



Oral History and Folklife Research, Inc.

An Interview with Charles Rotmil

Interview Conducted By

Keith Ludden

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Transcribed by Jesse Ahearn

Reviewed by Keith Ludden

Keith Ludden: It is Friday July 15, [2016].

Charles Rotmil: Okay.

KL: And we are in Portland. We're talking to Charles Rotmil

CR: Charles Rotmil

KL: Rotmil, Okay. Great. Mr. Rotmil, do you mind if I ask you what year you were born?

CR: What's that?

KL: Do you mind if I ask what year you were born?

KL: What year you were born?

CR: Oh, Not at all. I was born in 1932, October 29. This year I will turn 84. Yeah.

KL: And...

CR: I was born in Strasbourg, France.

KL: Where in France

CR: Strasbourg.

KL: Strasbourg?

CR: Yes.

KL: Okay, there's a Strasbourg, Germany too.

CR: Well, No people think it's Germany, it's not Germany. It's Alsace-Lorraine. During the war The Germans invaded it. Took it. In the Treaty of Versailles it came up also as an issue, so did Czechoslovakia, (inaudible) Germans. But it is Germanic area, Alsace-Lorraine (Rotmil here speaks French for a moment). I am bi-lingual.

KL: Okay, How do you spell it?

CR: My name?

KL: No, The name of the town.

CR: Okay, It literally means "The City of Streets". Stras, S-T-R-A-S then B-O-U-R-G. Bourg means city, and Stras is streets. And that is because all of European roads cross there. Once you go below that you are in The Alps. So you can't go across. All of the Great Wars have been fought at that crossroad. So, Strasbourg means "city of streets" cause all of the roads coming in from Europe they go there otherwise you have to go all the way down below Switzerland.

KL: And, I'm going to check something here real quick.

CR: Okay.

KL: Just wanna make sure I have numbers rolling there.

CR: Okay

KL: Okay, So when you were born there, it was under French control or German control?

CR: Well, when I was born, it was under French control. During the war (WWII) it was under German control, so was France for that matter, so was Belgium. Ah, it wasn't until the liberation in 1944 that it went back to France. So, I mean, there were people in Strasbourg who died in German uniforms. Who were conscripted. I met someone like that once. I lived on (inaudible) for a year. I became a school teacher and, I was—I got a job there. So that's the irony of it, yeah.

KL: Okay, when you were a small child, What do you remember about Strasbourg?

CR: Well, I remember it being a very pleasant city. Cobblestone streets. I've been back, there's the old city and the new city. There's also the center for European Union, is there. Cobblestone street, I remember being pulled on a sled with my mother and sister. It was a good life at that time. There was also a very strong Jewish community before the war. But we moved away when I was about three years old we moved to Paris. Because my father was an art broker, and that took him to the big cities. Where he dealt with art, and dealers, and buyers. And from Paris in 1935 or '36 we moved to Brussels. And then we went to Vienna in 1938, and in 1938, we got

there just before Germany annexed Austria in the famous cold rape of Austria. And we got caught in a crystal night¹, and in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws came in to force in Germany. And, mainly it was also a definition in the law, “What is a Jew”, and it has all kinds of prohibitions for Jews, and they lost all of their civil rights. So in a way even though we lived in Europe a lot of people left Germany at that time. But we stayed put, we moved to Vienna, but then my father was arrested during Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. Men came in to the apartment, beat him up, and took him away. Then, when he was released a few months later he got exit papers. He got even—I have it somewhere, he got like an exit passport. And we left Vienna in 1938, and we went all the way in to Belgium. In a place called Marneffe, Marneffe Belgium, and there, there was an estate. At that time it was given over by a rich man to, to the Belgium government, at that time they made it a refugee camp. So we lived there. There were several buildings on the grounds. When I went back recently it’s been transformed in to a prison, it’s a state prison. But we lived in one of the buildings until 1939, when Poland was invaded, and then 1940 we had to leave, because Belgium was invaded. We went on the road and walk with a lot of other immigrants to get away from the Germans. And it wasn’t just Jews, it was also a lot of other people.

KL: So, you were on foot?

CR: On foot. That’s a good point. At one point, we got on a truck. We were in the back of a truck with a canvas over us, and a plane came down and began shooting at us. It ripped the canvas in half. Luckily enough we didn’t get hit. That was the end of going in a vehicle because it wasn’t safe. But even then airplanes would come down and shoot at us. They weren’t just shooting the refugees they were shooting at trucks or cars. If you weren’t in their vehicle, it was dangerous.

KL: So, how old were you at this time?

CR: I was born in ’32, so I was about five or six, in 1938, 1939, I was born in October you see so it means I’m young for a whole year until I get old all of a sudden. Then from the invasion, we walked, and we got on a train and what happened was that the train derailed—sabotage, and fifty people died and a hundred-fifty were injured, including, I was one of them my brother also, but my mother and sister were badly injured. We had lost my father on the road, we didn’t know where he was. So at the hospital they told me that my sister had died, and my mother I saw in the hospital but she died about a month later. Then a woman who was the wife of the finance minister of Belgium took us back to Brussels cause the Germans were saying, “It’s occupied, but you can go back home everything is fine”. People went back home. When we got there, we lived with this woman. And then we found my father, got reunited.

KL: Tell me about finding your father.

¹ Kristallnacht. November 10, 1938.

CR: What's that?

KL: Tell me about finding your father?

CR: Yes, well it was through the Red Cross. And, ah, first my father lived in a, he actually lived in a house of prostitution, he had a girlfriend there. And, we lived upstairs. I didn't know at the time what was going on, but apparently, they were catering to German air force pilots, Luftwaffe. They were like a relief station that was set up all over by the Germans. And my father, he did a lot of risky stuff. But you know as Jewish you couldn't just get a job. You were sort of hiding identities, and he was wheeling and dealing with various ways of making money. He was always out somewhere, and we didn't eat well you know and, now my mother and sister were gone. It was just my brother and I, and my father. And then I was caught in a raid one night, early dawn, where Gestapo stood over me with a gun to my head. And we were interrogated, everybody in the house was interrogated. Some of them were taken on a truck. But they let my brother and I go. And then my father came and said "You live with me now," and we lived with him in an apartment. But in 1943 with the "final solution," my father was arrested and, for good. And I have documents that I found about my father, telling me that he was taken on a train to Auschwitz, number 779 on this train. And according to records that I have, most of the people on that train were gassed upon arrival. I don't know if you saw the movie "Son of Saul," [you] should see it. Powerful movie, about the people who worked with the Jews, who worked, who would take people from the train and ship them in to showers and they were gassed when they got to that point. And then I went in to hiding. Luckily we found a monk, Père Bruno (inaudible). I'm working on a book about it, by the way, I'm gonna come out with a7 book about this. I hid with a family, Luycx family, Leo Luycx In Leuven, Belgium. He was a professor at the university. At the reunion, I met them all again. I'm in that picture. It was a family reunion. They consider me part of the family because, because um, I was his ticket to heaven, you know. That he was honored by Yad Vashem. And then I stayed with the family until the war was over. And then I was reunited with Jewish agencies, and this is a photograph I found, I'm in the front row, third from the left. And you see a Belgium Chaplin there. And then from there we ended up, and Père657 Andres, another priest. And then we ended up in a group home.

