**Kate:** Good afternoon this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 9th of December, 1993 and I’m in Farmington Hills at the home of Elizabeth Ruskin who came from Russia in 1908 when she was 4 years old.

**Ruskin:** That's right.

**Kate:** Why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Ruskin:** Well, I was called Leah in here and I guess one teacher at school finally translated it to Elizabeth but my mother used to tell me that my name was Italia so evidently I should have been called Lia or Leah, I don't know why they changed it to that but I like the name. She always told me that I was named after a very wonderful woman who lived a long time, I can tell you that.

**Kate:** What about your maiden’s last name?

**Ruskin:** My maiden last name was Glasier spelt G-L-A-S- I- E-R and my dad's name was Ezra and you want me to tell you about him a little bit?

**Ruskin:** Yeah. How about your maiden name thinking it was Schrar might be?

**Kate:** Schrar but I was never a Schrar, the reason I found out Schrar is when we looked in this passport. They tell me the name was Schrar and it was changed when we came across but I wouldn't know anything about that because I was too young.

**Kate:** Where were you born?

**Ruskin:** I was born in Russia as far as I know.

**Kate:** And the town?

**Ruskin:** No, I was in Bialystock. B- I-A- L- Y- S- T-O-C-K, Bialystock. Now that I understand was on the border of Poland, so at the time I was born it could have been Poland or it could have been Russia. But nobody ever told me because we just didn't think about those things at the time.

**Kate:** And do you know anything about that town? Did your parents ever talk about that that town?

**Ruskin:** My mother used to talk about that town and tell me she always used to say it was a city of beautiful women. I remember that distinctly and by this picture you can see because mother was beautiful. She did say that the boys went to gymnasium.

**Kate:** Gymnasium

**Ruskin:** Or something, gymnasium. My brothers went there but they were all older. See, there were three boys born. I had three older brothers before I came along.

**Kate:** Did you talk about anything about the industry of that town or what this town was like?

**Ruskin:** No, and I really don't know what my father was. Funny but we never did understand but he was a master plumber and a builder when he came here and he did come to New York 2 years before he brought mother and us over.

As I told you before he did not like New York and I suppose he settled here because it was an industrial town and maybe he worked in the factories. He never did tell us, but when we came here dad had a beautiful home for us and everything.

He did a lot of building, he was a great man and my father couldn't sign his name when he came here. He’s a remarkable man. He used to sign an x but he learned and we had a wonderful life.

**Kate:** What was your father's name, full name?

**Ruskin:** Ezra.

**Kate:** Ezra

**Ruskin:** E-Z-R-A, Ezra Glasier.

**Kate:** What did he look like?

**Ruskin:** I have some old pictures of him I’ll have to show them to you but he did not, I can't remember him like this. I can't remember him like this at all. I think that when we came over here his beard and everything was gone.

**Kate:** And what do you remember him as? How would you describe his height and how his face...?

**Ruskin:** He wasn't very tall, no. I had one brother, this brother that came over, Label who became an attorney and he looked more like my dad than the other boys.

**Kate:** He had dark eyes or....?

**Ruskin:** He had dark eyes and dark hair and so did my mum.

**Kate:** How tall about, what would you say?

**Ruskin:** Oh maybe he was 5'8" or "9, he was not a tall man, no.

**Kate:** What about his personality? What do you think of your father?

**Ruskin:** [laughter] we all loved him and he loved us. I can say that and everything was for the children naturally. He was just a wonderful man. You can talk to people here, he did a lot of building and we had a beautiful home. I think when we came here we lived on Hastings street. Does that sound familiar to you?

**Kate:** I heard the name but...

**Ruskin:** It was an old Jewish neighborhood and I do remember that we lived in- we have to walk up three steps to the house from the store. So he must have had his plumbing shop and the house at the same- I can't recall that, I wish I did but way back in my mind I remember that we lived there where he had his place of business too. But we didn't live there very long because pretty soon he built us another beautiful home.

**Kate:** Do you remember any sort of anecdote or story about your father that you would like to tell that you told at home about him? About his personality, something he did that was memorable?

**Ruskin:** Well, I’ll tell you one thing. Even after we were grown we used to call my father the general because he was very strict with us. If he told us we had to be in by 11 he was at the door and we had to be in by 11 and as a result we all turned out very well.

Nobody got into trouble. There were 9 children, and we just adored my dad and my mother. Then we had the summer home and it was great. Every summer as soon as school was out my dad took his little truck and the first thing he put on that truck was his washing machine because there were 9 children. But we had a great time and maybe I’ve got some of him in because I do everything.

**Kate:** What do you mean you do everything?

**Ruskin:** Well, they want me downstairs now. They’ve got some work to do down there.

**Kate:** So you keep busy?

**Ruskin:** I keep busy, I keep very busy and dad was like that. After I graduated I worked with dad because my older sister was in the office. When she got married after I graduated I stepped in.

**Kate:** So it’s a family business in a way?

**Ruskin:** It’s a family and I actually run that business. I actually run the business.

**KATE:** What about your mum, what was your mother's name?

**Ruskin:** My mother's name was Mary and she was just a homemaker, that's all.

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

**Ruskin:** Her maiden name supposedly was Notkoff, N-O-T-K-O-F-F and she was a twin. She did tell us that she was a twin and she did bring over a nephew and his name is Irvin Notkoff. I kept in touch with him and he lives in New York. Now, whether he's alive or not I would love to find out.

For some reason I was the one that kept the family together. When I went there I saw him. I shouldn't tell you this, but when he came here he fell in love with a married lady and my mother shooed him out of the house. She wouldn't let him live here so he went to New York and when I went there, I went to New York to visit and I made amends. I made amends.

**Kate:** Then he was sore about having to leave?

**Ruskin:** Yes, he was very angry about having to leave and he'd want to stay. But I think he is a tool die maker. When he first went there he drove a cab. Maybe you could find out about him.

