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FRANK SHELIBOVSKY

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AGE 14

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PORT:

RESIDENCES:

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US:

NASH: Today is March 28, 1974, and after seven months of tape recording the stories of people who immigrated to this country, I am finally getting around to my own family. I am here in Brooklyn at Ocean Avenue --

SHELIBOVSKY: No, it's 2842 West --

NASH: Fifth Street, talking to my great-uncle, Mr. Frank Shelibov. My Uncle Frank came to this country in 1907 at the age of fourteen, and he was born in Lechowicz, in Russia. Tell me something about your childhood, Uncle Frank.

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SHELIBOVSKY: Well, in the old country, the reason my mother came to this country was because we couldn't make a living over there. My father came first, in 1905, and the other two boys came in, and my sister in 1906, and my brother Himan Shelibov came in 1906, and I, Frank Shelibov came in 1907 with my mother, Shelibov and Esther Shelibov, and my kid brother, Nat Shelibov.

NASH: Tell me something about Lechowicz.

SHELIBOVSKY: Lechowicz was a small town and it was really bad. We couldn't make a living over there. My father was working for only about two dollars a day or something like that.

NASH: What did he do?

SHELIBOVSKY: He was working there as a shoemaker, and my uncle's son, they made a minimum of two dollars a day or less. People used to come around in the morning with hay and you used to have tea and a little drink, and coffee or tea, and this was the way we made a very poor living.

NASH: Was this like an inn?

SHELIBOVSKY: Like an inn, yes, something like that. And then, I helped out. I went to Hebrew school down in there, and from a little later on, I was about thirteen and I went to school, and I couldn't make a living, so I went back to work to where my uncle's son, the shoemaker. I worked up a little while, then my father went why he wasn't in America, and he made our papers for my family to come over.

NASH: Tell me something more about Lechowicz. Where was it?

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SHELIBOVSKY: Lechowicz is in the state of Minsk, it was the state of Minsk, then, there is a little small town in the state of Minsk where we were born.

NASH: Were all the people Jews who lived there?

SHELIBOVSKY: Huh?

NASH: Was everyone Jewish?

SHELIBOVSKY: All Jewish and Polish and Russian. Of course my mother knew how to speak Russian and Polish and everything, just like fluently.

NASH: And how did they all get along together?

SHELIBOVSKY: Oh, we were getting along nicely, but still they all wanted to go to America to maybe make a better living.

NASH: So how did your father happen to go to the United States?

SHELIBOVSKY: One of his cousins brought him over to this country, by the name of Lise. And then, naturally, as he arrived here and started to get a job, at that time it was a crisis and you could not make a living on nothing and you couldn't get a job, so , he decided to work for two dollars a day, or maybe he made less than that. We made a very poor living there. I went to school probably about four months. I was the oldest from the four children and on our arrival here I had to go out and help my mother eats. I used to go work there in the chicken store.

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NASH: Are you talking about Russia still?

SHELIBOVSKY: The new country. I used to work there at the chicken store delivering orders, or plugging chicken for ten cents or fifteen cents a day. I used to make a half a dollar, or more or less, a quarter, in order to give it up.

NASH: You are talking about Russia?

SHELIBOVSKY: No, I'm talking about here.

NASH: Oh, let's go back to Russia a little bit. did you ever get any letters from your father when you were there, from the United States?

SHELIBOVSKY: We got letters from our father from the United States. In one letter was our tickets over, New York-London, a ticket to come over. So we went . . . the ticket arrived here so we went. We took a boat and we came to first, from we took a boat to England.

NASH: What did you take with you to the United States?

SHELIBOVSKY: Huh?

NASH: What did you take with you?

SHELIBOVSKY: Nothing, we took nothing there, just a few pieces of probably a cushion and bedding, and that's all, nothing else.

NASH: What was the trip like?

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SHELIBOVSKY: The trip was all right. I remember when I used to go on a small boat, it used to be like a sliding pile. On one side you used to have horses and we used to climb up on the top in the middle of the ocean there, and we used to slide down and we weren't afraid. I don't know why, today I wouldn't do it. In that time we arrived in Ule. People used to come over and give us some money, like three cents, four cents, rich people there.

NASH: Where is Ule?

SHELIBOVSKY: Ule is England. On the way to Ule we stopped off in Gamanye, Germany, on the way to Ule I remember, and everybody went into town. They used to give , piles of candy they used to give to everybody, the German people, they were very nice. I was watching the ship. I was afraid the ship would walk away and leave me behind, because they stopped off in Ule, England to get coal. At that time there was no oil and they used to run the ships on coal. So there from Gamanye, Germany we went to Ule.

NASH: What happened to the rest of your brothers and sisters on the boat?

SHELIBOVSKY: All went to town except me. I was afraid that the boat would walk away. We stood there three hours and went to Ule.

NASH: Who were you travelling with?

SHELIBOVSKY: With my mother, and my sister Esther, and Morris and Nat. While we were there in , they had to go to the doctor who examined their eyes. They had a little problem with their eyes but everything was all

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right. Then from Ule we went to Liverpoole. We were probably there about two weeks and we took the ship "Lucania" and we arrived in Ellis Island.

