

KECK-93

FANNIE (FAGEL) FRIEDMAN

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THE UKRAINE, 1921

AGE 15

PASSAGE ON "THE NEW AMSTERDAM"

DANE: This is Debby Dane and I'm speaking with Fannie Friedman
on Friday, November 22, 1985. We are about to
interview Mrs. Friedman about her immigration experience
from the Ukraine in 1921. This is Interview Number 93.

Mrs. Friedman, if you would tell me what town you were
born in and spell it, because I think I remember it's a
funny name.

FRIEDMAN: The town was Chechelnik, C-H-E-C-H-E-L-N-I-K,
Chechelnik, Chechelnik. Can I write it down?

DANE: Yeah. That helps.

FRIEDMAN: Chechelnik.

DANE: Yeah. That's right. C-H-E-C-H-E-L-N-I-K. Right. Was it a big town, a little town? How would you describe it?

FRIEDMAN: It was a small town. The population, the Jewish population was about four hundred. And then, around the town lived the peasants. Uh, they all had gardens and, uh, they used to come once a week, uh, to sell their wares, chickens, potatoes, onions. And we were the last house from the top, downhill, and my father was a blacksmith, and my mother was a seamstress. She used to sew for the, uh, for the peasant woman. My dresses and, uh, coats, even coats. And my father was shoeing horses and making wagons and, um, now about school. And we were, by now, we're nine children. The oldest, my oldest brother, went to Kishinev [PH], and he worked as a clerk in the store because there were so many children we just didn't have room for all of them. So my mother tried, she had a sister there, so she sent them away. Another brother went to work as a tailor and he lived, slept there, too. For two years, ten dollars a year. And another sister also worked. But my mother decided that, when it came to me and my

brother next to me, that she wants we would get an education. And, at that time, I mean, do you want to know?

DANE: Yes. Oh, this is great.

FRIEDMAN: Um, at that time, they did not accept Jewish children to the schools, to the Russian schools. Um, very limited, unless you, either you know somebody or you were triple A, you know. Not only A, but, (she laughs), so the intelligentsia in Chechel'nik, the people who could afford to go to big cities and study. So they decided to open up a school for poor children, and they called it the (Russian word), which means a, uh, school for the poor.

DANE: Could you say it again?

FRIEDMAN: (Russian word). And so there we learned Russian, arithmetic, uh, I think I started when I was eight years old, and my brother next to me was ten. And, uh, we used to, uh, yeah, we just came, lots of kids, from France and all that. And some of them are here and live in New York that we went to that school. So we also studied Hebrew. Not Yiddish, but Hebrew. Russian, Hebrew.

DANE: Was it unusual, I have been told that, um, in some Jewish families, the boys got the education and the girls stayed home. Was it unusual for you to go to school?

FRIEDMAN: Well, my brother did go to Chedar, you know. That's the, uh, for Hebrew, so they should know how to read in the Bible, or whatever. And the girls, well, I always went with them because they didn't want to go without me. The three younger brothers, whenever they went to their Hebrew classes, you know, there was a teacher, they called him the rabbi, uh, they wanted I should come, otherwise they didn't want to go. So when I came there the rabbi said, "Oh, you come here and sit down on the bench." And he taught me. (She laughs.) So I knew Hebrew. So then we went to this school for a few years. Then my mother ran to some educated people from the school that stopped existing for some reason. During the Revolution and the war and all that, people moved. So she, uh, she got a woman who, uh, finished high school, that she should teach me. Because she wanted I should be educated. The others worked, the older children. Then, after the Revolution, uh, well, this town belonged to a, uh, a count, you know. And he had big palaces there. And it was all surrounded by big, uh, fences, you know, we couldn't look in. (She laughs.) Like this.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: And, uh, so when they settled a little, they decided the first thing, one of the first things, that they are going to make a school out of these beautiful palaces. You know, the people who lived there, he, the count, lived in the palace most of the time. I remember seeing him once.

DANE: You did?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. I'll tell you about that. So, uh, so they hung up in the middle of the square a big sign, "Everybody come to the palaces to register children from six to fourteen or fifteen," you know. So we all went, and we came into those palaces. You know, some of them, the walls were all glass, you know. Dancing, and that floor, you know. Of course, the peasants, before that, took out all the furniture. When the Revolution broke out, they let themselves go, you know. But they brought in tables and chairs and we were all given examinations to decide which class we should go. And, uh, there was a formal garden with statues--

DANE: Were you impressed, were you--?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, we, we just, (she laughs) we couldn't stop looking.

And once I took my girlfriend and I said,
"Let's go and see how many rooms there is." It was one
huge, long, round, of course, there were a lot of
buildings, and we counted about thirty rooms, you know.
And toilets. We had never had toilets, you know. (She
laughs.)

DANE: It must have been so amazing. Had you always wanted to
go in when you were a little girl, wondered what it was like?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. We looked in. We looked in. All we could see
was a straight, uh, road, you know, taking you, like the movies sometimes.
Where at the end there is a palace, but you don't see it, you just see the
road leading up to it. It was very far for me to walk, you know. In
wintertime I didn't have any shoes, so one of my brothers had to stay home
so I could go to school. (She laughs.) And the next day he was going to
be, he did, this older brother, didn't go there. I was the only one from
the family who went.

DANE: No kidding.

FRIEDMAN: And right away we started, uh, well, of course, I could
write Russian and talk Russian and arithmetic. So I think I went into the

sixth grade. And right away they started teaching, I don't know where all the teachers came from, but they were there, you know.

DANE: And were they Russian, gentiles or?

FRIEDMAN: Gentiles, all gentiles. Uh, and they started, besides Russian and geography and history, eh, and um, they started to teach us German and French. It was just accepted that you had to have all these languages besides the Russian.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: I don't know why. Whenever I looked back, I say, "How come?" But that's the way it was. We had to take languages. And we took it as a matter of fact.