**Kate:** Unless you look in the book.

**Ruskin:** You can look in the book? I would love to. Now my daughter told me when she was there, she looked up the name she said there was a Pauline Notkoff. Now, that doesn't ring a bell to me at all because my mother never mentioned it. My mother mentioned her family and she did tell us that she was a twin, she had a twin brother and I think this Irvin came from the brother.

**Kate:** What did her look like exactly long?

**Ruskin:** My mother?

**Kate:** Yeah

**Ruskin:** Well, she wasn't very tall, you can see she had dark hair and dark eyes and beautiful pompadour, she had a pompadour look and dresses up to her neck like they wore. Look how nice she kept us. Now that was a chore. 6 kids, but the bigger chore was coming across on the boat.

**Kate:** With all the children?

**Ruskin:** That was the chore.

**Kate:** How would you describe her personality?

**Ruskin:** What?

**Kate:** Your personality? Your mother's personality, what would you say about it?

**Ruskin:** Well she never got angry at us, I know that. She did get angry at me once. I remember I was in the school play and I was coming home. I was coming home and I guess she was very upset because I wasn't home. She was worried about me and she met me and greeted me half way and she gave me a nice big slap.

**Kate:** That was unusual?

**Ruskin:** It was very unusual but she was so upset because she thought something had happened to me and I had no way of letting her know that I was staying in school practicing this play, whatever we did. But she never scolded us and she always cooked what we wanted. Even after I got married she was telling me how to make things for my husband. She was a real mother. That’s what I can tell you, a real mum.

**Kate:** Could you name all your brothers and sisters?

**Ruskin:** Yeah, sure. There was Ben, Benjamin he was the oldest and there was my brother Max, he was very good-looking, this is the tall one here, then my sister Rebecca who didn't like her name. Can I tell this and she changed it to Bessie and I hated that name because I loved Rebecca but those days Rebecca was, what was Rebecca? People call their children Rebecca now and Rachel’s and Sarah but those days they didn't do that.

**Kate:**  It was old fashioned, wasn't it?

**Ruskin:** They were old fashioned. But they've come back. So she was Rebecca and then there was my brother Lou who became an attorney and then me and my sister Lillian.

**Kate:** What about the house? Do you know anything about the house where you lived before in Russia? Did they talk about that house at all ever?

**Ruskin:** What?

**Kate:** When you came here only at 4 years old, where you used to live, did they ever talk about that house?

**Ruskin:** No, we didn't we talked about another house that my dad built and there was a little court between our house and the next and we became very good friends with the kids and they had a basketball stuck up there. We used to play all 4 of us, all the children from one house and another.

I remember that house very very well and then dad built a house on Garfield and my mother took care of the garden and she grew 1000 roses in the summer. And she came from Russia and knew nothing here and they did not speak good English and when I think back, this is the bane of my existence. That we didn't do more for them. Why?

**Kate:** Do you have any recollection, any memory at all before you came to the United States of that house? Do you remember anything back in Russia?

**Ruskin:** My little house? I’m afraid I don't.

**Kate:** Did your brothers and sisters say anything about that place where you used to live in Russia. Do they remember?

**Ruskin:** No, we never talked about it that was the funny part of it.

**Kate:** I thought maybe Benjamin would have talked about it?

**Ruskin:** I thought he would but he didn't. He was the oldest one.

**Kate:** Who did the cooking? Your mother did the cooking in the home?

**Ruskin:** My mum, my mother did the cooking.

**Kate:** What was your favorite food?

**Ruskin:** I honestly don't know. I was a good eater.

**Kate:** You said she cooked anything for you. What would you ask for?

**Ruskin:** She cooked anything. She made good soups, real good soups. We always had soups and I remember lamp chops. She used to stuff them. I don't know what she stuffed them with but they were good. Even when I got married, that's why I’m talking about lamb chops. She showed me how to stuff lamb chops and a good brisket. Oh that was good.

**Kate:** Did you help at all with the cooking?

**Ruskin:** No, I didn't help with the cooking but we used to come home from school and I remember there was a whole slew of us and by the time we lived on Garfield there were 3 more children. See 3 more that were born here. It was the sister Gertrude she was the first one and then there was another brother, Maury who also became an attorney and my baby sister Cecilia. I used to do the ironing. I used to love to iron. Isn’t that funny?

**Kate:** What was meal time like when you ate?

**Ruskin:** Not bad, noisy of course but we were all well behaved. When I look back now and they came here as immigrants and they didn't have a chance like the immigrants do today, if my dad had had the education, he would have gone so much further. But he did so well.

**Kate:** How did he do well when he didn't speak English?

**Ruskin:** I don't know. It’s peculiar. Well my older sister worked with him and then after she got married I was there and I kept the books. The girls became, two of them became school teachers but I was the oldest after my sister Rebecca got married and so I stepped in.

I don't know. I kept all the books and I know that I did everything I could. He was a master plumber. We had men working for us and he would send them out to fix, repair things but he also did a lot of building.

**Kate:** How about your grandparents. Did you ever know your grandparents?

**Ruskin:** I knew one grandmother. the one that my dad, that he came to in New York and I told you I went to New York at one time to visit, I went with somebody I don't remember and dad gave me some money to look up my grandmother and buy her a chicken and I did. This was funny and I gave her money and I bought a chicken and I cooked. I must have been able to cook and I was only, I think it was 21 years old at the time when I went.

**Kate:** So your grandmother came first? Or who came first.

**Ruskin:** My grandmother.

**Kate:** Before your father?

**Ruskin:** Oh yes. My father came to my grandmother and a brother and a sister in New York.

**Kate:** So your father's family, actually were the first to come here?

**Ruskin:** Yes

**Kate:** Do you know why they came?

**Ruskin:** I don't know why they came.

**Kate:**  They never talked about it very much?

**Ruskin:** They never talked about that.

**Kate:** So your father was actually the last one of his lot to go over?

**Ruskin:** Yes.

**Kate:** He chose not to go to New York where they lived?

**Ruskin:** He was in New York. He came to New York and he lived there but I don't know how long and then when he was ready, when he made enough money to send for all of us, he said he wasn't going to bring us there because it was too dirty. There was dirt on the streets and he just didn't like it and he didn't have an opportunity so he came to Detroit.