KL: By this time you had lost both your father and your mother?

CR: Yes, and my sister. So it was just my brother and I. When we were at that home, (inaudible) Suisse in Belgium, in 1945. Okay? We were asked to come on the exodus to Palestine. We were ready to go, but then a newspaper called avbow, its called Avbau, it had a page like this, looking for people who are missing. "Gazut (inaudible)" means "looking for". And they were looking for people, and somebody saw my name listed. Not on that page. I have not been able to find the page, it's just, they have no index. I found this at Harvard University. They have that newspaper on file. And then we got in touch with my aunt and uncle, who lived in Peekskill, New York. And they are the ones who arranged a visa for me to come over. I have a photograph of myself from the visa somewhere here. Oh, I wonder, this is actually the visa photograph when I was fourteen years old. So, what happened was, I came on this luxury liner.

KL: So, this would have been '47 or '48?

CR: '46

KL: '46, Okay.

CR: And on December 11, 1946, I arrived in New York City, under the French quota. In pier 53, the French line. And I was greeted by my aunt and uncle, Judge Pines from Peekskill, New York, who did all the legal stuff, and the whole village of Peekskill (inaudible) became heroes. Since then I have painted that ship. It's exhibited at the—it's a museum piece, and now, it's in on exhibition there now. I have another version of it in—there's another thing about the ship, and the interior, it was kind of ironic, it was a luxury liner. But even when I came, the, below deck was a huge room with bunk-beds, because it was used for the troops, and it was still partially, it has not yet been commissioned as a luxury liner, but there was still people on it. I slept in the steerage on the floor on a mattress. I was with eleven children with a mentor. It was a lot of legal stuff going on to get under the French quota. I think at the time there was four hundred French per year. I may be wrong, I think that's what it was. Does that make sense at all? And then..

KL: Let's see VE day was in May of 1946, is that right?

CR: No, I think that was '44

KL: '44. Okay, excuse me, I'm sorry.

CR: But that was France. Belgium didn't get invaded till 1945. First it was France was liberated, then Belgium was liberated. Then the Russians were coming in from the other end. That picture you have of me in the front, is with the, taken by the—this is more about the ship I was on. The New York Times wrote an article about Kristallnacht, detailing what happened. Its not like the world didn't know. The world knew what was happening. This is when I was in a chateau with a family, and I'm all the way to the right, standing up with the other kids. But, I had a false name. My name then was Charles Van Raamsdonk. I went to Catholic school, even became an altar boy. And, part of me became a believer in praying to the saints and all that. See this is the —1944, when Belgium was liberated.

KL: (Background/whisper) May I see that?

CR: So I guess '44, four years later if you think about it right? From the beginning of the war. And this was my family at the beginning. My brother died about four years ago. He had several strokes. And he died in New York City recently, four years ago.

KL: Is this one you?

CR: That's me, the good-looking kid there. That's me

KL: (laughter) The younger one.

CR: Yea, and then my sister Amiette, my fathers name was Adolf become Adie, my mother was Dor, Dorothy. And my brother Bernard. So, do you, I once wrote to Bruno Bettelheim do you know who he is?

KL: Yeah, he wrote about dreams.

CR: Right, right, right and children's stories right? He also wrote about survival, because at the beginning of the war he was put in Dachau. And he wrote a book, did a study called *Living Under Extreme Conditions*, and I read it. He wrote about Anne Frank, and he wrote about children. I wrote him a letter. (Long pause) He encouraged me to talk about this, it wasn't, I didn't talk about this until Sharon Nichols, I don't know how many years, fifteen years ago, from the holocaust center asked if I would talk to kids in schools. By now I must have talked to like ten-thousand kids. Sometimes nine hundred, once in Caribou, Maine. There were nine hundred kids in the Caribou community center, to talk about what happened to me both as an immigrant and as a survivor of the Holocaust. I once did sit dinner with Elie Wiesel, who just died recently. He came to a conference of Hidden Children. I've been to a couple of them, one of them in Prague, Czechoslovakia. I told them, I said "you know, for a long time I didn't think I was a survivor because, I was not in a concentration camp". He said, "You're a survivor, your family was murdered and you were forced in to hiding. You're a survivor." There's always a debate among survivors. Oh, you're not a survivor. I'm I survivor. So, do you have any questions? More?

KL: So, when you were in Belgium, you were in a Catholic....

CR: When I was in a group home at one point. A group home with other survivors, that was one photograph that I have of older kids, they were a little older. By that time, that's when they would try to recruit us to go to Palestine, on the Exodus, before Israel was established. Before it was formally Israel, they wanted us to bring Jews there. So we were slated to go until that Avbau Ad. And then we went and came here instead, under the French quota.

KL: Tell me a little bit about the group home? What was it like? Tell me about the group home?

CR: Well, everyone was older than I, for one thing. And, all of them had lost their families. And what it was, it was run by Jewish agencies because they were very worried that they were losing Jews to the Christians now. Some of them were converted. In fact one of them became the Archbishop of Paris, Lefebvre. Lefebvre was the Archbishop of Paris, he was a hidden child and converted. I didn't convert, although I wanted to, because I didn't think it was safe to be Jewish. Father Bruno wouldn't let me. He said, "No, no, you wait till after the war. You're too

young to make such a decision.” I wanted to be a monk even, you know. And I enjoyed the Catholic Religion, I used to pray myself. So when the day came to come here, it was very exciting. The ship took five- six days. December 11, 1946, it landed in New York. We came to the harbor at dawn, and the skyscrapers came out of the clouds and the mist. It’s very exciting. And then, my aunt and uncle greeted us and they drove us all the way up to Peekskill, New York. The first year I was here I cried almost every day. I was very homesick, and I didn’t like being here. I felt disoriented, I couldn’t speak English. It was a bit of a shock, the school, because they were very loose, they weren’t as strict as European schools. The kids were very, laissez-faire. It was very casual, it was a shock for me. But, I went to school in 1947, in January.

KL: So you would be about twelve now?

CR: Fourteen. Another thing is, when I came I only had six years of education. It was very broken up because there was a law during the war where Jews were not allowed to go to school. There’s actually an edict that I have somewhere that said you cannot go to school. So when they saw me in this country, they told me I belonged in the tenth grade. So they put me in the tenth grade and I couldn’t understand a word of English. But, by June, I passed everything, with D’s. I had a B- in French cause I couldn’t do the English part. I was good with the French. Geometry I passed. I understood geometry, but I didn’t do well in biology, I didn’t do well in English. It was difficult, but I was able, I even wrote an essay. We had to write an essay at the end of school called “What is the most memorable day of your life?”. And I wrote, the day the tanks came, and I described the liberation. And the Americans coming in to the village, and the tanks. And with us standing on the side of the road. It was only a page and a half. And, the teacher read it in class. And that was when I knew I had to be a writer.

KL: Tell me about that day.

CR: About what?

KL: About the day the tanks came.

