

KECK-152

HARRY CANTER

BIRTH DATE: MAY 10, 1903

INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 1986

RUNNING TIME: 50:00

INTERVIEWER: EDWARD APPLEBOME

RECORDING ENGINEER: STEVE PROFFIT

INTERVIEW LOCATION: LOS ANGELES, CA

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 7/1995

TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

RUSSIA, 1920

AGE 17

PASSAGE ON "THE SUSQUEHANNA"

APPLEBOME: This is Edward Applebome and I'm speaking with Mr. Harry Canter on Friday the 7th day of February, 1986. We are beginning this interview at 2:05 in the afternoon. We are about to interview Mr. Canter about his immigration experience from Russia in 1920. Ready to go? Mr. Canter, can you tell me where and when you were born?

CANTER: I was born in 1903, May 10th.

APPLEBOME: And where?

CANTER: In Russia.

APPLEBOME: What was the town that you were born in?

CANTER: It was a village, Rudna. They called it Rudna. I don't know how to spell it. Rudna.

APPLEBOME: Rudna.

CANTER: And we had a summer resort.

APPLEBOME: That your family ran?

CANTER: Yeah. And it was three hotels, I mean not big ones, small, three hotels, and in Russia not everybody goes on vacation. Only entirely sick and entirely rich. Middle class don't go on vacation. And we didn't have a hotel like here you go and pay and you eat meals and you stay there. We rent them a room. And then it was a public kitchen for everybody assigned to a place. They cooked themselves. They came with maids. And but we had to supply them with produce, meat, meat, chickens, whatever they needed. There was nobody else. They had to buy it from us. And then my father didn't work in this business. My father was in Europe. Forest is the biggest business. like oil business is here. And he worked for a man, he was in United States, all over the world. He owned the forest. And they used to cut out the big, the trees, and they didn't send a whole lot, but they used to cut off from four sides the bark, they used to call it sphagnum. And did you ever see, I don't know if you know about it, years ago, I'm talking about the years when I was young, they used to take like a raft, they used to tie together all the wood together.

Now men used to sit on the top and they used to ship it to Germany, to all over the countries and that was my father's job. He used to get thirty dollars a month for it.

APPLEBOME: But, so who ran the hotel then?

CANTER: My mother. And we are eight boys and two girls. Ten children. Whoever grew up a little older, they, everybody chipped in. And the whole hotel is three months.

APPLEBOME: Where, the season of the hotel was three months?

CANTER: Because of winter, six months you ride on wheels and six months you ride on sleds.

APPLEBOME: Did your family live in the hotel?

CANTER: We had a, we had a house out, this was in the woods, in the forest, in the forest. And we had a few, it was three, five minutes walk, a big house. And we lived in that big house and we rented rooms in that house too.

APPLEBOME: Did you own the hotel, your family?

CANTER: We owned it, but let me explain how you own it in Russia in them years. A Jew was not allowed to own land. So we built it. Not me, I was a kid. My father built it, or my grandfather. My father built it and the land stands, I don't know, I still don't know but this time, did you ever hear of a "Plague" in Europe? Radziwill, Radziwill, you know, one of the Kennedy's daughters was married to Radziwill. You know that?

APPLEBOME: Right.

CANTER: This is Radziwill, he owned, I don't know, it belonged to the government, I can't figure that out yet. He owned, the whole thing he owned. And the land was his. He was our landlord. We used to pay him rent for the house and pay him rent for the hotels. So, he owned these and in 1914, when the War broke out, so, when like the fight is going on between here and San Diego, figure, so they chase out all the people that lived there. They used to call them (Yiddish word). In other ways, "Home lost", refugees, like refugees. So here you take care of them. But I'm talking about thirteen states. Whatever they were fighting they chased off the people. So in the thirteen states, so they chased them out. What did they have? They didn't have no cars. So they took the horse and buggy and whatever belonging. They took a little food, whatever they had, and everybody has a big family in Russia. Ten was a small family, used to have more. So by time they came to us, in Minsk, Minsk Gubernia, it's a State, by the time they came to us our father and mother started with ten, fifteen children, they came to us they had one or they had nothing. They all died. There's no soup kitchens. There's nothing. No place to

stay. So, you know what we used to do? Wherever they died they dugged up a little, like a highway, it's a big highway, you go maybe 100 miles, that's all you see from both sides. They digged up a little bit, a grave, and they put them in, buried them, and put two sticks of wood, a cross. And that was, so you ride for days after the War that's all you see is a cemetery from both sides of the, of the. And so, I'll come to the point. They came to our State, to our State, so they passed a law, whoever, a refugee, moves in you can't make him move out. Like rent control here. Something like that. So they moved into our hotels. And that was the end of our hotels. They moved in, the refugees, they even burned the furniture to keep warm, winter. And when I left, we left everything there. We left cows. We left horses.