NASH: What was Ellis Island like?

SHELIBOVSKY: Every people that used to arrive used to arrive there first. And then my father came over to Ellis Island and he took us out. We went to down there on Moore Street in Brooklyn.

NASH: How long were you on Ellis Island?

SHELIBOVSKY: Huh?

NASH: How long were you at Ellis Island?

SHELIBOVSKY: It must be about three weeks or a month.

NASH: On Ellis Island?

SHELIBOVSKY: Ellis Island, something like that. I don't know exactly.

NASH: What do you remember about Ellis Island?

SHELIBOVSKY: Ellis was a small . . . people were just arriving there, nothing else. You stayed there for certain days or weeks until he came around and takes us out. He took us out to New York, to Brooklyn.

NASH: And why did it take so long for him to get you?

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SHELIBOVSKY: There were a lot of people on the island there, I wasn't the only one.
There was probably hundreds or thousands of people there.

NASH: Do you remember what it was like, what you ate?

SHELIBOVSKY: Well, we ate, it wasn't bad. We ate whatever they give us and we were satisfied, as long as we arrived to New York. After arriving in New York he took us to room, paid about twelve dollars or ten dollars a month rent.

NASH: On Wall Street?

SHELIBOVSKY: On Moore Street.

NASH: Moore, a huh.

SHELIBOVSKY: Moore. So at that time, we stayed a little while and went down to Street. From Street we went to McKinley Street. Well, naturally, immigrants worked there, and on McKinley Street we used to be on the upper floor. We were on the second floor, and there used to be the Norwegian borders. But their real name was Jachim, it was Norwegian. Naturally, they used to go up to amateur hours. At first he went to a dancing hall, and used to work dancing down there. From down there he went to amateur hours like they all did, like , and naturally, while he was singing there they used to throw balls, eggs, rotten eggs, and they were yelling on him, so anybody, they didn't like, they used to come out with a hook and used to pull them back in the rear. And little by little they went up, so the older boy named Al was living with another

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fellow, Rich, and they were playing on the stage making money, but the amount, I don't know. Later on, the other two boys go up, like Harry, and my mother used to call him Jimmy, so they went on the stage.

NASH: Let's get back to you. (Laughter) How did you find your first job?

SHELIBOVSKY: Oh, my first job I went to, like a butcher. It was right when I was going to school in Long Island, so I didn't want to go to school no more, I had to go to work. so, my mother used to grab me and say "Why don't you go to school?" So I told her why.

NASH: Why?

SHELIBOVSKY: Why? Because my father couldn't make no living. I had to go down and help him out.

NASH: What was your father's name?

SHELIBOVSKY: Bernard, Bernard Shelibov. And so, right when we were there, you know, right when we were growing there a little while, then I got myself a different job. I worked down there carrying some parts in the pants. Like today you are using zippers, but years ago you used to use buttons down there, for buttoning. button hole maker, they used to make button holes and I used to bring them back into the factories. And little by little, then I got myself a job in a stationary store, at 96th and Tupp Avenue, and I worked there carrying the soda upstairs, on Tupp avenue, and the Street, or Geary Street, in between.

NASH: This was in Brooklyn?

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SHELIBOVSKY: Brooklyn. I used to carry soda there and work in the stationary store there for a little while. Then, little by little we went to work but my father, he didn't make no living down there. Still he was peddling around in the factory. He used to make two dollars and three dollars a week, that's all, so I go. when they pay that time I believe it was about fourteen dollars a month, and then we were housing borders, about three or four borders. One of my relatives down there, there were three that were there. Two they were in one bed, one that was single. There used to be Lavene, , while we were there, and that is the way we made a living. We made a very poor living down there.

NASH: What about your other brothers?

SHELIBOVSKY: The other brothers and my sister all went to school, they graduated. Probably one of them was in high school, Nat, and Morris, he used to belong to the . They used to teach children how to read and write. So when he had a job --he lost his job --he used to read books day and night, and he learned other people to learn, and for him he didn't care. He had nice friends with him, but he read some of the books and he learned to be hypnotized. Hypnotized he learned, Morris. And he learned to be hypnotized, and a fellow used to come around, was there, he couldn't go to sleep. He went all to the biggest doctors and he couldn't go to sleep for no money in the world. so I said to him, "Listen, I am going to hypnotize you and you are going to sleep." He used to walk around day and night without sleep. All the doctors gave him up and they said there was nothing else they could do for him. So, he went ahead and he hypnotized him, and he put him to sleep. He said, "You've got to go sleep at 6:00 and you got to get up at 6:00 in

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the morning." And he did it, and that's the way he was. He cured it.

NASH: How ole was he when that happened?

SHELIBOVSKY: He must be around eighteen, nineteen, around that age.

NASH: How did Esther like school?

SHELIBOVSKY: Esther went to public schools and she become a booker, but my mother used to go to . . . she had to work, sewing vests, you know, like we are wearing now, and they used to wear the vest but always under the coat. You know the vest?