CR: Oh, well we were told, Americans are coming. We knew they had landed in France. We came on the roadside and you could hear the rumbling of the tanks. It’s like a low..mmmmmmrrrrrrrrr. and we could hear it. And suddenly they came one after the other. And the men were on top waving at us. They were even throwing us chocolates, and all kinds of stuff. I remember at one point I was in a, kind of a, like a (inaudible). And the Americans were camped there, because the war was going on in Germany. And the Battle of the Bulge, I was right near it. On the western part, Eastern part of Belgium. They used to come back there with blackened faces. One time they gave us K-rations in the boxes. And in the box was a can of tuna fish I think or something like that, even cigarettes, and a prophylactic. We didn’t know what they were. We blew them up and made balloons out of them. And we ran around and drove the nuns crazy. Cause we were holding them up in our hands, we tied a knot at the end. Then when I was told what it was for, when you blow it up you see a little tip at the end. And I thought,

“how do you get this over your penis and testicles?”. I thought you put it over everything. I didn’t quite know why you had to wear it, I mean the whole thing, it was a mystery. Cause I was still just coming of age. That was one of those things. One time a monk came to us, a big fat monk, who had just come, who was a missionary from the Congo. And he came back and he had a big robe with big sleeves. Out of the sleeve, he took out a lifesaver roll, and he gave it to us. He went around the room, he must have had like a hundred of them that the army had given him. Each one of us had a lifesaver roll. I still can’t look at one straight in the eye without remembering that. It was like the miracle of the loaves, you know, when he multiplied the lifesaver rolls. I’d never seen it before, the magic of the candy coming from the monk’s sleeve. So, Père Bruno, I kept visiting him. My father, Bruno went there. He was from Louvain, the Abbey Mont Caesar- the Abbey of Mount Caesar, and I’ve been back to see him until he died. I have photographs of him somewhere. We kept in touch. I’m still in touch with the children of the family that hid me. I went to Belgium because Shimon Peres, the President of Israel, came to Belgium to give honorable medals to the children of the rescuers. So, the three daughters of their father who owned the chateau got a medal. I came up there and every one of them wanted me to be with them, so I went to all their houses, I went to Normandy and Brussels, wherever they lived. They all vied for my company, because I’m their father’s legacy to Heaven, you know what I mean?

KL: Now, you said a family hid you for a while. Did you say a family hid you for a while?

CR: They hid me, yes.

KL: Tell me about that.

CR: Well, when Père Bruno saw me in the monastery, he gave me different names, (inaudible) was one, then Van Raamstonk. I went to several places. He had a network of, an operation, very complicated. He had people who made false documents. He had people who had money. He had people who could put you up. He had people who would transport us. So, I ended up with a family, they had five children. Then I became one of their child, you see.

KL: Now was this family Jewish, or Catholic?

CR: Catholic, and he took it upon himself. They could all have gone to prison, all of them. The children questioned that that he took a risk of their lives as well as his own by taking me in. It was really, in the true sense of the word, a Christian act. When Père Bruno asked him if he could take me. Père Bruno told me there was a long silence, and then after a while he said “Well Mr. Leuyx?” And Mr. Leuyx said “When are you bringing him? I was waiting for you to tell me when your bringing him.” He didn’t even question that he had to hide me. Even though he had his own kind of prejudice himself, he felt obligated. He felt it was wrong that a million children died in the camps. Elie Wiesel brought that up, because he said, you know, for one, it questions a God, just God. Who would allow the murder of a million children? How is that possible? He struggled with that all his life. With me. I’m sort of an Atheist, but, in fact as people die around

me, I worry about my own mortality now. As far as I know we just disappear. Like an animal dies, you don't think anything of it. We become dust, know what I mean? Scientifically I think there's an answer, but I'm not a mystic, or metaphysics. I never could do it. I think the reason is, I wasn't brought up to believe—I was too young. I was not even thirteen, so I was not Bar-Mitzvah. After the war, in Brussels, when I was in the group home, they arranged for my Bar-Mitzvah. A bunch of us went to the old Synagogue in Brussels, I've been back to it since, and they took a photograph of all of us. They did a mass Bar-Mitzvah for about thirty kids. You know, all of us together, we're told, "you're Bar-Mitzvah now" So, they wanted to. Wiesel thought it was very important, for Jews to survive, that they follow the religion. Otherwise there's no Judaism in a way.

KL: Now did the war interrupt your family's practice of Judaism?

CR: Yes.

KL: Did it make it difficult to....

CR: My father was very, very religious. It became more and more difficult. I do remember him taking me to Synagogue. At one point the Germans were burning [the] Synagogue, with people inside. You know burning the Torahs, which is a sacred book. A Torah is made of living material, skin, and the ink is from the hooves, they make ink. It is supposed to be a living document. It's a little bit like the Muslims, who believe the Koran is the living, thoughts or the words of God, so it doesn't exist really, there's no book. But with the Jews the Torah is the book. You write it out, but you make it as human as possible, as a living document. So, I do remember watching my father, praying, in the morning. He had tefillin on his head, his forehead, and one on his arm. They're little boxes that contain a prayer of Abraham. Every morning he prayed. When my grandmother, his mother, died in the London blitz, he sat on a chair that tipped over for a week. It's a tradition that for a week you sit below the world. So you sit on a (inaudible). And people come, like a week, they come and visit you. You cover mirrors too with a cloth, for a week. To honor the dead. He did that for her. But when we told him about my mother and sister dying, I don't remember him having a reaction. Now I'm trying to write a book about... I've determined this year, I'm going to come out with two books. If I have to I will self-publish it. I'm a little frozen in how to find a publisher. I've approached some editors and they are not interested. One [is] the basis of the story I've been telling. I will call it "Me, Father Bruno, and Hitler". That's one book. The other book is more contemporary. Some of the stories are on-line at realitystudio.org. It's a web site. They interviewed me, because I once took a photograph of a painter. I was a photographer, I am a photographer, in New York City. I was in the art scene. I'm gonna have a show soon. If you want I'll show you later, some photographs. I'm going to have a show at the Jewish Museum here in October. I'm in the middle now of choosing the pictures and framing them. So, I do a little bit of everything. I'm kind of a renaissance man. When I went to kids, I played the harmonica, and, you know what, if you, I can. If you get up a moment, behind the chair. Behind the chair there's a harmonica. Bring it over a second. I don't think I have any—Oh, wait, you know what? I have it, I have it, I have (inaudible). Is

everything okay? This kind of—This got twisted. No, no I'm okay I got it. I have the harmonica. I have it. I'm okay.

KL: Where is the harmonica?

CR: No, I have it. I have some over there also. When I was a kid—I want to play something, on the harmonica. When I was a kid I played the harmonica. They gave me a harmonica to play. And I don't know why this is, for some reason I played this tune which turned out to be a German soldier tune called "Ich Hatte Einen Kameraden"². Do you know it? I had a comrade. It's about, I was in a battle field. My friend and I. A bullet came flying in the air. Was it for him, or me. Then he gets hit. Then he says, "I had a comrade, better you'll never find". Then about him losing a—Some reason I remember the tune, as a kid I would hear the Germans play it. It shows in time of war, we all lose, everybody dies. So I'm gonna play it.

KL: Please!

CR:: (Harmonica music)

KL: Hold on a sec, I'm gonna have you do that again, because it was a little bit hot in the mic. I'll have you do that again, and when you're done I'll turn it up again.

