

(p): pause of 2-3 seconds

(P): pause of 4-5 seconds

(LP): long pause of 6-7 seconds

(VLP): very long pause or silence of more than 7 seconds

... indicates voice trails off

Items in italics are words that were emphasized in speech

Items underlined are words that were very strongly emphasized in speech

\\ indicates a slowing of pace or a lowering pitch of voice

// indicates a louder pitch or more animated voice tone

(I:) refers to the Interviewer

[] indicates side comments usually indicating emotional overtones or activities, such as [laughs] or [cries]; also used to indicate tone of voice, such as [angrily] or [in monotone].

(Angrosino 2002:51)

(I: Agreeing to be interviewed)

I'm delighted

(I: Uh usually when I- interview children of the Holocaust survivors uh I ask them to provide a little bit of background information about who their parents were uh where they were before the war, what their family life was- just a little bit- a little bit about where they were the war and then the (word @ 0:25) begins uh- uh after the war how and when it was decided, how you came over and I'll leave you to that next part of the process

Okay great, uh my parents are from **Vilno (@:40)**, they met uh my father was ten years older than my mom so she was friends- ah was in high school with his sister uh they married uh in nineteen forty-one

(I: When were they born?)

They were both born in **Vilno**

(I: When?)

Ah oh one was- uh my father was born in nineteen twelve my mother was born- in nineteen eleven- my mother was born in nineteen twenty-one, he was **Mischa Kaverofski** and she was **Golda Polanis**, she was an orphan and uh had been raised by an aunt and uncle who had a kind of book store uh lending library and uh (VLP) they married young

(I: So what about his family?)

His family, he had said there were seven children, uh his father was from **Vilanstock (@1:37)** I don't know if his mother was from **Vilno or Vilanstock**, her name was Anna, his name was Aaron, I'd like to have a daughter named Arian where I combine the names um, there were seven siblings including him, before the war, from what I know Gabriel, a brother had gone to France to study to be an engineer, **Rya (@2:02)** a sister was a nurse, uh Ella was the friend of my mom's so she was younger and was still a student, uh **Heim (@2:14)** he had a brother **Heim** who was a poet and a communist and that was a – they were a very bourgeois family so that was not exactly uh approved of, and then there was one more brother who had left for New York prior to the war, in his case he was uh they were- uh- my father always felt very fortunate because he survived the Gulags uh and...)

(I: What did he do before the war?)

Oh he- he finished gymnasium and then his father died young at fifty so he took over, they had a sheet metal business, and he was a very uh very proud that he was a very assimilated- he knew his Hebrew they-they were very- his father was a very uh scholarly

man but he was also very proud that in that business that they did a lot of business with gentile people and they got along and he was invited to play tennis in their club and this was- to my father assimilation wherever he was was a very important thing

(I: And they what did they speak at home?)

They spoke Yiddish, in fact I'm shocked that I still, I'm suddenly finding myself speaking to myself in Yiddish sometimes, and just realizing I still remember it

(I: Yeah)

Uh they spoke Yiddish uh in company, uh at that time uh the communists had *taken over Vilno* so they also spoke Russian but the-the dominant language would have- outside the house would have been Polish

(I: Kay so *Vilno* before the war was part of Poland)

Exactly

(I: So do they identify as Lithuanian or do they identify as...)

Polish

(I: They identify as Polish even though *Vilno* has such a cultural history of being Lithuanian)

Yeah no um (p) the little I understand they didn't seem to be (p) wanting to identify as Lithuanian, they seem to feel that the Lithuanians were more anti-Semitic towards the Jews than the Poles were

(I: Wow)

Not sure why, but that was sort of the impression I got from my dad (p) Um

(I: Were they religious?)

Not at all, his father he claimed was, my father not at all, in fact after the war he became an Apostate

(I: Mhm)

I mean it used to be embarrassing because on Jewish holidays he would be sitting there on our balcony eating ham sandwiches

(I: (laughing))

He was a *bad* boy my father, Mischa was a very rebellious- and yet he had a very very, uh humanistic guy, in fact I- just to give you an example of the way he raised my brother Saul, who is three years younger than me, was the director general of the YMCA's of Canada, Not HA's, and the only reason he didn't go further was that they couldn't believe in Geneva that-that there had been a Jewish person running the Canadian Y's, but this is why we love Canada, you this is why- you know I keep telling writer's that I've went with who are Nationalists like- you should be kissing the ground and behaving yourselves not acting like adolescents and trying to break up the country you know (P) // So ah (p) my parents were arrested as capitalists in-in- soon after they were married

(I: When was that?)

That would have been forty-one

(I: So nineteen thirty-nine the war began...)

And they were- and they continued their lives

(I: And Vilno was- Vilno was

Vilno was still uh, Vilno was still- was not- the German's only came in in forty-one

(I: Okay so that's when the Russians came in?)

The Russians must have

(I: Must have been before)

The Russians came in before and in forty-one uh (p) s-s-soon after, in fact soon after they were arrested the-the Russians-the Germans came and Vln became uh ah you know they formed a ghetto you know and uh it was a lot of lies ah-ah you know they took them into the forests and it was terrible. My father loves the Russians because of that, he feels they saved his life by arresting him and sending him to the Gulags

(I: So he was sent to the Gulags, and your mother too?)

Yes and my mother too, my mom his mom and his sister, the women were sent to an Agrarian work camp you know like uh a farming community where they were- they were like free labour but they were uh not tortured, there was no brutality, my father and the men that were arrested were sent to the Gulags uh in Siberia, they were all- both of them went to Siberia but- and they were separated

(I: Now when were you born?)

I was born forty-three, and the way- my father was quite the story teller so the way he tells it is, they were- he was released around forty-two ah when the Russians released the Poles to fight with them against the Germans, at that point I think he weighed a hundred pounds so there wasn't going to be much chance of him being taken into the army, he started his trek by train from town to town and this happened after the war, he went looking for his wife, his mother, and his sister and he found them (p) I was born in a place called **Slavgorad (@7:54)** which for years I couldn't even find on a map, now uh with Google it's-it's amazing right? I discovered that it was an air base in the- in Siberia and they probably used the prisoners like my father to chop down the-the forest to make the-the runways

(I: Hm)

And so he found- he found uh them, he tells the story that he took my mother out on a tractor for some privacy and (laughing) and I was born like nine months later

(I: (laughing))

That-that-that's the story in our family, that I've recounted to my children and they go 'Oh Grandma please'

(I: (laughing louder) conceived on a tractor (laughing))

Uh and um

(I: So you were born in...)

I was born in forty-three and they stayed in-in-in Siberia

(I: Together)

Together until the end of the war. // I asked them like what were they doing and he said whatever- at one point he claims that he was actu-that he would work for farmers he would do whatever kind of work he could find, at one point, I love this story, he became someone who could tell- he claimed he could tell fortunes and that he could tell women they were gonna get- if they were going to be pregnant, and in fact when he was dying of Alzheimer's my daughter came to visit him- that was in j-may and she gave birth in October and he told her she would be having a girl and she did- well I guess there's a fifty-fifty chance though. Um so they survived and then (VLP) somehow they- there- there were all these uh- what were they called, **B'riha (word @9:44)** all these **B'riha** that came to eastern Europe and were smuggling Jew- my mother wouldn't go back to Poland, my mother would not go back to Poland after **Vilno**, she heard they were pilgrims she wanted nothing to do with that, my father was a big Zionist, had been uh a

leader in Vilno of Zionist groups and stuff, so they somehow got smuggled out of there to a DP camp in Austria called **Bindermuel**(place @ 10:11)

(I: Okay so it was they and you?)

They and me, and in fact my brother was born in forty-six right after the war in-in that camp

(I: Okay)

Yeah. And my dad, I have pictures actually it's too bad I didn't bring them, my dad became uh was paid by the Jewish, some Jewish fund and I have pictures of him on podiums where they're uh uh they're uh they're giving speeches in the very same places in Austria where Hitler had given his speeches like in **Linez** (@ 10:46) cause this camp was right near **Linez** uh about uh Israel for Jews, Palestine for Jews and his job was smuggling, financing the smuggling of Jews out of eastern Europe into those illegal uh-uh ships to Palestine

(I: But they didn't go)

We were supposed to go when the work was finished but I contracted t-tuberculosis and for some reason we-we- they were told that I would need a cold climate (p) and so we stayed in the DP camps for five years, we were there until nineteen fifty

(I: What do- what did they do?)

