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Mrs. Leah Seltzer

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: This is a recording of the Oral History Program. We're interviewing Mrs. Leah Seltzer. And the interviewer is Myron Lazarus. Now, you're not going to tell me how old you are but where were you born.

Mrs. Seltzer: *[phonetic] [0:00:17]* Elien Six. This is how you...

Interviewer: Pronounce it.

Mrs. Seltzer: *[phonetic] [0:00:20]* Elien Six, yes, it's a very small town in the *[phonetic] [0:00:25]* Kier State or *[inaudible] [0:00:26]*.

Interviewer: You say *[phonetic] [0:00:28]* Kier State?

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes.

Interviewer: In the Ukraine?

Mrs. Seltzer: That's right. But that – when I was about six months old my mother told me we moved to the other little place which I remember. And that – the name of that little place is Lipovitz. And...

Interviewer: Your pronunciation is good.

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, I can still *[inaudible] [0:00:47]* because when I came here I was, you know, as a child, the only children that *[inaudible] [0:00:52]* that I think me and my dad had a harder *[inaudible] [0:00:55]* and all the children spoke English. And I can't even *[inaudible] [0:00:58]*. And my dad took me to the library and this wasn't well the fact they have a Russian book. Do you know what I read when I was six, seven years old?

Interviewer: *[inaudible] [0:01:07]*?

Mrs. Seltzer: Long E. And what was that, oh...

Interviewer: *[inaudible] [0:01:12]*.

Mrs. Seltzer: *[inaudible] [0:01:12]* and, yes, books *[inaudible] [0:01:15]*.

Interviewer: And you speak Russian today?

Mrs. Seltzer: I wouldn't call it speaking. I can understand. I can say a few words.

Interviewer: Now this city you were from, what kind – was it an agricultural area?

Mrs. Seltzer: It had nothing. And that's the truth. You know, they asked – with there, I used to **[inaudible] [0:01:32]**. How did you make a living? And do as you told **[inaudible] [0:01:38]** he's turning around. What do you mean he's turning around? Well, you know, they used to wear **[phonetic] [0:01:43]** Carry came and then I used to go around that.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, nobody has told the Jews were not that type of people but you would go bring people together. Do you have anything to sell, oh, he knew somebody who runs and die. Next thing – the **[inaudible] [0:01:59]** was never seen by anybody but just in the air. Now the...

Interviewer: But of course the Ukraine itself is agriculture.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yeah, but not the Jews. The Jews were congregated, segregated, call whatever you want and the same thing as the little city is a friend, they're all around us and they were cousins formed naturally. And I don't remember ever have seen a Jew in my young day that was **[inaudible] [0:02:24]**.

Interviewer: Well, I just interviewed one on one.

Mrs. Seltzer: **[inaudible] [0:02:26]**?

Interviewer: Yeah, it's surprising. I really hear Jews or even **[inaudible] [0:02:31]**.

Mrs. Seltzer: Oh, and other than **[inaudible] [0:02:33]**.

Interviewer: I know, it's shocking, it's shocking to me and said **[inaudible] [0:02:37]**. Now what kind of business was your family in?

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, I don't – didn't remember my father. My dad left Ukraine when I was about two and a half or three years old. Why? Because he lost a rubber and a **[inaudible] [0:02:54]** and they didn't have enough money to buy another pair of **[inaudible] [0:02:58]**. So my mother said that's does not the way to live. We got to pull **[inaudible] [0:03:04]** and he went to United States.

Well, he was a bookkeeper at home and so was his father. And coming to the states that that's the language how could he get a book? He didn't have the money. So, we were there and we had no money to send to my mother but even before as he left they had a little grocery store.

Interviewer: This is in Russia or – yeah.

Mrs. Seltzer: In Russia, oh no, Russia. *[inaudible]* **[0:03:31]** at level store and talking about interesting things.

Interviewer: But he was a bookkeeper.

Mrs. Seltzer: A bookkeeper but, no, *[inaudible]* **[0:03:39]**. When he was a young man in that alien set he and father work for – what was the name, it's just a mail *[inaudible]* **[0:03:52]** mail. And when he moved to Wilmington – to Lipovitz I think it requires any – how many people needs a bookkeeper, you know, there was a *[inaudible]* **[0:04:03]** and they didn't have anything to count.

So, what do you do, you open up a little store because my mother's father had been in the fleet business, in grain business but I figured, yeah, I'll put up a little store. And shortly after *[inaudible]* **[0:04:21]** than I. And then I was about two or three years old when my father went to State and my mother remained that little business.

And I'm talking about incidence that I got – I don't really remember *[inaudible]* **[0:04:35]** you remember. And we came to the state, I always thought how wonderful it is, there's not graph, no fees, that's my young mind that made it up that way. Why? Because *[inaudible]* **[0:04:52]** on the ground. He will come to pick up a mini-stick and put on a two cents of *[inaudible]* **[0:04:56]** or whatever it cause to walk on. And I was amazed because at home I got to take teeth out of your mouth.