NASH: I don't know the vest. (laughter)

SHELIBOVSKY: Show her what it is. It's a men's vests. so, while she made a little money she went to private school and she learned how to type, like a business school. And then, of course, still she couldn't , for six dollars, seven dollars a week. We still couldn't make a living. We made a very, very poor living down here. so then, after that, you know, we all, while we grew up, we all went to work, we used to help around the house. We all made about the same amount of money, something like that. I worked as a butcher, after that, the other boy then got a job in a post office. He couldn't keep records down there, writing down there, because he never went to school, so it was very hard. And I, myself, also did the same kind of work. I used to run down the sweaters to work. I was under sixteen, and I was supposed to have working papers, but I didn't have no working papers. I told him, so I used to hide in the closets and under the tables when the inspector

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used to come in and ask me for my papers. but once upon a time, when the inspector came into the factory, and asked me "How old are you?" So I told him "Sixteen today." So he says to me "Why not tomorrow or yesterday?" "Sir, cause it happens to be I was sixteen." (laughter) "I was sixteen."

NASH: Tell me, do you remember your fist impressions of America?

SHELIBOVSKY: Sure I remember.

NASH: What were they?

SHELIBOVSKY: Depression, the place was very, very bad. Nobody made a living.

NASH: No, your first impressions of what New York City looked like?

SHELIBOVSKY: Oh, I thought the place was good. I used to go down to dancing and stayed until probably three or four o'clock in the morning. I used to take girls home. Once I took a girl home in , as I said. Or I used to go out in the evening with her and I used to go down in the park, lay on the grass. About seven or eight o'clock we used to go down to Bosway Park, lay out there until about three o'clock in the morning, four o'clock we used to come home. But nobody bothered anything. It was nice and quiet, nothing like today.

NASH: Tell me about the differences between your sisters and brothers. What were they all like?

SHELIBOVSKY: What, today or that time?

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NASH: At that time.

SHELIBOVSKY: That time was a pleasure to live in. The little we made, but it was quiet. Nobody touch you, nobody bothered, everybody had a nice time. We used to go on down to Delancy Street, that used to be the hangout, thousands of people were there. Everybody enjoyed it. we used to go to Jewish halls and come back home at night, or after that you would go to a cabaret, a Jewish cabaret, and used to have meals. Everybody enjoyed and had a good time, and the was packed. I used to slept down there. I used to sleep there, fall asleep or sit down on a chair there. A man leaning against a window there, and under my face, I used to sleep until about four o'clock, five o'clock, and then we used to get up. People used to hang on the chairs, the place was jammed. Nobody bothered anybody. Not what is going on today, there was never anything like that. Today, people are afraid to go, but not at that time.

NASH: Tell me about the differences between your sisters and your brothers. what were they like?

SHELIBOVSKY: Well, they all were, you know how sisters and brothers --everybody tries to make a living. But my sister never worked, or never wanted to work, and that's the truth. she used to go down to an agency to get a job, but instead of going to an agency she used to go down to her cousins and stay there all day.

NASH: Which sister is this?

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SHELIBOVSKY: Esther. she used to go down to her cousins down there and stay there, and then she would come down at night and say, "What you got to eat? You've got nothing to eat for me." My mother used to give her --whatever chops would look good, you usually feed them with birds, you know, what do you call it, the birds today? Like all those flies around there, and everything else. I used to give her --as much money as I used to give in the house, my mother, "The money, where's the money?" She used to keep the money in her name. We had a cousin, Berman, she used to keep the money there. I could never find out whether she had money or what amount of money. There were times that I didn't work for six, or three months or four months, I used to pay off after, pay off.

NASH: So, you supported the family?

SHELIBOVSKY: I, how do you say, what they did they deduct it, I pay it up. I paid the difference. And I used to send it out of the country, several times in country. she always was, little by little, after I gets a little older there, she was operated on her back, and they straightened on her back. My brother was, Morris, was going to school , broke a leg while going to school. That is the way we carried on the whole life like that.

NASH: And how about Dora, my grandmother? What was she like?

SHELIBOVSKY: Dora was a pretty girl, in the house and everything, and everything else. She also, once a few weeks, she left the house and sleep over with her friends, but naturally she came back. She was working in the factory, and she was making the living, as Flora was at that time. How

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much they earned? We used to work for nine, ten dollars a week. A person who make twenty-five dollars a week at that time, you could get married and save money.

NASH; How much did she earn?

SHELIBOVSKY: I don't know, it must have been about seventeen, eighteen dollars a week.

NASH: What was she doing?

SHELIBOVSKY: I don't know, I try to remember. I think she was working in a factory like underwear. I don't know. That I don't remember.

NASH: What did she like to do? What were her specialties? Did she have any special interests?

SHELIBOVSKY: Well, she used to go out, we used to go out together. She used to take me along and we used to go down in coney Island and in Park we used to play games down there. And at that time we used to go down --there used to be a place, Farm, and that was in richmond Hill. From here we used to take car and change for the Broadway L, and change for the train and get off , and we used to take the Richmond car, by cemetery. We used to, at that time, we had a nice time over there too, we used to buy a bottle of beer. All people got together with a bottle of beer. And a bottle of beer, we used to drink beer, and we had probably about seventy-five, between a hundred glasses of beer , maybe more, and the whole thing cost maybe five dollars. And, you know, we sat down all together, and sang songs

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together.