APPLEBOME: What job did you do at the hotel when you were a boy?

CANTER: You used to go and, you used to go to villages, I still
 remember all the villages. They were about a half a mile or
 a mile away, small villages, even the village that I'm talking
 about, Rudna, maybe about sixty, eighty people lived there,
 families. And so there was villages all around and we used to go
 from one village to the other in the morning and collect milk,
 collect milk in cans for the, you called them dashnikis, the
 people that used to stay there. But a little spring chicken, a
 chicken, potatoes, whatever we had they needed, so we used to pay
 them and we used to get a little profit and sell it to them. Then

I used to, we Jewish people can't kill a chicken, they had to go to a Rabbi. He's not actually a Rabbi, but they called him a Rabbi. He's a Shoyhoy. So we used to go about four miles away, carry the chickens back to kill the chickens, bring back to the people and sell them. And that was my job, but anybody helped a little bit, whatever they needed to help out the, and--

APPLEBOME: Before the refugees had moved into the hotel, where did most of guests come from?

CANTER: From all over Russia. Because, as I said, only sick people, you know we had, oh yeah. I have to show you this. See this here picture. See, this is me. See these here trees? That's, you have to look, like here there are pine trees. Way tall, very tall. So what is the questions you ask me just now?

APPLEBOME: Where the people came from?

CANTER: Oh, so this here is very healthy for consumptive people. It's pine trees. So they came from Germany, they came from Poland, they came from all over there.

APPLEBOME: Was it an expensive hotel?

CANTER: No, no. In them years you rented for not expensive. But you, you, the consumptive people like here in United States, years ago they used to send them to Colorado. Good air for the people that have consumption. So that was our place. Well known for consumptive people. And this is, three of them are missing because they were in United States already. These people here. We were ten children.

APPLEBOME: Okay. That's a beautiful picture. Okay, so let's go on with our discussion.

CANTER: Yeah.

APPLEBOME: So the hotel was now occupied by refugees during the War.

CANTER: We lost it. We left it there. When we left the refugees there too because we left right after the War.

APPLEBOME: Was there fighting going on near your village?

CANTER: Sixty miles away. That was the nearest, the last, the German was dugged in, they called it Boranovitch. That's a city. Not a very big city, but a city. They dugged in there and they stood there a few years.

APPLEBOME: Can you spell the name of the city?

CANTER: I couldn't spell the name. Boranovitch.

APPLEBOME: Okay.

CANTER: And 'til the finish of the War.

APPLEBOME: Did you worry about getting drafted pr were you too young?

CANTER: I was too young to get drafted. I was, I had to register. See, in Europe we have no birth certificates all together. You know, it isn't like here, compulsory that your born and the doctor registers you. There, if your mother registers you alright, otherwise forget about it. So, so I was registered already, but they drafted, I was sixteen at that time when I was registered. Because when I came here I wasn't seventeen years, I was sixteen going on seventeen. And they didn't take me. And they took one, they registered, they took one of my brothers. He was in the War.

APPLEBOME: So whose idea was it that your family had to leave?

CANTER: Oh, now I come to the point. In Russia when you have a son, soon as he hits twenty-one it's compulsory he had to go to be a soldier for three years. So the Jewish people were going

to be soldiers? So they escaped. So we had an uncle here, way, way, way back before I was born, and he was in New York. He had a "Forwards" building. Had a restaurant. A restaurant business, and he sold a full meal for fifteen cents and a chicken meal Friday night for twenty-five cents. That was his first. So he, he went, they escaped and he went to United States. And then, when you don't appear, three of them were here, each time they had to go. So this one that established himself already, made a few dollars, so he sent for the other brother, younger than him. Then both of them sent for the third brother. Had to be in the army. So already three were here. Then another brother came here. And then a sister of mine fell in love, they were supposed to get married, fell in love with a fellow. And she found out that he didn't know how to write and read. Which is not normal for you but where I was born it was normal. Out of ten people maybe one or two know how to write and read. So she didn't want to marry him. So he threatened her, he'd kill himself, kill her. So she escaped. So she went. Then there were four brothers and a sister here. Then the World War started. So when the World War started nobody could come into the United States. It closed. The doors were closed. absolutely nobody. After the War finished, so they sent for us. They sent \$3,000, you know, papers with \$3,000. The four brothers and a sister got together. One gave \$800, one gave

\$600, whatever they could donate, they donated. And they sent for us. Four brothers, a sister and a mother. That's in 1920. And they sent for us and we, at that time left Russia.