[0:05:03]

And as far as graph is concern just for sure I remember *[inaudible]* **[0:05:07]**. All the police they're naturally gentile. And the *[inaudible]* **[0:05:15]** went pretty stir up on a Sunday, well, the Jews they can keep the stores open on Saturday. So, my mother just couldn't make underneath having two days closed so, you know, the Jewish people *[inaudible]* **[0:05:30]** sunflower, got the bake bread or whatever the small item was.

So, they had us store – door in the back of the store and went into sort of a courtyard so she would need her back there and, you know, come in so it ran out fine until one time the policeman noticed it. Well, he noticed not they didn't have any money to pay upon, we knew that – what if they're going to do that? So, over there they had no payment so very few wouldn't planks.

And from March to June that has mud and dirt up to here. I took her, I led her out to the middle of the street with mud up to her stomach and left the *[inaudible]* **[0:06:18]**. Like with the track it didn't – it's plenty for you and for me by at that time her shoes, her underwear, her clothes.

Interviewer: Does that *[inaudible]* **[0:06:27]**?

Mrs. Seltzer: Yeah, as I said, he was good-hearted because he didn't *[inaudible]* **[0:06:33]** and he didn't arrest her and she wouldn't have to pay fine, you need *[inaudible]* **[0:06:35]**. So, but he had to do something so she wouldn't do it again so this is what he did. And I remember...

Interviewer: But this was – your mother mainly supported this family.

Mrs. Seltzer: I imagined – oh yes, yes, and then that was in – oh, gosh, for many years, many years. They would send a few dollars – my dad, everything he got there but it wasn't very much – it just couldn't...

Interviewer: How many people were in your family now?

Mrs. Seltzer: Just my brother and I, my mother and dad.

Interviewer: And this was a small grocery store.

Mrs. Seltzer: Very small store, yes. You know, a grocery store here as a *[inaudible]* **[0:07:22]** channel 12 consent. But over there things are different. Everything the grain and everything came in and a 100-pound bags, rice, barley or butter, everything came in bag. And my mother has to lift those bags and to weigh out the two or *[inaudible]* **[0:07:42]** in pound or kilo or whatever the weight maybe was and it's specific.

Now here you go and you buy kerosene or whatever you buy, you bag it. I don't know a client or something. They had a large container and you have to pump it out, you know, and everything was to give a call and there was no heat. I remember mother had a little earthen pot. I should have *[inaudible]* **[0:08:04]** in there.

And she said in this store, you know, when there was no customer like frequently and she had – war – I don't know if you've ever seen them. I needed gloves without the end with everything done so that you can manipulate in those small things.

Interviewer: And using with cards now.

Mrs. Seltzer: Do they? Well, if she said with that little – I just don't remember, I remember that – yes.

Interviewer: Around this thing that was warmed.

Mrs. Seltzer: She have it on *[inaudible]* [0:08:27] but just a tiny pot, an earthen way pot as a whole I should *[inaudible]* [0:08:34].

Interviewer: Did you remember – do you have any education *[inaudible]* [0:08:39]?

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, and I was lucky that way because ordinarily children that young don't learn as much as I do. But my mother's – what was the, cousin, yeah, and son was a teacher, a truth rather than a teacher because I teach our Jewish teacher could only teach them the *[inaudible]* [0:08:58].

But have finished to get *[inaudible]* [0:09:02] so many years ago mind you. And he liked me. I have a very small and tiny and without a father home, you know?

Interviewer: What is your maiden name?

Mrs. Seltzer: Gold.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Oh, I see. Okay. Right.

Mrs. Seltzer: So, he started *[inaudible]* [0:09:15] and over there they wouldn't take it to school unless you pass the examination. So, then I was – oh, I must have been about four and a half or so, I started Hebrew store. And after he and my mother realized I've just – by going to Hebrew school we didn't have any money so she *[inaudible]* [0:09:34] he could get me already to admit it to the government's goal *[inaudible]* [0:09:42] money. So he too have made the examination and they took me into the first grade.

Interviewer: How old were you in there?

Mrs. Seltzer: Seven – close to six, no. It took us a year to get here because *[inaudible]* **[0:10:00]** from the Russia to *[inaudible]* **[0:10:02]**. So...

[0:10:06]

Interviewer: And how long were you in the school? Is that called the gymnasium that you went to?

Mrs. Seltzer: No, no, no, no. No, it was an elementary school, actually. I was there for...

Interviewer: Could have been too long.

Mrs. Seltzer: ...a little over a year but I knew enough to go here to sixth grade although I started on the third grade but at the end of the year I was graduated from that sixth grade.

Interviewer: Sixth grade.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes. I'll get to that *[inaudible]* **[0:10:36]**. And of course another thing, my mother after, you know, the business sort of gave up with the *[inaudible]* **[0:10:46]** so she inherited a large house from her father. And...

Interviewer: In the town that you were in?

