**Janet:** This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It’s August 6th 1994. I’m here in Rockville Center, New York with Manya Klein, who came from Poland in 1929 when she was 17 years old. I’m very happy to be here. I’m looking forward to hearing your story of coming to this country. Let’s start with your giving your birth date. Your birth date.

**Manya:** July 10th 1911.

**Janet:** Where were you born in Poland?

**Manya:** Bialystok.

**Janet:** Can you spell that?

**Manya:** B-I-A-L-Y-S-T-O-C-K, Bialystok, Poland.

**Janet:** Did you live in Bialystok up until the time you left for the United States?

**Manya:** Yes. In the interim, I lived other places.

**Janet:** You did? Let’s see. After you were born, how long did you live in Bialystok?

**Manya:** Until I was about 10, 11 years old. Then the civil war broke out between Poland and Russia. We were forced to leave Bialystok and go and stay with my grandmother and grandfather in a little tiny village called Colonia Isaaca.

**Janet:** Could you spell that one?

**Manya:** Colonia. Just …

**Janet:** C-O-L

**Manya:** O-N-I-A I-S-A-A-C-A. It was a village with one street.

**Janet:** Well good. Let’s talk about life in Bialystok first. Then we’ll talk about after you had to move to your grandparents. What do you remember? You were up to, you were 11 or 12. What do you remember about Bialystok?

**Manya:** Just normal with growing up being poor, not having the advantages of other children but healthy and happy.

**Janet:** Was Bialystok a big city?

**Manya:** Very big city, very cultural, very big city.

**Janet:** What was your father’s name?

**Manya:** Naftoli, N-A-F-T-O-L-I.

**Janet:** Your mother?

**Manya:** Rajzl, R-A-J-Z-L.

**Janet:** Do you remember your mother’s maiden name?

**Manya:** Asch, A-S-C-H.

**Janet:** You had how many brothers and sisters?

**Manya:** I had two brothers and one sister.

**Janet:** What were their names? The order of the way you …

**Manya:** The eldest brother was Max. My sister’s name is Eva. My youngest brother David.

**Janet:** You were after Eva and before David?

**Manya:** Yes right. I was the third one, yeah. Not very, I didn’t choose it, no. It’s not the [unclear 00:02:56] but I was loved.

**Janet:** Let’s see. Do you remember the house you lived in? Could you describe the house you lived in in Bialystok?

**Manya:** The last one I remember is Zamojska 10 is the address.

**Janet:** Zamojska?

**Manya:** Yeah. Z-A-M-O-J-S-K-A, number 10. It was just but a one and a half room. We all stayed together in the same room.

**Janet:** Do you remember what your mother cooked on or what?

**Manya:** Cooked? We didn’t have regular stuffs and all that but she cooked on something whenever she cooked.

**Janet:** How about like water, running water, electricity, that kind of thing? Was that [inaudible 00:03:48]?

**Manya:** No, we had oil lamps. Then later on, much later, electricity came on.

**Janet:** Were you a religious family?

**Manya:** In Bialystok? Whatever little religion my father brought in to the home. I don't remember going much to temple there. Just holidays, just during the holidays.

**Janet:** I see. What did your father do for a living?

**Manya:** He used to work in a place where they used to make silk from thread. He was like, what would you call it here? I don't know what you would call it here.

**Janet:** He …

**Manya:** A weaver.

**Janet:** A weaver?

**Manya:** Yeah, yeah. He was highly intellectual. To him, that was a means of living to earn the money. Most of his time he spent reading and watching concerts and music and things like that.

**Janet:** Do you remember any incidents that happened in Bialystok when you think back to your early life? Are there any memories that come to you about your early years there?

**Manya:** You mean as far as being treated by the government or things like that? Jewish people weren’t very welcome there. You know that. I couldn’t go to the choice school I wanted. I had to take second best. I don't remember them abusing me.

**Janet:** Friends who were Gentiles?

**Manya:** In my school, no. You weren’t permitted to be together with Gentiles. It was just a strictly Jewish school, only Jewish children. I did have Gentile friends outside, you know?