APPLEBOME: What had you heard about the United States? Did they write to you?

CANTER: Oh yeah. Listen, they wrote, and they used to talk, the United States, they didn't call it the United States, America, they used to call it America. Golden medina. The Medina means state. Golden States. People say you find gold in the streets. (he Laughs.) You go, you find gold in the streets, that's how wonderful it was. And first of all it's a free country, you know. We weren't free. You ever heard of pogroms?

APPLEBOME: Of course.

CANTER: Well, every Monday and Tuesday, people, they didn't use guns to shoot you, but they attacked you. Most of them got killed. They broke your bones. So they used to attack, now I have to go back to the big house. In the village, the houses, made from piece of wood like my father used to do, put them together, made little windows and everything. One room they have. Here in the kitchen. Here they sleep. Here is this and here is this.

One room. We had a big house. Because ten children, we had, I used to call it in Russia (?), a bedroom, cooking in the kitchen, all this here. We had a dining room, living room, we had a big home. So the people from the village used to have a meeting. Where did they go? They had no room, so they used to come to us to have the meeting. So we used, the meeting started to talk, but the Jews had to make a pogrom. In our house. They talked about killing Jews. So they used to come over to my mother. Her name was Hiah. Says, in Russian they used to say, "Hiah t'nasha." "You belong to us. You are one of us. We don't maim you. We don't maim you." And that way they used to talk, in our house to make pogroms. Yeah. And ah--

APPLEBOME: Would you see the attacks go on in the street?

CANTER: Not in my, in my place. Because, you know, even today, not all Russians are bad, you know. Not all of them are bad. Some of them are nice people. But the hoodlums. So I saw it in Tinkovitch, that's four miles away. It's a town, not a village like ours. It's a town already. There I used to see it. Because I used to go to cheder there, you know, I used to go four miles away. We didn't have a school. So my, we used to board out. Wintertime it's below zero. Summertime we used to come home.

Four miles back and forth. But wintertime my father and mother used to pay the teacher to keep us. They used to, like board. Used to feed us and they used to sleep, only once a week we used to come home for Friday 'til Sunday morning.

APPLEBOME: How did the other Jews in the town feel about having pogroms organized at your home?

CANTER: We didn't have, we only had two Jewish people. I mean in our community, us and a neighbor of ours. Two. Only two Jewish people in that village, Rudna. That's all we had was two Jewish people. The rest of them were goyim. Like Christians. So, but they were nice to us. There was no trouble at all. No trouble at all.

APPLEBOME: Okay. So we're up to the point after the War now where your family is deciding to leave.

CANTER: Alright. So, so what happened. So now I have to tell you another story. How do you make a living when the Bolsheviks came in? You can't have no business. You can't have no, do nothing, you have no land. The people live on land. They grow their own wheat, the grow their own, their own fruit, their own vegetables. And they have a way to hold it for the next year because only three months of the year, four months of the year, grows. And the rest of time don't grow nothing. You can't go buy. We have no market, no stores. So, so they, so how did we make a living? A Jew could make a living in

them years without business. So what did they have to do? You have to bootleg. You have to do things you're not supposed to do. So what happened? They called me, I was smart, I was smarter. My oldest brother, he's not the oldest. The oldest one was there.

APPLEBOME: Was in the United States.

CANTER: No, was in Europe. The oldest was here, all four of them. But the next oldest, he was the oldest after my father died. My father died in wartime, but not in the war. He died, something happened, he wouldn't die here, but he died at fifty-three. So he was, he remained the provider for the family. So what did we do? We found somebody, you know, friends, they tell us about in Moscow. You know, that was the capital, years ago was the capital, Moscow, but now it's Petrograd they call it. In Europe, Petersburg. But anyway, so we find out after the War there was hunger there. Because the War took away, used to come into a village, "How many cows you have?" "Six." "How much grain you have?" Everything, they took it away. So there was hunger. There was nothing to eat. So in Moscow we find out there is some Jewish people. That particular man I'm talking about had a shoe business. A manufacturer from shoes. In Moscow. In Moscow you can't live in Moscow as a Jew. Only, they used to call them (Yiddish phrase). First class business man like gildes, gold. Gildes is gold. First class golden businessman. Like that's the way they used to do. He's allowed to live in Russia. I'm talking about the Czar. Even after the Czar, he was living there but they took away his business. But he pockets some money, he pocketed the cellar. He was a millionaire in them years. He had a lot of money. So he pocketed some money. So they find out that they're looking for

