**Paul:** Good afternoon this is Paul Seacrest for the National Park Service. Today is Friday May 19th 1995. I’m at the Ellis Island recording studio with Frieda Mark. Mrs. Mark came from Germany via Israel. She arrived in New York from Israel in May of 1952. She was 32 when she arrived in New York.

Mrs. Mark, thank you for coming in. Can we begin by you giving me your birth date please?

**Frieda:** My birth date is June 6, 1920.

**Paul:** You were born in Germany?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Were in Germany were you born?

**Frieda:** In a small town in Bavaria. The name of the town is Furth, F-U-R-T-H.

**Paul:** Can you tell me a little bit about that town?

**Frieda:** It’s a very small town near Nuremberg. I grew up in the town and went to school there. My parents and I had a brother and a younger sister. It was just small place and then the Nazis started to march.

**Paul:** In your early childhood is there a building that sticks out in your mind from that town?

**Frieda:** Yes, it has a very interesting style, what’s it called? The city hall has a large tower and is a very beautiful building. I was in the private school here. My parents were religious and I really was never in a public school, it was a private school. I did not go very long to school but what I learnt was excellent, excellent education for the few years I was there.

**Paul:** I should say for the sake of the tape that the rustling you may be hearing is your coat. You’re wrapping your hands in your coat because it’s chilly in here and the microphone will probably pick that up, so anyone listening to this tape should be aware of that. What was your father’s name?

**Frieda:** Max, M-A-X. The family name was Zysplatt, Z-Y-S-P-L-A-T-T

**Paul:** Can you tell me a little bit about your father’s family background?

**Frieda:** My parents crossed into Germany from Poland during World War 1. I think at this time Poland was occupied by Germany, times were very bad. They crossed over to Germany and settled in this town Furth, near Nuremberg and was hard times.

**Paul:** Do you know how your parents met?

**Frieda:** Yes. It’s a long story.

**Paul:** Could you just give us a short version?

**Frieda:** They met in Poland, very two young people and it was before World War 1. They met and after some time they got married and decided to go to Germany.

**Paul:** What did your father do for a living in Germany?

**Frieda:** My father had a small business where he was selling toys, pots, pans and combs. He was travelling around and was selling it.

**Paul:** What was your father’s personality like?

**Frieda:** My father was a wonderful man, very friendly and very helpful to the people. My mother was strict, very strict.

**Paul:** Is there a story that you like to tell about your father from your early childhood?

**Frieda:** He travelled a lot around and was gone and sometimes my mother joined him. There was a family and they took care of me when they were out of town. They were wonderful people.

**Paul:** What was your mother’s name?

**Frieda:** Esther.

**Paul:** Her maiden name?

**Frieda:** Family.

**Paul:** Family was her maiden name?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Could you just spell it for us for the sake of the tape?

**Frieda:** It was F-A-M-I-L-I-A, I think it’s correct.

**Paul:** What do you know about your mother’s family background?

**Frieda:** There I have a good story. My mother’s grandparents were very religious. In this time a boy and a girl were not allowed to see each other before the wedding, all their marriages were arranged. My grandmother must have been a very pretty girl and stubborn. She said she’s not going to marry anybody unless she sees the man, she has to see it but that was against the religion.

I think they had an in-between somebody who arranged the marriage. She put her in a room in front of a big mirror. She was looking in the mirror and behind her came in the groom. That’s how they were allowed to see each other, only through the mirror. They got married. It must be over100 years ago. They had 14 children together.

**Paul:** Your mother’s parents would have been their children, one of - Your mother’s?

**Frieda:** My mother had a lot of brothers and sisters. When they grew up most of them immigrated to America. When I came here I found here a big family which I have never met before and didn’t really know that they live here. Their name was also Family and I think they spell it now the American way.

**Paul:** That is the Americanized version of the name Family.

**Frieda:** Yes. There are several families here by this name but I never knew them. Now they are already the children and grandchildren because my mother would have been way over 100 years old and my father.

**Paul:** You mentioned that your mother was the strict one in the family.

**Frieda:** Yes she was very strict.

**Paul:** Is there a story you can tell me about an example of your mother’s strictness while you were growing up.

**Frieda:** I always had to help with the house work, the kitchen work and doing the windows. I better to do it and I did. I was mad because my brother never had to do anything because the boys don’t have housework, only the girls.

**Paul:** You mentioned that you have brothers and sisters.

**Frieda:** One brother.

**Paul:** What is his name?

**Frieda:** He passed away. His name was Isaac.

**Paul:** Can you tell me, do you have an incident that stands out in your mind about an experience you shared with your brother as children?