DANE: When the Revolution came and they opened up the school, was it exciting? Were you, were you happy that the Revolution had come because now you--

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes. We were. So, first of all, uh, you know, the, there were a lot of groups fighting amongst themselves against the Communists, against the

Bolsheviks. And, uh, as I told you on the phone, in the middle they were killing Jews. And when the Bolsheviks came in they was no killing Jews. We used to hide in the basement, you know, or up in the attic, when all these other people came. Once there was a pogrom in our town, and we had to run and, uh, I remember my mother, you know, we didn't go to sleep, we used to sit, one of us, at the window, to see whether those people were making pogroms, were coming. Because we knew all around they were there and they were killing Jews. So, um, the neighbor came over and we said, "Esther, they're coming." She said, "So what shall I do?" She said, "On days like this everybody does what--" So everybody woke up and we ran to the nearest village. You know, a lot of people in the village knew us because they used to come to my father for the, for shoeing their horses. But somebody came before and told them that the Jews are coming to kill them. You know. So they were going to shoot them when they came near and they saw all the children. So they took us into a school. The men separate, and the women and children separate. And we didn't know whether they were killing the men or whatever.

DANE: Do you remember that?

FRIEDMAN: Absolutely.

DANE: Were you terrified?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, sure. We cried and, uh, I said to my mother. "Ma, we are such good people. Why are they killing us?" She says, "What God does, you don't ask questions." She was a very religious woman. And they send the wagon of peasants to see whether it's true that there is a pogrom in Chechel'nik, and they went and they said, "Yes. They killed ninety people." And among them four of my teachers. My Jewish teachers. Not the teachers from the palace.

DANE: Oh, but the peasants helped you.

FRIEDMAN: Then, yeah. When they, when they found out they gave us wagons to come back. And we were lucky that our house was not destroyed or nor burned, because it was at the end and it wasn't a palace. I assure you. It was a very small hut, you know. Uh, so we didn't have any food, you know. They killed all these people

and people were afraid, if they had the food, a little food, you know, these, these groups of people, (Russian phrase.) Peclura [PH], that was their name, you know. the leaders of these people who were fighting the Bolsheviks, they didn't have any food. So wherever they could get it, so they emptied whatever was there. So two days later, after the pogrom, my mother took a sack and she went to the peasants, and everybody gave her a piece of bread. And potatoes, you know. It was difficult. We really didn't have nothing to eat. Uh, then they started to bring in potatoes. So we ate potatoes three times a day.

DANE: Do you eat potatoes today?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. But-- Yeah, when you're young, well, we were worried but, uh, what else can you do? You just live through it, and you played and you read books and you went to the library, after they left. But then, the Bolsheviks came in, you know. The Red Army, you know, they always used to send in, um, what do you call a man who comes to see what--

DANE: A scout?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. A scout. And we saw a scout with the red flag, everybody was on the outside. And we were sitting near our house and they marched in, you know. This man came back and said, "It's clear. Nobody is there." And, um, we were sitting and looking up and we see, uh, two soldiers coming towards our house, one of them had a very broad smile on his face and he came over and it was my first cousin. My mother's sister's boy. (She laughs.)

DANE: Is that right?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. And everybody was kissing me introduce this man who was riding a small horse, almost touching the ground. And he was in the propaganda, uh, group, this other soldier and my, uh, you know, just telling the, uh, the people, who the Communists have. And in the evening they used to come and sit in our house and, uh, tell stories, you know. And my mother used to say to them, you, know, when they came in they took our blacksmith shop and they started to fix their wagons, and shoe the horses. So my mother said to this, uh, guy in the propaganda, she says, "You claim that you're going to help the poor people. Look what you're doing to us." He said, "In time the Revolution, thousands of lives don't mean anything because we are going to bring a new life for everyone." So, on the way, uh,

there has to be people, and, I mean, all kinds of people, our friends, used to come in and they would bring other friends from the Red Army and they'd say that we guaranteed and they'd sing their songs, you know. (Russian phrase) mean the, the, uh, march would be, the people died. But the rest, what do you call it in English? When you bury somebody and you march to bury him?

DANE: Funeral processional or something.

FRIEDMAN: Funeral march.

DANE; When you, did you, was the Revolution exciting for you?
Were you glad the Bolsheviks came in?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. They didn't kill. See, they opened a school. And they had propaganda all around, that they're there for the poor and, uh, I mean, the other people that we saw were killing. So how could we, uh, (She laughs.) and they were just human beings. And then, um, after they came, they tried to, you know, after it settled but, uh, in eight, uh, 1919, you know, things settled, they started to open offices and all that. So we decided to get in touch with my father. And, uh, my older sister and brother went to Roumania, which they had to cross the line, the boundary line between Russian and Roumania which was, as I told you on the phone, at

one time it was Russia, so my brother and sister went to Kishinev [PH], (?), or whatever and they, uh, they got in, they stayed for a while, they got on touch with my father, and he said, "Bring over the family. We're going to send money, we've saved up money, and we'll bring you over." So it was done in a minute. We had to sell our, the house and, uh, the house, it was three little rooms.

DANE: Before we leave the town, though, tell me about the count when it was, when the czar was still in power, you saw him one day?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I saw him. And my father was saying that he heard the peasants talking that the count is coming, and that there's going to be a little reception for him. Um, you know, near us, we were, as I say, the last house. And he was coming from the, uh, railroad train in an automobile. And I said, "Can I come with you?" He said, "Sure." So we went up on the road, and there were five peasants standing there with a table and a bread covered with a white thing and some salt. And here we see the airplane, the, the, automobile coming. We never saw an automobile before.

