**Janet:** Today is September 30th, 1995. I’m here in Lake Hiawatha at the home of Sadie Wishnick. Sadie came from Poland in 1913 when she was seven years of age. Let’s start at the beginning Sadie, if you would say your name, when you were born.

**Sadie:** My name was Sarah Beila, S-A-R-A-H, B-E-I-L-A.

**Janet:** And your maiden name?

**Sadie:** [unclear 00:00:44].

**Janet:** What is your birth date?

**Sadie:** March 12th 1905.

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

**Sadie:** I was born in Bielsk, B-I-E-L-S-K.

**Janet:** You left Bielsk about a year before you came to this country?

**Sadie:** Yes.

**Janet:** Where did you go?

**Sadie:** I went to Ola; this is the town my mother was born in and brought up. Since my father left Bielsk to come to America, my mother wanted to be among her own people and we went to Ola.

**Janet:** Ola is in Russia?

**Sadie:** Yes, the same area. If you want to know it’s called Grodna Gibrna; G-R-O-D-N-A, G-I-B-R-N-A.

**Janet:** What are your earliest memories when you were in Bielsk?

**Sadie:** My father was called a [unclear 00:02:12]; that’s a man who today we call them those who deliver stuff from the docks; longshoreman. He was that type of a man. He would go to the… they didn’t have anything but trains.

The train was called a bon, B-O-N. He would go to the bon, pick up the merchandise that had to be sold in the stores, and he would bring it there. It was a very good business. This is what I remember.

**Janet:** Did you ever go with him to pick…?

**Sadie:** No. I stayed home with my mother. My mother was a very good woman, a pleasant person who loved her children and not only was I there, but I had a brother Morris, then was Maisha, M-A-I-S-H-A. After him came a sister, Elkaleah, E-L-K-A-L-E-A-H; then I have a sister Anna. All of us were taken when I was seven years old… my brother was five, my sister Elkaleah was about three.

My sister Anna was not taken; she was in my mother’s stomach. My mother was pregnant with her. When my father left, my sister Anna was not born yet. She was born in Ola. We were all born in Bielsk but she was born in Ola because my mother was pregnant and she went to where she was born; a little town near Bielsk, not too far away.

**Janet:** You were the oldest?

**Sadie:** I’m the oldest.

**Janet:** Tell me your mother’s name.

**Sadie:** My mother’s name was Kali, K-A-L-I.

**Janet:** That’s her first name?

**Sadie:** [unclear 00:05:02].

**Janet:** Her maiden name?

**Sadie:** Yes. My mother took us all and we went to Ola because she had nothing to do there anymore. My father was gone. He went to America not because my mother wanted to go but thank he wanted so we avoided being in the war, because next year was the war.

He went to America because his father wanted. He was in business with his father in Bielsk. They were partners in the business. They were in Bielsk and my grandfather, [unclear 00:06:17], he was a very stubborn man. He got what he wanted.

My father had three sisters and two brothers in America. The oldest sister decided she wants her father to come to America, sent his father a ship’s card. That’s a ticket to go on the boat. He decide he’s going to America. When he decide he’s going to America he says, “I want you to go with me” to my father. My mother didn’t want to go but my father went. The man always takes over so they went to America.

When they came to America, my mother’s father and mother, her whole family was here already in America except for one uncle who was a Rabbi. He said in America the ground is treif. It means it’s not kosher. He was a Rabbi and a very religious Rabbi and he wouldn’t come to America; he didn’t.

**Janet:** This is your mother’s brother?

**Sadie:** My mother’s brother.

**Janet:** But your mother’s mother and father were still in…?

**Sadie:** America. They were gone but my mother had aunts there; my grandmother’s sisters, a sister, and everybody. She was born there so it was like coming home again and that’s where she stayed until my sister Anna was born. After she was born my father was here in America and he couldn’t be without us. He was very lonesome. When she was about two years old that’s when he decided we should come to America.

My father came to America, he did not have a trade, he did not know what to do because driving he couldn’t. He didn’t understand the language; he couldn’t take a horse and wagon and go here because he didn’t know the streets. Since the whole family was in the needle trade, they decided the easiest thing for him is to become a presser; that was his trade already. He was a presser at Children’s Clothing.

My father being here he was very lonesome and my mother’s whole family was here except for one brother, the Rabbi which I just spoke about, who wouldn’t come to America regardless of what they tried and how they told him; he wouldn’t come.

My father insisted that we come to America. Of course he was very poor because not having the trade, you couldn’t earn much. Those were the trade at that time. He earned very little but when he came to America he went to my mother’s parents. Their names were Hanah and Label Warsofsky. Hanah is H-A-N-A-H and Label’s L-A-B-E-L.

**Janet:** Spell Warsofsky.

**Sadie:** W-A-R-S-O-F-S-K-Y. They had here living with them two daughters. One was Ida and the other was Ethel. We didn’t call them anything but English names when we came to America. We came with Jewish names but they had English names. When we came to America, this is my grandfather and grandmother, they helped my father. He stayed with them and he could save as much as he could save from his wages that he got. They gave him money and they sent for us.

My youngest sister Enyi was born in Ola and when we left with her she was two years old. My mother still nursed her thinking if she’s going to go on the boat, which was a bad thing for her because she couldn’t eat. We all didn’t. The younger ones not but my mother was always laying down sick on the boat. It was a big trip. I remember a month maybe it took. We were on the boat… but yet in my mother’s family there were two more people. They were six. There was my aunt Becky, married; my uncle Jake, married; and then…

**Janet:** There were the two sisters that were living with your grandparents, and then the Rabbi and your mother.

**Sadie:** Yes, they were six. The names of my aunts and uncles here, one was Becky, the woman that was married. Her husband was [unclear 00:13:35]. Then there was my uncle Jake and his wife was Hava; somehow we call them by their Jewish names. Those were the two married and the rest were single besides my mother.

When we came to this country we came to Ellis Island.

**Janet:** First let’s talk a little bit of anything you can remember before you went to Ola, when you were in Bielsk. Do you remember the house you lived in?

**Sadie:** We rented the house where we were living. I was born there, my brother Morris was born there, my sister Elsie was born there; all three of us were born there.

