

Friedman and Kibrick Family Saga of Coming to America

Aunt Annette: This is Thanksgiving eve, September 27th 1969. And Daddy and Uncle Sam and Auntie Annette are here. And while they're all sitting together we thought we'd get some stories straightened out. We've always heard stories from Russia and Mexico and San Francisco but we're always getting them mixed up. So we thought we'd get it on tape and get it all straightened out so we could figure out who was where, when, and what you did. Okay?

Sol: Okay.

Annette: Now, you and Sam came over together from Russia Right? What year?

Sol: In June 1913.

Annette: And you were how old?

Sol: I Was close to 16 and he was close to 18.

Annette; 16 and 18. And where did you go? Directly to where?

Sol: From Russia direct to San Fran – to Galveston, Texas and then to San Francisco. Annette: And why did you come?

Sol: (Laughing) Why did we come?

Annette: Yeah. And why did you pick San Francisco instead of New York like most people?

Sam: Well that's an interesting question you've asked us. Why did we pick Galveston, or why did we pick San Francisco? Our father, your grandfather, has a personal friend. Mr. Abrams. I forgot his first name.

Sol: Abraham. Abraham.

(Cross talk in Russian/yittish.)

Sam: He was our father's personal friend. Mr. Abrams took a trip to Europe – Sol: 1911 or 1912.

Sam: Around 1915.

Sol: No, no. It was 1913.

Sam: Yeah. And we promised – well we were discussing what was the future of the Jewish people in Russia and what would become for us. We have to – we get to army age we take the way for –

Sol: 4 years.

Sam: 4 years. And when we come out of the army we have no future. Annette: What was the army age, 18?

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Sam: No 21. And we come out 25. There's nothing ready for Jewish boy waiting for him in the way of employment. And everybody, all the Jewish people were always dreaming of improving their life by going out into the world, especially America.

(Indecipherable background chatter)

Annette: We have some Champagne that (Matzah's) brought in while we're recording. You're on tape, you said you were too scared to talk on tape.

Matzah?: I can listen in.

Sandy: Well, when it comes to revisiting our wedding she –
Laughter.)

Sol: Okay, continue!

Annette: Well we can still have it, it's not too late.

Sandy: Yeah we'll have it after the interview to –

Annette: Well what about during the interview?

Sandy: That's a better idea.

Annette: That'll make it a little more lively.

Sol: Is it cold, is it cold?

Sandy: Oh, it's very cold. I'll get some glasses. You go ahead and talk.

Sam: When they discuss the children's future with this Mr. Abrams he evidentially advised them that the best thing would be for whole family –

Sol: The youngsters.

Sam: To immigrate to America. But naturally first comes the elderly people send out the youngsters to probe the country and find out whether it's feasible or it's advisable. So my father took the whole group mother, and decided that it would be a good idea to build on the dream of going to immigrate to America. And Mr. Abrams promised if we ever decide to come to –

Sol: United States.

Sam: To come to America, we should go through Galveston Texas. Which is a distribution point by certain –

Sol: (Ya-ka, ya-ka)

Sam: By certain philanthropic organizations. Which were very much interested that immigration should not accumulate or go full blast to the east coast. There were too many people going to the east coast and very few people went to the west. And I think the name of the organization was (ee-ka, 05:37). The people that was financing that was some of the Rothchilds. They were some of the people that were interested that immigration should not go east.

Sol: West.

Sam: Should be distributed.

Sol: That was the slogan, go West.

Sam: Should be distributed more equally and not all in one place. SO when we finally decided to leave Russia and go to America we communicated with that organization and they have made the cost of the trip subsidized the trip –

Sol: 80 rubles.

Sam: We paid very little for the trip, they have financed it. For all these people that took this course.

Annette: Did you come over with and friends or just the two of you? Sam/Sol: Yeah.

Sam: Now at that time it was 1913 that we finally decided to go. Then our personal friend Licht.

Sol: Two boys.

Sam: You know who the Licht are.

Annette: Yeah I met them. They used to have the soap factory. Sam: No, no.

Sol: (En, en, en.)

Annette: Oh, oh yeah.

Sam: The Licht, was my wife's brother. (Indecipherable names then Benny and Meyer) Benny was my age and we were friends. Ever worked together in Warsaw a couple years before I left Russia. And they indicated they would like to join us. We were happy to have them join us. So we were four musketeers.

Sandy: We're not going to make it with this bottle of champagne. Annette: Sandy just tried the champagne. Good, huh?

Sandy: It's cellar.

Sol: Give me a little bit.

Annette: Did you all go to Texas then, straight to Texas?

Sam: These –

Sandy: Hold on.

Sam: These tickets on this (ee-kar company) would only subsidize you if you go to through that port.

Sol: West. Go west boy.

Tape cuts. Resumes.

Annette: Okay, we're going on then?

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Sandy: Yeah it's recording now.

Annette: So you went to Galveston Texas and you met Mr. Abrams.

Sam: No, no.

Annette: The four musketeers.

Sam: The instructions were that when you get to Texas the ee-kar, the officers of the ee-kar organization will ask you –

Annette: What're you doing Sandy? (Indecipherable.) Well turn on these then.

Sam: The instructions were that when these ee-kar officers were working out of Galveston will ask you, "Where will you like to go in America. New York? Midwest? Or west?" You should say you prefer San Francisco. Then they'll ask you, "Do you know someone there that might be interested in sponsoring you to see that you don't fall as a burden-

Sol: To the state.

Sam: On somebody." So you say you would, you knew that Mr. –

Sol: Abrams.

Sam: Laser...Abrams. Will take care of us and will see that we get established there and do not fall a burden to –

Sol: Anyone.

Sam: On anyone. SO when it came about and they asked us this question we indicated so. Then they asked the Lichts too, where did they prefer to go. And they gave the same name and the same city even though they did not prepare – have a clear understanding with Mr. Abrams to that effect. SO the government, or the immigration officers, send out a telegram –

(Crosstalk)

Sam: Send out a telegram to Mr. Abrams asking him all these questions. Does he know such young people, and does he undertake to see that we get established.

Sol: Guarantees it.

Sam: In the meantime they examined us as to our health, the immigration authorities. And they found that Sol, your father, has some kind of –

Sol: Questionable. Something questionable.

Sam: Glaucoma. In the eyes. And that was, sometimes they make you go back to the country you come from. And that was a terrific blow to me, to all of us because we just got news of what that means eventually. SO he was kept separated from us.

Sol: It was Friday night.

Sam: And in the meantime - Sandy: How old were you there? Sam: 16. 12 and 16. And –

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Sol: In July it was supposed to be 16, it was June. Annette: Where did they separate you?

Sol: In the immigration –

Sandy: You were all by yourself then? All by yourself? Sol: I was left. I was left on the outside.

Sam: We were separate like he was a man with a disease or something.

Sandy: Were you frightened?

Annette: It was contagious.

Sol: He was shipped out right away into the city and I was left on, not myself, was left – Anette: They thought it's contagious.

Sam: I was not very far. I was very close. In the meantime we were waiting – Annette: Were you worried?

Sol: He was worried, I wasn't. I was turning the wheel upside down.

Sam: We sure were worried. In the meantime they were waiting also to hear form – Sol: Abrams.

Sam: From San Francisco. Oh no, let me put it straight. When they, they did not try to interview me first. The organization of the (ee-kar) because refused to do anything or say anything until I knew what happens to my brother. And we were discussing where I want to go, because if he goes back maybe I want to go back too. So the Lichts didn't have any time. They want to go to America and right away starting to get that gold that's lying in the streets. So they sent a telegram to this organization to San Francisco asking that question whether they'll take us to take care of us.

Sol: Except...

Sam: Except to worry about, to start establishing, and nothing came. No answer.

Sol: Nothing came.

Sam: No answer came. In the meantime as I said, he was impenaled (sic) in a separate building.

Sol: In the middle of the ocean. It's like an asylum. You were in the city.

Sam: No.

Sol: Yes, it was an asylum.

Sam: Detained...people questioning whether he was admitted or not. Finally I heard the good news that he was freed.

Sol: I jumped out.

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Sam: He was found well enough to proceed. Then we rushed into this office of the (ee-kar) and we told them to send telegram to San Francisco. And that would take 24 hours before we got an answer. The answer was favorable and it included also, (Yiddish words, 15:28).

Annette: Oh I see. Why didn't they answer the Lichts. Sol: Because they didn't expect them.

Sam: They didn't know who they were. And they didn't, they had a deal with us and they didn't –

Annette: Okay, then what'd you do? You hopped on a plane and – I'm just kidding. Sol: They gave us (indecipherable)

Sam: Don't forget we were very young and very green –

Anette: And very poor too.

