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## When Erving Was an Infant My Mother Nursed Us Both So We Were Bosom Buddies

Esther Besbris

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## Remembering Erving Goffman

### Esther Besbris: When Erving Was an Infant My Mother Nursed Us Both So We Were Bosom Buddies

This conversation with Esther Besbris was recorded over the phone on January 1, 2009. After Dmitri Shalin transcribed the conversation, Esther Besbris edited the text and approved posting the present version in the Goffman Archives. Breaks in the conversation flow are indicated by ellipses. Supplementary information and additional materials inserted during the editing process appear in square brackets. Undecipherable words and unclear passages are identified in the text as "[?]".

[Posted 04-11-10]

**Shalin:** . . . Yes, I think the phone is working fine. Maybe you can start with your relationship to Erving and how you came to know him.

**Besbris:** OK. Erving's mother [Anne Averbach] and my mother [Rissi Averbach] were sisters, and within the family these two had the closest bond. It was very close. And you know, it often follows that when parents have that relationship, it continues with the kids. Anne and my mother were very friendly; more than that, they were family. Especially when Anne Goffman moved back to Winnipeg, she and my mother would literally spend hours on the telephone. At one time they could be on the phone for two hours, it was that kind of a relationship. Just as an aside, when Aunt Anne wasn't well and Erving was an infant and I was an infant, my mother nursed us both. Erving and I are the same age, his birthday is June and mine is February. Maybe that created some symbiotic relationship, I don't know.

**Shalin:** Literally nursed you both?

**Besbris:** Literally. It was only for a brief time, but Anne didn't feel well, Erving was an infant, I was an infant, it was very generous.

**Shalin:** You are literally milk siblings.

**Besbris:** Yes, that was strange. My brother Eddie and Erving's sister Frances were of the same age, just as Erving and I were. And at one time when we were very young, to use the term that we used then, we were "sweethearts." Let me tell you my favorite Erving's story.

**Shalin:** Please, those are precious.

**Besbris:** Well, Erving and I were sweethearts, I was all seven as he was, or

earlier, and Eddie and Fran were ten or eleven. I remember we were visiting in Dauphin, we would do that from time to time, taking the train to Dauphin for two hundred miles, I think, and over six hours in time to get there. We were visiting, and then the morning when we were to leave, very early that morning, I recall, I was probably six or seven at the time, there was a fierce thunderstorm that morning. We were getting ready to leave and Erving wasn't in the house. When we were ready to leave, Erving finally came in, I am sure wet. What happened was that he had gone to his dad's store and brought me a necklace.

**Shalin:** How sweet!

**Besbris:** It was. It was probably the most precious necklace I could think of then and now.

**Shalin:** Do you still have it?

**Besbris:** No, I don't know. It would be great if I did, but I don't. But I do have the memory. I specifically remember about Erving that when they came to Winnipeg, and they did that frequently, they would come to our place generally first. My mother and Auntie Annie and the kids . . . I am terribly sorry but I will have to hold off, somebody is coming in and they will keep buzzing in until I let them go.

**Besbris:** Oh, sure.

**Besbris:** Just a moment.

[Pause]

**Besbris:** Hello?

**Shalin:** Yes, I am here.

**Besbris:** I am sorry.

**Shalin:** That happens.

**Besbris:** So they would come to our house. I remember one night there was a family gathering, they were all in town, and that was always a joyous occasion to us. The kids liked to come, because my dad had a hardware and paint store, but during the Christmas season he had a toy counter and the kids loved that. So there were a number of family members there, we had a large

family – you know I am running on, so stop me any time.

**Shalin:** No, no, those little bits are important, sometimes more so than grander occasions.

**Besbris:** Well, this is Erving I'm talking about. . . . The adults heard a word that Erving would be reciting a poem that was very moving. So they tried to get him to say it. He was quite young then, I don't know whether he was ten or twelve, old enough to say no because he was uncomfortable and young enough to have recited it. Anyway, they prevailed upon him and he did. I think it was called "My Pal," either "My Pal" or "My Mom," one or the other. He recited it with a great deal of emotion and feeling and he knocked us off our feet, all of us. This is that side of Erving we have, and the necklace, and everything else. On the other hand . . . he went to St. Jones Technical High School when they moved to Winnipeg. I am going back to when he was young.

**Shalin:** Sure, sure, we'll jump back and forth.

**Besbris:** This is a story I learned just recently. At St. John High School Erving was known as a math genius, and in science as well. I remember in the year book they had jokes they put in. One of the jokes supposedly asked Erving a question, a science question, and Erving hesitated before he could give the answer, "Why, err" – and they, "That's right, "wire" is the answer." It is an opinion of Erving. At any rate, that year the school put on "Hamlet," the school play.

**Shalin:** Which year was it, can you tell?

**Besbris:** That's when they moved back to Winnipeg after Fran graduated from high school and Erving was entering the high school, so I think the year they put on "Hamlet" was probably three eight, 1938, or maybe '39, one or the other. I think "Hamlet" was midway, so let's say '38. So Erving would have been 16 years old. He and his friends were the grave diggers. You remember them in the play?

**Shalin:** Right.

**Besbris:** Now, at one point, some of the cast members were supposed to be drinking something. I don't know what it was, they had to pour it out of container. And of course what the cast was supposed to have put water into it. And it was Erving who put in, I don't know whether it was scotch or vodka. And to the great surprise of the people who were drinking it, this is

what they were swallowing at the time of the performance. I don't know what their response was, but this is what Erving did, all right?

**Shalin:** It was a prank that Erving pulled.

**Besbris:** Yes, the prank. When they lived in Dauphin they moved back. They moved to Dauphin probably between 1923-24, I am just guessing.

**Shalin:** Erving was one or two years old. He was born in 1922.

**Besbris:** Yes, June of '22. After leaving Manville, Alberta, Uncle Max, Erving's father, had opened a business in Dauphin. And while he was getting ready to open it, the family lived in Winnipeg in what at that time we called a "block," now known as "apartment." And just down the street from where they lived, my dad had a store and we lived above the store, so I could trundle down to where they were in the Westlake block. That is where they lived. So they lived in that block until they moved to Dauphin. That is the town where Erving lived during his formative years until he was ready for high school in Winnipeg. We kept hearing stories about Erving's exploits in town – the clock he took apart to find out how it works, the crab apples that he took from a neighbor's yard and he was caught taking them. There was something about the chicken that, I can't remember the details, but there was something about the chicken he might have killed and brought to his mother in Dauphin. But I am not sure if she kept kosher. She didn't when she came to Winnipeg.

**Shalin:** She had a kosher household?

**Besbris:** Well, in Dauphin, she may have, possibly. She was the least set on this among the four sisters. She was the one who found herself more in tune with the times as they moved along. She was an amazing woman whom I loved completely. Erving knew, as a young child, that the chicken had to be taken down to whoever came in to Dauphin . . . Dauphin did not have a large Jewish community, in fact it was quite small. Whoever had to do it, came in from another larger town.

**Shalin:** Kosher butcher.

**Besbris:** Yes, he would probably kill the chicken and make it kosher, whatever the procedure is. I am not quite sure, somebody may have the details. Either Erving took the chicken and was going to kosher it for his mother or just had this in mind, I am not sure, but there were Erving's stories that provably showed his inquisitive mind at work, his need to explore, always. I have all of his books here and I have read them. I am going to say

something to you that I hesitated to do. I told Fran I didn't feel I should because this is not factual, this is my perception, so take it please with this in mind.

**Shalin:** Sure, sure.

**Besbris:** As I said, we had a large family, and to use Erving's term, "the presentation of self" was important to many of the family members – not to all fortunately but to many of them. I always felt that Erving observed this. He would never participate in that; this was not Erving's style at all. But there were some of the aunts whom we knew who would have the fancy books on the coffee table that Erving referred to – remember? – to impress the people who came in.

**Shalin:** Really? He took it from experience?

**Besbris:** If he has, that's what I am saying to you. This is my perception of what Erving did.

**Shalin:** This is most interesting how you connect Erving's ideas with his experience.

**Besbris:** Please, as I said, you've got to be careful.

**Shalin:** Of course, this is just an interpretation coming from a family member, which makes it all the more valuable.

**Besbris:** It's mine. This was the family, the well-known Averbach family. The name was important to some of the family members, the affairs that they had, the parties that they gave, etcetera. I feel, anyway, that Erving [wrote] with that direction in mind. I remember when Aunt Anne moved into Winnipeg, they rented a house on Machray Avenue, and they lived there for a while during which time they were building a house on Scotia. I think you've got that address, it was 207 or 209 Scotia. I think my sister in Winnipeg verified that address.

**Shalin:** And the name of that street?

**Besbris:** Scotia – S-c-o-t-i-a.

**Shalin:** OK, thanks.

**Besbris:** It was around the riverbank and the river was nearby. In the house

that they built, off the living room, there was a small den. I remember from time to time when I came to my aunt, Erving would be in the den with one or two of his friends, the door would be closed, and they would have, I guess at that time, a record player on, all right? I would never dare to enter that room. The boys were there.

