

old. I started running away, I started getting hungry so I used to run away, steal from the farmers, I used to live on sugar cane, brown sugar, oranges, I used to take the cocoa beans, suck it, maybe it was dope, (he laughs) I don't know it, which they said is made, but it kept me alive and during those first two years uh, I was with small children, I remember two white kids, they were German kids, in two weeks they both died of starvation.

During those two weeks I used to bring them something to eat too. After that I was banned, I will admit, I did it because I used to run away and get in some home and come back and they used to beat me up. They'd beat me up, they used to pull my pants down in front of everybody, with the, with bushes, twigs, that was the first caretakers and their names were Mr. Healy (?), English people, then they put me in with the big kids. I got worse, I really got very bad, I used to run away almost every week.

DALLETT: So did you have any Hebrew education there?

FRANK: No!

DALLETT: No what—

FRANK: No, they were all languages, all, everybody came in they were taught English right away. There were Spanish, there were Africans, there were Portuguese, even the Japs and probably 'cause of them were all black, I was the only white boy among oh, between three thousand, between the girls and the boys maybe three thousand kids. And we were in big dormitories. And living there u\in the dormitories, first thing in the morning, there's no basins, no bathrooms, you got to run outside in the cold, what they call "honey houses". And the first thing you did was dive into a pool, that was your way of washing, cleaning. Four o'clock in the morning, that was with the big boys, big, the smallest and of course they taught us, besides going to school, they taught us how to make gardens and also once a week, we had to travel to the mountains, in order to bring wood to cook, we used to go up in, normally with a team of horses with about twenty or thirty of the older kids, you know from twelve to eighteen, pull it up the mountains and there were all kinds of precipices in those mountains, you had to be careful, which a few kids, a few fellows were hurt, and bring back the, and this was once a week. Third year I

was, I was told I have to go along. Okay, well during all that time, the Russian woman came back and once a month she used to come and visit me. She'd come to visit me and she'd bring big bags of candy like this and she lined up everybody and they used to get the candy and serve it to everybody so they'd be nice to me. She used to do that, the Russian woman, Mrs. Urich, lovely woman, rich, beautiful woman and uh, during the time and then the, I'd say the third or four, third year maybe or the fourth year we were also lined up and, two people, white people come along, they shake hands with everybody, when they saw me, they want to know, by their gestures I knew what they were saying, I didn't quite hear it, they only speaked English, "What is he doing here?" So they shook my hand and somebody explained to me, shook my hands and they, he tapped me on the head and that was the Duke of Windsor. And then uh, after that, uh, the home, we used to play games, we used to play soccer, that's how I learned how to play soccer and other games and, of course, we had to go out in the fields and work, planted our own corn, sugar cane and all that. I was no different than anybody else and, of course, I had fights with the, a lot of fights with the black fellows and

there's other stories I don't want to mention. And the sleeping quarters were a big dormitory and a sack and a wooden bed made out, just a plain wooden, like a table.

DALLETT: Did you continue to go to the eye doctor the whole time you were there?

FRANK: Yes, once a month, a nurse, the first year I was, practically lived in the infirmary, we had our own little infirmary and there was a mulatto nurse, she used to take care of me, nice woman. And here I used to get up in the morning, five kids used to sleep with them, matter of fact I remember a kid named Yakasomi. He was a Hindu, he used to sleep with me and in the morning, I used to wake him up, he used to get up, go outside and wash and I kicked him, I rolled him, so I finally called the nurse in, this happened a couple of times, maybe three times and with different kids, he was dead. Also I now I remember, the punishments, the punishment I used to get for running away, besides beating me up in front of everybody, they used to make me go to the church which was across the street from the home and dig graves for the kids that were dying there, that's how fast they were

dying. Of starvation actually, because they didn't feed us enough. Well around the fourth year or so, things, you know, I was big already, I used to play ball, I used to work, I used to do everything and also we used to have to wash our own, we used to sit on the veranda outside with tables after we got through eating, and what was the food about? The breakfast, (he coughs) excuse me, for breakfast they'd give us six biscuits and tea made out of lemon leaves, you could see the lemon leaves, big lemon leaves like this, that was our breakfast. And then, lunch, that was our dinner and lunch, rice and pieces of meat, a big bowl, everyday, and supper biscuits, oh yeah something else, every year around Christmas, they'd make a party for us. What was a party? We used to go in this big dormitory and sing songs, which they taught us and they'd give us a roll, an egg, apple and a little bag of candy, that was our Christmas (he laughs) and they gave us for dinner, uh, for lunch rather, that was our dinner, they used to give us cooked yam, sweet potatoes which we grew ourselves, that's the only time, before that they never gave us sweet potatoes, they used to sell them or something. And that was, that was in--

DALLETT: So all that food that you were planting and raising was not for the orphans?

