**Mattson**: Good afternoon? This is Elisa Mattson for the National Park Service. Today is September 13th, Tuesday afternoon-evening in 1994. I am in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Silver and we are in West Hollywood California. I am here with Mr. Abraham Silver and Mrs. Silver. Mr. Silver could you please for the tape give me your full name and your date of birth?

**Silver**: My name is Mr. Al Silver.

**Mattson**: And your date of birth?

**Silver**: Date of birth is 1911, 29th of January. Which brings it to in the years 1994.

**Mattson**: Can you tell me a little about the town that you grew up in?

**Silver**: Well we were at home when I say home it’s we know each other-Liverpool. On the street if somebody wants to know a certain address, they take you right there with you and that never done any place.

**Mattson**: Do you remember sir, the house that you lived in?

**Silver**: And we had a Kosher fish and chips shop in Liverpool and we spread it out to four five stores within 50years.

**Mrs. Al**: Al, she wants to know if you lived there.

**Silver**: Yes I was born.

**Mattson**: What was your house like? Do you remember your house?

**Silver**: Well, what we have is a store and in the back we live-

**Mattson**: What did it look like?

**Silver**: One bedroom, four boys and one girl.

**Mattson**: What were the names of your brothers and sisters?

**Silver**: Oh that’s something.

**Mrs. Al**: Go on. I know.

**Silver**: Sydney Silver, Louie Silver

**Mrs. Al**: Al Silver.

**Silver**: Cecilia Silver, Abraham Silver

**Mrs. Al**: Ralph

**Silver**: Ralph Silver. That’s four.

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

**Silver**: Henry.

**Mattson**: And what did he do for a living?

**Silver**: He was well, it’s hard to say. He was helping out in the fish and chips shop. And whenever he gets away, they play cards in the club and he loses he wins he loses but he always come out not losing.

**Mattson**: Oh that’s good. What did he look like?

**Silver**: He looked like Charlie Chaplin [Laughter].

**Mattson**: Well that’s a good description. Is there any stories that you remember about you being a small boy with your father growing up?

**Silver**: Well in my days I was the errand boy and whatever I did it’s making a living.

**Mrs. Al**: That means before

**Mattson**: Its ok, it can be either it doesn’t matter.

**Silver**: Makes no difference.

**Mattson**: Whatever story you can remember. How about your mother? What was your mother's name?

**Silver**: Rosy. R-O-S-Y. Rosy Silver.

**Mattson**: What was her maiden name? Do you remember that?

**Mrs. Al**: Pilkiss.

**Silver**: Pilkiss

**Mattson**: How do you spell that you know?

**Silver**: P-I-L-K-I-S-S.

**Mattson**: Did she have a job as well or did she?

**Silver**: No she had a job looking after the kids. That was the job

**Mattson**: What did she look like?

**Silver**: Oh well, it’s hard to figure out.

**Mattson**: Was she tall woman? Small?

**Silver**: About 5'3.

**Mrs. Al**: Was she heavy?

**Silver**: 140 pounds. Well there its different it’s called stone. Right? 14 pounds one stone I don’t know how that works though.

**Mattson**: Do you remember cooking in your family? Did you ever do any of the cooking?

**Silver**: We look at the meat because we couldn’t afford the prices in those days.

**Mattson**: What would your mother make for dinner?

**Silver**: There was no dinner. Just the odds and ends put together.

**Mattson**: Like what? What did you have?

**Silver**: Hamburger, well-

**Mrs. Al**: Well she was running a store she didn’t have time.

**Silver**: Chicken

**Mattson**: Whatever was-?

**Silver**: Was put together.

**Mattson**: Is there anything that you can remember was your favorite food growing up?

**Silver**: Pot roast.

**Mattson**: That was your favorite?

**Silver**: Chick pot roast.

**Mattson**: Do you remember your grandparents?

**Silver**: Oh jeez!

**Mrs. Al**: No he never saw them.

**Silver**: No never saw-

**Mattson**: If I had to ask you who you were closest to in your family? Who was your closest relative?

**Silver**: Well, we were all togetherness in Europe you know. But closeness-

**Mattson**: Any brothers or sister that you were closest too?

**Silver**: One girl and four boys and always fighting every day.

**Mrs. Al**. Well one brother brought him here probably Sidney.

**Silver**: Yeah he in cali- oh no he is in New York now.

**Mattson**: Do you remember religious life in your family?

**Silver**: Yes.

**Mattson**: Tell me about that?

**Silver**: Abraham Silver was a choir boy in Princess Road Sheol. You know what a Sheol is? A synagogue.

**Mattson**: Ok. Was this important to you your family.

**Silver**: Well that wasn’t-I was just a volunteer like you say.

**Mattson**: right.

**Silver**: Volunteer work didn’t get paid, and on the sideline used to take orders out for the fish and chips that we made up.