**Janet:** Uh-huh (affirmative). Do you remember what you and your friends did for fun? You played or what have you?

**Manya:** For fun? I was too young. It’s not like 17 now. They’re going wild, the 17-year-olds. Not very much, really not very much socially. After I came home, I used to do my homework and that was it. My first romance I had on the boat coming over here.

**Janet:** Oh good. We’ll get to that. Tell me now the circumstances under which, what your experience was that led the family to move to your grandparents?

**Manya:** Yes. To my grandparents? We had nothing to eat. That was early. We were young children. My grandparents had a farm. My mother used to go on the farm and pick up whatever she wanted, potatoes and string beans and green peas or whatever. She fed us this way.

**Janet:** Now, whose parents was this? Your mother’s?

**Manya:** My mother’s parents, yeah.

**Janet:** Did you know them? Did you spend time with them?

**Manya:** Yeah. We stayed there a couple of years. Then when everything quieted down, we moved back to Bialystok.

**Janet:** I see. What was life like on the farm? How is it different for you than it had been up till then?

**Manya:** I was walking around barefoot. I had no shoes. I remember they bought me a pair of shoes and I thought I didn’t want to spoil it. When I went to visit my grandfather or grandmother, I carried the shoes. I put them on just before I went to the house. That was stupid because my feet got to be bad.

**Janet:** That must have been during warm weather, right?

**Manya:** I wouldn’t walk in the street when it’s cold and snow, you know?

**Janet:** Uh-huh (affirmative). What was your grandmother like? How do you remember her?

**Manya:** Not to good advantage. She was a nice lady but a little selfish. My grandfather, he’s the one who welcomed us with open arms. He used to go and get milk from the cow and sneak it into me in the morning and with a piece of bread. Grandmother didn’t like it very much. She didn’t want us because she sold her farm things like butter and milk and cheese and that’s what she … The farm thrived on that money. He didn’t care because his first was to his children. She didn’t feel this way. They had a little friction. Then we moved out after that. My father came from Bialystok and took us back.

**Janet:** Now, you mentioned it was when Poland and Russia were fighting was when you … Did you see anything of that?

**Manya:** Yeah, yeah. I was only five years old. They used to take me to the trenches with them. I watched them shoot. I had no fear. I didn’t know what it was all about.

**Janet:** Really? Who would take you?

**Manya:** I’d walk with them.

**Janet:** With the soldiers?

**Manya:** Yeah. I remember once I was picking berries with a neighbor in the forest and I heard whistling. I said, “What’s going on?” I came home and my mother’s house was locked. She let me in. She said, “Don’t say a word. Come right in.”

There was a lot of fighting going on. We were locked in the house. A neighbor, they came in, the Polish people came in. They said, “Are there any Jewish in this town?” They said, “We have this one Jewish family.” He says, “We want them.” They put us all out there and want to shoot us. This Polish woman, God bless her soul wherever she is, she took us in and she hid us in her basement. For two months, we stayed there. Then war was over and we went back to Bialystok.

**Janet:** How old were you about? Were you about five years old then?

**Manya:** About then? Yeah, I was very little because if I had more brains, if I was older, I wouldn’t go to watch them shoot, you know?

**Janet:** Yeah. Do you recall those two months when you were being hidden by the Polish woman?

**Manya:** Yeah, I remember that. I remember. My sister had light hair and my little brother had light hair. They looked like Arians. They were walking around. Just my mother and I were hidden.

**Janet:** Wow. Then who brought you food? The woman who?

**Manya:** The woman yeah. Over there in Poland, the oldest son becomes master of the house. He wanted us out but she says, “Then you have to kill me first.” This lovely lady saved our lives.

**Janet:** Do you remember her name?

**Manya:** No. No. I wish I did. Yeah, I wish I did. It’s such a long time. It’s over 60 years, you know?

**Janet:** Yeah, wow. That was when you were five. Then when you were 11 or 12, again, there was fighting?

**Manya:** My mother was dressmaker. She worked. She supported us. We didn’t have to depend on my grandparents anymore. In fact, we moved out to a different village. Then my father came and said, “That’s enough. You’re going home.” Then we all came home. We took along our cow.

