

KM-078/BORNSTEIN

KM-078

PHILIP A. BORNSTEIN (SIVOSKY)

BIRTH DATE: APRIL 8, 1909

INTERVIEW DATE: JULY 31, 1994

RUNNING TIME: 42:20

INTERVIEWER: KATE MOORE

RECORDING ENGINEER:

INTERVIEW LOCATION: COLUMBUS, OHIO

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 11/1994

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LITHUANIA, 1921

AGE 11

PASSAGE ON "THE OSCAR II"

MOORE: Good afternoon. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service, and today is the 31st of July 1994, and I'm in Columbus, Ohio at the home of Philip Bornstein, who came to the U.S. from Lithuania in 1921 when he was eleven years old. Why don't you begin by giving us your full name and date of birth, please?

BORNSTEIN: My full name is Philip A. Bornstein. I was born in a small town called Saboskin. It's close by Grodno.

MOORE: How do you spell both those names?

BORNSTEIN: S-A-B-O-S-K-I-N. Saboskin. G-R-O-D-N-O. Grodno.

MOORE: And what is your birth date?

BORNSTEIN: It's April 8, 1909.

MOORE: And what size town was your home town?

BORNSTEIN: To the best of my ability as I remember I left the city when I was about six years of age. Things is engraved in my mind which I (?) at the time when the war started out. It was 1914. The war started between Russia and Germany. One evening my mother woke me up. She says, "My child, don't worry and don't get scared, but the city is on fire." I still remember the moment my mother grabbed me, and she put clothes on me, and she told me, "Don't worry, my child. God will provide for us." We were so embedded with religion that the only thing we had in our household was God alone. See, He was going to help us, and He was going to see over us. It's an amazing thing what happened. My mother was quite religious, usually, and she didn't take any, she first started to get a little buggy, which we had as youngsters, and then she put the Bible away and the candlesticks, and didn't take anything else. We went outside, and we prayed. As time went on we

found ourselves, my father was already in America, and we was totally cut off of means of sustaining us. And during that period of time the Russians recaptured the city, because we were on the borderline, and they were afraid we would be spies for Germany, so they sent us to Grodno in the cattle cars, and we went to the city of Vitupsik in Russia.

MOORE: And how do you spell that, do you know?

BORNSTEIN: That's V-I-T-U-P-S-I-K.

MOORE: Now, what year was this?

BORNSTEIN: This was just the war, starting on the war, (?).

MOORE: And your father was already in the United States.

BORNSTEIN: The United States, yes.

MOORE: When did he leave for the United States?

BORNSTEIN: In 1909. Because I didn't remember my father hardly at all there.

MOORE: And the town that you went from originally, that you were born in, what was its major industry?

BORNSTEIN: Just a farm settlement more or less there. I

remember it had a market in the center of the city, and they used to each own bring his wares, and his fruits and vegetables, and sell them, and go back home.

MOORE: What about the house that you lived in in that small town? What was it like?

BORNSTEIN: It was a log cabin. Actually, a little cabin, one room and had a basement.

MOORE: What was it made of, the cabin?

BORNSTEIN: Just logs.

MOORE: Logs. How about the floor? What was the floor?

BORNSTEIN: It was a hard floor, see. Just the hard, long boards there, as I remember. There was nothing finer than that, no accommodations.

MOORE: What about water? Where did you get your water from?

BORNSTEIN: From the well.

MOORE: And where was that?

BORNSTEIN: It was probably twenty feet, each provided for a

circle of people living within the community, see.

MOORE: And how did you heat the cabin?

BORNSTEIN: We used wood.

MOORE: And you heated the wood in what?

BORNSTEIN: We had a big oven. And that kept the house warm, and normally in the winter months we used to go to the top of the oven, and we would sleep there. It was wonderful. (he laughs) It was a luxurious apartment, believe me.

MOORE: (she laughs) And what about the lighting? What lighting did you use?

BORNSTEIN: Kerosene lamps, to the best of my ability.

MOORE: What about toilet facilities? Where were they?

BORNSTEIN: In the backyard.

MOORE: The outhouse.

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: And how about animals? Did you keep animals?

