

EXODUS Project

Interview of Mark & Larisa Warshavsky

November 06, 2016

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EXODUS

Mark & Larisa Warshavsky.mp4

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Lynnie Mirvis: I'm Lynnie Mirvis and I'm here interviewing Larisa and Mark and I want to ask you, tell your full name, Larisa.

Larisa Warshavsky: Larisa Warshavsky.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay, Larisa Warshavsky.

Mark Warshavsky: And Mark Warshavsky.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mark Warshavsky. It's so nice that you're here. This is for the Exodus Project and today is November 6th, 2016. So what is your date of birth, Larisa?

Larisa Warshavsky: December 2, 1952.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay. And you?

Mark Warshavsky: October 19, 1948,

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay, great. And which republic and city or town did you come from, Larisa?

Larisa Warshavsky: From Kharkov, Ukraine.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay, Kharkov. And...

Mark Warshavsky: And same. Same city. Yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, you're both...okay. You both came from Kharkov. So I want to ask you, and you can take turns, just thinking back when you were growing up there in Kharkov what was life like for you there in the former Soviet Union? Can you describe...

Larisa Warshavsky: Well,...

Lynnie Mirvis: ...your house, your family?

Larisa Warshavsky: ...I came from kind of middle class family. My parents were...my mother was a teacher. She...teacher. She was teaching in it's kind of like ____ school for adults and she was teaching English, German, and Russian. My father was an

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engineer, a radio engineer so, you know, we had...you know, my **opinion** at that time was a pretty good life and, you know, I went to school. I was a student, you know? Graduated from school and then I was kind of trying to decide what I was going to do but what happened was I met Mark and...

Lynnie Mirvis: Ahh.

Larisa Warshavsky: When I was 18 and we got married when I was 19.

Lynnie Mirvis: So you got married young. Ahh, okay. So...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah. My first son was born before I even turned 20 but I went...I went to college to get my accounting degree. While, you know, my son went to school I went to school as well. But when I met Mark, he was at the time in college ____ but he can probably tell about himself a little more.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay, okay. Mark, do you want to tell me about your...

Mark Warshavsky: Yes. I was born in _____. My father...louder? Okay. I was born in military family. My brother was a Soviet Army officer that died. After World War II he still in army and he was stationed in Germany and when he came back to Kharkov, I was born in the family and this is, like Larisa said, middle class family.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Mark Warshavsky: He left army and we returned from middle Asia to Kharkov.

Larisa Warshavsky: Tell about his profession during the...

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, he was a professional musician before World War II but his career, like pianist, he changed career to military because he was...he was forced to go to army.

Larisa Warshavsky: Uh-huh. He was forced.

Mark Warshavsky: And he was in World War II from first day to last day.

Larisa Warshavsky: Mm-hmm.

Mark Warshavsky: Even he was in army before...before Hitler invaded.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm. Right.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes, invaded. Invaded Soviet Union.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. So you both grew up in middle class families.

Mark Warshavsky: I have two older brothers.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh. Yeah.

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Mark Warshavsky: One was born in 1937 and the other 1938 and I was born after World War II.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Mark Warshavsky: It's a big difference because it was war.

Larisa Warshavsky: Was war. Yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: He returned back from war alive and I was born...

Larisa Warshavsky: Mm-hmm.

Mark Warshavsky: ...in '48.

Larisa Warshavsky: Did your family talk about World War II or about anti-Semitism? Did that...did they experience that?

Lynnie Mirvis: We did.

Larisa Warshavsky: Or did you...

Mark Warshavsky: It's good question.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was...I could say you could feel it, you know, more or less but it was there, you know? I feel it on myself and I know we feel it when our son was already like in school and older. It was, like, besides just saying some bad words to us, you know? People didn't realize, you know? Like before school, you know, in the apartment building where I lived and I was, like, playing in the yard I could hear some of these things. Of course, I was usually very, very upset and I remember one day when I was at home and I told my father and he said, "Well, I think it's time for me to explain to you who you are and what does it mean and you don't need to be ashamed. You just are who you are. You just need to keep to yourself." But we tried not to kind of say this a lot so people would definitely know that you're Jewish. I tried to be like everybody else around.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: But it was...it felt like at school, you know, I don't remember very detailed but, you know, I could feel it all the time.

Lynnie Mirvis: Did they call you names or...because you were Jewish or...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, yeah, yeah, they were saying...yeah. And it was sometimes very, you know, you feel very little, you know, when you start feeling like you're going to go into yourselves. Like, this is not right but nothing you can do because you're in minority, you know, in this situation. And like some teachers were a little mean, you know? And it was...

Lynnie Mirvis: Do you...

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Larisa Warshavsky: Especially when we was...like, few years before we left our older son who was 17 when we left the country, during the school years he was doing different kind of sports and he was in some competitions and he won part of the competition and the person who was supposed to win competition should go to Czechoslovakia at the time for the tour and his coach...

Mark Warshavsky: Coach, yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: He told him openly, he said, "Well, you know, I cannot send you over there." Just, like, openly. Not, like, even trying to hid something.

Mark Warshavsky: Mm-hmm.

Lynnie Mirvis: He can't...couldn't send him because he was Jewish?

Mark Warshavsky: Yes. Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: That's the only reason.

Larisa Warshavsky: He told him, "You're Jewish." He said, "You know, if I will choose your name they wouldn't let you go anyway." Because they...whatever.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: And so they chose some other person but what happened was that his family couldn't...

Mark Warshavsky: Afford.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...afford...find money...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...for it and so it came back to our son and I went to our union and they helped me with some money to support this trip for him.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh. And he did go?

Larisa Warshavsky: But it was since like this and I remember when we left, my parents told me...when we moved to our apartment they told me that somebody put their door on fire.

Lynnie Mirvis: Really?

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, after we left. And when we were leaving, it was so dramatic so everybody knew around that we were leaving, you know? Actually we left in the bus coming from out...from, like our, you know, apartment. Right from there. It was _____.

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Lynnie Mirvis: Right, so...

Larisa Warshavsky: So we felt it. I don't know about you. Your family.

Lynnie Mirvis: You were feeling...what was it like to be Jewish growing up in the Soviet Union?

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah. Any step of your life there, you have fifth line of your...

Larisa Warshavsky: Nationality.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: Nationality.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: And in library, anywhere, they'll come in, fifth line is your nationality. Your nationality is Jewish, they'd...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: They'd already stamp to be **prosecuted...not persecuted.**

Larisa Warshavsky: I forgot...I forgot to say one thing, that when like you were looking for a job and they get your passport they're like, "Oh, we don't have an opening for you."

Mark Warshavsky: Don't have anything.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Larisa Warshavsky: While they have but they don't want to take you.

Lynnie Mirvis: When you were trying to get a job there. Yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, it was another thing. Yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: They would look at your passport before...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: At the fifth line that said "Jewish."

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, you fill out an application but everywhere you were asked your nationality.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

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Larisa Warshavsky: And you...you would say...

Mark Warshavsky: Even in library. What's problem with library?

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: But you put Jewish on the fifth line in library. Anywhere.

Lynnie Mirvis: Anywhere. Anywhere you went.

Mark Warshavsky: Anywhere.

Larisa Warshavsky: Even at the library you had to write your nationality.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes. If you're Armenian or Georgian, that's okay but if you're Jewish, you have problem.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. But what about when you were really young? You were talking about that you didn't really know you were Jewish. Is that what you were saying?

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, you know,...

Lynnie Mirvis: What was that like?

Larisa Warshavsky: ...we didn't talk about. It's my parents, you know? Of course when you're young you don't know a lot of things and...but when I start hearing those insults, you know, I was...kind of raised the question and, you know, I remember that I was actually laying in bed, like, before I went to sleep and he was trying to tell me all this and I was like...I started, you know, seeing the picture of, you know, why this happened...was happening. And I was like, "Why do they hate us?"