DANE: What did you think of it?

FRIEDMAN: Well, we knew it existed. (She laughs.)

DANE: So you knew what it was.

FRIEDMAN: And he came out, a young man. I guess he was good looking. I didn't look so much at that. And they all bowed to the ground, and they kissed his hand and, uh, they offered him the bread. And, uh, the man that was with him took him, you know, into the automobile. They didn't say much, they just, uh, they give him a piece of paper with complaints. (She laughs.)

DANE: Was it exciting to see him, or--

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. I always remember that. Why, was I, of all the people, telling my father I want to come with him to see it. You know, reading Tolstoy about counts and all of that, I said, and there's a count. So, um--

DANE: When your father left, when? What year? Do you remember?

FRIEDMAN: 1912.

DANE: 1912. And why is it that he left? What motivated him to come to America?

FRIEDMAN: (She sighs.) Well, uh, as I told you, he had, I had a sister who came in 1905. She was already here, married, and her husband worked in the shipyards. And my father wasn't making much of a living, you know. And, uh, well, the sister wrote him a lot of letters telling him that he could make money and, uh, bring over the family and they'll get an education and all that. And so he went, and she sent him money to come.

DANE: Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: And he took this brother of mine who was sixteen and he was working as a tailor. You know, and he was already a good tailor. And one brother was still in the Russian Army. Um, so, uh, he decided to go. And I remember taking him to, we had a railroad station about two miles away to Chechel'nik, so we all went, my mother carried my youngest brother in her arms and the whole family went. And they took next to nothing. They didn't have anything to take. (She laughs.) And when he came to America he, uh, got a job and he lived with his sister.

DANE: Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: They were twins.

DANE: Was it sad to see him go away? Did you understand that he was leaving?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. You see, but the tragedy was that after he left and he couldn't send us any money because of the war, so we had nothing to live on. So I had a grandfather who was also a, uh, so he started to work and he took in two assistants they still continued. It wasn't much, you know. Well, during the war, everybody was trying to take away everything from the peasants. Whatever they grew it, they didn't hide it. They didn't have it. If they didn't have it, we couldn't have it neither.

DANE: That's right.

FRIEDMAN: So they didn't fix their wagons.

DANE: I'm going to just do one thing, (She adjusts the microphone.) um, did you have any idea or imagine what America was like, your sister was, you probably didn't even remember your sister, but--

FRIEDMAN: No, it wasn't my sister.

DANE: Oh, it was his sister. Your aunt. Did you have an image of what America was like? Did you imagine what it would be like?

FRIEDMAN: Well, people said that everybody gets rich there. But I was skeptical about it, really. Because my father said that he worked very hard, to save money before he stopped writing. And my brother also said that, uh, there's no money. And the, uh, everybody works very hard. And we understood that. We were not stupid. To the extent that we should think, but we knew it's free and there were no pogroms, and this they let us know. And all the children go to school. And that was good enough for us.

DANE: The war came, and you lived through that. Then did you start hearing from your father again?

FRIEDMAN: No. You see, until the war came he sent us money, and we, my mother went and she bought material and made everybody new dresses, and that's the picture we took. Everything, with new clothes, that she made. And, uh, well, you know, we were very happy thinking that in two years we'll go. Then in 1914 the war came and, uh, they couldn't do it.

DANE: After the war, how did you, who, how did you end up coming? Did your father, or your brother--

FRIEDMAN: I told you that we went to Roumania, and from Roumania we, this brother who came first, wrote to my father. And we, uh, and then we, we came to Roumania and we stayed in, uh, in Bucharest for a year, until everything, you know. We lived like real refugees, in a basement. When we came to Roumania, though my father sent a little money but not enough, and nobody was working. So we lived what they call (Russian phrase). It means something like a lot of people who live together. And it was in a basement. I don't know who paid for it. And we was given planks of wood to make a bed according to how many people have to sleep there. So my brother made for the whole family, you know. I don't even remember what we slept on. Though we took some pillows with us. Anyway, it was terrible. Just terrible.

DANE: And how would you eat?

FRIEDMAN: There were so many people, about forty people, in that basement. And there was just a stove in the middle. I don't know what my mother cooked. I really don't. Unless we just bought bread and herring. And this was about all, I think. Before that we stayed in a hotel, until we

found this, and until they built up. And the rats were running around all over the place.

DANE: How awful.

FRIEDMAN: It was the cheapest hotel. And inside there were the prostitutes making so much noise and I couldn't understand what's going on.
(They laugh.)

DANE: And you lived there a year?

FRIEDMAN: Not in the hotel. We didn't stay, you know, we stayed only a week until they found us, that thing. And there we stayed a long time there. Why we stayed so long I can't understand, in Bucharest. But the young people had a good time, you know. We went out and we sang and we, uh, whatever we ate didn't matter, really.

DANE: You know what you just reminded me of, the home in Russian, you were telling me earlier about when the Proclamation. Could you tell me the story again?

FRIEDMAN: Uh, Russian? In English?

DANE: In English. Well, tell me the story in English and the poem in Russian.

FRIEDMAN: Okay. Good. (They laugh.)

DANE: How are we doing? Should we switch? Maybe we'd better switch just in case the, I 'd hate to-- This is the end of side one, Fannie Friedman, Interview Number 93. It's twelve noon.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DANE: This is the beginning of side two, Fannie Friedman, Interview Number 93. It's 12:04. Let's go back to the town, before we get you into Europe and over to America. And you have a story that you call Natasha.

FRIEDMAN: Right.

DANE: Will you tell us, please?