Sol: We didn't need any money, what we need was bread.

Sam: And remember that we finally got together, we got tickets and food. Sol: They gave us 15 breads, the Russian big breads, sardines and fruit. Sam: Food? They gave us no food –

Sol: No, food for the whole row. 4 or 5 days.

Sam: And we came to the city of Houston, Texas. And it was (tichable? 16:25), you know what tichable is? Nine day and half, which is a fast day in memory of destruction of second temple. And that's, it's a sad day in Jewish history but we were traveling and we sat there and they told us – oh no, no. I missed an episode.

Sol: I and Sam went down to the post office –

Sam: Wait a minute, wait a minute. They had people, police from immigration department, from the (ee-kar) department. They, is it registering?

Annette: Yeah I think so, Sandy it's working isn't it?

Sam: They accompanied us to the station and they give us the tickets and they said this will take us direct to San Francisco. The only thing that there is a place where we have to change trains. Which means actually does not mean direct. When you come to Houston, Texas you have to change trains. Well to our surprise we were already somewhere east when they looked around, we got our own train. We were very off our course. When they notice that, the conductors they changed us to another train and then back on the right road we finally arrived to Houston, Texas. And as I said that day was (tichable). And they told us we had four hours to wait for our train.

Sol: The change.

Sam: So we sat and waited. Then I suggest let's write letters. We were so green we thought that if you write a letter you have to go to the post office little did we know that there are, in the modern world, there are boxes (mailboxes) -

(Cross talk)

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Sam: Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. We don't know.

Sam: Anyway, we made the letters and we sealed them and I and Sol went to the post office to mail them. That means to town. And we –

Sol: Couldn't come back.

Sam: We asked for post office, post office until finally we reached the post office, we deposited the mail and we started on our way back. And we couldn't find our place at the station because there is more than one station in that city. We came to one station and it wasn't the right station. Finally we met someone with a high hat, they wear the thing like noble people.

Sol: They're accents, Texas accents.

Sam: No, no. He was a man of wealth, of –

(Cross talk)

Sam: And we asked him some questions, we said "Station, station, station". So he understood that we are lost.

Annette: Were you speaking in Yiddish? Sol: Any language.

Sam: We just said "station, station". And he called over policeman and told him evidently that they went to the wrong station and that he should accompany us, he should bring us back to the right station. So finally the policeman brought us to the right station but the Lichts are gone.

Sol: Our bags, our food, everything is gone.

Sam: The tickets, the bags, the food everything was gone. And here we are left. We're left. They have no time. They wanted to start gathering that gold that was in the street.

Annette: They took a sooner train? (20:50) (Indecipherable)

Sol: We lost the train!

Annette: You missed the train?

Sol: Missed the train.

Sam: So what can we do? So I talk to some people, a little German, a little Yiddish, I don't know. They didn't know what to do so I suggest I says, "Listen, a telegram can go fast than the train."

Sol: Send the telegram.

Sam: Why can't you send a telegram and stop these boys and wait for us so we get united. So he says, "It's a good idea."

Sandy: What language were you talking in? Sam: Jewish. I talk Jewish but –

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Sol: German.

Sam: They were German people or German Jews, I don't know. Anyway, so they send the telegram –

Sol: And they stop them.

Sam: They stop these people.

Sol: (indecipherable. 21:45)

Sam: And they took the train.

Sandy: What'd they expect to do with your ticket?

Sam: I don't know.

Sol: They saw a train, they went! That's why they call them "greedos", don't you know why?

Sam: Anyway, about four hours later we arrived to that place and the policeman on the other side was waiting for us, brought us into big, you know waiting goal. They were sitting on the floor with –

Sol: Bags and everything.

Sam: With all the bags with all the food. Anyway that's how we got united, that's the way we came –

Sol: Proceeded.

Sam: That's the way we proceeded on. Any other questions. Annette: Oh yeah.

Annette: Oh what, you went to San Francisco.

Annette: And then you looked up the Licht's in San Francisco.

Sol: This man at the hotel and he gave us two in a room. Two rooms. On "A" street in San Francisco and we came there in the middle of the week and he kept us there till Sunday. On Sunday we started looking for a job. I was the first one. He says that he (mumbled, 23:09) fruit man. He says, "Do you need a boy?" He says "Yes I could use a boy." Didn't ask no questions, how much money, what're you gonna' do, nothing! He just picked me up Sunday morning and here I go. And I was one of the boys to eat and sleep and work there for the man. That was my first job.

Annette: You didn't go to work together then.

Sol: No, no. They gave me a basket of fruit, keep your foot in the door and say, "Ten cents! Ten cents!"

Annette: Oh, you went door to door selling.

Sol: Yeah that was my job. And that was my first job. Now Sam will tell you what his first job was.

Annette: You said ten cents per basket?

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Sol: That's the grapes, yeah. Here Sam, you had another job. You went the - Sam: First you say was fruit, not milk?

Sol: No, no, the milk one was later.

Sam: Well, Mr. Abrams picked for me a job in a factory to varnish trunks. They made new trunks. They varnish them and prepare them to look nice. Gives them a luster. And my wages were –

Sol: Six dollars.

Sam: Six dollars a week. Everybody was very curious to see in the shop such a young boy, just came from Europe, his first job. We became very friendly. And I was even friendly with the foreman too. So after I worked a week or two, I told him, or asked him, can't he be instrumental of me to getting the same wages as this old man.

Sol: That's, that's –

Sam: When I'm 60 or 65 – Sol: That's the communist.

Sam: 60 or 65 and he was getting ten dollars a week. And I said, "Don't I do the same thing as good as he does? Just try." I didn't mean, I didn't ask and say if not I'll strike. I just said see what you can do. So he promised me. Then it was Friday I got relieved from my job just because I had the audacity of asking for a raise.

Annette: They fired you?

Sol: I said before I had a fruit job but it wasn't so. He arranged with Spiegleman at the furniture store arranged that he's got some boys for work. Whoever's going to work he doesn't know but he looks at me and he says, "You, a child, a kid. You don't look like a working man. Let's go down to the store." And he bought for me overalls. He bought me some long overalls and I look like a working man, a regular man practically. So I went down, he sent me down to the factory and I was working there. About a week's time I'm polishing furniture. We polish the furniture until blood starts going out of the fingers. But it wasn't so bad. But the boys, they were going, they used to take my coat, the little coat I had, and they put wet stuff in there to make us feel miserable. Anyway, regardless –

Sam: Maybe they were just playing.

Sol: Yeah. By the end of the week I told Mr. Morris, Morris is his name, he was the foreman at the Spiegleman factory, I say, "Wouldn't it be alright I should get a dollar a day like the others do?" They only gave me five dollars a week. Saturday we didn't work but we worked Sunday. So he says, "You're fired." That was the attitude that anybody asked for more money should be fired. And 1913 was a very, very bad – very few people, there was a lot of unemployed people.

Sam: Unemployment, yeah.

Sol: And a lot of American citizens.

Sam: People were standing in the street for coffee. Sol: Begging.

Sam: Not begging.

Sol: Give me a cup of coffee.

Sam: They were feeding them free but they had to stay in the – Russian woman: Lines.

Sam: Lines. To get rations.

Sol: So they figure that a boy like me if he gets five dollars a week he should keep his mouth shut. But I said, nobody instigated me because we need more money because we only, we paid five dollars for board and room for two of us so we couldn't live on ten dollars a week. So he told me I was fired. After I'm fired, he was mad at me, Mr. Abrams, why I asked for raise or something like that. But anyway, the next beginning of the week I got fruit job. And on fruit job I stayed until about, the season, the fruit season, the he didn't need me anymore.

Sandy: How much could you make on the fruit job?

Sol: A dollar a day. But I was, I could eat all the fruit I want. And I slept at that man's house, I didn't have to pay for board and room. But somehow we want to still better ourselves, you know? So one day he said, he stops, a milk man, Jewish milk man. He says maybe he could use a boy. He knew, he said he'd fix me right away and he took me up on the wagon and he brought me over to his family and said, "I've got a boy! A little slave!" You know. (Laughing) He had kids and I was satisfied. And I worked there about two or three months.

Annette: Get up at three o'clock in the morning.

Sol: Oh yeah. (Indecipherable, 29:50) After supper and went to station, brought the milk. And bottling the milk, putting in the ice box so the next morning we should have fresh milk to deliver.

Sam: Distribute.

Sol: Distribute. So like that I was working until Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, I was free. But on (suchurst? 30:24) that is, what do you call in English?

Sam: Tabernacle.