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm. And what did he say?

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, generally what we knew because a lot of Jewish people achieved a lot and they were very smart and they probably were a little jealous of this. They didn't want Jewish people to be in power,...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...to be leaders.

Mark Warshavsky: Mathematicians.

Larisa Warshavsky: Leading, you know? And, you know, this is just the politics which came from the government ____ and in the families it was going from one tradition to another.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: And, you know, this was all until probably after, you know, we left. I think that...actually I remember a very interesting thing when I was leaving...

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Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...and I have to get some signature ____ people before I, like, you know, get ____ and I went to the...our director at place of work. He was very pro-Jewish but he was...he was a very nice guy and I came and so he was like...he wished me well and all this and he said...he said, "Well, you know, where are you going," and everything so he was very, very nice. But what I noticed at the time when I was leaving in like 1989, people who were not Jewish, they started being jealous because we were able to leave the country.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, I see. You were...

Larisa Warshavsky: And they were not. They didn't have any reason to leave.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Larisa Warshavsky: We had reason, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: I want to get into that, the reason.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was a little advantage at that time.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. It was an advantage and he was nice.

Larisa Warshavsky: People were more...it was...perestroika it was different time, you know? It was kind of starting...getting a little bit different.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: When we were already here, they start like doing a little bit more on Jewish culture.

Mark Warshavsky: They repaired synagogue in our city.

Larisa Warshavsky: We had one synagogue in our...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, I was ask you about your Jewish celebrations. Were you able to practice Judaism?

Mark Warshavsky: But the synagogue...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, but let me tell people about synagogue.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: The synagogue, it used to be synagogue.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: Then I don't know what...

Mark Warshavsky: The biggest in Europe. Very beautiful.

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Larisa Warshavsky: When...when was it when it was converted to sports center?

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, it got converted into a sports center.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, it was sports center. Actually I was going there for gymnastics and stuff.

Mark Warshavsky: I know three more. One was rebuilt for planetarium.

Larisa Warshavsky: Mm-hmm. Yeah, we had several. It was years and years ago.

Mark Warshavsky: One synagogue was on the part of...kind of a part of factory or something and they were closed.

Larisa Warshavsky: So they used those buildings...

Mark Warshavsky: It was three or four.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...for something else.

Lynnie Mirvis: Why do you think they did that? What was...

Mark Warshavsky: This beautiful synagogue was converted to...

Larisa Warshavsky: It was not far from us.

Mark Warshavsky: ...club.

Lynnie Mirvis: So they...

Mark Warshavsky: Now they rebuilt in this...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: ...really Jewish...

Larisa Warshavsky: When perestroika started, I think that Americans actually helped with money and...

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, sister city Cincinnati.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: Of Kharkov.

Mark Warshavsky: And Cincinnati's Jewish community helped to rebuild that.

Lynnie Mirvis: Really. Right. Today.

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Larisa Warshavsky: It's beautiful. We went back several years ago.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, and now it's...

Larisa Warshavsky: It looks beautiful.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. But when you were growing there was the one synagogue.

Mark Warshavsky: No.

Larisa Warshavsky: We didn't...no. We didn't have any synagogue.

Lynnie Mirvis: You didn't have a synagogue.

Mark Warshavsky: Not any.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was synagogue but it was not synagogue-ish.

Lynnie Mirvis: Can you tell me you think the reason why did that? Why the Soviet... why the government did that? Made the synagogues into...

Mark Warshavsky: They oppress any religious institutions.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Mark Warshavsky: Even churches. They blew up with bomb one church in 1961 or something.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm. So...

Mark Warshavsky: Church, too.

Larisa Warshavsky: They would...like, atheists, you know?

Mark Warshavsky: Church also was persecuted but not like Jewish.

Larisa Warshavsky: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: Jewish was persecuted much, more more pressure for that.

Lynnie Mirvis: Much more persecution, oppression. What...

Mark Warshavsky: And it was underground, synagogue. You remember? We visit underground...

Larisa Warshavsky: My family was not I would say full of any religious as Mark was but his parents were, like, 18 or 20 years older than my parents. My parents were both born in '29 and his in '08 and '11.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, they were older.

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Larisa Warshavsky: They were older so his mother, she was trying to follow...yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: My mother tried to keep Jewish religion.

Larisa Warshavsky: Holidays and stuff.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. What do you remember about that?

Mark Warshavsky: Okay, for example, meat, you know...meat she was...put salt...

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Mark Warshavsky: ...to...yeah. To be kosher.

Larisa Warshavsky: Right. Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: And I remember that. She always do that. Also all holidays. I don't know how she knows. We didn't have any calendars, Jewish calendars, but I remember I was kid and we visit another religious family, probably they know. They knew...

Larisa Warshavsky: That's alright.

Mark Warshavsky: They knew probably from Israel friends or family what holidays and my mother always knew the holidays. Also she got ____ for her parents.

Larisa Warshavsky: Her parents. I remember she had a light.

Lynnie Mirvis: Like a little candle.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was a light. It was not a candle, it was a light.

Mark Warshavsky: But you couldn't buy it.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, you couldn't buy a candle but you...

Mark Warshavsky: No, you can't buy.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...had a light to...

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: To...on the anniversary of the death of her parents.

Larisa Warshavsky: A little lamp and she would just ____.

Mark Warshavsky: She did that.

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Lynnie Mirvis: Yes.

Mark Warshavsky: And she knew all religious...

Larisa Warshavsky: She knew everything.

Lynnie Mirvis: Do you remember any holidays that she celebrated...

Mark Warshavsky: Oh, yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...or that she...

Mark Warshavsky: Passover.

Lynnie Mirvis: You celebrated...

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: What did you do for Passover? Do you remember?

Mark Warshavsky: Actually no Seder like we have here. It was just good...you know, good chicken and...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, she prepared good food.

Mark Warshavsky: ...matzah balls.

Larisa Warshavsky: I want to say we couldn't buy matzah anywhere.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was not sold anywhere.

Lynnie Mirvis: No matzah.

Mark Warshavsky: Also I was kid and we went to...

Larisa Warshavsky: It was like an underground production or something.

Mark Warshavsky: No, no. I remember we go to farmer's market and she buy live chicken...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: ...and it was slaughtered there.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah. It was slaughtered there, yes.

Mark Warshavsky: It was...yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: Not very legal but...

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Mark Warshavsky: Very illegal but...

Lynnie Mirvis: You mean in a kosher way?

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: They slaughtered it in a kosher way but not in a secret...secretly?

Mark Warshavsky: Not secretly but it...

Larisa Warshavsky: Not ____.

Mark Warshavsky: For government it was like...like...

Larisa Warshavsky: He just does it, you know? He just...

Mark Warshavsky: Like doing something for people.

Larisa Warshavsky: Just kill in kitchen, you know? So you can use it.

Mark Warshavsky: My mother knew that and it was kosher chicken there.

Lynnie Mirvis: So she tried to get the kosher...

Larisa Warshavsky: But I know that what I remember when we got married and I went into his family, that, you know, we were...until, like, long time after it, you know, we were getting matzah from, like, underground somewhere.

Lynnie Mirvis: How did you do that? So you were getting the matzah.

Larisa Warshavsky: I don't know. Just word, you know? One say something.

Mark Warshavsky: One time we can't buy matzah and what I did with my older son, we did matzah at home.

Larisa Warshavsky: They did...one year they did.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, you did?

Larisa Warshavsky: It was not the same.

Lynnie Mirvis: Tell us how you did that. Can you tell...

Larisa Warshavsky: It was not the same.

Lynnie Mirvis: ...tell us how you...

Mark Warshavsky: Just, you know,...

Larisa Warshavsky: It was too thick, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Flour and water?