FRIEDMAN: Um, in 1862 the serfs were freed in Russia. And in this

small village, the Proclamation from the czar came in and that they're freed. And nobody in the town could read. But there was one little girl in the town, Natasha, who was ten years old and, um, she used to play with the girls from the big house and that little girl used to give her all the books and she loved to read. So she knew how to read. Then when all the older people came together and they say, "Now, who can read the story for us." And Sergi, her father, said, "Why, Natasha can read." They said, "Fine. We'll all come to your house tonight." So, um, he looks for Natasha and she sits in the back of the barn and she reads the book. He said, "Natasha, come here. Tonight you'll have to read something for the elders of the city, of the town." She said, "Me? I'm just a little girl. I can't do that, daddy. I'll die." He said, "No, you won't die. You go and help mother cook, make some cookies, and, uh, you'll read it." And, and so all the people came. And she sat in the middle. and they, uh, they all listened to her. And even the women who had, uh, suckling children, they gave them the breasts that they would keep quiet so they, too, with their ears, should listen. And did they understand the whole thing? No. They didn't

understand, but they knew that the new, uh, time was coming to them, a new, uh, free time that they're going to be freed as serfs. I don't, eh, translate it exactly, uh, because in Russian I can't translate everything. So, um, this is Natasha and it's in, it starts with (Russian phrase) which means look. And you look into the heart, and he describes what he sees. That the little girl is sitting near a candle reading and everybody is listening to her. And now I'm going to tell it in Russian. (Recites poem in Russian.) They are listening, that's the end. (Russian phrase), they knew that the new sun is rising for them. That means freedom.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: The words are so beautiful in Russian that I didn't translate exactly, but they're beautiful. The way it says, "Why are they listening to her? She is so smart? And he said, "No. They're listening because she is the only one who can read the published, printed word." You know we, um, my sister could write, the older sister, and my mother. So during the war, uh, you know, the peasant women couldn't write nor read, so if they got letters from their sons or husbands, so they used to come to us

and pay five cents that we should read the letter and write for them.

DANE: Uh-huh. How do you know that story, the Natasha, the poem? How did you--

FRIEDMAN: It's a poem. I had to read, I mean, it was one of the poems that I had to read while I was going to school and it just stuck in my head because I thought, "Oh, they were slaves, and this little girl told them that they were free." Oh, how beautiful, you know. Because I was such an avid reader all the time and I thought, oh, I should have been that, (she laughs), but we weren't slaves. Oh, we were in Egypt.

DANE: Did lots of people know that poem in your town? I mean, was it--

FRIEDMAN: No. You know, my children, when they were growing up, I was always telling them this story, you know, just to amuse them, because they reacted just like my (?). And they would say, "Ma, no (Russian phrase.)" They didn't want to hear the (name of the poem in Russian.) And I had another story, from Hebrew, that I also remember. That, this is about King David. Morris, (Mrs. Friedman's husband), he knows all this. (They

laugh.) You wouldn't have time to, uh, for me to say something about America, how I mad out, if I tell you about it.

DANE: Okay. Let's go. Let's save the, let me write that down and we'll save that one and make sure we get the rest of it. Okay. Let's move forward to, you're in Bucharest, and then, you'd been there about a year. What happened that finally allowed you to come? Did you get money finally, or--?

FRIEDMAN: We got they money they sent us, actually they sent us, uh, uh, tickets for the boat, you know. And they send us a little money and, you know, we dressed up a little. And, uh, then we went to Holland.

DANE: By train?

FRIEDMAN: By train. Uh-huh. And there they put us in one of these very clean, nice, beautiful home. Everything was clean, the toilet and all. That's where we had to learn. And we ate in a dining room with covered tables. I don't know who provided all that, but I guess it was in the tickets, you know, because we were, we showed the

tickets. But we had to, they looked for lice, as you say, and I didn't want to say the word lice, and they eyes and, uh, and we were just sitting and looking in each other's sad and washing our hair, bathing three times a day.

DANE: Because you knew--

FRIEDMAN: And we just had a good time. We were so clean.

DANE: How long were you there?

FRIEDMAN: A week. I mean, until everybody was, I mean, we weren't the only family, you know. There were a lot of other people, naturally. And we all went through the same thing.

DANE: Did you have vaccinations also done?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah.

DANE: Uh-huh. And--

FRIEDMAN: I had forgotten to tell you that I got, I got the measles in Kashna, Roumania. In Roumania. And they took me to the hospital. And my younger brother also got the measles. So we were there together for a week. And my, my sister-in-law had a baby there. My older brother-- (She laughs.)

DANE: No kidding.

FRIEDMAN: Yes, and I don't know who paid for that. We didn't. I guess there were organizations that paid. We were refugees, really.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did you have any connection with HIAS in Europe, do you know?

FRIEDMAN: No. No. We knew nothing about them. See, my oldest brother, he was a grown man, he was in the service, for three years, in the army. And he could read and write and all that. And he kind of took over.

DANE: Yeah. I see. Then it was time to leave on the boat, do you remember the name of the boat, by any chance?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. Didn't I tell you? Oh, you didn't call me on the phone.

DANE: I did. But I just want it for the tape. I know and you know but they don't know.

FRIEDMAN: We were in Amsterdam and they, uh, oh, in Rotterdam, I think. We were in Rotterdam, and the name of the ship was the New Amsterdam. And to us it was a beautiful ship. And, you know, there was, uh, but as soon as we went out in the ocean we were all so sick. The food was good, I suppose. We ate some, and we didn't eat, but we had a good time. We came up on the deck and we'd sing and dance and talk. And everybody was asking everybody else, "Where are you going? Where are you going?" And, uh, somebody said, "I'm going to Boston," and we said, "We're going to Boston," you know. There was one man whose uncle was a doctor, and he showed us the stationary, you know. It said Dr. Norman, you know, and everybody was looking up at him. A doctor! Why, we didn't have a doctor in our town.

DANE: Uh-huh. Wow.