**Shalin:** Girls weren't welcome.

**Besbris:** I don't even know if they were aware who was in there. I know that they would be playing [?] symphonies, and it was kind of quiet. I recall one Sunday I was over at Aunt Anne's house and Erving was at the dinner table. I think that was the day before he was to go for his physical [conscription?]. At that time the war was on and Canada had conscription, so Erving was called, every male was. I remember him sitting at the table, he was very quiet. He wasn't eating too much, it was kind of quiet time, he wasn't entering the conversation at all. Oh, I am sorry, that is the damn phone again.

**Shalin:** Don't worry about. Just go ahead an answer.

[Pause]

**Besbris:** Hello.

**Shalin:** Yes, I am here.

**Besbris:** That was Marly on the phone. Now, some time later Erving went to the University of Toronto, all right?

**Shalin:** Yes.

**Besbris:** I was visiting for a couple of weeks, I was with Fran in her apartment. Erving came in, I remember, this was sometime in '43, 1943, probably the latter part of November or the early part of December. Erving came in with a friend of his. I remember the friend of his had too much to drink, sat down in the chair and fell asleep. I remember Erving wanted to get some warm water to pour over the young man's hand, the consequence would be that the man would involuntarily urinate. The response to that would be, "You are late involuntarily." I don't remember that he did it, but I remember him kind of laughing and weighing the possibility of playing this trick on him.

Sometime later Erving left Toronto and went to the University of Chicago. We are jumping now. By that time I was going to marry an American who was traveling from California to Florida. I met him in Chicago, we had a few days together, and during that time I saw Erving who came down to the hotel. He

was more amenable at that time to these kinds of interactions than in later years. He was already in Chicago.

**Besbris:** Do you know when he came to Chicago?

**Shalin:** I don't know but I know that he was there in '43, '42-'43, before he went to Shetland where he wrote his [dissertation].

**Besbris:** I think he enrolled in Chicago around 1946.

**Shalin:** In '46 he was already in Chicago.

**Besbris:** In '46 he definitely was in Chicago. This would be February-March; it's a specific date. So we sat and we talked. It was a nice time we had together. And then David, the man I later married, came in and we were going to the dinner in the hotel, but when we came to the dining room, maître d' wouldn't let Erving in because he didn't have a tie or a jacket. I think he was very gracious to me as a result, because instead of leaving, which I would have done with him, he said, "OK." My husband ran out and brought a tie for him and they may have provided the jacket, I don't remember. He let them put the tie on, then we sat down and had a dinner together. That was significant to me because Erving, you know, would not do the required things.

**Shalin:** He was not high on conventions.

**Besbris:** That's it, it is the convention that I keep trying to live in Winnipeg. There is a story which I was told, it is about a niece whose home was in Calgary and who went to the University of Manitoba for her college years. At the time of graduation all the family went down to watch the procedure. Erving was a guest speaker. I don't know whether he gave a commencement address or whatever, but he was an honored speaker. Of course this was very exciting, especially for my mother. Remember this is Erving, this is my mother. So they are all there, expecting to socialize with him. The story I heard was that after his speech he walked off the stage and that was all they saw of him. That was it. That was it.

**Shalin:** Was the family upset?

**Besbris:** I imagine they would have been because they thought they could get to see him without realizing that this was not in his psyche, this wasn't the thing that he would do.

**Shalin:** I believe he was awarded an honorary degree there in 1976.

**Besbris:** I know that he got the MacIver award, you know that?

**Shalin:** Right, but he also came to the University of Manitoba in 1976 to give a commencement speech, and he was awarded an honorary degree there. I believe that was around 1976.

**Besbris:** That's very likely.

**Shalin:** And when he talked he said something to the effect that you will be governed by the idiots.

**Besbris:** That I don't know. I don't know what the speech was at all. . . . At his high school graduation [**laughing**] the principal and someone else handed out the high school diploma and everybody walked across the stage. I remember, because I was sitting in there. Erving came from one end of the stage, walked rapidly across to where the school principal was, and then just as abruptly walked off. He was not going to take his time crossing over. That was it.

You know, Erving was not a tall man.

**Shalin:** How tall would you say he was.

**Besbris:** I am trying to guess – maybe 5'6 or less.

**Shalin:** 5'6?

**Besbris:** Maybe. Maybe. I am sure there are records somewhere, but he wasn't tall, and that might have somehow entered along the lines into whatever it was that he felt sometimes. I don't know.

**Shalin:** You may be right. From what I hear he might have been conscious about his height.

**Besbris:** It may be because, again going back to Winnipeg, appearance was very important, how you looked, all right? How you looked, how you dressed, how you conformed, what would people say. What would people say – that I recall not too fondly.

The more recent stories about Erving come from my sister who lived in Dauphin for a year [Gertrude Frankelson]. She lived with Anne and the family and established some kind of a relationship with Erving, enough so that years

later when she was in Boston and she and her husband went over to visit with Fran and Chuck, Erving did what might be unprecedented. He came down to see my sister whom he admired very much. Whatever this means, he loved the fact that she had such a fine small nose, OK?

**Shalin:** [**Laughing**] He commented on that?

**Besbris:** Yes, he commented on her nose. Years later when we moved to California and we lived near Auntie Anne for a while . . .

**Shalin:** When was it, do you remember?

**Besbris:** Yes, of course. We came here January 1, 1960. At that time my Aunt Anne and I were very very close. Fran wasn't in California and so my husband and I were there for her for any reason. And my husband loved her very much. So we were in a car, driving down Hauser Street, which is on the way to Anne's house. Now, we knew that Erving visited his mother from time to time; he was living in San Francisco at that time, and I knew not to call Auntie Anne when he visited. We talked every day but I would never phone her or go down there [because] we knew that that was the time when she was alone with Erving. As we drove near her apartment, I saw Erving walking down the street. I wanted desperately to stop, just go over and say something, hug him, but I didn't and couldn't. That was the last time I saw him.

**Shalin:** That was in . . .

**Besbris:** That was probably January or February of 1960.

**Shalin:** And that was the last time you saw him.

**Besbris:** The last time I saw him. Evidently, he had gone out to get something and was walking back to where my aunt was. She was living in a place called Park La Brea Apartments.

**Shalin:** That was in Los Angeles.

**Besbris:** Oh, yes, this was in Los Angeles. After her husband had died she left the house and moved into this apartment on Hauser. If you give me a little time, I'll get you exact address for the apartment where she lived.

**Shalin:** Max Goffman died in 1954 at the age of 64.

**Besbris:** . . . My daughter was born in '58 and she was named after Max.

**Shalin:** Max was born in 1890, I believe, and he died at the age of 64, so I think he died in 1954.

**Besbris:** Oh, in '54! You say he was born in 1890, that would make it 1954. Right, right. After that my aunt left the house and moved into the apartment. Max had to die before my daughter was born.

**Shalin:** Did you see them in Los Angeles when they lived together?

**Besbris:** I can tell you when they moved to Los Angeles. Bear with me, I've got a video of that. My husband was called back into the Korean War, and at that time we were living in New York. We drove across country, and I had one son who was not quite 3. It was in 1952.

**Shalin:** I thought both of them moved to California in 1952.

**Besbris:** In 1952 or late '51. . . . That was when Erving would come to visit her. During the days when he was there, we would not infringe on their time at all.

On the day of my wedding there was a telegram from Erving, which again, you wouldn't associate with something that Erving might do, although he gave me my first and most precious necklace. That is something that I remember with a great deal of [affection?], probably now exaggerated. I remember what weather was like that morning – it was pouring, pouring when the little kid went up there. He must have been all of 7 or 8 years old.

Now if you have any questions . . .

**Shalin:** Oh, yes, if I may. Let's go back a little bit. How far does your memory stretch when it comes to Erving?

**Besbris:** After he moved to Dauphin, [I would see him] whenever he came to Winnipeg or when we went to Dauphin, which wasn't that often, maybe a couple of times a year.

**Shalin:** At three or four you already knew Erving.

**Besbris:** Oh, yes, yes. There are certain things that stay in your memory. There is one recollection of Erving, and I couldn't have been two at the time; this is not something that anyone could have told me, but it was

verified (there are impressions that for some reason stay with you). Erving was kind of special. The stories of what he did in Dauphin, and unfortunately I don't recall them, but there were many stories and we used to love to hear them. There would be letters between my mother and Auntie Anne. If you are going to do anything about Erving – and I love the idea of the Archives – it would be convenient for people to have one source to go to.

**Shalin:** Do you have access to a computer?

**Besbris:** Yes. As a matter of fact, my son decided that I have to get into the 20th century. I bought it and it is now sitting in my house. I have to learn how to use it.

**Shalin:** Maybe he can show you how to use it; you can see the interviews I collected, the documents that are on the web. The letters you have mentioned – did they survive?

**Besbris:** No, no. They did not. Something that you just mentioned struck a chord, but I think I lost it.

**Shalin:** We were talking about collecting all the materials in one source.

**Besbris:** Keep talking and it may come back.

**Shalin:** Any letters from Erving to you that might have survived, the telegram he sent on your wedding?

**Besbris:** Somewhere, I am sure, that we kept the telegrams that came to us.

**Shalin:** If you find anything related to Erving, let me know, photographs, whatever.

**Besbris:** I do have one thing. You probably can pick it up. *The New York Times* put out a book review, and the first page with outstanding contributions was [about Erving's book]. I don't remember which one it was.