**Janet:** Do you remember the community at all where you lived?

**Sadie:** I was seven years old. I can’t describe it because I was really too young. I actually left two years, then I was five; five years you don’t know so much.

**Janet:** Were you in a Jewish section of town? Were there other people in the town? Were they all Jewish?

**Sadie:** Yes it was all Jewish. Our area was Jewish but we weren’t all Jewish. There were Christian people there too.

**Janet:** Did they mix? Was there bad feeling?

**Sadie:** We had to deal with them. They were the ones who were farmers. We had to buy from them. But I can’t because at five years you don’t take in so much.

**Janet:** Was Bielsk a small town?

**Sadie:** It was bigger than Ola. There’s a very big town who everybody knows, Bialystok. This was the next town to Bialystok. Bialystok is bigger than Bielsk. Bielsk wasn’t a small town; Ola, they didn’t even have a train coming into Ola but Bielsk did have a train so it was a bigger town. It was almost a city. Bialystok is a city, this is a city but a small one. Ola was like a village; very small place.

**Janet:** Were your father’s mother and father in Bielsk?

**Sadie:** My mother’s parents were in America. There was a picture of me which I can’t find; I was just born and my grandfather was in America, from my mother’s side. He was in America. He was the first one to go to America I think from almost the whole town. He came here I don’t know what year in the 80’s.

**Janet:** He was already here when you were born in 1905?

**Sadie:** Yes, and he was here before that. He went to America. Everybody was very poor; money there was very little of. But my grandmother had a brother living in Baltimore, who was quite wealthy; at that time expecting he was wealthy. I have a good idea that he sent my grandfather from my mother’s side. He sent him a ship’s card. He got the ship’s card to come to America.

My grandfather Label was a very good tailor. He came here, he had a job, and he saved up money and he came back to Europe, to Ola, because his wife and children were in Ola. My mother she got married in Ola. He came back to my mother’s wedding. That was a trip he took from Europe to come here. He came back to Ola to her wedding and after she was married he went back to America.

When my mother got married… in Europe when you get married you have to have dowry, nadin they call it.

**Janet:** How do you spell nadin?

**Sadie:** N-A-D-I-N, nadin. You have to have nadin; you can’t get married… poor people get married. They were poor but still if you haven’t got it, the husband must get dowry. Then he planned to go back to America, my grandfather. He wanted to come to America then bring his family out.

When going back he was tight, he didn’t have money already. He went to my mother and he says, “Lend me the money I’ll send it back.” My father wouldn’t give it. He wouldn’t give it and my mother was ready to divorce him.

**Janet:** In other words your grandfather gave the dowry?

**Sadie:** He brought it for him.

**Janet:** Which was money?

**Sadie:** Yes.

**Janet:** Then he gave it but then your father wouldn’t give it back?

**Sadie:** He says, “No I won’t give”, and he wouldn’t give. Actually he was the holder of it because it’s him. That’s the way it worked that time. Anyhow he wouldn’t give it. My mother was very upset, she trusted her father, she knew he would send it but he wouldn’t give it, and she was ready to divorce him but in Europe you don’t allow divorce. This is how it went on and he got money other ways, I don’t know which way or how, and he went back to America.

**Janet:** Let’s switch to your father’s mother and father.

**Sadie:** My father is different. My mother had a mother and father; my father had only a father because his mother died. I’m named after his mother. In the Jewish religion you got a name after the person died. When his mother died, I wasn’t born yet. My paternal grandfather had three wives. The first one had my father and a sister and a brother, three children. The sister’s name was Elkie, E-L-K-I-E and her brother’s name was [unclear 00:22:07], and then there was…

**Janet:** And your father; he was the third child.

**Sadie:** Yes. There was another marriage then my father had a stepmother. He loved her like he loved his mother. When the both of them died… I think the stepmother must have died in child birth. She had twins; two girls.

When his stepmother died and I was born, they named me after two people. I’m named after my father’s mother Sarah, and after his stepmother Beila. That’s why I’m Sarah Beila. My father loved his stepmother. He loved his mother too but he was very young when she died.

My grandfather married again. I can’t remember whether he married in Europe or even came to America and got married. Maybe he did get married in Europe and brought his third wife with him to America.

**Janet:** Do you remember that grandfather in Europe? Do you have any memories?

**Sadie:** I remember both of my grandfathers.

**Janet:** Do you remember in Europe, your father’s father?

**Sadie:** Yes.

**Janet:** What do you remember about him there?

**Sadie:** He was a longshoreman with my father. From Europe I remember vaguely but when I came to America I had two grandfathers which I know very well. The both of them died already when I was married.

**Janet:** Let’s say any other memories you have of Bielsk. Do you remember any celebrations there? Any rituals or observances? Religious or otherwise?

**Sadie:** I was too young. I remember going to shul, mama taking me, but I was too young to remember very much of what happened in Europe. I vaguely do remember like we lived in a house and it had a stove, like a fireplace; the whole wall was stove.

**Janet:** Was it stone?

**Sadie:** I don’t know what it was built of, probably like the fireplace but what I remember was it was open and when they cooked you saw the fire. They put the pots and pans to cook on there and it cooked.

**Janet:** The fireplace was the stove?

**Sadie:** For everything; for warmth, for everything. In between they had like a shelf. It was an open thing and we’d lay there and warm ourselves. It was a wonderful thing. That’s what I remember; not much do I remember because I was too young.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything about Ola that little time that you were there?

**Sadie:** Yes. The same thing they have, actually I remember more about Ola. I’m talking about this fireplace because that’s what I remember so much. They were more modern already in Bielsk than they were in Ola. The way they cooked and things like that I don’t… I was too young. But in Ola I was already older, and that’s what I liked. I liked to sleep on it, lay on it; it was beautiful.

The women there instead of playing [unclear 00:27:28] which the women play today, they used to make feather pillows. They used to take the feathers off flick; flick feather they used to call it. That’s what you have feather pillows today. This was their [unclear 00:27:54]. This is what they did then.

**Janet:** You called it flick?

**Sadie:** Flicking feathers. They used to flick feathers. This word is also used in pulling the feathers off the chicken when the chicken is sold after it’s slaughtered then you have to take the feathers off. That’s what you called flick. But then they also called flick when they used to take the feather off the stem. That’s what you have feather pillows out of. I still sleep on feather pillows.