FRANK: No, it was, we didn't plant rice, most of the time, everyday, four or five years that's all they used to give us is rice and pieces of meat. I used to cry myself to, at night from hungry, uh, and of course, time I was in, I was their we had sailors coming off the ships from the Port of Spain, used to come down and pick coconuts, we didn't even allowed to pick the coconuts but the sailors used to come pick coconuts and take it away. Well that was the fourth year, now they didn't, the fourth year, well I'd say about four and a half years I'd be there, things, oh yeah, something else, the new, then all of a sudden the fourth years who's in charge, Mr. Healy and Mrs, Healy, they were retired and they brought new overseers and the new overseers was a dean, a reverend and a bishop and uh, he taught me how to play casino and chess and all that. He felt sorry for me so every once in awhile he'd take me to his house and feed me, but when I ran away and I used to come back or they'd catch me, he used to give me the worst beating of my life, by way of branches with your pants down, in front of everybody (he

laughs), also while we were there in the fourth year, I was big already and this whole business of war, they used to train us from twelve to thirteen to eighteen, up to eighteen years old they used to give us wooden carbine guns and we used to march in the streets of Taca Rico, to train us in case we had to go to war, comes to the--

DALLETT: Now you might have explained this but I'm not sure, who was actually running the orphanage, was it--

FRANK: English.

DALLETT: It was the English orphanage.

FRANK: English, definitely English, definitely, of course, because the bishop, he came from England and I was surprised they, he, they were Catholics, usually they were mostly Protestants, but I remember there were nuns there dressed in blue, it could have been Catholic overseers like nuns, I even remember the two officers, the men, name was Mr. Sharp and Mr. Gaston, I remember, they were nice, they treated me nice. I used to get punished because I was bad but I finally calmed down then

I'd say four and a half years I finally, finally find myself, they told me, "You're going to New York, to Brooklyn." (he laughs.) That's where my mother was, in New York. I used to hear about New York, Brooklyn, it was a big thing, oh New York, Brooklyn, New York , Brooklyn.

DALLETT: What did you hear about it, what did that mean to you?

FRANK: Well, about America itself, how famous, how rich a country and all that, I used to say, "Well, my mother lives there, my mother lives there." (He laughs.)

DALLETT: Why would you hear all that, would the other kids talk about it?

FRANK: That's right. I was grown up already and, of course, I never read the papers there but I used to hear from the outsiders and of course Mrs. Urich used to come down and explain to me soon, soon, she must have been in touch with my mother all the time, all the time. Well, as far as the orphan home, it was gruesome sometimes. I used to fight the big kids. They used to really beat me up and I

used to beat them up and if you want to hear details, the big fellows, the ones that were eighteen years old already, one day I see one, they used to also teach carpentry work. What's carpentry work? How to make coffins, its the only carpentry work they did, build their own coffins, little coffins out of pine and uh, all of a sudden I see one, somebody cutting each other's hair. How'd they cut their hair? They'd take a bottle, break it and they, the sharp edge, they used to cut their hair, that's what they did with me, take it in a bunch and cut it. That's the way they used to cut your hair there. Believe it or not they never had, I never saw scissors there. Well--

DALLETT: Do you remember that day when you were told, okay you're leaving?

FRANK: Yes, yeah, I remember. It was about the four, about the fifth year, beginning of the fifth year, I'm sure. Also I remember they took me by train to Port of Spain. They introduced me to the captain of the ship. Name of the ship, I think Mrs. Urich came down, took me by herself, I'm not quite sure, no I think she did, she put me on the ship and she gave me a little package, I don't know

what was in there, could have been money, for some reason or other and charge (?) of the captain of the ship. It was a freighter boat, they were loaded, well, before we left Port of Spain I noticed they were loading coconuts.

DALLETT: And what was the name of the ship?

FRANK: Maraval, M-A-R-A-V-A-L, Maraval, and it was two weeks on the ocean, and I remember we stopped in France, we stopped in England, we stopped on some of the islands.

DALLETT: And you were in charge, the captain was in charge of you?

FRANK: Yes. he was in charge of me. When I got to the United States, before I was taken off the ship, my mother came, she saw me, she started screaming, I was wearing a cross (he laughs). I had no shoes, my hair was all the way down to my butt, and uh--

DALLETT: Can you tell me some details about it was like on the ship?