BORNSTEIN: No. We were animals. (they laugh)

MOORE: But you didn't keep any animals?

BORNSTEIN: No, no, no.

MOORE: Okay. And what did your father do before he left to go to America?

BORNSTEIN: He was a shoemaker.

MOORE: He was a shoemaker. And did he find a shoemaking job in the States, or what did he do?

BORNSTEIN: It was not, you couldn't depend upon this work. It's a good thing we were religious, because if you had work, God provided it, if you didn't have work, it was God's wish not to have it. You see there? So he didn't have any problems, see here, because it was God's wish. So he didn't ask any questions, see. That's what it was, see, that's the answer.

MOORE: What was your mother's name?

BORNSTEIN: Nina.

MRS. BORNSTEIN: Nina.

BORNSTEIN: Nina, and her maiden name, now, uh, Chajfosky.

MOORE: And how do you spell that?

BORNSTEIN: Now you're putting me to the test. Uh, C-H, C-H-A-
J-F-O-S-K-Y. Chajfosky.

MOORE: And what was her occupation?

BORNSTEIN: A housewife.

MOORE: And what did she look like? How would you describe
her?

BORNSTEIN: She was sweet. (Mrs. Bornstein laughs) She was
the dearest mother I could ever have.

MOORE: And how would you describe her looks?

BORNSTEIN: She was sweet.

MRS. BORNSTEIN: She was tall, thin. A nice looking woman.

BORNSTEIN: She was a real mother. See here, sweet as she can
be.

MRS. BORNSTEIN: Yes, she was.

MOORE: Oh, sure. And is there a story about your mother
that you associate with your childhood, besides
waking you up that night?

BORNSTEIN: She had, she was a lovely mother. I had a family, we were four brothers and two sisters, and I'm the only one left right today. And she was always, she had a good thing. We always had enough food, but she cooked, if company would come in, she'd always put a plate out and serve them, too. "What did you do, Mom?" "If I cooked soup, I put a little more water in, see? And if I have potatoes, I put another potato in, you see there, and divide it up. This way here everybody's happy and everybody's eating." She probably didn't get anything, but everyone else did.

MOORE: You mentioned your brothers and sisters. What were their names? What, in order, could you name all of them?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah, I think I can. Hyman, Morris, Sam, Phil, that's me, my sister Anna, and Dora.

MOORE: And what about your dad? What was your dad's, how did he look like? What was his looks?

BORNSTEIN: Well, he was a really conservative individual, very religious, observant man.

MRS. BORNSTEIN: Had a big beard, a beautiful beard.

BORNSTEIN: And the men tried to make a living, you see here?
You left the old country for one reason, to try to
educate his children. And to make enough money so
you could get yourself a new home.

MOORE: Now, your father's name was, again . . .

BORNSTEIN: Wolf.

MOORE: Wolf.

BORNSTEIN: Uh-huh, Bornstein.

MOORE: Bornstein. Okay. And, um . . .

BORNSTEIN: And that name was changed. Our real name, when we
got to this country, was Sivosky.

MOORE: How do you spell that? S . . .

BORNSTEIN: S-I-V-O-S-K-Y. Sivosky. But his brother was living
here in this country, and his name, he changed his
name to Bornstein, so we adopted the same name.

MOORE: Uh-huh. So your father's name was Wolf Sivosky?

BORNSTEIN: Sivosky, yeah.

MOORE: Sivosky, all right.

BORNSTEIN: You're doing better.

MOORE: (she laughs) All right. Now, you mentioned meal time and your mother cooking. Did anyone else help her with the meals?

BORNSTEIN: No. It was Mother's job.

MOORE: And what was your favorite food?

BORNSTEIN: Food.

MOORE: (she laughs) Food was your favorite food.

BORNSTEIN: That's right. For me you didn't ask for any menus. There was no menus then. What you had to cook, that's what you ate. No specialty.

MOORE: What was, did you eat your meals together?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

MOORE: How many meals a day did you eat together?

BORNSTEIN: Maybe two.

MOORE: Now, did your mother keep kosher?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: And did, did you have, like, a butcher that was kosher as well?