**Frieda:** No, he went his away and I was always mad at him.

**Paul:** Was he older than you?

**Frieda:** Yes, he was older and then I have a sister, she lives in Israel now and she’s eight and a half years younger.

**Paul:** Was she born in Germany?

**Frieda:** Yes, she was born in Germany in 1928.

**Paul:** Her name?

**Frieda:** Zelma.

**Paul:** 1928?

**Frieda:** ‘28, she was born yes.

**Paul:** What religion was the family?

**Frieda:** Jewish.

**Paul:** Can you talk to me a little bit about the Jewish community in your town.

**Frieda:** It was a very religious town and very religious people which believed in their religion. As I told you we went to a private school which was a Jewish school. It was one of the few towns in Germany which also had a Jewish orphanage.

Children there from all over Germany in that orphanage. I had friends there so I visited very often, that orphanage. It’s still standing and it’s now a religious center, a Jewish center and a synagogue.

**Paul:** How did your family practice their religion at home?

**Frieda:** My father led all the prayers. On Friday my mother was having the Sabbath lights. We had always the service -In my father went to synagogue. Then my mother had to decide for supper the food which she made. She made her own bread and her own noodles. We said the prayers. We were not allowed to touch the light or make a fire. It was always dark and I never liked it.

**Paul:** Is there a prayer that you remember from your childhood learning?

**Frieda:** There are many prayers.

**Paul:** Is there one that you could say for us in …?

**Frieda:** You said the prayer for the bread and the prayer for the wine.

**Paul:** What language would you …?

**Frieda:** It was in Hebrew.

**Paul:** Could you say the prayer for the bread in Hebrew for us.

**Frieda:** [Foreign language 00:10:39].

**Paul:** Thank you. You mentioned school, how old were you when you started school?

**Frieda:** I was about six, six and a half years.

**Paul:** You mentioned that you’re going to school was cut short that you had …

**Frieda:** It was cut short because I have seven years of schooling. We had in this school one world famous student and that was Henry Kissinger, he went to the same school.

Here in New York there is a lot of people which are together. They have a club from people which come from that school. We had a convention about five years ago where I met people I haven’t seen long time.

**Paul:** What was the name of the school?

**Frieda:** Jewish [foreign language 00:11:47].

**Paul:** Can you spell all that?

**Frieda:** Yes I can and then when Hitler and the Jewish children were expelled from the public schools. Also from Nuremberg and from the surrounding cities they came to that school but we were already gone at the time, we were already in Israel.

**Paul:** Can you tell me a little bit about what you remember about Nazis beginning to take over.

**Frieda:** I remember, it must have been ‘32, ‘33 that they were matching in the streets and boycotting Jewish stores. Personally I have never seen bad things, they were screaming in every -They had the signs, ‘Do not buy for Jews and boycott Jewish stores.’ We all left in 1934.

**Paul:** When you were growing up in this town what do you remember about the relationship between the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community?

**Frieda:** I had friends which lived in the same building where we lived. There was one girl, her name was Emma Reitsome, I still remember her full name. Her father was a communist. I remember when the Nazis came in 1932, ‘33 and took him to a concentration camp. Her mother was left alone with two children.

Then I had girls in the street which did not go to my school but we were friends. When the Nazis came, they broke off with me. They stopped talking to me and pretended not to see me anymore.

**Paul:** Did your father’s business change in any way when this happened?

**Frieda:** He just closed it and left. My father left a year ahead of us, in 1933 he left Germany.

**Paul:** Who’s decision was it to leave Germany?

**Frieda:** My father, my mother didn’t want it. My father wanted to leave because he said he remembers the times from Poland and he does not want to stay in Germany. He went ahead, then it was Palestine. I remember my mother was selling all the furniture and giving away what we had and packed everything and left.

**Paul:** How did you personally feel about leaving your home?

**Frieda:** I was a young girl, 13, 14 years old, I cried. I have one thing I remember, the brothers which my mother had in America I know they helped her, they sent her money. Because one day she took me in the entrance, we had linoleum on the floor and she said, “Frieda I’m going to show you something, don’t tell anybody but you have to know.”

She lifted this linoleum and underneath were dollar bills. I have no idea how much it was. She said she got it from her brother and we have to hide it till she leaves and I’m not allowed to tell anybody. Although she hasn’t seen her brothers in 20 years or more, I don’t know, they still were thinking about her.

