**Janet:**  This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here at Ellis Island in the Oral History Studio. I'm with Mr. Emile Nathanson, who came from France in 1916 when he was 6 years of age. This is your first visit back since that time.

**Emile:** To Ellis Island?

**Janet:**  Yes

**Emile:** Yes.

**Janet:**  This is the first time that Mr. Nathanson has been back here and I'm looking forward it to whatever you can remember. I realize as a 6 year old

**Emile:** Very Little.

**Janet:**  I realize as a six year old it's quite young but anyway we'll see what we can manage to remember about it. Okay. Let’s start at the beginning, if you would give your birth date, again just for the tape your birthdate.

**Emile:** January 15th1910.

**Janet:**  Okay. And where in France were you born?

**Emile:** Paris.

**Janet:**  Paris. And did you live in Paris up until the time that you left the France?

**Emile:** Six years. We spent a little while in Spain but not very long but most of the 6 years we spent in Paris.

**Janet:**  You were living with your mother and father?

**Emile:** And my sister.

**Janet:**  Okay and what was your father's name?

**Emile:** David. David Natchitz.

**Janet:**  Okay and that's an N-A- T- C...

**Emile:** C- H-I-T-Z.

**Janet:**  Okay Natchitz and your mother's name?

**Emile:** Rebecca

**Janet:**  Rebecca. Your mother's maiden name do you remember that?

**Emile:** M-O-L-L-E-T, Mollet.

**Janet:**  Mollet. Okay and your sister who....

**Emile:** Cecile.

**Janet:**  Cecile. So it was just you and Cecile?

**Emile:** No, there was also an Albert. There’s a story about Albert that I don't know how I can describe it. The custom in Paris in those days was to send a child 2- 3 years out to the country for the summer because it was too hot. So 1914, they sent him out to a farm. A month later the Germans walked in and so he was a prisoner of war from 1914 until 1920. Till he was 6 or maybe right after the war 1918 19.

Then he brought him back to Paris where my uncle was living. And so that was the three of us, me, Albert and Cécile and my brother I didn't see until he was 6 years old. When he came over somebody brought him over. We were here at that time and somebody bought him over and that's when we finally got together again.

**Janet:**  Wow.

**Emile:** So it is a story that was quite the...it was in a lot of newspapers at the time. Little prisoner of war, he was six years old, and coming over.

**Janet:** It's very interesting. Would you like to say any more about his experience?

**Emile:** He can do much more than I can. It's too bad he lives in California because he could have really tell us the real story but anyway he was that young too, so I don't think he remembers too much. You want to know who was there and that was the three of us with my father and mother but my brother I didn't see until he was 6.

**Janet:**  How much older than you?

**Emile:** Three and a half years.

**Janet:**  He was three and a half years and your sister?

**Emile:** Also about three and a half to me. I was 6 she was about 9, space 9. I was born January she was born June 1913 I would say.

**Janet:**  And so she and Albert were close in age.

**Emile:** No, because she was the oldest.

**Janet:** She was the oldest

**Emile:** I was next

**Janet:**  And Albert was the youngest okay. Well, hopefully I'll get a chance to interview him someday.

**Emile:** I know he'd be interested if you knew what was going on but unfortunately he’s In California, so he can't do nothing about it.

**Janet:**  I see. Okay how about grandparents? Did you have any grandparents?

**Emile:** All I can remember is a grandmother In Paris. Originally our family came from Austria not I but my mother and father and my grandmother and uncles and aunts, originally living in Austria. And they all immigrated to Paris and that's where I was born.

**Janet:**  Do you do you remember where they said in Austria they were living?

**EMILE:** I'll have to think Ben knows because he was there and he interviewed the people that were there. My father's birthplace was Dubno, D-U-B-N-O which was alternating between Russia and Poland, so he's not either he’s a Polish or Russian. He's one or the other but then I can't seem to remember the name of my grandmother's place. I always do but it's just now, I can't remember.

**JANET:**  Okay. Well we'll see, if it strikes you can tell me.

**Emile:** Ben would remember because he was there.

**Janet:**  Do you remember your grandmother? Do you remember any experiences with her?

**EMILE:** No except she took me by the hand but that's all. I wouldn't remember because I remember grandma that's all. Her name was Ethel if you ever want to know her name and then we had a couple of uncles. My mother's brothers were there. They were living in Paris too.

**Janet:**  What do you remember about life in Paris? Do you remember anything?

**Emile:** I’ll tell you one thing. The most disappointed little kid you ever saw was me because I left a very clean beautiful spotless Paris and then to the dirtiest filthiest New York I ever saw with dirt in the streets and garbage and I said to myself, “If I were only older I’d take the boat you go home again.” Because Paris was so clean, was so nice, as far as I can remember anyway. The difference was so great.

**Janet:** Can you remember anything you did there as a little boy?

**Emile:** I went to school.

**Janet:**  You did go to school. Your mother's name was Brody, your grandmother?

**Emile:** Mollet. There's her name. Brody was where she was born.

**Janet:**  Brody was where she was born in Austria.

**Emile:** That's right. How’d you come to it?

**Janet:**  Ben.

**Emile:** Ben, oh Ben knew [crosstalk 00:06:21].

**Janet:**  Okay, so we have that straight.

**Emile:** You got the name.

**Janet:**  Okay so.

**Emile:** What happened in Paris while I was there I can remember very distinctly. First of all I remember in 1914 and the soldiers were marching in the street, the war had broken out. I was 4 years old and I was just as high as my uncle’s Sable because he was in the- things with the metal things, I don't know what they are calling it.

**Janet:**  Like the armor?

**Emile:** The cavalry wore metal...

**Janet:** Shields?

**Emile:** No, just across there. They still have them today. If you ever see a parade in Paris you'll see them. They have a name I don't remember the name but that I remember. Also I remember Buying French fried potatoes on a corner from an old lady for one soup. I’d go there and she'd have a potato burning with potato and for a penny she rent a corner out of a piece of paper. That I remember. I also remember if you want to know

**Janet:**  Oh I do.

**Emile:** Going to work with my father and mother to one of the woods outside of where we lived. Not far. It wasn't in the border of Bolognese because that was in much further south. And the thing that I'd remember which is stupid I know but as we went for a walk I found a little toy train.

**Janet:**  Okay, just take your time.

**Emile:** A little toy train. I picked it up. It said Made in Germany of course. It was made in Allemany, it was for German and I looked at it and said, “Made in Germany” and as a 4 year old I already so inborn for my hatred for Germany that I said, “Look pop,” in French naturally, I said, “Look.”

He said, “Yeah that's a German,” I took up threw it away because it was made in Germany. That was a Bosch German toy. Though that I remember. Now let me see, I went to school and I wore a little apron because we all wore aprons in those days and we took our lunch and we never had any milk which is why I had trouble with my teeth all my life.

We had no calcium and for lunch they give a little bottle of watered wine. That was for our lunch, that I remember. It’s too bad that Cecile isn’t here, she would have remembered much more. Let’s see what else I remember about Paris? Well, anyway in 1915 my father Left for America and we went to Spain and we spent a couple months there.