Sol: Tabernacle. I didn't know any difference and I went home to Sam for the holidays. Then I came back he says, "In United States we don't keep such Holidays. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, alright but sorry your job is taken. Take your things and go home." So I went home. Meanwhile I had accident there. And I feel down. I received a letter from home and I fell asleep –

END OF TAPE 1. BEGIN TAPE 2.

Sandy: While you were working on that milk wagon, you had an accident. Because the tape ran out before we got the rest.

Sol: I received a letter from home and I start reading it on the way. The wagons they used to be very tall you know. And while I was reading the letter I fell asleep when turning a corner. I fell down and it was about 24 hours, not unconscious, but I didn't know –

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Sam: Out of commission.

Sol: Not myself. Until I get straightened out the doctor examined me and said (indecipherable, 00:58) until Sam came. And he found out that I was off of my rocker.

Sandy: Off the wagon and off your rocker.

Sam: Well, as I said when that when I had a disappointed experience was shocking to me that you could lose a job so easy. Even easier than to get one. So it was challenge to me. I would like to get something that I shouldn't have such an immediate (indecipherable, 01:33) and that I can live my life. And I thought selling papers would be an answer. I got my, what I thought my days quarter of papers, and I took it around the corner and tried to sell papers. But all of a sudden some young kids appeared and started telling me how they would hit me and I didn't know what they were saying. But they soon gave it to me to understand that I didn't belong there. I should go to the other corner.

Annette: It's a competition.

Sam: So I went to the other corner then someone else pushed from there. Then finally I got in front of the plaza of that big hotel, what do you call it?

Group: San Francisco.

Sam: There I really opened my eyes. People gave me quarters and didn't want any change. People gave me dimes when they only owed me a nickel.

Annette: And nobody kicked you off that corner? Sol: Wait, wait, wait.

Sam: Until someone, the same experience that I had on Market Street started here. They started ask what was I doing there and I understood by then that they didn't want me there. I don't belong there. And I had to give that up. Actually it was very profitable business but it didn't last very long.

Annette: So where did you go from there?

Sam: From there I went to, I took a small job that didn't last very long. What do you call these –

Annette: Venetian.

Sam: Women, in windows?

Annette: Mnnequins?

Sam: Mannequins. In mannequin factory. That was very short lived.

Annette; And from there?

Sam: Then I looked around and I was advised there was a place in the sack factory (03:52), whereby –

Sol: The Lichts – Annette: Bag factory.

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Sam: Oh they moved there? The Lichts evidently got the first job and then I applied and I was accepted there. That's where we come to new ending about bag business.

Sol: When I find out they're making eight dollars a week and I was, you know, I wasn't. Annette: What'd you do after the milk route?

Sol: After the milk route –

Sam: Wait a minute, wait, wait, wait. I want to tell you the story about milk route. I was very depressed working in that bag factory. You are actually losing the human image, the image of a human being because I was a young boy and all of a sudden I found out that my hands were so full of dirt that you couldn't wash off that I was ashamed of myself.

Sol: He was depressed.

Sam: I was looking at my hands figuring there was no future for me in America. The whole trip, the whole effort of gathering myself and going to America isn't worth it. I did not see any future at all. I didn't see how I could ever get out. The work was hard and dirty and most of things that bothered me was my hands were so full of, what do you call it?

Annette: Grit. (Crosstalk, 05:45)

Sam: And it was already in, in the skin. And that was a reminder that it isn't for me. I didn't make a good step in right direction. And one of these days, one of these thoughts, I used to go finish my work I used to hitch a truck, one of these low trucks.

Sol: Hitchhike.

Sam: Get on the truck –

Sol: in the back of the truck and go.

Sam: These low trucks, it's easy to get on. And I hurt myself a little bit. Sol: Save five cents.

Sam: A little bit. Didn't have to wait for a bus. I used to go get into and some friends there at the grocery store were intelligent people and I used to greet them, say hello, and they wanted to know how I am and they recognize in me that I was very depressed. And I was. "Why are you so depressed?" And I don't see any way out of this. (Yiddish, 07:05) What do you call it? What do you call a bad dream?

Annette: Nightmare.

Sam: Nightmare. To me it was like a nightmare. Anyway, going home with this mood I come home and on the steps on the stairs, before I go up to my apartment, was sitting a nice looking Jewish girl and she started talking to me. I was bewildered.

Sandy: The nightmare changed in a moment.

Sam: What does she got to do with me? What does she, what does she want, and somehow she gave me to understand that she is a friend of mine, a friend of the family and she was told that my brother had an accident and would I please go with her, she'll bring me to -

Sol: Was she that....

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Sam: To the place where he lives. So she did take me over there. Sol: Mission.

Sam: And then I came in there. He took a look at me (laugh) and he said, "What's the matter, look how you look. Why are you go in such dirty clothes?"

Sol: Jacket, jacket.

Sam: Dirty clothes, see he was employed in a milk van which is clean and -

Sol: Very clean.

Sam: No special garb, no special uniform, mine was just old clothes and a -

Sol: A jacket.

Sam: Very depressing. So I told him I was coming from work and a girl did not let me go to my apartment.

Sol: Change clothes.

Sam: And she wanted me to go right away with her to see you, so I explained to him 10 minutes later - Sol: 5 mintes later

Sam: He asks me the same question and I begin to understand then there is something wrong with him. (Annette laughs.)

Sam: And a few minutes later he asked me the same question (laughs) "What have you got on, why are you so dirty?" Anyway, the doctor assured me they want me to feel good so they brought a doctor had the doctor talk to me and explain to me, "Don't worry, it's a concussion of the brain" but (laughs), and then the next day he was better and he stopped asking that question.

Annette: You got washed.

[00:10:09]

Sol: He went home, I stayed there until I felt better and then I went to work. Annette: And then what happened after your job?

Sol: After I quit my job - that Monday I was fired at the job.

Annette: Fired!

Sol: I went to the same place where they were working, of course six dollars is not enough. Need eight dollars a week, had a lot of expenses so after I got in there I felt very happy there, I wasn't depressed among the sacs.

Sam: The bag factory paid two and a half dollars a day.

Sol: When?

Sam: Much, many years -

Annette: How long did you work there at the bag factory?

Sol: Listen, I remember better. He's dreaming two and a half dollars, it's fifteen dollars a week, fifteen dollars a week was 3 or 4 years later.

Sam: The reason I remember because we finally were promoted to manage a little branch of this. Sol: Oh, that was years.

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Annette: That's a higher grade.

Annette: How long did you work there all together? Sol: Oh a couple of years.

Sol: Then I got a raise.

Sam: Then we got five dollars the two of us.

Sol: For Sunday, only Sunday eight dollars.

Sam: No we got ten dollars

Sol: No siree.

Sam: Five dollars and -

Sol: No, no, no.

Sol: It was after we were in business already for ourselves, he called us, Schwartz, and he said "Boys I know you are tzadikim, you know, fine boys, I want you to work for me eight hours only and I'll give you five dollars." We were very glad to get it because, five dollars, it was, it was, for 2 for 8 hours, was why we were in business already for, ourselves, it was after, oh you don't remember, it was eight dollars.

Sam: We made ten dollars that day, Sunday, and that was a lot. Sandy: Ten dollars a person, or ten dollars -

Sam: No both of us, I got five dollars and -

Sol: I could bet you anything -

Sam: Anyway, it's plenty cheap.

(laughter)

Sol: But the idea wasn't that, you see, when I, when I, when I was starting to work in the factory and I got acquainted with all this business, you know, I quit the job all of a sudden I went to work in the new factory, ames sales he just gave up the business about four or five years ago, six years ago, so I got into work there, I had a little experience already from this place here, from the Schwartzes and I, and they put me up to , the upstairs where 2 or 300 girls were working there, and I took one of the machines, I was patching, I was working about a week and the girls the foreman came and took me off of the job and he says, the complaint was I was making too fast too many bags too fast and the only boy among so many girls and they didn't like it and they put me down on the second floor mending bags, I mended bags, and then I saw mending bags not for me that's not a future, and I quit the job and went back to the Schwartzes, the Schwartzes we stayed about the winter time it was summer we came in it was already winter time, winter time we came to himwith a ...what position did we not....we got to go to school...we cannot continue in this way 10 hours a day from 7 in the morning till 6 at night and an hour for lunch, so he listened and he said alright, but remember, you will get the same pay for 9 hours, but to the Russians, tell 'em...that you are getting um you are only getting paid for 9 hours and we were all happy, all four of us, we went to school and so on and so on, until

Sandy: When you say all 4 of us who were the four, you and Sam. Annette: And the Lichts.