That’s what we used to sleep on; we had no other kind of pillows. That was their socializing. A lot of things I can’t remember but this I remember. We used to lay there, the kids play on there while they were socializing.

**Janet:** Do you remember what clothing that you wore while you were there?

**Sadie:** Dresses, not that special. I don’t remember too much because I was too young. To me, whatever I wore I thought that’s what I have to wear. I didn’t think it was special. I didn’t think it was something to think about. We wore whatever we wore. Of course there are pictures, I don’t have them, of people how they were dressed at that time of life. They were dressed different and they combed their hair different, they all were wearing [unclear 00:29:42]; a wig, but too much I can’t remember.

The same person that interviewed me and the same paper, there are two people that were interviewed from Lake Hiawatha and both of them are gone; they’re dead now. They have in the paper… I kept that paper maybe I still have it. We were the ones that were interviewed. Can I talk about this too?

**Janet:** What we’ll do is if you find that we’ll put it in your file.

**Sadie:** I might if I look up my old things I might find the whole paper. If not, if you get in touch with that paper they would send it to you; from liberty year.

**Janet:** Did your mother keep a kosher house?

**Sadie:** Always. This was the way everybody lived. There’s nothing like [unclear 00:31:02] at that time of life.

**Janet:** Do you remember your mother preparing to come to America?

**Sadie:** Yes. There was a lot to do. She had to pack.

**Janet:** Do you know what she took?

**Sadie:** She didn’t like to wear [unclear 00:31:25] but she took it along anyway. She was travelling with two cousins; a young girl and her brother I think. She thought they’d help her but they didn’t. They were busy finding boyfriends and girlfriends. They didn’t look at her and the poor thing really suffered on our way coming. They took away one of her baggages and they lost it. In that one was her [unclear 00:31:57] and a lot of things that she was bringing to America, which made her very unhappy.

**Janet:** Was she bringing the feather bedding? Do you remember?

**Sadie:** I guess yes she must have because we had them here. That time they were doing the same thing here like they did in Europe so probably either she did bring some. We could get it here because my grandmother must have plenty lying around from where she lived. We weren’t missing pillows. It’s like I was from [unclear 00:32:39]. We used to cover the whole thing made with [unclear 00:32:44]. It comes only out of ducks and geese. They have that soft part. That was made out of just that. It was delicious. I slept on it for a long time.

I think when I got married I had one yet and then made clothes out of it. That’s how much I loved it. I don’t know how I got used to the other things anymore. I can’t believe it because I never wanted to let go.

**Janet:** How about the leaving? Do you remember the leave-taking? Did people come to say goodbye?

**Sadie:** Yes. They came, they cried, they said goodbye. I think they gave her along something. She had an aunt there who was very close to her mother’s sister and she was very close to her. She helped her to have the baby. We had a baby. Being a two-year old, here a two-year old is called what; then it was a baby, that’s all, and she was nursing her. You can imagine how hard it was for my mother. Here she was, travelling with four children; three children and a baby. The other one’s almost a baby too, Elkaleah.

She was maybe three years old. Elkaleah and Enyi was very close. Most of us are two years apart but these were very close. I lost my sister Elkaleah. She died at the age of 30 in America, left a child of two years; cancer. At that time… this is going away from what we’re talking but otherwise I also just recently lost a brother. He was 79 and he also died of cancer.

The rest of us are all here. My brother Morris is still alive, then there is Enyi. When my mother came to America she brought four children and she had four children. We were eight.

**Janet:** Do you remember leaving Ola and going towards the ship? To the port?

**Sadie:** I remember but it’s not very clear because even at the age of seven these things don’t enter your mind, or you think about.

**Janet:** But do you remember anything about the ship?

**Sadie:** Yes. It was a big ship. We were in the third class and pretty bad; we were sick all the way. My mother was nursing my sister and she looked awful when she was coming off the boat because she didn’t eat and nursed the baby. You can imagine how she looked.

On the boat the doctor examined us, all of us, and I guess we passed because he wouldn’t say anything but then my mother… these doctors they were looking for money from even these poor people. They wanted money and my mother had no idea that he would want money. She goes to the doctor and she says to him, “Please give me my papers.” “Go, you’ll get them. Don’t worry.” My mother took his word, we got off the boat, he went back with the boat with our papers and looking at my mother and looking at us with no papers, they didn’t let us in. We got off the boat all ready to eat they wouldn’t give us anything.

There were benches. I saw those benches I went especially before Ellis Island was made over. We went on a trip from one of our senior citizen places and I said I must see those benches. This is what I remember clearly. “I must go look at the benches. Where is the benches where we came and they sat us down? Empty, just us.” We came there and I walked.

We were starved. The children especially were starved. Mom couldn’t tell us because she was… but we were starved. All of a sudden we found a piece of bread, a mouldy piece of bread, and we divided it among us just to take the hunger away. To this day, I will never find the taste in any food like I found in that food. This is what happened to us in Ellis Island.

**Janet:** You mentioned that they thought your mother was unbalanced. What did you mean by that?

**Sadie:** Like I told you, she was nursing. She got skinny like [unclear 00:38:21]. Her eyes were in her head. She didn’t look right and she had no papers to say she was right. So what did they do? They took her into a place and start examining her. We were there for seven days. They start examining her; they ask all kinds of questions. Of course she was normal and she answered all the questions. Like they said, “Count to a hundred”. We used to sing a song in Europe I could count it backwards for you.

Then they gave her the [unclear 00:39:03]. She passed everything yet because of not having the papers they wouldn’t let us go out; it was terrible. My mother begged them. She said, “Send me back, I don’t mind. I liked Europe. Please send me back”. Of course they weren’t sending her back but here in America [inaudible 00:39:24] they managed to get us out.

**Janet:** Your father?

**Sadie:** My father, my grandmother, my grandfather, the family here. They were more Americanized than my father. They were the ones who worked on this thing. Finally we came here.

**Janet:** What do you remember about sleeping at Ellis Island those seven days?

**Sadie:** We didn’t sleep there. We stayed there right after we got off in that place then they took us somewhere. It’s very vague to me how we slept in Ellis Island.