**Kate:** Who would you say you were particularly close to in the family, if you were going to say a family member that you were close to? Who was it?

**Ruskin:** Me? I’m close to my sister now. I guess the two of us have always been close. She’s only not quite two years younger than I am this one and we are the only two left.

**Kate:** Which sister is that, Lillian?

**Ruskin:** Lillian. Yes.

**Kate:** She's the one we- she doesn’t want us to talk about very much? [Laughter] do you have any anecdotes about Lillian?

**Ruskin:** Yes. [Laughter] Lillian won't tell you she'd like not to tell you she was born in Russia and I don't know why. Well her husband came from Germany. They came from an old German stock. Now why she was embarrassed about that- she's always been like that. She taught school here.

She became a school teacher, very bright lady and she lives in one of these homes like I do now, I think she's just as peppy as I am and she has two grandsons. Lovely, one is a doctor and the other one is an attorney and we love each other.

We talk to each other every day on the phone but oh she had she really didn't like it cause I thought I was being interviewed and maybe, I said to her maybe we’ll be in the paper. She said, “No answer.” I said, “What's wrong Lillian?” and she said, “I’d rather you not,” and I began to laugh. I said I’d rather I am.

**Kate:** Why don't you live in the same home? Why wouldn't – oops here.

**Ruskin:** No, that's mine.

**Kate:** What's the funny thing?

**Ruskin:** Something has been in my imagination for year and years and years now. Could this be true? I was standing outside of the house in Russia and I was a little girl, you can see because I was little and then somebody came. We were there during the programs, you know. I think that's why my dad left. There was a soldier with a big gun, aimed it at me and my older sister, just as he put the gun up dragged me back in the house. Could that be true? And I why do I keep thinking about that?

**Kate:** Well, it could be its come back to you now, it could be very much be true because it frightened you as a small child and now as you get older you start to remember very well.

**Ruskin:** Why does it come back to me all the time? Why should I remember something like that?

**Kate:** Because it frightened you probably.

**Ruskin:** She pulled me into the house and the man was laughing.

**Kate:** It hard to know what's fiction and what's fact but it seems to me that it could be that it's an old memory coming back.

**Ruskin:** Why?

**Kate:** It’s interesting.

**Ruskin:** That's a funny thing that comes back to me constantly.

**Kate:** Now you were brought over at 4 years old. Do you remember anything about going in that boat trip?

**Ruskin:** Not a thing.

**Kate:** No, you're too young.

**Ruskin:** I’m too young.

**Kate:** What about your brothers and sisters? Did they talk about the boat trip over?

**Ruskin:** Yes. They talked but actually I really don't know. I can't remember and neither does my sister because we talked about it because I told her you were coming and we both feel that we did ourselves and my parents an injustice because we should have done this a long time ago. The older ones now eleven, you see my older brother was 11 years old and he should have known and he would have known.

**Kate:** But they never talked about it very much or did they talk ever about the voyage over, the boat trip?

**Ruskin:** Never.

**Kate:** That you know

**Ruskin:** Never that I know.

**Kate:** What about your parents? They were never any comments about..?

**Ruskin:** Yeah my mother used to. My mother used to say. My dad didn't but my mother came with us. Dad came alone and maybe it wasn't so hard for him. She had 6 children to take care of. Of course the older ones probably, I always question how did she do it, well the older ones took care of the younger ones I’m sure but she didn't, she never said it was a hardship so I don’t know how we came.

**Kate:** You say that your father paid the way over?

**Ruskin:** Yes, my father worked and established a home for us here in Detroit and came and paid.

**Kate:** How did he do that? How did he come to Detroit and get that house? Do you know?

**Ruskin:** Well, he must have come on the boat too.

**Kate:** He came on the boat, but how did he get to Detroit of all places?

**Ruskin:** That's what I don't understand either. He came to New York because his mother was there. His mother and brother must have brought him over but as I say he didn't like it. He didn't want to bring his family to New York.

**Kate:** But he never mentioned how he got to Michigan and why Michigan?

**Ruskin:** No, except that he knew that there was work here he said. Certainly he couldn't have been a master plumber right away and a builder? This happened many years later because I was grown and working with him but he didn't like it he knew that there were more opportunities here so he came here.

**Kate:** Did your family have any stories or anecdotes about the first things they saw in the United States and how they were different for them?

**Ruskin:** Nothing.

**Kate:** Nothing.

**Ruskin:** I can't remember that at all.

**Kate:** What is your first, first memory, this one with the gun now?

**Ruskin:**  Yes.

**Kate:** That one was the first one. What’s the next first memory you have?

**Ruskin:** In Russia?

**Kate:** No, just the youngest memory you have yourself. What’s the first thing that you remember, the youngest age, the first thing? What age were you?

**Ruskin:** I must have been even younger than at 4, I was very young, I must have been 2 or 3 years old at the time I was telling?

**Kate:** The one with the gun?

**Ruskin:** Yes.

**Kate:** But after that what would you say your next memory was, anything? You remember going to kindergarten?

**Ruskin:** In Russia?

**Kate:** No, here.

**Ruskin:** I don't know if I, I must have gone to kindergarten but I couldn't speak English I don't know how I even went.

**Kate:** Do you remember learning English.

**Ruskin:**  Nobody, we just learned ourselves I guess. I don't know.

**Kate:** So did you go to kindergarten in the United States? Did you go to school here?

**Ruskin:** I don't think so. I must have gone though.

**Kate:** Or you could have gone to first grade, straight?

**Ruskin:** I think I went right into the first grade. I remember a wonderful English teacher that I had her name was Miss Nichols, I remember her.

**Kate:** And she was what grade you think?

**Ruskin:** She was more than the first grade because we had a spelling bee that I won and she gave me a dime. I remember that distinctly. That was the price of spelling bee in English and she gave me a dime.