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Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: And you made the matzah.

Mark Warshavsky: Mm-hmm. I made matzah because we didn't have any.

Larisa Warshavsky: His mother, she was making so many different dishes from matzah, you know? Just kind of crushing and doing...we call it babka. It was matzah...

Mark Washavsky: With eggs.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...plus eggs and some chicken fat.

Lynnie Mirvis: We called it matzah brei. Did you fry it in the skillet?

Larisa Warshavsky: No, no.

Lynnie Mirvis: It was just a babka?

Larisa Warshavsky: She just crush it just kind of make it and then she put this into oven or even on stovetop, I don't remember where exactly but she was, you know, making it and we love it, you know? And she was making different things, you know? She was doing matzah, you know, soup with matzo balls.

Lynnie Mirvis: So she had the foods.

Mark Warshavsky: And at Hanukah she gave money to our sons.

Larisa Warshavsky: All the children, you know? She was...

Mark Warshavsky: And first time we see Hanukah lights in Italy, when we go through, you know, from Soviet Union, Vienna, Austria,...

Larisa Warshavsky: We need to explain about our emigration. It was very interesting story.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, we'll have to...

Mark Warshavsky: ...and Italy and we walk about...walk about the camp we stayed and we see two candles then next three candles, first time I see the candles in my life.

Lynnie Mirvis: You never saw candles?

Mark Warshavsky: No, no.

Larisa Warshavsky: And time we left, back there it was not even started to kind of rise again, you know? Because I know later they start doing different like camps for Jewish people, organizations involved in Jewish _____, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: You're talking about when you left?

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Larisa Warshavsky: It was not at the time we left. It was not...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. I want to get to that, when you left. Yeah. Is there anything else, like, before we talk about what it was like for you to leave and is there anything else that comes to mind during those years in the Soviet Union when you're growing up and... yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, we...we...all we knew and all that...especially when I start dating Mark and we got married. I know he was...he start talking about this. He was talking about this all the time because he was in army in Germany. He saw different world and...

Lynnie Mirvis: You were in the army.

Larisa Warshavsky: He was...he was listening to all that information.

Mark Warshavsky: Everybody. It's mandatory.

Lynnie Mirvis: You had to be in the army.

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, you have to.

Lynnie Mirvis: Tell me...repeat what your professions were. I know you said you went to college.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, I got accounting degree.

Lynnie Mirvis: And you went into accounting and you were able to find a job but it was...

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, I was...yeah. I was working and I actually start working in that profession doing different things and I was working in...

Mark Warshavsky: ____ shop.

Larisa Warshavsky: No, it's where...I don't know how to call it. It's where...sewing the clothes, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: And I was kind of like a receptionist, bookkeeper, everything.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: And kind of assistant and while there I remember I went to some...some just bookkeeping courses and then the company he worked for...

Mark Warshavsky: Opening. Yeah.

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Larisa Warshavsky: They had opening for accounting person and I went in there so when I start working in there they accepted me because he already worked there. Otherwise probably...

Lynnie Mirvis: You were married already?

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, we were already married. And I went to college a few years and I got...

Lynnie Mirvis: You said while your son was in school.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...more degree, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: Of this field and I work in the accounting department at that company and then a few years before we left I got moved to some other place where, you know, I had the same profession so it helped me a lot here.

Lynnie Mirvis: It helped you. I was going to ask you about...tell me more about your jobs, what work you did and your education.

Mark Warshavsky: Okay. My education was electrical engineering and I finished college and when...when I was...how tell about my project? Diploma project. I did diploma project, very good project, and they gave me...they gave me not a big, big score.

Larisa Warshavsky: Like, satisfied.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: There was satisfied, good, and excellent and he was just satisfied.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes, because...

Larisa Warshavsky: They liked your project.

Mark Warshavsky: ...I was Jew again.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, they didn't give you the highest.

Mark Warshavsky: No. No, they didn't.

Larisa Warshavsky: ____ review he needed to do this just, you know, ____.

Mark Warshavsky: And I started work like engineer but it was not very paid job.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, you know, there, you know, very interesting. Engineers were paid less than people who...

Mark Warshavsky: Than workers.

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Larisa Warshavsky: Who do all the...the workers.

Lynnie Mirvis: Really? The pay scale was...

Mark Warshavsky: And I switched my profession to technician, computer technician, not engineering position.

Lynnie Mirvis: In computers.

Mark Warshavsky: But it was more pay...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, it was more money.

Mark Warshavsky: ...than...

Lynnie Mirvis: But you experienced anti-Semitism in the workplace.

Mark Warshavsky: In the workplace, no.

Larisa Warshavsky: You know why.

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, because 90% or 80%...

Larisa Warshavsky: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: ...in that...

Larisa Warshavsky: At that company were Jewish.

Mark Warshavsky: At that company were Jewish people.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, they were Jewish.

Larisa Warshavsky: All these computer guys.

Mark Warshavsky: We all together like family.

Lynnie Mirvis: So they were Jewish but...who didn't give you the highest...you were saying that they didn't award you the highest...satisfactory. Was it...was that...

Larisa Warshavsky: He in the highest but not bad pay, you know? He was paid hourly rate and he was...but, you know, he had engineering degree, you know? So he was... it's not the guy who came from out of school, just started doing this.

Mark Warshavsky: Actually that helped me work here in America, that experience.

Lynnie Mirvis: The experience.

Mark Warshavsky: Of...I was technician and now I'm technician, too.

Larisa Warshavsky: Working with computers.

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Lynnie Mirvis: Right, so I want to come to that.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: And before we leave the Soviet Union, do you want to tell me how did you two meet? How did you meet each other?

Larisa Warshavsky: I had and I still have...I have relatives and it's on my father's side and we went to this guy's wedding and Mark happened to be his best friend so I met him at the wedding of my relatives and we started dating from that time and a year later we... you know, we apply for license and we had wedding a couple months later.

Lynnie Mirvis: Aww, okay. How do you remember it?

Mark Warshavsky: It was not religious or Jewish experience for marriage. It was government.

Lynnie Mirvis: Government.

Mark Warshavsky: Government. Only government.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, you just go and register.

Lynnie Mirvis: No chuppah.

Mark Warshavsky: No, no, no, no.

Lynnie Mirvis: Did you know about what a Jewish wedding would be like or you didn't...

Mark Warshavsky: Yes. Actually we...we rent small house from owners and they got chuppah actually and I see that when I was a kid.

Larisa Warshavsky: Who was it?

Mark Warshavsky: It was before we lived in that apartment where you meet ____.

Larisa Warshavsky: Oh, okay.

Mark Warshavsky: I saw that chuppah. It was for me very interesting.

Larisa Warshavsky: I never did.

Mark Warshavsky: And it was not like standing chuppah. Four people...

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, they had the holes that...

Mark Warshavsky: ...holded it.

Larisa Warshavsky: They just hold it.

Lynnie Mirvis: ...hold this up over...

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Mark Warshavsky: Yes. It was just a simple...

Lynnie Mirvis: But you weren't able to do that? That wasn't something you knew about?

Larisa Warshavsky: No, we just registered and we had a party, we invited all of our kinds of friends.

Mark Warshavsky: Also, I remember it was Jewish party of cemetery and I got on...on the...

Larisa Warshavsky: What? The funeral.

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, I was in funeral and I...and guy...only one guy can say Kaddish and I remember that. I was kid and it was the first time I saw and I hear the Kaddish.

Lynnie Mirvis: You didn't know what Kaddish was...

Mark Warshavsky: No.

Lynnie Mirvis: ...and you saw it.

Mark Warshavsky: First ever.

Lynnie Mirvis: Of course you didn't learn Hebrew. Nobody taught you that.

Mark Warshavsky: No. No Hebrew.

Lynnie Mirvis: No Hebrew.