**Shalin:** It might have been *Frame Analysis*.

**Besbris:** It may be. I remember I have that. If you don't have it, I can [send it to you].

**Shalin:** I don't think I have it. It would be interesting to see.

**Besbris:** Erving and Senator Moynihan were friends.

**Shalin:** I didn't know that.

**Besbris:** They were. They must have been good friends, because at the time of his death, Senator Moynihan wrote in a paper, it must have been in the *New York Times*. See if you can find it.

**Shalin:** I'll look for it.

**Besbris:** He wrote something, a tribute to Erving.

**Shalin:** After his death?

**Besbris:** Yes, because of his death.

**Shalin:** Do you have any childhood photos of yourself, Max and Anne?

**Besbris:** Of course.

**Shalin:** I would love to see them.

**Besbris:** I will pull them together. I think I have one of Erving after he graduated from Toronto, but I do know I have some. Oh, I know I have something wonderful. He and Fran both dressed in costumes of . . . I am trying to think of the term . . . You know when they are trying to dance.

**Shalin:** Like a tutu?

**Besbris:** No, this was a very dramatic dance, he would be the villain. In any case, I have those pictures. I will send them to you but I want them back.

**Shalin:** Of course, of course. I'll just look them up, make a copy, if you don't mind.

**Besbris:** Absolutely. There are two great pictures.

**Shalin:** I exchanged emails with Marly today, and she told me I should come for Frances' 90th birthday.

**Besbris:** It will be on the 25th.

**Shalin:** My daughter is a student at USC.

**Besbris:** Excuse me?

**Shalin:** My daughter is a senior at the University of Southern California.

**Besbris:** She is at USC?

**Shalin:** Yes.

**Besbris:** Oh, how nice!

**Shalin:** So I come that way sometimes.

**Besbris:** It would be lovely.

**Shalin:** It would be lovely, but I wrote to Marly that I would feel like an interloper at this family affair.

**Besbris:** No, as a matter of fact, there will be many friends there. I speak with Marly several times a week.

**Shalin:** And you will attend the party?

**Besbris:** Of course.

**Shalin:** You live close by?

**Besbris:** Actually I live in Manhattan Beach. I don't know if you know the area. It's at least 20 miles from Fran's house, considerably west from when Fran lives. Fran lives in the Valley, in Studio City.

**Shalin:** That is probably not too far from where my daughter is.

**Besbris:** I live closer to USC than Fran. In fact I worked at USC for a while.

**Shalin:** If I convince myself that I would not be an odd man out . . .

**Besbris:** Oh, absolutely not!

**Shalin:** I would love to come and pay my respect to Fran and Marly and you and all the gang.

**Besbris:** Marly is going to try to make it. See, Marly only comes here in November for Thanksgiving, and then she comes sometime in the spring.

**Shalin:** She said she will try to come for two days.

**Besbris:** That's exactly what she told me. She will try to come Saturday and Sunday and leave Monday, but she will try to make it. Did you get to see, ah . . .

**Shalin:** The Averbach Family Reunion Album?

**Besbris:** No. Did you get to see that?

**Shalin:** Marly is sending it to me. There was also a DVD of that family reunion.

**Besbris:** Yes, and also the presentation of the Walk of Fame for Fran, which was lovely.

**Shalin:** I have seen it on the web; Anrea sent me the link. It was a photo montage, not a live event.

**Besbris:** That was absolutely lovely. Fran and I we talk frequently, several times a week at least. We do a lot of reminiscing; you do it at a certain age.

**Shalin:** I am a bit younger but I am with you.

**Besbris:** Oh, you are young.

**Shalin:** I came from Russia in 1976 . . .

**Besbris:** Really?

**Shalin:** . . . when Jews were allowed to emigrate. I studied at Columbia University, get my Ph.D. there, taught at Southern Illinois University, and then moved to the University of Nevada in Las Vegas.

**Besbris:** So you've got a double [degree].

**Shalin:** Yes, I repeated graduate studies in the U.S.

**Besbris:** Great! May I ask?

**Shalin:** Sure.

**Besbris:** Where and when did you learn to speak [English] as well as you do?

**Shalin:** Well, I can't claim credit for it; it just happened; some people are better at languages than others. My biological father was an artist with some acting and singing skills, and I suspect I inherited some musical sensibilities that make it easier to pick up language patterns, mimic intonation. But then, I've lived in this country more than half of my life, so. . .

**Besbris:** You came over in . . .

**Shalin:** I came over in '76. It's been quite some time.

**Besbris:** You said you went to Columbia?

**Shalin:** Yes.

**Besbris:** And you are teaching what now?

**Shalin:** Sociology.

**Besbris:** Of course! I have a friend who teaches sociology at Cal State, Northridge. She got very excited when she learned we were related. She was over here one day. I think I have one of the original books of Erving's thesis, you know, *The Presentation [of Self in Everyday Life]*.

**Shalin:** The first edition was published in 1956 by the University of Edinburgh Press.

**Besbris:** I am gonna take a look to see where it was published. . . .

**Shalin:** I've never seen that first edition.

**Besbris:** I'll show it to you when you come here. My aunt Anne had one, and she gave it to me, so it could be . . . I could check while we talk.

**Shalin:** No rush.

**Besbris:** After we speak I am going to take a look.

**Shalin:** Esther, if I may backtrack a bit . . .

**Besbris:** Absolutely.

**Shalin:** You knew not only Anne but also Max Goffman.

**Besbris:** Oh, yes of course.

**Shalin:** Could you describe to me what kind of person he was, what role Judaism played in life? You size up people well and it would be interesting to hear your take on that household.

**Besbris:** Anne is almost indescribable.

**Shalin:** [Laughing]

**Besbris:** Truly, she was Aunt Anne to everybody. If you could call her Aunt Anne, it was truly something very positive in one's life. A friend of my husband's loved her. She was an aunt to him too. Her table was always open to everybody, always. She was an amazingly perceptive woman for one who had no formal education – perceptive, bright, warm, she was my daughter's substitute grandmother. In fact, my daughter probably loved her more than anyone. They had a very close relationship, my daughter and Aunt Anne. There always would be a box of cookies that she had baked. She always baked. She was a great great cook and wonderful baker. My sister lived in Dauphin for a while; when she was leaving to get married, my aunt gave her a tablecloth, and told her something that my sister never forgot and that was characteristic of Aunt Anne. It was a tablecloth to be put on the table that would always be open to anybody who came. That's how Anne was, OK? Always open to anybody. There was always a meal for anybody who came in. Everybody loved her, and everybody thought that she was most special [laughing]. This was really a gift she had. I know that she was very special, but so did everybody else.

**Shalin:** Something stood out about her.

**Besbris:** Somewhere I think I have a note of hers. There is the other thing. When she wrote something, I could truly hear her voice in it. It was that kind of ability. She always said, I don't have the words, but she did. Whatever she wrote, and somewhere I have a note that she wrote me . . .

**Shalin:** I'd love to see it.

**Besbris:** I can find it. As I am talking I try to visualize where I have it. My daughter could tell you things about Aunt Anne.

**Shalin:** She may have memories of her own.

**Besbris:** Uncle Max was a businessman. He had a store in Dauphin.

**Shalin:** What kind of store?

**Besbris:** It was a general store – ladies ready to wear mostly. I believe it was a general store in Dauphin. When you saw Uncle Max, he was always with a cigar.

**Shalin:** Did he actually smoke?

**Besbris:** Yes, yes. In fact, I can always figure him with his cigar. When I said a money man, what I meant was that if you needed a loan, he was the one that people went to. I remember my dad, he suffered . . . it was very tough for him during the Depression, and he had a loan from the bank that he needed to pay off the wholesalers (the name for wholesalers here is something else) to keep his business. He went to his brother who wouldn't do it, but Uncle Max did. And when the note was paid off, all the wholesalers came to Auntie Anne's house, she had a party and the note was burned. They went through the process of burning the note which Uncle Max had signed. You know my dad would never let anybody suffer because of any default. And he didn't. I know that Uncle Max did this for many people, for many nieces and nephews, I am sure. He was like that.

This is running too long, so we could stop.

**Shalin:** If you are tired, we can stop, but I can listen without end. You tell me when you had enough.

**Besbris:** Well, he was a gentle man, doted on Auntie Anne. He was about 9 years older. And she was one who loved to dance.

**Shalin:** Anne?

**Besbris:** Oh, she loved to dance!

**Shalin:** Was she good at it?

**Besbris:** Yes, when she could no longer dance, I'd see her sitting down on sidelines, people were dancing, and – this is truly an exaggeration – her face would be on the floor with them. There would be that joyous expression in her eyes. She could appreciate somebody else's pleasure, somebody else's

enjoyment in life.

**Shalin:** A lot of empathy for others.

**Besbris:** She had an amazing empathy. Her perception of people used to surprise me every now and then. It was quite astonishing.

**Shalin:** She must have loved music.

**Besbris:** Yes, yes. You asked about the orthodoxy . . .

**Shalin:** Yes, but first maybe you could say a few more words about Max.

**Besbris:** As I said, Max would come into Winnipeg . . . He kept his store going for a long time. He'd come in during the week and spend some time in Winnipeg because Auntie Anne moved to Winnipeg and built the house on Scotia by that time.