**Mattson**: Can you remember a holiday in your house?

**Silver**: A holiday?

**Mattson**: One holiday that sticks out in your mind you can remember and tell me about?

**Silver**: Well, it’s so happen to be this month, Rosh Hashanah.

**Mattson**: Yes.

**Silver**: Then we have the Yom Kippur next week.

**Mattson**: Do you remember when you were younger? One of these holidays? Do you remember what you would eat for dinner? Do you remember what you would do on a holiday?

**Silver**: Well, we pray.

**Mattson**: As a family together?

**Mrs. Al**: Besides praying did you mother make chicken for dinner?

**Silver**: Huh?

**Mrs. Al**: What did your mother make for the holidays chicken?

**Silver**: No she didn’t say that.

**Mattson**: Well, tell me. What did she make for dinner on a holiday?

**Silver**: Again I will say chicken and hamburger which is close.

**Mattson**: Do you remember playing games as a child? What games were the games that you would play?

**Silver**: What you do is you kiss-

**Mrs. Al**: Spin the bottle?

**Silver**: Spin the bottle.

**Mattson**: You play that when you were a kid growing up?

**Silver**: Oh yeah.

**Mattson**: Any other games?

**Silver**: Well football, baseball and that’s all common thing.

**Mattson**: Where would you go to play? Do you remember?

**Silver**: We have to go to Prospect Park. That’s the grounds are free. Years ago we used to pay for them then they give us free.

**Mrs. Al**: There was a prospect park in England.

**Silver**: Yes Prospect Park. Seften Park.

**Mattson**: Do you remember a friend, any of your friends? Do you remember them as children? Can you remember any of their names?

**Silver**: Hemming Boaz. Hemming B-O-A-Z.

**Mattson**: And what do you remember about him?

**Silver**: He was also a go getter and he rides the bike and he tries to show off. I always remember that. Now he’s on the ground.

**Mattson**: He was one of your friends in England? Let’s jump over to the voyage coming to America. Do you remember how you got to the port where you left?

**Silver**: I was brought by the Hias H-I-A-S. I guess you are familiar with that.

**Mattson**: Yes I am.

**Silver**: Hias, and growing up we need some money so I went down to the ship yard trying to get a butcher job and my colleague they says one job left and I volunteer for it and they says you are a good boy we going to pay you a little bit. Not a lot but a little. That’s-

**Mattson**: Do you remember the ship?

**Silver**: ANDANIA.

**Mrs. Al**: No that’s the ship you worked in. the ship you came in.

**Silver**: The ship I came in was Andania.

**Mrs. Al**: Wasn’t it Cornet-

**Silver**: It’s the Cornet line

**Mattson**: What did it look like? Do you remember what it looked like?

**Silver**: The what?

**Mattson**: The ship what did it look like?

**Silver**: Well it was 20,000 tons. It’s a big ship.

**Mattson**: Had you ever seen that ship that big before?

**Silver**: No, now they make small once no.

**Mattson**: Were you excited?

**Silver**: Yes oh yes

**Mattson**: Tell me about your brother and how he decided for you to come over and-

**Silver**: Well, it’s like everything else. One brings the other one over. It’s my uncle come from Poland to England and from England they brought me as a guest. So instead of being a guest-

**Mrs. Al**: No they brought your brother first then

**Silver**: My brother first. My brother first.

**Mattson**: Which brother was that?

**Silver**: Sydney.

**Mattson**: And your uncle what was your uncle's name?

**Silver**: Uncle Joe Bulkers.

**Mattson**: And he was here as well? He was in America

**Silver**: No not here. He almost was here but he couldn’t make it.

**Mattson**: So your brother brought you over?

**Silver**: And I paid him money. I didn’t want any charity. So I got 100pounds.

**Mattson**: How did you get that much money?

**Silver**: By working weekends and selling those things on the side walk. Soldiers and stuff like that. Anything you can make money.

**Mattson**: Do you remember how long you were on the ship?

**Silver**: On the ship three weeks. After the third week they threw me out because I told them that-

**Mrs. Al**: No, you are all mixed up that’s when you were working on the ship, that’s something different

**Silver**: When I was working on the ship.

**Mattson**: When you came to America how long did it take?

**Silver**: Oh three weeks.

**Mrs. Al**: No you said no, you said like 10days

**Silver**: 10 days?

**Mrs. Al**: Yeah.

**Mattson**: Do you remember what you took with you?

**Silver**: I had a suit, black and white striped suit. A polar hat. That’s a derby and spats. You understand.

**Mrs. Al**: And your brother didn’t come for you.

**Silver**: And my brother didn’t come-no he came the last minute. He went to Hias. To find out about me but they found out.

**Mattson**: Who came to get you?

**Silver**: The HIAS. Agency.

**Mattson**: And where did they take you?

**Silver**: They took me to me to the office

**Mrs. Al**: No, no. on the train now.

**Silver**: Oh on the train. And the minute I opened my mouth, they said “Dumb bloc he come from bloody old England” [laughter].

**Mattson**: Do you remember seeing Ellis Island?

**Silver**: Once we passed through there with my daughter.

**Mattson**: No, do you remember when you arrived? When you arrived in Ellis Island do you remember what it looked like?

**Silver**: A barn. A big barn

**Mattson**: Were you examined by any medical examiners? By a doctor? Do you remember seeing a doctor?

**Silver**: Before we come to another country, we get examined. Same thing is if you work, you got to have a working card a house card it’s called.