Mrs. Seltzer: And it was the town, yes. And they had *[inaudible]* **[0:10:56]** so many of the children from the surrounding area began to come and they couldn't travel back and forth.

Interviewer: Now you talked about the programmers and remember you said this. By the way, you live them at the grocery store where...

Mrs. Seltzer: No, no. The grocery store was a little bit of a market place and our room which my mother rented from our family was, oh, three or four houses away and telling about like in the Russia at that time. It was in the basement.

The family who rented the room to us have five children, a son and four daughters. It was a two-story house that's *[inaudible]* **[0:11:46]** to someone else and they live downstairs and I can just *[inaudible]* **[0:11:48]** for me. They had a kitchen, a dining room and one bedroom and there's other front room which they rented to us.

Now in this room we had two beds my brother, for him, and my mother and for me. We have a stove there. We had a wardrobe, faucet, we had table and chairs and just the drawers just for our living cultures.

Interviewer: So you, your mother and brother.

Mrs. Seltzer: All of us, yes, all of us. And **[inaudible] [0:12:24]** the family that they rented from, yes, because I remember at night, you know, they used to start – they used to move the chairs together, dining room chairs and make two – a bed for two, two of the girls and over there for two the girls that makes four. And I feel good of don't think **[inaudible] [0:12:44]** boys slept, I really don't.

Interviewer: That's worth something.

Mrs. Seltzer: Then when the children got so old **[inaudible] [0:12:49]** they moved upstairs. As I've said when the program started the first thing they would do is break into your store and they go by the merchandise while my mother called me before that so she get – and then the things will have to procure. You couldn't buy flower, you couldn't buy anything.

Interviewer: What was this date now that were you – approximate date or...

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, the approximate date was – when we the revolution, 1921, 1919?

Interviewer: Yeah, but the programs were probably earlier also around the time of the U.S., Russia, Japanese war 1900.

Mrs. Seltzer: Did they after – did they after the – oh sure. Well, she was not **[inaudible] [0:13:28]** at that time.

Interviewer: But the programs are connected with desires. And that's not the comments.

Mrs. Seltzer: That's right, of revolutions, the revolution, no. You see, the revolution have not taken over yet. And there is no government tool, so anyone, any leader would get a band together and go plunder. You don't have to be a college graduate to go and take away things that didn't belong to you.

Anyway, in the meantime, things have gotten very bad and couldn't get anything so mother gave this little business and as I said she hasn't **[inaudible] [0:14:06]** large house, we had one, two, three bedrooms **[phonetic] [0:14:13]** Azol. Do you know what **[phonetic] [0:14:13]** Azol is?

Interviewer: No.

Mrs. Seltzer: It's not a living room. It's a drawing room. My grandfather was – it was **[inaudible] [0:14:23]** but comfortably well off. So, when they build that house they made **[phonetic] [0:14:30]** Azol.

Interviewer: What was it used for? Like a living room?

Mrs. Seltzer: No. It was a showroom really.

Interviewer: Like the power.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, like the power, that's right. I remember they had – the only thing I've seen the **[inaudible] [0:14:45]** ceiling and decoration was that depends different museums, you know, where they moved entire rooms at the ceiling and door. Did you ever see them? Well, that works. That's the center, no, the cluster. The center where the fixture can come out just beautiful and the corner says.

[0:15:09]

And I remember the beautiful red velvet furniture and **[inaudible] [0:15:13]**. She got a beautiful home, beautiful – but after, of course, there was no heating system but did you ever **[inaudible] [0:15:22]** for not like two rooms together, that room or this room. And then between here there would be a double roll up oven, you see, but it wasn't used for baking, it was used for heating and they would **[inaudible] [0:15:35]** this coal or charcoal or **[phonetic] [0:15:36]** Pete. And you know what **[phonetic] [0:15:37]** Pete was...

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:15:40]**.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes. And they would heat through at the bricks on the side and the wall would get warm and from that the rooms, yeah, everybody that's sitting in the area when you're back. So mother had – and when the gymnasium opened up in our city a lot of people came **[inaudible] [0:15:59]** children, the Jewish people in our **[inaudible] [0:16:00]** education. So they would come to my mother and mother was taken borders that's where they were. We had at one time we had six girls and...

Interviewer: But this was – your mother got rid of this...

Mrs. Seltzer: Little grocery store. Yeah, There was no merchandise to be **[inaudible] [0:16:15]** anymore.

Interviewer: Right. And then earn living by living out rooms and *[inaudible] [0:16:19]*.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, that's right. She used to cook meals for them and do the laundry and house them, you know, and they attend to school.

Interviewer: Boarding House.

Mrs. Seltzer: That's right. And that's too conservative *[inaudible] [0:16:33]* to my education because at night you withdraw the curtains just like a blackout and if anybody ever comes to the door would *[inaudible] [0:16:42]* bed. That was not what it was told; you were free because she never knew who was coming and *[inaudible] [0:16:47]*, so.

Interviewer: do you have a distinct memory of a particular attack on your house?