CR: If you go online you can find the words. Ich Hatte Einen Kameraden. When I played that, people, I went, played recently, there were people crying in the audience. They remembered That's the way it starts. (Harmonica music) It goes back to 1800. The last century. It's not new. "I had a friend. (Harmonica and singing in German). I played like a march, but I heard they play it as taps now. You can also play you know. (Harmonica music, much slower tempo). When I play it after I give a talk, I end that way. (Pause for technical adjustment) You know, when I recently got this award in appreciation of the—my contribution to the Holocaust, speaking to kids. The other survivor, Max, got up and said "I have nothing to say". I stood up and said "I thank you for this award, I like what I'm doing. I'm gonna play you a tune on the harmonica". I played Ich Hatte Einen Kameraden, It was amazing, the effect it had. That's about the best thing I can do to pay tribute to this award, this plaque that I got, you know. That's a photograph of the museum underneath, the Holocaust Museum. When you get a chance take a look because, my paintings are out there. Of the train crash, of myself, of the accordion player. We did the accordion player because he was a Gypsy. Gypsies were also targets during the war. They were also murdered. What they call the Romano's or the, you know they still have them. They're still around, you know they're wanderers. Before the word homeless came along, the Gypsies were wanderers. There even were Gypsies here at one time. In fact, Steven King did a movie, in Maine, called *Thinner*. I was an extra in that, but I got cut out. I was in a bar scene, with the lead, at the bar. The one that loses weight. You know the movie?

² Traditional German tune.

KL: I remember some of the ads for it.

CR: What happened is that he made these Gypsies leave, on legal grounds, so they could not stay where they are. So, one of them put a curse on him. He was overweight and he wanted to lose weight so, thinner, so he began to lose weight, to the point where he's almost like a skeleton and he dies. So that was a curse, see. They filmed it in Belfast when he lived up there. They had me in the background, in a bar, but I didn't end up in the movie. It was not a very good movie either. It was for television, I think. Any other questions?

KL: So, you came to the U.S. when you were fourteen?

CR: I was fourteen. I should also mention, there was no Ellis Island then, it was over with. You came on a ship, but you couldn't leave the ship until everything was cleared. They came aboard to check everybody out. To make sure [they had] the right documents and all. Now, we had a mentor with us. There were maybe sixteen of us who came under the protection of a mentor.

KL: Tell me what you thought about when you stepped off that ship and—

CR: I'll tell you something. I was given a pair of shoes, and I didn't wear them. I saved them for when I stepped off the boat. So I put the shoes on, brand new pair. They gave all of us a new pair of shoes, leather shoes. I remember being, waiting for a turn to get off. They were clearing the papers. There was a man who stood there with a huge ten-gallon hat, from Texas. He was hustling telegrams, you could send a telegrams home. I remember being shocked by that, that kind of exposure, behavior. I was also shocked by looking at the cabs, the yellow cabs. I had never seen anything but black cabs. I had never seen cabs painted yellow. Everything seemed so loud, you know, I mean the clothes and everything. It was a bit of a shock. Of course, New York is a shock, the skyscrapers, Empire State Building, all the skyscrapers. It was a shock. But when I arrived to Peekskill it was more like a regular town. Everything was less than maybe one hundred years old. You know what I mean, it was not that old. It's a booming town, Peekskill. When I got there, I had a cape, that went to my knees. I had a green beret, and short pants. But, my aunt took everything away and burned it in a garbage bin. It was infected. Instead I got one of those navy pea jackets, which I hated, cause you couldn't close it tight. The cape was nice. And you know, I was given clothes from the different stores that were giving us clothes. Donating them. Another thing happened, there was a little Jewish community. My brother and I were like heroes you know. So, we were invited once at the Jewish community. I was home and I wanted to put something on my hair, because I had wild hair and I let it grow all over the place. So I went to the medicine chest, and I put on what I thought was some kind of hair lotion. It turned out to be sun tan lotion. So I went to the thing with oil all over my head, shining. But that was one of the things, you can't read. You know what I mean. You can't read the labels.

KL: That must have been tough arriving—

CR: Very traumatic. I cried for a year. I realized I was very homesick. No matter what, I wanted to stay in France or Belgium. I just saw a movie called “Brooklyn”. Which is about a— She talks about she’s homesick. I realize that’s right, that’s what it was. My aunt and uncle did not understand much about me. And, with my brother, the following year, he left and went to college. He was older, he was sixteen. And, he went to NYU. He got a Bachelor in Business Administration. And right away he got a job with U. S. Rubber, and the eventually at I.B.M. His whole life he worked for I.B.M. Not as a computer specialist, but in the business part. So, with me, I struggled with work. I could not find a vocation, and I took any kind of job I could find. I identify with people today looking for work. One time I worked in a book bindary, in New York City. I don’t know what year that was, 1948 maybe ’49. I was getting ninety cents an hour. My time. Then eventually, I connected with a Jewish Agency, Aide to Jewish Children. It took a while for me to get with them. They helped people like me, who were immigrants. And, I lived in New York, in a little room. I worked as a messenger, for twenty-five dollars a week. The room cost nine dollars a week, it was amazing. Then she told me, “I have something for you, you. You have a choice, you can go to Philadelphia, or Milwaukee.” And, she said, “I think you’ll like Milwaukee, because there are a lot of Germans there.” She thought, a lot of people think I’m German. And, Milwaukee, they had skinheads over there. Know what I mean, neo-Nazis. So, she gave me a train ticket to Philadelphia and, I fell in love with it. And then, I moved to Philadelphia and lived with a foster home. I lived with the foster home until I was eighteen. I went to Temple University. At eighteen I asked the Agency, that I wanted to live in my own apartment. So I got a room near Rittenhouse Square. Very much like, very independent. All of my stuff around, all of my apartments have always been interesting. Very creative, because I do a lot of stuff. So I had this room, and I had a great time. But, I dropped out of college after two years, because I met this woman. Up to that point I had a very difficult time with women. You know, going to sleep, I wanted sex and all that. I met this woman by the name of, it was Baggiani, Italian. She [played the] piano, a pianist, and she taught me, [was teaching me], piano. Next thing you know, I’m involved with her. And, we had sex right away. And, she said, “Don’t worry.” She was a Christian. She said, “I use the rhythm method.” And she got pregnant. And then, I married her. I had three children. By the age of twenty, I was a father. I had just got in this country at the age of—And then after three years and three children, we got divorced. She went off, she took off with another man. Then, I was not married for a long time. But, I’ve always had a difficulty, I was always had to write that I had a problem with English. I forget what they call that, there’s a word for it. Language barrier, that English is an acquired language. I did Temple. Then, years later, when I left New York. I left New York in 1982, and came to Maine. Because—With my son Adam, he was only like a year old. Because, my ex-wife’s parents had retired in Maine. They lived on the coast near Pemaquid Point. That inspired us to come to Maine. From New York City it was traumatic, it was a shock. But, it was amazing, cause you know rent, life, everything was easier. W lived in a huge, like a house at one time, on an estate near Wiscasset. You know, and I loved it. I’ve been here ever since. I never went back. I do miss New York, the hustle and bustle. The culture. I probably would have an easier time getting published, if I lived there. It’s hard here. Although, then I became a Holocaust speaker. Further, I became a teacher. I became certified. First I worked in the nursing field. Then I became a teacher.

KL: What did you teach?