BORNSTEIN: Over there, sure.

MOORE: Now, what about your grandparents? Where did they live?

BORNSTEIN: They lived in the same town.

MOORE: And were you close to them at all?

BORNSTEIN: I don't remember them too much. I remember my grandmother a little.

MOORE: All right. So you were in the middle of telling us how you were woken up, and the city's on fire. And you had to leave. What happened then?

BORNSTEIN: We stayed in, we stayed in Vitupsik a couple of years, and then it was after the war, see here. And then we come back to Saboskin, which was totally demolished, so we went to live in Grodno. (a telephone rings) (break in tape)

MOORE: All right. It's record? (referring to the tape

recorder) (voice off mike) Okay. Now, but
I . . .

BORNSTEIN: Vitupsik.

MOORE: How do you spell that?

BORNSTEIN: Give me a pen and paper.

MOORE: I have some right here.

BORNSTEIN: (he writes it out first) V-I-T-P-E-S.

MOORE: All right. And that was a town . . .

BORNSTEIN: A beautiful Russian city, very, very modern. A
beautiful city.

MOORE: Now, what language were you speaking at home at that
time?

BORNSTEIN: Yiddish.

MOORE: You were speaking Yiddish. Now, did you learn any
other language at all?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah. We adopted Russian. We spoke some Polish,
and towards the last we spoke German, German.

MOORE: And what did your mother do? How did you live in

each of these towns? On what were you living?

BORNSTEIN: We were living very poorly. We lived all in one room, and the Russians, at that time they were not organized whereas you keep the, they called them the, the refugees. They were not organized, and that's (?) providing housing, or giving some money. You had to go out yourself and beg for some of the food, she had. My brother Morris, who was quite an intelligent young man at the age of fourteen, and he studied Hebrew extensively, he went out and gave lessons. And then we used to have, the crust of the bread we used to get in payment of that, or get probably five pound of potatoes, see? There was no luxuries. And we appreciated every minute of it, see, because nothing we available.

MOORE: Now, did you experience any religious persecution, then, in that area?

BORNSTEIN: In that area at that time? No, no, no. I think in fact there was a German soldier come in with his rifle and ask for bread, and my mother showed him, she says, "We're Jews, we're Yiddish." And she showed him the Bible, and he left. So, to that

extent, kind of the Bible saved us. Yeah.

MOORE: And other than that, though, were you all driven from any place or threatened for being Jewish?

BORNSTEIN: Not there at the time, because war was going on, you know, they had other things to think about than religious persecution.

MOORE: Now, what holiday celebration was your favorite?

BORNSTEIN: All the holidays were favorites, see. You had no choice picking holidays. A holiday come along, you observed it, see?

MOORE: What was one that stands out, do you think?

BORNSTEIN: Well, my boyhood life was entirely, I felt more or less a responsibility in life. I'm growing up overnight, see. I knew what it meant not to have food, see. And I know what it meant to sit there without eating anything, you see? So you immediately don't think about playing around. You just think about getting something to eat.

MOORE: Now, what about school life? Did you attend school?

BORNSTEIN: I didn't have no schooling there. For about three,

four years, it was nothing. We were always on the go.

MOORE: So . . .

BORNSTEIN: You educate yourself pretty quick.

MOORE: Did you learn to read and write, then?

BORNSTEIN: Very little, no.

MOORE: Now, what about, tell me a little bit about what happened after that? You're in this town, this Russian town living, how did you get to the United States, and what's the passage there, then?

BORNSTEIN: It was really exciting and thrilling, and it was all, you felt, you were crying at the same time, joy and crying. The American ambassador was stopped and made his speeches in Grodno, in the public square. And my brother Morris was there listening to his speech, immediately wrote the name of my father, and they gave him the ticket. It wasn't very long that we heard from my father, that we were alive and he's alive.

MOORE: So it as through the ambassador . . .

BORNSTEIN: Through the ambassador.

MOORE: By chance.

BORNSTEIN: That's right.

MOORE: So you got in contact . . .

BORNSTEIN: Got in touch with my father. We were totally separated, not knowing. And the hardest thing we the living, not having any money. He sent us tickets, and then we went to Germany, Danzig.