NASH: What songs did you sing?

SHELIBOVSKY: I could hardly remember.

NASH: Jewish songs or American?

SHELIBOVSKY: Jewish songs. Like a lot of people used to come over from the other side, for Jewish songs, or they sang from the other side. They all getting , they all belonged in a group, and we all had a nice time.

NASH: How much education did Dora have?

SHELIBOVSKY: Dora didn't have no education. She didn't go to school. The only education she had she had it from the other side. Over there she went to a Hebrew school. Like Esther also had a Hebrew school, but she went to school. She is the oldest, from next to me, next was Morris, then comes Nick. Nick, he arrived here, he arrived here, he arrived here on the train from Europe, that I remember. You know, my mother used to wear a long dress, and she was trying to get a ticket, the ticket she paid on the fare from Italy to Ule. So what does she do with her boy who was four and a half years? She put him under her skirt!
(laughter) That's no joke. That's true, under her skirt.

NASH: Did she get away with it?

SHELIBOVSKY: No, she didn't get --then the guy, the motorman --she to go down there --at that time the electric, lights --so, she used to go out with a limp, and he said there would be some nights feet sticking out there

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(laughter), so he grabbed around his feet and he pulled him out.

(Laughter) Nat, he was only about four and a half years old, then she had to pay his fare.

NASH: You were a religious family?

SHELIBOVSKY: Huh?

NASH: Were you a religious family?

SHELIBOVSKY: Yes, all the time, even today I go to shule.

NASH: And in those days did the whole family to to shules together?

SHELIBOVSKY: We all went to shule but there were times I didn't go to shule because I had to go to work. I got a job in a factory and I got nine dollars a week, or ten dollars a week, or probably, eight dollars a week, and we used to have to work Saturdays because there was a time deadline. Everything what I knew, I forgot, but I picked it up again very fast. There was jobs, was plenty, because all the work I had done in foreign country, used to do here. Everybody used to come over to this country to buy goods. Not only did they buy these new shirts, in the South they used to buy here, underwear, worn underwear, worn hats, everything else they used to send away to the South and the colored people used to buy that.

NASH: When did your father die?

SHELIBOVSKY: My father died in 1926.

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NASH: Why did he die?

SHELIBOVSKY: He died, he got sick, and that's what it is. He must have died about sixty-four or sixty-five years.

NASH: Was it hard for the family after he died?

SHELIBOVSKY: Huh?

NASH: Was it harder for the family after he died?

SHELIBOVSKY: Oh, it wasn't much harder because he wasn't the main producer. He never made anything, the highest was three or four dollars a week. Can you make a living on three or four dollars a week? That's why we all had to go to work. Hymie worked for three dollars a week at that time.

NASH: What kind of a person was your mother?

SHELIBOVSKY: Mother was all right. She worked hard for her family, the best that she could. Mother couldn't do anything, just trying to get along with everybody. But she knew I was the goat in the family, in other words, I --when everybody would deduct it, I had to put up, otherwise she couldn't make a living. And then Sella never went to work, she has never worked in her life.

NASH: Tell me some of the happiest times you can remember in your childhood.

SHELIBOVSKY: Oh, the happiest time in our childhood we went in the country. I used

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to go down to the country myself. is the highest that I went in the mountains. We used to go and have a nice time for two days and I used to go back. Even with her I used to go also about the same time. When I got married, in 1931, even before that time when I went with her, I used to go down every week in the country. We stayed there two days where had a farm, in , in New York. I used to stay there two or three weekends. There was a time when I was engaged I had the flu and pneumonia together, and I was laid up, when I was engaged. Well, it happened when I was engaged with her, it happened a cousin came over, two cousins came over, boys, one of them came from Buffalo and one from Connecticut, and I had to give away my bed. See? When I gave away my bed I had no place to sleep.

NASH: This was when you were sick?

SHELIBOVSKY: Yes, and I had a pain and I couldn't breathe, so where can I go? I went to her house, and it was Saturday night, and I laid on the bed and Sunday I couldn't get up no more. I had doctors there and when the doctor examined me, the doctors gave me up. I had big doctors, Doctor Reed and Doctor, from that block but I forgot what his name is, they gave me up. but they gave me oxygen, pills, and everything else and the doctors said, "There is no cure for him, he will die." And as it happened I went through, I got well. Naturally, I couldn't go to work no more, and naturally, where did I go? I went to the country, to her uncle, in . They had a farm there, and I stayed there about, probably, I believe I stayed there maybe about two months or three months.

NASH: What year was this?

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SHELIBOVSKY: 1930. And then, little by little I got well, naturally then --my father was also complaining about Esther, and my mother complaining about her, but I didn't listen to him. I got married, and I am very happy up to today, and I got well, and I keep going like that. Well of course, now, it is very much my age. I am about close to eighty, eighty years.