food. They'll pay you anything to get food. So all our friends, I was little but my brother, me and my brother, I had an older brother they didn't take him but they said I'm smarter than him, so he picked me. So we used to travel to Moscow every second week. I think every second week. And the government allowed you to take with you, their loaves of bread are about ten pounds, eight pounds. A large, big loaf of bread like this here. And black bread like pumpernickel. And one loaf of bread, five pounds of butter, two dozen eggs, three dozens eggs, three pounds of cheese, whatever, food, food. They asked you, "Where are you going in Moscow? What are you going to do in Moscow?" "I want to be a barber, learn a trade." So they allowed you this certain amount to take with you. So how do you make from two pounds and one loaf of bread? So instead of three pounds of butter used to say six or seven or eight. Instead of three pounds of cheese, took eight pounds of cheese, double the amount. And me and my brother used to, and how did we carry that stuff? What do you call the things that the soldiers, on the back--

APPLEBOME: A shoulder bag?

CANTER: On their backs they carry that?

APPLEBOME: Back packs?

CANTER: Soldier carries stuff on the back. So we used to take these soldier things and put in all our stuff and used to come on the train. We used to put in between, their stuff, they used to keep it and I used to put my bag with it together so

they wouldn't, wouldn't recognize that I'm carrying a lot of stuff. Because they wouldn't search them. They used to search us. So on every station we come to Minsk, the train used to stop, take out, look for this. Me they didn't catch there because I put the stuff there. So anyway--

APPLEBOME: Let's get to the part where your family was getting ready to leave now, right?

CANTER: Yeah, no. I want to finish this story. Used to come, we arrived in Moscow and we used to bring it to the millionaire and he used to give us, if they didn't catch you. So we sold it to him and we used to make 2,000 rubles. And on the way back, you were not allowed to carry money, they used to search you for money. So in Europe everybody wears boots. Those long boots. So we find out a pattern, that boots had double lining. You know, they had a lining inside. So we opened the lining. We took a knife and shoveled it in, the money, all around, all around the lining. And it looked normal. And soon as we came in and they took us off for the search, they used to undress you, on the way to, not to carry money. So took off my boots and throw it, like this here, then I get undressed. Didn't even touch my boots, didn't even, they used to search me in the pockets, but never, not my boots. But anyway, so we came to Russia. How do you take out this business to carry out the station? So again, we used to be smart. The people that carried us on the wagons, baggage, used to pay two dollars a package. Two dollars a package and they used to wheel out. On the other side of the gate and we used to pick it up. That's where we smuggled it in. That's where we made a living. So then, now we'll come the other

way. So this is finished. So then something happened and we couldn't go no more. So we had, we opened a brewery that makes whiskey. You're not allowed in wartime to make whiskey here. There was the same thing. They shoot you. If they catch you, they shoot you. So we had three little places. Like moonshine we used to make. So they, one, we had a Gentile man, a neighbor, only made about three quarts a night and another one was bigger. One we had was all in the woods altogether. So they told my brother, they used to, not to go there, called it (?), our city where we used to sell the whiskey. So he took hundreds of bottles of whiskey and went to sell there. They warned him not to go because they're laying for him, they're looking for him. Somebody squealed. So, you know, he didn't listen, so they caught him. So they caught him and took him in and locked him up. They hit him twenty-five times on the bottom of the feet. They call it a (?), like a hose, a rubber hose, but there is not a rubber hose with empty inside, solid rubber. He was crippled maybe for months. He couldn't walk. And they locked him up. He got better. So he was locked up. And he was working on trains, to unload trains. Freight. So after that, I'll make it short because I'd have to have three days. So they sent us the money, so we had money to bail him out. So everything is shmirt. Everything is under hand. You pay off, you pay off. So we bailed him out for 10,000 rubles, which is maybe ten, like pesos here, you get five million pesos for a dollar (he laughs). You know, it's cheap. So we bailed him out and that day we escaped. We came home and we left everything. The houses, the cattle, the chickens, the dogs, the geese, the turkeys, everything. Only took what we took to make our wagon. We escaped because the Russians were coming back. Settle the war, they were coming. Soon as they came in that was, we escaped maybe a half a day, otherwise we'd never be here, we'd all get killed like anybody else, the six million Jews

got killed. We wouldn't be here.

APPLEBOME: And where did you go then?

CANTER: We went up. See, we had no trains. We went up to, they called it Zamiriouv, that's where the first train. We saw, I saw trains, but the rest of the family didn't see no trains. Because we were traveling to Moscow on trains. So we came up to there and there we went to Warsaw, Poland. And there we stood for six, there we stood for six months to wait for, for a visa. So, I have to tell you about a funny story. We arrived in Moscow--

APPLEBOME: This might be a good time for me to take a break just because we have to flip the tape. This is the end of side one of tape one of the interview with Mr. Harry Canter.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

APPLEBOME: This is side two of tape one of the interview with Mr. Harry Canter. Mr. Canter, I think we were as far as Warsaw.