MOORE: Okay. So you were in the town. How did you get from the town to Germany? What did you take with you?

BORNSTEIN: Not much. We didn't have much to take.

MOORE: And how did you get there?

BORNSTEIN: Well, it was really something differently. We were traveling. In fact, we were all (?), see, women and kids. And we took a horse and wagon, which was loose in the market, and we packed up what we had.

MOORE: And what was that? What did you have?

BORNSTEIN: Not much.

MOORE: Anything . . .

BORNSTEIN: Nothing important. We had religious books, yeah.
Outside of that, nothing.

MOORE: How about those candlesticks?

BORNSTEIN: She had them there.

MOORE: Did she still have them?

BORNSTEIN: No, no. No, no, no.

MOORE: Did you bring pictures?

BORNSTEIN: No, we didn't have any. I think we did have some,
but they were still lost.

MOORE: Uh-huh. And she brought them, she brought the
Bible.

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: And she brought the candlesticks?

BORNSTEIN: Candlesticks. But the one thing in Grodno, we were,
my brother Sam and I, we were small kids, you know.
We used to go into the barracks and buy baked goods
in the bakery and go into the barracks and sell them

to the soldiers. And the first thing we know, we had a lot of money, a lot of money, see. They liked us, a couple of small kids, you know. And we had money. The money wasn't worth anything, but we had money.

MOORE: And so what did you do with the money?

BORNSTEIN: Well, we exchanged it, we stayed in Danzig, maybe four weeks or more, you know. There was a place where they deloused you, and to carry you, you know . . .

MOORE: Now, wait a minute, now. You went from this Russian town by horse and carriage?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: All the way to Danzig?

BORNSTEIN: No, no, no. Danzig we went by train.

MOORE: From where?

BORNSTEIN: From Grodno.

MOORE: I see. So you went from your town to Gro . . .

BORNSTEIN: Grodno.

MOORE: Grodno. From Grodno, by train to Danzig.

BORNSTEIN: Yeah, I think something like that. That I don't remember too well.

MOORE: Okay. And then you stayed there?

BORNSTEIN: We stayed in the barracks.

MOORE: Why did you stay so long?

BORNSTEIN: Well, we had a lot of records to go through. When you go into Ellis Island, you know, you have to be pretty well taken care of.

MOORE: And they deloused you?

BORNSTEIN: Especially the women, in their hair, see? They had the . . .

MOORE: What did they do?

BORNSTEIN: They washed them very well, and take this, it's a terrible feeling, but you were already there.

MOORE: And so what else did they do? Did you get a doctor's examination?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah. Everybody got a doctor's examination.

MOORE: Before you left?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah.

MOORE: And what, how thorough was that examination?

BORNSTEIN: My feeling was it was good, you know. But, of course, I don't know, I don't remember that much, you know.

MOORE: So you remember, do you remember staying for four weeks there?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: And what did you do?

BORNSTEIN: We stayed in the barracks and they gave us the meals, and that was it.

MOORE: Were you hungry there at all?

BORNSTEIN: Well, an incident that happened there before we got to the United States. That was an interesting one. My brother and I, we were under, we were entirely fenced in, so you couldn't get out to the city or anything. We noticed the river down below. So it told my brother, "Let's go see Danzig." As soon as

we got on the boat, they started shooting at us.

MOORE: Who started to shoot?

BORNSTEIN: The guards.

MOORE: Whose boat?

BORNSTEIN: We hired a man with a boat, waiting there to take us across.

MOORE: You hired a man?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah, sure. (he laughs) And we went in . . .

MOORE: How old were you?

BORNSTEIN: About eleven.

MOORE: And so this man took your money and said, "I'll take you to Danzig."

BORNSTEIN: Yeah. He says he would. I didn't know. I didn't know where Danzig was at or anything. There was a . . .

MOORE: But didn't the man with the boat know it was dangerous.