FRANK: Well, uh, I just wandered around, it was a freight ship, not too many people in the crews, you know, it was a big freight ship. It wasn't too much but, uh, I remember getting seasick the first day, first day. After that I used to help the sailors in whatever they did. I used to stay in the captain's cabin there, he was also a nice man, he was an Australian. Talking about Australians, they were nice people. I remember Alexandria, Egypt when the big boats used to come into the uh, Australian soldiers, they used to unload a lot of canned food. My brothers and I, they used to give us a ride, they used to drop us off by the house and give us this, box, case of canned food to take home. Well that was back, I forgot to tell you about that. And like I said, I was on the boat and then like I, of course, my mother came to the boat before they took me to Ellis Island and an immigration officer, by name of Greenberg, I remember, tall American Jewish man, his name was Greenberg, I know it was a Berg, it was definitely Greenberg, and he was nice and he took me off the ship, on a small boat. I remember crossing the bridges and then first, bridges, I don't know where he took me but then he took me to Ellis Island. And from that time on, and then a few days

later, I find myself marching in front of a, the judges, three, three woman judges.

DALLETT: Why were you held there for three days?

FRANK: No, I'm saying that was the first few days for inspection, you had to go through the, to pass you.

DALLETT: Tell me about that, was it like a medical inspection or did they ask you questions?

FRANK: Well, when I got in front of them, I see they're reading the sheet, I saw them stamp it "reject". Then I didn't. what was a reject or they were letting me through. They put me, took me upstairs and every week or so, I have the problem, marching through, then I got the understanding, because of my eye they wouldn't pass me. I was, the doctors would come and then--

DALLETT: Did you get see your mother in this period?

FRANK: Oh yes, my mother came to visit me. My aunts from here came to visit me and my brothers I don't remember,

although one brother was older than me, then my sister was very young, she was also in an orphan home in the, when my mother came to the United States she had to go to work so she, somebody foster home my young sister, she was only six, eight months, a year, so my mother put her in a foster home, which was in a farm in west in Connecticut. And uh--

DALLETT: Were you in the infirmary, or were you--

FRANK: In Trinidad not all the time.

DALLETT: I mean on Ellis Island.

FRANK: No, I was in a big room, I don't think I was quarantined because I was flying around the place. I used to go try to throw stones in the water, I used to walk around, but they, it seems I might have been first class. For some reason or other I was put in first class. I was in a big oval room, all by myself, a room twice as big as this, with one, two beds.

DALLETT: Wow, do you remember actually where that was located at

Ellis Island?

FRANK: Yes, that was facing Manhattan. I was facing Manhattan, I could see the Statue of Liberty, faced Manhattan, the waters, it was one big room, it was like an upstairs all around and you used to see the people downstairs.

DALLETT: Oh you could see all the people.

FRANK: Oh yes, definitely, I used to watch them, and marching all around like cattle, you know, pass the, you know, in front of the judges, there were customs officers telling you how to go, writing down, like I heard they change your name, but actually my name was Frank from Jaffa, that was my father's name from where I was born, it was never changed.

DALLETT: So, could you go downstairs among the other people?

FRANK: Yes, yes, I went downstairs, of course I did.

DALLETT: Do you remember going into the dining room there or what was that like?

FRANK: Well I, I'm not sure but it was one big room with, there also, big wooden tables, wooden benches. But I don't exactly remember if I ate along with them, if I'm not sure, my food was brought up to me. and they were first class but at that time it seems I was the only one upstairs, I don't know. There was hardly anybody upstairs because everybody came in steerage, you know, big boats.

DALLETT: And how often would you have to go and have another medical examination or go in front of the judges?

FRANK: Well, when I was on Ellis Island nobody took care, nobody took care, uh, I was just staying there until they passed me. Finally, all of a sudden I come in front, uh, it seems, I don't know if he was American general, uh soldier, an army doctor or an English doctor (?) if I'm not mistaken it could have been an English doctor that was living in the United States for some reason or other during the war and he told me, "There's nothing wrong with your eyes," he passed me. Next day, my mother, they call up my mother, oh my mother was with me that time, so

finally, and before I got off the Ellis Island, I think my mother had to put up a five hundred dollar bond and who would be the bondsman, the matzo people, the Margareten and Horowitz.

DALLETT: Really.