**Kate:** And so how young do you think you were?

**Ruskin:** Maybe 6 or 7

**Kate:** So you knew English well enough to win?

**Ruskin:** I knew English well enough.

**Kate:** Well when you were here, what was the neighborhood you lived in here?

**Ruskin:** I told you I lived on Hastings Street. There’s a story, there’s a book about that. Where is the book? I must have it. I think I have it here.

**Kate:** The Hasting Street is exactly where?

**Ruskin:** Hasting Street is, you know where the market is, the Eastern market? Right through there some place. It’s not called East Detroit. It was a very nice neighborhood. It was a nice neighborhood and I know there were some Jewish delicatessens on the street. There’s a whole book that somebody wrote about it and it was a very nice neighborhood.

**Kate:** Downtown Detroit?

**Ruskin:** No, it wasn't downtown.

**Kate:** On the east side.

**Ruskin:** Not even the east side. It was not East Detroit. It was not right in Detroit. Hasting street is still well known as a street.

**Kate:** Did other family members live nearby you?

**Ruskin:** We didn't have any. I never had an aunt or uncle here. Never, they all remained in Russia and those that came on my father's side were in New York but I visited them.

**Kate:** What do you remember about the neighborhood of your childhood, what was special about it?

**Ruskin:** The one I remember is the one I lived on mount Comb Street. I remember the names of the street. Now do you know where that is? Do you know where the, there was a wonderful restaurant Whitney across Woodward and we could go across there and also then I lived on Garfield that was the beautiful home and a beautiful street.

Just beautiful and my mother grew the roses and we had what they call a music room. There was the piano, I remember that very vividly and then we walked up the stairs to the bedrooms and that's where we lived and think I went to Caperon School. I try to think where is the Caperon School? But there isn't a Caperon school anymore.

**Kate:** How old were you then?

**Ruskin:** I must have been 10 or 12. I must have been because I was taking piano lessons.

**Kate:** So Garfield was the time that you remember fondly.

**Ruskin:** That's the time that I remember fondly.

**Kate:** What about Hastings? When did you live on Hastings?

**Ruskin:** When we first came.

**Kate:** When you first came?

**Ruskin:** Yeah

**Kate:** So your father basically went to a Jewish neighborhood?

**Ruskin:**  Oh yes

**Kate:** And his family and his children grew up in it?

**Ruskin:** We grew up there, yes.

**Kate:** Did you get along well with your neighbors?

**Ruskin:** With my neighbors? Yes.

**Kate:** Did anyone else work in your family besides your father?

**Ruskin:** Well my two older brothers did.

**Kate:** When they were younger to work?

**Ruskin:** Yes they went to work. My oldest brother was in the navy, both brothers were in the navy, both oldest brothers and the third one right over me became a lawyer, he didn't, he became an attorney.

**Kate:** Did they fight the first war?

**Ruskin:** Did they fight in the first war? I remember them in their uniforms.

**Kate:** Was it the first or the second war?

**Ruskin:** I don't know, it wasn't the second no because by that time I was married, I’m sure. Must have been the first but I remember them both. I don't think they were ever shipped out. They were here. But I remember them. We had a beautiful home on Garfield there. We had a third floor and there was nothing up there. We used to wax the floors and dance and we had a great time. Once we had a Halloween party and my brother Max, he was the good looking one. That’s the tall one here and his wife is still living. Betty, she's a dear.

We’re very good friends, very dear friends. She and my sister live at Stroll Bridge. You should go there get some information from them. And he came and I was angry because he didn't come to the party or something at the party and he showed up as surprise on the back room on his uniform and oh boy all the girls. I had a lot of girlfriends because I had 3 older brothers. Oh boy.

**Kate:** What about school? Did you feel foreign in school?

**Ruskin:** No. I can't understand that. I wish I knew and I really wish I knew. My name wasn't Leah and they used to call me Lizzie. I remember that and Miss Nichols said to me, “Don't you think-? That isn't your name, that is not a name,” and I said, “Yes, it is.” I didn't know when I came across here and she says, Lizzie is Elizabeth and I’ve been Elizabeth ever since.

Another thing, this is interesting, I was born April 11th 1904 and in Russia I don't think I even have a birth certificate. I can't understand that. I talked to my sister this morning and said, “Why haven't we got one? Why didn't we go into this?” I’m the one whose digging, you know what I mean? I should have dug many many years ago. I might have gotten more information from my father. But I didn't think about it. I guess we were just happy and content the whole bunch of us.

You’re not Jewish so you don't know. Passover comes every year just like Christmas come on the 25th but Hanukkah this comes also a different time. Passover comes during April and March sometimes and it comes in a different time. My mother used to tell me I was born 3 days before Pessa’h. You know what Pessa’h is? Passover.

Well, every year it came at a different time so every year at school, I remember this vividly I had a different birthday because 3 days before Easter was a different time, maybe a different time. So on April 11th one year Miss Nichol said to me, “What is this monkey business? When were you really born?” And I said, “I don't know, 3 days before Pessa’h. My mother told me.”

This is funny isn't it? So she said, “Well this is April 11th,” and that's how I established my birthday. It could have been the 15th, it could have been 1st of April, and it could have been some times in March. It depends on when the year when Passover fell. This is where I got my birthday from.

**Kate:** But you can find out when Passover fell in 1904?

**Ruskin:** Yes, I could.

**Kate:** Easily

**Ruskin:** How?

**Kate:** Just go get an old calendar.

**Ruskin:** What?

**Kate:** Get an old calendar.

**Ruskin:** What am I thinking? Why didn't you come before? See I’m not so smart. Oh I never thought of that.

**Kate:** You remember Miss Nichols, right?

**Ruskin:** Oh, I remember Miss Nichols.

**Kate:** Is that the earliest teacher you remember?

**Ruskin:** I remember her and I remember in high school I had a Mr. Laberdy, a big fat man and he was my arithmetic teacher and he was great and I loved arithmetic. I still do my check book by hand, I don't use computers, I do everything myself and my name was Elizabeth Glasier and when holidays came I stayed out of school because we were religious.

One day he said to me, “You're not Jewish? Elizabeth Glasier, you're not Jewish.” He said to me, “Why you are taking these days off from school?” I couldn't convince him, I could not convince him.