Sol: They were grading bags and Sam was grading bags and I was -

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Annette: You went to night school?

Sol: And the boss made me for a little mechanic, he gave me an apron and oil can. Annette: A screwdriver.

Sol: A screwdriver - and he taught me how to do it and when I asked for a raise he says a tell Schwartz that he, tell Schwartz that I couldn't that Spira cannot get along without me, (laughs) Spira was one of the bosses, but anyway, I was, I was eh -

Sam: They themselves told them how to ask.

Sol: How to ask for a raise, says he couldn't get along without me and of course I think he was a mechanic himself, not a mechanic, but ah you know an amateur mechanic a little bit, a needle, to put a needle how to fix a belt.

Sam: What do you call it? Sandy: A maintenance man? Sam: I mean a man handy man.

Sol: A handy man handy man and he told me how to do it and what to do and I was handy and I did it, everything he taught me and he was busy, he was bookkeeper he was everything he was, but someday we get up all the two of us, one day we get up and said we can't take it anymore. I mean its too much, hard work, dirty work and it's not enough money.

Annette:mucho trabaho and poco dinero.

Annette: Yeah.

Sol: So ah I said I'm going out peddle fruitdon't forget, so we both take a wagon, for a dollar and a half a wagon for a day, we go down to market and buy some strawberries, (laughs) fruit, strawberries (laughs) you know -

Annette: (laughs) Strawberries.

Sol: He got the strawberries, tell about the strawberries Sam.

Sam: Well I remember particularly one evening we bought a chest of strawberries, the strawberries are very perishable, if you don't sell that day.

Sol: Especially if it is a rainy day.

Sam: All your profit is gone. (laughs)

Annette: Kaput.

Sam: Besides we have to look for a place where to (dop?) so we worked late into the night and we ah, we were known already in a certain section of the, of the city.

Sol: Apartment houses.

Sam: Apartment houses, that they were looking for us, I mean. Sol: Young kids, you know, they was give us a chance.

Sam: I remember the wife of a ...of a fire, of a fire -
Sol: Man.

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Sam: Man. She was marveling at the young, youngsters like we, should work so hard and so late, so she actually was waiting, waiting for us and when we finally got there she found out our plight, which she took off our hands, all the strawberries, all the strawberries we had and made us happy. (laughs)

Annette: She made jam.

Sam: Anyway uh this this this couldn't last let alone because it was hard work.

Sol: Really hard work.

Sam: It was really hard work and hazardous, I mean perishable fruit, we gave it, we gave it up soon enough.

Sol: We gave it up and I went to work and I got a started to peddle bags because we already had a year and half or 2 years experience bags in the bag factory.

Annette: Lot of, lot of.

Sol: lo I went out and I peddled bags and Sam bought a couple a machines, sewing machines and we hired a place on Octavia Street.

Sam: Leased.

Sol: Leased, rented, and he was mending the bags and I was peddling the bags and we were bailing them and sorting them and anyhow our old boss used to buy from us and he came to us with a proposition, he says if you would do this why don't you come and work for us? for us say Sunday, gonna' be a...so he gave us 5 dollar for two of us, for two of us, for the day, he didn't give us ten dollars so we were ready to do it meanwhile Sam was mending the bags and he saw that if I am busy outside he hired a girl, a woman, Italian woman, she was mending bags, and short times after that i jumped off the track and I brought my -

Sam: How can, how can Italian woman sing Irish songs?

Sol: She wasn't Italian, but she was a good singer she was such a good singer.

Sam: She was Irish.

Sol: Irish? Well maybe, doesn't make a difference.

Sam: She sang this famous about Ireland.

[00:19:19]

Sol: Yeah.

Sam: She was crying, she was so lonesome for her country, she was singing such sad heartrending songs, was just something like Jewish styles.

Sol: So I didn't take long and I jumped off my wagon and I broke my leg, and Sam started to cry over my shoulders, what did you do? went to the hospital, to the Mt. Sinai hospital there, San Francisco, and they told me I'd be crippled forever, yeah they told me in Jewish, and this climate is going to give him a lot of pain. Anyway I came there I had to do some work, even I had a cast on, I did some work, so we had to let go of that woman.

Annette: The Irish.

Sol: And he was grading bags and I was mending with that cast, was mending bags, anyway, eventually we had to give up the woman and I was six weeks until mending the bags you know it was a lot of work, always in bags, you know you don't make money but they are a lot of work, always.

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Annette: Yeah.

Sol: Bags, split bags you know, potatoes, at that time potato bags was a big, big business, used to buy a bag for 2, 2 and a half cents, or a cent and a half, started to be the close of 1916, 17 and the bags were got a high price and bags became 15 cents 14 cents and meanwhile I used to peddle bags, you know later when I get well I used to do pretty good you know, go out in the bag and collecting money, customers, and our boss, you know, bought for us the rest of the goods, you know, Schwartz, used to buy all our bags up, you know and we stayed there till.

Sam: We also started to create a market for ourselves.

Sol: Of course.

Sam: I remember, I remember was driving a horse and a buggy and I put a bale of bags on. Sol: (indecipherable)

Sam: To deliver to a customer.

Sol: Station.

Sam: And I'm going on Market Street and the policeman (laughs) on a horse, stops me, so I stop, stop, and say "where are you running?" and I say I'm going to deliver a bale of bags, and he says, "are you in a hurry?" Yes, I said I was in a hurry, he said.

Sol: Ten times.

Sam: Go ten times around the block, then you'll see that you're not in a hurry.

Sol: Because he didn't.

Sam: I had to go ten times.

Sol: At that time they didn't give no tickets.

Sam: Ten times around the block, and I learned my lesson not to be -

Sol: And then he went home.

Sam: And I learned my lesson not to be in a hurry.

Sol: I used to take a buggy, he used to go to Oakland to see some companies.

Sandy: How did you get to Oakland? It's a long way around.

Sol: No, no, by the -

Sandy: Ferries. Oh the ferry.

Sol: In 20 minutes.

Annette: Now, isn't it, is it time to check that?

Sandy: We've got a few more minutes, but this is the last tape, the other one is not.

Annette: Oh, we'll have to do it another time, but give us a brief resume, of what happened how long more, how long did you stay in San Francisco?

Sol: He stayed less.

Sam: This is a long story, I mean, the reason how we get to Mexico. You see at that time - Annette: Better make it, well -

Sam: Short.

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Annette: Yes.

Sam: I'm not going to tell the story now.

Sandy: Let me interrupt for just a second, I wouldn't jump the gun too much, we'll get together another time and continue.

Annette: Sure

Sam: But I want to tie it in so we can ...where we started, the cause of our going to Mexico was because, again, remember my hands were killing me, I mean, the looks, that was depressing me and how much progress we make in the bag business was doubtful.

Annette: There was no future.

Sam: And I did see a future, I did see a future but was, was slow. Annette: Were you sending money home?

Sol: Yeah.

Annette: you were sending money home already? To Russia?

Annette: They're making money.

Sam: No he was talking about sending money, one uncle, Pauline's father. Sol: Palatnik.

Sam: Gave us 300 rubles so because when we come to America we have to show that we are independent we have some money we are not going to fall as a burden on the public, but the minute I got to San Francisco I sent him back the 300 rubles just to make sure.

[00:24:31]

Sol: (Indecipherable) He had some more money my father, in Russia that we had to send it back right away.

Sam: Anyway at that time and Ann's brother has gone to Mexico and wrote us letters about how wonderful what a wonderful business he does and how easy it is to establish yourself, so we thought that maybe it is a good thing to try that, so I -

(bell ringing)

Annette: Kibrik yeah?

Sam: I made a trip first there and I looked things around.

Sol: Yeah Kibrick.

Sam: And I liked it.

Annette: Were'nt there supposed to have been copper mines or something in the Magdalena?

Sol: That was, that was yeah.

Annette: That was later?

Sam: Copper mines?

Sol: First the dream that we was copper; Russians, you had a lot of Russians coming in from Siberia.

Sam: Anyhow there was big stories about how people can get rich there in Mexico so I made up my mind, let them stay and do a little business and -

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Sol: Oh I made money.

Sam: And I'll take a look at that part of the - when I got there and I stayed there a few weeks? My hands were beautiful, hands -

(Annette laughs)

Sam: You gave me a laugh, look, I am a white man, there were probably detergents at that time too, to know how to clean, but I didn't know about that.

Sol: No his dream was this in San Francisco I think, his dream was this, some day, somehow, he's gonna' get a job before he finished high school by the way, and I -

Sam: Night school.

Sol: Night school. And I remember.