**Janet:**  I see so when your father left for America the rest of the family went to Spain at that time?

**Emile:** The three, the four of us, the three of us. Cecil, I and my mother went to Spain. Why I don't remember exactly, whether he had to go there to get- you see this was the beginning of the World War and if I remember correctly I think he was being drafted as a soldier.

And since he didn't consider himself a Frenchman, He decided it was time to... So we went to Spain I don't know just what the event was, why but we went to Spain for about 6 months.

**Janet:**  So your grandmother and your uncles remained in Paris.

**Emile:** So did my uncle Charles which was my father's brother. This way Albert came back from the war, he went to Charles that was my uncle. One of the delicacies, it’s stupid.

**Janet:**  No, it's not.

**Emile:** It is and I talked to him, “What is it you like best when you came?” because he lived on whatever the Germans gave him for food because they would actually prisoners behind the German lines. He said what he liked best is that his uncle gave him a cup of tea and he put bread in it, white bread really. And that he remembers and that's what he ate which was nothing to do with me except that I remember what he said.

**Janet:**  This is when he finally got back to Paris.

**Emile:** When he got back to Paris. He was about 5 6 at the time. And we were already here.

**Janet:**  Is there anything else that you can think of about Paris before you left for Spain? Do you remember the street you lived on? The house you live in?

**Emile:** Yes, I do very well was [unclear 00:10:52]. It was in the Poissonier section it was a More or less a French ghetto for Jewish people. All Jewish like the East side became later this particular place was mostly Jewish, not mostly but that's where we all gathered together.

My father was a tailor and he got a job tailoring and I remember sitting on a table with his feet across sewing. That was his job. Now what else do I remember about Paris? Let me see.

**Janet:**  Do you remember the house?

**Emile:** Oh yes, it was a tenement house, we lived on the first floor and the funniest thing I remember some of things to my mother told me in French that I remember to this day.

**Janet:**  Oh wonderful. Could you say them in French? And then say what they mean?

**Emile:** Yeah, she said, “[French 00:11:44] don’t touch the curtains.” I was 3 years old. “[French 00:11:5], go shopping for me.” So she sent you the grocery. So those things I remember why I don't know. I don't know much more what happened in the United States when I got here.

**Janet:**  When you went shopping can you can you recall any of your Shopping expeditions?

**Emile:** Yes I do. The most important thing we bought a chocolate bar and my mother chopped up and made, we didn't drink coffee so we had chocolate instead of coffee. But there is another thing I remember it sounds very dim now to me but when I went on my commission, I went downstairs and I was looking for my father and he was in the saloon where they were playing dominoes.

I now remember that stupid thing and what I remember most distinctly, the odor of the wine on the saloon and they were playing dominoes at the tables and drinking wine, so that I remember, about Paris, what else? The funny thing I remember a lot about Paris much more than I could say about nothing exactly.

I was going to say that I remember more about Paris than I did when I came to this country but I remember a lot when I was 6,7, 8 years old about New York at that time which was an awful dirty place.

**Janet:**  Yeah we'll get to that but just before we leave your life in Paris. So you went for chocolate and did you go to other little shops?

**Emile:** No, I was only 3, so I came down the flight of stairs and I went to the grocery and the saloon and came right back and I bought a long bread. We bought bread those days were very long breads which I carried under my arm. Did you ever see a French bread? They have them these days here too, that I remember buying.

**Janet:**  Did you have friends? Did you have playmates?

**Emile:** I don't remember. My sister was the only one I really associated with. I was only a youngster although I do remember one thing which I regret the fact that my sister passed way before I could ask her.

We naturally had no bathrooms, so we had to have a bath. We went to a bath house. For one cent they gave you a big wooden tub and you took your bath on that wooden tub. It just came to me the other day, it just occurred to me. Only I was never able to ask my sister about it, although she would have remembered.

**Janet:**  So like the whole family would go?

**Emile:** Yeah, and we have the baths in wooden tubs. And it cost a penny which was a lot of money in those days, a whole penny.

**Janet:**  How about your clothing? Did your father make your clothes?

**Emile:** No, he worked for a factory. I don't exactly remember what he made. I do remember wearing a little sailor suit that he bought from me. It was I wore when I came over to this country. If you saw my Passport I was wearing a little uniform at that time. I don't know if you have it.

**Janet:** Yeah, we'll look at that.

**Emile:** You've got the passport? See I don't see a passport there.

**Janet:**  No I guess I don't have that, so how about any other food that you remember besides the long bread and the chocolate, any other foods that you remember as a small boy?

**Emile:** Spaghetti we ate. I do remember meals much to tell you the truth. I don’t remember anything what we actually ate except the chocolates stuck in my mind because we looked forward to it so.

**Janet:**  Do you remember your father at all from your days in Paris before he left for the United States and you went to Spain?

**Emile:** I remember papa was there but exactly I don't remember much about my father. My grandmother I remember because she came every day took me by the hand and we went for a walk. Almost the same as if Rebecca is today.

As a matter fact Rebecca's, my mother's name. I don't remember- I'll tell you this one thing I do remember I got it written down there when we came over and we decided we're going to leave. Pop called us from wherever it was, from Spain that he was leaving. So when we came back to Paris we got ready to leave to go back go to America.

There's two distinct things that I remember I had cousins, you mentioned people, I did have cousins and one played a joke on me which I remember to this day. He gave me a little black pepper told me to chew on it and I bite my tongue and I got so upset that I sat down and my mother had a box of candy, so I sat on it the box of candy. That I remember and I squashed all the candy, all the chocolates. I don't remember the trip from Paris to Le Harve but I do remember being on the boat.

**Janet:**  Well do you remember anything about going from Paris to Spain before you came back?

**Emile:** I remember being there and there's quite a lot I remember about Spain.

**Janet:**  Why don't you give whatever you remember about Spain?

**Emile:** The most important things are things that were very distinct. They have what they call a beach. Now I don't know if they have something like that in Canada where there's eating in a rush. So they were having some kind of a celebration and they were blowing balloons and we, the two of us Cecil and I went out to get the balloons and before we knew it someone was yelling, “Hey hurry, hurry, hurry.” What was happening?

The tide was coming in and if we hadn't rushed back in time we would have drowned and they had cabins, little cabins that you get undressed in and got your bathing suits and there was somebody there, his name was Miguel and he collected clam. So I remember the smell of the clams that he would carry in baskets of clams but as far as living there I don't remember anything.

**Janet:**  Do you remember where in Spain you were?

**Emile:** Saint Sebastian. It was Right on the border I guess we didn’t get in that deeply.

**Janet:**  Now do you know why the family went to Spain?

**Emile:** I'm only summarizing. I think that my father had to go to Spain to get a passport to leave for Europe because the conditions must have been pretty stiff because the war was on at that time already and they weren’t letting people out.

He was only 30 at that time. He could have been a very good soldier. As a matter of fact he was a soldier. My father served in the Japanese- Russian war and I shouldn’t mention it but I think he went AWOL and he left and he went crossed the border into Austria where he met my mother and that's where they got married. So that's the story about Pop anyway but as far as remembering him I don't remember too much.

**Janet:**  When you came back to Paris to get ready to go to the United States then you were there just for a short time?