My father was working for this uh- this uh this Gia- some organization that was smuggling- he was getting Jews out of out of eastern Europe-

(I: And he was getting paid for this?)

He was getting paid, that was his job

(I: What about your mother?)

(p) She had me and then my brother the- oh I have pictures the women were- there are women pictures of women learning to sew, they were learning all kinds of trades i-in that camp uh there were- there were courses and stuff like that in fact I think my mother learned to sew there and when we came to Canada uh the first few years she was sewing furs

(I: Mhm)

Because uh-

(I: So you started school there then if you were there that long you must have-)

No

(I: No?)

I-no no no, I came uh no- I think-I went- I was sent to a camp one summer but I was not- I didn't start school until I came here

(I: Do you remember being sick with tuberculosis?)

(p) I remember being anxious (p) when we came over here uh being warned not to say certain things and that they were they-they-they take x-rays and there might be a spot on my chest and to simply uh say I don't know-I don't know what that's about, but it was- I- it had been-it was gone and I-and I was fine I was- we were allowed in

(I: So how come they decide- so they weren't allowed to go in)

They were going to Israel and they had to find a sponsor one- I think, it's possible that it took as long as it did to get here, to-to leave to DP camp- mind you my father loved that job, he had a-he had a motorcycle and a driver and they would go to different cities in Germany to give speeches and-and help the Jews out of- out of Germany and Austria, so he was happy to be there, he in fact had plans to go to Israel and go into politics, a lot of

his friends did and were a part of those jobs... um so and we had no- he couldn't find d sponsor- they couldn't find sponsors- it ended up that it was an aunt that my mother didn't know who sponsored us to come to Montreal, their name was **Basken (@13:42)**

(I: And it was an Aunt?)

It was an aunt of my mom's but I must tell you we're a bit of an odd family uh when we got here we went to stay with them (p) and I'm sure she meant no harm, the aunt took on a – took my father around the flat to show him how the light switches worked because her assumption was that because I think maybe before the war many of the Jews who came to Montreal came from small towns, so there was some kind of (p) or she was just ignorant- anyway her assumption was that we must have come from a very primitive place

(I: (**Can't make out @ 14:24**))

Yeah and so we didn't know about (**word @14:27**) and my father was so insulted, I remember it was on Saint- it was on Saint Urban she- that he-he left the house he went and saw a for- a room for rent somewhere down the street- she was a widow with two daughters, he came back and said 'we're leaving' and we have nothing ever to do with them again

(I: Okay so let's go through that- so they sponsored you)

They sponsored us

(I: So you left for..)

We left for Montr- we came to Halifax, we went by ship

(I: Okay so how do you leave Europe? Like where did you get the boat? Do you remember where?)

I don't know where we got the boat cause I would've only been about six years old. I must tell you honestly that I pride myself on my memory and I have a very good memory but that part is very very foggy like-like I can't remember the- I don't remember the boat, I don't remember the boat ride I assume that it must have been- I think I was sick, very sick on the ship (p) But I don't remember it at all

(I: Because you were told that?)

Because it was true (p) I must have been told that because I think it was- all of it was so traumatic I don't remember it

(I: And you were speaking Yiddish to your mother?)

Yes Yiddish

(I: *Only* Yiddish?)

Yeah

(I: No German?)

I knew German but we didn't speak German to each other

(I: So you were- this was nineteen fifty? When exactly was it?)

Yeah in nineteen fifty we came, in June

(I: June. And when were you born in forty-three?)

June

(I: So you were seven)

I just turned seven

(I: And when did – so th-so is it odd that you didn't start school in Austria or was it- did they just start at seven- like would you have started-)

No they started at six I guess

(I: Mhm)

Uh (P) no I definitely did not go to school, I had friends- maybe it wasn't organized, what I do remember in the DP camp is that I would have friends and they-then they'd be gone, because they had gotten their papers and they would leave so I think things were very transitory

(I: Mhm)

I know there were activities because there were- there's pictures of us doing **horas (@16:35)** and there's pictures of us and I know it once- once- the summer my brother was (p) was born (p) the year my- yeah I was sent to a summer camp so it wasn't as though there wasn't activities but not formal education

(I: Mhm)

Because in fact I was very embarrassed when we got here because I was seven and put in grade one with six year olds and I was kind of precautious and so I felt like they were thinking I'm stupid

(I: So do you remember landing in Halifax?)

Nope

(I: Do you remember your parents talking about what their impression was when they first came?)

Yes, according to my mom (p) and again, \I don't know if she was exaggerating, she said it was very (p) uh (p) for her it was very humiliating because in order to make sense of the crowd of people coming off the ships, they were given numbers to wear, and she found that extraordinary given the experiences these people had been through during the war, with numbers on their arms and being treated like sticks you know?

(I: Cattle)

She found that very very humiliating

(I: You know it's interesting because-)

//Have you heard that from other people?

(I: I haven't but I've been curious about it because the photos I've seen is they all have tags even though-)

Something

(I: Even though you know those round tags with numbers-)

Yeah

(I: And to me- *to me* that's horrifying)

She found it very humiliating and in fact I have a daughter who's an artist who studied at NASCAD and one of the pieces- when Pier 21 was-was closed and it was going to be- but prior to when it was going to be made into a museum- they offered the space to artists to do installations and she did two pieces that became very uh talented and based on what my mother had told her- one was uh a merry- uh a Ferris wheel made of office chairs that she created into a Ferris wheel uh office chairs being bureaucratic things and-and she puts- she had it so it created it was amazing, the other were you know these felted room dividers?

(I: Yeah)

So she built a maze of these room dividers and to her that was like a metaphor for what her grandparents experience had been at Pier 21

(I: Do you have photos of these?)

Yeah it's in a magazine

- (I: Could you share them with me?)
Absolutely, wonderful work
- (I: Who has them?)
Her name was of-of-f her pieces? I
- (I: Mhm)
It was in a Canadian art magazine uh on the cover I-I've kept all this stuff
- (I: And who-who owns those pieces of art?)
They were- the sad part is- I said to her she should offer them to some Jewish museum- they took it down when they started- when they built the museum
- (I: Mhm)
Yeah, so they're just in pictures, but uh...
- (I: What's her name?)
Her name is Lauren Shaffer,(p) yeah
- (I: So uh so your mother felt...)
She didn't- she thought that was-and my s- my sense of that trip- look first of all my parents, there was a tremendous uh, they didn't want to- I'm a typical of-of a kind of more like child of survivors even though I did- like I was already born during the war
- (I: Yeah)
Cause I was- you didn't ask your parent to tell you about those things, they didn't want to talk- in *my* family they didn't want to talk about that, they wanted to look to the future- my father insisted that we only speak English at home once we got here, he wanted to learn English quickly (p) um I had to be sensitive to what I could ask and when I could ask and so mostly I didn't
- (I: Mhm)
I just tried to glean it from what I could pick up here and there
- (I: So do you remember the train ride or no?)
I don't even remember the train ride
- (I: Okay so you land in Montreal)
We came to Montreal we went to this aunt then we moved into a room, my father
- (I: On **Saint Belcher (@20:46)** or **Saint German** or?)
Saint German sorry yeah on **Saint German**, my father got through um through Jewish agencies my father got a job sweeping uh the floors believe it or not at the **Canadaire (@21:00)** which is way out, he had to leave at like six in the morning but.. but uh (p) at one point his name was Chef and his son became a very important uh cultural patron in Toronto afterwards an insurance broker, this mister Chef was an insurance agent and he came around selling insurance to these new immigrants, 'you need life insurance, you need this insurance you need that insurance' and my father thought wow I could- he-he was very personable Mischa, he knew a lot, they came with a lot of other peoples, it was a big community
- (I: Okay so hold on, let's go back)
Okay
- (I: This is really interesting but so they moved into one room, like a double parlour room?)
(p) yeah for a short time and then we were-
- (I: And do you know how much they paid, do you...)
(exhales heavily) God
- (I: I-I know I wouldn't)