FRANK: Yes, they owned a restaurant on East Side. See, It's possible that my mother must have went there to eat or she worked for them or something and they, she got them through somebody else or whatever, to uh, put up that five hundred dollar bond for a year or so. Then of course, I told her what happened, you know, I went to church, I went to communion before I was (?) while I was in Trinidad. I was no different than anybody else. I was confirmed as a Catholic. I went, you know, every, I was dressed up in a little white shorts and white shirt with a red, that was our insignia, red and white, I was no different than anybody else, we'd march and I was confirmed as a Catholic. Then, of course, when my mother, got out of Ellis Island my mother took me to a rabbi. She explained the whole story, he said a few words and they sound funny and I come Jewish again (they

laugh).

DALLETT: Is that one of the first things she did when you got off?

FRANK: That's right, the first thing she did. Took me to a rabbi. And of course--

DALLETT: Did you understand what was going on, did you remember--

FRANK: Yeah, of course, I was between eleven and thirteen by the time I got here, of course, I told you, its amazing, maybe I'm older than eighty, I don't know, cause I remember from the time I was, my mother, we lived there and before I went to, they registered me into school, Hebrew school, so I could have been four years. I remember fighting with Arab kids, they used to throw stones at me, so my brothers and I used throw stones back at them, even in those days they were no different. I remember going, talking about uh, Palestine, Jaffa. I remember my mother used to send me to the markets where all the Arabs, nobody bothered me really, except the kids and my mother would send me to go to the bakery, bring those big, flat breads. I remember my mother sent me to

markets, I used to bring home what they call here "chile con carne", they have Arabian food made up from beans or something. Every once in a while, you know, I remember my father used to bring home fruits and everything from the time we lived in Palestine, Jaffa. He used to come home. My father always used to carry a gun with him, believe it or not, he used to--(doorbell rings).

DALLETT: Whoops, well that is the end of side one of Interview Number 134 with Samuel Frank.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 134 with Samuel Frank. So, how many days altogether were you on Ellis Island?

FRANK: I'd say fifty-one days.

DALLETT: Fifty-one.

FRANK: And they, they wanted to send me back, where I don't know, they didn't, probably, turned out the orphan home or they couldn't send me back, well they could have sent me back, well they could have sent me back to Jaffa. cause I still had an uncle there.

DALLETT: But I assume Trinidad, you passed through that medical examination, your trachoma must have been cured for them to send you.

FRANK: Yes, that's right.

DALLETT: And then for some reason they held you again on Ellis Island--

FRANK: It probably didn't cure one hundred percent, It's possible because they were very strict at that time, its not like now they go on the boats and they come off shore and they immigrate. It's possible I still might have had trachoma. Even my, when I left, when I started living with my mother, she took me to a big hospital in New York to make sure, and maybe five or six doctors are examining me and they still couldn't understand how I passed. Cause

I still had a little trachoma. Okay.

DALLETT: Tell me about your first impressions, your first few days, literally did you go to the rabbi the first day you were in New York?

FRANK: The next, first, the next day and not only that, my mother took me and gave me a haircut, took me to a rabbi. That's right, she did, she absolutely did. In those days, In the east Side there was plenty of rabbis with that big beard and that long, like in Europe.

DALLETT: Where did your mother live, where was she living?

FRANK 131 Pitt Street, New York, right across from the Hamilton Fish Market.

DALLETT: And was she living with her, with her sister that had come to this country?

FRANK: No, she lived by herself with my two brothers and then my sister. Of course she had her relatives living in uh, in Brooklyn at that time, she finally, later on, we moved to

Brooklyn.

DALLETT: So, do you remember that first day, how did you get to Pitt Street from Ellis Island?

FRANK: Well. My mother took me by subway. I couldn't walk from Ellis island to the dock to Pitt Street, it was quite, although later on I used to walk back, by subway. The subway--

DALLETT: What did you think of that? Was that the first subway you had been on?

FRANK: Oh sure. First subway and not only a subway, Delancey Street, while I'm living the first two years in New York in the East Side, after my mother took me to the rabbi, uh, naturally she registered me in school. April 6, that's how I found out how old I was. In order to get my Social Security, I tried to write the Taca Rica Orphan Home, I tried to get in touch with uh, Jaffe, Palestine, never could get an answer. Finally I wrote to the school where my mother registered me when I came to this country in 1921, I was born April 5, 1906. And uh, she, I went

to school for two years, I was put in the seven, fifth grade. I knew how to speak English, I knew how to write, I knew different things, but when it came to music, arithmetic and all that I was dumb, they didn't teach too much of that. All they really taught you was about the Bible and the English language. So they put me back in the third grade, that was, I wasn't too big, I was short, matter of fact my brother used to say to me, "Wait 'til my brother comes from Africa or wherever he was in Trinidad, cannibal land. He'll beat you up." When I came to the United States, I came to the East Side, I was shorter than my two brothers, I was stunted. In one year I grew past them about six inches and then I became the tallest, 'cause there weren't too many, my brothers were very short. I was five foot six and a half, I was only five foot five.