**Shalin:** And they moved to Winnipeg in . . .

**Besbris:** In 1937. Fran finished the high school and was going to go to the University of Manitoba. That's when they moved into Winnipeg. It was about '36, '37. Erving was ready for a high school at that time. At that time the high school started at grade ten, as opposed to now when it is from 9 to 12. Yes, that would probably be in 1936. But he kept the business going. I heard that Max had, and I don't know the specific meaning of this reference, a seat on the Grain Exchange. Winnipeg was a center, and the Grain Exchange was, I suppose, not unlike a group of people with stocks. I don't quite know, I am floundering with this. He had a group of men friends and they would play cards, they would get together for what was probably poker games. He may have made some money on the Grain Exchange. They were comfortable.

**Shalin:** How well-to-do were they – middle class, upper middle class?

**Besbris:** Well, you'd have to get a frame of reference. Upper-middle class here in Winnipeg would be different. Definitely the middle class but hovering . . . in the '30s middle class would be comfortable, . . . upper middle class has a slightly different [connotation]. OK, say upper middle class.

**Shalin:** They did not suffer much during the Depression.

**Besbris:** No, they did not.

**Shalin:** So Erving grew up without feeling any financial strain.

**Besbris:** Yes. But Auntie Anne lived relatively simply. They lived comfortably but simply.

**Shalin:** They had a car, I understand.

**Besbris:** They had a car, which you couldn't do much with in the winter months when it was 40 below. I spoke to my sister and it's now warmed up considerably.

**Shalin:** Fran mentioned to me that Erving would get into trouble and Anne would punish him. She could be strict if she felt he didn't do something right, as when he broke a bunch of LPs in the basement. She said she could even spank Erving on occasion.

**Besbris:** Probably. Of course I saw very different Anne. Fran told me that her mother could be very very strict. As a matter of fact, I do remember, in reference to that, when we were visiting once, my brother and I were there, quite young, I was 6 or 7, and Eddie 10 or 11, there was a party in the house and we were sent to bed. Erving and I went to one bed, Eddie and Fran went to another bed in the same room, we were playing as kids, and Auntie Anne came up and she was horrified. I remember that.

**Shalin:** Why was she?

**Besbris:** Well, because Eddie and Fran were in one bed and Erving and I were in the other.

**Shalin:** How old were you?

**Besbris:** I was probably 6 or 7 and Eddie was 10 or 11, or even younger. I remember that not only did she make us get out of the beds, I think Frances was sent out of the room to another room. I remember that now. . . . Fran and my brother were close in age. She was born in 1919 and my brother in 1918. There was just a year between them. But I never saw that part of Aunt Anne.

**Shalin:** She was kind and friendly with you.

**Besbris:** We were very close, particularly after I moved to California. She and I were on the phone all the time. One thing I remember, we would often celebrate her birthday; when she turned 75, we all went out to a

restaurant. The MC was told it was her birthday, and he called her up, and as she walked up to him, and I remember his voice, "You are 75?!" He would never believe it. She was a tiny lady (but we would say she was ten feet tall), a beautiful beautiful woman, you've got to see her pictures, OK? Anyway, that was just a comment.

**Shalin:** Would you say Erving resembled his mother more than his father, physically?

**Besbris:** He looked like an Averbach.

**Shalin:** More after mother's side of the family.

**Besbris:** Yes, he had dark dark eyes, which is characteristic of a lot of Averbachs. Some of the Averbachs were not tall, which is a euphemism for "short."

**Shalin:** Was Max taller than Anne?

**Besbris:** He was probably taller than Erving, but he wasn't a tall man, and Auntie Anne was tiny. She was probably 5 feet, 5'1. That's about it. As I said, for us she was 10 feet tall.

**Shalin:** As a human being, for sure. What was Anne's education, did she go through high school?

**Besbris:** No. I don't know if she had any schooling in Russia at all, but when she came to Winnipeg, she learned English, and she had more schooling than the other three women. There were four sisters and four brothers who came to Winnipeg. One of the brothers lived in Minneapolis and then he moved to California, and the other brother, the youngest one, who was a bit of a rogue, a gorgeous rogue [Uncle Mickey], he lived in Edmonton. So two brothers and four sisters lived in Winnipeg.

**Shalin:** You are not certain about Anne's education, just that she was naturally smart.

**Besbris:** No, I don't know if there was any formal education, but she learned to read and write English.

**Shalin:** What language was spoken at Anne's household?

**Besbris:** I'd say mostly English.

**Shalin:** What about Yiddish, could it be used on occasion?

**Besbris:** I would assume so.

**Shalin:** Some friends of Erving told me that he would sprinkle his speech with Yiddishisms.

**Besbris:** Uncle Max might have, and Auntie Anne probably did too. That you can verify with Fran.

**Shalin:** I forgot to ask her about the language her parents spoke among themselves.

**Besbris:** When Auntie Anne moved to California, I know that she attended, not regularly but during the High Holidays, a synagogue. When we moved out, we would spend some time with her during the High Holidays.

**Shalin:** How would you describe their religious feelings – was it mostly cultural Judaism or there were some ritual elements? Which holidays would they celebrate?

**Besbris:** Passover.

**Shalin:** Hanukah?

**Besbris:** Yes,

**Shalin:** OK, major festivals.

**Besbris:** But I know that Auntie Anne would order her chickens from the Eaton's Department Store.

**Shalin:** At some point she kept kosher.

**Besbris:** She did not keep kosher. Maybe in Dauphin she might have, I don't know. But in Winnipeg keeping kosher was not a requisite.

**Shalin:** Right. Do you remember the games Anne played with children, the books they read, maybe hobbies that Erving had?

**Besbris:** I'd just be guessing at that, I wouldn't give you anything factual.

**Shalin:** OK, I heard he liked to experiment with chemicals.

**Besbris:** Oh, yes, yes, yes. I agree with that.

**Shalin:** Erving didn't smoke, did he?

**Besbris:** Never that I knew. No.

**Shalin:** Did he like music, theater, movies?

**Besbris:** Yes, as I mentioned to you, many times when I was in the house, he and his friends would be in a den, doors to the den were closed, but I could hear the music. They would not be playing contemporary stuff. It would be symphony.

**Shalin:** Classical music.

**Besbris:** . . . .They were beyond the Tchaikovsky caliber. For some reasons Mahler's name comes to mind. There was some very fine music.

**Shalin:** People who visited Erving in his Philadelphia home remember seeing a piano. I was wondering whether it was Erving or his son who played piano.

**Besbris:** That I don't know. I don't recall Erving playing.

**Shalin:** Any books he might have liked?

**Besbris:** No, but it is interesting, I was engaged to an American and from time to time he would send me books. I would call Erving after I got them. We talked, I would phone Erving from time to time. I remember once there was something going on and he said, "Are you amenable to doing this or this?" And I would say, "Yes." I remember specifically that he asked me. I don't remember what was planned but I do remember his asking me what I felt about it. I would mention to him some of the books that I had and he would tell me whether he approved of them. If he approved of the book, he would say, "That's good, that's a good one."

**Shalin:** He knew a lot about books.

**Besbris:** Oh, yes, yes, yes.

**Shalin:** Do you recall any of Erving's girlfriends, did he date?

**Besbris:** Not that I know of. No. I would see him in the halls of the high school but he would be very often alone, walking by himself. I shouldn't say very often, but from time to time when I saw him he would be walking alone. Most of the time he would enjoy interactions that some of the boys would engage in when they were changing classes.

**Shalin:** He wasn't particularly boisterous.

**Besbris:** No, no, no, he was not.

**Shalin:** How would you describe Erving's temperament, his character in the early years, as a teenager? I know he had friends.

**Besbris:** Yes, he did, yes he did. In fact, if I am not mistaken, Jack Ludwig who had written some books . . . I fact, I have a book of his somewhere.

**Shalin:** What is the name of that person?

**Besbris:** Jack Ludwig – L-u-d-w-i-g. I think that Jack Ludwig, and that has to do with Erving, Jack Ludwig aspired to be a writer comparable to [Saul Bellow]. . . . He was very envious of that man. . . .

**Shalin:** You said that Erving might have been called into the army, had a physical checkup?

**Besbris:** I think he was called for a physical.

**Shalin:** But he didn't serve.

**Besbris:** I am almost positive, that is what I heard, that he was called to take the physical, which everybody was.

**Shalin:** But he never served.

**Besbris:** No, he never served.

**Shalin:** Maybe he had a deferment as a student.

**Besbris:** I don't know if he had a student deferment, but he was still living in Winnipeg and had not yet gone to Toronto. And I don't think he ever went to the University of Manitoba, I don't think he ever attended that. All of this would have been in '40, '41, something like that.

**Shalin:** You say in 1946 Erving was in Chicago.

**Besbris:** I would say that he was there. He was in Chicago, attending the school there.

**Shalin:** I thought Erving started at the University of Chicago around 1948 [Goffman enrolled at the U of C in 1946].

**Besbris:** Are you sure?

**Shalin:** I am not sure. Maybe earlier.

**Besbris:** I think earlier, I don't know, I would not make it a certainty, but in as much as he was in Chicago, he was attending a school at the time.

**Shalin:** Much of the time Erving was working on his Ph.D. there.

**Besbris:** That may be because it was from Chicago that he went to Scotland.

**Shalin:** He defended his thesis in 1953, and he went to the Shetland Islands maybe round 1951 if not earlier.

**Besbris:** It would be sometime in the early '50s.

**Shalin:** Am I overwhelming you, Esther? You sure you are OK?

**Besbris:** Not at all. I wish I had the answers for you.

**Shalin:** Don't worry about that. Every little bit counts, even if it is second-hand or just a supposition. Did you meet Erving's first wife, Angelica?