Mark Warshavsky: Even Yiddish.

Lynnie Mirvis: No Yiddish.

Mark Warshavsky: My parents, if they want kids don't understand what they say...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: ...they say it in Yiddish.

Larisa Warshavsky: My situation since mom knew German and it's pretty close to Yiddish, my grandparents and her, they were talking so I wouldn't understand what they're saying.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: I remember that.

Lynnie Mirvis: So she understood but you...they didn't...

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Mark Warshavsky: And Father, after World War II, he say in Germany. He was translator because he knows Yiddish. He knew Yiddish, my father.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. He knew Yiddish.

Mark Warshavsky: In army when he stayed...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. You said he had to stop being a musician. Did it have anything to do with his being Jewish that he had to stop being a musician?

Mark Warshavsky: Probably because of army. He was 25 years in the army.

Lynnie Mirvis: He was forced to go into the army?

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah. Yeah. So...what...when did you actually come to America? What date?

Larisa Warshavsky: We came on March 6, 1990.

Lynnie Mirvis: March 6, 1990. Okay. So can you tell about, like, what made you decide, like, to come? How did that work?

Larisa Warshavsky: We...I think that we...sometime before that we kind of start...you know, you know that certain time because of the Afghanistan, the...not allowed to leave anybody from the country and ____ 1987 they sort of started again so we kind of...we could hear somebody left, you know? Somebody you knew...

Lynnie Mirvis: People were leaving but it ____ leave.

Larisa Warshavsky: People start kind of getting out.

Mark Warshavsky: It was your cousin.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, and what happened, you know, my cousin Eugene ____ who lives now near San Francisco, he came before us here in Memphis. That's why we're here actually. And we discovered from him that he's thinking about leaving.

Mark Warshavsky: He's leaving.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was like, "What?" You know? So we kind of start thinking about it more and more and more and the way to leave the country was to ask somebody to send you invitation.

Mark Warshavsky: From Israel.

Larisa Warshavsky: From Israel actually to leave the country, so...and we had a guy who left and Mark...we called him there and we ask him to send.

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Mark Warshavsky: My distant relative.

Larisa Warshavsky: Distant relative, yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: He send me invitation.

Larisa Warshavsky: And what happened was that at the end of September of 1989, they closed the door for anybody just to go to United States this way, talking about going through some other countries and then going to America. The only way you could go, you could go Israel, you could go to Germany, I mean...but not...

Mark Warshavsky: No, not Germany.

Larisa Warshavsky: Not at that time. A little bit later, yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay.

Larisa Warshavsky: So anyway, this guy send us invitation and we applied right away and we were lucky that the chief of the office who was processing this was a good guy.

Mark Warshavsky: A very good guy.

Larisa Warshavsky: Because we heard they say like...

Mark Warshavsky: Unbelievable.

Larisa Warshavsky: We heard that in Kiev was very bad guy. He was delaying and he was very ugly. This guy, you know, when we came and we had forms that, you know, we can come and get it we came and he ask us, he said, "Do you have somebody in the United States?" We said yes. "You go, you go."

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, a good guy.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was already after the deadline but it was signed before that day...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...so he let us come here. Otherwise we would go anywhere. I mean, we would go to Israel.

Mark Warshavsky: We would go to Israel.

Larisa Warshavsky: We were thinking about it. If not, we going to Israel.

Lynnie Mirvis: But you'd rather come to the United States.

Larisa Warshavsky: We decided we go...we go period because we didn't want our two sons, you know, to, you know, live through this mess.

Mark Warshavsky: Older son should be sent to Afghanistan.

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Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: He was 17...

Mark Warshavsky: 17.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...and he already...he already was in the first year in college.

Lynnie Mirvis: I see, so...

Larisa Warshavsky: You know, after school.

Lynnie Mirvis: ...that was your oldest.

Larisa Warshavsky: So we were...

Lynnie Mirvis: What's his name? What is his name?

Mark Warshavsky: Alex.

Larisa Warshavsky: Alex. Alexander.

Lynnie Mirvis: Alexander. Right. And how old was your second son?

Larisa Warshavsky: When we came he was 6. His name is Eugene.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, so you did not want them to be in the war.

Larisa Warshavsky: So anyway, it was just, you know, decided but we just wanted to see if we can come to United States. It would be great, if not we're going to Israel, you know? We already thought about it. And we...we just went through this process. It was real, real quick and we got other jobs so we can start...we start selling stuff and all this and we left at the end of November of '89, 1989.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. So how did your life change after you decided to come, to leave? Were there any changes?

Larisa Warshavsky: I think that like at that time it wasn't a time when somebody knew that they were leaving and you were like, "Oh, you...like, you know, betray the country." It wasn't at that time, thank God.

Mark Warshavsky: Your father was upset.

Larisa Warshavsky: But my parents...my parents were not happy with it.

Lynnie Mirvis: They didn't like you leaving.

Larisa Warshavsky: My father told us, he said, "So, you leave your parents here?" And Mark said, "We need to save our children."

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Mark Warshavsky: Mm-hmm.

Lynnie Mirvis: But oh, what a decision.

Mark Warshavsky: That's my heart.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was very, very difficult and we said, "Well, we will...we will invite you, we will do something." So anyway, but the problem was that my father was radio engineer and he worked for the plant who was kind of like a secret plant because they were working for the space and he had certain...how do you call it? The...

Mark Warshavsky: Top secret clearance.

Larisa Warshavsky: Clearance. He had some clearance which wouldn't allow him... even he would, they would to go with us, it wouldn't allow him to leave the country. They would keep him for certain...

Mark Warshavsky: He knew some secrets.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...time because he knew some secrets.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: And so that's why at the time when he was saying that he didn't know if, like, we would be even seeing each other again and I really wondered.

Lynnie Mirvis: So what was that...you're only...

Larisa Warshavsky: I'm the only one.

Lynnie Mirvis: The only child?

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah. I'm the only one child.

Lynnie Mirvis: So that must have been...

Larisa Warshavsky: So it was difficult for them. It was difficult and I remember when we...we we're leaving that, you know, his mother actually, it was very hard on her. His father died the same year in February I believe.

Mark Warshavsky: Not the same year. In '88.

Larisa Warshavsky: Oh, '88. It was year before and his mother, you know, I guess she was...she was...you know, she had some health problems of course, you know? And I guess the stress of the situation, her understanding that we were leaving, you know, she died the day before we left. It was crazy.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, what was...what were you feeling? I can't imagine what you were feeling.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was crazy. His brother who lived close to her called and he said...I mean, it was devastating. I don't remember generally how we packed, how we

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finished packing, how we did it, you know? I remember that his friend and my friend came and they were helping us just to put stuff and do...I remember when we went to Austria, it was first stop, we couldn't find stuff because I didn't know where our stuff is.

Lynnie Mirvis: You didn't know what you just...

Larisa Warshavsky: We had help.

Lynnie Mirvis: How did you decide what to take and whatnot to...

Mark Warshavsky: They allowed us to have two luggages.

Larisa Warshavsky: Two pieces of luggage for each person.

Mark Warshavsky: It's eight and they convert about \$500 for whole family.

Larisa Warshavsky: No, I think it's like \$90 per person.

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, \$90.

Larisa Warshavsky: So \$360, that's it.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes. That's all we have.

Larisa Warshavsky: That's all we could have is that.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's all you could have.

Mark Warshavsky: Also, we pay...they strip our citizenship and...

Larisa Warshavsky: And we have to pay for it.

Mark Warshavsky: And we pay for that.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: We pay for that, two thousand something rubles.

Larisa Warshavsky: Pretty big money.

Mark Warshavsky: It's big money that...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: But we were trying to sell stuff. That's why we already had some money so we were able to pay for it.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes. Big money to pay for stripping citizenship.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: So we barely left with...