DALLETT: Was that a strange experience, to get to know your brothers again and your mother--

FRANK: Well, of course, it was. And of course, the street where we lived and the fellows and the school. I used to fight in school, too, it seems that, because I was, I was on

the defensive. In palestine, otherwise I'd be a dead duck over there because you know, and I used to fight with the kids. I was bad in school a little bit, not too much, matter of fact (his wife speaks off-mike) they put me in the back seat and my eyes weren't too good. Finally, teacher put me in front about the second or third row, I started learning better. They put me in the seventh grade from there, fifth to the seventh, then I still didn't learn too good. They put me back in, or in the fifth again. Finally after two years, of course, I had a lot of experience on the East Side, I used to fight with the kids in the street, I was always on the defensive, you know, fighting with kids from different blocks and all that sort of thing and uh, finally, two years I went to school. After two years, I don't know how, this is on, I don't know, what happened is, I became, I did something wrong, I don't know exactly, but I stopped school. I went to continuation school for six months, that's where I was bad, for half a day each week at that time, you had to go to continuation school from any school that you came out of. I didn't, I was getting bored already, they would even teach me how to sell cakes and make a salesman out of me and that, I didn't, I

wasn't very educated in things like that. Finally I sent back there, I don't know what it was. They, I stopped going to continuation school. I got a job for two years. I worked on Broadway, I worked on Spring Street on Broadway in a, what would you call that factory where they make combs, mirrors with celluloid and all that stuff, well anyway, a factory. I worked there for two years and I don't know what happened. After that I went to work for a printing shop for a few months. I didn't like it, they used to send me to the Bronx for the packages with lead, all that stuff and what do they give you? A quarter? Five cents fare, at that time, you could ride up and down for five cents. And a quarter would give me, which was a good trade, but I with I was stuck at it. I was restless. Finally I went to a place called, on 14th Street and Union Square, called the Jewish Agriculture Society. Agriculture Society and they sent me to their farm and that's how I started working on different farms. I worked in Connecticut, I worked in New Jersey, I worked in New York. I worked on pig farms, I worked on ranches, all over the New Jersey, mostly New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania. I even worked on Sheffield (?) Farms. When they start using

milk machines and all that. And I was only about seventeen years old when I started working on the farms, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, which is right, see. I worked on chicken farms, yuck. And I worked for Jewish people, American, Christian people and I used to come in to visit as soon as I saved up some money. I used to get paid fifteen dollars a month with board. I still had about forty dollars, fifty dollars everytime I went to visit my mother on the East Side. I used to give them most of the money or I used to go and squander it. See movies and all that. I was broke and I used to go back to the Jewish Agricultural Society and they'd send me to different jobs. I had experience already. Then in 1929, 1929 I find myself working in a summer camp, Cam Connecticut. Big summer camp. I was a handyman, used to drive to meet the trains, do all those things and it was 1929 and I worked there 'til 1938. In between in the winter, I was caretaker for two years, I was all alone. I was caretaker for a couple of years, which I stayed up there all winter. I used to go hunting, trapping, of course, I used to go to the village, meet fiends, go out with girls and then I met my first wife, went back to New York, Brooklyn, met my first

wife, '38, '39, no, yeah, '38, '39, '40, uh, was thinking of marriage already. So the fastest trade I could learn was house painter. Which I did very good, I always worked, I was never laid off. I worked for one boss, twenty-two years, on and off, different bosses and uh, I always had a car, even on the farm for fifteen dollars a month. One of those jalopies, they called them Model A, Fords.

DALLETT: Do you remember those first few years when you were here?

You told me that the kids in Trinidad had told you what life in America was going to be like, do you remember whether you were disappointed, or you thought it was great?

FRANK: No, I wasn't, I used to hear a lot about Brooklyn, New York. They were amazed, they were all, it was something big to them, it was, yes, they used to rave about Brooklyn, New York, for some reason. I didn't know or from then after that I used to say, "Where are you going?" "oh New York, New York, Brooklyn, Brooklyn." It was a very good thing.

DALLETT: And what did you think when you got here?