- I don't
(I: Yeah okay so-)
I was too young
(I: But do you remember moving into **Saint German**?)
I remember being- I remember the lady who-who lived there and her two daughters, one daughter was Laine and god the name escapes me now, a nice nice girl
(I: **Did she have polio or? (Can't quite make this sentence out@ 22:05)**)
I think so, yeah one daughter had =- yeah that's right, one daughter had had polio, very nice people um
(I: So your mom had kitchen privileges?)
Yeah and my mom was so young and very-
(I: How old was she?)
Okay at that point she was twenty-one, she's thirty years old, fifty-one they say, she's thirty years old and very girlish like much younger than the thirty-one (p) I was like more like the mother, you know she was very girlish and-and uh when she worked in fur as well the woman owned that business was almost like a moth- well she'd also been and orphan so she-she would develop friendships with older women, like they'd become like mothers to her
(I: Yeah okay so she didn't-so she didn't--)
And she went to work
(I: Immediately?)
No because- n-not until we moved to **Curbes (@22:56)**
(I: When did you move to **Curbes**?)
Soon after, like my father , really he-he got
(I: So he got-so probably what happened, he landed day one
Yeah
(I: And then day two he went looking for a job)
Yeah got a job, we stayed for-
(I: As a sweeper)
Yeah as a sweeper, so that was enough money I think- obviously and there was- what was it called- he grew **frelong (@23:20)** there as an organization that would give people money without interest and I think he managed to get some money so he could rent an apartment on **Curbes**
(I: Yeah they would yeah he would have to pay them back though)
And he'd have to pay them back, and in that apartment we had two- at times two and three men living with us as roomers
(I: Boarders)
Yes as boarders
(I: Yeah)
And often these were men who had lost their family in the war
(I: Yeah)
And they had come the same way that we had
(I: So you know your father needed the money because of the (**Yiddish word @23:55**)
Yeah
(I: And it was you know anywhere from between five, six, seven hundred dollars to get the flat)

Yeah, yeah (p) yeah (p) and that he-he was always very um praised that um organization and the help they provided and that first summer (p) \\\ yeah // we-we both saw- my brother and I were sent to camp, there were these subsidized camps- free camps, so we were sent to camp for a couple of weeks and uh I uh by then I was seven and I went to **Guidrummen (@24:34)** I went to- to

(I: That was in September)
In September

(I: Okay so you lived- do you remember the address in **Curbes?**)
Seven forty-one

(I: Seven forty-one **Curbes**)
Yeah, and I don't remember other addresses

(I: Yeah)
It was an apartment building and we lived on the second floor and the- across from us was another Holocaust surviving family, the Weismann's, and they eventually went to Australia, and it was owned- \\\okay what's his name, the building was owned (P) by someone who ha-she- she was an widow and she admired my father tremendously knowing his story (p) and uh her s-her son became a journalist and when I met him he told me how much they had admired my father, which I had no idea of

(I: Mhm, so they were a Canadian-Jewish family?)
Yeeeah Jewish yeah

(I: Yeah and were you the only survivors in the building or were there others?)
No, next door to us the Weismann's, then there were the **Weigansburgs(@ 25:35)** who were also survivors uh-ah this woman was very sensi-kind uh I don't know if she was, or just those were the people who were looking for apartments, but there were quite a few survivors in that building

(I: Mhm)
I remember the Weismann's because they were the first ones to get a television \\\ I think in fifty-five- yeah

(I: So you started school)
I started school, I was put in grade one

(I: And humiliated)
Very

(I: Now did you speak any English at that time?)
I didn't no, at the beginning and they- I-I I might be dramatizing but I tell my grandkids that they thought I was a mute, because I-I wouldn't speak

(I: But that makes sense, you wouldn't speak until you could speak)
Exactly, but I wouldn't try, like I probably could speak by the end of a summer to some degree but it was rough and I wouldn't- I wasn't willing to be uh embarrassed so I wouldn't speak at all. By (p) January, I was fluent (p) cause I remember by the end of the year I was first- I sat at the front of the- I was the top person in the class

(I: Okay so how did the teacher-were you the only- there must have been-)
It might have been

(I: Increasingly more immigrants in the classroom at that time not many -)
Not many

(I: Because people were generally born in forty- cause people came in forty-seven, forty-eight-)

Yeah not many, honestly I was the only one, that's why I made my father –I-I feel so bad, I made my father change our name, cause I couldn't bare the shame, they were all making fun of my name

(I: Yeah, cause there were very few kids born in forty-three right?)

Yeah I was the...

(I: Yeah so what happened every year after-)

Yeah my brother is-has a whole completely different story, no humiliation, no emba- I don't (p) he just assumed Mischa changed his name cause its easier you know it- not-no (p) nothing identified with that name at all

(I: And he was probably also in a class, cause he was born in forty-six)

Maybe you're right, yeah

(I: When he was born there must have been tons of survivors)

You're right yeah, yeah you're right

(I: You know tons)

Yeah you're right, I felt very odd man out

(I: Mhm)

And *all* I wanted was to belong, so I didn't talk until I could talk like a Canadian and uh (p) yeah

(I: So what did the teachers do to help you integrate do you remember?)

(P) \ No, they were very nice to me, I had a music teacher who I adored I remember that I remember his name was Mr. Johnson and that's when I discovered classical music (p) you know our house was poor I mean I don't know what it would have been like in Vilno but in the first few years on the *Curbes* there weren't books there wasn't music there- there – it was really just trying to make a living, my mom was- I was like a latch- latch key my mom was

(I: At six seven)

At six seven and I had a younger brother and in those days they didn't have babysitters you looked after like if I was seven he was four I looked after him (p) he must have been n- he was looked after by a woman who lived in the apartment building maybe he stayed with someone during the day and when I came home from school uh you know, so I matured very quickly so it- that made me feel even that much older than the other kids in my class, but I remember (p) I remember some of the other kids in my class we went right through grade school together, there was *Judy Chinx and Dorothy Zelnaker (@29:06)* uh Har- \ what was his name (P) uh I'm having a blank right now but some of the kids I still- I mean I even see them now and we're all grown up

(I: Mhm, okay so you went to school and when did your mother start working?)

Right-uh my mother started working when I went to school (p) see- and my brother was left with someone who stayed home who I guess they paid a few dollars to during the day and she- my father was determined- eh didn't want her working, she was working cause she needed to help but I think she was also working because it made her proud that she could contribute

(I: Mhm)

He wasn't proud that she was contributing I think he wanted her to stop working so within a few years he was doing better and-and she stopped

(I: But they needed the two-)

- Yeah of course and you should- her fingers became totally uh crippled from the- cause she was sewing furs which are very uh
- (I: Who did- what did she work in a factory?)
She worked in a factory for uh- I wish I could remember the owner- it as a small place a woman- uh a nice Jewish woman ran it and was very kind to my mom uh \ \ but I can't remember the name
- (I: Was she a survivor too? Or was it a-)
She was not a survivor but she might have come uh prior to the war
- (I: Just prior?)
Maybe just prior
- (I: Prior to the war okay, and uh did-how did your mother learn English?)
They both learned- they insisted we talk English at home, they uh they-they taught themselves, I don't remember them going to have- they didn't take a language course, they taught themselves, I mean in- by going to the shops, doing the shopping uh oh my mom loved movies, she was a big big mo- film buff and there was a **Realto theatre** (@31:01) not far from where we were
- (I: Still is)
Yeah yeah, she would go to movies as often as she could in fact I think I was named Rita because she madly in love with Rita Hayworth
- (I: Mhm, what was your name at birth?)
No middle name
- (I: Just your first name at birth)
Rita
- (I: It was Rita?)
Yeah
- (I: In Europe?)
In Europe
- (I: Really)
Yeah no middle name and when I asked my dad well what was my Jewish name, cause most of my friends had Jewish names, they didn't give us a Jewish name, he was really a rebel, he was not a-
- (I: What's your brother's name?)
Solomon (p) and that was his name at birth
- (I: Mhm)
And now he's-he's Sol, S-O-L (p)
- (I: So he goes to- so your mother goes to movies)
My mother goes to movies, my dad starts to uh at night starts to (p) this Mr Chef who he bought insurance from, helped him learn enough English that he could apply for an agent's license himself and my father had this theatre that he did when he wanted something badly to-to uh to get his license he would have to answer a-a long English questionnaire and his English wasn't very good so he tells it that he went to see the people at the insurance company and he would bang on his head and explain that there was a metal plate there because in the Gulags at one point he did something out of turn and he was hit with a rifle and uh he had some kind of procedure anyway and he would threaten that it's easy for him to have seizures when he gets upset and so he doesn't want to get upset so they have to shorten the questionnaire so that it'll be simpler for him to-

and that he has this whole community of people who will be customers and that they seem to have understood so he got an agent's- and at night he would go and visit these people and sell them insurance

(I: Are they all survivors?)