**Besbris:** Would that be Angelica? I thought it was Schuyler.

**Shalin:** She went by name Sky or Schuyler.

**Besbris:** Sky, yes.

**Shalin:** Her full name was Angelica Schuyler Choate.

**Besbris:** She was one of the Choates – C-h-o-a-t-e-s. You know, the Choate School, Choate newspapers? They were very prominent in Boston, not unlike the Cabots and the Lodges . . . who else is prominent in Boston?

**Shalin:** They go back to Mayflower.

**Besbris:** They probably do.

**Shalin:** The Abbots [Cabots] and others.

**Besbris:** Her mother, and I believe that may have entered into her difficulties or was part of it, her mother immolated herself, OK?

**Shalin:** She did what?

**Besbris:** She immolated herself.

**Shalin:** Committed suicide by stopping to eat?

**Besbris:** I don't know but I understand . . . I don't know how she did it but she set herself on fire.

**Shalin:** Oh, I see.

**Besbris:** Again, this is something that I heard many years ago. I remember that when Sky died . . .

**Shalin:** That was in 1964.

**Besbris:** Probably about that time. Let me think, yes because Tommie was very young.

**Shalin:** He was born in '53. In 1964 he must have been about 9 [?] years old.

**Besbris:** You say he was born in . . .

**Shalin:** In 1953, and Sky committed suicide in 1964.

**Besbris:** Excuse me, you say Tom was born in '63 . . .

**Shalin:** No, no, in '53.

**Besbris:** I know. I am trying to think. . . . It's funny because I remember a message from Fran. She flew of course from the East coast, we met her at the airport. We brought Auntie Anne to meet Fran, and then they flew to San Francisco. I remember Fran saying to me, that's all she said, I remember her

words, "Poor Sky, she never had a chance." That's what she said. They got a word about her . . .

**Shalin:** Jumping off the bridge.

**Besbris:** . . . She jumped off the bridge, yes. And too, it is kind of interesting, she – and again this is second hand, so please be careful with these things . . .

**Shalin:** Of course.

**Besbris:** You know that.

**Shalin:** Right, right.

**Besbris:** I understood that she was always a very conservative dresser – no jewelry, very simple, very plain. Also, I remember talking about that to Fran the other night, Erving worked as a dealer in Las Vegas.

**Shalin:** Really? I know he trained, I didn't realize he actually worked as a dealer.

**Besbris:** Maybe it was in Reno, Reno or Las Vegas. What I heard was that he worked as a dealer to gather information for what he was going to write. And Sky went out to visit him, and Fran . . . no, Sky could count cards.

**Shalin:** She was that smart?

**Besbris:** She was that good. And after a while they wouldn't let her play in the casinos anymore.

**Shalin:** Did she do it by herself or with Erving?

**Besbris:** I don't suppose it was with Erving. Anyway, this is just an aside.

**Shalin:** That is very interesting. I know Erving trained to become a dealer. My colleague, Professor Mel Kohn, told me that he once received a letter from a Las Vegas Sheriff inquiring about "one Erving Goffman" who says he was a professor and wants to learn to be a dealer, something like that.

**Besbris:** So he could do the research, obviously.

**Shalin:** What I don't know is whether Erving ever completed the training and

got a license.

**Besbris:** This is what I heard that a word "working" should have been a substitute for "training."

**Shalin:** That is, Erving didn't want to be a professional dealer; he just wanted to observe the scene as a scholar.

**Besbris:** What was interesting was that at the time of Schuyler's death Erving was working with a doctor in Los Angeles (I think her name was "Hooks" or "Hooker"), and I believe that they were doing some research on suicide prevention, which is kind of ironic.

**Shalin:** I didn't know that.

**Besbris:** Yes. You have to double-check it.

**Shalin:** Of course, of course. That is a new tangent to explore.

**Besbris:** I thought that was really interesting. He would come from time to time to Los Angeles, working with the doctor . . . I think her name was "Hooks" or "Hooker."

**Shalin:** You don't remember her first name.

**Besbris:** No. Probably UCLA would have that. I am pretty sure it was "Hooks" or "Hooker." There was a period in which Sky might have been bipolar (the term they use today), but quite suddenly, Auntie Annie would tell me, she began to dress differently, wear makeup and jewelry.

**Shalin:** Dress more provocatively?

**Besbris:** Excuse me?

**Shalin:** Dress more provocatively.

**Besbris:** Yes, yes. And I think she also bought a building somewhere that she wanted to give some group. These are fragments of information. And there was one period in which she wasn't looking after Tom at all, from what Auntie Anne said. In one period there were a lot of books that she was bundling up and packing. I don't know what the significance of that was. Again, Auntie Anne would tell me these things periodically.

**Shalin:** This is most interesting. Do you know how Erving met Sky?

**Besbris:** I think that was at the University of Chicago.

**Shalin:** Yes, she was a student there. I have heard that she completed her graduate work but never defended her Ph. D. thesis.

**Besbris:** Really?

**Shalin:** I understand, also, that she took a great interest in Erving's research.

**Besbris:** Yes, that was my understanding that they met in Chicago while both were at school.

**Shalin:** You were not present at their wedding.

**Besbris:** I don't know that anyone was.

**Shalin:** It wasn't in Chicago?

**Besbris:** I don't know. I don't even know how that was consummated. I don't know at all about the wedding.

**Shalin:** She wasn't Jewish.

**Besbris:** No.

**Shalin:** I wonder how Max and Anne responded to this fact. Did you hear anything about that?

**Besbris:** I never heard anything from Auntie Anne, but again, Auntie Anne would accept her, I think.

**Shalin:** So she would be accepting of Erving's wife.

**Besbris:** I don't know if that was a big part of her concern. And I know that Erving by that time was pretty independent.

**Shalin:** Would you say Anne had any tangible political leanings or beliefs?

**Besbris:** I don't know, I don't see her as political. No.

**Shalin:** Fran told me she was left-leaning for a while, almost socialist.

**Besbris:** Who, Fran?

**Shalin:** Fran.

**Besbris:** You are talking to someone who marched in a Mayday parade, which I did. I have to say that I went to the Arbeiter Ring, which is a real socialist school.

**Shalin:** What was its name?

**Besbris:** The Arbeiter Ring, The Workingman's Circle. That's where I learned to read and write Jewish. I went there for a number of years. I was the only one in the family who went there. My brother went to Talmud Torah, and my younger sister went to the Peretz School, which is a kind of a folk school. At any rate, Fran joined the New Theater Group in, I am trying to think, probably in the early '40s, and they would put on plays like "Waiting for Lefty" and others which had real social content. Fran never told you but she was in a play which, again, had real social direction. She won the Governor General's Award as an outstanding woman [actress].

**Shalin:** That was a while ago.

**Besbris:** I am trying to think, that was in the early '40s. This is the new Theater Group. I have something on that if you want more detail.

**Shalin:** Sure. We are focusing on Erving and his parents for the moment, but I would love to hear your story as well. Maybe we can have a special talk about your family and Fran.

**Besbris:** Fran would make an interesting story.

**Shalin:** You said that Anne was not especially political and neither was Max.

**Besbris:** Oh, I don't think they were political, except for . . . excuse me, I must make this one caveat. My uncle, my aunt's brother, Meyer Averbach, ran for school trustee and we all worked on his behalf to make phone calls to get everybody to vote [**laughing**]. We were part of the Independent Labor Party at that time. He [Max] couldn't have been part of any party, but Auntie Anne voted for her brother and others who were similarly associated.

**Shalin:** I meant to ask you if you encountered anti-Semitism when you were growing up. I've heard there was anti-Semitism in Canada.

**Besbris:** Definitely, definitely, there was. I grew up in an area which housed any number of people from foreign countries – Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Polish, Russians, Jewish, and some Anglos. Winnipeg at some time was known to have 23 foreign language newspapers.

**Shalin:** Hello? Hello?

[**Telephone disconnected**]

**Shalin:** Esther, suddenly you disappeared. I'll try to call back, just a second.

[**Break**]

**Besbris:** Hello.

**Shalin:** Something happened.

**Besbris:** My phone died. . . . I went to get the other one, and if this dies, you'll have to forgive me.

**Shalin:** That's fine. Technology will let us down sometimes.

**Besbris:** It's one that has to be recharged periodically and it gave up the ghost. Anyway, what I was telling you, Winnipeg had 23 language newspapers. Some other time I will give you the background of what Winnipeg was like where Auntie Anne and the others first came to the country and how they lived.

**Shalin:** That would be interesting.

**Besbris:** Whatever effect it might have had on Erving, I don't know.

**Shalin:** You don't know if Erving encountered anti-Semitism.

**Besbris:** In Dauphin, I don't know. Remember, Dauphin had a half a dozen Jewish families total. It was very small.

**Shalin:** That few?

**Besbris:** Pardon me?

**Shalin:** Only a half dozen?

**Besbris:** Probably.

**Shalin:** I thought Erving had a Bar Mitzvah in a synagogue.

**Besbris:** I understand that he did have one.

**Shalin:** And Fran told me that Erving gave a moving speech dedicated to his mother. Something titled "Ode to Mother."

**Besbris:** See, that's bound to be Erving's warm, sentimental, compassionate side.

**Shalin:** And this is most important. I theorize that Erving's greatness as an ethnographer was in his ability to tune into people's moods, to respond emotionally to their stirrings. He tried to act cool, not show this part of himself, but he was alive with emotions.