BORNSTEIN: No. He knew, probably, but he was doing it right

along, I presume. We paid him pretty well, see here. And they started shooting at us. We said, "Keep on going." My mother was worried sick, you know. "My children were gone. What happened to them?" We didn't tell her anything. We went in and found the kosher butcher shop. Did we buy salami and bread? And we brought in bundles of it, and coming back we couldn't get to the end. He says, "Keep on going." And it was kind of, it was really taking a chance, you know. If a bullet had gotten us, it wouldn't have been funny.

MOORE: So what did your mother say when you got back?

BORNSTEIN: She prayed, and we told her, I says, "Mom, it just wasn't (?), don't worry."

MOORE: (she laughs) All right. So there, now, what happened, tell me a little more. You waited, and then what happened?

BORNSTEIN: Waited where?

MOORE: You were there four weeks, right?

BORNSTEIN: Nothing you can do. You're just a kid, you play around, you know. You got so many people worse off

than you are. You spend time that way.

MOORE: And at one point they called you to go?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah. When our number was called and (?). I think it took us about four weeks, a month's time to get here.

MOORE: So you left from, what port was it that you left from?

BORNSTEIN: Danzig.

MOORE: Right. The name of the boat was . . .

BORNSTEIN: Oscar II.

MOORE: Oscar II?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: And what did the boat look like? What was the impression of the boat that you had?

BORNSTEIN: A big boat. We got all sick on it.

MOORE: What accommodations did you have in the boat?

BORNSTEIN: I don't remember.

MOORE: First, second or third class?

BORNSTEIN: We were not in the first class. We were in the third class, you know, as low as you could go.

MOORE: And where did you sleep? What did it look like where you slept? Did you have . . .

BORNSTEIN: Bunks.

MOORE: Bunks. Was it a common . . .

BORNSTEIN: A common bunk.

MOORE: And was your family separated from other families?

BORNSTEIN: We were all by ourselves. I mean, there were plenty of families there, and all of them, I guess, were in the same boat we were in, in the boat.

MOORE: But did you have your own cabin?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: All right. So your family was in the cabin . . .

BORNSTEIN: That's right.

MOORE: With bunk beds. Uh-huh. What about the food on the boat?

BORNSTEIN: Well, it wasn't bad, you know. We were hungry, so we ate anything.

MOORE: What are your impressions of that boat trip? Anything you had never seen before?

BORNSTEIN: Something, something unbelievable when you get in, as a kid, and you get in the big boat, you know, and see all the people there, and everybody waiting and talking and eating, you know. There were sad moments there.

MOORE: Did your mother know any English before she came here?

BORNSTEIN: No, she didn't know anything.

MOORE: What did she know about the United States, or what did she expect?

BORNSTEIN: The land of honey, and that you can pick up money on the street. (he laughs) Just waiting for you. It's a garden, still growing.

MOORE: And on the boat what type of experience was it for your mother?

BORNSTEIN: It was an awful experience, because she wasn't well at the time, with all the problems she had, you know, worrying about us.

MOORE: She wasn't well, why? What did she have?

BORNSTEIN: She had an ulcer in her leg. And she'd rest a while, it would go away and then it would come back, you know. We had a family in Europe. We had an aunt and uncle. I had an aunt, and we had the family of six, each one. We hadn't heard a word after the war. They were all killed off.

MOORE: Well, okay. So the voyage took how long on the boat, then?

BORNSTEIN: About a month time, I presume.

MOORE: Do you remember seeing land for the first time?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah. We saw the Statue of Liberty, and that was a great thrill, see?

MOORE: Did you know what it meant, the Statue?

BORNSTEIN: Yes, we did know.

MOORE: And what was the atmosphere on the boat then, what

happened?

BORNSTEIN: Everything was good.

MOORE: And were people on deck waiting to see it?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. The crowd was great, you know. Everybody waving, you know, and smiling, you know, and everything was beautiful.

MOORE: So what happened after the Statue?

BORNSTEIN: We remained in Ellis Island for a few days. My father didn't get to us.

MOORE: Well, how did you get to Ellis Island from your, how did you disembark from the boat to Ellis Island?

BORNSTEIN: I guess the boat was parked and we went right to Ellis Island.

MOORE: Uh-huh. You didn't go on a different little boat?