**Kate:** He thought you were just taking the days off?

**Ruskin:** He thought I was taking the days off.

**Kate:** Well, you said you won the spelling bee for a dime?

**Ruskin:**  That was the prize.

**Kate:** Do you remember learning anything English, not knowing words at the beginning, do you remember any confusion?

**Ruskin:** I can't understand that because in I know very good in English. I remember this English teacher, I must have been older than 10, I can't remember. Is it off?

**Kate:** Just hold on.

**Ruskin:** I wish I could tell you more. I don't think back but I remember on incident. We had a play, we read at a play or a story and we had to make into a play and the one who was best could choose the characters and it was me. She gave me. She liked my story the best and I choose all the characters.

I loved that kind of stuff at school, I loved it. I should have been a school teacher. I should have been something. But my dad needed me and I didn't think about anything at that time. But I went back. I went back to music school with a friend of mine years ago. We went and we took the wonderful heritage of Hebrew music. I went back. I didn't get credit. We went away in University but I did go back because I wanted more of the knowledge and I do a lot of work in my synagogue. I still do voluntary work.

**Kate:** Let's go back to these religious aspects. How religious were you're parents?

**Ruskin:** How what?

**Kate:** How religious were your parents?

**Ruskin:** No, they weren't fanatics at all.

**Kate:** Were they orthodox?

**Ruskin:** They were orthodox, yeah.

**Kate:** So on the weekends what would happen?

**Ruskin:** Nothing but the holidays. I do remember, you're bringing me back. You’re taking me way back because the holidays, I remember there's one holiday where they had to go and I think they still do but people don't do it. They went to the synagogue at night and I remember sitting on the steps of, now where we were? Which house? Until they came back home, I remember that. You’re taking me way back.

**Kate:** Okay, what's your first memory of any holiday? Do you have a memory? What’s your first holiday memory?

**Ruskin:** I think the New Year’s. The New Year

**Kate:** When?

**Ruskin:** Rosh Hashanah one? The Yom Kippur.

**Kate:** What year? Do you remember how young you were?

**Ruskin:** I must have been very young because now I remember sitting on the steps and waiting for them to come home.

**Kate:** That was Rosh Hashanah?

**Ruskin:** That was Rosh Hashanah and they'd come home and then we'd have our dinner.

**Kate:** So at every week did you observe the....?

**Ruskin:** No, we weren't that religious.

**Kate:** How about foods and things?

**Ruskin:** Oh, that was strictly kosher.

**Kate:** It was strictly kosher?

**Ruskin:** Strictly kosher.

**Kate:**  Alright so in terms of food you did. But did they go to synagogue every week?

**Ruskin:** No.

**Kate:** No but on the high holidays?

**Ruskin:** Just the high holidays. No. my dad wasn't that kind at all. No we don't go at all every week. I just observe the holidays.

**Kate:** Did you have a kosher butcher you went to and shops?

**Ruskin:** Oh yes. We always had a kosher butcher.

**Kate:** So in a certain sense they maintained tradition in food?

**Ruskin:** Yeah, oh yes. I still do. I still buy from the kosher butcher. That was instilled in me.

**Kate:** So your food habits have stayed the same basically?

**Ruskin:** Mmh.

**Kate:** What about did you ever have persecution? Did you ever feel any type of persecution here or any bigotry by people? Did you ever run into that here?

**Ruskin:** No, never.

**Kate:** Did they ever talk about it in terms of Russia. You said your father said they left because of it?

**Ruskin:** I know that he left for some reason, I know that and I think it's because of the army. I think they were all had to go to the army and that's why my dad left. I’m sure that was the reason. That’s the only reason we were ever told.

**Kate:** Did he talk about his life during the Czar times in Russia at all?

**Ruskin:** No.

**Kate:** So basically they had very few stories, were there any stories told about that time that you knew?

**Ruskin:** No, not that I can recall.

**Kate:** Did you grandmother talk about it?

**Ruskin:** Well my grandmother just came on a visit. No, she didn't tell us anything.

**Kate:** When you lived before in the house, the beautiful house in Garfield, did you live near a synagogue? Did he build his house near a synagogue?

**Ruskin:** Yes.

**Kate:** So he built it so that you could go?

**Ruskin:** Yes, so that we could go. That was a beautiful house with roses, I remember that. Just roses and roses and my mother took care of all of that in the back by herself.

**Kate:** Who was more religious, your mother or your father?

**Ruskin:** I don't think either one were that religious. Maybe my mother but I really I’m not sure.

**Kate:** She made the food on a daily basis?

**Ruskin:** She made the food and that's what makes me think of that but she wasn't that religious.

**Kate:** So after Garfield where did you go? What other house?

**Ruskin:** We went on Leslie. Dad built a home there and that was also a beautiful, beautiful home. I was married in that house.

**Kate:** Let’s go back to Garfield. How many rooms were in Garfield?

**Ruskin:** Lesley, it was beautiful. Garfield had bathrooms downstairs. Lesley had a bathroom downstairs I remember and a beautiful bathroom upstairs, a big one but downstairs was just a little one. It was black and white, I remember that because I was with my dad at that time we were building and I had a lot to do with that house. I was already grown.

**Kate:** Garfield you had...?

**Ruskin:** No, Lesley.

**Kate:** Now let’s go back to the three drives that you talked about. You talked about Hasting Street, was there indoor plumbing in hasting street?

**Ruskin:** I can't remember.

**Kate:** How was it lit? Do you remember how it was lit in hasting street?

**Ruskin:** How it was lit?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Ruskin:** I can't remember.

**Kate:** Okay, you were so small.

**Ruskin:** I don't know.

**Kate:** How about Garfield?

**Ruskin:** Oh Garfield was lit.

**Kate:** With what?

**Ruskin:** With lights, with lamps and things like that.

**Kate:** Lamps or electricity?

**Ruskin:** Electric

**Kate:** So it was electric?

**Ruskin:** Electric, oh yes.

**Kate:** Did you have a car?

**Ruskin:** We had a Cadillac my dear.

**Kate:** When did you get that?

**Ruskin:** Well, I was already driving. My dad taught me how to drive and a big Oltz. Remember the Oltz mobile, they weren't Oltz mobiles, they were Oltz. He taught me how to drive. He told me to put it in first I put it in reverse and oh my poor dad. His head went back. But I learned how to drive.