CANTER: Warsaw. We are now in Warsaw.

APPLEBOME: And what happened next?

CANTER: Well, in Warsaw we stood six months to get passport because we had escaped without passports, otherwise if we go for a passport they would never let us out. So we, we escaped, we went away without passports. How do you travel without a passport? So we, we were, there was a place, you see, people (interruption) so we had to wait, people stood day and night in line. Day and night in line. First a husband or son, everybody, people were dying in line there to get a passport. So we had money, so it was zlotys in Russia, in Poland they call it zlotys, dollars, zlotys. So we paid 5,000 zlotys for six passports and the brother's passport to the house, you know, you pay them off. So then we left for Danzig. In Danzig we had to wait for the boat and we stood there three weeks I think, about three weeks. And the place was not a hotel, over, over, see, Danzig is a free port of Germany. So it was the barracks where the soldiers, in wartime, where the soldiers used to stay, and that's where they kept us there for three weeks. It's like an island, something like that. And from there on we waited and we took the boat and it was a very--

APPLEBOME: Do you remember the name of the boat?

CANTER: Susquehanna.

APPLEBOME: Susquehanna.

CANTER: Susquehanna. And it was a, I didn't know what is good and what is bad, but it was a terrible boat. This boat was not even a passenger boat. They used to carry troops when the war with Germany, with Russia, so they used to carry troops to Europe on that boat. And (he laughs) the louses were there, you go like this and you have a handful of louses in that boat. But anyway, and we were there, today a boat goes four days, five days, we were two weeks on the water. Two weeks. And then we arrived in Ellis Island.

APPLEBOME: Did you travel steerage?

CANTER: No.

APPLEBOME: Second class?

CANTER: This I don't remember. It must be second class. We wouldn't go first class.

APPLEBOME: What do you remember about the voyage over?

CANTER: Well, the only remember, I'll tell you what happened on the voyage over, what I remember. We started with four brothers, a sister, and a mother. And between germany, between

Danzig and Bremen, you know, Bremen is in Germany, a big city. A big city, Bremen. My mother got sick on the boat and what do you think she got? We didn't know, but she got sick. She got scarlet fever and that's a terrible sickness for a fifty-five year old woman. People, children, you know, you burn up with fever. So what do you think, it's catchy. It's a disease, very bad. So they tried to round up the whole family to take off on a small boat, on a tug boat or something, to take us away from the boat. Take us to Bremen. So there was a man was speaking English and we start to talk to him and talk to him and then he said you got to talk to the captain and after a few hours talking they allowed us to continue, four brothers, and they took my mother and my sister in Bremen. They were there three months 'til she got well. They arrived in the United States three months later. And we arrived without the mother and my sister.

APPLEBOME: That must have been difficult to leave your mother.

CANTER: Oh, man, oh, man. Not for us, but for my mother. And the only lady, the professor, they had big doctors there in Germany, the only way they told my sister that she survived is her will to see her children, she didn't see her children, the five children were here. Some of them she didn't see for twenty-five years and she had a very high fever and from the fever she was talking about Label, you know, his name was

Lable, the first one. Yussel, the next one. The way she's going to see him and she's going to see him and she's going to see him. And the doctor said the willingness to live and that's the way she survived it. That's what the professor told my sister.

APPLEBOME: So on the boat trip over it was just you and your brothers.

CANTER: Yeah, me and my brothers, four of us.

APPLEBOME: Did you all share a room?

CANTER: On the boat?

APPLEBOME: Yes.

CANTER: Ah, I don't know what kind of room there was. Small little rooms, I don't remember, but bunk, bunk, at the top and the bottom, I know. But we all, I think we were two in a room, two in a room.

APPLEBOME: Did you get sea sick?

CANTER: Yes. The rest of them didn't, but I did.

APPLEBOME: So is there anything else to say about the boat trip?

CANTER: Well, the boat trip (he laughs) I didn't know what was good and I thought this was supposed to be a boat trip but I didn't know there's nice boat trips like people travel. So bad trip. But anyway, we survived and we arrived on, the first day we arrived was Yom Kippur day. In them years it was Yom Kippur day and we stood on the boat on Yom Kippur day and I don;t know, they must have arranged it from someplace, there was, you ever heard of HIAS?

APPLEBOME: Yes, of course.