**Paul:** That was how she kept things running while your father was away she had money?

**Frieda:** I think she got also help from the Jewish community in that town. It was very little because on the weekend there was hardly any money left. We talked if we can have this for Saturday or not, if we have enough money or not.

**Paul:** Your father was gone a year before the rest of the family?

**Frieda:** A year before yeah. Then the family followed to Israel.

**Paul:** Can you tell me how you got to Israel from Germany?

**Frieda:** My brother, my mother and my sister we stayed with a Jewish family about a week when my mother sold all her belongings. Then certain things were packed. I still have certain pieces from Germany.

**Paul:** What do you remember specifically taking with you to Israel?

**Frieda:** My mother had beautiful silver candlesticks, she took. Some plates she took and her pots and pans and all her feather beds, she wouldn’t leave this out, the feather bed. It was all packed and sent along. Including an old sewing machine which we still have in Israel, a German sewing machine. I would like to bring it over here but it’s so expensive to transport it.

**Paul:** I should say for the sake of the tape that, of course when you’re -You’re actually going to Palestine it wasn’t called Israel at that time …

**Frieda:** It was Palestine, yes.

**Paul:** That really even though we’re saying Israel we really mean Palestine.

**Frieda:** It was Palestine till 47.

**Paul:** You left the town, you sent on the belongings.

**Frieda:** My mother did. Somebody packed it and sent it.

**Paul:** What do you remember of the actual journey to get to Palestine?

**Frieda:** We were on a ship.

**Paul:** Where did you go to get the ship?

**Frieda:** From Germany we went by train to Italy. I remember as long as we were in Germany I was afraid to talk but the moment we crossed the border, it was like a load was taken off my head. Because I knew that now the Nazis cannot get you. We stayed in Italy a few days, I forgot, in a big place where people gave us a room. Then we had a ship called the Pilsnas.

**Paul:** Pilsner, P-I …

**Frieda:** Pilsnas, P-I-L-S-N-A-S, Pilsnas.

**Paul:** Pilsnas?

**Frieda:** Yeah, that was the name of the ship. It took over a week.

**Paul:** Does anything stick out in your mind about the ship?

**Frieda:** I had a lot of fun on the ship. There was music, people were dancing and we were watching. It was kosher food I remember. Our family had a room there, my brother, we had four beds.

**Paul:** What is your mother’s attitude about going to Palestine?

**Frieda:** My mother did not want to go to Palestine. She wanted to go to Poland because in Poland she had a lot of family. She said, “What is she going to do in the desert?” My father said, no he’s not going to Poland. We would all have disappeared of course in the holocaust.

**Paul:** Tell me about seeing your father after a year.

**Frieda:** It was strange. We arrived in Jaffa and to get off the ship they put us in little boats. The boats was wriggling I got very ill, I started to throw up. When we landed finally in Jaffa and they took me out of that little boat, it was really a shock because it is such a -The camels and the donkeys. It was very dirty and all Arabic. You come from another area but Tel Aviv, of course, is more modern. We had a hard time finding then apartment. My parents couldn’t find an apartment.

**Paul:** Did your father come to Jaffa to meet you?

**Frieda:** Yeah.

**Paul:** When you arrived he didn’t have a place for you to stay at first?

**Frieda:** No, he didn’t.

**Paul:** Where was he staying?

**Frieda:** He was looking for a place for us and somebody promised him an apartment but then we landed in a very cheap hotel in town and it had bedbugs. I’ll never forget that, first time in my life. It was such a difference from Jaffa, what we saw and what we knew.

**Paul:** Two completely different worlds?

**Frieda:** Completely different worlds. In Tel Aviv the camels were walking still in the streets and donkeys and the marketplace. I mean it’s unbelievable. Everything was covered with flies then. Today it’s beautiful but that was, how many years ago?

**Paul:** 60 years ago.

**Frieda:** 60 years?

**Paul:** Almost, this is 1934?

**Frieda:** Right. Yeah, 60 years.

**Paul:** Its 34 when you arrived?

**Frieda:** Yeah 60 years.

**Paul:** Your mother probably really wanted to be in Poland when she got to Palestine seeing all of this?

**Frieda:** No, she worked very hard, was very hardworking because finally we found a place with two small rooms and we were five people. There was no kitchen, she just had a little table where she prepared the food and also at this time they did not have any stoves or anything everything was done on a primus. Do you know what a primus is?