**Emile:** For a short time.

**Janet:**  Then you remember leaving Paris to go to Le Harve to get the ship?

**Emile:** The only thing I say I as I remember is being on the train and getting that red pepper and sitting on a box of chocolate and that's- the rest of the trip I don't remember.

**Janet:** When you when you were leaving for the United States, we’re your cousins or uncles or anybody else….?

**Emile:** No, just the three of us left at the same time. Nobody came with us but I can remember. If they did I don't remember.

**Janet:**  Do you remember goodbyes or actual leaving?

**Emile:** No, I remember being on a train and the next thing I remember being on a boat looking out watching the lights dimming in the distance as we got out into the ocean. It's all written on there if you get a chance to read it.

**Janet:** Well, it's good to have it in your words too on the tape. How about do you remember anything your mother packed and took with her? Personally have a toy? Did you personally to have a toy or bring anything besides your clothing.

**Emile:** No, I didn't. I would remember that. There was one thing I remembered while being on the boat I mentioned it to a dozen people already. I was very sea sick and I couldn't keep my things down and one thing I did do I went on to the cook, the steward downstairs where they were doing the cooking and he had a big Swiss cheese.

I keep seeing that all the time because- and every morning I'd go down and he’d give me a slice of cheese from the big one and I go upstairs and eat it and then promptly get it overboard. But I remember why I don't know and I mentioned it to Ben, he thought was funny.

When we went to the bathrooms, you didn't have to pull a chain because, the ocean. It dropped into the ocean and you managed to get a nice bath in the wrong places at the right time because the waters surged it up. I don't know where the bathroom must have been right downstairs at the bottom of the boat. That I remembered stupid.

**Janet:**  Say the name of the ship for the tape?

**Emile:** Lafayette

**Janet:**  Lafayette, were you in the bottom? Were you in steerage?

**Emile:** We were in second class.

**Janet:**  Second class. So what do you remember anything about the ship? I know you wrote it down but anything you can remember.

**Emile:** I remember having bunk beds. We slept in bunk beds but I don't remember much about the trip at all, although, it must have taken maybe 7, 8 days. I do remember that we had the drills. A certain time during a day, they'd yell out everybody should go to a certain place because they thought they saw a submarine and we were afraid of being sunk.

There was in 1916 but in the middle of the Submarine war. That I remember about people saying, “Submarines, submarines,” although I didn't know for sure it meant. But the trip I don't remember anything except that I remember eating Swiss cheese and vomiting over the sides.

**Janet:**  And do you remember your mother at all during the trip.

**Emile:** Very little. I don't remember until we got those Ellis Island and we had our passports and all that.

**Janet:**  Do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

**Emile:** No, I didn't ever saw the Statue of Liberty.

**Janet:**  And what was your first impression of Ellis Island.

**Emile:** For dopey, a lot of people running around. We were whatever you want to call it but the other people coming from Russia and Italy people with different costumes and beards and looked very unusual I thought, “Eh what funny place. Where the hell are we?”

But that was it. I got to Ellis Island as I said. They fed us and I saw my father beyond the other bars. I don't remember leaving. Leaving Ellis Island but when we got to the Battery we took the elevator to my aunt's house. She lived on 6th street. That I do remember.

**Janet:**  Do you remember what you ate at Ellis Island?

**Emile:** I so tell you, I remember the green pea soup which I ate with a fork because it was hard as a rock. I think I had tomato heaven.

**Janet:**  Oh really?

**Emile:** The meals were so unusual. We never ate things like that before. So I remember those meals.

**Janet:**  Do you remember the examinations you had here.

**Emile:** No, I don't. We had no trouble, we weren't held for any reason I think we went expressly through when it was ready.

**Janet:**  Did you see your father soon after you arrived here?

**Emile:** He was there.

**Janet:**  He was there when you arrived.

**Emile:** He was there on the other side of Basra. He must have taken the ferry to the, what do they called that place?

**Janet:**  The Battery Park?

**Emile:** Battery Park but I don't remember that. I don't remember leaving Ellis Island. I do remember going upstairs and taking the elevator which was unusual enough so I remember that.

**Janet:**  Do you remember at all what you thought or felt on that elevator train.

**Emile:** Crazy. What the heck was this upstairs? I was afraid the thing was going to fall off. It was all the way upstairs and it was a short trip. It was from the Battery to 86th street so it wasn't that long.

**Janet:**  And this was now your mother or father's sister?

**Emile:** My mother's.

**Janet:**  Your mother's sister and what was her name?

**Emile:** My father never had a family.

**Janet:**  Oh

**Emile:** He had no brothers, except for one brother in Paris, that's all.

**Janet:**  What was your aunt's name on east 63th street? Do you remember?

**Emile:** Gussy

**Janet:**  Gussy.

**Emile:** Gesha we called her because that was the Jewish name. We always called her Dan Gesha. She had a 3 roomed apartment where she lived with her daughter and her son and we all moved in to the three roomed apartment. I mention some of these things there. One of the meals that I do remember that she made is they called it Mamalega.

It was made of corn mashed like we make oat meal today. That was the most horrible thing I ever ate because it wasn't bad enough but she had to put jelly in it. I can remember eating that. So there's a lot of things I can remember about the eastside when we first came over.

**Janet:**  That would be most interesting because the eastside at that time was the real...

**Emile:** Was the eastside, the real eastside.

**Janet:**  The eastside. So what do you remember? Can you remember any first things that you hadn't encountered that you encountered there in the east side?

**Emile:** We've finished with Paris? We are on the east side now?

**Janet:**  Right.

**Emile:** Well I remember one thing which stuck in my mind, they had Orchard Street there was pushcarts and they had snow the day before so the snow wasn't taken away and the push carts were going like this and it full of dirt. It was dirty, I couldn't get over it.

Even to this day I can remember the dirty New York with all the cats and mice and everything else. That I remember. So we came to my aunt’s house. In the back there was a synagogue which I had never seen before but people went in to lay some of the things. We had gone to temple, the Rothschild’s had temple in Paris which we had gone to especially during the high holidays which I don't remember at all, except that I know that we went to a temple but never to a real synagogue and nobody wore their taluses that they wore and that stuck in my mind.

We were there a short time and then I remembered the fact about this, I mentioned it there about the merry go round that we used to get on. I was 6 years old and then you only came with a crank and cranked and the little wagons went around. The horses went around.

**Janet:**  It was on a wagon?

**Emile:** A little merry go round on a wagon and the man that owned it would come outside and crank it so that the merry go round would go around. That I remember.

**Janet:**  Now your aunt's apartment it was in a tenement?

**Emile:** That's right yeah, first floor in a tenement.

**Janet:**  First floor?

**Emile:** That's right and then on thing I do remember which wasn't unusual, I guess it was. We came over we couldn't speak the language naturally and everybody was saying, “Say something, say something in French,” so I did which they didn't know what I was saying because I couldn't speak any other language except French at that time.

One thing I do remember and they asked me say something and I said yeah, [French 00:27:04]. They found out later it meant [unclear 00:27:09] fat man. It sounded funny enough to be able to tell them [French 00:07:11.7] but I just don't remember when the French disappeared and the English came. Maybe when I started going to school.