BORNSTEIN: No, no.

MOORE: All right. So it went right up to Ellis Island.

BORNSTEIN: To Ellis Island, you know.

MOORE: And what do you remember about what Ellis Island

looked like to you?

BORNSTEIN: A great big building, and I saw a bunch of benches, and all the immigrants with these little suitcases waiting for someone to pick them up. And this, last year, two years ago, when my son said to me one day, he says, "Dad, how would you like to go to Ellis Island?" I said, "Why not?" So I said, "Son, I remember something about Ellis Island. There were some benches there, and offices in the back of it." So my son said, "Dad, you don't remember that far back." I go up there, we finally located the benches." He said, "How did you remember it?"

MOORE: Yeah. Well, you stayed there for a few days, too.

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: Did you have a medical examination there?

BORNSTEIN: I think we did.

MOORE: What happened with your mother and her leg? Did she have a problem?

BORNSTEIN: No, she had no problem at all. It dried up for her, and she was doing pretty well.

MOORE: And so why were you detained, then?

BORNSTEIN: It was waiting for my father to come in.

MOORE: I see. And what were the accommodations in Ellis Island at that time? Were there lots of people there with you?

BORNSTEIN: Lots of people were sleeping on benches.

MOORE: You slept on the benches.

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: Did you have any beds at any time?

BORNSTEIN: I don't think so.

MOORE: What about, were you fed there?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah. We had kosher food there.

MOORE: Did anyone speak to you in Yiddish or Russian or Polish or . . .

BORNSTEIN: Yiddish.

MOORE: People spoke to you in Yiddish.

BORNSTEIN: Uh-huh.

MOORE: And so your mother knew what was going on?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah.

MOORE: Were they polite to your mother?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah. They were all right, you know. Because you don't know too much was happening when you're kids, you know, they're not paying much attention to you. We got what we want.

MOORE: Was there any entertainment there for you?

BORNSTEIN: No, no.

MOORE: No. Okay. So you . . .

BORNSTEIN: We used to get a paper towel in the morning to wash your face.

MOORE: And so your father, what happened? After a few days . . .

BORNSTEIN: Yeah, and he went back to Columbus, he had a home.

MOORE: Were you ever frightened that you might be sent back?

BORNSTEIN: No. I wasn't frightened.

MOORE: Was your mother?

BORNSTEIN: No.

MOORE: So you were pretty confident that . . .

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: So you came back to Columbus. What address did you come to?

BORNSTEIN: We come back to a place my father owned, 513 South Ninth Street, in Columbus, Ohio.

MOORE: And how did you get from Ellis Island to Columbus.

BORNSTEIN: By train.

MOORE: By train. And do you remember seeing your father for the first time?

BORNSTEIN: The first time I didn't remember him. It was hard for me to say, "Dad." Because I didn't know who the man was. He had a beard on him. My brother didn't remember him either.

MOORE: Did any of the children remember him?

BORNSTEIN: My brother Morris knew him, he remembered him, but

we didn't.

MOORE: So you went to Ninth Street. What type of house was that? You owned it?

BORNSTEIN: He owned it. My father owned it, it's a brick home, a six-room house.

MOORE: And what about plumbing?

BORNSTEIN: Inside.

MOORE: And was, and what was your father working at during this time?

BORNSTEIN: He had a shoe shop here.

MOORE: And did you have, what type of lighting did you have in the house?

BORNSTEIN: Electric.

MOORE: Electric. And heating?

BORNSTEIN: It was a little different. He changed his methods, because here when you get a cow you had steaks and various forms of, cuts of meat. There a cow cuts meats, it's meat. When you get a nice chunk of meat, or you get a poor chunk of meat.

MOORE: Oh, you're talking about eating, yeah.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

MOORE: What about, how was the house heated?

BORNSTEIN: We had a coal furnace.

MOORE: But you still kept kosher in this house?

BORNSTEIN: We were kosher there, too.

MOORE: And what about religious life?

BORNSTEIN: It's different.

MOORE: It was different here than it was . . .

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah. Entirely. It's more organized. It's, the (?) is different.