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, yes, yes. Not on our house. There were rumors, you know, that such and such a gang, bandits will come into the city. You knew already because people would come running from the little town a few miles away were burned out or – and really high so especially us but that the man in the house. You know, my brother is away at that time and then with my uncle.

So just my mother and, yes, my mother has a widowed sister that live in the house for a number of years. So then just the three and all women and all the *[inaudible] [0:17:28]*, you know, so, we would go to somewhere where there was a man in the house. I don't know what the man would do but anyway we rent up.

So we got a friend directly across the street and he had a cow. And the cow was in the barn just like a garage under your house, you know? So we've go down there. Now why in the world you figure that they wouldn't come to look but this is where we crouch right near the cow. It's the truth. Well, anyway, they came at the top and they came from the...

Interviewer: And these were soldiers.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, soldiers, no, peasants, yes. They came to the garage door to the barn door and began to ban. Well, up we went up the steps and outside and I remember bandits and forces driving around in forces in the rear, you know? And I have a friend right next door and she had an older sister. And I remember – I think I'll *[inaudible] [0:18:23]*. One of the soldier *[inaudible] [0:18:26]* of war just go down on their knees begging to let her go who just thrown on their way and let her go.

And then as we were running, you don't know the way you run. You just run away from the where place you're been. We saw a man who was massacred but I didn't know *[inaudible]* [0:18:42], we didn't stop the thing. And we ran – and you're afraid to knock at anybody's door because you don't want to fake them and you don't know where to go and then somebody was looking at and they took us in.

And this is – and I know that's not I remember I was going to this school and most of the time didn't have any school because the bandits, you know, the rumors didn't *[inaudible]* [0:19:05] if there was applied a week or two to go to school.

Well, while going to school and there was a school and the priests house, you know, they always teach religion there and math lesson and Slavonic, you know, the Russian Slavonic. So, we have to know that too. As a little girl I remember the priest examine me. What I knew about Slavonic? *[inaudible]* [0:19:30] related. So if it's girl's school that I've gotten into and the principle asked me, I remember her name, *[phonetic]* [0:19:39] Maria Evanirna, isn't that funny? I don't even have a name for friends, I swear. You just see how people *[inaudible]* [0:19:46].

And she kept asking a question and then the priest with a little bit of gray manner said, "Oh, she knows. Leave her alone. She knows enough." That's not *[inaudible]* [0:19:56] all of things and an office friends they were, "I was so frightened."

[0:20:02]

So, one time there was rumor that the bandit would come so next – the children were dismissed but alongside of school building I remember that the very large escaped and a hyphens in other words, their house, it couldn't run any place and I had to run home. And I saw the horses coming and I was afraid and the *[inaudible]* [0:20:25] on my side began to hurt and I crashed against the fence and I was afraid and I started to run and, again – and he and my mother came *[inaudible]* [0:20:33] to get me. These are *[inaudible]* [0:20:36] I remember, yes.

Interviewer: Now you're interest in coming in United States was because of your inability to make a good living in this morning...

Mrs. Seltzer: Oh my god, by that time I get had to *[inaudible]* [0:20:52] establish, they had a hardware store and he wanted his family here and my mother was *[inaudible]* [0:20:59].

Interviewer: Now he was living where?

Mrs. Seltzer: On **[phonetic] [0:21:01]** 18 Union.

Interviewer: **[phonetic] [0:21:03]** 18 Union. How did you manage – he sent you enough money to come.

Mrs. Seltzer: He sent us enough money to come but you weren't just get out of the Russia, you know? And how could you go anywhere when there were so many bandits underway and you heard them – the day of the massacre and they used to go with wagons, you know, wagon load for the – quantity or a number of their strength. There are several families get together higher demand with this wagon. And they would go and there. You didn't hear that anything happened to them but there were always rumors. So himself they were stopped **[inaudible] [0:21:42]** and so and so was killed and there were – there were a lot of them.

And then you know until this day if I have a chance where I can go anywhere so without passing by a word I'll go. I'll go that way no matter how many miles I have to go out of the way and my daughter were at Green Acres, you know, on Green Acres. And I can go to **[phonetic] [0:22:02]** Coal Road but they didn't know that the **[inaudible] [0:22:05]**.

And I remember for years we used to go to **[inaudible] [0:22:10]** city and you know there's a piece of road **[inaudible] [0:22:14]**. How come they make a road right through the forest. I mean, it was a forest. And I talked to myself I'm still – I'm still afraid of the wolves because I remember we went and as I said it took all of this, I mean, and, you know, have **[inaudible] [0:22:30]** forces go, he stopped overnight in a house and people going on time and sure enough then that's surrounded the wagon and it stopped us.

And – but lot was with us. They **[inaudible] [0:22:43]** search us. Well, my mother remember have candles like silver candles but we didn't take very much **[inaudible] [0:22:49]** there wasn't much as quick carry. We didn't have very much to take and everybody took whatever they have, rings or a little bit of money, whatever anybody had, they gave it to them, they took the money and they didn't **[inaudible] [0:23:01]**. And that was the only instance we have. And then we came to **[inaudible] [0:23:06]**.