**Janet:** Did you have other food besides that mouldy bread?

**Sadie:** No, not until the next day maybe. Because they didn’t give us anything; everybody went in to eat. Soon as they got off the boat they all went in to eat. Us they didn’t let go. We had to sit on those benches for somebody to come and take us. We were sitting and dying of hunger. I only remember we ate that mouldy bread but after that what we ate and how we ate I don’t remember.

After that I remember very little the way we lived in Ellis Island but my grandmother used to come to see us very often. We couldn’t see her; she couldn’t walk in and talk to us. We saw her through a gate. I remember one thing my mother told me that she says my brother Morris… we were speaking Yiddish and my grandmother came over to the gate and we were told she used to bring us food, didn’t let us out though.

When she came over to the gate, my brother goes over to her he says, “[unclear 00:41:27]”. He didn’t have laces. They were falling apart so my grandmother heard the way he calls her [unclear 00:41:41]; woman. “Woman, please”. He didn’t know she was his grandmother. “Please bring me a pair of laces. You’re bringing other things please bring me a pair of laces”. My brother told me that. My grandmother went away crying terribly. Here you have a family, you can’t take them home.

Finally we came home, she not talk about America. My grandmother and grandfather, Hanah and Label, my maternal grandmother and grandfather, they were living in Clinton Street on the second floor. The houses then were built without bathrooms. A bathroom was in the hall and two families used the bathroom. They lived in the front, we lived in the back. They took an apartment for us.

Two boarders were sleeping on the floor on their house waiting for us to move in so they can come and live with us. I don’t know how they got the furniture because it wasn’t my thing to know. The place was a tomb. No sun, nothing; always black. We didn’t even have electric lights. We already had gas light, but it didn’t amount to much. We decided we can’t stand it anymore so we moved from Clinton Street to Pitt Street.

There it was sunshine all the time. We moved on the fifth floor, the very top. No more houses were that high. We had all the sunshine in the world. My mother was already pregnant with my brother Ebbie and she had to walk up five flights and carry packages. It was a little hard. Finally they decided they’ll move in the same Pitt Street, but that was 25 Pitt Street, where the elevator is; where the Brooklyn Bridge, where that train goes back and forth. We lived there for a while and every time we had boarders. We had four boarders.

**Janet:** How did it work with the boarders? They were fed meals?

**Sadie:** My mother I don’t think she cooked for them. They went to restaurants to eat.

**Janet:** But they slept?

**Sadie:** Yes.

**Janet:** They had actual beds or how did they sleep?

**Sadie:** They had beds. We slept on nothing but they had beds. Imagine four boarders and eight children in four rooms. To this day I can’t picture how we did it.

**Janet:** Do you know how much they paid?

**Sadie:** Very little. They paid enough for us to live to have a better life otherwise we had nothing. My father earned $6 a week and a family with eight children no matter how cheap it was, how could we make out and pay rent? We couldn’t, so we had to have the boarders and they helped us with paying rent. How much they paid I don’t know. I was never privy to that; nobody ever told me, after all I was a child. But enough I guess just to make do so we get along.

So we lived in 25 Pitt Street. We were then already about three more children were born. Ebbie was born and after Ebbie came Jenny. We were four children already. We had a barber living underneath us. He was going crazy. We were very good children. I hope all the children today would be half as good as we were, but we were boisterous. We’d fight and knock ourselves, never go outside and do any mischief to anybody; we were very strict.

My mother kept us very strict but in the house we turned the house over. We’d bang on the floor and he was right under us and he had to work. Finally we decided to move from there, across the street which was 32 Pitt Street. The guy danced in the street so glad to get rid of us. He danced in the street.

We moved and we lived in 32 Pitt Street and they needed a janitor. The landlord came to my mother and he says, “I need a janitor. I need somebody here to collect rent for me, to rent the places and clean the place. You can have your apartment free”. For all that mentioned, the apartment free, my mother took on the job. Because it was very hard, even if my father brought home $6 all of a sudden there was no work. They called it ‘suck’. He was home doing nothing. This is how we lived with my parents trying very hard to make ends meet.

My mother and father both were very religious. Because of my father not wanting to work on Saturday we certainly had to work. My father was almost doing okay because he wanted to support his family. My mother was ultra- religious. One day he worked on Saturday she went all day and cried, so he gave up. He didn’t work on Saturday anymore. Tried for a job where he shouldn’t work on Saturday and he got a job but he was working very hard to support us.

Then my mother tried business. She thought she’d try to go into business. It was before we had the janitor place. She wanted to go in a business. My paternal grandfather had a business on the East Side where the Forbes building was. He stood there and he sold pickles, just pickles, and this was a business.

He was selling these pickles before the Forbes and my father who was the best son you can know of, today maybe he would still be that way, but years ago he just had to give in to the father but he had that nature anyway. He wasn’t well- educated and he didn’t have even the Yiddish. He didn’t have enough push for people to put him through. They were worried only to make the money, like my grandfather he cared not if my father would learn or wouldn’t learn while you have other religious people they give up their lives just to learn.

So my grandfather was there with the pickles. My mother came to him and she says to him, “I’d like to earn more money. I can’t make it with my children. Would you put me in a business? Maybe herring?” There was always one thing he sold [unclear 00:51:25].

**Janet:** It was like a little stand? In other words he was outside the Forbes Building

**Sadie:** With a push cart. He had these pickles and all kinds of tomatoes but only that, and people bought. To them it was a good thing to walk out and eat a pickle on the street. That time that’s the way it was. They’d buy a pickle and they were walking and eating, like they would eat an ice cream sandwich. That’s the way they lived.

My mother came to him and she says, “Father-in-law please help me, I need to make a living.” So he found a booth and in it there was a place I guess somebody vacated it. He put her in there with herring; to sell herring. He wasn’t a good father. My mother’s parents they helped. He wasn’t helping; he left it all to them. He didn’t care. The truth of the matter is that parents weren’t what they are today.

My mother said to him, “I need money.” He says, “Nobody helped me to get along; what do you want from me? I haven’t got anything to give you”. My mother came to her mother and she cried. She says, “I don’t know what to do. He doesn’t want to give me money.” She says, “Okay, I’ll go partners with you. I’ll give you the money to buy the herring and when you make profit we will share it”.