MOORE: Did your parents become, well, how did your parents adjust to religious life in this country, then?

BORNSTEIN: They didn't change any. My father didn't work on Saturdays, the Sabbath observed. But you couldn't get along here unless you worked on Saturdays, so we kids didn't.

MOORE: And what about school? Do you remember going to school for the first time here?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: And what was that like?

BORNSTEIN: It was, that was a rough one, you see, there. You got to learn entirely different. The procedure was they had schools here, you know. Over there you couldn't have any schools because they were always fighting.

MOORE: So what grade did you go into at first?

BORNSTEIN: I think I go to the third grade.

MOORE: And how did you learn? Did you understand anything?

BORNSTEIN: I probably just memorized it. I graduated in six years, from high school.

MOORE: Do you remember any anecdotes about school?

BORNSTEIN: I mean, it was different. Of course, I had to work hard after school as well. My father died two years after.

MOORE: You got here?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah, we got here, you know. My mother said, "Kids, I want you to know one thing. You are orphans now. Don't bring shame upon the name. Don't go wild. Don't run around."

MOORE: And so your father, what did your father die of two years later?

BORNSTEIN: He had pneumonia.

MOORE: How old was he?

BORNSTEIN: He was fifty-four.

MOORE: Hmm. And so the shoe shop, who took over that?

BORNSTEIN: We sold that.

MOORE: You sold that.

BORNSTEIN: Uh-huh.

MOORE: And you went through school.

BORNSTEIN: Oh, yeah.

MOORE: And did your brothers go through school as well?

BORNSTEIN: They did. One of them (?) was enrolled in college without going through high school, by taking a test there. He was a real smart fellow.

MOORE: Which one was that?

BORNSTEIN: Morris.

MOORE: Morris. So tell me a little bit about your life, then? What happened? How did you keep the family going when your dad died? What happened?

BORNSTEIN: Well, we worked. We worked, all depends the type of work you want to work. At that time, years back, the peddling, street peddling, was a common thing. So my brother Sam, with another American fellow, hired a horse and wagon, got some fruit, and sold it there. Simple way. But after that I graduated high school, we learn the business in a commercial way. We picked something that was unusually down, we started grating horseradish, and packing it in quarts and in gallons, and that's not sweet business.

MOORE: So you grated horseradish?

BORNSTEIN: Horseradish, yeah.

MOORE: Who did you sell it to?

BORNSTEIN: To the restaurants, hotels. One sniff and you had to buy. (Ms. Moore laughs) And then we expanded our business, and we started going in the canned goods business. In fact, we bottled mustard, we bottled pickles. And we went in the (?) size also, for hotels and restaurants, we were doing good. We were number twenty-eighth in this country. That's the size.

MOORE: In terms of canned goods?

BORNSTEIN: Canned goods, sold, and the volume that we do. (a telephone rings)

MOORE: Hold on for a second. (break in tape)

BORNSTEIN: And we built a building.

MOORE: Uh-huh. All right. Now, you've built up your business with your brothers to be twenty-eighth in the country.

BORNSTEIN: We were the twenty-eighth largest in the country.

MOORE: You started by just grating horseradish.

BORNSTEIN: That's right.

MRS. BORNSTEIN: They even got the machine.

MOORE: Pardon?

MRS. BORNSTEIN: They even had the machine for horseradish.

MOORE: Oh. You still have the horseradish-grating machine?

BORNSTEIN: Uh-huh.

MOORE: And so you built up little by little?

BORNSTEIN: Little by little.

MOORE: How much did you have to work to do that a day, for example?

BORNSTEIN: In time, the only thing we had was time, see here? And we didn't care. You got to produce in order to do the business, see. We had, finally, when we sold the business, we had a hundred and seventy-five people working for us.

MOORE: What was the name of the business?

BORNSTEIN: Restaurant Food Supply.

MOORE: Restaurant Food Supply.

BORNSTEIN: Uh-huh.

MOORE: And when did you, do you still have that in the family, that business?

BORNSTEIN: No, we sold it.

MOORE: And what year did you sell it?

BORNSTEIN: 1991.

MOORE: So you just sold it. And so you went into that business. Now, how did you meet your wife?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, that's a different story.