**Paul:** [Unclear 00:22:18].

**Frieda:** You put in petroleum and you light it -I think you use it here for camp fire.

**Paul:** Like a Bunsen burner I think they call it?

**Frieda:** Something like this, yes.

**Paul:** It’s called a primus? P-R-I-M …

**Frieda:** P-R-I-M-U-S, Primus yeah. You had to pump it and then the flame goes all the way up. Then we had little ones where you can make it higher or lower, what’s it called? A little burner …

**Paul:** Like a knob that would turn?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Did you go to school once you got to?

**Frieda:** No.

**Paul:** What happened to you once you got to Palestine?

**Frieda:** School was very expensive and I didn’t know the language. I guess my parents needed the money. I had to go to work.

**Paul:** What language did you speak in Germany?

**Frieda:** German.

**Paul:** Did you speak Yiddish at all?

**Frieda:** Yes, my parents spoke it Yiddish at home.

**Paul:** You spoke German?

**Frieda:** German and I had English in school.

**Paul:** That’s interesting. You had some English background.

**Frieda:** I knew English. I had three years of English in school. Was a very good school, excellent.

**Paul:** Then in Palestine, what are they speaking? Arabic I suppose or?

**Frieda:** The Arabs section in Yaffa was Arabic. In Tel Aviv the language was Hebrew and any other language you want. People spoke Polish, Russian, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and German and Newspapers in every language.

**Paul:** I’m I to believe then there was a large community of Europeans who had come down?

**Frieda:** Yes. That was all before World War 1.

**Paul:** World War 2?

**Frieda:** World War 2, I’m sorry.

**Paul:** Just on the eve of World War 2?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** You said you had to go to work. What was the first job that they got for you or that you got for yourself?

**Frieda:** We lived in a basement, not far where we lived there was under construction a store. For Israel it was a big store for Tel Aviv, you would say five and ten like a Newberry store. My father knew somebody who works there and took me there.

They took me in to help whatever is necessary. I helped in the office and I helped in the store. I had to sweep the store, unpack the merchandise, be behind the counter and sell.

**Paul:** What were your feelings about not continuing on with your education? At that time how did you think about it?

**Frieda:** I thought it’s wonderful I don’t have to go to school.

**Paul:** Making money I suppose.

**Frieda:** I didn’t keep a dime from my money. Whatever I made I gave it home to the parents.

**Paul:** Is your brother following a similar path? Is he getting a job and contributing money?

**Frieda:** It’s blurry, I don’t remember exactly. My father in Poland when he was a young man he learned to trade to make leather bags like …

**Paul:** Like a briefcase?

**Frieda:** He made briefcases. He went to Jaffa and he bought leather and he came back. He still had the tools from Poland. We still have them in the family. He was standing in the kitchen on the table and started to make briefcases and my brother helped him. Then he went out and tried to sell them.

In school the children always carried a briefcase on their back, with all -They did not hold it in the arms, it was always in the briefcase. He made them and went around and sold these briefcases.

**Paul:** Did that supply enough of an income to keep the family running?

**Frieda:** There was never much there. I understand he had a hard time collecting the money after weeks what he sold, unless they sold. Everybody was in the same boat. I didn’t know anybody who had more. Whatever I earned I think it covered the rent.

**Paul:** What was the family’s experience once World War 2 broke out? How did they feel about being where they were and what was going on?

**Frieda:** We did not know what happened in Germany, we did not know about it. Just the mail stopped coming from Poland to my mother, the mail stopped coming but we did not know what happened. A lot of people came from our town and came to us because we were already the old timers there. We’d lived already there a few years.

They had a lot of people came from the same town and people my parents knew. They had friends, they came for Saturday and had a glass of tea and they continued their friendship, “Oh you came too, wonderful, nice you are here.”

**Paul:** But for the most part, you were oblivious to what was going on?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Was there any fighting in that part of the world during the Second World War?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** There was?

**Frieda:** Then it was Palestine. First of all, all the armies came. We had the Australian army, we had the Canadian army, we had the English army, from everywhere, the South African came. They were in the desert, they had big camps and brought a big prosperity to the country but we were bombed by the Italians.

**Paul:** That you remember experiencing?

**Frieda:** Yes, I remember the bombs of course. In World War 2, we were bombed a lot.

**Paul:** I think we’re going to pause just for a second right now. Peter’s going to flip the tapes over and we’ll get you to America. We’re now beginning side two with Frieda Mark. We have you in Palestine. We were just discussing some of the bombing that took place during the Second World War.

I guess what I’d like to do, and you’ve suggested to me that there is a great deal of story between what we’re talking about now and your actual arrival in America. What I would like you to do is give us a thumbnail sketch of what life was like in Israel in the 40s, before coming to America?