NASH: I would like to go back a little bit to find out about my grandfather. Do you remember my grandfather? Do you remember the first day you met him?

SHELIBOVSKY: Which is, I forgot?

NASH: Jack.

SHELIBOVSKY: Jack, I remember Jack, I remember Jack very, very well. Jack, you know, your grandmother, Dora, she went with another fellow who used to be a violinist.

NASH: Really?

SHELIBOVSKY: Yes. She was going around with a violinist, and he wants to go out with her only. And finally, it didn't work out so well and she got acquainted with him, and he married her.

NASH: How did they meet?

SHELIBOVSKY: Well, I don't know, through somebody. How my wife I met? I met --but they met, a certain --I don't know how they met, but they had a living. They both had a laundry on Tenth Avenue near Fiftieth Street.

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NASH: When did they open that laundry?

SHELIBOVSKY: Oh, they opened the laundry, I don't know exactly what year, that I don't remember. I believe probably, I could say probably 1916, the reason because 1916 I went to, I used to go down to --I had broken my nose at that time and I couldn't breathe, so I used to go down to the Hospital at that time, and right when I was going into the hospital, I said to myself "I'll take a ride over there." And how will I get there? We used to ride to Fortieth Street -I used to take the train from New York City, and down there I took the Fortieth Street Line, and I went off to Ninth Avenue. There at Fortieth Street I changed to Ninth Avenue L --it was all running boards at that time --and upstairs there used to a , the Ninth Avenue , so while I was going to your grandmother at that time, , that's what happened in 1920. You know, when I was a young kid, I didn't wait when the car should stop or gain, I used to grab this handle there, and I used to jump on the car, on the bus, so while I was running near the happening, on Fortieth Street and Ninth Avenue, what happened was that on Fifteenth Street, between Fourteenth and Fifteenth, or probably sixteenth Street, I got walloped, my head from the elevator pillow -you know, with the pillow you hold with your hand --and I fell into the car, and it would blow over me at that time. So they took me down in the ambulance, and on Ninth Avenue there was a drugstore there and they asked me if "Do you want me to take you home, or do you want to go in the hospital?" So I said myself, "I'll go home myself," and I was dizzy enough, and blood ran all over me, and I went down there and on the way I ran into Doctor Bill. Doctor Bill examined me and put a couple stitches in the head. So at that time I used to work, remember, I used to work on Main Street near Broadway, so it happened I called him up that I can't come, I had an

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accident and I couldn't come to work. And it just happened at that time you were watching me, an agent from the company, from the car company --at that time the company used to be called the New York Railway Company, and the office was on 150 Nessa Street, that I remember --and they wanted to settle up with me. so after I had the accident, I was in the house and all of a sudden the blood started to go from my nose and I couldn't stop it. I had like a whole pail full, so we called Dr. Bill and he gave me a certain medicine and put it into my nose and it finally stopped the blood. he was worried because I was pale from the shock that I received from the pillow, when I fell into the car. I was supposed to go to the hospital and I didn't go. You know, I was a youngster, and even today I am running around, and I was running around and I didn't care. So while I was home, one guy comes around here, an agent from a lawyer, and he says to me "Sign this waiver her, the paper, and you will get some money on it." As dizzy as I was, I didn't know what I was doing, so I signed it, a plain blank, and naturally, when he wrote to the lawyer, the lawyer he was, see? The New York Company wanted to settle with me and probably I would have got, I don't know how much, three or five hundred dollars, with a doctor, and if you are signed by the lawyer, I can't get anything. So, I didn't get nothing, I didn't get a penny at that time.

NASH; Tell me how you met your wife.

SHELIBOVSKY: Oh, my wife? That is a story by itself. (laughter)

NASH: How did you meet Sadie? What was Sadie's maiden name?

SHELIBOVSKY: Pindie. Well, I went out with one girl from Massachusetts but at that

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time I was very bashful, and that's the truth. I went with fellows in Park, they used to lay their hands on the girls. That's the truth. I was ashamed. I was very bashful and I couldn't talk that well. But when Sid came over here, I was different. So he says to me --we used to go up to a certain house on Segel Street, that I remember --"I've got a girl for you." "A girl for me," I said, "I'll see her." So, the house that I used to go on, I don't know what house it was, so we had to go and get off on the wharf, and creep into the other house, and there we met her. When I met her, I couldn't go into her house. Why? Because her mother was laid with flu and her brother was laid with flu, so we laid off, we laid off a little while. The mother was a very sickly women from the other side, being she had to support the whole family here, and her father was on the other side. It happened probably on 1916. Her father came here in 1913, but whatever he worked it wasn't enough. So naturally, I moved, and I got acquainted with her, and I went with her. When it came to 1931, I got married. What else?

NASH: Well, (laughter) and what about your other sisters and brothers at this time?