Yeah they were, most of our community at the beginning were either survivors

(I: People who they had met here)

Some of them they came over with uh some-

(I: Some from Vienna you mean or)

Some from Austria

(I: From Austria)

From the DP camps

(I: Yeah)

Some of them from Vilno prior to the war, **Heim Luenn** ([@33:35](#)) I remember who was a friend of ours uh he knew his wife from the Zionist group that they had as teenagers in Vilno, so most of them were survivors yeah and every- in the summer we would go to **Saint Vastan** ([@33:51](#)) and share a house on a- with a group of families uh one of them became uh \ \ what was his name, one of them became head of the Jewish public library at- a very nice man that we grew- that we knew at that time

(I: What was his name?)

Va-uh I'm having a blank moment because I know his name

(I: Okay it'll come)

Yeah yeah

(I: So your parents sort of hung out with people-)

They hung out

(I: More educated more cultured)

Yes, yes and what I remember and I don't know if that's unique to-to-to **Curbes** or my family, we were not that embraced (p) well first of all we didn't have family here, it was different thing for-for and some of these other people didn't either because I think it was different for people who got here who were sponsored by family here, they suddenly had this big extended family, we didn't have that

(I: I don't think, I don't think that was typical)

That wasn't eh

(I: I think most people)

Like us?

(I: Yeah your story- your story)

Okay

(I: Your story is much much more typical)

Oh okay and not only that (p) I can't recall that the neighbours on the street like other Jewish families, that they-that they befriended us maybe-maybe-maybe they thought Europeans were snobbish or maybe they were shy- I don't- they stayed there by themselves, they didn't-

(I: That was the Canadian Jews)

Yeah they didn't seem to make that many initial (LP) yeah no, I had friends, Canadian friends I know that in one case I know there was a nice family across the way, the Fleisher's, seven kids, very struggling, he-he was always in just uh undershirt, like you

- know rough and rough and he said some not nice things about people like my father, he would say you know 'They're taking our jobs'
- (I: He was a Canadian Jew?)
He was Canadian Jew
- (I: They're taking our- what else did he say?)
Uh (LP) I once heard him say to his wife that they should go back where they came from, \\ I remember that they- a very hurtful kind of thing to-to, well this is getting hard (VLP) well sorry (voice is audibly upset)
- (I: No don't be sorry, did you want some tissue?)
No
- (I: Okay)
Yeah so they and-and-and I don't know why im crying because that roof? (@36:33) people they were-they loved life I mean you should- I mean the parties I mean
- (I: Your parents?)
My parents and their friends
- (I: Yeah the Canadian Jewish didn't love the immigrants)
No
- (I: And *that's* what's hard)
That was hard yeah, not the kids, it wasn't a problem with the kids, you know my friends but the parents- I didn't we were neve- it was very separate, on *Curbes* it was the French and it as the English and then there was the Jewish and even among the Jewish there was these Jewish and then other Jewish
- (I: You know it's really interesting in an interview I did last week we were sort of trying to plot this out and it was you know a woman who was born in forty-one you know came over and we began to talk and they were on the plateau, and you know it's like so we labelled it, not the Jewish ghetto the Montreal *Scheddel* (Yiddish@37:23) right the Mont- but it's complicated cause the *Scheddel* was within the Montreal-Jewish community)
That's right, that's right
- (I: Which was in the Anglo community which was in the French community)
Exactly
- (I: Which was in a larger (word @37:36)
And Canada
- (I: And Canada)
And North America
- (I: Exactly)
And honestly my memory, and I tend to exaggerate things sometimes was sometimes the kids on the street, the French-Canadian kids, were nicer or at least more benevolent, then some of the-the-the Can- Jewish kids who had been there for a long time
- (I: Jewish-Canadian)
Jewish-Canadian
- (I: I call them that)
Yup
- (I: And why do you think that is?)
I-I got this feeling was that they were threatened, we were that group of people, my parents were so uh hungry to succeed uh they were so hungry for-for life uh there was drinking and there were parties you know even without much money, there-there was (p)

and I- these other people were looking at them like what's going on here, you're supposed to be humble and you're supposed to be suffering and you've been though- and you know like you're supposed to be grateful (p) and they weren't (p) any of those things, they were ambitious, I was like determined to be first in my class always and you know do the best I could I mean there was a whole make up time

(I: Meanwhile being so fiercely independent)

Fiercely, really I think I was more mature then then I am now (both laughing)

(I: It all comes around)

Yeah

(I: But you had to be right, cause you had to -)

I had to look after, but you see its interesting right? I tell- when we talk in the- as a family because now between my brother and his kids and my kids and my seven grandkids, when we all get together we're now like over twenty people, so this is- so when I tell these, you know these stories about latch key, like oh you know I looked after my brother he says 'you didn't look after me, what are you talking about I grew up on the street' and that's probably more true (p) I you know- I had this sense of responsibility but did I *literally* have him by the hand- no way! He'd come home from school I'd come home from school, we were on the street, and it's amazing how well we did I mean now my grandkids can't even play outside on their own

(I: No)

They have to be supervised

(I: Now I mean I tell the same thing that my father had a little tailor shop at Fairmount

Really?

(I: On **Derauche (@40:06)**

Wow

(I: And my mother worked there with them, she was a trained seamstress, there was no one taking care of us)

No, and you didn't have babysitters

(I: No)

And they did go out a lot, I mean what's amazing-

(I2: And **Curbes** is where?)

Curbes in Langois (@40:20)

(I: So you were further)

Further uh

(I: North)

Yeah yeah, my-my hood was uh like I thought, when we first came to **Saint Urban (@40:33)** (p) I once walked to Bernard (p) and there's that big church, I thought that was the end of the world, I was sure that's where it ends (p) When I moved to **Curbes** I figured Bernard was still the end of the world there was Lester's like there was certain- Lester's was there already then you know uh and-and-and Langois to Hutchinson was my-there was a candy store on **Derauche** and then there was Hutchinson and it's- and Hutchinson doesn't go on I thought that was you know

(I: It's like a map of the New York- a map of New York City)

Exactly

(I: (laughing) You-we could do the- we could do the Marquette to (laughing) (**cant make out @41:13-41:15**)

(I2 laughing)

Oh yeah, honestly, absolutely, now there's a Polish uh little place where I run to get their flakki and certain things that I learned from Hank's mom, which is right around the corner from that church and it's now a Polish church and I'll sit there and I'll just enjoy listening to Polish and thinking it's a good thing Hank's mother's not there because Hank's mother, as far as she was concerned the Poles- 'the Poles were worse than the Germans' and-and 'they would point me out' and uh you know

(I: Yeah)

But I love hearing Polish

(I: Do you speak Polish?)

No but I understand it completely

(I: Okay)

I s-I-I can still understand German, I can understand Polish, I guess we weren't in Russia all that long so I don't understand Russian

(I: So your birth certificate says)

Slovegorad (@42:02), USSR

(I: USSR)

And in fact believe me as a teenager in the fifties, being born in Russia was not fun, if we were going to **Platsburg (42:14)** or to-to-to I don't know what would we go to, oh the drive in movies or something they'd pull me off the bus because I was born in Russia, I had to go through this whole question, like, like im some-some Iron Curtain spy or something (laughing)

(I: So your father started insurance when- fifty-three?)

Fifty-two, fifty-three for sure, yeah, and he did very well

(I: So he worked at **Canadaire? (@42:43)**)

He worked at **Canadaire** and did this at night and then he realized I can do this for a living

(I: He wouldn't have gotten much money at **Canadaire**)

No, so that's why- again he uh honestly I don't know how much money you could get from Hebrew free loan

(I: Yeah)

But he praised them to the hill for as long as he was alive so obviously at every juncture when he wanted to improve- because there was no family to go to to get loans (p) so he re- so he would go to-to this organization

(I: So your mother worked-)

And he worked at home, his office was at home

(I: Okay and you mother? She-did she work peace work or was she paid salary do you know?)

That's a good question

(I: Would you know?)

I don't know, she was gone all day, she did it there

(I: Did she ever take work home?)

No, no, but it was hard work cause I really- I could-her—

(I: Was it unionized?)

No

(I: Did she get vacations do you know?)

Yes cause we went to **safe house now (check@43:40-42)**

(I: Okay)

Yeah

(I: And were there- were there only Jewish people working there?)

You know what it's fun- it's interesting I-I have no idea, she didn't- I don't know if she- the only person I heard about was the woman who owned it, now I'm not even sure, did she own it, was she ma- was she the manager?