CANTER: Well, they, that's all they dealt with, was immigrants. They helped immigrants. So they must have arranged it. They brought a Torah, you know, you have to fast. So they must have brought up a Torah on the boat. You go davening, we were praying the whole day and fasting the whole day. And on the end of the day the HIAS took us off on a boat and brought us to Ellis Island. And they, you may know this, break the fast, you must eat a good meal, nice meal. Break the fast. They gave us a meal there on Ellis Island. Today in a wedding I wouldn't get a meal like that. You never saw a meal like that In Europe. They gave us chicken. They gave us gefilte fish. They gave us noodle soup. They gave us honey cake. They gave us, there's no end to the meal what they gave us there, I'm telling you. And then after the meal they took us back on the boat.

APPLEBOME: Where was the meal served, do you remember?

CANTER: In Ellis Island.

APPLEBOME: No, but in the Great Hall or was it in one of the dining rooms?

CANTER: Ah, in the Great Hall I think because there was, I remember those ceilings, you had to look like that, very tall ceilings. So then there was smaller rooms, but anyway, they took us back and then the next day, or two days later, I think the next day my brothers, they had to vouch for me. When you come to the United States you just can't get off the boat.

APPLEBOME: Did they bring a Rabbi on board the boat to conduct a service?

CANTER: Yes. Yes. Well, maybe somebody, I don't remember, maybe somebody who knew how to do it. Because them people are all religious, including me. I was religious myself.

APPLEBOME: What did the people on the boat do who weren't Jewish?

CANTER: They didn't participate in this, you know. They had, you know, but for the Jewish people they made it. But they went about their normal business.

APPLEBOME: Do you remember where some of the other immigrants were from on the boat? Did you speak to any of these people?

CANTER: Oh, yeah. Most of them from that boat was from Austria, from Germany, and most of them was from Europe, most of them from Europe. From Russia. Because everybody escaped, the poverty, you know, they were dying from hunger there. Poverty. Nobody cared for you. There's no such a thing to help you out. And the worst part of the whole thing is after we arrived to Castle Garden that they, first of all a doctor examines you.

APPLEBOME: But first, we had the meal on Ellis Island--and you went back to the boat--

CANTER: The next day, the next day they took us back, I don't remember exactly, the next day or the next two days, the next day, I think. They took us back to Ellis Island and somebody has to vouch for you to take you off the boat. So you have to have them, you have to show them fifty dollars. And then they, the men that vouch for you that you shouldn't fall into the government to support you, that he's going to take care of you. So one of my brothers came and he vouched, he go to a panel, three people sitting there like judges. And then they send you to--

APPLEBOME: And what did they ask you?

CANTER: Oh, they ask you questions about this and about this and about Europe and clean record and this. And then after that you go to a doctor. The first thing they look for you, they call it trachoma. Also in Russia, I think it's a, glaucoma, I think it's glaucoma, but, so in Europe before you go to the United States everybody goes to a doctor to be examined for trachoma. We didn't have enough time. I told you that. We had to escape that day. So nobody, nobody was examined by doctors. So the doctor looks for trachoma, they open your eyes and then they look for other sickness. After that they, somebody if they find sickness they put you in, you know, they had a hospital there.

APPLEBOME: Yes.

CANTER: They had a hospital so they put you in. If they find a terrible sickness they put you in the hospital. Right there. And some of them maybe they find the sickness like heart trouble, like trachoma, like some other, senility, or some other sickness. So they used to pin, the doctors, the first examination they used to pin on you with a, with a letter, with a piece of paper on you, like "E", like "I", they used to pin, I couldn't understand the letters, but my brother told me, he was on the boat already, that means for the eyes. Heart, "H" is for heart, they used to pin that on you and then they had to be examined by different doctors separately.

APPLEBOME: So how did you and your brothers do in the exam?

CANTER: We went through like a flying eagle. And we went through with no trouble at all. No trouble at all. Then the only question is my brother to tell them, they ask you how much, my brother was business already so they ask him, "How much do you make a week?" To take care of the family. Four brothers and two of them arriving. So he said, "How much do you make a week?" he said, "A hundred dollars." For them to make a hundred dollars in them years, like nine thousand today. Who made a hundred dollars in 1920? So, (he laughs) I have to laugh. After the whole examination, by then they let them through and everything. So a man, what do you call it, from the tax collectors, talked to my brother like this here. He says, they call him in a room and he says, "Did you pay tax last year? Income tax?" He says, he was smart, he was a very smart man. He was almost a Rabbi. He says, "No." They said, "You make a hundred dollars a week, what do you mean you didn't pay no income tax?" He says, "Last year I didn't make. I'm making it now. I didn't declare this year yet. September." They let him go. He escaped. They didn't bother. He lied, you know. That's a true story.