**Janet:**  Did you go to school right away?

**Emile:** I was 6 years old so I must have gone on east 1st street. They had a school. It was the most unusual school because I remember to this day it wasn't exactly a school it was big auditorium and when classes were formed they pushed the sliding doors together make little tiny room and each little room was a school. But in the auditorium they pushed the doors away and we sat there. It wasn't really what you'd call a school like we would have today. That I remember and then I do remember when we left my aunt's with, you want to know this? This has nothing to do with it?

**Janet:**  No, this is good.

**Emile:** We moved to Saint Mark’s place which was east 8th street. It’s still called Saint Mark’s place in Second Avenue and it was there that my brother came and it was there that my sister Shirley Moo was born. So at that time my father came over with two children and so only to find himself with four in a couple of minutes, and somebody torched the building, and we all ran out naturally, we got out the place was burned like through the roof and my father was a very careful person he made sure he locked the door so when the firemen came, they had a break in.

He locked the door so nobody would come in. but he didn't realize Simon would have, which wasn't important, but all the four of us got out safely. The worst part of my life that I can remember, we moved to a fifth floor tenement, a terrible place and then my father would garner this New York and bought himself a little house, so we all finally got out into civilization.

**Janet:**  Okay maybe this is good point where we'll pause here and Kevin will turn the tape and then we'll continue. I find what you're saying very interesting so I’m sure other people will too.

**Emile:** Yeah, but I did write this because Michael was going for literature at Brooklyn college wanted me to write something. So I wrote him the history of my first day, I quote, my first day in New York.

**Janet:**  Wonderful. Well I want to say this will be in the folder with your name and it will be kept here in the oral history library. Before we leave the lower east side, let's just see if there's anything else that maybe any light you can shed on life on the lower east side in 1916 and 17.

**Emile:** 1916 we were in school and they were having parades and all the different immigrant kids were in a parade and I was the only one with the French flag because I was the only French kid there. Who comes from France to the United States, why? Beautiful there, why should you want to come here? Still Liberty there.

**Janet:**  And you have no recollection of going to school before you knew the language and how you felt about....

**Emile:** I remember going to school. My trouble must have been terrible because I couldn’t speak English and I just could speak French. But I must have caught on very quickly. I have a very good mind for languages off course I forgot my French after a while and now I speak it fluently. I made up my mind to get it back but now, [French 00:10:53] like a French man. [French 00:10:59I got it all back again. I read French, I read mostly French these days and I speak it very well.

**Janet:**  Do you have someone to speak it with?

**Emile:** That was my problem. I had nobody to talk to. So I talked to myself but I read and I speak it. I had a little business years ago and they knew I was French so I had a lot of French people coming in and talking to me. So I did have a little way, people to talk to.

**Janet:**  Is there anything else about the lower east side? Do you remember games that the kids played in the lower eastside?

**Emile:** Oh yes. We lived on 6th street and they had a trolley car running so we used to take pennies and put them under the trolley car so when you trolley car went over they became a bond dollar. They became big. Then we had the Ellington hall across the street that was a polish, where they had weddings. I remember that.

**Janet:**  Do you remember any of those, like the weddings?

**Emile:** I don't know. Since I was only 6, I had a lot of noise.

**Janet:**  Any other games or songs that you remember learning when you were first learning the language?

**Emile:** No, I don't remember anything like that. All I know is that the language came to me very quickly before I knew it I couldn't speak French anymore but I could speak English.

**Janet:**  How about in your home? What was being spoken?

**Emile:** We started off French and then we came back to this Yiddish and so we spoke only Yiddish at that time because nobody spoke French and they couldn't speak English and this was the eastside and everybody spoke Yiddish and I picked it up very quickly.

I was the only one with my sister that learned to speak Yiddish fluently. So there was another language I learnt. I couldn't read it very well but I could speak it which was the only way we could talk with my parents.

**Janet:**  Did your parents speak Yiddish in Paris?

**Emile:** They must have, I don't remember. I don't remember how they could have spoken at all if they didn't speak Yiddish but they did speak French because she sent me, told me to go to different places and she spoke it in French. I don't remember how long they were in Paris.

I don't remember when they came over. I do remember that my sister was born in 1913 but I don't remember how long they were in Paris before they decided to come to the United States, which I don't remember why. I do remember why but I’m sorry they did.

Anyway, one thing I remember the eastside very distinctively, in 1918 we had a big parade and we had the Kaiser in a glass coffin and we were young and screaming. The war was over and the Kaiser was in the glass coffin. I remember that distinctly, it was very funny and then we had a bakery on the corner of Second Avenue and Saint Mark’s place and the first time I ever got deep cake we got crumb cake, very good too, better than we get today.

And then I do remember going on the eastside with my parents to the Jewish theatres. Thomas Scheske and Morris Swartz and those people on, I don't remember the street where all the Jewish theatres were at that time. But between coming over to this country and going to east New York definitely I don’t remember too much.

**Janet:**  So how long did you stay on the lower east side then?

**Emile:** Two years.

**Janet:**  Two years.

**Emile:** Or maybe three years. That’s where my sister was born.

**Janet:**  Do you remember the birth of your sister?

**Emile:** Yes, very well. As a matter of fact I was helping my mother diaper her one day and she had a box of talcum powder on there and so I was helping but instead of putting it where it should be, I put it in her face and everybody got so excited, I was blinding her. Stupid, wasn't it?

Another thing I remember distinctly we were eating French fry potatoes, what exactly happened? Anyway turned out that my mother thought I was biting my tongue because I bit my tongue while I was eating French fries and she thought I bit my tongue off. Silly wasn't it?

I do remember one thing that we went, Cecil and I went to the movies the night my sister was born. Why we went to the movies? I guess we went because she was born and she was born in our house, she didn't go to the hospital or anything like that at that time.

**Janet:**  Was there a midwife? Do you remember?

**Emile:** Must have been.

**Janet:**  So you went to the movies...

**Emile:** And she was born.

**Janet:**  And you came home and you had a sister?

**Emile:** I came home and we had a sister. Yeah. Too bad we don't have a picture. She was cute, cute little girl. She still is cute.

**Janet:**  What's your sister's name?

**Emile:** Born originally Sylvia and she didn't like it so she changed it to Cheryl which was silly because I think Sylvia was much prettier and I called her Sebala which is Yiddish for onion, little Sebala.

**Janet:**  Do you remember what movie you saw the day your sister was born?

**Emile:** No, I do not. I do remember one thing there was a fighting movie theatre and there was a lot of fighting and yelling and they got me as a witness and I went to court to tell them what I remember. That I remember being in court and telling them what happened in the theatre but they didn't give me anything, they should have at least given me something, I was a witness. I remember that. I remember the theatre was on Second Avenue and Saint Mark’s place.

**Janet:**  Do you remember any either theatre performances or movies that you saw when you were little that stuck in your mind?

**Emile:** Yes, I do. We’d go to the movies at that time and as a treat we got an orange to take with us and we went got to the movies, they had billboards showing what was playing. I remember there was on there where a man was laying and his family was being stabbed and blood was coming out and that stuck in my mind.