Sam: I don't know that you need all that, there's a lot of copies

Sol: Listen to that, listen to this. Someday, somehow, he hopes to work for the southern pacific rail company.

Annette: Who?

Sol: Sam. He likes the office job, clean.

(Sam laughs)

Sol: And someday he's going to try to break the ice and go into business.

Sam: Something final.

Sol: The Russians when they came in -

Sam: Now this will serve you as to where we stop.

Sol: Where we stop.

Sam: And so we can continue.

Annette: Why don't you continue until the tape is finished just a few more minutes? Sandy: There's about 5 more minutes of tape.

Sol: I stayed, I stayed back in San Francisco and, and, and I continued my business, even if I was with myself, I bought bags and I kept the door locked, and at night could work it out, meantime prices started going up, going up, going up, 2-3 cent bags went for 10 cents, 15 cents, 20 cents.

Sandy: Stop, I think that is it, lemme' check. Sam: Even if it is -

Sol: Licht. One day he comes down there, comes to me and he tells me how Sam, Sam is in Mexico, how you getting along? I says fine, very good and he (makes a noise like spitting) -

Annette: He was bitter.

Sol: Je was jealous, and he couldn't - how do you say in Jewish, and he didn't...(yiddish word)

Annette: He envied.

Sol: He envied that I was a kid, much younger than all his boys and I was independent, solid, not dropping nothing. You know sometimes your mood, I say -

Sam: Courage.

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Sol: Your courage drops down, all by myself in the whole world, and I was happy and successful. Because when I left San Francisco to go to Mexico, I had \$7000, cash, in that time it was like \$70,000 today.

Sandy: It took you how long to accumulate that? Two years?

Sol: Oh no. I was completely, at 95 - 5 years, both of us were working.

Annette: Both of you, together.

Sol: Yeah but the high prices, made -

Annette: I see.

Sol: The bags that I sold to man, men, for 10 cents.

Sandy: You bought for a couple of cents.

Sol: I came back to San Francisco to visit 3, 4 years later, he told me I'll give it to you for 3 cents, take it, 2 cents, or anything you give me

(Crosstalk)

Sol: And I sold my bags to different people. Sam: Just at the right time.

Annette: It's good stock.

Sol: And I went to the American Express company and I bought seventy 100 dollar bills and I paid him \$35 dollars for that, I went to a tailor and he sewed me in a special pocket so I should keep it with me, nobody should steal them, for Sam always told me I should be careful of course.

Annette: Couldn't you put them in a bank?

Sol: No, bank, checks, at that time it didn't exist, either cash or checks.

Sam: Maybe it existed but he didn't know anything about it. (laughs)

Sol: So when I came back to Nogales Arizona a Jewish detective got ahold of me. He thought I am a German detective and he comes -

Sam: German spy.

Sol: Yeah a spy, he takes me out of the hotel and says open up your bag, I open my bag and he finds Tefillin, you know? Not Talos? Tefillin and he says, "Oh, I thought you were a spy."

Sam (laughs)

Sol: And he let me go, he thought he got himself a - at that time there was a lot of German - END OF TAPE 2
BEGIN TAPE 3

Sandy: All sitting around here now on Thanksgiving Day 1970, just one year later than the first tape that we made last year. And sitting here now is Beatrice, Annette, Sam, Sol, Annette, and Myself. And Eva who is sitting to my left and I couldn't see her. So we're going to sit here and see if we can pick up the thread of the story that started in Russia, wound up in Texas, San Francisco, and then part of the last tape we found Sam in Mexico and Sol was getting the money belt strapped to him and he was going to be on his way to meet the Jewish detective on the way to Mexico. I think what we'll do now is turn

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the microphone over to Sol and let him pick up the adventure on the way to Mexico which was interrupted because we ran out of tape last year.

(Background chatter)

Sol: It was in the month of, what was it? It was 1918, sometimes, I think in the summer. After I left Dallas I came back to Hermosillo, or as you Americans say "Her-mo-sillo". And as soon as I came they opened up a special store for me, separate. I should be able to learn the language faster and just because it was in the same market I made a bell so any time somebody came in and I couldn't understand them they came running to see what they could do. Meanwhile between the youth of Mexicans and myself, which I was still very young, I picked up the language faster than I would today. Picking up the language.

Sandy: You mean Sam had one story and you had another story down there?

Sol: Yes. Sam and Mr. Kibrick, at the store there of stationary and dry goods and they repeated the same thing in the store where I start. Where we were, I were. But eventually they gave up that store and made it all one big store. We started to look where a dollar could be made easier and we found that dry goods is still a field that we could make something but we have to do the manufacturing ourselves. And now can we manufacture dry goods? So we started to rip shirts open and make patterns out of it and that didn't come easy either because not experience enough but the women that they used to be around, sewing those dry good, shirts and so on, and they helped us somehow. They understood a little better than we did. We also had the experience of a Jewish boy that came from the United States introduce himself as a tailor. Then a day or two passed after he was working on them, he was ripping, sewing, and ripping. Sewing and ripping. Eventually nothing came out of his work. But he got rid of him alright and we decided that we'll go into the manufacturing business a little bit bigger. So I left for San Francisco and came to the Eastern machine company and they took me up to Lieber- Strauss where they showed me how their machines are operating on long Tables and many layers of different goods. And I looked at it and I saw what they were doing and I bought a machine and I also went to see a company, bought a maker, a machine. And I am ready for manufacturing. I came back to Mexico, made a big table because I saw there was a big table at manufacturing so I also made a big table. But little by little we started, we didn't make no mistakes but it came out. Nobody was willing to show us, you know, teach us. But it was going until I caught onto it and our main competitors were Chinese. And you know how Chinese are. They are very competition. They are working cheap. And so did we started to cut and make bundles and the women used to take the bundles out and used to make the pants, shirts, and then we had a girl in the place where we bought an old and they used to finish and put on the buttons and press them and we were in business. In the beginning we sold retail and a little later we sold wholesale I think and that went along until later 1921 until we brought over our family to Mexico from Romania.

Sandy: Sam was explaining before about a business coup that they had in Mexico when the Revolution sealed up the borders and they were unable to get yardage goods from the United States to make the shirts and pants that you were making. And Sam will maybe explain to us how that worked.

Sam: So, well I just told before I started to – Annette: You're a little too close.
Sandy: No, that's fine. Right there.

Sam: I just talked to Sandy and told him about (indecipherable, 08:08) that I made, or came across the idea that there was revolution all of a sudden in Mexico. And the border director who I was see to Mexico was closed. The only you one could go was open, the Juarez border, and mail would have to go

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around Juarez until they reached us in Hermosillo. And I thought of ordering all our purchases which we used to buy and bring in by freight, we ordered, it started in a small way and then we had large purchases and we had them mailed, we had them shipped by mail. We are the only ones in that period that had any merchandise. We tried to keep it very secret and we sold goods to a French company which was one of the biggest department stores and because we kept it secret we were able to sell them all that period to them at a very good profit. Until finally they made peace.

Sandy: What kind of place did you live in? Did you have a big house or something? Sol: Before –
Sandy: After you brought all the people over, how big a house was it?
Sol: After the family came in 21 we had about 15-20 room house.

Sandy: 15 or 20 rooms? That's a hotel, that's not a house. Annette: How'd you get that?

Sol: No it was the governor's house but you see they came twenty five people and they had little families already. So everybody made themselves a place to live in the 20 rooms.

Annette: How'd you get the governors house? Sol: We rent it out! It's just a plain house. Annette; How many people did you bring over? Sol: 25.

Sandy: 25 people?

Annette: All at once?

Sandy: Can you remember the names of the people?

(Crosstalk)

Sol: it's closed.

Sandy: How many, let's start naming them.

Sol: Our family was -

Sam: Wait a minute. Father and mother.

Sol: Yeah.

Sam: Enya and her husband.

Sol: Just take our family then take families separate. There were three. Sam: Let's, let's –

Sol: How much was our family?

Sam: Are you going to do it or I'll do it?

Sol: I mean you say go by family –

Sam: Correct. Father and Mother. Itzik and Enya and a child.

Sandy: That's five.

Sam: Annette.

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Sandy: 6.

Sam: Morris and Harry.

Sandy: 8.

Sam: Harry.

Sandy: That's 8.

Sam: Simon.

Sandy: 9.

Sam: Golegorski and –

Sandy: 10.

Sam: And his bride.

Sandy: 11.

Sam: 11. That's all I can think of.

Sol: That's our family.

Sam: That was our family. Now –

Sol: The old man.

Sam: Old man Kibberick. Four brothers, was it four brothers?