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Mark Warshavsky: And we have no citizenship at all.

Larisa Warshavsky: We left a lot of stuff behind.

Lynnie Mirvis: No citizenship.

Mark Warshavsky: No citizenship.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, we left a lot of stuff behind, you know? It was left with my parents who actually have to clean all this and they were leaving later.

Mark Warshavsky: My friends helped.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah. It was...

Lynnie Mirvis: Were you able later to...you said...to send for any family members?

Larisa Warshavsky: Yes. When we...we came here we, you know, immediately asked how to send invitation for our relatives and I remember I send to my parents and Mark send to his...

Mark Warshavsky: Brothers.

Larisa Warshavsky: His brothers, his two brothers. And, you know, we did what we could so it would be much, much faster.

Lynnie Mirvis: Were they able to...and they were able to come?

Larisa Warshavsky: Right, to come here.

Mark Warshavsky: And actually one brother came here. Now he is in Chicago.

Larisa Warshavsky: At about the same time.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay.

Mark Warshavsky: We just came from...last month it was bat mitzvah with his granddaughter.

Lynnie Mirvis: Aww, that's wonderful.

Larisa Warshavsky: They've very nice.

Mark Warshavsky: Very nice, religious bat mitzvah and...

Lynnie Mirvis: That's beautiful.

Mark Warshavsky: Beautiful. Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, but the other brother, he...they stayed there because his wife's mother was still alive and...so it was different seeing the kind of delayed...

Mark Warshavsky: They decided to _____.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...but then it was some kind of crisis in her _____. It was something. Anyway, I guess it was less _____ because they decided to leave but we wanted them to come here because we would help them. We already lived here for some time and we kind of would help them in the beginning and they just decided to go to his relatives. His wife has a lot of relatives in Israel. A lot of them.

Lynnie Mirvis: So they're happy in Israel.

Mark Warshavsky: They're happy in Israel.

Larisa Warshavsky: But they already adjusted, they're happy, and they just...you know.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: We've been twice to Israel and see them, too.

Mark Warshavsky: _____.

Lynnie Mirvis: So you were able to...so you were there twice in Israel visiting the family?

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, as soon as he moved, six months later we came to see them.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, so you came to see them?

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: But was that after you had been here for a while?

Larisa Warshavsky: Right, right.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: After a while. It was in the summer.

Lynnie Mirvis: So tell me about the journey over. You said you made some stops. What were the stops and how did you travel?

Mark Warshavsky: The first stop was...

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, first we left very unorthodox way, you know? Because a lot of people were leaving, going through...like, plane, flying.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: Flying to...

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Larisa Warshavsky: Flying or trains.

Mark Warshavsky: ...Vienna.

Larisa Warshavsky: You know? First stop was usually Austria, Vienna.

Mark Warshavsky: Vienna.

Larisa Warshavsky: In Vienna, they had some...

Mark Warshavsky: Camps.

Larisa Warshavsky: They had some organization to help us through...

Mark Warshavsky: Refugee camp or something.

Larisa Warshavsky: But the way we left, we had several...five or six families and we...

Mark Warshavsky: Rented a bus.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...rented a big, huge bus.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: And we...we just had our luggage and then we had some people who generally could protect us because there was cases where people...you know, getting in the bus...

Mark Warshavsky: They know Jewish ____.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was some critical situation when they were like trying to help people...

Mark Warshavsky: They could stop bus and grab us.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...on the way but we were lucky. We didn't have such ____ and we...so we were driving through...Kharkov is in the Northeast part of Ukraine. We were getting through all Ukraine, through the very, you know, west point, and then were going through that place, then we went through Czechoslovakia and I don't remember, Bratislava?

Mark Warshavsky: At that time was Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, we went...it was...

Mark Warshavsky: Because remember they split with two countries.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yes, yes.

Mark Warshavsky: It would be exactly time we were there.

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Larisa Warshavsky: It was very...we saw the signs on the walls, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Wow.

Larisa Warshavsky: But we...we finally...we were driving through Czechoslovakia which was whole country at that time and went to Bratislava. In Bratislava, you know, since we had limited amount of money, the way we bought the tickets, our drivers got three bottles of vodka and they were exchanging this for the tickets for us.

Mark Warshavsky: Two bottles of vodka for tickets.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, you had to give them the bottles of vodka...

Larisa Warshavsky: We gave to driver. He was doing this.

Lynnie Mirvis: ...and he got the tickets.

Mark Warshavsky: We didn't have Czech money.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: But for Czechs, drinking is money.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's like money.

Mark Warshavsky: So they gave it to...

Larisa Warshavsky: We use it so we kind of, you know, got this, you know, before we left so we got into the...it was like...we stayed in the bus practically overnight and in the morning it was a train and we had limited amount of time. It was crazy. We had to practically throw your luggage into this, you know, train and get people inside. It was just very, very dramatic.

Mark Warshavsky: Same time...

Larisa Warshavsky: You want to say.

Mark Warshavsky: Same time, another bus coming from Odessa...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yes.

Mark Warshavsky: Odessa, and in that bus was...

Larisa Warshavsky: Future wife of our older son.

Mark Warshavsky: Future wife of our older son. Same time, same...

Larisa Warshavsky: We found this later.

Mark Warshavsky: Side by side, our bus and the Odessa bus.

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Larisa Warshavsky: They said that they can...

Mark Warshavsky: They married now.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's amazing.

Larisa Warshavsky: They were a little bit later and they were made not able to get the same train. They were on the next train.

Lynnie Mirvis: They were on the next train.

Larisa Warshavsky: But we went to this train and I remember we went to train and it was a lot of people.

Mark Warshavsky: No food, no...

Larisa Warshavsky: We didn't have food, we didn't have...

Mark Warshavsky: It was cold.

Larisa Warshavsky: I mean, we already ate everything we brought with us, you know? Because when you...we're going to...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...take some time, and I remember how we were sitting and we were with a lot of people and they saw...they gave, like, some food, you know? They saw that we were...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: Because you can imagine that, you know, the kids or Eugene, you know, they were looking at, you know, people who have food.

Mark Warshavsky: Like real refugees.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Mark Warshavsky: Like real ones.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: So and ____.

Lynnie Mirvis: What were you feeling? What was that like?

Larisa Warshavsky: We were happy we left.

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah.

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Larisa Warshavsky: That's ____.

Mark Warshavsky: We just ____.

Larisa Warshavsky: But we were really tired. We were...it was very, very difficult. You need to keep up with your stuff, you need to keep up with your children, and...

Mark Warshavsky: After that ordeal, we stayed very beautiful area.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah. When we came to Vienna, you know, some organization, like I said, met us and they were distributing people in different places to stay while they were giving some interviews and, you know, checking other stuff and at that time it was pretty good. Like, we were one of the last who came this way and they didn't have places in Vienna to put people and...which we were really hoping to because we really, like, wanted to see Vienna, you know? And what chance do you have, you know? You never know what's going to happen in the future. And we...they took...they took a lot of people to this big bus and it was like 140 km from Vienna. It was a very nice place actually in the countryside and near the river.

Mark Warshavsky: It was horse farm.

Larisa Warshavsky: Horse farm.

Mark Warshavsky: Not just farm, for training, for...

Larisa Warshavsky: They had like a...

Lynnie Mirvis: Horseback riding.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah. They had a hotel and people arriving there to spend time ____.

Mark Warshavsky: It has arena. They train people.

Lynnie Mirvis: Like a resort.

Mark Warshavsky: Very fancy people.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, and so anyways, they fed us there and we stayed there...

Mark Warshavsky: It was good time.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...while waiting and we were, like, walking around. It was like December so it was wintertime, you know? Snow, fields, you know?

Mark Warshavsky: It was winter. Did we spend two months?

Larisa Warshavsky: No, a month.