She had to help her with the children because she couldn’t leave the children all day and stay there with the herring. This could have been a good business but to share a business like that didn’t do anything for either one.

If this was a mother today, “Here child, I’ve got the money, take it, try, do good…” Then it was different. They were all for themselves. Children had to do it for themselves.

**Janet:** Where was the herring booth?

**Sadie:** On Fourth Street in New York, Manhattan; East Side Manhattan Fourth Street was the herring booth. My mother stood it for a while and then she saw it’s impossible. My grandmother she didn’t like the idea of having to worry about her grandchildren. My grandmother was ultra- religious. She used to feed all the poor people. Being people herself didn’t matter but she used to go to who had meat. It was all push carts and all the old stuff that was left on the push cart that people didn’t sell. She would even take [inaudible 00:54:47]. She was kosher so she would kosher the meat, put it in little packages for all these people, and send her grandchildren to deliver.

They didn’t like it. Why don’t they come and take it? “Please [unclear 00:55:09], they’re ashamed”. She’d say it in Yiddish because she couldn’t speak English. We wouldn’t listen to grandma? We did. This is the way we lived at that time.

**Janet:** Do you remember doing that?

**Sadie:** Sure. My youngest sisters they always told how they said to her that… I never said that; I had too much respect but the younger ones they said, “[unclear 00:55:36] why can’t they come and take it?” “They’re ashamed.” So what, won’t listen to [unclear 00:55:52]? We went and we all did everything. We were all very close that way.

They had to give up that business. My mother had to give it up. She had no alternative. She tried something else. In the house she was living there were always stores underneath. There was an empty store. She tried [inaudible 00:56:21] and she’s living upstairs so it seemed to her it would be easy to do. She tried and my father whenever he had no work he was always home. If she had to do something for the children she’d say to him, “Go down and stay in the food store.”

It was the worst thing she could have done. He knew nothing about money. The women knew already when he came that they could get away things and there was no merchandise and no money when she came down. She had to give that up too. I think after that she became a janitor and she didn’t do any more of that stuff, which was a little good for her because being a janitor besides having an apartment free and still boarders, she had money already.

When you went to take an apartment at that time you had to pay [unclear 00:57:22]; money for the key. You didn’t have to. It was like a tip so she would get some money there. Some people would ask her to clean the windows. I helped; I was always besides my mother. With everything she had to do, I was her helper and I was very devoted to my parents.

Being a janitor she managed very well. She even saved some money. Then we got older. I was getting ready to get married and my mother thought we should have a nicer house. Which boy would want to come into… so we moved to Henry Street which was a nicer street. Imagine we were living on Pitt Street where the elevator was going all day long, whoever heard it. You get so used to noise you don’t hear it anymore.

My grandfather died so my maternal grandmother used to stand under the bridge and sell… she was a business lady. She always tried to do business. In Europe, she used to make yeast and sell it. My grandmother had six children. My mother, when she was eight years old, was sent away to a family because it was very hard for her to feed all the children and she was old enough in that day to go and work. She was sent away…

**Janet:** We’ll pause here and you’ll continue the story when I change the tape.

This is tape two of Sadie Wishnick. You were saying that your mother was sent away at eight years old to work.

**Sadie:** She was working… this is not what I can remember; what my mother told me. My mother used to live with me every summer she came here for vacation to stay with me after my father passed away. While we were here she was telling me how she was brought up. She says she was eight years old and her mother sent her away. She was working in a family who had a bakery.

My mother was the best cook, the best baker in this world. The dishes she knew and the things she could make, very few people know and can make because she was always in families who were wealthy, who she learnt from. She was eight years old and she was sent away to this family and besides being up all night and baking, she had to sit in the mark, that’s like a fair, and sell what she baked. It was in her town. The people would come there and she used to fall asleep. You can’t be up day and night.

She used to sit and sleep. So they came to my grandmother and they said, “You should be ashamed of yourself sending a child out to work. She sleeps there; she can’t even keep her eyes open”. Didn’t do any good; she still worked and she still was with all kinds of families and this is how she grow up. When she was of age, she was 18 years old when she got married. They found my father for her, from Bielsk.

**Janet:** Do you know anything about how they found him?

**Sadie:** It’s always a match maker. My mother told me that she had like a second cousin whom she was in love with. She thought maybe she was going to marry him. All of a sudden he tells her he saw a girl and he likes her. My mother was very independent. She said, “You like her? Marry her.” Maybe he would have married her if she wasn’t so independent but yet she was independent; she wouldn’t have anything to do with him after he told her about another girl. Maybe she was just a passing fancy. Today it wouldn’t mean anything. To her, she was very independent.

He saw that was over then [unclear 01:03:20] came and they brought my father and he gave one look at her and she was beautiful. My mother was the most beautiful person I ever saw to this day. She was tiny and she was so beautiful that from all the movies I saw and the movie actresses I saw I thought nobody was as beautiful as she was in my eyes. That’s how I felt about her. He looked at her once and that was it. He wants her.

He wasn’t such a bad catch because of a business with his father and they got married. They went off to Bielsk where my father’s business was. They moved into a house which wasn’t their own, I know it was a rental from somebody and they lived there. I can’t remember because after I was born… I was born in Bielsk but I was born in that house just when they got married. Immediately she was pregnant and I was born so how could I remember how the house was or anything like that. That I can’t remember.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything that she cooked that were from the old country even if she cooked them here?

**Sadie:** Simmers. She made simmers which was most delicious. Everybody knows what simmers is?

**Janet:** Describe it.

**Sadie:** Simmers is made with carrots and apples and raisins and you put meat into it. It is cooked a long time and comes out delicious. This is one of the things she made. She made [unclear 01:05:20] herring. It’s marinated herring. She used to make it; it was so delicious.

An uncle of mine came once to her house and he wanted to take her to a restaurant tour. He says, “You come and show them how to make that herring”. She also made fish. She made a special fish, [unclear 01:06:14], also marinated fish. It was out of this world. My uncle also wanted to take it to that restaurant, who was his friend and he’ll have the whole world coming to him. That’s how delicious he knew it was, and it was.