FRIEDMAN: And so, uh, as I say. And then when we came to America we, uh, still kept up with them.

DANE: Oh, really?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah.

DANE: That's interesting because a lot of people I've spoken to said oh, no, we didn't talk to anybody, we stayed to ourselves, um, we were too sick on that boat, nobody was interested in anyone else. It's interesting that you did meet other people.

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. We, we just had a good time. We were young.

DANE: Do you remember what it looked like? You stayed down in steerage, third class? Do you remember?

FRIEDMAN: No, I don't think it was third class, all the way down.

DANE: Do you remember where you slept? Was it in a cabin, or in bunks?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yeah. Well, it was private bunks, you know, with four or six beds in it, up and down. Or maybe three, three flights up. But, maybe it was steerage. I don't know. I don't think my father would have sent us steerage.

DANE: There was a lot of you, though. Did you bring food on the boat?

FRIEDMAN: Bring? Where would we get food? (They laugh.) Don't forget, we came from Holland. and we stayed, everything was government, you know, federal, whatever. It wasn't ours to take. And we knew that much, that there would be enough food. No, we didn't carry food.

DANE: You were fifteen. Were you looking forward to coming to America? Now you're on the boat--

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes. Uh, well, I knew I'd get some new clothes, and my father wrote to us that he has an apartment for us, and everyone will have a bed for themselves, and we were just eager to go, to come. We were wondering, but we knew very little except that you work hard to, to come to something and you're free, there is no pogroms, and everybody goes to school for nothing. This the principal in school explained to me. He says. "Fanya, there they ask no questions. Everybody goes to school. You're very lucky." You know, when I came to get my diploma. I thought that it would mean something here, but it didn't mean nothing.

DANE: Well, you knew a lot more. You came into New York, how long were you at sea? Do you remember? Was it a long time?

FRIEDMAN: At least fourteen days.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did you get sick?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. We were all sick, very sick. But, uh, at times we went in and we ate. It was pleasant. I don't remember anything unpleasant about it. There was always bread and butter. We were not used to much, I mean, and fish, some kind of fish, cheese. We were very happy about it.

DANE: Then when you came into New York harbor, getting close to America, did you see the Statue of Liberty?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, sure. Everybody, I was just talking to my brother and I said, "You remember the Statue of Liberty?" He said, everybody was showing, but we didn't know what it was. "Look, look, look." In different languages, you know. So we looked. We saw a statue. But we didn't know it was the Statue of Liberty. We didn't get an education in that respect.

History, the American history. We didn't know.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. What did it look like to you, 'cause it wasn't a man on a horse, which is what--

FRIEDMAN: Well, she was holding a, that thing and I was wondering, "What is it?" I suppose somebody explained that, uh, she's inviting people to come in and making the road light, you know, light for the road or something. Yeah, we were excited. And some people were crying and, uh, some people went on their knees, you know, religious people. And my mother was so busy seeing that all the children should be around her.

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: And, uh, we got off and, uh, you know, and they, they tell you where to go and what to do and you just follow. You know, there were all these big buildings, and they assigned us space, you know, rows of bunks up and down. And, as I said, uh, it was Passover and some Jewish people came and they said, "How many Jewish people are here?" And so we stayed on the side and they said we'll all have a Kosher, uh, meal for you. And we came to the tables and what they served, uh, eggs and fish and, uh,

something, and, you know, the man, the Jewish man, said the prayers like you're supposed to.

DANE: Was it a rabbi? Did they have a rabbi do the Seder, or--

FRIEDMAN: I don't remember a rabbi. I know there were people from Hias who were, you know, attending to everything, telling us where to sit and, uh, serving and all that. A rabbi, every, everybody can read Hebrew, every man can read it. You don't need a rabbi.

DANE: Were you surprised that they had Passover at Ellis Island in this new place?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. (She laughs.) We heard about it, you know, we heard about HIAS. But I don't know why they didn't come to us. Well, we lived as many other people lived. I mean, what else could I do? We got a little money from my father when we were in Roumania so they didn't, unless they talked to my brother and I didn't know nothing about it. But they didn't improve us, condition, nothing, no.

DANE: When you got to Ellis Island, did you have to re-go

through, re-do the physical examination?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. They eyes and the head. The eyes were very important.

DANE: Uh-huh. Did they take off your, did you have to do showers and take off clothes and--

FRIEDMAN: No, no, no.

DANE: None of that.

FRIEDMAN: No. I don't think so. I don't remember none of that. We were already dressed and ready to go. After, you know, what happened in Holland. I think they got the records, they looked, they looked at us. And then when my father came and, um, he stayed in one side, and we stayed in this side, the whole family. (She laughs.) You know, there was a little gate in front of us. and they asked us, well, there was a translator talking to us in Yiddish, you know, and he said, uh, "You recognize him?" I didn't. My mother did. And we all embraced and cried and all that. And, uh, they took us to New York and we took a train.

DANE: Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: And we came to Malden.

DANE: To Malden here in Boston. Before we go leave Ellis Island, do you remember, um, you spent three nights there, about?

FRIEDMAN: Yes, two or three nights. Why, I don't know. I think my sister-in-law was sick, and they had to keep her, and we didn't want to go without her.

DANE: Were you afraid, or aware that you might get sent back to Europe? Did you--

FRIEDMAN: Yeah, we were. Because they did send back people. But we, uh, I mean, you can't just worry all the time. My mother, I suppose, worried more than I did. And we, we kept, as I said, we went to a concert. They had all these long benches. We all sat there, we, for the first time in our lives. We saw somebody in concert singing to us music, and everybody looked so happy, you know, the people who were already here. And then they announced with the loudspeaker, "The family Shamitz [PH]" And we all got up and we ran. You know, they were walking in front of us and showed us, and my father was already standing there. and we all came into the office, I suppose, where they, uh, let the people get together and, uh, oh, we kissed

and hugged. My father had no beard. That's why I didn't recognize him.