FRANK: Well, it was amazing they way it was built. The bridges, I never, a bridge like the Brooklyn Bridge and delancey Street. Oh yes while I was, when I came into uh, the first year, after school, I used to sell papers on Delancey Street. I used to sell chewing gum, pocket books. I used to walk from Battery Park, I used to go down and walk from Delancey Street where I picked up my papers I think, walk down to Battery Park and walk almost up to 42nd Street, carrying a bundle of papers on my back, selling them and especially when there wa san extra (?0 I used to sell papers in two blocks. When, in those days, you used to go around the street, in the street, "Extra, extra." I'd sell about fifty papers, I'd carry in no time, people from the windows, "Come up kid, come up kid." And uh, well it was the life that you lived on the east Side while I was there which was nice, you know, we used to go to Central Park, Prospect Park in Brooklyn, all those things, you know, it was a normal life. Used to like to go to the movies, what was the movies on Clinton Street on the East Side, two for a nickel. W used to come to the movies was called the uh, we used to

call it. "dumps". We used to go there and kids would holler, "Who's got," it was two for a nickel, so we used to holler, "Who's got two cents?" Whoever got three cents would holler, "Who's got two cents?" Got three cents would holler, "Who's got two cents?" You'd go in two for a nickel, believe it or not. And if you wanted to go to a real good movie up the block it'd cost you a dime at the most and of course at the same time, on the East Side at that time when I came here, uh, and the Delancey. We had a Loews, we had a new Delancey, and I saw Houdini. I remember Houdini and a lot of famous people. Used to come and see a movie and a vaudeville and all of that and, oh yes, and all of a sudden I find myself on the east Side, training as a boxer, amateur boxer, believe it or not. I used to get my head bashed in, all for a sweater or a wristwatch or things like that. That wasn't uncommon, I mean not only me, anybody who lived on the east Side, that's what they used to do mostly, live like that. And my mother of course, my mother had to go to work, she had to provide and whatever I could help, I didn't get too much. My brother Dave, uh, he was the cook, my mother went to work, he used to prepare dinner, he was the next to youngest. And the

older brother, he was the black sheep of the family and I don't want to talk about him. He was a bad boy, he was a bad boy.

DALLETT: Did you continue to see the rabbi or was that sort of a one, just a one day--

FRANK: No, no just a one day, that's right. I also, I remember Saturdays on the East Side, of course, they had prayers and schuls. I used to walk in, walk out you know, just to be curious to see what was going on, I didn't do anything bad, I wanted to show off, I'd walk in without my yarmulke, you know, but I wasn't bad of course. And then at Hamilton Fish Market, if you lived at, uh, they used to call me the "African Cannibal" because I came from Cannibal, because I came from Trinidad. So what they used to make me, they used to go in the park, they had a little arena, and I used to fight, had fights. I had my eye, I used to win fights, lose fights, (?) kids, you know. Sometimes you get a bloody (?) (he laughs).

DALLETT: How long did it take you to get accustomed to the American, the New York way of life? It sounds so

different than what you had experienced?

FRANK: Well, you know, I didn't really get across it 'cause after four years in New York and Brooklyn, New York, I went to work on the farms. I figured someday I'm going to buy a farm because I had the experience from the Agriculture Society, Jewish, they used to loan money to Jewish farmers. But it didn't work out that way. I would have loved to have a farm. But I got married, the fastest trade I could learn was painting. I become a good painter. I'd say a good painter and a good, a very good production man. You had to work hard and fast. That's how I made good, I was even a foreman as a painter.

DALLETT: And where was most of that business, was that in--

FRANK: That was in uh, New York, Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island. I uh, I was strictly union. I worked as a painter which paid off very well, which I get a nice, not nice, I get a pension. (?)

DALLETT: Did you ever go back to Palestine?

FRANK: In '82 we went back, we went to visit. Big change, eh? Two cousins, I couldn't find them. (?) I walked my brains out in the streets. Finally, I had people looking for me, I didn't know the first name, I still have two cousins there but its hard to find. I even wrote a letter explaining the whole situation and I got the letter back through the immigration in Miami.

DALLETT: Oh, saying you can't contact them--

FRANK: Yeah. I was planning to go again this year. But now the restrictions, traveling, I'll wait. Maybe, I'd like to go back and visit again. Sure, its something to see, very--. I even went around, actually remembered where we lived. I remember the steps, the stores and walk up four steps and my mother used to take me to the doctor. Its still there, not the doctors are not their stores (?).