**Kate:** Now when did you get your first car? When did you finally get your first car?

**Ruskin:** The Oltz mobile.

**Kate:** And what year was that about?

**Ruskin:** We were already at the cottage because I worked with dad. When we closed the plumbing store, my brothers, my oldest brother and my dad got in the car and we drove out to the lake every night.

**Kate:** Which Lake was that again?

**Ruskin:** Silvern.

**Kate:** Silvern.

**Ruskin:** It's right close here by, it's close by. And there were no express ways and we used to go straight out Woodward Avenue and for even a day and the car had those Pepsi glass or something curtains you know that you had to pull across. So that must have been a very long time ago.

**Kate:** How old do you think, what year do you think that would be? You learned to drive when you were how old?

**Ruskin:** I don't know. I don't know how old I was.

**Kate:** A teenager still?

**Ruskin:** I don't think so. I think I might have been maybe 18 or 19 I don't know.

**Kate:** Before your first automobile the Oltz as you call it,

**Ruskin:** Oh we had a horse and buggy. Oh you're taking me back. We had a horse and buggy and we used to go to Belle isle and used to picnic. And we passed all these cars, used to whoosh by us and I said to my dad, all of us used to say and he said to us, “Someday we're going to get a car. I’ll show you, we're going to drive in one of these cars.” But we had a horse and buggy and we used to go to belle isle.

**Kate:** Did you go during the winter time too?

**Ruskin:** No

**Kate:** And were there other horse and buggies there?

**Ruskin:** Yes but there were more cars. But that was my father he promised and he got us a car.

**Kate:** When was this Belle isle? How young were you then?

**Ruskin:** I got it. I’ve got pictures of those. But I really don't know.

**Kate:** Were you under 15 years old?

**Ruskin:** I must have been under 15. No, I think I was already working in the shop with him and I was through with school, so how old could I have been?

**Kate:** Must have been 18 or 19 years.

**Ruskin:** No, no I wasn't that old cause I only went to high school of commerce and that was only a two year course after my schooling. I went there cause I was going to work with dad and I took short hand and typewriting and things like that.

**Kate:** And so you were out of school at what age?

**Ruskin:** About 16 or 17. That’s about path of the course, isn't it?

**Kate:** Yes

**Ruskin:** 17, 16. 16 yeah.

**Kate:** So that's when you remember the horse and carriage. You don't remember the horse and carriage before that when you were little?

**Ruskin:** No, not that little.

**Kate:** So how did you get around when you were a child?

**Ruskin:** Around where?

**Kate:** In your neighborhood. Your father went to work or what he did, how did he get around or the family moved from when place to another?

**Ruskin:** I don't know he must have had the car. No, he had a horse and buggy. But where did he keep the horse? That’s what's bothering me now. You’re taking me way way back. I’m glad but things that I forgot. Why would he have kept the horse and buggy?

**Kate:** Do you remember the horse and buggy when you were little?

**Ruskin:** Definitely.

**Kate:** When you were little?

**Ruskin:** No not that little because I don't think the big boys by that time maybe my big brothers didn't come with us. I can't remember. Maybe it was just the younger kids.

**Kate:** What did you do for entertainment? Wait a minute, you didn't tell something. At Garfield you said there was indoor plumbing, was there indoor plumbing in all the houses you had?

**Ruskin:** I think so except the cottage.

**Kate:** So in the Hasting Street did you have to go outside to go to the bathroom?

**Ruskin:** I don't remember. Now that's what I don't remember

**Kate:** Okay, but you remember Garfield there was?

**Ruskin:** Oh yes.

**Kate:** And the heating was how? How was the heated at Garfield?

**Ruskin:** I think I don't know about Garfield but some of the houses had the radiators, I remember those. Yes, I recall those very well.

**Kate:** What did you do for entertainment as a child? In your younger days, what did you do?

**Ruskin:** We played Jackson ball. I remember that very well. What else? Probably we read books and drew, I don't remember but that I remember vividly, Jackson ball. And then we lived that other street where we lived the next door the neighbors, we would play, we had a basketball outside, one of those things out there. We played that.

**Kate:** What about did you belong to any clubs as a child? Were you a girl scout?

**Ruskin:** I wasn't a girl scout but I belonged to a club but I forgot the name of it. I always belonged to something. I always belonged to something.

**Kate:** Did your family ever talk about- did anybody in your family return to Russia after they came here?

**Ruskin:** No, never.

**Kate:** Alright. Did your family talk about whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with coming to America?

**Ruskin:** Evidently everybody was satisfied. My father was very happy here. My mother, by the time we lived in Garfield, she had excellent help.

**Kate:** You say 9 children but I see only 6 in these photos?

**Ruskin:** Well, the 3 were born here.

**Kate:** Which ones?

**Ruskin:** They are all gone now. Those three died, there’s only 2 of us left. My sister and I.

**Kate:** But when you mention children you stopped with Lillian.

**Ruskin:** I stopped with Lillian. This is Lillian here. I had a sister Gertrude and I had a brother, University of Michigan graduate, captain of the debating team graduate, bridge club, captain of language club, very brilliant man, brilliant lawyer and the baby Cecilia, Cecilia who moved to Hampton, got married and moved to Florida and had 2 children there and she died very young. The youngest ones died very young.

**Kate:** What's very young? What age?

**Ruskin:** Well my brother Maury was 59, Cecilia died after that she was the baby and my sister Gertrude was about- she was I think about 70 or something, but the 2 younger ones died very young. She was born, I went to the hospital with my older sister and we took mother and the little girl home and I was 10 years old. That’s right I was 10 years old and I remember carrying her when we brought her home, I was so excited. I had a little baby sister.