**Janet:** Really? From your grandparents?

**Manya:** Yeah, yeah. We had our own cow. We took it to Bialystok. That’s a big city. We had to find quarters for her where to stay.

**Janet:** Where did you put her?

**Manya:** Somebody had a barn and they let us keep the cow there. We had milk for a long time. I don't know, later on disposed of her when she got old but we took our own cow with us.

**Janet:** Wow. Was the cow like a pet to you or it was mainly just to get the milk?

**Manya:** To get the milk. We loved her. In fact, the Polish came and they took away the cow. They took it away from us. Then my mother came back and pleaded with them that she needed to support the children with it, the milk. They took her to the field and the cow saw my mother and she says, “Mow.” That was funny. The cow recognized my mother.

**Janet:** Did you have a name for this cow?

**Manya:** We must have but I don’t remember. I don’t. There are a lot of things that are blank. You know?

**Janet:** Yeah. Did you have to help with any chores around the house?

**Manya:** There wasn’t very much to do because we had one man room and everybody was in it. Everybody chipped in a little bit. I do remember my mother baked. She baked a lot of bread so we should have what to eat for the winter. She hid it in the attic among the straw and nobody should find it. When the soldiers came, not only they took the bread, they bread their horses into our room to store them there. They took all the bread away.

**Janet:** What kind of bread was it? Do you remember?

**Manya:** A black bread. Black, yeah. It wasn’t very tasty but it’s better than nothing.

**Janet:** Yeah right. Do you remember any other dishes that your mother cooked? Anything that you maybe carry on as a?

**Manya:** In Bialystok, yes when we came back. I remember those dishes but at the farm, she hardly made anything worthwhile. The only worthwhile meal my grandmother used to make and once in a while she’d invite us. She didn’t want us to stay with her but she was nice when we came to visit.

**Janet:** I see. What dishes do you remember that your mother made in Bialystok or that your grandmother?

**Manya:** She make Gefilte fish. Everybody knows that. That’s a real Jewish, it stands out, stuffed cabbage, chicken soup, penicillin. My mother was a very good cook. No, not extra but fairly good.

**Janet:** Did your father come to the United States before the rest of the family?

**Manya:** Yes, my father and my oldest brother, yeah. They came in 1921.

**Janet:** I see. Do you recall what they said about why your father and brother were moving? Do you remember their feelings about it or?

**Manya:** My mother was the one who instigated that. She says, “There’s no way we can survive in Poland. One day it’s going to be bad.” She had the premonition like if we stayed another 10 years, Hitler came. She had a vision that we should leave. Then she had two brothers in this country. She wrote to them and begged them to please get us over there. There was a quarter you couldn’t come. First, they brought my father and my brother. My father had to work here for seven years to become a citizen and show the government that when he brings his family, he can support them. Then seven years later we came.

**Janet:** What was your father doing here for those seven years he was working?

**Manya:** My mother’s brothers had a shop that made coats and things like that. They took him in. He was learning and helping out.

**Janet:** He was sewing?

**Manya:** Yeah, a little bit. He was helping out in the shop with all kind of chores.

**Janet:** I see.

**Manya:** He wasn’t proud. As long as he can support his family. As long as he can support his family.

**Janet:** What was his temperament like, your father’s?

**Manya:** My father was a very quiet, gentle soul. He was good. He used to have for lunch a cup of soup and a roll. The rest of the money, he sent to Federation for Jewish Charities. Give his money away, send money to a nephew in Israel. To him, life was giving, not taking. He was just wonderful, wonderful person. I carry him in my heart always. Whenever I’m in any trouble, I know Papa is not going to let anything happen to me.

**Janet:** That’s lovely. Do you remember any experiences with your father as a little girl in Poland? Any places you went with him?

**Manya:** No, not really because he was in the war for a while. I didn’t see him and then he was home. He used to work and come home a bit tired. No place. When I came to this country, I was too big already, you know?

**Janet:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Manya:** We established a relationship. I always loved him but then I was a 17, 18 I already was going out with boys, you know?