CR: Foreign languages. French, German, and English. And [I] got certified. And I took, I went to Vermont College EDP and I got a Master of Fine Arts, in writing. I thrived, it was independent study, I thrived. With Temple it was hard, I couldn't keep up. But with independent you're on your own, and I loved what I was doing. I became prolific. I wrote, one of my semesters I did the beginning of a novel. The other one, I did a study of the Holocaust. And then, I did a study of cults another semester. Each time I read twenty books, each semester. And reported on them. So—loved it, and then I got my Master of Fine Arts. By then I was teaching. Now, I do lectures, and I get paid sometimes two, three hundred dollars for a talk. I'm a lecturer. And I'm very good at it, can't shut me up. I tell stories—mesmerized—once I talked to nine hundred students, I mean, they were mesmerized. I don't know why, but it's almost like, I feel like Homer. Talking about his adventures, Ulysses, about meeting the cyclops. You know surviving. The Nazi's/The monsters, and all that. I talk about all the different stories that happened, and it's very traumatic. And, for kids that have nothing happening in their lives, fascinating. You know what I mean, who play their cell-phone. Or they join, there's a thing called, Adventure Bound, where you go, you have near death experiences that way. You know what I mean, because otherwise you don't know what it is if you don't. Nothing has made me stronger, but it's very hard to adjust to a new country. But what's interesting, this country is unique. Because, almost everybody here, is an immigrant, at some point. Everybody immigrated here. And I was reading recently, that if you are black, most likely your ancestors came on a slave ship. Interesting point. While with me, yea that's it. I was just looking at my birth certificate. I was just looking at the name of my great-grandparents. That's alright its just for me. I do have, I go to Ancestry. What happened is, I have twenty-two, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. I have four children. I have, I don't know how many grandchildren. And, I have great-grandchildren, twenty-two total. So I created a family. And, once in a while we have reunions. Every year. We try to do a reunion, if everybody can come. I have a daughter Colette, who lives in California now. She lived in Vermont for a long time. I have a granddaughter in Vermont. I have a son who lives in Orlando, Eric. And you know, it's interesting. And Michelle who lives in New York—It's interesting, how they're not that much into my background. I think there's part of them, who don't want to go around saying they have Jewish traits. Or Jewish roots. You see, cause my wife was not Jewish, my first wife. Now I'm in a relationship, fortunately, with a woman who's Jewish. But, not religious, but similar traditions. I've been with her for thirty years. We don't live together, but we have a very strong bond. I can say I'm happy with her, and I'm really content that I have someone. That I'm not alone. A lot of people in this building are alone. Some die in they're apartments, alone. I don't have that. We see each other a lot. We talk every day. And when she comes [here], it's three or four days. Not many people can look at their wives and say, "When are you going home?" or, "When are you coming back?" It gives you a break. You know like right now, I can do things, I'm writing. You know I do stuff. And I do photography. When were done I'll show you the photographs. In fact I'm supposed to meet the curator, to choose the one he's going to use.

KL: Am I keeping you from another appointment?

CR: In October.

KL: Oh, in October, okay.

CR: October, I'll let you know what I find out. But in the meantime, you should go to the Holocaust Museum and see that show they are having with my paintings.

KL: Now, your talking about the museum in Washington, D.C.?

CR: In, Augusta.

KL: Oh, In Augusta, okay. Yea, I've been there.

CR: The one in Washington has my testimony. And, Spielberg also. I have a testimony with him. And then, I'm on record there. I think if you do a search, you'll find that P re Bruno is definitely mentioned in the museum as one of the saviors, you know. He's been honored in Yad Vashem also. That's the organization in Israel that honors, what they call, "The Just". People who took the chance, and hid you. I have a book here, by Martin Gilbert, which is about rescuers. I'll show it to you. I use a bunch of books. When I give talks, I show it to them. One is by Lucy Dawidowicz, called *The War Against the Jews*. And, she thinks Kristallnacht was the beginning. That's when there was physical war against Jews. Then, the newest book is by Snyder, called *Black Earth*. In which it delves in to the philosophy of the Holocaust. The meaning, searching for meaning. There's even a book called, *In Search of Meaning*. Even Elie Wiesel said, after the Holocaust, you couldn't even write a poem. You could not express anything about what happened. I've been back to Auschwitz. And, it's just a big killing field, the bars are still there. Have you ever been?

KL: No, I have not.

CR: Three miles away, is Birkenau. That's where the people were gassed, and then, there were four crematoriums, four. And, when you go down, they were knocked down by the Russians, or the Germans. You can walk around, it's just a killing field. And in the village of Auschwitz, as you walk, the ground is just dust and you don't know what that dust is. It could be people. And, there's a pond, way at the other end, in which they dumped the ashes. So it's a Memorial now. My father is in there somewhere. So I go back and pay tribute. I go back to the (inaudible) to pay tribute. My mother and sister are buried there. I found a cemetery. They had a civil cemetery, *victime civile de legere*, victims of the war, of course. Across, on the upper right hand corner of the cemetery, is a German cemetery, (inaudible), from the First World War. And, you look at the graves, the crosses, all of them are about eighteen years old. Cause that war was fought in the battlefield. Second World War, they attacked civilians, bombed cities. That was new. Even Hiroshima, you killed civilians, to bring a nation to its knees. Even now a days, that's what they do. Isis, look what they do, the latest thing, in France. Now, we're talking about the past, but look what's happening now. Eighty people were killed, in Nice.

KL: It must be difficult to think about your parents and your sister, having perished there. In Auschwitz. How do you deal with that?

CR: What do you mean? With what?

KL: With the fact that some of your family perished in the camps?

CR: My mother and sister were buried in (inaudible)

KL: Okay.

CR: My father, his ashes are in a pond. There's no way to deal with it. There isn't. A lot of anger. I get angry easily. I was angry at you. You didn't show up. I was disappointed, I was angry

KL: My apologies.

CR: Cause I had to walk back in the heat, and I was cursing you the whole way. I was told to avoid the heat, you know what I mean. I wonder if there is something in that, back... You can see my naturalization papers there, you see it? It's the real thing, in the back.

KL: Oh, yes. Tell me about the day you were naturalized?

CR: Yes, I had to wait five years. By that time, I was already in New York City. I was involved with a woman. In fact she was pregnant, my first wife, that's right. We all came in a big room. There must have been a couple hundred, maybe a hundred people. And, we've all got our hands up, and were made naturalized, en masse. It felt great, cause up until that point I was apatride, no country. Even though I was born in France, my birth certificate says apatride. And, it could be, a little bit, that if you were Jewish they didn't want to give you a nationality. Even the French.

KL: How is that word spelled?

CR: A-P-A-T-R-I-D-E. Patride means county. Hanna Arendt wrote about that. I have a book by her, which I can't find, on totalitarianism. She writes about it. The idea that, by removing your citizenship, you have no citizenship. My father was born in Poland. He was born in Barcin.

KL: Yea, I thought I saw that on...

CR: And, my mother was born in Hamburg. And, they lived in Strasbourg. But, I think it was my father. Yes, on the Gestapo record, it said apatride. They wouldn't give him a nationality. In this country, they would say that my father was Polish. And then, they would say that I was

French. Even the French now, when I go there... I wanted to get a youth hostel passed. I said to them, "I'm American." He says, "No, You're French." (Inaudible). So, they gave me a French youth hostel pass. In fact they told me if I want to, I could get French health system. I'm under their health system. I never had to use it. They have social health system there.