**Janet:** Do you know what was in the marinade?

**Sadie:** You take white fish and yellow perch. Those were the two fishes she used. She would boil vinegar and she puts all spices in it and then spill it over and of course use sugar. It was delicious. That’s about all I can remember about the marinated fish.

She had another dish which is unbelievable; herring. She would take herring and put it in a pot and put salt over that herring. It had to be a closed pot, tight, and boil it. Then she would take that herring out, it had no salt, and marinate that. The herring used to be so hard to eat. It wasn’t hard to eat but you felt it harder in your mouth. It was the most delicious meal you could ever think. She knew dishes that nobody in this world knows. Would you believe that? That you would take herring and put it in a pot, and put salt in and cover it tight and cook it, and take that herring off it had no salt, and then marinate it and serve it. I, to this day, make pro cuisine.

At one time we used to get the feet from the chicken and at that I used to cut up little pieces and then take the neck of the chicken and gizzards, cut them all up in little pieces and put onions, carrots, a little kind of these vegetables that can taste good in there, and boil it.

My mother never put anything in because they didn’t know about tomato sauce or tomato paste or that stuff then. There was no such a thing but her delicacies are still in my mouth. She put nothing in but it came out delicious.

Now I do doctor it with these things. I put in tomato paste with everything and I boil it a long time. I buy chop meat and I take the chop meat and I put the onion into it, and garlic; garlic I put in the sauce too. Then I put eggs and a little [unclear 01:10:19] and then I make little balls and throw it into that sauce, my mother did the same, and that boils all together. It’s delicious.

I told my grandson [unclear 01:10:35]. I gave it all to them. I just made it for the holidays. I make it for the holidays; I make it for him for Passover. Every six months you should see my pots. It’s a restaurant pot that I make it in and they have it. My kids have just gone crazy about it. My great grandson, one year, I said to him, “Brian, that was left over a little. You never give enough”.

Now the second one also is going crazy with it. I have two grandsons. One is already an accountant. He graduated college. The second one is going to college now. They’re so crazy about this fish you can’t imagine. I have a neighbor who used to live here. He now takes care of my property. He wanted me that we should go on business with that. I think I gave you enough dishes.

**Janet:** Tell me a bit more anything else you remember about the Lower East Side from when you were there.

**Sadie:** As I told you we lived in these apartments.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything else about the push carts?

**Sadie:** That’s all we had. There were some stores. In front of the stores were push carts. The stores were mostly clothing but food was [unclear 01:12:45] push carts. When we came to this country, it was during the First World War. Right after we came to this country the war broke out.

Everything was bought very cheap. For a few pennies or maybe a penny you could get a pound of onions. A penny was a very important thing. At one time during the war, things start climbing so they wanted 10 cents or 5 cents a pound for onions. The women went and they threw kerosene on the onions on the push carts because they had no business charging them so much money. They put a string all around their neck and paraded around the push carts to show how they felt about these people.

**Janet:** It seems to me there was a shul or synagogue practically on every block where you resided in the Lower East Side at that time.

**Sadie:** When we came to this country they weren’t so many. There was a few and everybody had a society they belonged to; everybody who came to America that time. We belonged to the Ola society. Bielsk had a society too but because my mother was from Ola and they were the first ones to stop at the society… my grandfather was practically the first one to come to America from all of them. Imagine you see one twice. He was here in the early 1800s. So they start it, they called it society.

**Janet:** We were talking about the Lower East Side. Did you belong?

**Sadie:** My grandfather was the starter so everybody from that little town belonged to this society. The society gave you cemetery, you paid quarterly, you had a loan society that used to loan you money, doctors came from that society. This society had a shul. Every society had a shul and we had the Ola shul.

**Janet:** Where was that?

**Sadie:** That was in Clinton Street. It was in a hall. That was a hall people hired for affairs, weddings and things like that. They hired a room in that catering hall for their synagogue and that’s where we used to pray in Clinton Street.

Then there was all over the East Side in [unclear 01:16:18] Street, there was a beautiful built-up shul. We never had; we used that hall until as time went on people moved away and they weren’t there. It was disintegrated but this is the way we had. When it did happen was when I was married already. Anybody got angry at one another, they opened up a shul and stores. It was a shul here, a shul there all over shuls.

**Janet:** They would get in some kind of dispute over the running of the shuls?

**Sadie:** They take a few people, start their own. This is what happened; that was much later but the time when I came to this country every organization had their shul. Either it was a built up beautiful if they were a richer organization as one in [unclear 01:17:11 Street. It was gorgeous. That’s gone already. They don’t use it as a shul anymore. They’re all going.

When my husband passed away I was married 55 years but since then everything has gone different. Everything is either disintegrated and nothing is the same any more. At that time we know all the shuls. Every town that had a name and had a society had a shul.

**Janet:** Do you remember any social life around the societies or shuls?

**Sadie:** Sure. They used to have dances. Every couple of years we had a banquet. Our society had a beautiful banquet in fact I have a little glass to drink whisky; whisky glass. We had movies already. When we came to America there were movies.

**Janet:** Were these Yiddish?

**Sadie:** No. We were going to school, we were learning English and then they had movies here.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything about Second Avenue and the theatre?

**Sadie:** Yes we used to go to the theatres to see shows. There was Yiddish shows on Second Avenue. I actually grew up I didn’t even feel that I was ever from Europe. You could hear through my talking that I started on [unclear 01:19:28]. What I didn’t want is why is my name Sadie? It could have been Sarah. Sarah’s a beautiful name.

**Janet:** How did you get Sadie? Do you know?

**Sadie:** When I came to this country my aunts Ida and Ethel they were the ones who took care of us because what did we know? We came here without knowing the English language. They take me to school. I think it was my aunt Ida. I said, “Ida please, I don’t want to be called Sarah”.

The European people they don’t pronounce things right and they would say instead of saying Sarah or Serin. Sarah they would say in Yiddish but then in English it would be Serin. I said, “I don’t like Serin”. I don’t like the way they said it. Serie is a beautiful name and I didn’t like the way they said it. It degraded on me so I said to my aunt, “Anything but Serie, please”. So she named me Sadie.

Since my name was Beila so it’s Sadie Beila. Now they call me Sadie Bel. I used to write only Sadie now I have to be a ‘B’ in the middle.