(I: Yeah the fore-foreman)

Yeah the foreman or whatever, that's all- there weren't friendships formed, there weren't people coming to the house from work um and it wasn't so much a shame but I know my father was very proud when he could insist that she stop working and believe it or not she wasn't so glad, I think she really liked uh working

(I: Yeah the independence right)

The independence, the community that she had there

(I: Yeah)

Maybe that's where she learned more English, she spoke English very well

(I: What did they speak between the two of-)

To each other they spoke at the beginning Yiddish, and then that's a you know- Mischa - Yiddish (P) and late on English

(I: And what about you know to their friends between)

Polish, most of these people- and Russian, depending like

(I: Not Yiddish)

(p) No

(I: Well I think it's interesting because-)

I don't know

(I: The Jews who grew up, who came from like Warsaw or **Krokagamor (@45:06)**, more cosmopolitan Jews-)

They didn't speak Yiddish

(I: They didn't speak Yiddish well)

No, no my parents spoke- from Vilno absolutely

(I: No Vilno's Yiddish)

Yiddish is-the- an-and the snobbishness about the type of Yiddish, if you read ah-ah what's his- what was the guy that was yeah (**can't make out from 45:43-45:47**) so my Yiddish was different than-than others and I was- I was told it was superior, you know it was very- (I laughing)

(I: Well John's laughing because my mother was a Pole like my father (**can't make out @ 45:56-45:58**))

Okay, and I had that because Hank's parents were- were from Warsaw, she never learned Yiddish you know that's-that's for peasants that knew that

(I: (**can't make out @ 46:07**))

And-and she- and-and they lived in a Bowhouse apartment, I mean she get- his mother would get so upset with what she thought was such ignorance by J-by Jewish people here of a certain group when they asked questions about where they'd come from because I mean they had, you know she came from this assimilated family that had travelled to all over Europe and had a car and lived in a Bowhouse apartment building and-and-and uh (p) very assimilated I mean it's so ironic right that-that uh like it's not ironic but it certainly made no difference to anybody right

- (I: Mhm, did you- you said your parents never talked about the war years)
Very little
- (I: And did you uh were you asked about it in school, that you remember?)
No, no
- (I: The teachers never were curious or?)
At the beginning nobody (p) uh you didn't talk about it, you didn't- if when I was among friends, I was thrilled if they didn't know I was an immigrant (p) I was delighted to be thought of as a Canadian
- (I: Just for assimilating)
For uh-the- because yeah
- (I: But what would it have meant for you to be an immigrant?)
(p) A moki, and I'd be called names
- (I: And you were called that?)
Yep, yeah in fact I still can't figure out what moki means, greenhorn everyone- was never called greenhorn it's funny, a moki I was called
- (I: Who called you a moki?)
Other Jewish kids (P) and I still don't know- like I've tried to find out what that word came from, it's not to mock, it-it-it-
- (I: It's M-O-K-I)
What does it mean?
- (I: Well we've looked it up and I always ask people to define it but it's-it's disparaging)
Yeah I know it's disparaging
- (I: Who's-who's ignorant, beneath)
Yeah, yeah
- (I: Could you offer a better definition?)
(I2: No I wouldn't)
- (I: It has the same as like)
The same as greenhorn
- (I: Well it's worse than that, it's like calling a Black a nigger)
Yeah, and I would...
- (I: Yeah)
So for me to- actually it's interesting, I was going to say I sound like a Black woman, for me to pass was the-the highest thing I could do
- (I: To pass as a non-immigrant)
To pass as a a non-immigrant (p) yeah
- (I: So what would it mean so you'd be called names, moki but what else would it signify?)
It would mean that uh it was humiliating and it- I can think- it's so wrong because I'm so smart and my family is so uh worldly and we've been- we know so much, we've been through so much more than-than you can even imagine, but none of this seemed to have- and it changed uh I mean you know that from your work, it changed like we now- by the time I was a teenager uh I was considered very fascinating because of my background, but in the fifties it was not fascinating it was- listen it was going on in Israel too, [\they](#) didn't want deal with the Holocaust they didn't want...
- (I: But it was different there)
(p) It was different-
- (I: No, no, they didn't want- and that was the same but it was for slightly different reasons)

- What were the- well they were building a new country
- (I: That- one they were building a new country and two there was a shame because the Israelis felt that the Jews went to their death as sheep to the slaughter)
- Well (p) my- maybe there was a bit of that in my father (p) you know I mean he- the stories he *was* willing to tell were stories about his cleverness, his avoiding death
- (I: His survival)
- His survival instincts, uh the stories he would tell about the Gulag were about religious Jews who would (p) tell on someone for a cigarette, ah people behaving in bad ways who should have known better, so I'm not sure I was proud to be an immigrant, or to be a survivor (p) I think that's survivor guilt by the time I was seven, \ to be honest with you, // there was something in what my father was conveying, that-that-uh ... yeah that seemed um s-uh- he wasn't pro- he was proud that he survived but it was because he was- d-he was clever and he was strong and-and-and-and he didn't take any *guff* (@50:51) you know um (P) yeah
- (I: And I'm sure things weren't helped by your neighbours the Freemans? What was their name?)
- Oh uh uh
- (I: The sendin- you know thinking you should go back and...)
- No there was-
- (I: That didn't help any)
- No, no, and-and, the fifties you know it was the c-it was the Cold War um there was Korea you know there was all kinds of things still going on, so I think there might have still been a bit of paranoia, maybe there was a little bit of anxiety about other- the others (p) but I know that for me, assimilating was an- was very important, very very important...
- (I: Now there's no religion in your family?)
- (p) No, there was a bar mitzvah for my brother uh my father was very- had been raised in a very uh his father was a religious man, no after the-the war just, he became a real apostate
- (I: Mhm)
- A real apostate
- (I: And your mother was okay with that?)
- My mother was okay with that, yeah in fact I remember one time uh somebody came around collecting for charity, a religious Jewish man and my father was taking a nap cause he-he'd ended up with a brain tumor operation from the-the thing that had happened to him during the war and he was-
- (I: That was true?)
- Oh yeah
- (I: Okay)
- And he was having seizures
- (I: Okay)
- And-and um so he uh he (p) I said to the guy, my dad's sleeping and if he gets up he's going to be really upset and I didn't have any money in Yiddish (*can't make out@ 53:45*)
- (I: So you learned from your dad (laughing))
- My dad wakes up, and he chased the guy all the way down the stairs of that apartment building, in his jockey shorts (I laughing) 'go get a job' he's yelling at him in Yiddish (I

laughing) so-so that's what, that's what the war did to his religious uh you know, affiliations, // and it's interesting I mean, we're very humanist in my family and my kids are uh but none of them married Jewish men (p) and yet um they're very-we-we celebrate the Jewish holidays and they wanted to know more, I know more about my Jewish religion now than I did when I was growing up

(I: So they're culturally Jewish)

Very much so

(I: Okay, but you married not only a Jew but a S-)

Interesting eh

(I: But a survivor Jew)

Yeah I'm sure it's one of the reasons, fifty years later that we're still together

(I: Because?)

Because of that-that uh that base that we both went through, and what it did for us and with us, that I don't think someone else might necessarily understand

(I: Can you talk about that?)

(p) Uh well there's a lot of going from very bright to very dark moods sometimes uh the s-the-the idea of family is-is like incredibly important so that we even went through the seventies and I burnt my bra and-and-and smoked pot and I'm definitely going to have to sign the uh respect my confidence affidavit (both laughing)

(I: I won't include that (laughing))

But anyway um (p) the-the (p) family was just so important that we found ways to work out all those different passages where we went in different directions and came back together again (p) //and I love, I mean I think he does to- I love-I loved hearing his mother speak Polish, I l-love our identity, I love what- the richness of-of-of-of-the- the stories and the culture and the language, this-th-the accent, I love that, I'll run to **Court Saint Luke (@55:11)** just to hear that accent

(I: So it's interesting, if I could just pull something together, the theme that was most important to you was to assimilate yet the theme that you crave is the signs of being an immigrant)

Absolutely

(I: Is that-)

Yeah, absolutely, and today I'm so, proud of being an immigrant and for my kid-and identifying always with-with-with um, you know all of us have gone crazy about those girls that were captured

(I2: In Nigeria)

(I: In Nigeria)

Everybody right? You don't have- I have three daughters but you don't have to have daughters but the very thought of displacement of what those girls must be feeling

(I: Because they're women, because their religion)

Because they're women yeah

(I: Because of all those)

I mean it-it triggers something in-in-in you know, being taken out of one place put into another uh it makes you a certain kind of person, a different kind of person and (p) in a funny way they're richer for it, if you manage to-to survive it and thrive

(I: I wanna get back to that in a second, I really want to talk about what changed, what shifted, but just to finish off that part I just want to- do you think it would have been different, you were

older, you were the daughter, do you think it would have made a difference in terms of expectations if you were a son?)