**Janet:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Manya:** We came much close together when I got married and had my children. He used to come and babysit for me and let me and my husband go out to a movie or something. He always did that.

**Janet:** Let’s see. Then was he sending money to your mother when he was here?

**Manya:** Yes, for seven years. Then we lived well. We had oranges. We had grapes. We had all the good things. Yeah, yeah.

**Janet:** You were back in Bialystok then?

**Manya:** Yes.

**Janet:** As a Jewish girl, did you have any anti-Semitic kinds of incidences?

**Manya:** There was. There was in Bialystok but I personally never suffered any except that as I say, I couldn’t go to a certain that I wanted to go. Otherwise, I was treated pretty well.

**Janet:** Were you friendly in general with the Polish people, the Gentiles?

**Manya:** Oh yes. Yes, yes. We had no problems.

**Janet:** Then what happened? Did your father send you a ticket or?

**Manya:** No, not after seven years. We got tickets. We had to get a visa. Go to Warsaw. It was a lot of paperwork. Then the four of us came. I remember sitting in Ellis Island on the same bench I just sat a couple of months ago. I found the same spot. I was sitting there. Then I saw the stairway coming down and a tall man coming down. I says, “That’s my Papa.” He came down to get us.

**Janet:** Tell me first about, you went to Warsaw, you got the papers. Then did you go back to Bialystok?

**Manya:** Yes, yes. You had to stay and wait until they say you’re ready to go. Then the trip was horrible.

**Janet:** Do you remember packing up?

**Manya:** Yeah. We didn’t have very much to pack.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything you or your mother took?

**Manya:** Just bare essentials. Nothing that we had. We didn’t have any furniture to take. We couldn’t take it to America. Yeah, we did have one thing that was very pathetic. We had a dog and we had to leave him behind. There’s no one to take him. My youngest brother, that was his dog. He cried so much when he left him. That was it. We couldn’t take him along. You weren’t allowed to take pets.

**Janet:** When you left Bialystok, what mode of transportation? What did you take to get to the port?

**Manya:** A train to Warsaw. Then from Warsaw, we went to a port in France.

**Janet:** Le Havre?

**Manya:** Le Havre, right. From Le Havre, we went to Rochambeau and that took three weeks to get here, three weeks. We were in steerage. I remember being deathly sick the whole voyage, throwing up all the time.

**Janet:** Why did it take three weeks? That is a long time.

**Manya:** That’s how long it took those days. Unless you went on a ship that’s better ship and better accommodations and all that.

**Janet:** The Rochambeau, could you describe that ship?

**Manya:** I saw very little of it except that we were down below and it’s horrible. Once in a while we’ll go up on the deck. I’d see all the ladies dressed up. I was so jealous. That’s about it. We weren’t allowed to mingle with them.

**Janet:** Did people play music or was there any [inaudible 00:19:46]?

**Manya:** Yeah, for the first and second class. Yeah, but not for us. We didn’t have anything. I did meet a young man on the boat. I met him in Warsaw. He came from the town called Drohobych.

**Janet:** Could you spell it?

**Manya:** D-R-O-H-O-B-Y-C-H. Two families, we are talking to each other. He took my address and he corresponded. We decided to go to America at the same time. We met in Le Havre and there the romance blossomed. Then when I came to this country, I saw him.

**Janet:** On the ship you spent time together?

**Manya:** With him, all the time yeah. We talked about our future and about our dreams. He sang to me in German songs. It was nice. It was a little interlude. We came to this country. I learned to speak English right away. It took him longer. He just didn’t acclimate himself to the American way of life. One day I walked in the streets to buy something and he was walking with another young man and introduced me to him. That was to become my husband later on. Through him, I met my husband.

**Janet:** When you were on board ship and you were discussing your dreams and aspirations, do you know what they were? What did you hope for then?

**Manya:** Hopefully America opens up new world, new dreams, falling in love and having a good time. Tell you what, at 17, you have all kind of dreams, you know?