DANE: That's right. Were you impressed with the building? It was, it's a huge building on Ellis Island. Do you remember--

FRIEDMAN: You know, there were so many changes that we went through that we, you mean the building at, uh, Ellis Island? We were, we were, people talked about it, you know. We knew what we were coming to, that you have to stay there and they're going to examine you again and again. So we knew, little by little we got so used to it that we weren't, uh, excited any more, or afraid. We knew this is the way to come to this wonderful land. You have to go through all that, and we accepted it gladly.

DANE: Did anyone ever refer to it as the Island of Tears? Have you ever heard that expression?

FRIEDMAN: You mean for the people who had to turn back?

DANE: Yeah.

FRIEDMAN: No, maybe they did. The older people talked. I was very happy, just looking forward, what's going to happen there? Am I going

to find a boyfriend there right away? That's the way young girls think. My father's going to buy me some new clothes and I'll go to school and, uh, read all the, all kinds of books. You know we had a movie house in Chechelnik.

DANE: A movie house? You're kidding.

FRIEDMAN: Well, it wasn't exactly a movie house, but we had, you know, somebody had a barn, and we put a sheet on and we had that thing.

DANE: No kidding.

FRIEDMAN: And I remember that I went with this brother, he's not living now, that was two years older than me, we went. And in the middle of the movie somebody yelled, "Pogrom! Everybody go home." And he took my hand and then a girl from my school was not Jewish, she, she lived far away. She said, "I want to come with you because they'll kill me." So the three of us ran like crazy, and from the city we already heard the, the cries, you know, like they were killing people, and they were. You know, this was a little pogrom, just a few houses. They were just killing them. And they started to shoot. You know, we heard guns, or whatever it was. And we ran, and when we came in, my mother sat at the window. She cried. (She is moved.) And then the next day we went to school, everything was okay.

DANE: That's amazing.

FRIEDMAN: Well, we took that little girl home.

DANE: You did?

FRIEDMAN: She said, "They'll kill me." You know, they were shooting, they didn't choose, it wasn't just a Jewish place where the people came to, uh, see the movies. But they were, they threw a bomb now and then into the city.

DANE: It's so scary.

FRIEDMAN: Yeah.

DANE: But America, you came, and you came up to Boston on the Fall River Line, didn't you? How did you get to Boston, on the train or on that boat?

FRIEDMAN: No, on the train. On the train. Everybody knew, the way we were dressed, they knew we were immigrants. But then at the same time we were nothing new because so many immigrants came at that time. But

we were talking Yiddish. And my father said, "Don't talk Yiddish. Don't talk. They'll know you're an immigrant." (They laugh.) According to the clothes they knew. so, uh--

DANE: Did you ever refer, did you ever heard the word greenhorn? Did you--

FRIEDMAN: Oh, sure. Yeah, we were greenhorns. And, um, so I'm a greenhorn. I was proud. I know so many languages. I just don't know English. And the first thing my aunt taught me is to say, "How do you do?" Why how do you do? So, for Jewish people, "H's" are some times left out for some reason or other. Everybody was teaching every few words. Then, when we came to the school, the teacher was just saying, "This is a table, this is a chair, I speak." You know, just the way, and we learned, because we were so eager.

DANE: Hold on a second. (To engineer.) How are we doing? Um, so when you got up here you went right to school?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. I went to evening school, as I say, and then in a few months my mother said, "Everybody has to work. Your father doesn't have that much money." So, uh, they advertised, and my aunt was telling us that

there was someplace where they were making skirts. and my sisters. my three sisters, all three of us, went there and they put us on these electric machines. I couldn't work. I could work a machine, and they taught me, and I was making skirts.

DANE: Were you sad to have to leave school?

FRIEDMAN: Huh?

DANE: Were you sad to have to leave school?

FRIEDMAN: Oh, yes. But then, night school was good, too. I met so many boys there. (She laughs.) They also spoke the same language that I did, you know. And, uh, I wasn't worried about much. I got to go to work, I wanted to work, and my brother, this american that was already here and making a lot of money, he says, "You're making ten, twelve dollars a week," he says, "Five dollars put in the bank." He took me to a bank, and I signed my name. And when I left to go to New York I already had three hundred dollars saved up.

DANE: Wow.

FRIEDMAN: And we worked very hard. The, uh, then, I didn't work much in that. Then we went to work in the Malden Knitting Mills. You know the Malden Knitting Mills on Eastern Avenue. And the three of us worked there, you know, uh, making sweaters.

DANE: How long would you work a day?

FRIEDMAN: Well, didn't matter, six to six or something like that .

And he used, he used to curse us if we didn't understand what, he spoke Yiddish. (She laughs.) Yell at us like we were, I don't know, nothing. Sometimes I tried, Because if I didn't, you know, I wasn't such experienced on an electric machine, you know, so, uh, he was cursing me. But then, when I decided to go to New York, he was sorry to let me go.

DANE: Because you worked hard.

FRIEDMAN: Yeah.

DANE: When you first got here did you ever miss home? Did you wish that you'd never come, or did you always like it?

FRIEDMAN: Never. Never. There was nothing to come home to. No.

How could we? I mean, when we left it was just awful. The Revolution went on for some time, and they were killing each other. And toward the city, where all the, uh, uh, prisoners of war passing by, and they looked miserable. Germans and Hungarians, and we used to bring them out water, and my mother gave them a piece of bread if she had it. (A telephone rings in the background.) So--

DANE: This is the end of side two, of Fannie Friedman, Interview Number 93. It's 12:30.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

DANE: This is tape two, side one, Fannie Friedman, Interview Number 93. It is 12:45.