SHELIBOVSKY: Well, Morris at that time, he could have got married. He was so busy with books, and he was laying day and night reading books. He went to high school too. Morris went about a year or two years of high school, and many things he know, but he couldn't pass the merit because that guy never slept, except four hours, three hours a night, and books all night. All the books in the New York Library he read. And a big library on Ports --there is a big library down there, and he read it too. He was day and night in books. That is where he learned

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to hypnotize. And he used to go down in , learning children how to read and write. So naturally, when it came to marriage, he failed. So, he lost his job, and he couldn't get no job. It was about 1916, so my father sent him to a factory --being a peddler he knows all the factories --and he used to work on linings, he sewed linings on the coats. He used to make about fourteen dollars or fifteen dollars. So he got himself a job, a city job, Morris, and what did he get? He got a job watching the piers. He got a job watching the piers in Staten Island. That's a story too. While he was working on Staten Island, every night they were, all of a sudden, they disappeared. Usually there was somebody there who takes you over there, or somebody there when he signs in for the day's work, like you punch a card today, he used to sign the book. All the books disappeared and nobody was on the beach. It happened on May, I believe, no, it happened in 1944, January, 1944.

NASH: How old was he?

SHELIBOVSKY: Well, I don't know. He was a single boy, and he was under Esther. '44 it happened? '44. And what happened? All of a sudden he disappeared. We went looking for him all over and he is not around. so, at that time, you find people in the morgue, Staten Island, in the Bronx. People used to get killed in the street and they would always be in the morgue house. We looked for him and he is not there. It is not him. It is not him because I know his handwriting and everything

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else, and so, we went looking one way, and the other way, and we send down divers looking for him because maybe he got drowned. What happened? There used to be the mafia at that time, but we used to call them something different. he was a guy who never drank, was very well educated, very well. He learned from hypnotizing. So, while he was working there, all of a sudden he disappeared. So, we sent down divers, we took a lawyer named Shapiro, Nathan Shapiro. His father was a rabbi, and they used to live, at that time, on Ruby Avenue, and his office used to be on Moore Street, which was a very poor neighborhood, as a beginner. Of course later, shapiro would become a very big lawyer, he was an assemblyman, and he probably he could always have been a judge, but never wanted to be. And he knew my mother and everything else, and he says, "Shall we sent finally, in the store, Morris is not here. So, when he got drowned, it happened on the first of January, 1944. All of a sudden, on April the 17th, he swam up out, . And I recognized him. How? His handwriting and his keys and all that.

NASH: You mean, they found his body?

SHELIBOVSKY: They found his body, but his body was falling apart, because they way he got there, he got hooked up under the, what do you call it?

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NASH: Pier?

SHELIBOVSKY: Under the pier, on a hook. So, he fell , was falling apart, he fell into the water and sort of swam up out, and there we picked him up. Of course, at that time, he didn't belong to no society, so my mother, at that time, we, as a Segel, we used to belong to the Greater New York Lodge. The cemetery was among the common cemetery in Mesbitt, in Ridgewood. We bought his grave, and the way he was, they buried him, because we couldn't do the work they used to do because he was already rotten. His body was falling apart to pieces. We buried him in the grave, and we put up a stone. The stone is there and everything is well.

NASH: Wasn't, it wasn't, did you take his son?

SHELIBOVSKY: My brother, Morris, and naturally, I still go out to the cemeteries, to my mother. Whatever I have to say, I say it. I did not forget them.

NASH: Where is he buried? Mt. Carmel Cemetery?

SHELIBOVSKY: Mt. Carmel Cemetery, he was.

NASH: It is not a Jewish cemetery?

SHELIBOVSKY: It is a Jewish cemetery. They wanted to bury him with the , everything, so we went to the lodge and we told them exactly what

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happened, and the head of the lodge knew we were very, very poor and he gave me a grave for fifty dollars, and he is buried there. So my mother, when my mother died too, about eighty-five, she is buried right next to him over there.

NASH: And where is your father buried?

SHELIBOVSKY: My father also buried in Mr. Camel Cemetery. He died in 1926, on August 4th, I believe.

NASH: So, your mother was eighty-five when she died?

SHELIBOVSKY: My mother was about eighty-five. So that is, as far as I can remember, everything. Everything was right. Now, what else can I tell you?

NASH: (laughter) Tell me about my great-great grandparents.

SHELIBOVSKY: died, and my mother at the time was about sixteen years old. And he was a guy that never worked, he never had a trade, and he couldn't make a living, but he liked her because she was a good-looking woman, a smart woman, and he talked her into he should marry her, instead of marrying somebody else. And being he was out of work, he couldn't get no job, I supports her for twenty-five years. So, he married her, my mother Rose, to Bernard. They lived together

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happily, but it was very, very hard to make a living at that time. Naturally, later on, they went to the United States, but being he was there, they use to have boarders, they used to have rabbis there. We used to rent our apartment in order to make something for a living. Then we had, people used to come around carrying hay, big trucks of hay, used to come in the middle of the night, three o'clock, or two o'clock in the morning, and we used to make this big stuff, another store but stuff. We used to have tea, rolls, and that is the way we made a very poor living down there. Until, finally, they went to this country.

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SHELIBOVSKY: And my uncle, being that when they got married, later, father, and he had a son. His son was --I don't remember his Jewish name? I forgot his name. Roy, he must be called -the boy must be named Roy, according to the United States.