Interviewer: Excuse me, you actually didn't have passport.

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, I'll tell you, my mother had the passport that she had made use ago in order to go to the United States and then the World War work out. So we – he kept that passport with pictures and everything, so we have that. And luckily at that time my brother's age with me younger because **[inaudible] [0:23:36]** was 16 years old. We won't be permitted to get out of there.

Anyway, we came to this little town of **[phonetic] [0:23:41]** Camenca.

Interviewer: **[phonetic] [0:23:44]** Camenca.

Mrs. Seltzer: **[phonetic] [0:23:44]** Camenca. Yeah. It was a resort, a great resort. I've never heard of anything like that here but over there it's very common. Grapes or grape juice was supposed to be an excellent cure for many sort of stomach illness. And I remember mother used to tell us that as a young woman, shortly after she got married she must have had some kind of **[inaudible] [0:24:12]**.

And they took it to **[phonetic] [0:24:14]** Dr. Kia and he said two words, **[inaudible] [0:24:18]** to eat nothing. That's **[inaudible] [0:24:22]**, nothing. She lived in her mother to let them **[inaudible] [0:24:27]** and on rule. And then she lost weight after she almost like a scalp and they thought she's going to have a TB.

When she could keep the **[inaudible] [0:24:42]** and the doctor told she should go to this **[phonetic] [0:24:47]** Camenca on that cure. You have to stay here so many ways. I need so many pans of great or juice per day. And this is the place where we have to hold up.

In order to close the Dniester River into a Romania, into –it's less than **[inaudible] [0:25:05]** it's a little community – a little province that kept changing him between Russia and Romania all of them.

[0:25:12]

Interviewer: That's Arabian?

Mrs. Seltzer: So we stay there and you have to steal your way into the **[inaudible] [0:25:19]** they wouldn't left you and why should they but there was terrific, you know, he stopped on the house and that woman's son knew 13 people on Romania and they used to – used to so much pressure it, you know?

Whenever the people on guard that he know we're on that's going to get – take across the world. Well, I remember when time he took us and brought us to a gentile, a peasant's family and we have to wait for a certain signal across the river while sitting in a little *[inaudible]* [0:25:54]. in other words they didn't have the right people so we have to go back to his friend's home.

So, few weeks, I don't know how long it last and then again he was given the sign to go so again he took us. And by then it was – the eyes was beginning to break up on the river. You couldn't *[inaudible]* [0:26:16] to ride to – so he had *[inaudible]* [0:26:20] and he put my mother and my *[inaudible]* [0:26:24] and he said, "Don't make a sound or move because the thing *[inaudible]* [0:26:28] red light, you know? And there were *[inaudible]* [0:26:31] and my brother couldn't come with us or my mother was torn.

You know what they did with my brother, the man, they tied him with ropes and made him jump the flow *[inaudible]* [0:26:41]. Well, he came – he was so wet, you know, and when we got across it was how it feels, you know, slight and dark, peach dark, it have to be a dark night, you know? Right, we don't know where we were on but *[inaudible]* [0:26:57] ran and we came to a little village and that we'll came to each one and took a few and within minutes of new comers to the city, to the little village.

Interviewer: *[inaudible]* [0:27:11].

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, definitely. And we came in there I remember and there was a mother and a father and a married daughter.

Interviewer: And this was in Romania.

Mrs. Seltzer: This was in Romania. And a child – they all live in two rooms and my mother was – screamed her heart, "My son, where is my son," you know. So, on the *[phonetic]* [0:27:39] QT they start to inquire, I hear that they found him.

Interviewer: He was all right.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yeah, he was all right. Yeah. And then from there in due time we received a word from my dad that he have money sent to us and...

Interviewer: And you mean while you're staying in Romania...

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, and that's why *[inaudible]* [0:27:58] by the border. And then we went to *[phonetic]* [0:28:04] the crest. I remember – I think I slept in every *[inaudible]* [0:28:09] house, you know, they did – they would never turn your wife. They took them *[inaudible]* [0:28:16]. And it goes that way. And then I remember my mother had to get all these.

And they would just issue so many a day or so many a week or so many until months, you didn't know – there was no definite time whenever they feel like it. That's when they *[inaudible]* [0:28:35].

Interviewer: From Romania you were trying to get in to Germany?

Mrs. Seltzer: No, we were trying to come here to get some sort of a peasant no matter from where, you know? So, we stayed and *[inaudible]* [0:28:44] months and I remember that we didn't have any milk at home. We didn't have any flower. We didn't have any tea. We didn't have any sugar, nothing at home.

Do you know what they used to use for tea? We used to take the leaves from the trees and dry them out and just *[inaudible]* [0:29:01] and then that's how the tea came from.

Interviewer: Did you use *[inaudible]* [0:29:06] grass leaves?