**Janet:** Uh-huh (affirmative). Do you remember your feelings about coming here? How you felt?

**Manya:** Very excited. When I saw the Statue of Liberty, I bust out in tears.

**Janet:** You had heard about it so you knew?

**Manya:** Oh sure, sure.

**Janet:** What were other people doing?

**Manya:** Everybody was applauding and elated. Of course they gave us a hard time. They feel that people coming out of Poland aren’t as clean as America wants you to be. Every place we stopped, they quarantined us. They have to wash your hair all the time, and take baths and showers. They treated you like cattle.

**Janet:** You mean where you stopped en route?

**Manya:** Yeah.

**Janet:** You had several stops before you got to New York?

**Manya:** Right. They used to stop just to clean people, clean them off.

**Janet:** Really?

**Manya:** Then of course you had to be in perfect health to get in here. There were doctors.

**Janet:** When you got to Ellis Island and what was that like for you?

**Manya:** Yeah, over there doctors, every part of you was gone over. Your eyes and your head and your body, and God forbid if you weren’t well, they sent you back. That’s something to pray for. Then they keep you there for a couple of days to make sure that everything is already. Then they let your relatives know that you’re here. They come and bail you out.

**Janet:** Was your mother or your brother or sister, was there any possibility that there was something wrong with them?

**Manya:** No, we were worried about my mother. That maybe she wouldn’t pass. She was a little bit sickly. She was all right. Basically, she was all right. She wasn’t too strong but she was all right.

**Janet:** I actually meant to ask you a question about sickness and illness in Poland. Do you remember any sickness or illness in your family or friends and how it was treated when you were a girl in Poland?

**Manya:** I don't remember being sick. Really, I don't remember. My little brother I remember David, he had water in his lungs. I remember Papa taking him to the doctor and carrying him back. There was no transportation, no taxis or anything. I remember my little brother crying. “If you love me why do you let them do it to me?” They didn’t even have anesthesia or anything. They just stuck a needle to get the water out. He was very sick. I remember that. I was jealous that he was sick and he had oranges and grape fruits, and grapes and I couldn’t have any because I was well. That I remember.

**Janet:** Were there regular doctors there or was it more like folk medicine or some other kinds of medicine?

**Manya:** I honestly don’t remember going to a doctor ever. I don’t remember. I guess I was well, didn’t have to. Don’t look for trouble if there’s no trouble there.

**Janet:** When your brother had the water in his lungs, did he go to a hospital?

**Manya:** I think it was a private doctor. I don't remember being in a hospital. Thank God he was all right.

**Janet:** This is the brother who had the dog?

**Manya:** Yeah. That was my youngest brother. Since, he’s gone. I lost him.

**Janet:** Do you remember the dog’s name?

**Manya:** Mucyk

**Janet:** Mucyk.

**Manya:** Yeah, M-U-C-Y-K. He was a lovely dog. A white dog with brown spots.

**Janet:** Let’s now talk about when you first saw Ellis Island, what did it look like? Can you describe what it looked like?

**Manya:** I remember benches and benches that’s all I remember. It was glam looking. It wasn’t like it’s now. To me, it was paradise.

**Janet:** Do you remember then the reunion with your father? Would you describe that?

**Manya:** As I said, so I’m coming down the steps and we all started crying. Papa didn’t recognize us. Seven is a big difference. Like my little brother was, he left he was six and he was 13. Of course kissing and hugging. He was delighted to have his family back.

**Janet:** What was your mother’s attitude about … She wanted to come. Is that right?

**Manya:** She’s the one who wanted to come. My father didn’t want to come. She made him. She says, “If you don’t go, I’ll go and you stay with the children.” He didn’t want that so he went.

**Janet:** How did your father like it once he was here?

**Manya:** He worked hard. He liked it. There was that time a place called Lewisohn Stadium. They used to give concerts free at night. Papa used to be there at every concert. He couldn’t afford a seat but he used to sit on the stone there they provided for people who couldn’t afford but he was there for every concert because to him music was his life. That was a big plus in his in this country. Of course he took care of my brother. My brother went to school and became a CPA.