APPLEBOME: Had you ever met that brother before, as a boy had you known him?

CANTER: This particular brother I remembered him from Europe. So, no, only two of them I didn't know at all. See, when we arrived in, in the Statue of Liberty,

the boat stopped there. The next day it was a Sunday or something, so my brother came, came to see us and they wouldn't let him on the boat. So I remember he brought us crackers with cream cheese and we, on a rope, he carried it down, we carried it upstairs, and he brought us crackers and cream cheese, so my brother says--

APPLEBOME: He was on another boat that came out?

CANTER: A small little boat, to the boat, to the big boat. He was like visitors to see us. So my brother says, one of the brothers that I knew from Europe, he says to me, to us, hollers. "Des es Label. This is Label." Do I know Label? I didn't know him, he left before I was born. He hollers, "This is Label." So would you believe it, actually died, I swear to you, that I had so much respect for that man that I wouldn't say a dirty word. He was like a stranger to me. I wasn't brought up with him. So the respect I had, I looked up to him like a God, not like the other brothers. So one of the brothers that came to take us off, him I remembered from Europe.

APPLEBOME: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty in the New York Harbor?

CANTER: Oh yeah. The first thing that they, somebody said it in English, "Statue of Liberty." But we didn't understand the whole business. But I heard the Statue of Liberty in Europe yet, you know why? One of my teachers was here in the United States. He came back and he was again my teacher. So he explained everything. Whenever he had a

chance he was talking about the United States. So he explained about stopping, and he knew that I'm going to America, so he said, "You'll see the Statue of Liberty." But anyway, so we came to the Statue of Liberty and everybody started to hug each other and said, "At last we are free, at last we are free." And that was the, but if you have time, and I don't know if you want it, I can explain it to you. The way I arrived in Warsaw, you want to hear that, something?

APPLEBOME: Well, let's talk now about when you came into New York after you got off of Ellis Island. You said you had passed the exams--

CANTER: The exam, that was easy. They took us over on a boat, on a ferry they took us to Staten Island I think. And they were living in Jersey City. We came to Jersey City. Another thing I want to tell you for something. We arrived on the boat, in Danzig we had trouble with a lot of families but this family we got friendly. So he was going to Jersey City to his family and we spelled a "j" as a "g" in Russian. And we spelled it Gersey City. We were trying to get to Jersey City, he was trying for Jersey City. So we said goodbye, we kissed the whole family, we said goodbye. After we are here a few weeks I walk in Third Avenue, who's walking? Benny. Benny Lipschitz is walking. Says, "Hey, what the hell? What are you doing?" So instead of spelling Gersey City, Jersey City, we were traveling to the same block. (They both laugh) It's true.

APPLEBOME: And so what did you do when you got to the United States?

CANTER: So my brothers were here, so who's going to take care of us? So one of my brothers, see, they donate money, like eight hundred dollars, twelve hundred dollars, three thousand dollars. He didn't donate so much, he gave two or something. So they decided that he's going to keep us, for that he's going to keep all the four, the four of us, so my sister. we slept there and we ate there and they had a delicatessen business, you know. So we ate in the store. We ate in the store. So when they find, one of my brothers they gave a job in the delicatessen business, older than me. And one became an electrician, helper to an electrician. And a month later they find me a job as an egg candler. You know what an egg candler is? Doctor of eggs, see. He tells you which one has blood, which one stinks, which one is no good. So, today they do it by machine, electronically they do it. So I became an egg handler. My first job was twelve dollars a week.

APPLEBOME: Where did you work?

CANTER: The Eagle Grocery Company. They had 550 stores. Jersey City. And that was our first job. 'Til my mother came, three months later. So when my mother came, so they find us rooms--

APPLEBOME: Did you meet your mother at Ellis Island?

CANTER: No. I didn't go. They took her off. They took her off. See, I couldn't. To take her off, again, they had to go through the same thing I went through, so

what am I gonna go to Ellis Island? I don't make no money. You have to vouch for them. So I think this same brother or another went, I don't remember which one. They took her off. And then we lived--

APPLEBOME: Do you remember when you finally got to see your mother and sister again?