**Mattson**: So when you were on Ellis Island they didn’t examine you?

**Silver**: No, not at Ellis island no.

**Mattson**: Can you describe the scene for me? What was it like when you got off the ship? What did it look like? Who did you see?

**Silver**: Well I was a stranger number one and number two-

**Mrs. Al**: Did you see the statue of liberty?

**Silver**: Statue of liberty

**Mattson**: What did that look like to you? Do you remember what it looked like and what you thought?

**Silver**: I don’t know what to say how you say that?

**Mrs. Al**: Strange?

**Silver**: Everything seemed strange.

**Mattson**: Were you excited to come to America?

**Silver**: Yeah they said you bring a shovel along with you, so you dig up the money [Laughter] that was funny.

**Mattson**: What was your first job when you came to this country?

**Silver**: All the boy taking orders out for the meat concern.

**Mattson**: Where was this?

**Silver**: In Liverpool

**Mattson**: No, no. In America. What was your first job in America?

**Silver**: The first job in America? The Fairfax Avenue-

**Mrs. Al**: No Al, in Brooklyn.

**Mattson**: In New York. When you were in New York.

**Silver**: Oh in New York

**Mattson**: Did you work with your brother?

**Silver**: I joined the union

**Mrs. Al**: No that was later. When you first came from Liverpool you worked in a job. It was one of the friends. Wasn’t it one of your aunt’s friends who gave you the job?

**Silver**: Well I forgot his name.

**Mattson**: Well that ok. Let’s see. Do you remember after you came here where you first lived? What was your house like? Where did you live when you came to New York?

**Silver**: To New York that’s Williamsburg. That’s New York?

**Mattson**: Mmh, where did you live when you first came to New York?

**Silver**: Williamsburg.

**Mattson**: And what did your house look like?

**Silver**: It wasn’t a house it was put together fast

**Mrs. Al**: He lived with his aunt. Didn’t you live with your aunt?

**Silver**: I lived with my aunt.

**Mattson**: What was her name?

**Silver**: Her name was Pilkiss.

**Mattson**: No her first name?

**Mrs. Al**: Clara.

**Silver**: Clara.

**Mattson**: Clara.

**Silver**: C-L-A-R-A.

**Mattson**: Now what was that like? Living with your aunt?

**Silver**: No good. You never live with relatives. No good.

**Mrs. Al**: You lived there a few years.

**Silver**: Yeah a few years.

**Mrs. Al**: With his brother.

**Mattson**: Your brother lived with your aunt as well?

**Silver**: My brother lived with me and we were paying Clara Pilkiss so much money.

**Mattson**: What did you do after that? Where did you live after that?

**Silver**: What did I do?

**Mattson**: Where did you live next?

**Silver**: Where did I live?

**Mattson**: Mmmh, after you lived with your aunt?

**Mrs. Al**: We got married.

**Silver**: New York

**Mattson**: Oh then you meet. When did you meet your wife?

**Mrs. Al**: 1937

**Silver**: 1937

**Mattson**: Can you describe how we meet?

**Silver**: Yeah we went to a dance. And we start doing the dancing. You forget huh?

**Mrs. Al**: I didn’t forget.

**Silver**: [laughter]

**Mattson**: And then you went right from living with your aunt to living with your wife. Where did you first live?

**Mrs. Al**: We lived with my mother. It was right before the war,

**Mattson**: And where were you working at that point?

**Mrs. Al**: He worked at a butchers shop.

**Silver**: And then they told me to join the union. Gentile union and you get much advance money.

**Mattson**: Are you happy that you came to America?

**Silver**: Oh sure, I am somebody, was somebody. I am somebody now.

**Mrs. Al**: We went back to Liverpool?

**Mattson**: You did. When did you go back?

**Silver**: About 8 years-

**Mrs. Al**: 1972 I think we went back.

**Mattson**: Can you tell me a little bit what it was like to live in America during the war time?

**Silver**: War time? Well I heard-my ears wasn’t right. So they didn’t let me go.

**Mrs. Al**: They didn’t take him he had a punctured ear.

**Silver**: Punctured ear drum.

**Mrs. Al**: And he didn’t know it.

**Silver**: But my best years is right here in California.

**Mattson**: When did you come to California?

**Mrs. Al**: 20years ago.

**Silver**: 20 years ago.

**Mrs. Al**: 1974

**Mattson**: And have you been living in the same area in California?

**Mrs. Al**: Yeah.

**Mattson**: Well thank you very much Mrs. Al and Mrs. Al for your help as well. This is Elisa Mattson-

**Mrs. Al**: Now when will this be?

**Mattson**: Now I will tell you that in a minute I just want to sign off for the tape and then we can talk about it. This Elisa Mattson signing off with Mr. and Mrs. Al and Peter Ham on the 13th of September 1994 for the Ellis island oral histories project. Thank you.