FRIEDMAN: You know, when I said that when I came here, uh, I joined the (name of organization in Russian), which was a young people's Zionist organization. I didn't know, uh, you said I know who they are. You

didn't know.

DANE; No, I didn't know. Did I say that?

FRIEDMAN; Yes. I said to you, "I met Sholom Alachem." You know who Sholom Alachem is, the one who wrote, uh, Fiddler On The Roof. Yeah. So I met him at Chechelnic. They were, uh, they were two famous, very famous Jewish writers, (?) and (?), which is not familiar to you, and sholom Alachem. And I don't know how this happened that we had a library in Chechelnic. And when I was twelve I was already reading Tolstoy, you know, Tolstoy. And Dostoyevsky, you know. And, uh, I was educated in that respect, you know, knowing, uh, then when I came to America I started to read the English writers. And we belonged to the great book discussion group.

DANE: Tell me about that.

FRIEDMAN: Well, the great books, they are great books, believe me. Um, history, philosophy, uh, uh, classics and we, we meet at the library. It's a national organization. We meet at libraries and um, we buy our own books. Morris, you can tell them about it. And, uh, (husband speaks). And, uh, we read the books and

then we come and we talk about it.

DANE: Talk about it? When you got here and you started working in the factory at the knitting mill, were you going to night school at that point?

FRIEDMAN: Yes.

DANE: And were you studying English or--

FRIEDMAN: English. Only English. And then, when I came to New York, I went to this preparatory school evenings, when I worked in Mansanto [PH] House.

DANE: Was it frustrating for you not to be able to speak English here, or were you surrounded by people that spoke Yiddish, so you didn't notice?

FRIEDMAN: Yes. We spoke Yiddish all the time. I my house, everybody spoke Yiddish. Of course my younger brothers, you know, they went to day school and they, they became. you know, I have an experience at the school where I was telling stories. A Vietnamese boy

came and in first grade he couldn't understand or speak words. You know, every time I, when I tell the story, I say, "You know what I mean? How do you like it?" Something relating to the story. And I said, "Does anybody want to say something?" Up went his hand. He couldn't understand what I said. When he was in the third grade, was he speaking english. He's now in junior high school. He says, "Mrs. Friedman, I'm an american." You know because now they talk so much about bilingual, that they should teach these children the Spanish. Well, we just learned, there was no other way. You had to learn. And we did. So, uh, it just came naturally. I still, my first language is really Yiddish. But Russian I can speak but, you know, I don't speak it. But I can read a book and understand. And, uh, but Morris and me, we always, uh, you know, intermingle. My children speak Yiddish. I sent them to Yiddish school. Leon and Nana.

DANE: And your grandchildren, has it filtered down that far?

FRIEDMAN: They don't understand a word of Yiddish. This is the usual way. You know, when I was, uh, at school and

I was asking the children, "Where do your grandparents come from?" "I don't now. I think--" "Aren't you interested to know where your grandparents came from?" Most of the, uh, children were Irish Italian, intermarried, you know. Because this is the neighborhood where they lived. So I say, "Don't you want to know about anything?" I say, "Why don't you go and interview your grandparents?" And they did. It was beautiful. And they gave me all the letters. I know there is no time for that. And it's so beautiful. For the first time they found out where their grandparents came from.

DANE: It's important.

FRIEDMAN: They're not interested if you don't tell them.

DANE: Right, because no one helps them.

FRIEDMAN: I tell my children, I say, "Don't you want to know some details about me." They say, "Grandma, we know everything. We know that you were born in Chechelnyk, you came here--" But we didn't even touch on South Carolina. We lived there for twenty-five years.

DANE: But I still have even more questions, just, when you first got here, about being a greenhorn. And I always ask this question--

FRIEDMAN: Yeah, go ahead.

DANE: --because people answer different. Did you ever feel, when you first got here, that you were an outsider? Were you ever treated as an immigrant?

FRIEDMAN: No. No. We did not. Well, you know, people were, uh, saying, "You're a greenhorn." So what? I didn't like it sometimes, I suppose. It depends on how it is said. If they wanted to insult you with it, you were insulted. But if they said, "You're a greenhorn," I said, "Yeah, I just came, and if this is what you call me that's okay with me."

DANE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

FRIEDMAN: No, really. I didn't. Many people asked me, "Did you feel--" Because, after all, I did live in a Jewish neighborhood, you know, and a lot of them were immigrants. In New York, you know, there it's already, uh, all kinds of people come. So, somebody would, uh, imitate me. You know, I don't pronounce the "H", I don't pronounce the "W", "V" and all

that, so I don't like it. But I remember being on, uh, on the radio in South Carolina. We were building a library and I spoke on the radio. So after he finished he said, "Mrs, Friedman, we can still take off some, you know, if you don't like what we, what you said." I said, "The only thing I want you to take out is my accent." (They laugh.) I mean, sometimes my accent, because I was a little nervous. so it was so sharp, you know, that I said to myself, "That's me speaking with such a terrible accent." Especially in South Carolina.

DANE: Right. Right. Another question I always ask and I'm wondering, you are Fannie now, what were you called in Russia when you first came?

FRIEDMAN: In Russia I was called Fanya [PH]. But in Yiddish, I'm Fagel [PH].

DANE: Fagel. And is that what you were always called by your brothers and sisters and people who you met here?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah, they still call me that. The whole family calls me Fagel. They don't call me Fannie.

DANE: When did you become Fannie, and to who?

FRIEDMAN: Well, when I came to school, the teacher said, "What's your name?" I said, "Fagel." She said, "Your Fannie." And that's it. I stayed Fannie.

DANE: What did you think about that? Do you remember when she said that?

