

**CELEBRATING OUR STORIES**  
**Jewish Life in Ann Arbor**

**Angela Keselman and Diana Khiterer**  
**Recorded April 22, 2013**

**0:46-1:43**

*Angela:* Me and my family, we came from Kiev. Now it's capital of Ukraine. In that time, in 1980 when we left Ukraine, it was former Soviet Union. We came to United States with my husband, Igor, my parents, my mother-in-law, my sister, and our son, five years old. We came to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where the HIAS and the Jewish Community Center help us with the apartments and food stamps, help us find a job, help us with English because we came all without any English, and give us all everything that we need to start our new life.

**2:20-2:46**

*Diana:* —it was huge beautiful city, but not for Jewish people.

*Angela:* Right. The anti-Semitism was very big in Kiev and when we left. Actually it was less the last year that Jewish people immigrated from former Soviet Union from Kiev and other city around former Soviet Union. In 1980 the immigration was closed.

**3:12-4:09**

*Diana:* . . .we had relatives—unfortunately we couldn't get straight to my cousins, which was my—I decided was going to be much better, but my late sister-in-law, my husband's sister, used to live in Chicago and she invited us. When we already get all papers saying to my cousins, they just take us to Ann Arbor. Of course Chicago was city—we knew about Chicago. It was promising city, but we decided we better stay with my relatives in a smaller community, smaller city. Plus Ann Arbor at that time was free for entrance. Chicago, you pay huge money, which we of course didn't have. It's how we got in 1991 here. I came here with my mother, my husband, two sons, who was five—no 16 and 8. Until that day we are still in Ann Arbor and we love it.

**4:20-7:24**

*Angela:* . . .when we moved to Ann Arbor it was 1981 from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania when the HIAS and JCC accept us. We knew

nothing about Ann Arbor. Only reason we came here because my husband find a job as electrical engineer in the Bechtel Corporation that time.

For me, Ann Arbor it was just—when he took a job then I was crying. I didn't wanna leave Pittsburgh because my parents was there, we already made some friends there. Actually I couldn't even pronounce Ann Arbor at that time. It was just very—it was hard. Hard not just, it's scary because I didn't know how to drive car. I didn't know any English. My son was five years old and I didn't know what to do, how to go to the doctor, what to say, how to ask if he was okay even. It was very hard, but Jewish community in Ann Arbor especially Helen Aminoff, Claire, they were member of Beth Israel Synagogue. They helped a lot. They help us with apartment. They took us to different places and show us around. They help with advice. I don't know how they understood our language, but they helped a lot. At that time was Rabbi Kensky.

It's just funny story. My father came to this country when he was 75, 74 actually. Back in Kiev when he was a young boy, he went to the Hebrew school. He learned a language there and when he was young boy. All these years until 74 years old when we came here, he didn't practice in any language at all. When he came to synagogue, I don't know how. He went to Torah and he said every word like he learned just yesterday. It was incredible. I think being the synagogue, go to synagogue, have a opportunity to go synagogue and say this word that he remember, it just give him so much pleasure and so much joy that he can do that. Beth Israel was the synagogue when our son had a Bar Mitzvah and my dad was reading from Torah and you can see with his face how happy he was that he can do that and he actually lived to see his grandson as a Bar Mitzvah in a synagogue.

Jewish people in Ann Arbor in that time was very, very supportive. They help in every possible way. They took us to the—they drove us to the doctor. They drove us to school. They went to school as translators and stuff like that.

**13:08-13:36**

*Angela:*

...Our son grew up here. He came five years old. He's a major in Air Force. My mother give him for his Bar Mitzvah, Star of David. He is wearing that all his year in Air Force or whatever he is go. He's not afraid to wear it. That's the simplest example how

it's different. He would never wear that in Ukraine, even now. I'm sure even now.

**24:48-25:32**

*Diana:* . . .Of course we left and it was a little bit depressing. We left behind friends, house—apartments, everything we had. We came with little—

*Angela:* Money.

*Diana:* - pictures, little money, with clothes, some memories. Of course we were a little depressed, but when I was coming in a supermarket just get to supermarket, you know, my depression would disappear in a minute when I saw everything. I say, "Okay. Today I can't buy this yet, but I hope if we're gonna work hard, we'll be able to buy everything we want." This makes much, much easier to pushing ourself to get as much as fast as possible English, jobs, all this stuff.

**27:41-28:10**

*Angela:* . . .This country's blessed. If you wanna get somewhere, you will get there you just have to work hard and know what you want.

*Diana:* It's probably best country in the world. You can get everything you want to get, just need to work a little bit hard and you can get everything.

*Angela:* You just have to have dream and follow your dreams and then you're gonna get where you wanna be.

**36:00-36:24**

*Angela:* One last thing? No, because this is the Jewish—just saying that we're proud to be Jewish.

*Diana:* We're proud to be Jewish and I'm very proud of my relatives who came to Ann Arbor. We're proud of ourself. We fight many years and we're here. Now I'm so proud to have all family here.

*Angela:* It's thank you to you that we can tell our story.