Mrs. Seltzer: I don't know. I have one time I remember being a mother had been in business from you all – the cousins and the danger of being killed, she used to run out and get some flower for us. One time the flower got wet and that's funny with little memories like that and it have like terrible taste and smell to it.

Well, you know, you'd bake the bread there for a whole week. And I couldn't eat it. Everybody ate it. My mother was so mad at me. Everybody – I couldn't slow *[inaudible]* [0:29:37] makes me sick not to think of that odor from that dampness. And I remember that week I didn't eat. And you know you're stronger than the children you brought up here because just the strongest survived.

Interviewer: That's right. Now, you got passage from Romania.

[0:30:02]

Mrs. Seltzer: From Romania we have to go to Liverpool. And on the way we stopped at Belgium.

Interviewer: Or Holland.

Mrs. Seltzer: No, in Belgium. I remember that the large dogs that they used to use for carts, women used to sell fruit and the dog is still walking *[inaudible]* **[0:30:25]** the cart. And then whatever that piece – we stayed there for several weeks, too.

We had – I had a first experience with this cooking gas. You know, several families moved into with these people who charge so much, you know? And she said one thing I can't interest too much on you don't blow out the fire of the flame. When you are through cooking, turn off the gas, you know, because there were so many accidents.

This is one thing – the only thing I remember is a little, beautiful plum and they had – even with gooseberries, it's like a grape but it's sour. Well, over here you'll see little gooseberries *[inaudible]* **[0:31:06]**. Over there they have gooseberries, the size of cherries. Beautiful fruits, and we haven't seen anything like that. Oh, we really did. One thing, I did my weights in those few weeks we were there.

Interviewer: This was in Belgium, right?

Mrs. Seltzer: This was in Belgium. Then we went to – one of us we went to through London I remember passing through it and seeing that double *[phonetic]* **[0:31:29]** blasts, oh, I was fascinated.

Interviewer: Okay. Remember the boat going from Europe to England?

Mrs. Seltzer: Oh, sure, at the school? Well, no. No, we didn't go to England by boat.

Interviewer: How did you get there? It's an island.

Mrs. Seltzer: I must have been asleep then my mother must have carried me because I don't remember. I only remember trains and busses. I don't remember being on a boat until we got to Liverpool and we went *[inaudible]* **[0:31:57]** several years ago. I don't remember the name of that Italian boat but this name was the Baltic, B-A-L-T-I-C, Baltic in Liverpool.

Interviewer: Is it a boat?

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes. Isn't that funny how some things just impressed *[inaudible]* **[0:32:12]**? And how sick I was in that boat. I couldn't even it.

Interviewer: Do you remember the kind of that boat? Was it passenger boat or a freight or...?

Mrs. Seltzer: Oh yes, it was different. Oh no, no, no, no. It was a passenger.

Interviewer: As I said a *[inaudible]* [0:32:24].

Mrs. Seltzer: No, it was a passenger boat and that should be we were in the steerage.

Interviewer: Yeah, all the way down.

Mrs. Seltzer: All the way down. And that's by August 6, first couple of days but after that I'm *[inaudible]* [0:32:33]. And I would steal my way up to the upper deck.

Interviewer: In steerage how did you manage to it?

Mrs. Seltzer: What do you mean?

Interviewer: In some boats they had to supply their own food.

Mrs. Seltzer: No, no. W were given food back in the 1921.

Interviewer: Yeah, so later the...

Mrs. Seltzer: Yeah, 1921.

Interviewer: Now where did you when you came in – how long it take you to get over here?

Mrs. Seltzer: I don't know if it was 12 or 14 days.

Interviewer: Yes. And you landed in New York or Philadelphia?

Mrs. Seltzer: Castle Garden. Do you know where that is? That's where the immigrants are examined.

Interviewer: In New York? Ellis Island?

Mrs. Seltzer: Ellis Island. Castle Garden, that's the name for it. Yeah ,we stayed there. And, oh, I haven't told you everything yet. You know, we have to everywhere we were. They have to examine us. Doctors have to examine us. When we came to Romania, guess what, they found that I had trachoma.

Interviewer: All right.

Mrs. Seltzer: And they operate on without these – and also *[inaudible]* **[0:33:41]** I remember like this – oh, just like what they say, big room and the people lined up. All the people that got on to operate on watched operations.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness. And you're still at your childhood.

Mrs. Seltzer: And it was, oh my god, it was primarily for soldiers.

Interviewer: In the hospital?

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, primarily for soldiers. And they operate on me and next thing they tied my eyes. And he said it would take three days to take the bandage out but I was afraid that dust would get into. So for weeks, I used to walk around with a blindfold *[inaudible]* **[0:34:23]**. And then every time the doctor examined I was afraid if they find something wrong with my eyes. Like, you know, one – good thing that the operation that I used to suffer with *[inaudible]* **[0:34:35]** I often used to cry in the morning, couldn't open my eyes. They get stuck together.