This billboard but the movie itself I don't remember, if you want to know something, I don't know if it's important enough but when I was four years old, Cecil and I went to the same place, the same farm that Albert went to a couple of years later and the farmer's wife's name was Madame Apoloni and she had a farm and they made their own cheese.

We slept in a little bunk in the wall, Cecil and I but this thing that stick to me, all these years I can remember, is that we went for a walk through a cemetery and I got scared because all the statues were with their hands up and I kept thinking it was people. And there was a wedding going on in that day and as we ran they threw us little almond candy. That stuck in my mind but when we came back to Paris, I don't remember anything at all. Those things stuck.

**Janet:**  Is there anything else about the farm that sticks to your mind.

**Emile:** Yeah, she gave us Tartines, we ate them. To this day I remember them because we do them today. Big slices of rye bread with jelly on top, they were called Tartines, that I remember. Unfortunately I don't remember eating anything else that I remember.

**Janet:**  Was this a farm? Where there animals?

**Emile:** No farm. Maybe they were, I don't remember any but it was a farm and it seemed to be one of the thing she did as a living, having children brought there. They do it now, they did that and it was quite customary in the summer to send your child.

Did you ever read Madame Bovary? Do you remember what the Emma, was that her name? Emma's little girl when she was born? They sent her to that farm and she lived there for a while? If you remember the story. So it was custom... it was customary to send a child to spend the summer there. Why he was the only one that went at that time, I don't remember because we had been there before.

**Janet:**  Were there other children at the farm when you went?

**Emile:** No, just the two of us. My cousin Emile, my uncle's son had just left and as we came home, we came home by ourselves. We took a train as we got off the train on the platform, we saw Emile on the other side and he waved to us because he was going back to Paris. Funny isn't it, the things that you remember? Silly.

**Janet:**  Do you find that you remember more and more?

**Emile:** No, the things I remember, I still have them definitely. The things I forgot I never got back except taking a bath in the tub, that just came to me recently and I do remember during the war Zeppelins came over dropping bombs and they dropped the bomb about 3-4 blocks on the factory not far from us.

There was an explosion that was in 1959 I imagine. That was during the war. Outside of that about Paris I don't remember too much except this you little things that stayed in my mind. But I do remember that Paris was so damn clean, Paris was clean, the concierge came out and she washed the sidewalks and cleaned there was no dirt and then I came over here and then I said, “Pap I want to go back.”

**Janet:** And did you want to go back for a long time?

**Emile:** I want to go back forever. Did I want to go back?

**Janet:**  Did you keep wanting to go back?

**Emile:** To this day I'm very sorry I never managed to get back because the house is still there. I don't know if Ben saw the house I think he went to the house. I have a cousin who lives there yet with her mother and whenever the boys go to Paris, they go to visit her. She's still there. She's the only one I remember that still there of all family, aunt rose but I never managed to get back which was a big disappointment to me.

I think my problem was that I had trouble getting a passport because I wasn't- I don't remember why I couldn't get a passport but I didn't or whether that was just my excuse for not going back. I don't know.

**Janet:**  How about your mother and father, were they glad they were here. Do you remember?

**Emile:** I don't remember. They couldn't be very glad they lived in those tenement houses that we lived in which Paris was a tenement house to but there was one hell of a difference. But the terrible things that happened here it happened there too. It happens even today, the communal bathroom, toilet, to everybody on the floor uses the same toilet.

You had to stand in a line and wait till somebody got out so you could get in. We had that in Paris too but I don't remember but about Paris, we went to Van court one night, that’s the only time my father ever took us anywhere and Sylvia was a little girl and Albert was six, and I was nine, Cecil was thirteen and we got a little late that night from [unclear 00:43:00] Park and that's the night the fire broke out in the house and we had to run for our lives. That stuck in my mind.

**Janet:**  Did everyone get out, I mean everyone in the building?

**Emile:** I don't remember. I know somebody gave us blankets. We stood outside watching the firemen putting the fire out.

**Janet:**  So then was it shortly after that that you moved away?

**Emile:** East New York to East First Street on the fifth floor of Atonement house which was the only thing my father could get in there, that short of time. But he did go to east New York right after that and bought this little house under Jersey Avenue in East New York.

**Janet:**  And how did you like that?

**Emile:** It was wonderful. Of course East New York in 1919 was all lots. No houses except a house here, a house there. There I made a lot of friends. But it was open you had grass you had trees. On east side you had nothing.

**Janet:**  So you must've been one about 10?

**Emile:** I was 9 when we came to East New York.

**Janet:**  So now what do you remember about your friends in east New York? Do you remember...?

**Emile:** We went to school. I had a very unusual experience. I shouldn't mention it but kids are very cruel especially at that age and unfortunately my very common name in Europe was a joke in this country.

It was Nachitz and now any kid hearing a name like that would have the time of his life yelling Nachitz, Nachitz and so I ran and they ran after me yelling. And that I remember. That's how I managed to get our name changed.

**Janet:**  Oh, when did you do that?

**Emile:** Short time later I kept insisting, I can't live like this anymore. So my father had a name change although I know it should be a Nachitz which would not be bad today but when your 9- 10 years old and you're going to school with a lot of game and you're the only Jewish kid in the block and your name is Nachitz you won't forget it too easily.

East New York was nice though I liked. I went to PS 173 and a principal used to come every morning in a horse and carriage. We would watch her and she would come riding up in the horse and carriage and come out of the carriage that was our principal.

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

**Emile:** No, I don't. I do remember the name of my high school teacher. When we went to high school, Thomas Jefferson high school was open, we were the first ones to go there and his name was Elize Lieberman.

We opened the school Thomas Jefferson I guess you've heard of it now. That where they shoot each other in east New York. You’ve heard of kids being shot, it's all black now, that time it was a nice school.

**Janet:**  Do you remember being the first class in Thomas Jefferson, do you remember going into the school and what everybody...?

**Emile:** No, I don't but we did have a parade. All the kids marched to parade the opening of Thomas Jefferson. I do remember one thing, my love of music. I got there because the first time I had heard an orchestra play and the school orchestra playing and I remember to this day what they were playing.

The Haydn symphony, the clock symphony tick tock tick tock so I remember and I got my love for music just at that time which I have kept all my life but unfortunately for me I didn't stay in Thomas Jefferson too long because my parents needed me. When I got to be 14 I went to work.

**Janet:**  What was your first job?

**Emile:** I went to new lot evening high school it was called and my first job was in, very unusual job, I don’t know why I’m talking so much.

**Janet:**  It's just terrific. Everything is very interesting.

**Emile:** This was job was a place where years ago if you remember they used to have little house slippers for children with little Indian heads on them and our job was the artist would give us a card board and a brush and a paint and we'd walk along back of each other.

Each one painted his little part of it in which they do today in Japan, that’s in Taiwan. That’s how you get these $10 paintings today. The painting are made by 16 different people at the one time, did you know that? You didn't know that. Did you ever see this little $10, $12 paintings?

**Janet:**  Yeah.

**Emile:** Well they are made 17-18 people each one painting a little tiny bit. That was my first job was to paint those little head, Indian heads.