NASH: Who's Roy?

SHELIBOVSKY: Roy was my cousin Alta's father. In other words, my uncle used to be Roy. so, at that time when they became very old, very old, and being that Roy was a very religious man, in shule, and he came out on the Jewish holidays, he called him over there. I was in the house, and was probably around ten or eight, I don't remember exactly, and he

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called his son over to --it was on the first day of the holiday, New Year's, and he said, "Go over there, and call over the son from the synagogue. I'm dying." And he came there, and he sent over his son. He was about my age, must be around ten.

NASH: Albert?

SHELIBOVSKY: Albert, yes. he sent him over there, and he called him all back. He called me over there, and he put his hand on my head and he blessed me. And , she is a very religious woman. She used to fast twice a year, twice a week, rather. Thursday and Friday she used to fast according to the Jewish religion.

NASH: Is this --?

SHELIBOVSKY: Leah. She fasted twice a week. You know, while we were living together we used to eat together and everything else, and she would bless me. She would say, "Come over in the morning," and I would bend on the floor, not exactly on our knees, but we would bend down and she would put her hands on me and she would bless me. You know, probably to that blessing, every Saturday I went to shule, and I said "God is after her." I'll tell you, a woman like her, will never be born. And probably to those days, when she blessed me, I am living today. And probably their son has blessed the other son, and as soon as he got married and came around to him, she blessed

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his son, and she died right away, while I was there. As soon as she blessed me, she died.

NASH: This is your grandmother?

SHELIBOVSKY: Grandmother. She was about ninety-two years. I could never forget her.

NASH: Tell me the name of your mother's mother.

SHELIBOVSKY: Leah, Lean.

NASH: Lean what?

SHELIBOVSKY: Well, it would be Shelibovsky. Lean was, or used to be a Shelibovsky.

NASH: And what was your mother's father's name?

SHELIBOVSKY: My mother's father's name? Mother's father's? That I don't know. Her first husband was, used to be Hiam, used to be, according to the Jewish word.

NASH: That was his first name. What was his second name?

SHELIBOVSKY: Second name was Valiconski. In other words, according to the

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, but in the old country they have a big name, Valiconski?

NASH: This is your mother's father, Valiconski?

SHELIBOVSKY: Yes.

NASH: Valiconski Hiam, Hiam Valiconski?

SHELIBOVSKY: Valichonski, with a C-H.

NASH: His first name was --?

SHELIBOVSKY: His first name was Hiam.

NASH: Hiam Valichonski, right?

SHELIBOVSKY: Yes, that was his name. And probably, up to today, I mean, living
, her prayers . And my father used to go and made a living
out of --they had to make a living at night. People used to come over
with hay , you know, people, they used to stop over having a
bite. So, it was a time, they squealed on him that he was selling
whiskey, so when they took the whiskey away, as little as he made,
we couldn't make a living no more. so he used to go --I mean my
father, my father's father used to run down to men in , and down
there they had a big rabbi, and whatever he blessed, it came true.

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So, you wasn't allowed to say anything to him, bless him, and he says to him something like, to my grandmother he says, "Look, when I pray, I pray, but when I curse, it is a curse, and go away from me."

NASH: The rabbi said that?

SHELIBOVSKY: Yes, the rabbi said, "Go away, because when I am going to curse you, you can die right away."

NASH: Why did the rabbi want to curse him?

SHELIBOVSKY: Rabbi didn't want to curse him but he wasn't allowed to answer him because he was afraid from the government at that time that they would squeal on him that he sells whiskey. You see, by whiskey he made a living on it, but he wasn't allowed to sell whiskey, so he went to have a prayer on him that he should be able to sell it, and he wasn't allowed to, you know, to , , and prayer, it's a prayer, blessed him, and when he blessed him, nothing happened, and he wasn't allowed to do it. When he would say a blessing, you might not be believing it, but I do, and when he says a prayer in a bed, Murray, he could die right away, and he wasn't allowed to do it, so my grandfather was a very big man, and everybody had the biggest respect for him, and he left. He didn't say why he was afraid. he was afraid from him --and many times he helped him out. My mother went a few times to him.

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NASH: Who was your father's mother?

SHELIBOVSKY: My father's mother, I believe was Dora, if I am not mistaken.

NASH: Dora, what was her last name?

SHELIBOVSKY: Your grandmother.

NASH: Her name? Your father's mother?

SHELIBOVSKY; Huh?

NASH: Your father's mother?

SHELIBOVSKY: My father's mother, that I don't know. That I don't know. I don't remember that.

NASH: Do you know where they came from? Where did your father come from?
What part of Russia?

SHELIBOVSKY: My father? From the city of Minsk. It is that state like, you know, he come from .

NASH: And your father's father?

SHELIBOVSKY: My father's father, usually, before me I believe it was Kasinov. That

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is also a part of means leaving town.

NASH: Kasinov?