Mark Warshavsky: One month.

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Larisa Warshavsky: We arrived there at the end of November and we left just before New Year's.

Mark Warshavsky: Before New Year's.

Larisa Warshavsky: Just before new year we left Austria. We had an interview and they took us to Vienna ____.

Lynnie Mirvis: Was that with the emigration, the Hebrew Emigration Society, your interview? Or you don't remember probably.

Mark Warshavsky: The ____.

Lynnie Mirvis: The _____. The Jewish agency of Israel interviewed you.

Larisa Warshavsky: Anyway, and then it's not the end, you know? We stayed there and in the end of December before New Year they took...they took us to Vienna to take a train to go to Italy.

Mark Warshavsky: I will tell...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: To Italy. It's a long trip.

Mark Warshavsky: You imagine...okay. You imagine surreal picture. Jewish people with luggages, with crying kids.

Larisa Warshavsky: There's kids. Yes.

Mark Warshavsky: And Germans with weapons, with dogs, looks like World War II.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, they came to the terminal.

Mark Warshavsky: Exactly.

Lynnie Mirvis: Scary.

Mark Warshavsky: But they protected us.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay.

Mark Warshavsky: Not like...

Lynnie Mirvis: Not like in World War II.

Mark Warshavsky: But it's like holocaust.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was...it was...

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Lynnie Mirvis: But it was the opposite.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was a crazy feeling.

Mark Warshavsky: It's crazy.

Lynnie Mirvis: Seeing the Germans...

Mark Warshavsky: Jewish people and Germans around...Austrians.

Lynnie Mirvis: Austrians.

Mark Warshavsky: But they speak...

Larisa Warshavsky: In German.

Lynnie Mirvis: But this time they were protecting you.

Mark Warshavsky: And they're with weapons and with dogs.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was...

Mark Warshavsky: And it was like...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, and it was a situation when they actually made some mistakes and put...they put more people into train than supposed to be so we come, they tell us what the, you know, number of these section we're supposed to stay in and their own...

Mark Warshavsky: Two families.

Larisa Warshavsky: _____. And so we complained and they said, "Whatever."

Lynnie Mirvis: So you had to stand up and...

Larisa Warshavsky: So we used...it was like two levels.

Mark Warshavsky: Nowhere to sleep.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was three ways so anyway somehow we just...I mean...

Mark Warshavsky: We squeezed, but...

Larisa Warshavsky: We squeezed somehow.

Mark Warshavsky: ...we were happy.

Lynnie Mirvis: You were going to Italy.

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Larisa Warshavsky: The next morning...the next morning we arrived to Italy. _____ sunshine, warmer, you know? And in Italy they told us that at the train we'll be staying only 15 minutes and everybody needed to leave in 15 minutes with all these pieces of luggage, with children, with everything. I mean, we were lucky. Our son was, like, 6 but some could...practically was newborn.

Mark Warshavsky: Alex helped me.

Larisa Warshavsky: Alex was...you know, I usually call him...he's like second father to our other son because he was...they're almost 11 years difference, you know?

Lynn Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: I was having him while I went to college, he went to college, then I went to college so between that time, you know, we didn't have any children and then we got second son so we...we...they dropped us in Italy and then they took us by bus somewhere and it was a place we stayed at. It was..._____. It's not far from Rome.

Mark Warshavsky: _____.

Larisa Warshavsky: _____. I remembered something.

Mark Warshavsky: It doesn't matter.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was like a summer camping place.

Mark Warshavsky: Cold. It was cold. It was summer.

Larisa Warshavsky: Cold, you know? We were sleeping in our, like, clothes.

Lynn Mirvis: Oh my God.

Mark Warshavsky: It was small cabins.

Lynn Mirvis: Uh-huh. And you were freezing.

Larisa Warshavsky: They had some heat heating but it was not sufficient.

Mark Warshavsky: No, it was not.

Lynn Mirvis: How long were you there?

Mark Warshavsky: A week. About a week.

Larisa Warshavsky: A week or two.

Mark Warshavsky: And said, "In week, you need to leave."

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, they told us we need to find someplace.

Mark Warshavsky: "Find your apartment."

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Larisa Warshavsky: Someplace to stay.

Mark Warshavsky: Find place and stay.

Lynnie Mirvis: In Italy.

Mark Warshavsky: And we don't know no language, no Italian language.

Larisa Warshavsky: But the thing is that a lot of people were doing these things before so it was like word, how to do it, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. You ask people.

Larisa Warshavsky: Everybody would just say...we brought a lot of stuff with us which we were...like, when we settled Mark was going with Alex to the market and trying to sell so we could have some extra money.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: You know? Just different stuff and...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...we...and then we moved to...it was **Nettuno** which was south of Rome. It's a very touristy place on the ocean and...

Mark Warshavsky: Marina.

Larisa Warshavsky: Marina.

Mark Warshavsky: With yachts.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, it was very, very nice. We had good time and we went... our friends from Kharkov were there...or stayed there. They had some problem and they were offered to go to Switzerland but they decided to wait until they will let them to go to United States because they had relatives. And anyway...but we didn't have a lot of problems, a lot of, like, waiting because my cousin who was already here who left before us that we told you about and he...he came to Jewish Family Service and he told about us and they said, "Fine, we're going to..."

Mark Warshavsky: Bob Silver.

Larisa Warshavsky: "We're going to take them." Bob Silver, yes. They said, "Yeah, okay, we're going to take this family."

Lynnie Mirvis: Bob Silver. Oh, so you were able to come to Memphis from Italy.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, so we just generally went through the process. We went... they checked us, medical, you know, how we're, you know, not ill or something.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

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Larisa Warshavsky: And we had some interviews a couple times and different places but we were like...we knew everything comes to the certain point, you know? So this time it was still kind of nervous but not...not as...like, some people didn't know if they were going to have anybody here so they didn't know where they come and how they could start. They were _____. We were lucky because we had...

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, you had somebody.

Larisa Warshavsky: And I think we were lucky that we came to Memphis.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: Because we heard about, like, people who come into New York, they just give them money and they need to do what they were on their own.

Mark Warshavsky: We have three volunteer families.

Lynnie Mirvis: You had three...oh, so tell me what that was like when you arrived here.

Larisa Warshavsky: We came on March 6th, I remember.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: We went...we went a couple places. We went to St. Louis.

Mark Warshavsky: _____.

Lynnie Mirvis: You flew in.

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, New York, then St. Louis, and from St. Louis to Memphis and I remember how we were trying to get some clothes because it was warmer... warmer here. So we came to Memphis and it was, like, March, already pretty warm and so...but I remember, you know, my cousin came to see his family and _____ was... actually the...why my cousin came here, because his wife's uncle came here years ago. It was _____ family.

Lynnie Mirvis: _____. Okay.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, they came and anyway, their part of the family came here just spontaneously. They just said, "Oh, we want some warm..."

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: A warmer place.

Larisa Warshavsky: Warm place, you know? They were cold and they were...so they offered...so it was like a chain reaction, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. And then you came.

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Larisa Warshavsky: Another family member, another family member and that's why he came here and then we came here.

Lynnie Mirvis: Wow.

Larisa Warshavsky: And we came and then we were...we were, like, in shock when they took us to Cherry Road apartments and they opened and we're like...

Mark Warshavsky: They opened and it was...

Larisa Warshavsky: We come into apartment...

Mark Warshavsky: ...full refrigerator.

Larisa Warshavsky: Furnished, food, you know?

Mark Warshavsky: Beds. We were so happy.

Larisa Warshavsky: Everything there. We was like...you know, we knew we could have apartment, that we were going to have...they told us how much it cost but we never were thinking that we're going to be like completely starved.

Mark Warshavsky: It was better apartment than we have back in Kharkov.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: Really. It was a better apartment.