**Frieda:** At this time I was a young girl. There was a complete blackout in the country. You could not have any light showing out and everything was dark in the streets. The cars when they drove around they were no lights, everything was just black.

Israel, the roof is flat, when there was more light on the roof. Young people we had parties on the roof for Saturday night, I guess or Friday evening. That’s how I met my husband, on such a party on the roof, 54 years ago.

**Paul:** What was his name?

**Frieda:** His name is Henry.

**Paul:** Can you tell me why he was in Palestine at that time?

**Frieda:** In 1933, he left Vienna. He left his whole family because he went to build up the country. He came to Palestine and became a brick layer and worked in construction till World War 2 started. I didn’t know him then.

**Paul:** You met him after the war?

**Frieda:** No.

**Paul:** Or during the war?

**Frieda:** No, I met during the war, but he was not a brick layer anymore.

**Paul:** His name was Henry Mark M-A-R-K?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Tell me when did you get married? What year?

**Frieda:** In 1942.

**Paul:** You married during the war?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Tell me how life was different now that you were married? How was it different than it had been with your family?

**Frieda:** We married. Nobody could afford an apartment, we just had one room. Most young people had one room and they shared the kitchen and the bathroom with other couples. There was no more construction and he worked for the English army in the camps. It was called the NAAFI that was like they made food and concessions.

**Paul:** What’s the name of it?

**Frieda:** NAAFI was the name of the company, N-A-A-F-I.

**Paul:** Thank you.

**Frieda:** He worked for the NAAFI. I worked still in the same store where I started when I was 14.

**Paul:** Did you have children during this time?

**Frieda:** We got married in 42 and my daughter was born 45.

**Paul:** That’s your oldest child?

**Frieda:** My oldest child.

**Paul:** What is her name?

**Frieda:** Rina.

**Paul:** Rita?

**Frieda:** Rina.

**Paul:** Rina?

**Frieda:** R-I-N-A.

**Paul:** Thank you.

**Frieda:** [Chaana 00:33:11] Rina, after her grandmother. Anyway, at this time my husband changed jobs. By accident he fell into a store where they had a drapery, they sold drapery material and made drapes. By accident he fell into such a place. He liked it and he said to me, “I think I will stick with drapes and see what we can do about it.”

**Paul:** What was impetus to decide to come to America during this time?

**Frieda:** His family was in America, my husband’s family. We had the war of independence, we had very hard times. You could not go out and buy an egg, everything was rationed and long lines. His family came from Vienna to Los Angeles. They sent us the papers and he said, “We are young, we’ll try Los Angeles.”

**Paul:** What did you know about America in your life at this time? How did you perceive the country of the United States before you got here?

**Frieda:** I have never been here. We had a big American army stationed then in Palestine and the soldiers were there, very friendly. We had all the American music and saw the American movies. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dancing into the sunset, Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy. We loved it and we had all American movies and all American music.

**Paul:** Your perceptions of America are very much colored by what you’re seeing on the silver screen?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Was your husband in communication frequently with his family that was here?

**Frieda:** He was always with his family, yes. I mean they wrote us letters and we wrote them letters.

**Paul:** How did you emotionally feel about leaving this second life that you had built up for yourself?

**Frieda:** I was glad to get away from Israel at that time because life was very hard. You had all the money in your pocket, but you could not buy anything with it. I had two small children and it was hard to buy food for them.

**Paul:** Rina was born in 45?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** What’s the name of the second child?

**Frieda:** Judy.

**Paul:** What year was she born?

**Frieda:** 50.

**Paul:** She was born in 50?

**Frieda:** Yeah 1950.

**Paul:** The war of independence is 1947?

**Frieda:** 47, yes.

**Paul:** Israel becomes a …?

**Frieda:** Became a state and we were bombed by the Arabs day and night, lots of bombings and running to the shelters. We had an opportunity to leave and we were young. Business was hard because my husband was in draperies, if the bombs are falling people don’t buy any drapes. He said, “We’ll come to America and we’ll try our best.”

**Paul:** What do you remember about the process of getting the necessary papers to go?

**Frieda:** My husband did all, we had to go to Haifa. In Haifa they had a consulate and my husband’s family guaranteed for us and signed all the papers. They were already here a few years.

**Paul:** They were in Los Angeles?

**Frieda:** All in Los Angeles, yes.

**Paul:** Tell me just like I asked you when you were leaving Germany to go to Palestine, what did you take with you when you were getting ready to leave Israel?

**Frieda:** Just suitcases with clothes.

**Paul:** Were your parents still living at that time?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** How did they feel about you going to America?