**Janet:** This is your older brother?

**Manya:** Yeah, the older, Max, yeah. He’s gone too. That was it.

**Janet:** Now, where did you settle in New York?

**Manya:** We were on Vise Avenue in the Bronx. I went there many years ago because I wanted, when I came here I was a young girl. I became a citizen, a naturalized citizen on my father’s papers. Later on in life I wanted to have my own citizenship papers. I went to the Bronx. I hardly found the house because Bronx is completely demolished, all the windows are closed. I found the place where we lived. I think it was 536 Vise Avenue.

**Janet:** V-I?

**Manya:** V-I-S-E, Vise Avenue. It’s still there. It’s still there.

**Janet:** These concerts that your father went to, were they in Bronx, do you know?

**Manya:** No, no. they were in Manhattan.

**Janet:** In Manhattan?

**Manya:** Yeah, yeah.

**Janet:** Did your father play a musical instrument?

**Manya:** No, but he sang. I know I remember him singing. He had a beautiful voice. He didn’t give this voice to any of his children. None of us could take pride in that.

**Janet:** What language was he singing in?

**Manya:** Polish and Hebrew, Yiddish.

**Janet:** Let’s see. Were there any attitudes or values, ideas that your mother or father had that they tried to instill in you that you can think of?

**Manya:** My father was the one to instill that, “You should be good and do a lot of charity work.” He used to say to me that, “You only pass this way but once. Whatever good you do, do it now.” I remember that.

**Janet:** Did you know his mother and father at all?

**Manya:** Briefly. Just briefly during the war. I remember mostly through pictures. I remember his mother when we were in the farm with my grandparents, these were days where nobody had anything to eat. She came. She was wandering from one place to the other. I recognized her. “That’s our grandmother.” She came and wanted, the people could help her out with money or something too. It was very sad.

**Janet:** Your one set of grandparents helped?

**Manya:** No. No, my grandmother didn’t even know this one. It’s not like here where you’re close together. She came. I think we helped her out a little bit and she went on her way. I don't know where she went. I was a child, I didn’t know anything.

**Janet:** I wonder where your father got such a strong attitude about charity and giving.

**Manya:** Reading. His, I remember at his funeral, the man who spoke didn’t know my father. He just spoke like anybody else. One man got up. He says, “This man doesn’t know Naftoli like I do.” He says, “This man had a big library.” He says, “Papa used to come every week and take a couple of books, read them and bring them back.” The man broke down and cried. He says, “Who is going to read my books now?” When he went over and spoke about my father. He was well-read. He knew every opera, could sing every opera, every area. He was quite a man.

**Janet:** You settled on Vise Avenue. Then you finished school in this country?

**Manya:** Yes, I finished high school. I went just about two years to college at night.

**Janet:** What was the high school like compared with the gymnasium that you had attended in Poland?

**Manya:** It’s different. First of all, it’s big, a lot of students there were, the class was like I said small classes. It was big of course. I didn’t participate in everything. I was a foreign girl. When I came in, at first, I didn’t know what they were talking about. I speak a little French. That got me through. I was there only for one year. It was Boston high school, Maurice High School.

**Janet:** Maurice High School?

**Manya:** Yeah.

**Janet:** Can you think of any incidence in your learning English that either helped you? Do you remember?

**Manya:** Yeah. I used to a, they used to call it clinics to learn English. They used to cater to foreign students. I picked that up. I’m a linguist. I like languages because I remember when I took my region’s exam at this high school, it was 50% for the composition and I got 48 out of 50. For a foreign girl, that was the ultimate.

**Janet:** Tell me about the clinics. I hadn’t heard that before. When were they held and how often?

**Manya:** They were just private, private places they used to, like people who were doing charity work or do, they have nothing to do there so they appointed themselves to be teachers.

**Janet:** Volunteers?

**Manya:** Yeah. They help out. Whatever little bit I picked up was better than nothing. It helped me.

**Janet:** It’s like having a tutor while you were taking high school?

**Manya:** Right, right. Right yeah.

**Janet:** Were there a lot of immigrant children in your high school class [inaudible 00:31:56]?

**Manya:** Not so many, no. There were a lot of adults learning the English, adult people.

**Janet:** In the high school?

**Manya:** No, no, in the clinics.

**Janet:** In the clinics?

**Manya:** Yeah.

**Janet:** I see. I see. How about your mother and father, did they take to learn English at that point in their lives?

**Manya:** They spoke English. Papa a little bit better than my mother because he was here longer. My mother spoke a broken English but it helped her. It helped her too.