Absolutely

(I: How so?(p) Is you bro-your husband-)

My brother has uh a PhD in Psychology from Perdue, I was told I could be a teacher or a nurse, that-th-that's what- there was money for that um I married at twenty to get out of the house uh I don't think my brother would have had to marry to get out of the house um, I was exceptionally bright in school but (p) I was a girl so I didn't need you know- my father uh, as proud as he was of me, it was my brother who he got an- who he took to play tennis and uh found extra money to give him- there was a difference in the way girls and boys were raised

(I: So he was more privileged?)

He was more privileged, but it's also possible that we actually were- my parents were more privileged at that point, that's also possible, cause he's three years younger

(I: Mhm, so when did things change financially for your parents?)

(p) You know when you think about it, by fifty-nine, sixty (p) fifty-nine yeah

(I: So less than a decade?)

Oh yeah, yeah

(I: What happened then?)

My dad opened up an office downtown, he began-

(I: Insurance?)

Insurance, he became a broker, he expanded his clientele, he had Greek clients and uh French clients, he was unsu- you know um (LP)

(I: And did you move?)

We moved to Clinton, yeah we moved to- in fact it was amazing my mom (p) my mom had melanoma and was in the hospital, and my father went and rented a house without her and-and the landlady (p) Betty Rozoski (@58:39) is her name, in face she was head of PR at the Jewish hospital for years and she always says she can never stop thinking about my dad cause he came there and the place she wanted to rent hadn't been cleaned out yet, it was horrible, and he says this 'I'm taking it' and gave her the money for the first two months and uh she always said every Saturday he would go off to- in his whites to play tennis with my brother and would tell her, he told- he would talk to some people more about his past than to his kids he wanted, really he wanted my brother and I to be, ordinary Canadian kids

(I: Mhm)

Whatever he thought that meant (P) and (p) we...

(I: So you moved to Clinton-)

We moved to Clinton uh I had-

(I: So that was a rental)

That was a rental, and I lived there until I married, from about fifty-nine until sixty-three

(I: And did they move too?)

When I married they moved to an apartment on Codeneige (@59:50) and they stayed there til-til the end

(I: They never bought a house?)

No, interesting-no, they- unusual

(I: Unusual yeah)

There was an opportunity (p) they never bought a house, my father had many clients who were developers in **Court Saint Luke (@ 100:08)** and-and made fortunes of money um (P) it's funny no Hank's parents they bought a house, umm I have a friend **Sylvia Safty (@100:19)** who-who's family became very successful too, they also never bought a house, I don't know

(Phone ringing/alarm ringing)

Is that an alarm (check @100:30), she's wondering

(I: I texted her)

Yeah, mhm (p) um no they never bought a house, *I* couldn't wait to buy a house, and in fact I couldn't wait to buy a house in what I call blue hair country (I2 laughing) which was Westmount

(I2: You mentioned blue hair last week)

Really?

(I2: I hadn't--)

(I: I'll-I'll tell you later, it's a very funny story, not so funny, so let's go back)

Okay

(I: So they had-they had the money to buy a house)

Yes

(I: And they were fairly established, middle class...)

Yes, yeah

Everyone pauses @ 101:05

(I: She's going to be late)

Okay

(I: (p) Okay hold on so-)

Is that okay with you? (p) Cause whatever works for you

(I: Yeah no I just-)

(I2: (can't make out @101:20)

(I: Yeah no I just want to- I just want to)

Now I'm not upset anymore so I can keep going

(I: (chuckles) Okay)

Have you had to do this?

(I2: No I don't have to background)

Well for other reasons

(I2: For- (Laughing hard))

(I laughing)

(I2: Oh I did for other reasons, very very- you're absolutely right Rita.. yeah... I think I'm skilled at not telling but no, it gets through)

(I: I'm persistent)

(I2: Yeah)

(LP for everyone)

Are you-are you in Sociology as well?

(I2: No I'm just Zelda's partner, here giving her a hand)

Good for you

(I2: It's fine)

My husband is doing that with me now uh he's a jeweller

(I2: Okay)

And I'm a book promoter

(I2: Okay)

And he closed his business and he's retired and now he's the escort, I said he should get a card, but if the book business gets any work he can be another kind of escort

(Everyone laughing)

(I: That's right, okay so they did it because, I-I just want to)

They (p) they were people I think who spent what they had, they didn't overspend but they spent what they had, my mom loved nice clothes

(I: So she had melanoma but she survived)

Oh yeah, yeah (p) and she as very beautiful and very vain and she loved pretty clothes and she shopped a lot for clothes and my dad was proud of her, she was ten years younger uh and he was very generous, he would-if he had a client who had a baby he would buy the baby cloths, if-if he was on a – he couldn't drive after the brain tumour operation he couldn't drive so he took buses or he went by taxis and if there was someone on the bus who looked like a poor person, he'd get their address and he'd buy things, so they didn't-they didn't save a whole lot of money (p) they didn't, // enough, enough

(I: So you went to university)

I went to university in-in fact I always say poor Hank, I went to teacher's college for two years

(I: At MacDonald's?)

Yeah, I-I uh actually that's a funny story I went to MacDonald and the first year I wanted to live in dorm, like what I called normal people would do because-

(I: Canadians, the assimilation again)

Yeah, that's right, most- everybody else was taking the bus you know and I had a roommate, we became friends after but I remember the first few times we'd be standing and she kept staring at me and I say 'why are you staring at me?'" and she finally told me that she'd never seen a Jew before (p) and I was like you know, it was just shocking to me, but she was just being honest

(I: So when did you meet Hank?)

I met Hank, he was friends with neighbours of mine across the street in Clinton, it was the Safty family, I don't- Moscha (@104:17) is an architect, a very famous architect and Sylvia is an artist and Gabriel was uh a li- a teach- anyway we became good friends and, he brother' best friend was this guy Hank Schaffer and he lived around the corner and I once got a glimpse of him and he was this tall, waspy basketball player and it was like, I fell in love before I ever knew him, honestly, he was everything that someone who wants to assimilate you know, anyway they fixed us up on a blind date

(I: And is he the same age as you?)

No he's going to be seventy-five, he was born in thirty-nine

(I: Okay)

(p) And when we first met I just thought he was like, he lived in **Teamar (@105:04)** he went to **Teamar**- you know he was finished high school, he had gone to **Teamar** high, oh he was already working, he had a car, he was working in his father's jewellery business (p) he was so cool, I had no idea that his background was even worse than min- I mean worse, more traumatic than mine, and uh (p) with a name like Hank I figured I mean how much more American can you get? But it was actually Henry and his original name was

Henry Eckhouse (@105:34) and he had- his story- honestly you should talk to him it's the most amazing story

(I: Okay)

Amazing story, amazing, so we met- that was in my last year of high school (p) and the nerve of my father we started to date and I'm in my first year at MacDonald college and he-he actually asked Hank what are your intentions

(I: You were like seventeen, you were sixteen)

I was eighteen

(I: Yeah eighteen cause you were a year-)

Yeah cause I was- what are your-he asked him what are your intentions (P) and Hank said I have none, so my father says, he doesn't, he comes back and I asked him what his sense was and he said he has none and he has no interest in you, and I was *so* depressed

(I: Is that true?)

No he never-never said he had no interest in me he just wasn't ready you know, that I-I kind of went off with him and about six months later honestly, he showed up to the door with an engagement ring and then there's enough reasons to marry someone at that age, but a year later we did

(I: (laughing))

And somehow here we are I mean-I mean we've separated several times, in the early seventies I burnt my bras and I went back to school, I went back to school in si- we married in sixty-three I think I was back in school by sixty-nine, I went in film (p) Hank- Hank was the parents I never had, at times he became the- you know we changed roles, but he financed my going back to school, to do what *I* wanted which was film studies

(I: So do you're involved with film?)