KL: You said something a while back I was kind of interested in. You said "A lot of people think you're German." But you identify as French, or Jewish?

CR: As French.

KL: Cause Jewish is not a nationality. I resent that, when they do that. I mean Hitler started that whole thing. Jews is not a race, like Arabs, or Blacks. Italian is not a race. I hate it when I hear, Italian vote, the French vote, and the Jewish vote. What if you're French. What if you're an Italian Jew, what happens then. People still do that. You know, automatically, the Jewish vote. What makes me Jewish? I don't practice. I don't go to—I'm not even a believer. I can't believe in something meta-physical. You know what I mean? I'm like (knocks on something) (inaudible). You know what I mean? Everything has to be real, tangible, unfortunately. I wish I could believe in the afterlife. I wouldn't be so anxious. But to me that's an illusion. To think life goes on. There is a mystery. I believe there's a mystery, a scientific mystery. When you read about black holes, they think it holds the key to the universe, a black hole. Because a black hole can swallow an entire galaxy. Because, in a black hole, there is no space and no time. What is that? You know what I mean? See we think of space and time. Can you imagine living where there is no space and time? And, that's where I think we do go on, in that way. Know what I mean? I mean all of this, this wood. Created, how did it get created like this? It's amazing. Everything, even this plant went berserk. Look at this. It was this big when I bought it. What am I gonna do? He's gonna eat me out of house and home. It's gonna take over the apartment.

KL: Well, I don't want to take too much of your time here. I'd love to keep talking, if you'd like. I don't want you to get too warm or..

CR: You've finished recording for now?

KL: I'm just kind of checking to see if you're getting tired.

CR: Oh, no, I'm okay.

KL: Okay.

CR: I was drinking iced coffee.

KL: Okay.

CR: Did you want some water?

CR: No, I'm fine. How were you received in the U.S.? Did you feel like people treated you differently than other people?

CR: Oh, yeah. First of all, at the beginning, a lot of people called me greenhorn. I resented that. You know, we often do this with kids in this country, who can't speak English. In the meantime, they speak Korean, they speak Arabic, they speak Somalian. We should respect that. I'm a language teacher, so I respect that. I used to teach languages, and I used to give a project. One time I bought a book that had the beginning of the Bible, in all kinds of languages. And then, I was told I couldn't use it. So I bought another book that had famous texts, like Anne Frank's diary in Dutch and so on. And, I love languages. It was very traumatic, coming here, if you don't know the language. And, you don't know how to deal with people. There is definitely no consciousness, of what it's like for some people to be European. Or to be from another country. I'm very aware. Now there's certain customs. For example, I was used to shaking hands in the morning, say "hi," "bonjour." It's ordinary. So, when they didn't want to shake my hand here, I felt offended. And then, everybody was in to their own world in high school. I was in the tenth grade. And this girl, Miriam Corngouth, was supposed to look after me. Once in a while she'd show up, "Are you okay?" I'd say, "Oui," and then she'd leave. But I wasn't. So I went from class to class in awe. But now, I love this country. I love the independence. I can do what I'm doing right here.. And I do think, the wealth is shared. The fact that I live here, subsidized, I mean some of the money is spread around. To allow us to live here, and I pay very low rent. You're paying thirty percent of your earnings. So I'm lucky that I'm here. I'm not homeless.

KL: I need to stop and just check this a little bit.?

CR: Do you have room? Do you still have room?

KL: Pardon me?

CR: Do you have enough room on there?

KL: Yeah, there's plenty of room. I just wanted to check and make sure everything was still rolling.

CR: Yeah. So what else have we covered?

KL: Well, you said language. It sounds like language seemed to be your biggest difficulty.

CR: Have you ever been to Europe?

KL: Mm-hmm

CR: France?

KL: No. England and Ireland.

CR: See, They speak English

KL: Yeah.

CR: Its Europe and English. If you went to France you'd be lost. When I go to Czechoslovakia I was lost. But, I could speak German, and they know German. I can speak German when I have to. It's interesting. Not very fluent, I mean not a lot. But, I have a feeling of the language. It took a while. I read somewhere it takes seven years to get the feeling of a language. That's why high school French doesn't do it. You don't get the feel of the language.

KL: So your first language is French?

CR: French. Now, my parents spoke Yiddish, and German, see, and some French. Yiddish is German. It's sort of a slang version of German. With other words thrown in.

KL: When you were a small child you spoke French, or Yiddish?

CR: When I was in Strasbourg, I spoke French. And then, when I lost my parents, everything was French. When I went to Belgium, it's French and Flemish. When I went to school, I had to study Flemish. And I did for a little bit, like maybe six months. In some parts of Belgium they will all speak French to you. They're like Quebec they want to separate. That was a big problem. Also social customs. People are not as polite here, as I am used to. That takes me a little by surprise. They're a little offensive sometimes. They don't realize they are doing that. I always let a woman pass in front you know, I give seat. Open the door and let them in. I do that all the time. And when I eat, I use a knife and fork, and so forth. I was shocked at first that people had no manners. In fact, I read somewhere that the Scandinavian, before they teach anything to kids, they teach them social skills. They don't do that here. So a lot of kids grow up, and they have no manners. Street kids, or just people sometimes. Even in this building. One time a reporter came to do interviews, because, I think it was the fortieth anniversary. They came to me to talk. And I said, "Why did you pick me?" Well, they told them in the office that I'm one of few coherent people in the building.

KL: One of the few what people?

CR: Coherent.

KL: Oh, coherent. (laughter)

CR: So me and this other man, who lived across the way, were interviewed. Unfortunately, this other man, since I've lived here. Someone across the way died in his apartment. Someone died down the hallway. And then the fellow across the way, I used to play chess with him. Then one

day, I didn't hear from him. I was worried, called him up, knocked on his door, couldn't open the door. So, I told the office I'm concerned. So they called 911. The police came. He had collapsed on the floor, by his bed. First he was in a rehab, nursing home. Still there. When I went to see him, he seemed to have dementia. Because, he was saying things like, "I'm not going to stay here long. I'm going to a farm and live there." I asked the nurse about that, "Is that true?" She said, "No." He has trouble walking. I'm supposed to visit. I want to visit. But, he can't play chess anymore. He loves it. I play chess online, chessworld.com. Right now I'm playing forty people.

KL: Oh, my.

CR: I've played over one hundred countries. It's international.

KL: So, chess is pretty big with you?

CR: Well, you play one move at a time. And, you have ten days for each move, or seven days. You see, so when I look at the thing, I see that, you know four people moved. So I look to see what I should do, I make a move. And then, when you win, you get a rating. See? But the rating is with chessworld. I have an official rating with U.S. Chess Federation. I go to real tournaments.

KL: How did you get started playing chess?

CR: In the group home. I'm sorry, the group home, with all the kids. I read Dostoyevski then. I read Tolstoy. I read *Crime and Punishment*, when I was twelve years old, thirteen years old. And played chess. Learn to play chess. Cause they were all older kids. One kid was a violinist, one was a cabinet maker, he made a beautiful table. It was varnished and everything. So that's where, they all had skills. They were all older. So I did what they did. We used to sit around, to listen to Beethoven's ninth symphony, on seventy-eight RPM's. And we'd sit, like you watch television, we would listen to music. Another favorite was, The one by Saint-Saëns

KL: Gymnopédie?