**Janet:** Was the attitude of your mother and father to become Americanized or did they try to hold on to customs or ways from the old country?

**Manya:** No, they were pretty good. They were pretty good. They Americanized pretty fast. My mother liked to live and go out places and my father didn’t. That was a little bit of a block in their marriage. To him going out was to come and stay with my children so I can go out.

**Janet:** I see.

**Manya:** My mother would rather that I get somebody else to stay with the children. She’d like to come along with us and with my father and all. She liked to live.

**Janet:** Did she go to concerts too?

**Manya:** No.

**Janet:** That was not something that she was interested in?

**Manya:** That was not her forte no. No.

**Janet:** When you first came to this country, do you remember any things that struck you particularly as new or different than, probably everything did but is there anything that stands out in your mind?

**Manya:** I wanted to go shopping and get myself nice slit dress to go out. Then shortly, I fell in love with this young man that I met through my friend from the boat.

**Janet:** You were just walking down the street and you saw the man you had met on the boat with a friend?

**Manya:** Right. He introduced me. The next day the other fellow called me. It was really funny. I went out with him for six years because he was in college and I was still in high school. I had to wait until he graduates. He became a CPA later on. I became an accountant. After six years we got married.

**Janet:** Did I ask you this? The name the person you met on the boat?

**Manya:** Maurice.

**Janet:** Maurice? How about your husband’s name?

**Manya:** His name was Adolf.

**Janet:** Adolf Klein?

**Manya:** Adolf Haas.

**Janet:** Haas?

**Manya:** I was married twice.

**Janet:** Okay. H-A-AS?

**Manya:** Right.

**Janet:** What was it that you liked about Adolf Haas?

**Manya:** He was first of all, very good looking, charming, a good lover, knew how to treat a girl. I just liked everything about him. I knew there was no future right away but I waited.

**Janet:** Were you working then at that time?

**Manya:** I was working. I had decided that I’m not going to finish college because I got a wonderful position in a bank, Sterling National Bank 1410 Broadway. I worked there until I got married. Two years after I got married, I became pregnant and I stopped.

**Janet:** Now, was your husband, was he born here or was he [inaudible 00:35:14]?

**Manya:** No, no. He was also from, that’s why he knew the other fellow. Both are from Poland, came practically the same time to this country.

**Janet:** Where was he from in Poland?

**Manya:** Bzedgany.

**Janet:** Could you spell it?

**Manya:** I’ll try, Bzedgany, B-Z-E-D-G-A-N-Y Bzedgany. It’s near Drohobych, near the one that the other man came from. Young man. They knew each other from Poland. That was like they met here again.

**Janet:** Then how many children did you have?

**Manya:** Three.

**Janet:** Their names?

**Manya:** Mel, Melvin. Now he’s a doctor. He’s practicing in Georgia. The next one is Sandy, a daughter. She’s by profession a teacher. She’s raising her family. She’s a grandmother now. She’s a very young grandmother. She has two grandchildren. My youngest one is David. He’s a federal bank examiner for the FDIC. David just got married a little while ago.

**Janet:** What is Sandy’s married name?

**Manya:** Silverstein.

**Janet:** You have grandchildren?

**Manya:** I have five grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

**Janet:** Wonderful. Looking back starting out in Poland and coming here when you were 17, what effect do you think it had on your whole life here? The fact that you had started out in another country?

**Manya:** In a way it gave me a little upper hand on girls who were born here because I could speak several languages. That enhanced my life a little bit. Something cultural that you bring back with you from abroad when you come here but that would change.

**Janet:** Is there anything that, what would you say you were most proud of having done in your life?

**Manya:** In life? I’ll take you into my den and you’ll judge for yourself. I have every award you can want to dream of getting. I worked for every organization. A couple of years ago, I was given a testimonial dinner. I had 500 people give me a standing ovation. I was chosen the woman of the year. If you go in the den you’ll see all the awards that I got. I really didn’t waste my life. I worked for others. I worked for myself. My family comes first but I give of myself.