FRIEDMAN: Well, Fanya [PH] and Fannie isn't so much different. In Russian I wasn't going under Fagel, I was going under Fanya. So, uh, it was no, uh, some people said, "Why didn't you say Francis?" I didn't know there was such a thing as Francis. She said Fannie, I asked her a question.

DANE: Another question, now, I'm going through my list to make sure we cover the subjects, citizenship. Did you, how and when and why did you--

FRIEDMAN: Oh, I was very determined to become a citizen. So, as soon as I was the age, and I was five years her, we lived in Brooklyn at that time, I was already married. And, um, I wanted to become a citizen, I wanted to vote. So, uh, I read the book, I didn't fail, and I went. It was

still in Brooklyn, wherever you go. And I had two witnesses who were my friends. I met them in school. And, uh, they asked me such easy questions. And the judge was very encouraging, I didn't. And, but I was eager, I don't know how come. In Russia I didn't have to become a citizen. Of course, I was too young for a citizen. There you don't have to be if you were born. And even my mother wanted to become a citizen and she, she and four women got together and they paid the teacher fifty cents each he should teach them how to become a citizen.

DANE: And when you, that day at the courthouse, were you proud, did it make a difference?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah, I was glad. It was like any exam that you work for and you pass it, so you're glad. To say I was very proud, I wasn't that self-conscious about the whole thing. What it involved being a citizen. I just knew I was able to vote and, uh, and you get more privileges so you just have to be a citizen. Because in school they were telling us, you know, when you, uh, twenty-one and you're five years here you can become a citizen, do you want to? Ad I said, "Sure, of course." So they told me the books to read and, uh, that's all. It was easy. I had my passport at that time, I mean, the passport of my family. There was no question. We had all the, the papers.

DANE: And then, this is another way of sort of asking the same question but, when did you feel that you were an American, which is different then being a citizen. You had left Russia and now were living here. Did you feel that you were an American right away, or did it take time, or--

FRIEDMAN: I don't say I gave myself time to say, well, am I an american? I just went on living, you know. I did the things that I could for the community. always getting involved in something. I didn't do anybody a favor. It was in me to do the things that, that I liked. You know, when my children started school I was in the parent teacher's organization. And I felt, this is the way, not because of citizen, because I'm an american and, uh, people get together and do things for the school and I want to be there, and I was. I was secretary. Right away I was recording secretary. Because I liked to write all the time, you know.

DANE: And then what, just because we really should wrap up, you had two children, twins.

FRIEDMAN: I have.

DANE: You have. They were born. And will you tell me what

they do?

FRIEDMAN: My daughter said that we like the boy more. She always accused me of that, because he was a very good boy, studied, he was always on top of his class, he was valedictorian, and all that. And she was a good student. She was on the honor roll. But since he didn't give me any trouble, so I didn't yell at him. She, being jealous a little, you know, it was natural. So she complained. But now she's wonderful. Not because she's my daughter. She's a social worker in every sense of the word. What she does, for people saying that she's not supposed to, and she carried the burden with her. And she brought up two wonderful sons. Her husband is connected with the bank, and he's president of something or other. And, uh, she's sweet. She's very gifted, she has so many friends, and she loves that little boy.

DANE: And what do you call him, your great-grandson your--

FRIEDMAN: I call him Shanigala [PH], which means boy. You don't pronounce the (?).

DANE: And your son, what does he do?

FRIEDMAN: Mow, he went to Harvard, uh, on scholarship. And then

he went into the service, after he finished his first four years, but he got his bachelor's and he was sent to Japan and he stayed there for the two years after his basic training. And then he came back and he entered the Harvard Law School and, uh, he got a scholarship, and he was teaching there. And when he finished he went to New York because he always wanted to, he was born in New York, he always wanted to be in New York, and he took the Bar there, and, uh, got a job in a big office and then he decided he wanted to write a play and he did.

DANE: A play?

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. About, what's his name, the one who killed John Kennedy?

DANE: Lee Harvey Oswald.

FRIEDMAN: Yeah. He wrote the play and it was put on Broadway.

And I remember we came and they were waiting to see what the critics will say about it. It was Sunday night. We came to the play. My daughter came and all that. They didn't stay long. I'm not going to tell you what the play's all about. So, um, where he worked they said, "Well, either you are, you're a lawyer, or you're

a writer, what's it going to be?" So, he thought he would be a writer. So he got a grant from the Ford Foundation to write a book, so he did. So they gave him an offer, and he wrote Disorder In The Court. Disorder In The Court. It was during the time, the Democratic convention, there was such riots there, and after that people were not behaving well in court. So he wrote, (She addresses her husband.) Morris, is something burning? Yeah. I see they are burning. And then he's written, he's written all these books. He got the, uh, Scribes Award for the Justices of the United States Supreme Court, their personal lives and their outstanding cases. And now he is a professor at Hofstra, he teaches institutional law. He has an office and he lectures. And he has one son, and his wife is an artist. And he's just a nice-- I have some nice pictures of him someplace. And only last week he was three times in the New York Times.

DANE: No kidding.

FRIEDMAN: He had part in this, uh, this thing that was freed, what's his first name? (Husband speaks.) Yeah. He's the one who founded

the (?), you know, he, uh, that, uh, they did something wrong. So he was the one, he was given credit in the New York Times. Then they called a big conference in New York, which he was the initiator of that, uh, about the Supreme Court and, you know, Civil Rights and all that. This is where we are standing now.

DANE: So, we should finish up. So you ended up with a son and a wonderful daughter that are now making great contributions.

FRIEDMAN: Right. They do.

DANE: Uh-huh. I think--

FRIEDMAN: He worked for the, uh, Civil Liberties, for a long time. You know, contributed his time.

DANE; I think that's it. This is the end of tape two, side one, Fannie Friedman. It's Interview Number 93, and It's 1:00.