CANTER: Oh yeah, oh yeah. (He laughs.) You know, my mother, I don't know why, I was a little one, they're all husky, all of them, like 200 pounds, 250 pounds. And I was a little skinny runt. She, she only cried day and night I don't eat. She used to write to my teacher not to hit me. In Europe, a teacher, you say something wrong, they say, "I'll slap him." Takes by the ear and turns your ear off. So not to hit me. You know what she did in United States? I'm not telling you a lie. I used to work in Brooklyn, New York in delicatessen business after my brother, I worked for a brother of mine, he, then he went back to here. So I worked for whoever sold him, they told them "Harry Canter goes with the fixtures." They buy me with the fixtures when somebody bought it. Three times it was sold four times, and I used to come with the fixtures. So one of my bosses says to me, give me a letter and he can't read it because my mother used to write Jewish and, you know, altogether, the words together even I couldn't read

it, but I could read it but not him. He says, "What is this, Harry? Could you read it?" So I see my mother sends him a letter to my boss, he should see I eat in time not to work too hard. (He laughs.) That's my mother to me, you don't know. You know what she used to, to do? Wintertime in the east, years ago, I don't know about now, we don't get no fresh eggs. We get storage eggs. You still do, the same thing in New York.

APPLEBOME: I think they're fresh eggs.

CANTER: Yeah, but years ago when I came there was no fresh eggs in New York because chickens don't lay eggs when it is dark. Only when it's light. You know, now, today, they have light all night. The chickens, the chickens keeps on laying eggs. So she used to go, his name was Izzy (?). A butcher shop. Years ago you didn't buy chickens like today. You had to buy a live one in a chicken place then go to, then they used to kill it there. So she used to get up four o'clock in the morning to run, maybe a chicken laid an egg for me, a fresh egg for me. (He laughs.) She used to run, and that's how my mother carried on with me.

APPLEBOME: So you worked at delicatessen--

CANTER: First I worked at delicatessen up till 1928. Then we had a proposition, my brother was established in Jersey City. One left for California, another

one left for California. And the oldest one remained in Jersey City in a delicatessen business. So we had a proposition to go with him, partners, three more brothers. And him. So we bought his place and we had a proposition to buy another store, another, in a different neighborhood, another delicatessen store. So we took his store and already I saved up a few dollars so we took this store for 12,000 dollars. His store. So his, 12,000 dollars, and twelve times four is 3,000 dollars. So his three, each one giving 3,000 dollars, then a man offered years ago for that store 10,000 dollars. He went broke. He started off with waitresses and this one, she squealed on him and everything, so he went broke. He went broke so it was for sale in an auction. So the man, we are all well known, like here. Well known. So he says to us, to my brother, he says, "Don't," whatever, he had 1,800 dollar mortgage, they're paying a mortgage on it, he said, "Don't give up any more than 12,000 dollars, 1,800 dollars because I don't want them, I want you as a tenant. I don't care. If they buy it them tear it out." So who's going to buy it to tear out the fixtures? So we bought it for 1,800 dollars and we bought the other store which was a very successful business there. And that's the way we become partners--

APPLEBOME: This is the store in Los Angeles now?

CANTER: In Jersey City. 1928. May the 14th we opened , we became partners to him, to the brother.

APPLEBOME: This was you and your brothers.

CANTER: Three brothers, myself, and two more brothers, and my oldest brother. And we were partners there up till 1945, the end of 1945.

APPLEBOME: What was the name of the store?

CANTER: Canter Brothers. Here it's Canter Brothers. There it was, yeah, the same thing, Canter Brothers.

APPLEBOME: So why did you leave Jersey City?

CANTER: Because--

APPLEBOME: Excuse me, did you live in Jersey City?

CANTER: Yeah, all the twenty-five, all the twenty-five years I lived, even while I worked in, for the other people in Brooklyn, New York. I lived in Jersey City.

APPLEBOME: Um, you started working as soon as you got to this country?

CANTER: Yeah. A month later. First as an egg handler.

APPLEBOME: When were you able to learn English?

CANTER: Oh. The first year I used to go to night school. And after work used to go, all the greenhorns (he laughs). A bunch of us, you know, used to go there every night to night school. And, you know, necessity means, otherwise how could you make a living? So you're young, you learn fast. When you're old you can't learn. Your head is not so good.

APPLEBOME: And finally we went to California?

CANTER: And then in 19--, me and another, the younger brother, so we had two restaurants. They took one restaurant for their share and we took, me and my younger brother stood in a different location and we took one store for our share. And we sold it for 10,000 dollars. And we came here and we arrived in Los Angeles in '45, the last day of '45. New Year's Eve. And we were in partners to another brother, to one brother, he remained one, and he, that's why he sent us, he offered us a good proposition. So we left when he took us, we went partners with him. And it was a very good business. Here was the biggest business of all. In Jersey City. I mean we make a living, but here was very good business. Big.

APPLEBOME: Thank you very much. That's a wonderful story, Mr. Canter.

CANTER: Well, that was. So now, off record I have to tell you

something about what I told you about the lady.

APPLEBOME: This is the end of side two of tape one of the interview with Mr. Harry Canter. This is the end of the interview, Interview Number 152.