**Janet:** This was your father’s influence on that?

**Manya:** Yeah. Right, right. In fact you can send me a letter. Just address it to Manya without my second name, I’ll get it because everybody in town knows me.

**Janet:** That must mean, when you were first married, where were you settled? Where did you live?

**Manya:** In the Bronx, where I came from 1311 Grant Avenue I remember apartment on the third floor, walk up. I stayed there for a few years. Then I became pregnant. I found a partner [unclear 00:38:31] the floor. I raised my children in the Bronx.

**Janet:** How is these days of your life? This time now? Let’s see, you were born in?

**Manya:** I failed to tell you that I didn’t raise my children in Bronx. My children were 11, seven and three, nearly three, I moved right here to this house. I’m in this house since 1950.

**Janet:** I see. This is where you did all your charity work and everything?

**Manya:** Right. Right, right. When the children were bigger then I knew that I had more time to give. That’s what I did.

**Janet:** You must be what? 82?

**Manya:** I’m 82.

**Janet:** 82?

**Manya:** I don’t look it, do I?

**Janet:** No, you don’t. You don’t. How is this phase of your life?

**Manya:** I was married once again. I don't know if I failed to tell you that.

**Janet:** When was that?

**Manya:** 1970. I lost my husband 1968. He had a heart attack. I was a widow only for two years. I met this Mr. Klein. He was a bachelor. He was never married. For the first time in his life, he realized that he missed so much and he wanted to get married and have someone close to him. Two years later, we were … Not two years later, what am I talking about? I met him in August and we were married in January, six months. I was married to him for close to 14 years. Then he passed away.

**Janet:** I see.

**Manya:** I’m along now since both, he died about 11 years ago. I may be alone but I’m not lonely. I live in this beautiful house. My children have a place to come and visit. My grandchildren come to visit. Last Sunday my grandson came to take me to brunch. He was in New York. He just passed his graduate in law school and he took his bar. He came to celebrate. He’s the one that has the two children.

I’m very close to my children and grandchildren, very close. We talk to each other every day no matter where we are. I date and I go out and I go to dances. In fact I’m on the way to the beauty parlor. My hair looks a mess. I had an accident with my car so I don’t have a car. I just bought one yesterday. My neighbors, one neighbor is taking me to the beauty parlor, the other one is going to pick me up. I have a date tonight to go out. We’ll go dancing. I have a nice life.

**Janet:** Wonderful, wonderful.

**Manya:** I don’t want to move. Where am I going to go? Here, I have my roots. Everybody knows me. It’s beautiful here. I have wonderful neighbors. They all watch out for me. I don’t want to move any place.

**Janet:** Can you think about what life might have been like had you not left Poland?

**Manya:** First of all, I would have been poor to the very day. Then 1939 that would have been the end of it. Hitler came into Poland and that’s it. Really, because of my mother’s vision and because of the generosity of my uncles who brought my father and brother, I’m here.

**Janet:** That may be a good place to stop or is there anything else you would like to say? [inaudible 00:41:49].

**Manya:** I think it’s wonderful that I had a chance to describe everything to you and relive my life. It’s just really, I feel very chosen.

**Janet:** Welcome. I appreciate you doing it. It’s a pleasure to talk with you. Now, your tape will be part of the Ellis Island Oral History collection.

**Manya:**  That’s wonderful. I’m really proud.

**Janet:**  Wonderful.

**Manya:**  I’m a celebrity.

**Janet:** Celebrity, that’s right. Okay, I’ve been speaking …

**Manya:** Would you want to have this to put in your annual or whatever it is because I have copies of it.

**Janet:** Okay, let me sign off on the tape and then we’ll talk about that.

**Manya:** Okay.

**Janet:** I’ve been speaking with Manya Klein who came over here as Manya Wigodsky in 1929 when she was 17 years old. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service on August 6th 1994. I’m signing off.