Sol: I don't remember. Old man and four brothers –

Sam: And four brothers was five.

Sandy: That would be fifteen.

Sam: Wait a minute –

Sandy: That'd be sixteen.

Sam: Two girls, or three girls. That's eight.

Sandy: Nineteen.

Sam: Three girls is eight. And Shia and Shia's (kala? 12:04). What is it? Nine.

Sol: And then –

Sam: One more.

Sol: And then Volka.

Sam: That's it. That's ten. We had eleven they had ten. I think. Maybe I forgot something but I think this is all. Anyway, twenty one people. What was the question?

TAPE NOISE

Sandy: Why don't you tell us about it?

Sam: Is it closed, it's closed?

(Crosstalk, 12:48)

Annette: Yeah, you can interrupt each other.

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Sol: Sometime in 1921 or a little after we decided that we are going to open up a soap factory. And so we did. We bought the cartilage of (indecipherable, 13:05) and coconut oil and we manufactured soap until 1925 when my father left, or earlier was it maybe? He left for San Francisco. And I finished the rest of the material and sold everything I could and then once steel tank we left on the property unsold because they want to buy it from us.

Annette: What'd you do with all your clothing? Sol: In 1925, was it Dembrosky shows up?

Sam: (Murmuring) Sold it to him.

Sol: Yeah. Anyway, we decided, the family decided little by little to immigrate to the United States for different reasons. Which is nothing to be mentioned. They just didn't want to stay in Mexico. So around '24 or '25 some of the family started to immigrate to the United States. The Kibbricks went to New York and the Friedmans went west. And they settled in San Francisco. In '26 or so, when I was ready to close shop as they say, we decided the

differences in climates between San Francisco and Mexico is such a big difference we decided to settle in Los Angeles which is more warmer climate.

Sandy: You mean, were you down in Mexico by yourself or were you with other people?

Sol: I was with Sam.

Sandy: The two of you.

Sol: Yeah. And we sold the basket business, the dry goods business, and we sold the soap business. We – Annette: Did you have the soap and the dry goods at the same time?

Sol: Yeah.

Sam: In the same place. Annette: Same city?

Sol: Yeah. And we started to thinking about immigrate ourselves to United States. And in 1926 I came in and I don't remember exactly myself, or with Sam, or how it was. And we rented a place on Clarence Street.

Sandy: That's in Los Angeles now.

Sol: Yes. Los Angeles. The Family came over and we rented house for them and settled and we opened small plant on Clarence Street.

Sam: You're mixing up things. On Clarence Street. It's very off.

Sol: What was?

Sam: The story of Clarence Street was before any of us immigrated to Mexico.

Sol: Oh, I didn't say immigrated. I was talking about settling down the family. So we got them going, the boys, Henry and Morris, and we went and started the business for them. And in 1928, no in 1927 I met Eva and we got married and I've been back to Mexico and in 1928 I got my Visa and I stayed in the business until Sam later came from Mexico. And in 1928 we moved to Aliso Street. Stop.

Sam: I'm sorry that I thought he's telling about the beginning of our going into the bag business. And that was in San Francisco. That's why I thought he mixed things up.

Sol: But I didn't.

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Sam: No. Now I don't know if we've jumped quite a bit. Weren't there any more interesting episodes in Mexico before we immigrated?

Sol: No, no. Nothing, nothing.

(Crosstalk, 18:16)

Annette: Father was afraid that we shouldn't meet, the boys shouldn't meet Mexican girls and the girls shouldn't meet Mexican boys. Which it happens so I remember I was young at that time. One boy came over and gave me a serenade and father got up early in the morning and he says, "Annette, if you come again to the window with the violin I'll take a bucket of water and I'll pour it on him." That's why we had to go back to the United States.

Sol: Not back.

Annette: Well not back, but immigrate. I'm sorry it's my mistake. And so it happened. I don't know why you gave me this to talk for, I just have to butt in, huh?

Sol: Mr. Buttinski, close it.

TAPE NOISE

Sandy: When you left from Mexico and then went from San Francisco –

Sol: Stop, stop.

TAPE NOISE

Sandy: How long were you in San Francisco before you came back to Los Angeles? Sol: You mean when, what year?

Sandy: Well I don't know, you tell me.

Sol: 1913.

Sandy: No, no. The second time. After you were in Mexico –

CUT. MUFFLES.

Sam: No, no. To be able to immigrate we saw that they get in and then later we waited for our Visas. That really was an episode that was very interesting. We were friends with the counsel and we were pestering him, "When do we get our Visas? Did you order Visa?" And he got a teller, some cable from Washington which he deciphered just the way he thought it should read. And he gave us Visas, gave the family Visas, and they came to Nogales, Arizona and they said, "There is no Visas there, there is no Visas." And we had to stop and return all the family back to Hermosillo and clarify and wait for the real McCoy. And that was why the Kibbrick family they got there first because the first time it was real Visas and when it came to the Friedman's there was this mix up.

Sandy: When the family decided to move from Mexico some of them went to San Francisco first, is that right?

Sam: Yeah because we have everybody there, our connections. Sandy: And then you and Sol remained in Mexico for a while. Sol: To finish out the business.

Sam: To liquidate.

Sandy: And when you were ready to leave Mexico were they still in Francisco?

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Sam: Oh yeah.

Sandy: So did you go up to San Francisco?

Sam: Yeah. We only came to Los Angeles when we were able to come in to get our Visas to immigrate to United States. Then we opened up a little factory on Seaside and Clarence, you know where Clarence is?

Annette: No, where is it?

Sam: It's off Fourth Street before the bridge going west.

Sandy: in the same general vicinity as the factory is now?

Sam: Yeah.

Sol: But that was East Side and we on the West Side.

Annette: That was when, about 1928?

Sam: '26.

Sol: '26 is when we started. They -

Sam: No, no, no. In '26 the family immigrated.

Sol: Moved over. (Mumbled, 22:35)

Sam: No, no. But we couldn't immigrate until 1930.

Sol: No, WE didn't immigrate.

Sam: We didn't immigrate until 1930.

Sol: I immigrate -

Sam: When did you get married?

Sol: I immigrated in '28. In '27 I got married in the first days in January. I got my Visa and I came in to Los Angeles and started to live there.

Sam: But when did you finally immigrate? Sol: In the first days of January. 1928. Sam: Yeah?

Sol: Yeah.

Sam: You got a Visa before I did?

Sol: Oh yeah. Sure.

TAPE NOISE

Sam: He married and American girl. Sandy: She was an American citizen then? Sol: Yeah. Deriveted from her father's - Sam: Deriveted?

(Mumbling, 23:27) Sam: 50 cents worth.

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Sandy: Well her father wasn't a citizen.

Sol: Her father was a citizen.

Sandy: Well she wasn't born in this country, she was born in Palestine -

Sol: Her father was a citizen, that's why her children, they became citizen automatically.

Annette: As soon as we entered American borders.

Sol: They became citizen. Because they were all under age.

Sandy: Oh, I see.

Sol: it was a dif - what do you call it, derivative?

Sandy: Derivative?

Sol: Eh?

Sandy: Derivative.

Sol: Derivative.

Annette: All the commotion –

Sandy: All the commotion.

Annette: I used to go to Hebrew school.

Sol: Where, where?

Annette: I used to go to Rabbi –

(Crosstalk, laughter, 24:12)

Annette: Rabbi Elco. We were the class, he and I and a whole bunch of girls. And love at first sight, I fell in love with Eva.

(Laughter)

Annette: Then when I came home I was very much, I was enthusiastic. Sol was looking for a comp –

Sol: Mate.

Annette: And I told him a story about Eva, what a wonderful persona and how beautiful she looked. She wore a red dress with black buttons.

(Laughter)

Sam: That's what it took, huh?

Sol: That was only 43 years ago.

Annette: Only 43 years ago, yeah. And I introduced her to Sol and Sol took her out and it didn't take very long. They got engaged.

Sam: You never got commission.

Annette: I still didn't get much at home skill yet. TAPE NOISE

Sam: Mother took sick. And seriously. An appendix. And she thought, "This is it." Was end, she was gravely sick. They operated and they took out her appendix and she made her wish very clear that she doesn't want to die there. So therefore we decided we shouldn't live there neither.

Sandy: That's the reason for the move.

Sam: That's the prime reason. Prime reason because the more you get settled there the harder it is to depart.

Annette: Were there many other Jewish families there too?

Sol: No, no.