**Kate:** And this is your youngest?

**Ruskin:** The youngest.

**Kate:** What was her name again?

**Ruskin:** Cecilia

**Kate:** Cecilia, yes.

**Ruskin:** She has a daughter, she has a son, and they lived in Florida. My sister Lillian and I sort of -we took over the family, we still do things now. I don't know why the 2 of us do it. We used to go down there and visit with her when she was sick or her husband was sick or something happened and she still has her son who lives in Florida but her daughter lives in Birmingham Alabama.

About 4 years ago, Lillian and I, my sister has been a widow for many many years. I haven't been she has but we went down to see her older grandchild get married. We went to Birmingham Alabama.

**Kate:** So you are a person who keeps the family together?

**Ruskin:** Yes.

**Kate:** What tragedies were the most...?

**Ruskin:** What?

**Kate:** What tragedies were there in your life during this time?

**Ruskin:** You mean after I was married or before?

**Kate:** During the life of your family what would you say were some of the tragedies that rocked the family?

**Ruskin:** I know what rocked mine. My daughter died 4 months after my husband. In between my last remaining brother who lived in California, the one the attorney, this one died and then 4 months after my daughter, this sister Gertrude who was born here first, died. So within May 25th when my husband passed away and December 10th tomorrow, I lost four members of my immediate family.

**Kate:** I’m sorry.

**Ruskin:** How I survived I will never know.

**Kate:** How long ago was that?

**Ruskin:** About 11 years.

**Kate:** That must have been a lot?

**Ruskin:** It was too much. But my sister has, her daughter lives here and one is in California and this daughter here has 2 lovely children.

**Kate:** You have other children too. When did you get married? How did you meet your husband?

**Ruskin:** I met my husband when we lived on Lesley, the beautiful home on Lesley and on the corner of Lesley and Dexter they had what they call the Ann Campbell homes. Do you recall where they were built? Ann Campbell was an artist a poetess and they were building homes for her or she was building, I don't know and somebody lived in there.

My husband lived in Windsor and he was a pharmacist. My husband was a pharmacist, I still I went to the drugstore, from the plumbing to the drugstore. I always did. I guess that's what keeps me going. The lady who lived in that house, Trisa Gerstein, I remember her name. Jeez my memory must be good. At this age I remember names. And we used to play bridge together.

She was a great hostess and she was a great piano player, she played piano beautifully and I had a piano. We were playing, we used to have a lot of good times and my husband lived in Windsor and he went to the technical, it's another college. They had the small one before they expanded. Detroit institute of technology, he took his pharmaceutical, He was in Windsor took his college there but he came over here to take that and he rented a room there on the corner. Trisa called me one day, it was a blind date. That’s where we met in her house on the corner where I lived.

**Kate:** How old were you then?

**Ruskin:** Hmm?

**Kate:** How old were you?

**Ruskin:** I think about 22 or 23. We were married for 54 years, married in 1928.

**Kate:** And you met him in when?

**Ruskin:** I met him in September.

**Kate:** Of 19 what?

**Ruskin:** 1927 and we were married March 18th 1928.

**Kate:** That's pretty quick?

**Ruskin:** September to March, yeah.

**Kate:** How did you know he was going to be your husband?

**Ruskin:** He knew from the first day.

**Kate:** Did he say so?

**Ruskin:** Yes, he said so because he was courting another girl and I understand she also was a pharmacist and she came- you're taking me back, way back and I can't conceive in myself coming back to these things and there all the truth.

She came to the drugstore, he was supposed to take me out and he just took her and dropped her off on the corner of Grand River there in Larchmont wherever he first stall was in and he told me about it. But the first date we had I can tell you we went to the cast theatre, do you remember that?

**Kate:** Yes

**Ruskin:** And we saw a beautiful operetta. I wish I could remember the name and he gave me a little bottle of black Narcis, I always remember that. I used that kind of cologne or perfume for the longest time and we have 2 daughters.

**Kate:** How old were you when you had the daughters? How old were you?

**Ruskin:** Well, I was married march 1928, Mary was born January 29th of not that year, the following year and Doris was born, she's the one that died but she left 3 daughters. And that's the son-in-law that I talk about, Richard. He’s a dentist and he's just been wonderful. The 3 girls are married and I see them here all the time. My other daughter was born 3 years later, almost 3 years later.

She has 3 children but they are all live, Linda, my oldest granddaughter whom I adore, naturally she's married to a doctor and she has 2 children and they live in Loveland Colorado. She teaches art history at the university. She teaches art history and she studied the, what's that college here in Ohio?

**Kate:** Oberlin?

**Ruskin:** Oberlin, the art school and then she studied in Italy and in Germany. She’s quite a girl. I’ll show you her picture when we get through. Danny the second one got married about a year and a half ago, we went down to the wedding.

He lives in Oakland California and Peggy is the youngest. She’s the only one of the 6 grandchildren that is not married. She is a university of Michigan graduate and she lives in Minneapolis and she works for a children's publishing house. In fact there is a book here that she did. I will show it to you.

**Kate:** And these are whose daughters?

**Ruskin:** Grandchildren, these are the daughters that I had my younger daughter?

**Kate:** And the younger daughter was Doris?

**Ruskin:** She's a librarian.

**Kate:** She's alive? It’s your oldest daughter who died.

**Ruskin:** She was a teacher. My oldest died. She taught school, she was a university of Michigan graduate. That’s one thing, my husband and I both, if there is one thing, we gave the children everything. The finest of the educations, we felt that way. It’s nice and they all respect me. I guess I’m the Matriarch of the family. Sometimes I wish they wouldn't feel that way because I can take care of myself but oh dear.

**Kate:** They check up on you?

**Ruskin:** It isn't that they check up on me but they don't leave me out of anything, they want to make me a great big party.

**Kate:** Are you sure you don't want one?

**Ruskin:** I don't want it. I don't think so. I talked to my daughter this morning, she wants me down there. I have my ticket to fly down there and Richard wants me here but maybe Richard.