**Frieda:** They were hoping that we should come and have a better life because it was very hard at this time in Israel. Thanks God it has changed meantime.

**Paul:** Do you remember saying goodbye to your parents for the last time?

**Frieda:** Of course, they all came and took us to the airport. We hugged and we kissed and the children. We knew that we are going back to visit them if possible. I promised them I’d come every year.

**Paul:** You were never leaving with the intention of never seeing them again? You always …

**Frieda:** No, at this time I said, “If possible we will come and visit.” 10 years later I took the children we visited.

**Paul:** Where was the airport again?

**Frieda:** In Israel?

**Paul:** Yes, where did you?

**Frieda:** In Lod.

**Paul:** What sticks out in your mind about the air passage?

**Frieda:** The air passage with two little children was very hard.

**Paul:** What do you remember about that?

**Frieda:** That they all had ear aches. It took a long time because it was not a straight flight. First we went to Belgium and we had to stay over there for about two days in Belgium. What sticks out in my mind is we went to a big department during Belgium. One floor is like a giant food market.

I walked in with my husband and the children, the cheeses and salamis and everything was hanging full of -I looked at it and I had to start crying so hard I still cry now, I had to leave. I couldn’t look at all that food. This is what I remember about it.

**Paul:** Because you had come from such deprivation?

**Frieda:** Where you couldn’t get an egg. One egg was a big luxury. You saved it for your children.

**Paul:** Where did the plane go from Belgium?

**Frieda:** From Belgium to New York. What I remember about New York is Judy was two years old and we had a lot of suitcases. Something with the papers I don’t remember, I left it. I didn’t know it then, but I was at the beginning of another pregnancy. It was just the beginning and I felt already a little.

I said, “Rina stay with the suitcases.” We look around and Judy disappeared in that airport with hundreds and thousands of people walking. I call my husband, “Henry, where is Judy?” He doesn’t know where she is, he was busy. Nobody knew where Judy is, I said, “Rina you stay with the luggage and I run and look for Judy.”

People were coming and going. All of a sudden there was a tall man and he had Judy on his shoulders. He was standing in the middle between these thousands of people and held her on his shoulders so we could see her. I was running up and I had my child, this is my impression from New York.

**Paul:** What happened when you got to the airport? I know that ultimately you ended up here at Ellis Island?

**Frieda:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Exactly what happened and how did you get out here?

**Frieda:** The reason was we arrived, I forgot if it was a Thursday or Friday, and it was in the beginning of May. We had to bring papers which we had that we know what we want to do, that we have people who signed for us that we will never be on welfare, that we are in good health.

They looked at all these x-rays and everything. Somehow I don’t know how, my husband’s chest x-ray was with black spots, I don’t know. They said, “We’re very sorry but he needs a new chest x-ray. We have to see that he is in good health.” We came to Ellis Island. They took us with a little boat I remember with the girls, with the luggage. I was a nervous wreck.

**Paul:** Did you know what Ellis Island was?

**Frieda:** No, never heard of it. We came here because it was before a weekend they gave us a room a very nice room for the four of us. Then came was Friday, Saturday, Sunday where everything was closed. Monday he got the chest x-ray. Tuesday they send us out. A cousin of my husband came and picked us up.

**Paul:** With great relief I’m sure on your part?

**Frieda:** I don’t know, I never knew this young man. He lived in New York and I guess my husband called him or whatever. He had his name and address. He came and got us off when we arrived with the boat, I forgot and got us a small hotel somewhere in the city.

**Paul:** Tell me what you remember about being here, those four days?

**Frieda:** These four days, for me it was wonderful. Because we had a very nice room, the children were playing with other children. The meals were excellent.

**Paul:** Where did they feed you?

**Frieda:** In the kosher kitchen.

**Paul:** Does anything stick out in your mind about …

**Frieda:** I was not used to get a whole hotdog or if I want two I can have two hotdogs. My daughter at this time has never seen an apple or food, because we come from a place where everything was in very short supply. She played around and my little girl she stayed in -A lot of washing because we stayed in Belgium a few days, I had a lot of laundry. They had all of the facilities here.

**Paul:** They allowed you to do that?

**Frieda:** They had special facilities. There were a lot of people on this island. Just when we asked around there was one couple, I forgot from where, and they told us they are here already a year and a half. They lost their papers. We got a little scared I mean we were not prepared to sit here a year and a half.

Another woman said, she was from Canada a young woman, she said she’s in Ellis Island because as a child, she was a member in a communist party. All kinds of stories we had here.