I was for a long time, yeah, yeah, I worked in CBC and I worked in the film board and uh but it's a long time ago

(I: Mhm, so okay so the question I want to- sort of the area I want to sort of talk -)

Yeah

(I: I mean I think that I'm looking at the second part of this what is to look at the uh rags to riches, rags to riches comfort story right, to see how that happened, and in a fairly short-you know within a decade)

I-you know this is the-no- and the same thing happened with Hanks fa-family

(I: Yeah, but the-the stories are all different but all have the same theme)

Yeah I know, yeah

(I: And the same theme is that people, the Jewish community had no interest in the immigrants, there were nice people)

Really? I'm glad to hear that

(I: Yeah there were nice people)

I thought it was us you see

(I: Yeah, some people were helpful, some people were supportive, but overall they didn't want to know about the Holocaust)

Yeah yeah

(I: They didn't want to hear)

Yeah

(I: There are lots of stories about total shame like-)

Really

(I: Like go, like you know go to Palestine, go to Israel, you don't belong here, that happened (p) but that was in the fifties, the forties and the fifties, so what changed, why has the Jewish community embraced and embodied the Holocaust)

Because they became very successful, with it came philanthropy and someone like **Hornstein (@108:39)** who was friends with Hank's parents in the Polish community, half the museum downtown is his collection or art uh, they-they-they brought uh a worldly cultural uh experience that they'd had before the war here, they made fantastic –in right, so-so they became important they-they-they became uh (p) I mean as I told you one got, let's see **Heim Lewin (@109:17)** ended up run-running in combine Jewish appeal, this was a friend of my father's **Trekman, Paul Trekman (@109:25)** ran the Jewish Public Library uh these people uh **Hornstein** was a-a huge art collector uh I mean I-I'm sure there's many more (p) but they-they-they uh they brought the-the culture, once they had the money, they-they almost kind of brought what they'd had prior to the war, here and Quebec is a young-Montreal is a young- the whole country is a young country, and Quebec especially is-is a young, you know it's like an adolescent, so they brought it-they-they contributed a tremendous amount and why it happened very quickly because I gathered that the fifties, sixties, and seventies were like this amazing boom time, not just here, right all over

(I2: Everywhere)

I mean imagine, it's true, I never think about dates I mean from like-and how quick a time my father went from being a sweeper of a floor to someone who could send his son To Perdue, give his daughter a wedding for a hundred and fifty people, send her on a honeymoon to Europe, you know (p) uh all these people were doing you know that- it's incredible

(I: It's mind-boggling)

Yeah

(I: When you think about it)

Yeah when I think about it the way, really (p) it-it-it it just really is, but I think the drive, and also I think the Canadian Jews (p) opened up more too I mean I think the people who came here before the war were staying in a kind of (**Yiddish word @111:14**) (p) and it was only the fifties that they themselves, \ this happened to the next generation, much more open uh you know so they could meet each other and-and-and in a much more uh \ vibrant way

(I: (p) Did your parents ever regret coming to Canada?)

(p) Never, no, never never, never

(I: So they-they were okay with not going to Israel?)

(p) Oh yeah, you know yes because my father took me and my three daughters, when Hank and I were separated at one point he took us to Israel (p) he fought from the minute he got off the plane with everybody there, he fought with the taxi driver, he fought at the bank, he fought at the hotel

(I2: Your dad?)

My dad, you know what Israelis are like, have you been? So you know (p) he wouldn't- he was-he-he would he-he never wanted to go back again (p) He had loved Israel and he-and he still- I mean he always stayed a Zionist but he-he was so- he was a very um (P) because he was secular he was very sad in you now towards the end about what was happening in Israel, he blamed the ultra-religious for everything and he-he kept saying if

the country goes down that the (can't make out @112:49) \\because of the Arabs it will be because of the ultra-religious, so no he was not sorry that we didn't end up in Israel

(I: Mmm)

His family he-he had a brother there, he had a sister there, my mother had, when she was orphaned as a-a child and he brother was sent to Argentina he ended up in Israel and she met him but no, and we have cousins there and we're not close to anybody there. No they really really embraced here and now (p) and-and uh (P) well he loved it here, they loved it here

(I: Did your parents get along with Hank's parents?)

Uh, in the end yes when the grandchildren came, but they were two very different kinds of Jews

(I: How so?)

(p) Well first of all, my parents were Zionists, my father spoke Yiddish, had great pride in Vilno as a centre of culture and Vera who was from-

(I: Vera was Hank's mother?)

Hank's mother, who was originally from **Stanaslova (@114:02)** which was Poland and then the Ukraine but lived in Warsaw um was a very uh... she was more Polish than Jewish in many ways and at the same time more relig- more observant, they went to the synagogue on holidays, she-she was present of her **Hadasa (@114:27)**, my parents were less uh orotho- were less conventional and Hank's parents were just-

(I: So on one hand you have the Yiddish speaking family who were atheist)

Yes

(I: And the Polish speaking one who were-)

Yeah

(I: Who were not atheist sounds a little bit-)

Yeah yeah, it was, but in the end uh I think like- the fact that they shared that Holocaust background and the joy that having my daughters come, Hank was an only child (p) so having these three uh granddaughters and then great-grandchildren uh I- brought them- they were okay...

(I: When did your parents die?)

My father died, it was eighty-five, fifteen years ago, he lived to eighty-five which was pretty amazing when I think about all that he'd been through, my mom (p) died (p) and uh- ten years later in eighty- yeah

(I: Yeah)

W-Yeah, and-and uh (p) Hank's step-father died when he was seventy-three uh-ah seventy-three and Hank took over the-but his mom's story uh-uh-s-uh- given the age she told us she was, she would have been ninety-seven when she died, but in truth her nephew said she- how could she be ninety-seven, her brother was three years younger was ninety-seven- but we had said ninety-seven, so she had to be a hundred (p) and amazing, amazing woman

(I: There is a Polish directory where you can look up your families, a Jewish-Polish directory)

Oh yeah

(I: Yeah)

We've tried and just little little bits, we found out Hank's original name was **Eckhouse (@116:20)** so we did find something, but just one sentence um

(I: Well I'll-I'll share the link with you)

Yes please, I would appreciate that because we-I've tried so many times and I can't get far

(I: Yeah, so I want to go back)

Yeah

(I: To this question of (p) sort of the overwhelming identification of Jewish community members with the Holocaust, it-it's linked with the state of Israel and somewhat with religion um which is complicated)

Yeah (p) well it's very complicated and it gets even more complicated- at one point it would have been what, maybe twenty years ago, when I was still looking for projects to do for film and stuff, I tried, I was-I presented a film proposal- a documentary called 'From Warsaw ghetto to Westmount square' cause Hank's mother now lived in this fancy new **misvanderough (@ 117:18)** apartment building with a swimming pool at the top and her grandkids would come there and I didn't think they had any idea what this woman had they knew the story- but really you know the real st-of the fact that she had been a slave labourer (p) uh that (p) at that time the film board wasn't interested

(I: When was this?)

This would have been- okay so I was there- maybe eighty

(I: Yeah)

No it's not twenty, it was thirty years ago, yeah (p) I-I-I was doing all kinds of research

(I: Do you think they'd be interested now?)

Probably, this- but there's so much of it now, you know timing- like I always say that- timing is everything, when I - the last thing I tried to do in film was I had read in something called a **Pushguard prize (@118:12)** which are just excerpts of different books uh-uh-uh a piece from a book called Kiss of the Spiderwoman and I was completely taken with it so I got in touch with Manuel **Hewitt (@118:24)** who had written it and I said I would love to try and produce this as a film and he was thrilled and he was- he came here, we worked out a proposal, he was so- he wouldn't even take any money uh he had his agent let me have an option for a year and I tried, this was like seventy-eight, I tried to raise money to make that film uh-ah here

(I: And you couldn't)

I couldn't

(I: And it became a huge film)

I-I-I had, huge, huge right, I even sent it, at one point I remember I sent it to Raoul **Julliard (@119:03)** because I wanted him to play the other part

(I: Mhm)

Yeah, I was the wrong person, I was a film maker out of the Film Board doing small films, I was a woman, and on-one producer I went to uh-uh Greenberg actually said 'Are you married?' I said 'Yeah' 'Do you have children?' 'Yeah' 'Why aren't you home?' (p) this is after feminism was right and ready right, seventy-nine but it was still very hard for women, and also here I was and when I think about it now coming out of a degree in film, not business, not commerce, not even- you know what I mean, so who was I- like really, they were like who is she to, and I wasn't asking, I wanted just enough money to- to get a script made and I realized I'd have to give the power over but-I-I wanted to be involved, so that one I thought like, film and I are not gonna make it together, so I had you know - // now there's, I mean one of the films, what was it called, Bitter love, something that was done long ago was just re-re-re-shown at Cinema **Depark (@120:11)**

and everyone's interested (p) why, there's that much time that has past I think distance um I get nervous frankly because I mean I've got one friend who wants to go to Warsaw, they built a museum on the ground of-of what was the