SHELIBOVSKY: Kasinow. Another big story I will tell you. You might not believe it. I will tell you a story that happened in the old country with my mother. There used to be a gentile girl down there, and she had a sweetie, a sweetheart, a young boy, and both were gentiles, but that same guy was very, very poor. My mother knew him very well, both she knew them, and anyways, many children they had, as they were poor. People from the town got a hold of that girl there, a young girl, and said, "Why marry a man that he will never make a living? That way you will die from hunger ten times a day." But she loved him, very, very much. Finally, everybody was on top, "You marry a rich man." That rich man, he was a widower. "You will have everything in the world." Finally, they talked to her so much, that finally she did it, she went and married him. But her mother, the girl's mother, was a, what do you call that?

NASH: I don't know what girl you are talking about.

SHELIBOVSKY: A witch, her mother was a witch, the girl's mother was a witch. She says, "If you are going to marry that girl there, if you are going to my son, the widower, when you come to the eighth month you are going to have a miscarriage." It happened that way. They cursed her so

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much, they put a hex on that woman there. Years ago they could do it. So they cursed her so many times as many, about six or seven or eight times. They come to the eighth one, out, she had a miscarriage. She couldn't have no children. But being that her husband, the widower, was a very wealthy man, and he went to the biggest doctor in all of Warsaw, Kiev and Minsk, and yet nobody could do anything for him. When it came to the eighth month, bingo, out.

NASH: Every time?

SHELIBOVSKY: Every time. So my mother, at that time says, "Look, you went to so many doctors, so many doctors in the world, in every city and every town, and no professor, no biggest doctor could help you. When it came to this time, you were out, you had a miscarriage. You listen to me," she says. "Go over and ask for a rabbi, he is going to help yo. If you listen to him, if you go to him, you are going to have children." So she figured this way. "If I run to the biggest doctors in all of Warsaw and they couldn't help me, how can your rabbi do something for me?" So she said, "Go over to him, listen to me." So she says to her husband, "What can we lose?" Now, in the old country, you didn't have no trains at that time, and you had to go by horse and buggy. So naturally, according to the Jewish religion at that time, she started to bake, she started around two weeks or a month, probably more than a month, more, maybe about two months. She started to bake

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all kinds of cookies and all kinds of breads, like cake here. On the way over there you got to eat, because there wasn't no restaurant at that time, you know? It happened so many years back. My mother was a young women at that time. She died a eighty-five years. There is a Jewish law that you go in before a rabbi, you have to take sugar, bread and salt. I can't even talk. When they came out to the rabbi, naturally in the city they asked where the rabbi lives. They told her over here, and over there, down that street. You know? When she came over to the rabbi, she recognized him, with a big beard --I had once a picture from him --with a powerful head, all the way down to the floor. And when he said the prayer, she fell to his feet. And he knew what she was coming for. He picked her up and he gave her a certain grass to wear around her neck, and he said, "You wear that till you have a child." And she wore it, and come to the ninth month, she had one child, then two, then three, four, and five.

NASH: That's a happy story.

SHELIBOVSKY: That's a true story. My father and went there many times, the other father I mean, my father's father. There are certain times he answered him, he helped him out, but this time he refused it. He said, "Go away, a prayer is a prayer, but when i curse, it is a curse," and he got scared and he went away. It's such a man he was. And there was another time down there, there was a time at that time you find it like you find it today, boys making fun of the rabbi. You

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understand? Making fun out of him. A, that kind would make fun of --
I am going to get the --I'm getting dressed as a woman, with the
boy, and we were taking some rolls with us and --

OTHER PERSON: Now, that is not your history.

SHELIBOVSKY: That's my mother's history, that's not mine.

NASH: It is interesting.

SHELIBOVSKY: So, my mother used to tell me that. She was dressed as a woman
with a schital and everything else, with big hair, with a big --

OTHER PERSON: Kerchief, a kerchief.

SHELIBOVSKY: A kerchief, not a kerchief, need it to go up to the --dress with , you
know, like a shawl. The rabbi, he says to me, he says , or
whatever he said, "We haven't got no children," and the rabbi knew
who they were. But he says to him " , go home, be well, you'll
have a child." So she came home, she got swollen and she dropped
dead. That's a true story. No lie about it. There are still people, they
say, according to the Jewish Law, there are thirty-six people which
nobody knows who they are, or what they are, the world stays up on
them, and if they ever die, the world will go under. There are people
still today, there are thirty-six which nobody, even a rabbi doesn't

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know who they are. They in secret, and they stay secret, and they know some are stars. Kablli, which, you know what Kabolli is? You can't get a finer one than a book like that. Maybe you will find me one Kabolli .And it's true. you might not believe it. Now I, or somebody else, thirty-six people in this world, we don't know who they are, or whether they are here, whether they are in Israel, or Syria, or Russia, or where they are. When one dies, they give it over to somebody else to take their place. That's true. When I was about four years old, or five, so, he didn't speak, so he used to hide in the small chicken house. So they used to a rabbi in the same city where we used to live, and told him about it, so he says," Where is he?" So we brought him before the rabbi, and he knocked on his back and said, "Why don't you talk?" and he started to talk. This is true. My other brother, Himan, he started to talk. he didn't speak that well when he was three years old. Maybe he said something person, he used to run and hide in the hall.