**Paul:** Do any of the staff members stick out in your mind?

**Frieda:** They were extremely friendly and helpful. There was one very nice lady, when we came they asked us what food we would like. My husband said, “It's all right.” She gave us a nudge, and says, “Go to the kosher kitchen, it’s the best food.”

There came a lady over from New York by boat every morning. She cooked special, I think the kosher kitchen were maybe 10, 11 people, not more.

On the other half side of this island there was a camp for sailors which missed their boats, all young guys. They played ball all day. When they came to eat it was like a stampede when they came running. There were a few Jewish boys and they were with us in the kosher kitchen. They were most helpful and friendliest people.

**Paul:** Did you see any type’s food that you had never seen before?

**Frieda:** No, the kosher food is Jewish food.

**Paul:** The same everywhere?

**Frieda:** Yeah, it’s the same.

**Paul:** Were you allowed outside of the building?

**Frieda:** Yeah, we’d walked around outside. I always looked at the Statue of Liberty and I’m ashamed to say I didn’t know what it is.

**Paul:** After your little incident with Judy in the airport, how were you able to keep track of the children?

**Frieda:** There were not many children here. I think they were about four or five children all together. I kept a good eye on her. They should not fall in the water. She was only two years old at that time.

**Paul:** Do you remember if they offered any kind of supervision for the children, a school class or something that they could go to if they wanted to?

**Frieda:** I really do not remember, but there was one little girl here that the parents came from Germany. Rina the oldest girl, both of them -We speak German at home, she played with the child in German. They had a wonderful time.

I forgot which day it was, there came some ladies from an organization and they brought gifts for the children, beautiful dolls. There were only five children and they brought gifts for 20. I don’t know what happened. I think each child got one doll. We were very happy about it.

**Paul:** What about any kind of entertainment did they supply here at Ellis Island? Could you go to the movies if you wanted to?

**Frieda:** I don’t remember ever seeing here a movie.

**Paul:** Do you remember seeing any nationalities of people that you had never seen before?

**Frieda:** Not many people. There was that lady from Canada and some were from Europe. We were sitting with these people we could talk to.

**Paul:** Where was your room? Do you remember?

**Frieda:** No.

**Paul:** You don’t?

**Frieda:** No, we had to go up somewhere and a long -All I remember that the rooms were not locked, there were no keys. Everything was just wonderful, nobody ever disturbed. You could only lock it when you’re in the room from the inside, but not from the outside. I think that I how remember.

**Paul:** Obviously your husband had to have his x-ray retaken …

**Frieda:** We had to wait for Monday for the x-ray.

**Paul:** What about you and the girls, did you have to undergo any kind of physical exams?

**Frieda:** No, our papers were fine.

**Paul:** The cousin comes out to get you. Do you remember what the process was before you could leave Ellis Island? Did you have to sign something?

**Frieda:** My husband had to do all that. I was always busy with the girls and with the laundry because it didn’t ever dry I was worried the wash wouldn’t dry till we leave.

**Paul:** Do you remember what you were wearing when you arrived at Ellis Island?

**Frieda:** Dresses.

**Paul:** Could you describe it specifically for me?

**Frieda:** Dresses which people wore 50 years ago.

**Paul:** The cousin took you to a hotel?

**Frieda:** To a hotel. Somewhere around the big, what’s that square called here?

**Paul:** There are several.

**Frieda:** Broadway, is there a Broadway here?

**Paul:** Yes, there is a Broadway.

**Frieda:** I think somewhere in Broadway. Half of the building was a hotel and the other half was a senior citizens home. All I remember we had a room on the fifth floor. It was dark because when you looked out there was nothing but high rises, but it was cheap and it was convenient. They took us to, what’s that big movie where people the dancers, not Carnegie Hall, that big one?

**Paul:** Goodness I don’t know.

**Frieda:** The big theatre, very large.

**Paul:** You went to a theatre?

**Frieda:** Yes, a movie hall.

**Paul:** Was that the next night or the same night?

**Frieda:** No, I don’t remember. I think his wife took care of my children. She was babysitting so we can go out and see New York in the evening.

**Paul:** Of course you’ve been in other large cities, but did you have any specific impressions of New York?

**Frieda:** The lights. The people in the street, because don’t forget I come from a place where everything was dark, blackouts. They did not have the running lights like here, nobody could afford that. Of course meantime everything has changed.

**Paul:** How long did you stay in New York before you went to the West Coast?

**Frieda:** In New York we stayed about, I think, a week.

**Paul:** Were you using your English that you knew to communicate?

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Did you experience, in your time in New York, any troubles trying to communicate?