CR: No that's Satie.

KL: Oh, excuse me that's Satie.

CR: No, no, he wrote the one about the storm, that Disney made a cartoon based on...

KL: Night on bald mountain?

CR: No, that's someone else, that's, Borodin.

KL: Okay, I'm striking out.

CR: That's Borodin. No, it's Saint-Saëns. He wrote a symphony for organ and orchestra, I've heard that. But, I think it's something called *Dance Diabolique*, something like that. Which is a violin concerto. (hums music). It's very famous. And, Disney did a funny thing, with skeletons. Creepy stuff, which had nothing to do with the music. But, that was a favorite of ours. And, also, *The Moldau*, by a Herman Bloch³. Because in it is the, actually the *Hatikvah*, which is a theme, the Israeli national anthem. (hums music). The anthem is derived from that tune. I used to know the Greek national anthem. Because, the family that hid me, the Leuyx, the father had Greek roots. Mr. Leuyxs had Greek roots. They used to play that on the piano. Right now I can't think of it. Strange.

KL: Now, when you stayed with the Leuyx, did you have to stay inside and hide?

CR: No. I went to school. I had blue eyes, and I was blonde. So I look about as neo-Nazi as possible. I had no problem looking like a Christian. That's another joke about the stereotype. What a Jew looks like, you know what I mean? I used to have a paper that is about the so-called, Jewish nose. What is the Jewish nose? I have a pamphlet there, a German pamphlet. That's just a (inaudible). And, they would have a picture of the picture of people with noses, and say, "That's a Jewish nose." Crooked, you know big. Ears sticking out, I mean, all kinds of stuff. And, people believed that.

KL: So, you went to school. Tell me...

CR: I was difficult adjusting. Very, very, very hard. I think for a year, like I said, I was miserable. And then I left my aunt and uncle. I left Peekskill. Something happened with me and my cousin, which I can't get in to. But, because of that I was taken away, and moved to New York. And then, that's when I started living with foster families. Until I was eighteen. At eighteen I was independent. I worked for Campbells soup, which was in Camden. And, I used to go to Temple. And then, I left all of that, because Anita, my first wife was pregnant. We moved to New York City. On tenth street. And then I tried to, struggled to work there. We had three children. I moved to the upper west side. Rent was so cheap then. It was like a hundred fifty a month. And then, after three she left me for someone. I was very upset, devastated. But, on the other hand, I no longer had the responsibility, of having a family. I was on my own. But, I had to pay. I had to pay alimony, or child support, until they were all eighteen years old. Not much, because it was according to what I could afford.

KL: Tell me about your neighborhood in New York?

CR: What's that?

³ Bedrich Smetana?

KL: Tell me about your neighborhood in New York?

CR: Well, with Anita it was more like a Puerto Rican section. Between Columbus Avenue, and near the Museum of Natural History. So, that was that way. Then, we found a cold-water flat, in the village. That was not very good. Now wait a minute, I'm a little mixed up. Then we moved to the upper west side. It was after that. That's right, cause at first we had a room. New York then, was pretty crazy. It was more like bohemians. They had bohemians, they didn't have hippies, yet. Then after I was divorced, I lived on my own. And then, someone told me about getting a job as a photographer's assistant. So, I went and interviewed with Allan Arbus⁴. The husband of Dianne Arbus⁵. And, he liked me right away. And, I worked for him. Your phone just flashed. And, that was great. He was in the upper west side, east side. In a mansion. So, I went to work every day, and I used to bicycle all the way uptown and down. Over the Brooklyn bridge. Then into Brooklyn Heights for a while. I had an apartment for ninety dollars a month. On Pierpont street. I worked for Allan Arbus for about a year. And Diane used to come in to use the darkroom. Sometimes I wouldn't let her, because I had work to do. So, she had to wait. At that time, I didn't know. Well, she was just beginning to be known. But then, she committed suicide, you know. Then, I worked for other photographers, until I became independent and worked on my own. At one point, I was making five-hundred dollars a day. That was the minimum. When you were hired to do a job. It may take me a week to do the job, it's five-hundred bucks. Plus all expenses paid. So, I did that for a while. And then, later in life, I became involved with a community. That was, what they call new age. It was quasi-spiritual, quasi-psychological. I liked the psychological aspect, and I liked the community aspect. They had a retreat, in Woodstock, that I used to go to. That was on the side, because I had jobs during the day. It was kind of secretive. I was a little embarrassed about it. That I belonged to a cult. And, that's why, when I went to Vermont, I did a study on cults. (Inaudible) community, all religion is kind of a cult. You worship a leader, you know. But then, being a photographer was interesting. I studied with a man by the name of Harold Feinstein⁶, who recently died. He was a big influence on me. Encouraging me to become a street photographer. Then, Robert Frank⁷, I got to know him. Those are my role models. I'll show you some pictures I have. So, I've been published as a photographer, made money with it. But, now I'm retired, you know. I don't do anything. I'm just a lazy bum. But, I recently had a virus. I'm still recovering. It was in my

⁴ Allan Arbus, 1918-2013. American actor and photographer, best known in his role as psychiatrist Major Sidney Freedman on the long-running television show, *M*A*S*H*. Married to photographer Diane Nemerov Arbus.

⁵ Diane Nemerov Arbus, 1923-1971. American photographer. Her work sometimes featured marginalized people. Notable works include *Child With a Toy Hand Grenade in Central Park, NYC* and *Identical Twins, Roselle, New Jersey*. She was the first American photographer to have photographs displayed at the Venice Biennale.

⁶ Harold Feinstein 1931-2015. American photographer known for his photographs of Coney Island.

⁷Robert Frank b. 1924, Zurich, Switzerland. Swiss-American photographer and filmmaker.

head, mostly. But, it really affected me. I took antibiotics, so I'm still recovering from, kind of low energy and stuff. So, let me show you my pictures.

KL: Sure, sure.

CR: I think we pretty much covered it, or do you want to ask more questions?

KL: No, I'm fine. I've really been enjoying the conversation.

CR: Yeah, well yeah. Nowadays in New York, micro apartments like these are famous. Everybody, they're building now, tiny apartments.

KL: Yeah

CR: (inaudible) (showing pictures)

KL: My brother is a photographer. He shoots...

CR: You're a photographer?

KL: I do a little bit. My brother is better than I am. He shoots negatives that are 8" x 10".

CR: Now, this was, I went to a chess tournament, and it was held in Boston. At a hotel, near the airport. I stayed at the hotel. And, it was a beautiful room.

KL: Mm..

CR: (looking through pictures). Oh, I'm not supposed to show you that one.

KL: (laughter)

CR: Now, this is someone in the buildings

KL: Yeah?

CR: He lives here. I just took this. That's gonna be in a show.

KL: Now, are these digital, or...

CR: The prints are digital. Yeah, this is shot digital. This is film. That I...

KL: Scanned?

CR: Yeah.

KL: Okay, yeah, I do that sometimes. I shoot a negative and scan it.

CR: This is Judy Malina, and Julian Beck, from the Living Theater.