**Besbris:** It was definitely there. I'll say this unequivocally.

**Shalin:** You said something interesting, that when Anne heard about Sky's death, she said Sky didn't have a chance.

**Besbris:** Fran said this to me.

**Shalin:** Yes, it was Fran. How did you interpret this at the time?

**Besbris:** Well, interpretation at this point is kind of wasted because I know so little. But I guess my response to it at that time was, perhaps because of the early loss of her mother, and I don't know how much Erving was aware of how her mother died, that those things cling to you at some point.

**Shalin:** Yes, they can be transmitted through generations. These forces are hard to combat.

**Besbris:** Those are the words that Fran said to me. She got off the plane and she and Auntie Anne went on to San Francisco. They were going on to San Francisco from there.

**Shalin:** I understand that Sky did see a psychiatrist, even back in Washington DC.

**Besbris:** It very well could be. What you are saying is that she was aware that she needed some help.

**Shalin:** I have learned from those who worked with Erving in 1954-1956 that his interest in mental health institutions had in part to do with his wife's experience with psychiatry. Erving wasn't happy with the treatment she was receiving.

**Besbris:** It is definitely worthwhile to read the book again.

**Shalin:** Yes, in fact one of my hypotheses is that much of Erving's work is autobiographical. What you tell me about the Averbachs' emphasis on ceremony and propriety points in the same direction.

**Besbris:** But remember that I say this with a cautionary note that I have discussed this with nobody, all right? This is my feeling, and perhaps what I am doing is injecting my own feeling about what [I saw and felt].

**Shalin:** By golly, you should! Our emotions are indexes that clue us onto something important going on in the world. Your feelings will not give you the whole truth but they illuminate something that matters.

**Besbris:** Don't you transmit your emotions to somebody else?

**Shalin:** That's not necessarily a bad thing. I think Erving was very emotional.

**Besbris:** Oh, yes.

**Shalin:** His interest in ceremony, conventions, rituals, and rule breaking, just as his interest in mental illness, was quite personal. After his wife died, he published an article where he described what it was like to live with a family member given to those aberrations. There he was writing not about the people locked into mental institutions without a sound reason but about genuinely disturbed and disturbing individuals who make life impossible for those around them.

**Besbris:** Which brings you right back to his first writings, doesn't it?

**Shalin:** That's right. Without my prompting you brought up Erving's book on the presentation of self and connected it to the dynamics you observed at his parents' home, and that's why your observations are so valuable. As you said, Sky began to act out sometime before she committed suicide.

**Besbris:** I don't know what the time frame was, whether it was fairly recently in terms of her final act or whether what she was feeling was precipitated by what she [encountered] at Bethesda. There would be a time difference between her stay at Bethesda and the time she came to San Francisco.

**Shalin:** You may not know this, but that is what I was told. Erving received a job offer to go to Berkley sometime in 1958; he left for Berkeley while Sky and Tom stayed behind at Bethesda for almost a year. They were kind of separated.

**Besbris:** Um, that I did not know.

**Shalin:** Later on the family rejoined Erving at Berkeley.

**Besbris:** When did he write *Asylums*?

**Shalin:** *Asylums* came out in 1961.

**Besbris:** OK, that's another one. I will go and see where it was published.

**Shalin:** It was published in 1961; at that time he was teaching in California for several years.

**Besbris:** Hold on. You've forced me to take a look at the book.

**Shalin:** Sure, go ahead.

**Besbris:** [Here is] *Presentation of Self*, the covers are falling off.

**Shalin:** Which edition do you have – '59 or '56?

**Besbris:** '56.

**Shalin:** '56?

**Besbris:** Yes.

**Shalin:** Oh, this is a rare edition. I'd never seen that one.

**Besbris:** I'll bring it with me.

**Shalin:** That would be very good. Maybe I could xerox some pages.

**Besbris:** Absolutely, absolutely.

**Shalin:** And *Asylums* came out in 1961 or thereabout.

**Besbris:** I'll have to take a look. Oh, here it is! Not that it is significant, but I'll look. It is an Anchor book – '61 – you are right!

**Shalin:** Erving researched it when he worked at St. Elizabeth's hospital, masquerading as an athletic director.

**Besbris:** You have an amazing background of information.

**Shalin:** There is a lot of material available, I'll send it to you, or bring it to you when I see you in Los Angeles.

**Besbris:** I have a book here which I have not really read. Erving Goffman, with an introduction of Vivian Gornick. Does that mean anything to you?

**Shalin:** What is the title, is it *Gender Advertisements*? It came out in the 70s.

**Besbris:** I remember there was a magazine that I once saw that was brought out by something that Erving wrote, and it said, "Take a look at the nurses and take a look at the doctors, and you will see that the women's eyes were on male doctors." It was real conditioning. . . . I realized this is what happens. Maybe not so much now, but during the years when we grew up and beyond, when you thought about the nurse you associate it with the female.

**Shalin:** It was an important book on how society shapes our perception of men and woman, how gender is typed by our culture.

**Besbris:** Then why at some point I've heard that Erving's work, not so much went into disfavor as [became less popular].

**Shalin:** His perspective is rather unusual for sociology. In some ways he was more of an anthropologist.

**Besbris:** As a matter of fact, I am interjecting quickly, someone said that the highest accolades one could give him was that he wrote like an anthropologist.

**Shalin:** [**Laughing**] Erving is perhaps the most cited sociologist of the

second half of the 20th century in this country. He is much read in anthropology, linguistics, communication studies, perhaps more so than in sociology. He also had the literary sensibilities that are hard to emulate.

**Besbris:** When did you first encounter Erving's work?

**Shalin:** In Russia, when I studied at the University of Leningrad. I read some of his stuff and was struck by its brilliance. Traditionally, sociologists were more preoccupied with macro dynamics of class and structure, society at large, and Erving's work was more like the quantum mechanics in physics in its relation to cosmology. His talent was unique.

**Besbris:** Then what is it that appeals to people like you and to my friend who teaches sociology?

**Shalin:** Interesting question. I have some hypotheses. It is not uncommon for people to change their views of Erving's work. The younger they are, the more impressed they are with how we try to manage impression, sell a particular self, which is what we are forced to do on the way up, but once we are more established, it is no longer such a self-conscious concern. [You are less likely to be gripped by an impostor complex].

**Besbris:** Maybe because later on, unfortunately and sadly, we buy into the whole thing.

**Shalin:** That's another way of looking at it. We swallow hook and sinker the social bait.

**Besbris:** And integrate it into ourselves.

**Shalin:** If you wish, we become phonies we recoiled from in our youth. One implication that I puzzle over in this connection is that it must have been difficult for Erving to carve out a persona for himself once he discovered a con artist at the core of our social being.

**Besbris:** Oh, that is interesting.

**Shalin:** How do you present yourself in public when you know that all self-presentation is stage-managed, how do you follow conventions when you know they are there to help you put the show on. I would think it was not easy for someone like Erving to be authentic. One way to do so would be to flout conventions. See what I am saying?

**Besbris:** Yes!

**Shalin:** I wonder if the reputation Erving earned as being abrasive had something to do with his theoretical discoveries.

**Besbris:** Because he couldn't put himself into a social situation.

**Shalin:** He would have an X-rated vision, see people's phony guises.

**Besbris:** That I find really interesting. Truly. Your students are truly fortunate.

**Shalin:** I'll show you what I have written about Erving. Now, are you sure I am not overwhelming you?

**Besbris:** No, not at all, not at all.

**Shalin:** What you are telling me is priceless. You obviously knew Tom.

**Besbris:** Slightly.

**Shalin:** You didn't have much of a chance to interact with him.

**Besbris:** Um-m, not really. It was kind of an interesting situation. You know, when Frances had this terrible terrible accident . . .

**Shalin:** Car accident.

**Besbris:** Right. Chuck had died in June, and my feeling is that rather than stay here for Thanksgiving, she would have to come to my place. She decided she would go to Philadelphia and spend it with Alice and Gillian. I saw her on Wednesday, the day before the accident. We sat and talked, we spent some time together, and she told me that she was going next day to get some shoes or something. She went out, and there is a bakery shop, she was going to buy something that Chuck loved [in order] to take with her for Tom. She was crossing the street, it was five o'clock when it occurred.

**Shalin:** Did that happen about five years ago?

**Besbris:** About five years ago. In November it would be five years since Chuck [died]. It will be five years this year, I guess. At any rate, she was in a hospital for a long time, and Tom came, of course. There was a period when I was going to see her. My son lived in the Valley, I met him and said, "We'll

meet in front of Fran's house and then you could drive me to the hospital." I didn't know how to get out there. Every time I went there, somebody else drove. Oh, excuse me, there was another visit, I beg your pardon. It was when a woman who looked after Auntie Anne wanted to go visit Fran, so she picked me up and we went out there. Fran asked me to pick up something at the house that she wanted, an address book. So I went to pick up the key from the people who lived across the street and looked after Fran's house. This brings us back to Tom. He hadn't come back yet, and while we were waiting, the husband of the woman who used to look after Auntie Anne, he walked into the back of Fran's house just to see if the yard was looked after. At that point, the man came out and he was furious because we dared to do this. He wouldn't let me into the house, wouldn't let them in. Anyway, Tom came a little later, thanked me for coming, etc., but that was about it. That was the whole contact [I had with him]. Interestingly, he phoned me from time to time. One time he asked me if I would be there when the attorneys met with her but that was the end of it. Tom called me that Christmas and said, "You know this is very lonely day for people. Do you think you can go out there and spend some time there?" Which I did.