**Janet:** Do you remember being called a greenhorn? Do you remember anything like that?

**Sadie:** No, I was a child. Why would they call me greenhorn if I was a child? I started in [unclear 01:21:05] and immediately I was speaking English. I happened to be very bright in school; twice I skipped classes.

**Janet:** Were there a lot of immigrant children in your school at that point?

**Sadie:** Sure, practically all of them. They were all coming from Europe then.

**Janet:** Were there any incidences in learning English that stick in your mind?

**Sadie:** I had teachers, I loved them. They always made me a monitor. Only one thing that happened to me; I could have gotten out sooner. It was a year… we had cousins in Passaic and we went to one cousin’s wedding. It was just when I was skipped but just before school started, we went to this wedding. To go then was a trip. I’m living on the East Side.

First you took a trolley car but then the trolley cars were with horses at that time. This trolley car took us to where we got the boat. The boat took us across the river and then we got a train to Passaic. That’s how we got to that wedding.

Going back, we missed something and we couldn’t get back in time for me to come to school. They called my name in the class that I was promoted, there’s no Sadie [unclear 01:23:13]. Goodbye Charlie I lost out. I had to go back to the other class. Somebody else was put in my place. I was very upset.

**Janet:** How did you meet your husband?

**Sadie:** We were six girls, two boys. I was the oldest. As soon as I was anything they were ready to marry me off. They were out there waiting. My father called me out to meet an old maid. At 16 I was an old maid already. They brought me all kinds of boys to get married with and I didn’t want any of them.

**Janet:** Your mother and father brought you?

**Sadie:** No [unclear 01:24:12]. They went to them to bring. I had an aunt living in Bensonhurst. She went to a guy who was selling chickens and he was single. He was only about 21 or 22. She went to him and she liked him. She said this is a good one for my niece and she made me come there for the weekend and we met and this is how I met him.

**Janet:** What was it like when the match maker would bring you a boy? What were you thinking of?

**Sadie:** I dare would scream I didn’t want though a fellow would come to the house, take me somewhere and that was it. I saw some very nice shows on Broadway with them.

**Janet:** They would take you some place nice?

**Sadie:** Yes, sometimes. Sometimes I just couldn’t stand them from the minute I looked at them but this is the way it was. I got married. I actually married late, 21. I was an old lady. I’m not sure, I think I married sooner but I looked at my [unclear 01:25:29] they give you when you get married; somewhere I read it says 21. I remember going with my husband walking he says, “How old are you?” I said, “I’m 18”. He wouldn’t believe I’m 18 because who’s 18? He was act like he was an old man already [unclear 01:25:53].

**Janet:** Did you see him a long time before you got married?

**Sadie:** I think maybe a year, not quite a year. He was very anxious to get married. My parents were more modern. If you can call that modern they were modern. His parents were very Europe; old Europeans.

**Janet:** How did your parents become… did they become Americanized?

**Sadie:** My mother tried to become a citizen. She was Americanized. She was so modern in comparison to other people that I know and knew. She was trying to become a citizen. It was very hard for them. They had no education in English at all. Even Yiddish was hard for them to get. Yiddish they still had to pay a Rabbi to teach boys and girls. If their amount of money to spend was so little, guess who they taught; the boy’s education. The girls she learned by going to the synagogue and from hearing all the situations.

She had a wonderful brain. She could add and subtract in her brain. She didn’t know how to write it, she didn’t know how to say it. You can imagine if it was so hard for her to learn even the Yiddish, how could you expect her to know English? Besides having eight children and boarders, there were places to go and learn but she couldn’t. So the children were trying to teach her to sign her name. Mostly you had to know how to sign your name.

She was doing pretty good but I know of something involved, that the husband had to become first and then the wife could become because he was a citizen. They had that law at that time. My father couldn’t. He was way less than my mother. My mother was the one who did everything. My father never laid a hand on us; my mother did. She was the one who raised the children, took care of the house, took care of the finances, everything.

**Janet:** Your father had a good career in Europe. Do you think he was disappointed? Was it a come-down for him to come to this country?

**Sadie:** No. They didn’t know about come-downs there. It was the way you lived and that’s the way you have to live. It’s not like I was better off in [unclear 01:29:08]. I was okay here, I’ll do the best I can over there though it was very much… for my mother’s sake, this was a come-down. She liked it because it was a very good trade that he had and then all of a sudden she has to come to America and she knew that she was going to suffer here.

My mother didn’t have boarders in Europe but she came to America boarders were waiting. You can understand to her it was a come-down but she worked harder than my father to raise us. My father worked hard too but he worked only what he could get. She tried everything under the sun to try and give us a better life. This was the way they brought us up.

**Janet:** When you think of yourself now as living most of your life out here, do you feel that coming here as a seven year old, as an immigrant, do you think that made a difference in the kind of person you are?

**Sadie:** Not at all. I never felt that I came from Europe. Mostly is what my mother spoke to me and told me that I’m telling you. Otherwise I would know very little. If I entered [unclear 01:30:33], first grade, and I didn’t know a word and I was able to skip, so I had a very good head for learning. I went until eighth grade.

**Janet:** Then what did you do after that?

**Sadie:** I was 16 years old and I was ready for work. I went and I got working papers. We had to get working papers and that was in the Board of Health in Chinatown place there’s some place there. I came there for my working papers. I in the whole family, I have a birth certificate. All my other brothers and sisters don’t. My [inaudible 01:31:28].

**Janet:** Where did you get yours from?

**Sadie:** My mother came with it. I come with this birth certificate to get my working papers and the guy is out. When I go back I waited. Guess who came in? A China man. He read my birth certificate and he put it in English.

I have two birthdays; the 12th and the 21st until I met a friend and he told me how it worked in Europe. I was born in the 21st, see I have two dates and I’m legit. My other sisters and brothers are all seeking it. They don’t have, I don’t know why. Since I was the first should have been the hardest, and I have it.

I got my working papers and I went out looking for a job. I went one place and it was a shop on a machine. My mother didn’t like the idea for me to work on a machine because she said it’s not healthy, it’s not good and I got $6 a week sewing on a machine. She was afraid I can get hurt. I don’t know why but I quit that job and then I got a job at a factory that made pocket books.