**Janet:**  You mean you would have one part of the head that you painted?

**Emile:** That's all. like I’d have the feathers and I’d have red paints, so I’d level the lawyer put the thing on there and I’d put my red paint and kept going. One after the other and somebody else, they would put another one.

**Janet:**  And somebody else came...?

**Emile:** And that's how it was done. What they call working in a factory, these eight years ago, Ford's factory, what do they call that?

**Janet:**  Assembly line?

**Emile:** Assembly line. That was an assembly line and I worked there a while and then I did pretty good. I went to work for Kermit Roosevelt of all people. I got a job working for the US line. It was called the Roosevelt steam ship line at that time.

Kermit was the president’s- Theodore Roosevelt son was the president of the company. I think it was slightly anti-Semitic because when he interviewed me he asked me, “What nationality are you?” I said to myself, “If I say I’m Jewish he's not going to give me the job,” because I couldn't even register in a- where you got jobs these days, what do you have today? Where do you go to get a job?

**Janet:**  An employment office?

**Emile:** The employment agencies. So if I went there and I wrote Hebrew, they'd throw it in the garbage. I never could get a job but fortunately they sent me up to Kermit Roosevelt and I worked for the Roosevelt ship line.

**Janet:**  So you said you were French? Is that what you said?

**Emile:** That's right, he said, “What nationality are you?” I said to myself, “If I say Hebrew, he's not going to hire me.” So I said, I’m French and he saw my name Emile, he said, “There must be a connection.” How many Emile are there in this country? Spelt the way I spell mine. E-M-I-L-E.

So it came to him that I must be whatever he thought I was but I did work for Kermit Roosevelt for a couple years. It was a job, I could have travelled around the world because I could have got a job as a ship's boy there but I didn't want it.

**Janet:**  So what did you then for him, for the ship line?

**Emile:** I was an office boy, run errands things like that. It was the butt of the office naturally being the only Jewish kid in the office. My most traumatic period I can remember was Passover. My mother was a very religious woman and God forbid if I had a piece of bread I’d get a sin. I was getting sins all the time. God was up there doing nothing giving me sins, so she'd give me an egg and a piece of Martis.

So I had to find a place where I could hide and eat it so nobody would see me eating it. I remember that yeah but it was a nice job, I liked it and then I got a better job.

**Janet:**  What was that?

**Emile:** I worked for Isadora Jake Fissile, you wouldn't remember him. He was president of the United States bank and when it folded during the depression, I think he went to jail. But I worked for Isadora Jake fissile, it was a nice lawyer's office, I enjoyed that very much.

A very nice office, I really thought I, my mother had all. Unfortunately when I got to be 16 I got a sickness, I don't know if you ever had of [unclear 00:51:25], first it breaks out with scars. At that time it was mortal. Most people didn't live through it. I managed to live through it. I was 16, I lived through it but I lost my job.

**Janet:**  Were you hospitalized?

**Emile:** No, I didn't believe in hospital, I didn't have a doctor. This was a case of hit and miss, if you're lucky you'll live if you don't you'll die. I think at that time, a certain time during that time I thought I was dying and I had a very funny sensation. I had a rubber ball in my hand and it was like clay, like rubber and it kept coming through my fingers and I said to myself if I don't hold it, I’m going to die and I kept holding and holding. I finally got back into shape imagining it was my imagination. At that time I wrote a play in my delirium I wrote a play.

**Janet:**  What was it about?

**Emile:** About the World War 1, Medals for Valor. I remember the name of the play. I was 16, I was able, I wrote the play, in my mind, I didn't write it out because I didn't have the... but I survived that.

**Janet:**  Do you remember the gist of it? Of the play?

**Emile:** I only remember the generals were getting medals and soldiers were getting killed. That was the theme of my play. I don't think even Ben knows the story. Nobody knows it, there's nobody left to know. I’m the only one left.

**Janet:**  Is there anything else about it that you remember?

**Emile:** No. I remember in my mind I was writing this play.

**Janet:**  Do you think it was connected with the fact that you thought you were dying?

**Emile:** I don't know, I don't think so but I managed to get to it but I lost my wonderful job which wasn't wonderful because he went to jail after a while anyway, Isadora Jake Fissile. And after that, I got a job working for Hannon and son.

The shoe people in Fifth Avenue., they had a store opposite Saint Patrick’s cathedral. I worked there, I was shipping clerk there. I worked there a few years, shipping clerking, Hannon and son. First time I got a real pair of shoes. Up to that I didn't get real shoes. I got these old kids that you had a clip up. There I got a real pair of shoes and real pair of socks.

**Janet:**  What were you wearing up till then?

**Emile:** It had a fin. Kids wore shoes that were only half way and further up you had little hooks that you had to hook them on. You wouldn't remember, it was before your time.

**Janet:**  Like spats?

**Emile:** No, they were shoes, real shoes but they weren't the shoes that you would think of as shoe today. They don't wear them anymore. And then I heard that they were making oxfords. I said how could they make oxfords? They were only half fray, shoe falls off. That’s when they stopped making those shoes.

At that time, I don't remember what Rockefeller center looked like but I remember we had the store right opposite Saint Patrick’s and we saw all the parades going past, we’d sit in the window and I would go to central park to row boat during my lunch hour and then I quit.

I thought I was old enough to become a junior salesman and since Mr. Gottlieb won't give me the job, I said, “The hell, I’m quitting.” I quit and right after I quit they pulled the building down, they built Rockefeller center. That was in 1928 and in 1929 two months before the Wall Street crash, I got a job which was very unusual because right after that depression started.

I got a job with an importing company called Strohmeyer and Arpe and he imported olive oil, sardines from Italy mostly and wax, Carnauba wax. They used to purge automobiles, they used Carnauba wax. The one thing about Carnauba wax I remember distinctly. We had two customers. One was ponds cream and one was the shoe polish, what was the name of that shoe polish? I can't remember and they both bought the same Carnauba wax. [Unclear 00:55:50] how can they both use the same wax? And they did.

One made shoe polish and one made cold cream, out of the same wax and unfortunately or I don't know whether I should mention it. I also was the only Jewish kid in the job. While I worked for Kermit Roosevelt I learnt how to type with two fingers so I got a job typing. I stayed there about four years, right until the beginning of the depression in 1932.

Off course I was there when the provision was over and I was never happy because I never got anywhere because I think, I’m blaming it on the fact that I was Jewish but I don't know. No Jewish ever got a job there, anything better than what we got. Are you Jewish?

**Janet:**  Mmh hmm.

**Emile:** Yeah. So you know what I’m talking about because at that time in 1920s a Jewish kid getting a job was impossible. And I was very unfortunate enough to, I know, why am I babbling for?

**Janet:**  This is wonderful, keep going.

**Emile:** I went to high school, New Lots High and I passed everything. We had a very strict rule at that time that you had to have 18 regents’ points to graduate.

**Janet:** This is now in the evening, you were going?

**Emile:** Yeah, New Lots evening high. You won't believe this but I passed all my regents except one, my French. I failed my French as a result I couldn't graduate. In those days if you didn't have your 18 you couldn't graduate.

So I never graduated so I couldn't get a job civil service, is what most of my friends did. They all graduated, they all went to work, became teachers and things like that. A very funny thing happened while I was there and I think that was one of the reasons I never got anywhere.