**Besbris:** I understand that Tom and Fran are close.

[Pause]

**Shalin:** Tom and Fran?

**Besbris:** I heard what you said. I am trying to decide. He took over; he was very careful and very concerned about it. I don't know that she hears from him as frequently as she did at one time. Alice comes out to visit Fran.

**Shalin:** Do you know Alice?

**Besbris:** Yes. She has, you know, entered the field of sociology.

**Shalin:** She is writing a dissertation at Princeton. And you know her mother?

**Besbris:** Yes, I've met Gillian, who is in linguistics, which is kind of interesting.

**Shalin:** Erving was close to linguists, one of whom, William Labov, married Gillian, I understand.

**Besbris:** Yes, she married someone else after Erving died.

**Shalin:** There were other linguists like Dell Hymes, Birdwhistell.

**Besbris:** Don't know the names. I shouldn't be amazed at how much information you have, but this is astonishing.

**Shalin:** Well, look, I just study Erving.

**Besbris:** How long have you been doing this?

**Shalin:** I always took interest in his work but I didn't write about him, and then came back to him from another angle, from my studies of pragmatism that links our words with our deeds and our emotions. I look into the alignment between our words, deeds, and body, which sometimes work at cross purpose. That is, we say one thing, do another, and feel something else.

**Besbris:** What responsibility are you going to have with the Archives?

**Shalin:** It's an open source, web-based project that collects documents and biographical materials related to Erving Goffman. It is used by scholars interested in his work who can share their thoughts, post their studies, make comments, and so on. That's pretty much what I am doing.

**Besbris:** Except that you don't just gather them, you arrange them in some kind of order.

**Shalin:** I put on the web whatever has already been published about Erving, or at least provide a reference, and then I collect interviews and memoirs with Erving's students, colleagues and friends. I'll show you when I am in LA a sample of interviews I collected. I sent some to Marly already. The idea is to study, commemorate, and celebrate the life and work of this remarkable person.

**Besbris:** Is the university behind you on that?

**Shalin:** I am director of the UNLV Center for Democratic Culture which houses this project.

**Besbris:** So what they do?

**Shalin:** They give me thumbs up, support me morally more than anything else [**laughing**]. This center does different things. For instance, we study the quality of life in Nevada. Then I research emotional intelligence, do workshops for local organizations interested in the role of emotions in the workplace. I

am engaged in some collaborative studies with Russian scholars. If you have a computer, I can show you these projects, which are on the web and are easy to access. But so far as Erving's memory, I try to get a hold of people who knew him. Those who studied with him in Chicago are pushing 90 today.

**Besbris:** So it could be lost.

**Shalin:** Exactly. I spoke to Bob Habenstein who is in mid-90s now, Joe Gusfield who is almost 90, and others who are getting there as well.

**Besbris:** Do you have the names of people who Erving (a) went to school with, and (b) duly fraternized with?

**Shalin:** The people I mentioned – Joe Gusfield, Saul Mendlovitz – are the ones I talked to, and they give me more names to contact.

**Besbris:** What about the Winnipeg friends?

**Shalin:** Unfortunately, I don't know anyone out there.

**Besbris:** I'll get you some names.

**Shalin:** That would be terrific. I don't know if you've heard of Dennis Wrong, a Canadian sociologist who knew Erving. But Dennis is old and his memory is failing, it's hard to communicate with him. People age differently, some are as lucid as you are, some are not.

**Besbris:** I have two sources I could look up. I will get you the names.

**Shalin:** That would be only too wonderful. You didn't attend Erving's second wedding?

**Besbris:** No.

**Shalin:** I know Erving visited France, maybe in '54; he spent a year in France, probably with his wife.

**Besbris:** Would that be when he lived in Boston?

**Shalin:** I believe Erving spent a year at Harvard University in the mid-60s.

**Besbris:** Yes, that would be at least in 1961. That's why he was available to visit my sister when she was there visiting Fran. That would have been after 1960.

**Shalin:** You don't know much about Erving's trip to France.

**Besbris:** No.

**Shalin:** No one knows for sure, it seems. If you don't mind me asking you . . .

**Besbris:** Go ahead.

**Shalin:** You said that Erving was changing over the course of years, that he was more emotional as a child.

**Besbris:** I don't believe that I said that he had changed, but that when I knew him, those were characteristics present, OK? In his discussions with me he invited comments, he invited response, and so on. I would hesitate to call him and talk to him in later years when I knew that I couldn't.

**Shalin:** Several people I talked to noticed that Erving became less approachable with years, refused to let his pictures taken, and so on.

**Besbris:** Well, the Winnipeg story when he received his recognition [suggests that]. I believe that was a time when he would have stopped to see my mother. She was the woman that was in the house whenever he came to visit from Dauphin.

**Shalin:** He would be less available later on.

**Besbris:** I think so. I believe that is so.

**Shalin:** Do you have a hunch why this happened? Was it that he became famous?

**Besbris:** I don't believe that would be part of it. I don't think that was it.

**Shalin:** Maybe he was shy and didn't care for publicity.

**Besbris:** Maybe it had to do with the family thing, you know? I remember somebody once described family affairs as too much food and nothing to do. So we are expected to do certain things with the family.

**Shalin:** He didn't want to get involved with the family in 1976.

**Besbris:** When did you say it was?

**Shalin:** It was around 1976. And it was the University of, what, Manitoba or Winnipeg?

**Besbris:** It would be Manitoba. Check the year of that.

**Shalin:** I have this article somewhere on the web.

**Besbris:** I can verify that as well. I will talk to my niece and find out when she graduated. At any rate, in earlier years he would have stopped to see my mother. [On that occasion] from what I hear, he just walked off the stage and that was it.

**Shalin:** In the '60s and '70s, you didn't interact with Erving much.

**Besbris:** The last specific interaction was in '46 in Chicago.

**Shalin:** And then one more time you saw him walking down the street in LA in 1961.

**Besbris:** Yes, but in the intervening years I would hear about him through my aunt who kept me up to date about the work that he was doing, his son, his wife. Auntie Anne would share that with me. But that one time I saw him on the Hauser Boulevard walking back to Auntie Anne's apartment. The Park La Brea Apartments, that's what it was.

**Shalin:** How would you describe Erving's relationship with his mother, going back to childhood and later when he was visiting her in California?

**Besbris:** I wouldn't say that he was devoted but when he came, he spent the time with her, he looked after her. He looked after her finances to a degree, because we did that, my husband and I. No, let me put it this way – she had some property in Winnipeg, and so I would write the letters that she wanted me to write to the people and find out the man in the real estate who was running the business. He made off with a lot of money; my aunt lost a lot of money because he didn't pay the taxes, the income taxes. It was a horrendous situation. For a long time, because I wouldn't get involved with her income tax, Erving did her income taxes, I believe, up in San Francisco. And from what I understand, he signed over to her any returns on the books that he wrote. That's what she once told me.

**Shalin:** Royalties on his books.

**Besbris:** I think he signed them over to her. That's what I understand. I don't know anything more about it, but I know what Auntie Anne told me once.

**Shalin:** Anne was alone after Max died.

**Besbris:** No, when he died, there were a couple of nieces, the daughters of one of the sisters who were living in Los Angeles. She had them looking after her. This is the woman who never drove before, and she learned to drive a car. After Max died, she learned to drive a car so she would have some independence. I know she learned to drive a car and that's when she left the house and moved to the Park La Brea Apartments.

**Shalin:** This is where Erving came to visit his mother.

**Besbris:** Yes, when he would come.

**Shalin:** Would she visit him at Berkeley?

**Besbris:** I don't remember her going there.

**Shalin:** How frequently would you say Erving came to visit his mother?

**Besbris:** I can't tell you the frequency. I would imagine it would be several times a year, anyway. And remember that he would also come to UCLA. Those would be additional visits when he could have seen her or spoken with her.

**Shalin:** So he was there frequently. He seems to be a devoted son from what you tell me.

**Besbris:** I think so. I think he was. I know when Fran lost her son . . .

**Shalin:** I didn't know she did.

**Besbris:** Well, yes. That's why I was asking you about the year, about when Erving was in Winnipeg, because he was still living when Josh died. . . . Chuck and Fran moved from Boston to Florida where Chuck was given a very fine offer to take over the presidency of a department store in Florida. I will remember the name in a moment; I have to think of it – Jacksonville. . . . It is rather ironic, but Frances married a Bay from Dauphin, Charles Bay. This is interesting – Charles had a nephew in Dauphin, Jack, the son of Chuck's

brother, who attempted suicide. That is a funny expression, "It was successful." What do they mean by "successful" – that he managed to kill himself? I hate this expression.

**Shalin:** He failed, really. Did Erving respond to this in any way?

**Besbris:** Well, yes . . . I don't know whether he came out to Florida at that time or not. I will speak with Fran about that and see if we can get back to it.