Sam: No. We were the only ones. At that time. We and the Kibbrick family. Annette: You didn't mention about -
TAPE NOISE

Sam: Well, well. This living there as Jews was quite problem because you couldn't get any kosher meat. You couldn't get it from Nogales either. You had to import it either from El Paso or from San Francisco. And we wrote to my father about this situation so he learned how to kill chickens in the kosher way and that's what we lived on. On chickens as meat. We did not have any, what do you call? This other kind of meat? Beef. Beef or lamb. So from '21 to '26 we lived on chicken only.

Sandy: Chicken alone.

Sam: Chicken and beer.

Sandy: What'd you do about Passover wine?

Sol: Oh that was -

Sam: That was easy. You just -

Sandy: What'd you do?

Sam: You just ordered.

Sandy: You just walked out to the store and bought some? Sol: We made our own wine.

Sandy: That's what I thought. Where did you make it? Sol: Is it there?

Sandy: Huh?

Sol: No, stop, stop.

TAPE NOISE

Sandy: It's on.

TAPE NOISE

Sandy: It's still recording, yeah go ahead.

TAPE NOISE

Sol: As the immigrants when they came 1921 they registered as farmers. And because they registered as farmers we went in Hermosillo and we bought a great big orchard for the season. For the fruit. And when they came they was a time to pick the grapes. They started to pick the grapes but what can you do with so much grapes? So we decided that they should go out and sell some. They did sell some but couldn't sell all so we went and made wine and we put barrels of wine underground and we kept them until Passover. And at Passover we had our own wine and that the end of -

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TAPE NOISE

Sam: They had a taste of nuts. And that was really the best wine I ever tasted.

Sandy: How many barrels did you make?

Sol: I don't remember.

Sam: I don't know why -

Sandy: If it was so good what you should've done was go into the wine making business. Sam: We weren't smart enough.

Sol: Little by little they got different lines of business.

TAPE NOISE

Sam: A little story which is really a classic. We used to make a living, 90% legitimate. But 10% was not legitimate and it was not embarrassing neither because everyone was doing it. For instance. These tennis shoes. The prize was, say \$10 a dozen. The duty was about –

END OF TAPE BEGIN TAPE 4

Sandy: This is the second side. We just turned it over and you were telling us about the tennis shoes imported at \$10 a dozen with a duty of about \$5 a dozen so now you take it over again Sam.

Sam: The going price retail was about a dollar and a quarter. Which means about \$15 a dozen. So you couldn't pay \$10 a dozen for much nice and \$5 for duties and still sell it for \$15 a dozen. So we did the same as everybody else did. We brought in about 5 or 10 dozen imported, paid the duty legitimately. And based on those documents we kept on buying smuggled goods. In other words if there's \$10 a dozen worth in Nogales, Arizona the women sold it to us for \$12 or \$13 a dozen and we still could make a couple of dollars. So one day I was going up to the station, walking up to the station, it's not very far. To see whether any smugglers are passing by. The smuggling by the way used to be done by the women. So on the way –

Sandy: Were those little women with white tennis shoes? Sam: No, no. They were just making a living.

Sandy: From Pasadena.

Sol: Nice girls.

Sol: They were making a living out of smuggling. And by the way they didn't only smuggle tennis they used to smuggle whiskey and other more well and lucrative business. So on my way, maybe you have ever seen, have you ever seen these carts with two wheels? Two big wheels with a horse in the front and just two big wheels? And he asks me, "Do you have anything coming at the station?" I says, "I don't know I'll see if –

Sol: Buy something.

Sam: If I'll buy something. Will you give it to me?" He says, "I'll be happy to." So I'm walking and he follows me with this cart and I go up to the station and look around. Not a soul. Nothing. So after the train leaves I walk back, I'm walking back and he follows me just like he followed me going on and he says, "You owe me a dollar seventy five." I says, "How do I owe you a dollar seventy five. I told you if I buy something then naturally I'll be able to give it to you. Give you that – the trip - "

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Sol: (indecipherable, 33:35)

Sam: So he did not let up and kept on following me and wanted a dollar seventy five. When I came close to the store he stopped me, he didn't let me go back to the store. Just demanded that I give him a dollar seventy five. I laughed at him. So he held me and called police and made a complaint to another policeman as if he is the Judge. Well the policeman didn't know what to do so he said you better go to the Chief of Police and he will be the judge. When I heard that I said, "Gee I got him. I got him where I want him." Because the chief of police was a close personal friend of mine. First he owed me about \$300 which he never intended to pay back so how can I lose in a game like that. We walked and I finally got to the chief of police, when I walked in I told him my story and the driver told him his story and the Chief of Police reached for his pocket and took out a dollar seventy five and gave it to the driver. I was really embarrassed and I was really angry and mad and I couldn't, I didn't find enough words to express my indignity. He says, "Let him depart and we'll talk about it." So I says, "Chief, how can you do this to me? Do you doubt my word that, of the story that, you think that I really owe him a dollar seventy five?" He said, "Of course not. I didn't doubt. But do you know that some day is elections?" He says, "A dollar seventy five I should ruin my chance of getting reelected?"

(Laughter)

Sam: Isn't this a classic?

TAPE NOISE

Annette: You didn't want to bank the money that you made in Hermosillo because people would know so you used to travel to some other city to put it in, didn't you?

Sol: Used to bank there, there were very good banks there... TAPE NOISE

Sol: Ten times as much as I came with.

Sam: \$70,000.

Sol: Not cash.

Annette: That was a good little income.

Sol: Income what do you mean? Seven years, we worked seven years for it.

Annette: Yeah but in those days it was worth a lot more.

Sol: We had hard work.

Sam: Well there was another episode, you know? I remember in 1922 or '23 there was a big recession in this country. I don't remember what year it was, must've been '23. Prices dropped something –

Annette: Inflation. Sol: I don't know.

Sam: The prices dropped, that's not inflation. So we didn't know, we had a good business built up. That was already after we separated from the Kiddricks. And we went to the United States and we bought merchandise and people gave us more credit than we deserved just to fill us up because they knew what was coming and we didn't know. And we packed up the stores full with merchandise. And just as we arrived the recession set in also in Mexico and we were the only ones that spend our money, we owe a fortune of money to the United States and we had merchandise. It worried us immensely because we made evidently one of the biggest mistakes. Buy merchandise heavy before a recession, before things

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drop to very, very low. But they that were smart were sitting with empty shelves and we were the only ones that had merchandise. So we, with a bad situation, we made a nice season of good money.

Sandy: Because you were the only ones that had –

Sam: Because we're the only ones willing to sell.

TAPE CUT

Sol: It was beautiful. When I was in the United States and Sam was in Mexico with Kiddrick they told me they want newspapers. Maybe (indecipherable, 39:09).

Sam: Newspapers.

Sol: So I adopted –

Annette: No, you didn't say it last time – TAPE CUT – you didn't record it last time.

Sandy: It's on.

Sol: It's on?

Sandy: Yeah.

Sol: The most outstanding episode was while I was in San Francisco and Sam goes with Kiddrick in Mexico and they asked me to buy them all kinds of stationary. Papers and also old issues. And –

Sam: Old Newspapers.

Sol: Old newspapers. Bought, not used, just those that come out of the press over printed. Or left overs.

Sam: Overrun.

Sol: Yeah. I would also pick up, wherever I could, and I brought it back to my place of business, I adopted a little press and I would press it into one hundred pound bundles, press down tight because the freight on that goes by the cubic feet. And I made a really nice, good bundles. Tightly pressed. And I used to ship it into there. Sam and Kiddrick used to receive it. But they couldn't make too much money on it but they, as a fill in, I used to send them a couple of tons, two or three tons a month. So little by little they filled up several rooms, several houses. They didn't have a regular warehouse. And by the time when I came in 1918 when I close up my business and sold out, when I came there I found 3 or 4 rooms with issues. And they used to wrap that, these not only dry goods but they used to wrap fruit and vegetables and meat they used to pack in these newspapers. But as I recall the war was still on and something happened that they couldn't bring in any more of these old issues for different reasons or for sickness reasons or –

Sam: No, no.

Sol: Why what this was the reasons. Sam: No. They American government – Sol: They had all kinds, that's why.

Sam: Forbid he export of newspapers – Sol: Because the Germans.

Sam: Because the Germans learned a lot of secrets from these old issues. And they have used that influence with the Mexican government not to allow import of these newspapers and they did not issue any more export duties. So before this came about, before this came about we heard about it and we

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were warned that one of these days you will not be able to import these things because this stuff. So we kept on importing and we just rented rooms after rooms and filled them up. And sure enough one day, not only did the government not issue any export license, but the Mexican government forbade the use of old newspapers –

Sol: Stop, stop.

Sam: To wrap vegetables and –

Sol: No, but they had to sell it for a cent. Don't, don't. Stop now, stop. Sam: Just one minute.