Larisa Warshavsky: It was bigger. It was bigger than we had. We had...we had actually two rooms.

Mark Warshavsky: Two-room apartment.

Larisa Warshavsky: Two-room apartment, you know?

Mark Warshavsky: And in Cherry Road we had two-bedroom apartment.

Larisa Warshavsky: Two bedrooms.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: At first, you know, our kids were in the same room but we...we lived in apartment until...

Mark Warshavsky: '91.

Larisa Warshavsky: '91. Fall of '91 we bought our first house.

Lynnie Mirvis: You bought your first house so that's...that was something you weren't able to do in Russia. I mean, in the Soviet Union, to buy a house.

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Larisa Warshavsky: Well, we were not thinking about buying anything. I mean, we lived almost all the time from, like...

Mark Warshavsky: We never drive a car.

Larisa Warshavsky: From one pay to another pay.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: Sometimes we had a little bit extra but it was like...we were able _____ for vacation every year but not more. Nothing, like, extra but here we...when we can, since we already had a lot of stuff we didn't need to spend our money because we...we got some help from Jewish Federation for a few months.

Mark Warshavsky: Family offer us car.

Lynnie Mirvis: Really?

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah. We had three...three volunteer families.

Lynnie Mirvis: Who were they? Who were the volunteer families?

Larisa Warshavsky: It was **Sam and Lynn Riskin**.

Mark Warshavsky: **Riskin**.

Larisa Warshavsky: They...now they live in New Jersey, and **Lester and Rosaline Leet**.

Mark Warshavsky: **Leet**.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: And Stan and **Paula** Rosenblatt.

Mark Warshavsky: Stan Rosenblatt.

Larisa Warshavsky: We still keep in touch time by time, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, so they...

Larisa Warshavsky: So they...you know, that...**Lynn**, she was...they had a car which they were thinking probably to trade in but they give us this car and told us just to pay \$100 a month so we got the first car. We were _____.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, I'd love to see that picture.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, and...

Mark Warshavsky: A little Mazda.

Lynnie Mirvis: So they helped you, the volunteers from the...

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Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, it was...because...

Lynnie Mirvis: ...Jewish Family Service.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...they tried Mark to get job in two weeks after we came here.

Lynnie Mirvis: You had a job in two weeks? That's amazing.

Larisa Warshavsky: You know, because Eugene, my cousin, he already worked with this company.

Mark Warshavsky: Henry helped.

Larisa Warshavsky: Henry helped. Yeah.

Lynnie Mirvis: Yeah, **Henry Marcus** was the...

Larisa Warshavsky: She was help...oh, she is wonderful.

Lynnie Mirvis: ...coordinator of the Jewish Family Service, yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: She is an unbelievable person and she...Eugene, my cousin, worked at that company. He had, you know, probably same skills and Mark start working two weeks later so it was wonderful...

Lynnie Mirvis: Wonderful.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...because we were able to get on our feet, you know?

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Mark Warshavsky: In one year, I lost the job. They...

Larisa Warshavsky: Three years later.

Mark Warshavsky: The company closed and I was employed in a month.

Larisa Warshavsky: But it was...

Lynnie Mirvis: So you were able to find another job?

Larisa Warshavsky: But it was...but it was...you know, I think that we had in the beginning a good start, that's what helped us to save some money.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: And we were...we were like, "We're not buying any clothes." We just tried to use what we have and not buy anything. Just if it's absolutely necessary.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

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Larisa Warshavsky: And I remember our volunteer, that Stan Rosenblatt, he's a real estate person and he was telling us all the time about saving money, saving money. And then finally one time he asked us a question and he said something about like buying a house and he said, "How you were able to save that much?" And I said, "Well, we just started be very, very, you know, just, you know, tight with our money just trying not to use it." And he said, "I wish all Americans would do this same thing." A lot of people live here and they just using all their money.

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, right.

Larisa Warshavsky: And so...

Lynnie Mirvis: Well, what was your greatest challenge when you came here do you think?

Mark Warshavsky: I think language.

Lynnie Mirvis: Language was hard.

Mark Warshavsky: Language.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynnie Mirvis: Did you know English or you knew some?

Mark Warshavsky: Little.

Larisa Warshavsky: We...we...when we were kind of start planning our leaving the country, we start taking driving lessons and we started...

Mark Warshavsky: And English lessons.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...taking English lessons and the woman who was teaching us, she knew specifically American English because it's slangs and stuff. I think it helped us in the beginning, you know? Just to understand and I...but I remember that when actually, again, Jewish Family Service, it was **Henry** that helped me to get the job. For a job I worked for ____ and I work as, like, an accounting clerk but still it was in my field so I was very happy. I remember we were going to Jewish Center one day and everybody...they helped us to do all this resumes and actually those resumes were used for...I don't remember. And so anyway, and I got a job there and I remember how the English barrier was.

Lynnie Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: That, you know, especially for some reason I could understand a little bit more than to say something. I remember I was coming to my boss and I was trying to say to her something and I was saying...just, like, stopped and she said, "Okay, start over again." So I was like again and again but I had good accounting skills and a lot of people were asking me, they said, ____ accounting there." I said, "Accounting is accounting." They would create it...I mean, it's the same.

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Lynn timer Mirvis: Numbers are numbers. Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: Money come from here, come to there. I mean, it's the same thing. You know, it could be a little bit different but it's still the same...the same meaning.

Mark Warshavsky: Same with me. If I understand that stuff, I can fix there, I can fix here.

Lynn timer Mirvis: That's wonderful. You were able to transfer your skills to America and...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, but what I want to say about English, since my boss, you know, controller, she was trying to...me to be around them at the lunchtime and I remember we had those *USA Today's* sitting on, like, tables and she wanted me to be involved in kind of understanding of conversation and it helped a lot and I remember the...well one and a half year later it was just like...it's like somebody turned the switch. I started understanding everything and I was able to say something. Not maybe like I talking now but still it was a way to communicate with people, not afraid to say something.

Lynn timer Mirvis: Something happened.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, just...it's like...

Mark Warshavsky: Still we have big accents still.

Larisa Warshavsky: But remember I...you know, working there I was offered to get to be assistant controller, you know, a little bit later and, you know, I was working there for some time but, you know, it was a great start, you know?

Lynn timer Mirvis: So you really progressed in your careers and in your work.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah.

Lynn timer Mirvis: And tell me, was there any disappointment? Any disappointments that you had that you didn't expect or surprises that you had that you didn't expect?

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, you know, in the beginning of course we had a lot of surprises everywhere, you know? Just talking about simple things like going shopping or, I don't know, just meeting people with such kindness and everybody smiled here in Memphis.

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Lynn timer Mirvis: Smiled.

Larisa Warshavsky: It's not like in New York I know but people here are very, very friendly, you know?

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Lynn Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: And it was nice feeling. The only thing I think was I was thinking that I know a lot of people who came here sometimes, they were not very lucky like us in the beginning and they were trying different things and they tried to...like to go to...to take lessons, to go to college and after a while they achieved more than we did.

Lynn Mirvis: Mm-hmm.

Larisa Warshavsky: But we were stable but we were able to reach certain point, you know? I'm...of course I'm in finance so I try to manage our finances at home. You know, how to save, how to do this and stuff but I thought if I would have American education I could do a much higher level at work than I am right now.

Lynn Mirvis: Yeah.

Larisa Warshavsky: If we came here when I probably was younger we would have been able to solve that problem but we came and had two children and we needed to take care of them.

Lynn Mirvis: Right. You needed to work.

Larisa Warshavsky: So we couldn't leave just one person working. Two of us needed to work.

Lynn Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: But having work, children, and going to college, it would be very, very difficult.

Lynn Mirvis: Too much. Did you want to add?

Mark Warshavsky: Yeah, but we had...with the kids, the kids achieved very much...

