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Alex Blinstein, born December 9, 1950, in Odessa; discusses his family; his wife, Rita Masís Blinstein, born September 30, 1956, in Odessa; his two children, Anna, born 1980; his son, Simon (Sam), born 1984; his father, Simon Yakov Blinstein, born near Odessa, lived 1920 to 1969; his mother, Chaka Shikovna Blinstein, born in 1914 in Yassenova; describes his early years in Odessa; he says that Odessa was one of the most Jewish towns in the USSR, no less than 15% of its residents were Jewish; his father, Simon, was wounded in World War II; around 1955-1956, Simon (age 35) began to use medicine and was in the hospital; Simon had a mental illness; he describes how his family lived when Alex was young; they lived in a basement without utilities, except for water, and had no gas for cooking, but cooked over a fire; one of his duties at home was to prepare coal or wood for winter; he discusses that after the Russian Revolution, people who did not own property could go to schools and universities, but some Jews had property and thus could not go to school; he says that in the 1950's and 1960's, under Krushchev, his family had food to eat; in the summer they had fresh vegetables, like tomatoes; he says that on Jewish holidays his mother would make gefilte fish; as a child he played sports and began to read very early, even though his family did not have books, but others would give him books; growing up he had both Jewish and non-Jewish friends; when he was about 13, he took up the sport of boxing, which was a very popular sport in Odessa; he was the USSR Student Champion of Boxing; he says that it was hard for Jews to go to the Institute to receive education, because you had to be talented and have connections; he says that after eighth grade, when he was 15, he went to work in a machine building factory; this was the first time he faced antisemitism; he did not like this factory work and after two years he changed jobs and went to the seaport; he says that he worked making measurements of the port and making maps; he states that he went to the Institute of Food Technology; in 1966, when he was 16, he began to travel; he traveled in the USSR to Moscow, Kiev, Leningrad, Riga; he states that in Tashkent, he met interesting people who eventually moved to Israel; he states that Jewish students had to prepare twice as hard as non-Jewish students; he started mountain climbing as a sport; he says that some of the mountain camp instructors opened his mind about the Soviet system and he began to read books about the political system; then he worked at the mountain climbing camp, which provided him with room and board; then he returned to Odessa and couldn't find a job and that a lot of people were moving to Israel and America; he went to the Institute when he was 22 (1971); he states that he went to evening school; he then got a job at a design institute, where he worked for 12 years; 50 to 60% of the employees were Jewish; his future wife, Rita, also worked there in the refrigeration department; he and Rita got married and lived with his mother for two to three years; they listened to the Voice of America and Radio Liberty; he met his sponsor, Yefim Godler, in Tashkent; Yefin was an activist and helped to liberate Irina Ratushinskaya from prison; Yefin introduced him to his friends Igor and Misha Darsky, both brothers; after being in Vienna, Alex and Rita emigrated to the US; he says that he struggled in the US because he did not have the right skills; he works in the US as a lab technician; Rita is working as a designer; he says that life in America is more difficult than in Russia as there are so many ways to spend money and time. He says he wants balance in his life; in Chicago they have a good friend, Gara, who works in the Russian Cultural Center; Alex sponsored Gara to come to the US; Alex and Rita learned to drive once they came to the US; they own cars and enjoy visiting museums.