Sol: And I'll tell you why.
TAPE CUT

Sol: Yeah. The law when it came out that you cannot import – export anymore newspapers from the United States we, little by little, we sold, started to raise the price on these papers that we had. That was already when I came there. And it went up from \$2 or \$3 it went up to \$10. The last couple of bundles in the end we said by golly if we are not going to deliver any papers we will not have enough papers to wrap our news issues. By that time the Spanish flu came in.

Annette: Epidemic.

Sol: Epidemic. And in at that time when we were already exhausted of our issues, old newspapers, came out of it a decret, what do you call it?

Sam: A degree.

Sol: A degree. A decree.

Sandy: A law.

Sol: A law. That we shall not, they shall not maybe to wrap – Sam: The use of –

Sol: Toward the use of old issues to wrap meat.

Sam: Meant or vegetables.

Sol: And here we'll stop here and then I'll continue. While I was in San Francisco whenever I used to have, get a hold of some, lots of new papers, rolls or otherwise, I used to buy – they used to ship it in there. If it was a good buy or not a good buy I used to ship it in there and they kept it there. They got stuck with it you know. But when the new decree came out, not to use any old issues and by that time we were sold out of old issues anyway. We started to use the paper that I shipped in during the time I was in San Francisco. But little by little the sheet papers exhausted too. We took a saw because we had a lot of rolls and we didn't have not slitting machine. We took a saw and we used to cut it like wood. And you could imagine what shape it was. Use to make packages of kilos and used to sell it at high price. And this was –

TAPE CUT

Sol: Looking at a lot of newspapers. Here they stopped the law, made the law that you could not ship out newspapers. We sold all our newspapers at high price. By the time that paper was exhausted already –

Sam: We also used to sell the newspaper papers –

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Sol: Yeah. Printing. Printing.

Sam: Some papers to print newspapers. And one day the American council called us and said we look – Sol: For our enemies.

Sam: For you to deal with the enemy. We said, "Okay. If you say that we must stop we'll stop." And the newspaper came over toward the, some of the administration. And talked rough to us and said, "What do you mean you're going to keep us leaving –

Sol: Leaving toward Germany.

Sam: You're leaving in this country and you're going to do as you please." I said, "I haven't got any. Sol sold and we need that for ourselves." They were very angry but they didn't do much about it.

TAPE CUT

Sandy: November the 11th what?

Sol: 1918.

Sandy: And then what?

Sol: That's all? That was –

TAPE CUT

Sandy: Tell us about the early life in Los Angeles when you finally settled here.

Sol: Nothing spectacular. It was nothing. Nothing spectacular.

Sandy: What was Los Angeles like then?

Annette: Yeah like downtown –

Annette: Very empty.

Sandy: What was Los Angeles like then? Why don't you tell us what Los Angeles was like in those early days?

Sol: Oh at that time? There was nothing to report. It, at that time there was about 50,000 Jews. It was close –

TAPE CUT

Sandy: So what was life like in Mexico when there were, how many, 21 of you living in this large governor's mansion? Did you all get along or were there bickering and fighting and –

Sol: We drank beer.

Sandy: You drank beer all the time and that's why you didn't fight is that it? Did you make your own beer?

Sam: We were –

Annette: Neighbors.

Sam: A brewery.

Sandy: Oh, you lived around the corner from a brewery? TAPE CUT

Sol: We happened to be at the - (Indecipherable, 49:04) happened to be maybe three doors from a brewery. And Summer time is very hot there and a fence don't do much good for you. So the only thing

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you do, used to go across with pitchers and get for fifty cents you get a big pitcher of beer and many times we bought barrels.

Sam: Barrels.

Sol: Barrels. We got barrels and we made (whoopee? 49:34) 21 people don't take much to drink out of a small barrel of beer.

Sam: We were then friends with the Weinbergs. We were all invited to the Weinbergs for (indecipherable, 49:48)

Sandy: From Nogales? Sam: Yeah. Used to – TAPE CUT

Sandy: Holiday.

Sam: That's right. They came to us. We had (indecipherable, 50:05). We tried to make the best of a situation and –

Sandy: Sound like you had a good time.

Sam: To resemble our Jewish lives.

TAPE CUT

Sam: I can tell you something, you know the taxes there. If you would comply with them you couldn't exist. And everybody did this, they had two sets of books.

Sandy: You're talking about Mexico now, right? Sam: Yes.

Sol: Tell them about Mexico.

Sandy: Just want to make sure.

Sam: Suppose we sold \$150 a day or \$200 a month. So we put down ten dollars, twenty, fifteen dollars. We were very busy people and all of a sudden I mean when things went nice and smooth you forget about these visits from the government inspectors. So we were about two or three months, or years, in jotting down what our sales were. So one day an inspector comes in and before he has a chance to say anything I said to the boys, "Close up I have to go home. I have very important things to attend to." And we closed up and we excused ourselves and say, "What is it that you want? Oh you want to see the books? You come tomorrow. We have to go." So we closed up about two or three o'clock in the afternoon and we just had a good chance to fix up our books. Our second –

Sandy: Second set.

Sam: Second set. And later he probably didn't, I don't remember exactly when he came. He came the next day or a week later and he says, "We were caught up."

Sandy: What kind of tax did they have there? How high –

Sam: Prohibitive. Prohibitive. We have to give them away all the profits. Because it was all based on that because they knew what you were doing and what everybody was doing and therefore it was, the taxes were fitting the situation. Therefore say if you were working on a ten percent of fifteen percent profit they would take it all away.

Sandy: They took fifteen percent because they figured everybody had two sets of books?

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Sam: Yeah.

Sol: Besides that he could use a blanket, he could use a wool sweat, he could use something. And before he left he got it all packed up and delivered.

Sam: I don't remember anything about of that sort. Sol: Oh, I do.

Annette: That's good –

Sam: Well –

Sol: No, no we had –

TAPE CUT.

Sandy: Okay. Go ahead Sam.

Sam: It's interesting how sometimes dogs can be a connoisseur of people much better than we intelligent people are. We had a dog in our house that could never make peace with a certain character that lived in Los Angeles. He was a peddler and therefore he knew he did business with Barsky, with us. And when we had a party we always invited him too but our dog never stopped barking. He always was looking to get in a little fight with him. One day, one night I remember the boys tried to make fun. The dog would never make peace and we had to lock him up in a room. And this feller went loose among us and Barsky took some wine and beer and mixed and gave it to this feller and he was so drunk, and he was so strong he had a notion that Barsky was the one that fixed us up and he took a ladder that you would never believe that a human being can lift it. He took a ladder and lift it up and threw it at Barsky. Of course Barsky was lucky he wans't exactly in his way. But it was really –

Sandy: A viscous dog.

Sam: He was really made a dog of a human being. And I remember he got a hold of him and we gave him sour pickles to take away the drunkenness. But I'm going backwards. We never could figure out what was wrong with that man but he did not like him and he never wanted to make peace with him. It's interesting.

Sandy: Sounds like a good watch dog. TAPE CUT

Sam: But Mexico that was –

TAPE CUT

Sam: When I first came here I used to go to school, daytime. To get acquainted with the language and learn something. And I was like a student. And that was the time when I told you that I noticed my hands cleared up. They were not so rusty or full of dirt, of sack especially dust, but sat in the classroom and couldn't get it. So finally I was only human being and I was young and girl where I lived there where you get to get into conversation. Once they asked me what nationality I am. And I told them I was Jewish. She said, very intelligent girl supposedly, she says, "No it's impossible." "What do you mean it's impossible?" "But we know Jews are bad because Jews have horns." I says, "I'm sorry but you are all wrong. Your concept of the Jewish people - " And I try to explain that we are just as good or bad as any other people. She listened, listened. But believe me our friendship cooled off to such a degree that it was freezing.

Sol: It was, was –

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Sam: It's ingrained in them, Catholics they are Catholics, and there was no more that halfway decent relationship that was up to then. Because up to then we were just trying to learn more about each other. She cooled off –

Sandy: That was it.

Sam: That was it.

TAPE CUT

Sol: Friend. I said, "Don't tell that you are Jewish. You are Russos. Because they can see it, they can see it that you are Jews."

Sam: They teach them that Jews have horns.

Annette: They told me, "How could it be such a person like you being a Jew. You should be a Jew." And you know who told me that? Anamaria Gonzalez, she was the principal of school. It's so primitive.

Daniel: That's it. Talk, talk. Hello. Hello. Hello? Sol: Close it.

Sandy: With that little lack of conversation from Daniel I think we will close this tape and start the next one next time.

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