(I: Ghetto yeah, a Jewish museum)

And I don't know- I don't know how I feel about that I-uh it's complicated for me, Warsaw was bombed and flattened this is- it should be called New Warsaw or Warsaw the second uh Hank and-Hank and I have *no* desire to go back, so there's different, you now there's different but there's- it's-it's exotic (p) \\ I think it's almost like you know, I-I-I'm much more interest in (P) in the-I can't explain (p) uh (P) I'm not being as articulate as sometimes I can be um

(I: Too (can't make out @121:34)

Like there's something (p) I-I- resent that it took so long, to be heard and to be considered important information or experience, something to be learned uh it's never too late I guess, but most of- most of- I'm second-hand, like think of all the things I couldn't remember, if my father you know what- they should have been- to me it's like they should have been more interested in the sixties and the seventies when the people were there to tell it, but nobody, a lot of what they had to tell isn't pretty (p) now it can be molded differently you know what they want to do a Jewish museum is all about the rich culture before the war- yes, yes but it also included my father getting stoned every time he went to school (P) yes music was being composed but yes anti-Semitism was very you know it-it-it's uh

(I: Well the story isn't beautiful coming to Montreal in the fifties)

Exactly

(I: The story you told is not beautiful)

Exactly

(I: I mean you know-)

Exactly, no it's really not

(I: It's sheer determination)

Exactly its sheer determination and it (p) it was less what you got, but what you *gave* by like just pulling-like literally pulling yourself out of yourself to do that you know I'm amazed sometimes that these people lived as long as they did, I don't know how they did it, I uh frankly I can't imagine what my parents went through, I don't think I could do it (P) I can't imagine what Hank's mother did with a little boy that was circumcised in-in a-in-in in a place where everybody wanted to-she said there was- when she would go on a bus, the German soldiers would make room for her to sit down and it was the Poles who would look at her and she would have to get off because they might you-you know, not to say that the Germans were good, but it was so right with like uh- you couldn't trust anybody, I mean no wonder they came here and thrived I mean at least here (laughing) nobody was going to turn them in

(I: Did your parents trust, when they came here?)

More than me

(I: You didn't trust people, okay why?)

No, I just had this- I just sensed that um when they started calling me names I realized it wasn't so simple, but for my parents who knew what real anti-Semitism was, this was a picnic

(I: You had an accent at first?)

No, never, mind you people tell me I have an accent, but if someone's from New York or someone from- they claim Montreal- they say Montreal Jews have an accent

(I: For sure)

Yes eh

(I: (chuckles))

You see, so I have that accent

(I: So why would they call you names, just cause they-)

I don't know, cause they knew, oh I know why too, my dad when he got hit over the head, lost his hair so he was bald, so he looked like **Earl Brinner (@124:19)** well guess what in nineteen fifty, they-they made fun of my father, not to his face but to me, we beg- we made my father wear a toupee

(I laughing)

For years, shameful cause eh was very handsome, he actually looked like **Earl Brinner (@125:05)** a very handsome guy, vibrant and full of life they loved you know so they could tell we were different oh and the way I was dressed, oh my god I remember I came with all these little smock dresses, beautiful things, here everybody was in cinched like there were these horse hair skirts an cinched waists and it was like a whole different way until-until we could make those transitions, we stood out (p)

(I: And your hair, did you have long hair, short hair what was...)

I always had thin hair, short hair yeah (p) no I my pride was when I looked like everybody else, but my relief was when I could just pass like anybody else

(I: But in school they wore tunics, cause we all-)

Yeah exactly, thank goodness for that, yeah we all wore tunics, I had to wear oxfords but that's okay other people wore oxfords too uh by the- when I-I got comfortable with who I was in high school, my tunic was so dirty that it felt like cardboard (P) and I-

(I: So where did you go to high school?)

Ultramar high (@126:15)

(I: And you were still amongst the minority of immigrants, but it must have changed)

I was among the minority of immigrants but we were like ninety-eight percent Jewish

(I: Jewish, yeah)

It was unbelievable and by then I was what- I was just one of the-the folks

(I: Mhm, but in later years as you went through high school there were more recently more immigrants coming in)

Yes, yes and interestingly enough I didn't be- those weren't the people I befriended, it's ironic

(I: Who was?)

Because I became like a Canadian I-uh- it's-it's- when I think about it now, my friends (p) through school were mostly not immigrant Canadians

(I: But there weren't that many)

Cause there weren't that many

(I: Yeah)

But even in high school, even when they started to come

(I: But they were younger than you)

Well that's it, so there you go

(I: Yeah I was just curious)

Yeah no that's true, that's true yeah

- (I: Cause a lot of people who I interview were a bit younger than you, four-five years)
That is-
- (I: Most of their friends were immigrants)
You see, interesting
- (I: Right but -)
Because they came in mass
- (I: Now when I went to elementary school which was in **Alpha Joys (@ 127:28)**)
Oh yeah
- (I: I would say eighty percent were immigrants)
Really
- (I: Mhm)
Well that was in a very different experience than mine
- (I: Right and I'm you know probably eight year younger than you are)
Yeah that, so we've had very very different
- (I: Yeah similar but different)
Yeah, yeah
- (I: I can talk about the uniform but I notice difference between the- between what the immigrants wore and what the Jewish Canadian wore)
Yeah
- (I: The wool, the wool tunic as opposed to the polyester, the cotton oxford shirts as opposed to...)
Exactly
- (I: You know the wool knee socks as opposed to polyester)
There was a horse hair crinoline, mine was plastic
- (I: Exactly) (**talk over each other, can't make out 12:11-:1215**)
- (I: The real penny loafers versus the fake penny loafers)
Yeah exactly
- (I: So there was all these differences, even though there was a uniform)
Yeah, yeah, that's right
- (I: You know that denote of class)
Yeah, yeah
- (I: Yeah)
It's interesting how class conscious
- (I: Yeah)
Things were then, I had one friend who- Sue Michelle she was, live up above **Court Saint Catherine (@128:35)** in the big-
- (I: Houses)
You know here I was in an apartment with two other men, I mean my brother slept in a little alcove, my parents, that's where my parents- this is how it was in our house there was kind of a living room, my parents slept there, then the next two rooms that there were were rented out
- (I: How long did that last?)
All the time in- that's probably how they saved their money to- until we moved to Clinton there was always roomers as I call them, in the house, very little privacy
- (I: Were your parents friends with them did they-)

- Absol- they sort of became family, one-one did, **Kuscka (@129:16)** I once wrote down these names, they're such amazing (**129:20-129:25**) I mean these amazing names you know you never hear anymore
- (I: No, no, did they remarry?)
One of them-Roman, he remarried, **Kuscka** was always uh a bachelor, and you know what I don't- we- imagine that I never knew his story, I just knew that there was something sad and he was now part of our family
- (I: And he maintained friendship with your parents?)
Not- that's the other thing, as people became more (p) a lot of people moved to **Court Saint Luke (@130:03)** when we moved to Clinton and-and some people we didn't see as much anymore um my parents made friends with people in the- you know things changed as they got older, actually they d- they ended up in and Hank's parents too ended up having friends who were Canadian in terms of non-immigrant and I think many of the immigrants eventually really do assimilate, you and-and expand your
- (I: But that took a long time, that took a long time)
I'm talking the seventies, twenty years later
- (I: Seventies, eighties, yeah that took a long time)
A long time, you're right, it's interesting eh
- (I: That took a long long time)
I wonder is this typical in other countries, like is this typical wherever immigrants go, I don't know
- (I: I don't know, I mean you know I think this story is interesting for a number of reasons)
Yeah
- (I: I mean immigration has totally shifted right, it used to be historically poor people coming in for better opportunity)
And now
- (I: And now you have to be highly educated and then you become poor coming here right so it would be- it-it's different I think for each group)
Yeah
- (I: What was so interesting about this groups is that I think one of the first in Canadian history where it as so heterogeneous in terms of economic, financial, uh well they were all poor so-)
What were they- what were they-
- (I: But in terms of education)
Yeah, yeah, where they had been before
- (I: Religion uh, culture, social life, all that is very very different (p) so)
Is that **Anora (@131:47)**
- (I: Yeah that was **Anora**, okay I think I'm pretty)
//For god's sake, I haven't seen you in

Angrosino, Michael V. 2002. *Doing Cultural Anthropology: Projects in Ethnographic Data 2nd Edition*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press Inc.

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