**Kate:** Go for two, oh really, go with it.

**Ruskin:** Yeah go with it, I think. That’s a good idea. I’ll tell Doris. I have to call her back tonight because she asked me my ticket. I had to get down and I never wore glasses, I drove without glasses, but all of a sudden this one eye, I think I might have to have something done with it.

Tell me I work with my doctor well on the eastside and I talk to Doris this morning and she says mother can you hold on until I get home. So I really don't know but it's amazing, I read without glasses, drove without glasses.

**Kate:** Until when?

**Ruskin:** Up until last year. I just gave my car away. August I gave my car away.

**Kate:** When did you move in here?

**Ruskin:** I moved in here January 13th only I lived in another house like this in a place like this and l lived there for 5 years and I did everything there. They have staff meetings and I took the desk. They used to call me. We’re having a staff meeting can you come down take the desk and I did.

They told me I was the mayor of everyone. I loved the place. I just loved it and last year right after Christmas I just don't know what happened. My oldest granddaughter lives here from my oldest daughter who's a registered dietician, she said grandma I don't want you alone, I’m sending Janet, her other sister, to take bring you here for dinner.

I came to dinner and I was sitting just like this across , I have 7 great grandchildren, 6, the 7th is on the way and Lauren picked up her fork and dug it in her potato and I said, gee this looks good, I’m going to do the same thing. I couldn't pick up my fork. I don't know what happened. To this day I don't know what happened I felt like I was floating away.

Well I have a heart condition. I come by that it. My father and my two brothers passed away from that. I’ve got it and my sisters got it heart, we've all got heart. I don't know what happened and she got panicky, Judy got panicky and called my daughter in Palm Springs and she told her to call my nephew David Ruskin, who's a surgeon and who has a car, a telephone and he came right over.

And he called my doctor, I have a very good cardiologist here a doctor Lee and the first thing I know I was in an ambulance and I was in the hospital. I was there for 3 weeks. But nobody tells me what was wrong. They just wrong they just say to me, you were eating, forget it. So they decided that they were going to move me. I was in the other place 5 and a half years and I loved it. I came here, my daughter moved me, she packed my, I don't bother. I shouldn't say that because I miss all my friends over there.

**Kate:** Did they tell you why they moved you?

**Ruskin:** I’m getting a little more care here. They are monitoring my medication.

**Kate:** Oh I see. That’s good.

**Ruskin:** They are monitoring my medication and they see to it that I get 3 meals a day here where I did not get it over there. You only get one meal there. Sometimes I just forgot to eat. I suppose and I still drove my car and went to see the kids and I miss all of that. I miss it terribly.

**Kate:** Can’t you go see the other place too? Go see your friends sometimes?

**Ruskin:** Oh I do.

**Kate:** Oh good.

**Ruskin:** They ask my friends, when are you coming back? They all think I’m moving back. but it's not easy my daughter did all of that and before she left, see they are here 6 months and they live down in their other home for 6 months. They go there for winter.

Doris said to me, “Mother if you're so unhappy, I’ll move you.” Well, I wasn't going to put her through that again. She moved me when I was in the hospital, she packed and moved. I can't find half of the things. I just didn't want to put her.

**Kate:** But this place is beautiful.

**Ruskin:** This place is prettier and my apartment is bigger and I do get, at 7:30 I get a tray up here. I can go downstairs for breakfast but this is, the way they set up. I get coffee and a sweet roll or toast and I get my medication. I get medication at noon and I get at night. They are taking care of it for me.

**Kate:** Once you were married did you continue to work?

**Ruskin:** Definitely not?

**KATE:** What did your husband do?

**Ruskin:** My husband was a pharmacist. He had a drug store. He was a pharmacist when he was 21 years old before I even knew him because he tells me the sales man used to come in and they say, “Where's the pharmacist?” He’d come out and they'd say, “Hey we want the pharmacist. We don't want the young boy.” He was very young but I did help.

It was fun in the drugstore, when they were busy and things. Whenever they had a lot of trouble here in Detroit, we had to close the store years ago. The stores were open and we sold everything under the sun and liquor and cigarettes and everything and I used to come behind the counter and kind of help out with cigarettes and things like that but I never really worked. No I was a homemaker and raised the 2 girls. If I had to do it over again I wouldn't do it that way. I’d work, I’d do something.

**Kate:** You think so?

**Ruskin:** Oh I’d go back to school. Yes, I would have gone back to school.

**Kate:** You're unbelievable. You’re so active.

**Ruskin:** That's the one thing I really feel I should have done.

**Kate:** Do you think you're happy that your family came to America?

**Ruskin:** Oh, definitely.

**Kate:** Do you think your parents were happy that they chose to come?

**Ruskin:** I often wonder about my mother because she never learned to speak English well and the young children, not the 6 of us in here but the 3 that were born, I remember one brother used to say to her, speak English. She couldn't and yet she did well.

My dad is the one that really did well. He was a remarkable man. he came her couldn't sign his name, he made a cross, an X. you know how they did that but he finally learned a little bit and of course he had my sister and then he had me, see? So we just felt it was part of us going right into the business.

**Kate:** After you, who helped him, your sister Lillian?

**Ruskin:** No she was a school teacher. The rest of them were school teachers. Gertrude was a school teacher, Maury was the lawyer and they all became professionals. No.

**Kate:** Was your mother home sick ever?

**Ruskin:** She talked about her family, she talked about things, she talked about this forest that they used to go, but I don't think she was homesick, she was too busy.

**Kate:** What forest are you talking about?

**Ruskin:** I don't know. She used to talk about going in the forest in Russia. I don't know, telling us how beautiful it was, but I just don't do.... but she was never homesick and dad was never homesick. No. dad was a good bridge player.

**Kate:** So you've inherited your bridge.

**Ruskin:** He loved his bridge, had a good mind. Great.

**Kate:** That’s a good place to end this interview. I want to thank you on behalf of the Ellis Island project for taking your time.

**Ruskin:** Well it was a joy.

**Kate:** And the experience and this is Kate Moore signing off on the 9th of December 1993, with Elizabeth Ruskin for the Ellis Island oral history project.