DALLETT: When you were there, did you think about how your life would have been different if you had stayed in Palestine?

FRANK: Yes it would probably be. It wouldn't have been

blacksmith shop. It's possible if my father was alive. We moved to this country it would have been an automobile business, mechanics or it would probably be the same thing in Palestine, which is Israel of course. And uh, the store, matter of fact I even saw the same bakery, the bakery is still there, imagine all of these years, over seventy, how old am I? Well from five. six years old, seventy-five years ago, the bakery, the same bakery, you know, its an oven, its not bakeries like here. They still put in there and haul out, they make pizza pies too now, with Jewish bread, and it's still there and they, some of the small little stores, factories are still there but they turned down in front of the Mediterranean, Jaffe.

DALLETT: How about Ellis Island, did you ever go back there?

FRANK: Nope, I never went back because soon after, not too many years the place, there was nobody there any more. I don't know how many years but my kids when they grew up, my two girls they always wanted me to take them to the Statue of Liberty but I didn't have the time. I was busy making the living. Of course, of course, I lived in Brooklyn

then I got married after a few years, not too long after, in 1948, I bought my own house. We moved to Long Island, New York and brought up two girls, one to Hofstra, she's a psychiatrist and my, one of my daughters married, the oldest one graduated Smith College and I used to go there every year, what they used to call "Father and Daughter Weekend". She graduated from Smith College and became a, well a writer, she wrote a couple of books but she married and raised a few kids so she gave it up but she's doing a little, what do you call it?

DALLETT: Freelance?

FRANK: Freelancing and uh, so and they're living happily and okay and there's a lot of things. But that orphan home, that's the one, that's the story in there. That orphan home's terrible. And it was run by England, I couldn't believe it. Had to be run by, why would the Duke of Windsor come down to visit?

DALLETT: Right, the british were in charge.

FRANK: Yeah, and the overseers were from Britain and they, they

made it, on account of the war. These kids would actually die from starvation. And I don't care what anybody says, its the truth, it really was the truth, they didn't get enough to eat. That was my punishment sometimes, dig graves, in the back of the church, across the road from the orphan home. And uh, yeah (?) the only traveling, oh yeah, while we were in Trinidad they took us to a town called Tenapoona (?) Tenapoona, to see a movie. That was the only time I saw a movie there. They took the whole, all the kids in there from the orphanage, the younger kids to see a picture. It was of course, black and white. It could have been Al Jolson at that time, it couldn't be, it was called "Mammy". No it was some other picture, too early yeah, but it was a picture, something about somebody singing "Mammy" or something. But--

DALLETT: Did you keep your Hebrew up?

FRANK: I just forgot the Hebrew and the Jewish language, matter of fact, we knew how to speak Hebrew but our main language was Jewish. It seems that my mother was born in Russia, my father was born in Turkey, I don't know how

they met. I don't know if they met in Russia or they met in Tel Aviv, but they met. Going to the picture, "Peter the Great", it seems Russia and Turkey were fighting, somehow its possible, it was so close, by they were on the border, so, but they were up in the Palestine and that's where they were married. My mother was married at age fourteen, fifteen, or rather fourteen because her firstborn was, fifteen, she was fifteen.

DALLETT: So when you grew up in Palestine your first language then was Yiddish, right?

FRANK: Yiddish, yes. Yiddish, definitely.

DALLETT: But from not using it for so many years, Trinidad English became your--

FRANK: Yes, that's right 'cause right away it didn't take long.

DALLETT: Right.

FRANK: And I came here, how did I, I speak Jewish, not fluently, but I understand it, not fluently (his wife speaks off-

mike) when I married her, I, and also when I started coming out to Miami, in the winter months, I picked up some of it and of course, around here quite a few Jewish people, speak the Yiddish language, and I understand it pretty well and of course, the Jewish Journal, it give you, they teach you in the Jewish Journal, little sentences, Jew, English to English and Jewish and also in Hebrew.

DALLETT: Did you grow up telling your kids about your experiences, did they--

FRANK: Yeah, they realize, even now, sometimes you have an argument with your daughter for some reason, they would always say to me, "We know you had a hard life, we feel sorry," and they cry and all that. Sure they understand. Matter of fact, I used to figure, my daughter, my oldest daughter would try the story to have it published but uh, not that she isn't interested but she probably didn't get around to it, she wrote a couple of books.

DALLETT: Well, I'm sure she'll be pleased that you told your story to us.