Six months after I got the job, old man Strohmeyer had died and he handed money out to all the helps and I was only there six months and they gave me a check for $500. I was earning $18 at that time. In their reasoning, as a matter of fact they were all Germans that owned this place.

Strohmeyer was the owner. They reasoned if I got $500 and I was earning $890 a year, I got five years’ salary increase right there so I wasn't entitled to any. So I never got an increase and I sat on my $18 all the time I was there but it was good.

**Janet:**  Okay, we're going to continue but we're going to stop here and put on another tape.

**Emile:** So when do I get lunch?

**Janet:**  This is the beginning now of tape 2 and I’m speaking with Emile Nathanson who came from France in 1916 at 6 years of age and we were talking about you being the first class at Thomas Jefferson high school. Was that the parade where you heard the music that you...?

**Emile:** No, that was in school already. I was on a balcony and the orchestra was playing the Clarks symphony. I remember the Clarks symphony to this day. I never liked Haydn anyway but this one I liked except these last six symphonies I liked because he brought them in London. You know anything about Joseph. He had nothing to do with it.

**Janet:**  Okay, let's talk about you more. You got the job for the German company during the early depression time, right?

**Emile:** I got the job a month after the crash.

**Janet:**  A month after the crash.

**Emile:** The Wall Street crash which was lucky because they weren't many jobs after that. For a while anyway until the depression started to about 19...

**Janet:**  How long were you there?

**Emile:** I stayed from 1929 to about 1932, no it couldn't have been 1932 because I was there doing prohibition with them. 1934. No, it wasn't 1929 either that's when I left [unclear 01:00:15]. So I must have gotten the job 1930, I was there about 4 years.

**Janet:**  What do you remember about prohibition?

**Emile:** I got my first bottle of booze because we imported liquor, this company, we were the first ones to get liquor licenses and for the first time in my life I saw a bottle of wine. Up to then there was no wine at least not a whisky anyway.

I bought 3 bottles of wine and I went to a New Year’s Eve party and I got drunk and I insulted a policemen. We were all trying to run around the streets my friends and I, we all got under and everybody drunk from the three bottles of wine and we were insulting people which has nothing to do with it.

But I stayed in Strohmeyer for about four years and after that my life started going down. I shouldn't say that unless she isn’t here because that's when I got married. I had no job, I married a wonderful person but she was just as poor as I was and it was a very difficult time we had there for three years of our marriage.

**Janet:**  What was your wife's name?

**Emile:** Dina. It’s not Diana its Dina, D-I-N-A. its pronounced Dina.

**Janet:**  What was her maiden name?

**Emile:** Goldberg.

**Janet:**  How did you meet?

**Emile:** We had a social club. We talked about Danny Kay and that's a darn miserable thing happen to me. We went to dances and they had a cream called the Hebrew Alliance society. We went to dances there and they was the cutest little girl there, she wore the red bandana, she had her hair down to her... and I started dancing with her and she said her name was Dina and that's where I met her.

Unfortunately for me she lived out in Hollis and I lived in Coney Island and travelling from Coney Island to Hollis was 3 hours, on Farmers Boulevard. So we were married, I don't think I should say this, I don't think they know the stories.

**Janet:**  It would be good to have them done.

**Emile:** First you're going to look at me and say, what the hell happened to this guy, he never told us these things. Anyway we were married in 1936. It will be 60 years next month a year from now. We couldn't live together because I didn't work.

She had a job making $16 a week in Jamaica working in a millinery shop which you don't have these days and so for 3 years we were married and nobody knew it and then she being plucky went out and got an apartment and I’ll never forget what happened. I packed a suitcase and I left my house to live with her.

That was in 1939. I was awful. In 1939 we started living together. In 1941 my son was born. So this is the one we talked about now that's outside but the worst thing that could ever happen to me happened to me. I used to think years ago that if only I had dropped dead.

I couldn't get a job although I had 15 of them all crap jobs, salesman selling, I had a job selling lard to bakeries and butcher shops and they kicked me out when I came in. They gave me a little piece of lard and I was supposed to sell it. The worst place I went to was a place where they were killing horses.

They were canning horse meat and I smelt the place a mile before I got to it. I didn't take that job either but then the worst thing that could happen to me happened, my father in law, I don't remember exactly the story bought a little trimming store from somebody, I think he bought it for his daughter. His daughter was the only one with a boy at that time. He wanted to set him up but he saw to me, he didn't want any part of it.

It’s really, trade is a funny thing, my father had a tailor shop across the street from the trimming store and he didn't know that my father in law had bought it. Sounds like fiction. So he came across one day and he knew that I was looking for something. He went to find if he could buy the business. So there was his father in law there. So then he went to buy the damn business and I had it from 1975, 35 years I worked there. It was the stinkiest, largest business anybody could have. It was a trimming store, which was just a simple part of the business. The best part of the business was making buttonholes on the button whole machine and hand stitching on the hand stitching machine.

Unfortunately, the man I bought this business from was an old man and his business was also old and the machines were even older. So they were always falling apart and I didn't know anything about it so I started making buttonholes for a living and I did that for 35 years. My nephew insulted me. He used to call me a tailor.

**Janet:**  So where was the trimming store?

**Emile:** The trimming store was in Benson Hurst and that's where we moved when we moved from Coney Island. When I was 19 years old we moved from Coney Island to Benson Hurst. My father owned a little tailor shop. What do I remember there?

The first time in my life I ever had steam heat, I was 19, and we had never had steam heat. There was a lot about east New York I don't even want to talk about because it will take 2 hours but one thing I do remember is that the only heat we got in the house was from a coal stove.

My father would get up early stove and make the stove so we'd have a little heat. How come we lived like that? Today in Harlem if they didn't have steam they'd yell blue murder. We had no steam for 10 years of my life. He’d make the coal stove and I remember this I remember it was so cold that when I went to go to school, I got dressed under the covers.

I put my long socks, we were holding knickerbockers and we came out there was no steam or heat. With terrible winters we had in those days, snow was quite high. And this was a little shack, a two family wooden house. There is so much I don't even want to remember. I'm glad Celine isn't here,

**Janet:**  What do you feel most proud of that you did? What makes you feel satisfaction that you’ve...

**Emile:** I have such a wonderful son. My son was the apple of my eye, he was a wonderful kid. We went all places. We went to the Statue of Liberty when he was 6 years old. But otherwise the building were so degrading, it was so miserable. I hated it. I hated it from the first day I walked into that damn thing especially since the machines were broken.

One day I took that machine and went 45 pounds and I carried it to the east side to have it fixed. I carried it on my shoulder. It never worked, maybe that's I hated the business as much as I did. And I hated it for the simple reason amongst others that being a button whole maker was a big joke. Did you ever hear the joke? You never heard the joke about buttonhole makers? I don't remember exactly why but it was a joke.

When I went to the east side and I told them I was making buttonholes, they laughed and I had it for 35 years and I couldn't get the hell out of there. I couldn't get out of that thing. I finally did when I almost died of emphysema although I didn't really get it, I got night trouble and I knew it was a case of either dying or getting out of that dopy business. So I went to California, unfortunately that didn't work either.