And after the operation I *[inaudible]* **[0:34:44]**, something would come over there after all. And another thing, you know, they didn't like long hair and I had – I have to fix it on. And my mother said *[inaudible]* **[0:34:57]**. So after where we went they had to examine my head to make sure that everything was clean. They have to cut my hair and I said no – long hair here.

[0:35:07]

Interviewer: You know, I've heard stories where people – they're inspecting people for lice. And it was always *[inaudible]* **[0:35:13]** if you didn't pass. It goes in the hair.

Mrs. Seltzer: I have a long hair. That's right. My mother used to wash my hair. I remember in Romania before we had to go to *[inaudible]* **[0:35:22]** we used to have a special *[inaudible]* **[0:35:22]** beauty parlor that's something in that sort where they – I don't have the lice I swear. Something to make sure that your hair – it almost squeezed about how can it gets lost.

Interviewer: Now when you landed Ellis Island, where did you go from there?

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, my dad was waiting and the – they detained us for three days so he couldn't wait, he had a store here so he came back here and he had cousins living in New York so they met us, and then he – and they took us to their house and in Brooklyn, Brownsville, yeah. And then my dad came and he took us home. And the funniest thing is...

Interviewer: ***[inaudible] [0:36:10].***

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, and this – his girl – those peasant girl married my brother after that.

Interviewer: In Brownsville.

Mrs. Seltzer: In Brownsville, yes.

Interviewer: Then you went to school here in Wilmington.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes.

Interviewer: Where did you guys school?

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, I went to school that is ***[phonetic] [0:36:27]*** no more. It was on the ***[phonetic] [0:36:30]*** Holland Suite. You know where that Catholic church is – St. Anthony's?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, they have a school attached to it. And that school was a public school Tom and I started to go.

Interviewer: What was the number, do you remember?

Mrs. Seltzer: I don't remember. The certain thing that I can't seem to remember are the number of that school.

Interviewer: And how old are you when you came to this country?

Mrs. Seltzer: I must have been close to seven by then because it took us about nine months to travel.

Interviewer: And you live above the store or did your father had...

Mrs. Seltzer: My dad had a store at hand – let me see he had a dining room kitchen below that have an apartment and two bedrooms upstairs. So we –my

brother used to sleep on that couch in the kitchen downstairs and I had the bedroom.

Interviewer: And this is a hardware store.

Mrs. Seltzer: A hardware store. There is a printing shop there now. I think *[phonetic]* **[0:37:24]** Belby's Printing Shop. And then...

Interviewer: How long was your father in that business?

Mrs. Seltzer: My father was in that business for about 15 years ago. But this building he used to rent and then he decide to build so direct for us to sleep.

Interviewer: Which building is this *[inaudible]* **[0:37:47]**.

Mrs. Seltzer: The hardware store, *[phonetic]* **[0:37:49]** 18 Union. So this building where we were, was 800 *[inaudible]* **[0:37:54]** street. but direct across the street 7020 or 720 or whatever something like that, 724, that's right. It was a lot. We support the lot and built house and store for us.

So we just *[inaudible]* **[0:38:11]** about four years – three years ago. And there was a dancing school there for awhile like just passed that today I see that it's for rent or sale or something.

Interviewer: It's an area that's growing somewhat *[inaudible]* **[0:38:28]**.

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes, it is. But I didn't know why they had an awful lot of empty stores everywhere. And, you know, when we moved there the Italian – primarily the Italian they *[inaudible]* **[0:38:43]** used to call it *[inaudible]* **[0:38:45]**. Well, the Italians too were new immigrant at that time have large families and remember the use – they probably used to work both male and bankrupt. And, you know, a man with eight or nine children used to make as little as 17 – \$16 a week.

Interviewer: What year is that?

Mrs. Seltzer: In 1922.

Interviewer: They may less than that.

Mrs. Seltzer: I imagined the size of family than the...

Interviewer: Now, did you go to high school?

Mrs. Seltzer: Oh sure.

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:39:16].**

Mrs. Seltzer: Yeah. And you know when I get to school of course I used to cry. I understand that. Here I was seven, seven and a half, I don't know – and the rest of the children were younger and they could speak and I couldn't understand what they were saying, you know?

And my name of those called Lisa at home. But I came here and I said Lisa, teach us and understand me so she makes Leah out of it. My Jewish name is Leah. That's all right. But I mean, as long as **[inaudible] [0:39:50]** didn't know what that means and look around **[inaudible] [0:39:53]**. And I used to cry. I just come home and cry because they had been older couldn't **[inaudible] [0:39:59]** don't – list of immigrants, you know, education.

[0:40:03]

But as a child, I couldn't. But then it's funny, my brother wanted to go to college so we got a tutor. Well, a tutor was a very stupid man. He didn't understand – I asked him if he could tutor me too. So he said, "No, actually I can't tutor you. You go to summer school."

So, after being a year here, I didn't speak too well. I mean, I could speak but I used to be **[inaudible] [0:40:32]** books how could I learn American language. Anyway, so, I went to high school at the summer time and they thought that I have to make up some work. I didn't – I would ever say – they didn't know what **[inaudible] [0:40:44]** anyway they put me into a classroom.