Larisa Warshavsky: Yes, this is why we came.

Lynn Mirvis: So tell me about your children. Where are they now?

Larisa Warshavsky: This is why we came here so they can have the lives ____.

Lynn Mirvis: Yeah, do you want to tell me...tell me about your children.

Larisa Warshavsky: Talk to her. I talk all the time.

Lynn Mirvis: Talk a little louder because that's...

Mark Warshavsky: I have an older son Alex. He...he finished Christian Brothers University here and he was so good in math and in...he took very big score. SAT? How do you call it? SAT?

Larisa Warshavsky: We came here and a month later he took...

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Mark Warshavsky: In one month he took SAT course.

Larisa Warshavsky: And he missed...he had 96.

Mark Warshavsky: He had 99%.

Larisa Warshavsky: 96, 97.

Mark Warshavsky: 96%.

Lynnie Mirvis: Wow.

Mark Warshavsky: It's amazing because English wasn't...not so good and he finished that school and he started working with FedEx, programmer.

Larisa Warshavsky: He graduated. He was one...he was the best...

Mark Warshavsky: He was awarded...awarded the best...

Larisa Warshavsky: In his department.

Mark Warshavsky: ...student in engineering, electrical engineering.

Larisa Warshavsky: I think he's got...he's got very good scholarship throughout the years because of his good start.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's wonderful.

Larisa Warshavsky: He's very, very smart.

Lynnie Mirvis: So where is he now?

Larisa Warshavsky: He...well, he graduated from Christian Brothers, then he worked...

Mark Warshavsky: For FedEx.

Larisa Warshavsky: ...three years for Federal Express after that. And then he went to graduate school in...

Mark Warshavsky: Urbana-Champaign.

Larisa Warshavsky: University of Urbana-Champaign.

Mark Warshavsky: The best school in computer science.

Larisa Warshavsky: In computer science.

Mark Warshavsky: The best one.

Larisa Warshavsky: He got his master's degree in 19...

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Mark Warshavsky: '99.

Larisa Warshavsky: '99.

Mark Warshavsky: And he got nine offers from all over the country.

Larisa Warshavsky: He had...

Mark Warshavsky: Maybe we could stop for a while.

[video cuts]

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay, here we are continuing, part two.

Larisa Warshavsky: Okay, so Alex, he...in 1999 when he was finishing his master's degree he got 10 offers for the jobs in computer science. Like all over United States he was going to interviews and he actually practically had to choose where he wants to go. He decided to go to San Francisco to work for Siebel Systems. It was very good company at the time and he...he stayed there and he...three years he moved to another company which is a great company, Salesforce.com he works now and...

Mark Warshavsky: He's lead engineer there.

Larisa Warshavsky: He has a group and he has a lot of ____.

Lynnie Mirvis: So is he still single?

Larisa Warshavsky: No, he...back in 2006 he married. It was that girl who we were talking about from Odessa.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, you said that.

Mark Warshavsky: From the bus.

Larisa Warshavsky: From Odessa, yeah. And he has a daughter.

Mark Warshavsky: 5 years old.

Larisa Warshavsky: She's 5 ½ years old, Miriam.

Mark Warshavsky: Miriam.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, wonderful.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, they live now in Walnut Creek, not far from San Francisco. Very happy.

Lynnie Mirvis: Oh, that's great.

Mark Warshavsky: They just moved to a new house with swimming pool.

Larisa Warshavsky: New house.

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Mark Warshavsky: With everything.

Lynnie Mirvis: Wonderful.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, it's very expensive home but they have good life. They have very good life.

Mark Warshavsky: Over a million dollars house.

Lynnie Mirvis: They really became successful.

Larisa Warshavsky: The two of them have good jobs and they really know what they're doing.

Lynnie Mirvis: And what about your...

Larisa Warshavsky: Our younger son is a little different story.

Mark Warshavsky: He start his company but it's not even doing money.

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, let's start from the beginning. He...when he was at school, he went to San Francisco to visit my cousin who was there and he fell in love with San Francisco. He said, "I don't care what college I go to there. I just want to be here." And he wanted us to move while he was still in school and I said, "No, we can't do it. We can't afford to leave here." You know? "Just graduate from school and go to college." So he went to San Francisco State University which he graduated and he worked for some time after that at a great company, _____, which makes video games. But coming back to 2009 when it was a pretty bad time, you know, recession and stuff. He lost his job and he...he found something, he tried something, and then one of his friends who lived in New York, he said, "Come over here." You know? "You will have more opportunities here."

Lynnie Mirvis: Right, right.

Larisa Warshavsky: So he got his car full of his stuff, sent some stuff, got his friend, and he was driving through United States, make some stops. And three months later he found job in New York.

Mark Warshavsky: Very good job.

Larisa Warshavsky: And he...so changed few jobs and he moved to Brooklyn finally, you know, just changing...he moved so many times already.

Lynnie Mirvis: Is he still single?

Larisa Warshavsky: He lives...yeah, he's still single but a couple years ago he and his friend had an idea about something to do. Some kind of system, some speakers, some sound systems.

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Mark Warshavsky: Professional speakers. I mean, not professional. Industrial grade speakers for big...big ____.

Larisa Warshavsky: They made these and they're trying to move this into...

Mark Warshavsky: Real business.

Larisa Warshavsky: They don't have money for advertising but...

Mark Warshavsky: They open company, he is CEO or something. CEO?

Lynnie Mirvis: So he's innovative.

Larisa Warshavsky: Well, they don't have any income yet but...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right.

Larisa Warshavsky: But now actually I understand they installed the whole system into one of the bars so they can do some catering in there and they're going to pay rent ____.

Lynnie Mirvis: Okay.

Larisa Warshavsky: So they hope that they can ____ for more places and make some money but his friend practically finances this because he's a programmer and he works. He has full-time job but Eugene is doing this while doing very...

Mark Warshavsky: Almost full-time.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, but he doing very ____ you know? That's why we kind of worry about him and he's...he seems happy but...

Mark Warshavsky: Well, it's interesting. He changed his career from big paying job but...

Larisa Warshavsky: He graduated with his degree...

Mark Warshavsky: \$100,000 job he left and start company from scratch. That's big deal.

Lynnie Mirvis: So he's very creative and...

Larisa Warshavsky: He had degree in ____.

Lynnie Mirvis: Uh-huh.

Larisa Warshavsky: He studies English of course. Again, Hebrew and Russian. He went...one of the summers he went to ____ in Russia to get some training in there and anyway. Then what happened was the job at ____ it was kind of like project management so he learned a lot about project management and when he moved to New York he had several jobs in that field and like Mark said, he had more than \$100,000

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salary but he didn't like it. He said, "I don't want to reach middle age having family and kids and be unhappy about what I'm doing."

Mark Warshavsky: Yes.

Larisa Warshavsky: He's such a person.

Mark Warshavsky: And they start company.

Larisa Warshavsky: So anyway, I would hope he's...he's going to reach his, you know, goal but, you know,...

Lynnie Mirvis: Right. So you're hoping he will and your two sons are all doing different things and...

Larisa Warshavsky: He's dating a very nice Jewish girl and we hope they will get together.

Lynnie Mirvis: ____.

Larisa Warshavsky: So we're really happy about it.

Lynnie Mirvis: That's wonderful. So your...your sons have been very successful and...

Mark Warshavsky: Very successful.

Lynnie Mirvis: ...one became a risk taker to start his own company.

Larisa Warshavsky: Yeah, it takes a very good, you know,...

Lynnie Mirvis: It's wonderful.

Mark Warshavsky: Actually the whole decision to leave the country was for kids, not for us but we...

Larisa Warshavsky: We can't complain.

Mark Warshavsky: We achieved something. We can't complain.

Larisa Warshavsky: You know, we could achieve more...

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