I didn’t like that one because it smelled terrible. They had all those things, paints, and all things that go with a pocket book. I left that job. I once made myself a blouse. I did it myself and I made a beautiful butterfly in front of the blouse; I hand-sewed it. I came up to a place that was an embroidery place and he says, “Who did this?” I say, “I”, “You’re hired.” So I was hired to the embroidery place. I worked there for a while.

**Janet:** This is hand embroidery?

**Sadie:** Yes, hand embroidery. I worked there for a while then we had a boarder that lived in our house. He was a [unclear 01:34:43]. In fact we called him a cousin. He was from my mother’s town and he was married, in fact this man he had a child. His name was Nathan Kachalsky.

**Janet:** Can you spell that?

**Sadie:** Nathan, N-A-T-H-A-N, K-A-C-H-A-L-S-K-Y. He was just like a son in the family. He worked in the Children’s Clothing, same like my father and they went on strike. After the strike was settled he said to me, “Come Sadie, I’ll put you into the union and you can get a job.” He says, “You’ll get a good…”

After the strike was settled they didn’t give you $6 a week. They gave me $22.50 a week and my job was a cleaner. The operators when they work they leave long cuttings all over the place. I had to clean off the whole bag of these threads and that was my job. I worked on that until I got married.

It was really a chip because at the time before the strike, they got a girl for $17 and actually if the foreman was smart he didn’t have to take me because this wasn’t even part of the union, but I already was in the union and they hired me for the job. They couldn’t do anything about it. I just stayed there and in this job I got married. I met my Morris. My husband’s name was Morris Wishnick. I met him and we got married.

We had a beautiful wedding in the Jefferson Hall. My mother was looking for the biggest hall because we had a big family and then they [unclear 01:37:12], where you hide only the older people? The children stay home. “Oh no”, she said, “Not at my daughter’s wedding. I have to have everybody”.

300 people were at my wedding.

**Janet:** Did you have to have some kind of a dowry at this point?

**Sadie:** I gave no dowry. He gave me dowry. He was in business. He was in the chicken business. He fell in love and he didn’t want anything from anybody. He bought me a fur coat while we were engaged. Everybody envied me because fur coats were under thin people. My grandmother knew a furrier and he gave the best so I had a beautiful black fur.

When we got married we lived in a beautiful apartment in Bensonhurst. We got married and moved to Bensonhurst, had a beautiful apartment. It was a beautiful area near the bay. We used to walk to the bay and bathe. My sisters and brothers and cousins, everybody came to me. Then you don’t ask, “Should I come?” Today you’ve got to make an appointment.

**Janet:** Did you and Morris have children?

**Sadie:** One child, Doris. My Morris wanted I have seven kids, as many as I can have, and all boys. He got stuck with a girl and thank you dear God, from the girl we had three grandchildren; two girls and a boy. The girls are Linda…

**Janet** What’s your daughter’s married name?

**Sadie:** Doris [unclear 01:39:38]. She married Irving [unclear 01:39:42]. I lost my son-in-law two years ago. He passed away so now she lives alone.

**Janet:** She has three children.

**Sadie:** Two girls and a boy. The two girls got married and they brought me four great grandsons but my grandson Eddie he didn’t get married. He’s already 38 years old. He isn’t married. I’m still hoping. That’s the family I have.

**Janet:** How is this time of life for you? Your old age time how is it for you?

**Sadie:** Wonderful. You see how I am. Should it be good? It’s good. This knee was operated on; this eye had a transplant cornea, now cataract. Thank God physically all my vital organs are okay. So why should I complain? I have grandchildren. I know my daughter is out of the question. My son-in-law died. My grandchildren, they are the best in this world.

My granddaughter, Linda, I had to go for this operation. We have in our township two women that take care of people like me. When they have to go to doctors, they come and pick you up in a car, bring you to the doctor, bring you home. They’ll do it for me; no, Linda wouldn’t let.

Whenever I have to go to a doctor, and sometimes I beg off already, she’s a busy person. Besides having a family, she has a business at home. She makes trophies. It’s a business but it’s at home. She has to be home. I say, “Linda but you…” “No”, she says, “I’ll do everything but I’m going with you. Don’t make any appointments.” And that’s what she does.

The poor thing for this last operation we would have to be in the hospital at 8:30 AM that morning; that was Tuesday morning the 19th of September was my operation. Dr. Shaw is my doctor. He’s in Dover. His office is in Dover. We had to be in the hospital, and that was in Dover General, at 8:30 in the morning. Linda and Eddie… Eddie lives in Cherry Hill; my grandson. He took me to Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia. It’s close to him.

This operation I went to the Dr. Shaw, the one who is my man for the eyes all the time. Linda said, “Grandma, I don’t want to take this responsibility of going for the operation alone. I want Eddie to come.” Eddie didn’t say nothing and he says why make him spend a day? No drama, that’s what I want. That night when she was coming, they were both staying over my house that night to take me to the hospital, she had a car accident. Coming to me, a car hit into her car and cockled it.

That night I didn’t sleep because here I’m expecting and she isn’t here. Eddie went to the telephone and called her house. They told her she had an accident and they said she’s alright they had her in the hospital; no bones broken. You don’t come out of an accident and a total. This man was crazy; he sees a car is standing, he goes right into her.

**Janet:** Let’s go back to the immigration part. Is there anything else you can think of that has to do with your coming to this country?

**Sadie:** I think I told you. What else can I say? We came; we lived on the East Side and that was it.

**Janet:** Is there anything else that you want to say before we close the tape?

**Sadie:** It’s enough for the tape. I’ll give you my life story. I have the whole thing here; it’s typed. You have even more than I already gave them because of my eyes. It was very hard for me. I couldn’t see and now would you believe that I could read the last line? The girl was amazed; I was amazed myself.

**Janet:** That’s a good point to stop. I want to thank you very much.

**Sadie:** You’re welcome and I’m glad to have you. I have to show you my… I want to know am I on the… that I paid money for? You said you were going to investigate.

**Janet:** The Wall of Honor; we’ll talk about that. I’m signing off now. This is Janet Levine, it’s September 30th 1995. I’m here in Lake Hiawatha with Sadie Wishnick, and thank you very much.

**Sadie:** You’re welcome.

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