**Janet:**  Did you continue to work? Or you were retired when you left?

**Emile:** At that time I retired. I worked very hard at that business and I was rich. I worked very hard at that business because during World War 2 there was a lot factories making dresses but nobody had a machine. So they gave me the buttonholes to make. So I made a lot of money. So I was able to quit although I don't know what would have happened if I had. You knew and tell to this people, they should know all these, maybe Rebecca should know 20 years from now.

Anyway, I went to California with my son, he was 4 at that time and I couldn't find anything to do there because I was sick of there, I got out asthma and when I went to Hollywood it was the time the smog was coming in and I was very bad. I finally got a doctor who told me to, "Get the hell out of here or you won't live long."

So I went to Tujunga. They were chopping the Saint Gabriel Mountain. There I felt good but I couldn't work because there was no way to travel from Hollywood, I got a job in Hollywood, from Tujunga. So I had to leave California and sponge off my family, they were in Miami, Charlene, my mother, my father and Rosie. And I went there for a while in Miami. So I was lucky. The everglade fires were burning, so I got my asthma back and Tujunga was very good.

**Janet:**  Tell me did your mother and father become citizens at some point?

**Emile:** My father became a citizen I think in 1926 and I became a citizen under his papers. I never really renounced. My brother did become a full-fledged citizen but I didn't but I was able to become a citizen under his papers.

**Janet:**  So after you left Florida you came back here, to this…?

**Emile:** To this horrible city. And then we had no place to live because that was 1940s. Before the end of war and there were no places to live so we got a room in Sea gate but I had asthma then. I was very bad with asthma coming back from sea gate we moved to Neptune Avenue, from Neptune Avenue we moved to ocean parkway. Always rooming, just a room. You don't want to listen to this do you?

**Janet:**  Yeah.

**Emile:** Well, that's not important.

**Janet:**  Well tell me about this time in your life, this phase now?

**Emile:** That I am in now? In 1975 I retired. And that's it. What can I say?

**Janet:**  How is this phase, this time of your life?

**Emile:** It's awful.

**Janet:**  It's awful?

**Emile:** Mmh

**Janet:**  You have things of interest?

**Emile:** I don't know how to describe it. We moved to my father in law's house in Jamaica and since I never liked the bastards and the rest of the family, I moved there only because my wife and my son and my daughter and my dog had a place to live.

We lived in a Flatbush on the second floor. I moved out, I always try and remember why I moved in since I didn't like these people. But I felt if my daughter got a backyard and my daughter had Jamaica high around and my son had his own room, and my wife had a piano to play so we moved there. We’ve been living there for 35 years. June 1st will be 35 years and I hated it ever since and I still do.

**Janet:**  But tell me, I think you started to talk about this when the tape was off, about how you feel about being French and American. What do you consider your French side or your part of you is French.

**Emile:** Just a short time I consider myself French. If anybody asked me what was my nationality I said French. Why I don't know because I was only 6 but there is something about the French air that if you’re born a Frenchman you'll never forget.

I think that's the reason but unfortunately I was never happy in America, maybe because of my circumstances. Anyway, after I left [unclear 0:18:12] I got this [unclear 01:15:05] business and I was there for 35 years and I didn't like it. And then my son was born in Coney Island, that's where we finally after getting all these little stinking 2 by nothing rooms, my wonderful sister was able to get us an apartment in Coney Island where Trump village is today. So we lived there but we also didn't have a bathroom, it seemed to be my luck, I never had a bathroom. I had to share bathrooms.

**Janet:**  Your son's name is Saul?

**Emile:** Yes

**Janet:**  Did you have other children or just Saul?

**Emile:** I was going to come to that, then Ethel was born six years later, Ethel was born. She was born in Coney Island and then we moved to Flatbush, Lincoln road but I still had the business. No I didn't. When I sold the business in Benson Hurst, I found a guy that owned a buttonhole machine. See I couldn't get away from it. It was stuck to me.

The buttonhole machines and I hated the damn thing and I figured if he had a buttonhole machine maybe I could start business again. So I did. So here was a machine mechanic and I make the buttonholes and then he moved to New York and I started this new business again, making buttonholes there. But fortunate this time I got a brand new machine so at least I was lucky with that.

**Janet:**  So do you have grand children?

**Emile:** Four. I got three granddaughters and a grandson. Saul has two granddaughters and Ethel has a grandson and a granddaughter and her name is Stacy and his name is Greggy and she’s gone to only at the college.

**Janet:**  Tell me about your memories like we're talking about early memories and all that. You mentioned before but there were certain things that always stuck in your mind but as you talk about these things do more things fit together into the big picture?

**Emile:** One of my hobbies is when I can't sleep at night I start to relieve my life. So I start with my Parisian life right up until we moved to east New York where I got to run away from those kids because they were yelling at me and I had to go to pines, what was the name of that Apple cider? So half the time I was outside that place fighting with those kids because they were calling me names.

But my ten years in east New York were really difficult, very very difficult. Fortunately for me I had my brother and so we managed to together and we were very poor. Which is nothing to do with it but I was that kind of a kid that built wagons and things like that. So one of my jobs is to go to the burns coal place, we couldn’t afford to buy coal and when the coal truck went by, pieces that fell off we picked up and put them in the bag and we came home with a bag of coal but Albert was with me at that time.

**Janet:**  Why don't us, unless you can think of something else I think we should end on a positive note, how about some very fond memory.

**Emile:** I don't remember any except for my son. When he came I had somebody to go with and do things with. So we went together quite a bit. We went to the Statue of Liberty, we went to all different places and that's why I found these memories, the first six years of his life. After that he didn't need me anymore. So we're finished?

**Janet:**  Well is there anything else that you can, I know there is a lot more.

**Emile:** There is a lot more, but you don't want to know them. You wouldn't want for this. I was born in Paris, came to the eastside moved to east New York and moved to Benson Hurst and moved to Jamaica and that's my life. Very little there, off course there’s a lot if I wanted to go to the trouble of writing it like I did that. I could really write, but I don't feel like writing anymore.

**Janet:**  Well if you could write the way you speak I think it would be most interesting.

**Emile:** Yes but I don't want to. It’s not happy. Not a happy life that you want to recite. Off course probably who are unhappy than I.

**Janet:**  Let me just say that it's really been a pleasure because this is very, very interesting. No, it's very interesting and I really appreciate you coming in.

**Emile:** I’ll say one thing you won't get another. I think I’m one of a kind. Where will you get somebody else that's going to do that kind of crazy talk?

**Janet:**  I think you're one of a kind, yeah. Well I appreciate it, it's been my pleasure.

**Emile:** I’m sorry I talked too much.

**Janet:**  Oh, don't apologies. Thank you very much.

**Emile:** You're welcome.

**Janet:**  I’ve been speaking with Emile Nathanson and this is the 29th of May 1995. Mr. Nathanson is 85 years old at the time of this interview.

**Emile:** It doesn't look it.

**Janet:**  It doesn't look it. This is Janet Levine for the national park service and I’m signing off. Thank you

**Emile:** Good. Alright I want my lunch where is this?