MOORE: How old were you?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, that was something great, you know. I tell you. On the present scale, you know, we were still living with one another. All right. We went to weddings in Dayton.

MOORE: What year?

BORNSTEIN: It must have been 1932.

MRS. BORNSTEIN: Yeah, around there, in 1932.

BORNSTEIN: And her sister married a Columbus boy, and we went to see the wedding. But ten guys lived in one room that night, cheap guys, all rich guys was there. And we danced a little while when it was the next one, you know, the first thing you know you have an engagement ring. (they laugh)

MOORE: How long did that process . . .

BORNSTEIN: That's right. But I want you to know something. This is our fifty-ninth wedding anniversary.

MOORE: Today?

BORNSTEIN: No, no. It was on March 31st.

MOORE: March 31st you had your fifty-ninth wedding anniversary.

BORNSTEIN: So if you didn't, it wasn't too bad. (Ms. Moore laughs) So, I tell you, I have two beautiful sons.

MOORE: And what are their names?

BORNSTEIN: Now, Willard Bornstein, Bernie Bornstein. And they have two, each one has got two grandchildren, we have two grandchildren.

MRS. BORNSTEIN: We've got four.

BORNSTEIN: We've got four altogether, and one great-grandchild.

MOORE: And what do your sons do for a living?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, they're all, now specialists in the various fields they're in, consultants.

MOORE: In what fields?

BORNSTEIN: Food.

MOORE: In food.

BORNSTEIN: In restaurant operations.

MOORE: And so, and so you married Angela. Now, how do you look back, how did your mother adjust to life in this country?

BORNSTEIN: Oh, she had a difficult time. And she, today life is definitely you're gone, you're gone, you don't want to deal with it. My mother was the kind, she was married to one man, she wouldn't see another man. That was the end of it. (?) And she died, you know, she died in 1951.

MOORE: Did she learn English?

BORNSTEIN: Yeah, a little, a little.

MOORE: And did your children pick up any Yiddish from you?

BORNSTEIN: They understand some. My son understands pretty well. But their children, no.

MOORE: What did you speak at home with your wife?

BORNSTEIN: French.

MOORE: No! Did you? (she laughs) What did you speak, what language, did you speak Yiddish at home?

BORNSTEIN: No, we didn't we speak English. We talked Yiddish to one another. Occasionally, it was no secret. What we know, they know.

MOORE: And . . .

BORNSTEIN: (they laugh) We have a good time.

MOORE: All right. Now, when you look back on your life now, you've been married fifty-nine years, there's two different countries you've lived in, at least, maybe three and borders, though. So how do you think about the original decision to come here?

BORNSTEIN: I'm thankful, I'm grateful to God I'm able to tell a story, see. If someone was going to listen to me, I didn't think anything would happen like that. So I want to thank you girls for coming out and letting an old man talk to you. Such fine girls.

MOORE: But how do you feel about coming to this country? Would you ever think about going back?

BORNSTEIN: I would like to go back and see if the same town still exists, you know. I wanted to do it a couple of years ago. I just want to show the children the life, you had to live it to be there, see there. It's a rough life. Would you move back to Latvia?

MRS. BORNSTEIN: No.

BORNSTEIN: No love for it, huh?

MRS. BORNSTEIN: Not yet.

BORNSTEIN: That's it, huh.

MOORE: But what about, what advice would you give young people today, after you've lived all this?

BORNSTEIN: You've got to listen. Life is not a bowl of cherries, see here. You've got to listen, to give,

to give of yourself, and you've got to be giving, let's see, to other people as well. Because it's one time, one minute you have it and the next minute you don't have it. Life is that way.

MOORE: Well, I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for sharing this story with us.

BORNSTEIN: That's all right, honey. I didn't know what to expect. I did have some prepared.

MOORE: Yeah, I know. And I think, we'll send you a copy of this, too, in the future.

BORNSTEIN: I'm afraid to play it back.

MOORE: No. (she laughs) All right. This is Kate Moore in Columbus, Ohio at the Bornstein family home, July 31, 1994 with the Ellis Island Oral History Project.