FRANK: Oh yes, she'll be happy, they'll be so amazed, you know. Matter of fact, one of the books that she wrote here, she wrote a book, dedicated to her mother with the same name Frank, its called uh, "General Guide to Abortion". In the beginning she got royalties but I don't know what--

DALLETT: Okay, I want to thank you very, very much--

FRANK: And now I'm living in Florida (he laughs), I'm retired, and I'm still, I work in golf course which I had a little experience, uh--

DALLETT: You're still working?

FRANK: Yeah, a few days a week, I'm not working hard, otherwise at ny age, you know, if I had to work hard, if I had to work with a pick and shovel or do things like that it would be hard, I couldn't do it. But I do a lot of riding around. You know, driving machines that even I don't mind. I sweep with the broom sometimes, I don't mind.

DALLETT: Very active.

FRANK: Yes, they're amazed, people here, matter of fact, I retired when I was sixty-seven years old. I wa still climbing a forty foot extension ladder before that. I retired in '67. I didn't want to give up there at sixty-five or sixty-two, I still liked it, sure. I'm still believed in that, I'd carry a forty foot extension ladder around the house, I still, it was amazing the way I was doing it and of course if you want to hear what happened to me during the month of, this is on the, still on the -

DALLETT: Yeah, well we'll turn this off.

FRANK: This is about my health. First time in my life I went for a checkup. In the doctor's office--

DALLETT: Wait, we'll talk about this when we're finished cause, we'll just finish this story, okay?

FRANK: Let's put it this way, I didn't expect to be there, I expected to see my mother, my brothers, matter of fact they didn't even send my brothers, I don't think my brothers, I don't think my sister was old enough to come

to visit, yes she could have been older, (his wife speaks off-mike). She, well my two brothers didn't come, weren't allowed to visit me. Maybe they were worried about the eye, still contagious or something, I don't know, but there was absolutely nothing wrong with the eye because, like I said before, I didn't want to have children because I was afraid, I was afraid. Is that still on?

DALLETT: Yeah.

FRANK: I was afraid because, if I had children I figured they'd get eye sore. I'm talking about the eyes. Finally we move out to Long Island and uh, I'm working as a painter, I used to get complaints, I was leaving out holidays, my wife always arguing with me, "Why don't you go to the doctor, why don't you go to the doctor, why don't you?" I was afraid, I was afraid the doctor was going to say I was going blind. (His wife speaks off-mike.) So finally she makes me go to Doctor Kaufman, he prescribed new glasses for me, I was like a newborn, see, the doctors in Brooklyn, they didn't know, they weren't doing the right thing except the one, I was rejected from the army

because of the right eye. I went to a special doctor, the army doctor told me you better go see, take care of your right eye. So I went to the doctor in Brooklyn and for almost a year and a half the new medicine came in and he told me not to worry about it, its not contagious, you can go ahead after marrying and have children. And during time on Ellis Island, it was the same, I wouldn't say it was boring, everyday it was something different, noise my God, uh, I used to walk around the place and look around and see people from different countries all over and walking around like cattle and custom with a stamp, the stamp and punching and all that business.

DALLETT: Were you afraid that you would be sent back to Trinidad?

FRANK: Yes, I was afraid. I was starting to cry already, I really was. And my mother used to come and my aunts used to come and they'd say, "Don't worry, we'll get you out." By hook or crook my mother somehow went to the right people, this English army doctor passed me and then she took me to New York doctors and they were, well, leery at first, they examined me and they also treated me. She even took me to a doctor for my general health and I

remember they used to give me blocks and there was nothing wrong with me, everything was perfect except for the eye. But then it seems that, then of course, thank God, its because of the uh, when I went through for the army not only I got married because my wife wanted, my sweetheart at that time wanted me to get married so that they wouldn't draft me but I was rejected anyway.

DALLETT: Worked in your favor at some point.

FRANK: Yeah, and now that I'm here in Florida, I'm working, I'm still active and so on and about--

DALLETT: I would just want to thank you very much for telling me your story.

FRANK: I hope that something, uh, it would be nice for people to hear about it and its the honest God's truth, exactly. I'm not educated and its the way I see it.

DALLETT: It's the way it happened to you.

FRANK: I could, like picture on the wall, that's the way it

happened.

DALLETT: I'm glad you could retell it.

FRANK: Sure, because I live 'til eighty, those two brothers of mine , may they rest in peace, didn't, weren't that fortunate, they both, one died, the younger one died and the older one died and my sister is still alive. She's over seventy.

DALLETT: Okay, that is the end of side two and the end of Interview Number 134 with Samuel Frank and the time is 11:23.