Primarily it was arithmetic. Well, this was – I thought I was good in arithmetic. So, at the end of the semester, you know – they were amazed. I did so well. I said – but knowing the – I could hardly understand some of the problems but I did so well. And the teacher recommended that...

Interviewer: This was high school now?

Mrs. Seltzer: No, this was – but it just – I don't know what it was. They had – student would have to make of different work. I don't remember – I didn't know the name of the teacher afterward, I didn't know anything. I know I went to school.

Interviewer: Did you work by the way while you went to school or you didn't work?

Mrs. Seltzer: I was about eight years old, nine years old, I have my father in the school, what would I do. I learned to sell.

Interviewer: You graduated from...

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes.

Interviewer: What did you go when you get married after...?

Mrs. Seltzer: By the way, let's see, I graduated 1926. And I got married 1929 **[inaudible] [0:41:58]**.

Interviewer: Your husband was from Wilmington?

Mrs. Seltzer: He comes from a little town at **[inaudible] [0:42:06]** between Russia and Poland. What's the name of the little town? **[inaudible] [0:42:11]**, a very famous robot comes from there. And he came to the state in 1921 also. We came in July and he came in February.

And his mother used to remember when my mother used to hold on my hand while we cross the street. She said, little did she know that I would become her daughter-in-law.

Interviewer: **[inaudible] [0:42:30]**.

Mrs. Seltzer: Oh, sure. You know, belong to the same synagogue **[inaudible] [0:42:36]**.

Interviewer: Have you been active in community **[inaudible] [0:42:39]**?

Mrs. Seltzer: Yes.

Interviewer: How about the temple?

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, I am still on the **[inaudible] [0:42:46]** board. And I'm very much interested in selling **[inaudible] [0:42:52]**.

Interviewer: And your husband, I mean, what has been his career?

Mrs. Seltzer: Well, he – when he came to in the state, you know, his father had prearranged for him and for his other brother that as long as he become a teacher and my husband he become **[inaudible] [0:43:13]**.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mrs. Seltzer: My husband can't – rather they kept his finger so he said good-bye to **[inaudible] [0:43:20]** and he went to New York to look for his fortune. So what did the – what to do, he spoke English a little bit. So, he walked and walked in the City of New York and he saw the children were selling handkerchief. So he went and bought handkerchief but he couldn't sell them. He didn't have right place at the right time, you know?

Then he had a cousin who had a fish – a wholesale fish market. So he went to work for him for awhile but the smell of the fish didn't agree with him. Then he had also a relative, I understand, that had probably garage, sell – after all agreeing my cousin comes from **[inaudible] [0:44:01]** to take care of people came into park, you know? So that was a college fellow.

So the college fellow – all this to tell him, you can have also Saturday and Sunday. Yeah, I'll do work for you. And **[inaudible] [0:44:15]**, you know, go to the library or go here, you know. He didn't know that that was the time that and he used to tip, you know? So he did have new tips.

So then his cousin has so many cars parked and my husband love this mathematics and history. And he looked and he said to him and I said **[inaudible] [0:44:36]** at that partition right. So he measure the parking lot, measure the side of the car and he drew the lines so they could parked twice as many cars.

So when he came and he told him, oh my gosh, it doubled his income so he gave him \$1 tip. My husband was so mad **[inaudible] [0:44:56]**. He says, what do you mean? Just when you're showing this – that's all my work is to you **[inaudible] [0:45:02]**.

[0:45:05]

Interviewer: Okay.

Mrs. Seltzer: And then he came here and that's when he get to take over the store from my brother-in-law who have taken **[inaudible] [0:45:11]** but he could go into – in the meantime he had been going to – oh, he had to take exams, that's right. Before going to university, he had to pass the high school exams.

So, he found out the requirements, you know, and he read all the requirements and everything and he took all the exams and passed every

one of them, everyone one of them and he started night school, law school. So...

Interviewer: Where is this?

Mrs. Seltzer: **[inaudible] [0:45:41]**. And then when he took this over I **[inaudible] [0:45:47]** sacrifice that year of his life, you know, but his brother said he wasn't coming back so that's the end of that.

Interviewer: And this is what kind of a business?

Mrs. Seltzer: It's wholesale leather and shoe findings. And it was a fine store and shoemakers but he left.

Interviewer: You noticed any big changes in Wilmington and how your childhood to now. I mean, you located here **[inaudible] [0:46:16]**.

Mrs. Seltzer: I don't recognize the city. I don't recognize it. Every one of those stores and those streets have changed, every one of those buildings. It used to have a market across here, chickens and whatnot. And they used to have a toy store of the street, Feinberg wasn't here. None of these stores were here before and as far as the city's health is concerned, oh, that goes large building is going up. Just beyond recognition.

Interviewer: Well, I want to thank you very much. I know we took more of your time.

[0:46:57] End of Audio