KL: Ah..

CR: She became an actress This is Larry Rivers, the painter. Oh, that's a boy, in California, Big Sur. I don't know if I'll show that. This is a man, who lived in the, I lived in that building. I used to pay fifteen dollars a month.

KL: Oh, my.

CR: On first Avenue. But, he used to sit there. See, now this one I don't like as much, as this. I like that better.

KL: Yeah, mm-hmm.

CR: This is the one that came out black-and-white. This is a better print. They have this printer here, digital printer, cannon.

KL: Mm-Hmm.

CR: This is Jacques Lipchitz, the sculptor. He does sculptures.

KL: Mm-Hmm.

CR: He died, and I had to go and photograph his stuff. And then, I took this picture. From a ladder. He's taking a nap. See I do a lot of prints, until I get what I want.

KL: I'll come by and bring some of my prints, to show you sometime.

CR: Yeah. There's my son. This is, someone I knew. He stood in front of a wall. This is in this building. See? He is a veteran. If you look low enough, you realize he has no legs.

KL: Oh, yeah.

CR: He is in a wheelchair. He used to live here. There is a different version of that. Oh, you know what? Sometimes, I take pictures of people laying down. Like that one.

KL: Mm-Hmm.

CR: So, I did that of him. He told me later, I don't want to do that. He didn't like that. And, it could be a fear of homosexuality. But, I often do it from above, because it does an interesting... This is a painter. She wants me to show a lot of pictures of painters. It's a painting studio.

KL: Ah...

CR: This is Bob Thompson, in a chair that he found in the street. That became a front piece in the catalog for the Whitney Museum.

KL: Oh, my.

CR: They did a show about Bob Thompson, and they used this picture, on the front. So then, see, I do several prints, of that. Oh, I didn't know I did so many. Until I get the right distribution. And, this is a accordion player, that I painted. That's the photograph, like a painting.

KL: That's nice.

CR: Them too. You see, I do different versions. This is colder. Notice it's a colder print. This is warmer. This is a painter, from Maine. And, I shot that without posing. I was there. He was next to his painting. I took his picture. I'm quick on the trigger. And, this is another one. Do you know who this is?

KL: Do I know who it is?

CR: Robert Indiana

KL: Oh, okay, yeah.

CR: And, you know I sold this picture to somebody? Seven hundred dollars.

KL: Oh, my.

CR: This is someone in the building. Robert Mason, who's ninety-three. He lives in the building, and that's his stuff. So, I'm gonna include this. This is a better print. I like that better.

KL: Yeah, I like that. So, you use the filters?

CR: No, I don't use... Filters, no. Well, I see you've gone through a lot. This is something I did once.

KL: Ah, that's nice.

CR: But, I'm not sure I wanna use that in in a scene. That's another one of that. This is a cemetery. It's a grave.

KL: Looks interesting.

CR: This is in Paris. This is New York. She was standing there. Reflection in the window. This is a church, in France.

KL: That's nice.

CR: There's another one. A statue in Paris called... I forgot the name. They're lovers, and they have this, ominous, dark angel over them. This is a cemetery, Pe Le Chaise. I hope I have enough pictures. There was also the man by the door. Oh, this is Auschwitz, the suitcases. Which I may show. I don't know. You know something? Maybe I don't have enough pictures. I can't use this, but it's Cirque de Soleil.

KL: Okay, yeah.

CR: I'm not sure if I can use that. I have to find out. There's so many of these.

KL: Yeah, you did a lot of work.

CR: Oh, this is another one. With a reflection. In a botanical garden. That was the one on the wall there.

KL: Mm, that's nice.

CR: Know something? How many do I have enough there? I don't know. I'm gonna have to print more. I just realized, I might not have enough pictures.

KL: Mmm.

CR: I'm not sure about that. Oh this, this is another beauty

KL: That's nice.

CR: That's Normandy. Oh, that's another beauty. Isn't that gorgeous?

KL: Yeah, I like that a lot.

CR: I don't know if I have enough. Do I have enough? Might not be enough. I'm supposed to meet the curator

KL: Mm-hmm.

CR: Wait, I'm gonna sit down. I'm getting tired.

KL: Yea, I should...

CR: I'm gonna meet the curator, to help me decide what to take. You know what I mean? Wanna do more?

KL: Pardon me?

CR: Do you want to do more interviewing?

KL: Well, I should probably let you, let you go here. I don't wanna tire you out. And, I know it's probably getting a little warm for you.

CR: Well, if you wanna turn that on for a little while.

KL: Well, let's see. What time is it?

CR: Or, do you wanna stop?

KL: It's just about five o'clock

CR: Almost five

KL: I probably should be getting back to Augusta.

CR: Okay, but you've got enough there?

KL: Yeah, I think so. I really, really appreciate you taking time for me.

CR: Maybe later on if you wanna add something, or something comes up. Tell me. Maybe we could do recording on the phone.

KL: That's possible. Yeah, it's been done. I will send you a release.

CR: You can keep that summary.

KL: Oh, this? Oh, okay great. Is this for me?

CR: Yes.

KL: Oh, okay great. I'll put that in my folder here. Oh, I almost forgot.

CR: I wonder, do I have enough there for a show? I may have to print more pictures.

KL: I do want to do one other thing. And, that is, if it's okay, I'd like to take a photograph.

CR: Oh, yeah. You want to take a photograph now?

KL: Yeah, if I may?

CR: Yes.

KL: Okay. Usually I have my good camera for that, but I went off and left it. So, I'm gonna have to use this

CR: Oh yeah, but those are good.

KL: Yeah they do a nice job. Ah, yeah. There we go.

CR: How can I...

KL: Okay, yeah, I like that.

CR: How's it look?

KL: Ah, let's check.

CR: That's good. I like that it shows...

KL: You like that one from the right?

CR: Well, see, I once won the best music video in Maine.

KL: Yeah, I saw that.

CR: I did street musicians.

KL: Ah.

CR: I submitted it, it won best video.

KL: (laughter)

CR: And then, over there. You see that Japanese diploma?

KL: Um, this one?

CR: Yeah.

KL: Oh, okay.

CR: You see the flute on the wall?

KL: Oh, the flute? Yeah.

CR: Yes, that's a shakuhachi. It's a Japanese flute. And, I played it in front of a master. A certain tune. Then he signed it to say I played that tune in front of him.

KL: (laughter)

CR: Then he came to me. I went to a workshop. So, you had to play in front of him. This tune. And, he criticized me, but he gave me the document.

KL: (laughter)

CR: Well, you know what happened? I was using a vibrato and all that. That tune, that was playing. No ornaments. It's supposed to be very straight. So, I was critiqued that way. Just play the notes straight, don't embellish it. And, it was supposed to be a homage to illustrious men. You know, like a memorial kind of tune. And, once in a while, when I gave a talk. I play that. I tell them it's a Japanese version of the shofar. You know the shofar?

KL: No, I don't.

CR: It's a bull horn, that the Jews play.

KL: Okay.

Cr: They play it at the new year.

KL: Oh, okay, I know what you're talking about now. Yeah.

CR: The bull's horn.

KL: Yeah.

CR: So, I play that sometimes. Similar sound. Alright.

KL: Okay, well I'm gonna go ahead and, turn this off then.