**Frieda:** The only trouble we used the subway and we tried to find out where we are and where we were going. Nobody knew which way to go, “Sorry we don’t know either.” Everybody just knew his own line and we got lost somewhere in the subway till somebody put us back.

**Paul:** How did you feel about New York in that one week you were there?

**Frieda:** Very excited.

**Paul:** I suppose it looked a little bit like maybe the movies you had seen?

**Frieda:** What’s that big theatre? They always had dance girls, a whole row of them …

**Paul:** Radio City Music Hall, of course the [inaudible 00:52:14].

**Frieda:** That’s the one.

**Paul:** That’s where you went?

**Frieda:** That’s where he took us, the cousin, to show us New York.

**Paul:** Did you see anything in New York that you had never seen before?

**Frieda:** Many things.

**Paul:** Anything stick out in your mind specifically?

**Frieda:** The high buildings, the subway. Everything is moving, everything is running. People are more quiet in other countries but here, it was very exciting.

**Paul:** You were in New York for a week and then what happened?

**Frieda:** From New York, my husband had a brother in Minneapolis in Minnesota. We had a ticket to go to Minnesota and from Minnesota to Los Angeles. We stayed three or four days Saint Paul.

**Paul:** What stuck in your mind about that whole journey across the country?

**Frieda:** We flew.

**Paul:** You flew?

**Frieda:** Yeah, with a plane. We had tickets to fly.

**Paul:** I’m just curious in 1952, how long did it take to fly to Saint Paul?

**Frieda:** It took to fly, a day at least, because the plane went up and down all the time. It stopped at every little city.

**Paul:** That must have been awful.

**Frieda:** It was horrible because up and down all the time.

**Paul:** The kids probably had their ear problems too going up and down all the time?

**Frieda:** Big ear problems. I didn’t know about it before we left. Then we stayed at his brother’s and that was the opposite of New York, very quiet. I didn’t like it there.

**Paul:** We have five minutes left. I’d like you to explain a little bit to me what it was like to meet your husband’s family. When you first …

**Frieda:** My husband hasn’t seen his family from 1933 till ‘52. He came with his children and his brothers and sisters came with their children. All of a sudden my girls find a big family that they never knew they had.

We flew from Saint Paul to Los Angeles and also we were picked up at the airport and stayed at his sister’s house and brother-in-law, they had two children in our children’s age, they still have.

In the meantime my husband started to look around, what to do here for a business. I was expecting already, I knew then already that I’m expecting. My son was born in February.

**Paul:** Of ‘53?

**Frieda:** ‘53.

**Paul:** What is his name?

**Frieda:** Steven.

**Paul:** Steven?

**Frieda:** Yeah.

**Paul:** Tell me a little bit just quickly, how long did you stay on the West Coast?

**Frieda:** We still live there.

**Paul:** You stayed there a long time?

**Frieda:** Yeah, since ‘52 we live in Los Angeles.

**Paul:** Tell me quickly about what it was like to go back to Israel the first time?

**Frieda:** To visit?

**Paul:** To visit, when you went back to see your parents?

**Frieda:** I went to see my parents. Before that, I made a little money, I sent them packages, food packages and then to go back and take just presents, for my mother a dress and for everybody. I stayed in my sister’s house.

**Paul:** How long had it been from ‘52 to when? What year …

**Frieda:** Eight, nine years.

**Paul:** Long time.

**Frieda:** Yes.

**Paul:** Were they still experiencing a lot of the same hardships that you had experienced or had things gotten a little better?

**Frieda:** It got a little better, but still it was a hard time because they had wars. They still have wars, the wars in Israel and the Arabs attack them again. Thanks God all this has changed now. It’s a wonderful country and everybody should visit Israel and Los Angeles.

**Paul:** Do you think of yourself as being German, Israeli, or American?

**Frieda:** It’s a strange thing, I tell you the truth, when I go to Germany I feel like I have never left and I speak the language. Then I go to Israel, after a few days I feel I never left, I feel like a Israeli. Then I come back to America to Los Angeles and I feel like I belong here. It’s very strange, I think about it sometimes.

**Paul:** You have a lot of homes?

**Frieda:** Yes, I feel everywhere at home.

**Paul:** Mrs. Mark I want to thank you very much for taking time out from your visit here to let us interview you. This has been very interesting story.

**Frieda:** I don’t know.

**Paul:** This is Paul Seacrest, signing off with Frieda Mark on Friday May 19th, 1995 at the Ellis Island immigration museum. Thank you very much.