**Shalin:** Fran told me that in the last few months of his life, Chuck came to visit Erving in Philadelphia. They must have been close.

**Besbris:** Yes, they were friends in Dauphin. Chuck was older and taller but they were friends. For a long time I don't think Auntie Anne knew how ill Erving was.

**Shalin:** Erving wouldn't say much about it.

**Besbris:** No, he would not. There is much that he didn't say to her about it. And he was ill for some time.

**Shalin:** When did Anne die – in '89?

**Besbris:** I think it was '89, in January or February.

**Shalin:** And Erving died in 1982, so she lived several years after her son died.

**Besbris:** You know, that's not the way it is supposed to be.

**Shalin:** Oh, having to bury your child is any parent's nightmare.

**Besbris:** Unfortunately, I know it myself too well. After that happened, I wouldn't say she went downhill, but you never really recover. There is no way you recover from that.

**Shalin:** She must have been terribly affected by that.

**Besbris:** I think so. I believe she was. Yes. She didn't go out for some time, and then almost the first day she had gone out, I think, she fell. She fell outside and injured herself. After that, she lost her speech.

**Shalin:** She couldn't speak?

**Besbris:** They weren't sure, she was having troubles speaking and breathing. They took her to some doctors in UCLA. I don't know if they ever determined what the problem was.

**Shalin:** Perhaps it was a mini stroke.

**Besbris:** It may have been. I know that at about the same time she was in a car that she was driving and had gone to Ralph's. She would bring a container and fill it with water there (she used to buy her water at Ralph's). She had a container in her car with whatever groceries she bought; as she was backing out, the container tipped and I think she bent over to pick it up, and her foot locked on the gas break – no, not on the break – on the gas pedal. She went backward, and she couldn't control the car that [smashed] into several cars. That was terrible time for her, terrible.

**Shalin:** I can imagine. She must have been in her 70s when she died.

**Besbris:** Oh, no. She was older than that.

**Shalin:** Oh, yes of course. She was born in 1899, so she was close to 90.

**Besbris:** She was close to the 90. . . It is one of the things I never told my mother. She predeceased my mother. We never told my mother about Auntie Anne. I've got to tell you something. That's an Averbach characteristic – we really never tell about the unpleasant things to our kids, to our family members. You know, it's not a good thing.

**Shalin:** How do you interpret this? Is it to protect the third parties, to avoid the unpleasant sentiments on your part?

**Besbris:** To protect the kids! Oh, yes. And this comes from the parents. My mother, and I suppose Auntie Anne, are fiercely protective of the kids.

**Shalin:** Family comes first and children foremost.

**Besbris:** Oh, children are foremost, of course. And I am learning now that you can't keep things from the kids, because they will only speculate and speculations are always worse than the reality.

**Shalin:** This is important, and perhaps you can give me your advice. Fran urges me to talk to Tom, Erving's son, but I am not certain he would want to

see some things said about his father or his mother.

**Besbris:** Have you made an attempt?

**Shalin:** I didn't. My first thought was to protect him, but Renee Fox, a friend of Erving who chaired the sociology department at the University of Pennsylvania, told me, "Look, you don't know; it might be important for Tom to know what's going on, what is known about his parents. It should be up to him to decide."

**Besbris:** I agree.

**Shalin:** He can ignore it, he can look it up, he might find it important.

**Besbris:** Especially if that information would be part of the Archives.

**Shalin:** Yes, that's the idea. Still, you wonder if it is better to let him find out from other sources.

**Besbris:** Let me ask you, if you don't tell him, what is [going to happen] then?

**Shalin:** Oh, he has already been told about the Goffman Archives. Marly Zaslov . . .

**Besbris:** Marly emailed him.

**Shalin:** Yes, she told me that she did.

**Besbris:** And he didn't respond.

**Shalin:** That's what I understand, which makes me think that he might not want to be bothered. I would hate to impose.

**Besbris:** Well, you have been very sensitive, and I appreciate that. But you will never know whether or not he would have responded.

**Shalin:** I think you are exactly right.

**Besbris:** I am sure that you would present it most graciously.

**Shalin:** For me, I would love to shake his hand and register my deep respect for his father as a scholar and as a teacher. I wouldn't want to engage him in

any conversation he would rather avoid. But I think it is the right thing for him to know about the Archives so he can decide if he wants to read anything, talk about it, whatever.

**Besbris:** You know, your last few sentences on tape would be what you can put into your email.

**Shalin:** That's what I feel. I wouldn't want to approach Alice. She was – what? – about one year old when Erving died?

**Besbris:** As a matter of fact, Alice is hungry for any information I could give her. When I told her my favorite story about the necklace, she just salivated.

**Shalin:** She might be interested, but I know that years ago some researchers approached her mother who politely indicated that she would rather not get involved. So I want to avoid any situation that would make her feel uncomfortable. But then again, it is not my decision. Alice can decide for herself if she wants to look up any of the materials collected for the archives.

**Besbris:** In addition – and this is strictly a maybe – if she is well enough, she will come to Fran's 90th birthday.

**Shalin:** Alice?

**Besbris:** Aha.

**Shalin:** Somebody mentioned that she had a car accident.

**Besbris:** She did, and a very serious one.

**Shalin:** Is she OK?

**Besbris:** She is in the process of recovering but she was unable to go back to school.

**Shalin:** Oh, God, is it that serious? When did it happen?

**Besbris:** Yes, it happened some months ago. She is now recovering at her mother's house, enough so that, as Marly or Fran told me (no it wouldn't be Fran because I am not talking about the party to Fran), one of Fran's caretakers who is planning it all [told me] that Alice might be well enough to come. There is a wonderful opportunity.

**Shalin:** I see. But not Tom.

**Besbris:** I don't know about Tom. It may be. I don't know. I know that sometime she doesn't hear from them, and she expresses her disappointment to me.

**Shalin:** Fran?

**Besbris:** Yes, Fran. I guess it was a mother's day or something, she didn't hear from them, I think. . . .

**Shalin:** We will be winding down very shortly. Now, I value your perceptiveness, so I wonder if you can shed light on Fran's and Erving's interest in theater. Fran has these artistic sensibilities.

**Besbris:** Absolutely.

**Shalin:** And Erving uses the world-as-theater metaphor to illuminate society.

**Besbris:** Right!

**Shalin:** Do you see a connection here? My daughter told me recently, "Watch Happy Gilmore. There is Erving's sister there."

**Besbris:** Oh, yes!

**Shalin:** We watched it, and I kind of loved it.

**Besbris:** She is great in it.

**Shalin:** I know it is pure speculation, but what is your take on stage performance and the family dynamic?

**Besbris:** I'll tell you, that's what my son refers to as "damn Averbach gene." His son, who graduated Phi Beta from Berkeley and had an opening to attend med school, had given it all up to be a sport announcer [**laughing**].

**Shalin:** Wait a second, this is your son?

**Besbris:** This is my son's son, my grandson. My son said it was that damn Averbach's gene.

**Shalin:** Why is it "damn"?

**Besbris:** Oh, well, you know, it is not said in anger.

**Shalin:** OK, it is humorous. But it probably means something like being independent, stubborn, self-aware.

**Besbris:** Well, it is role playing – for Fran in theater, for Erving in his writings, and for my grandson in announcing [**laughing**].

**Shalin:** Is he aware of Goffman's work?

**Besbris:** Pardon?

**Shalin:** Is your grandson familiar with Goffman's work?

**Besbris:** I don't know, he is much more in the field of science. Obviously, somehow he got it at Berkeley. I don't know.

**Shalin:** But you sense some connection to role playing, self-presentation . . .

**Besbris:** Of course!

**Shalin:** You think there is something in the genes?

**Besbris:** It could be, it could be [**laughing**]. The histrionics of the family . . . you know, I was tongue-in-cheek when I said it before. Fran grew up loving the theater from the time she was 8 or 9 years old, and at that time she knew she wanted to be an actress, all right? Erving, as you have pointed out, wrote with such compassion and intuitive skills and whatever else you referred to . . . My Aunt Anne, I am sure, would have done well on the stage.

**Shalin:** She also had this dramatic presence.

**Besbris:** Oh, yes! Any family member had. Life is dull, it makes it more interesting.

**Shalin:** We have to make it more interesting, be humorous about it, not let it get too deeply under our skins. It's too painful otherwise.

**Besbris:** Yes. We can't dig too deeply into that because sometime you end up with nothing.

**Shalin:** Esther, let me quickly take a look at the year when Erving visited Winnipeg.

**Besbris:** If you wish, I wasn't questioning it.

**Shalin:** Oh, OK.

**Besbris:** I was just trying to get a time frame.

**Shalin:** It's on my computer screen. Wait just a second.

**Besbris:** OK.

[Pause]

**Shalin:** Esther?

**Besbris:** Yes.

**Shalin:** It says 1976.

**Besbris:** That's what you said.

**Shalin:** But it says it was at the University of Manitoba.

**Besbris:** Yes. '76, OK. I am trying to think of the year when Josh died. I have to think back . . . Josh was born in '47.

**Shalin:** That's the year I was born.

**Besbris:** Really! Oh, you are a young man.

**Shalin:** Sixty one, I am getting there. Forty seven or early '48, and he died when he was 21 or 22. So he died in '68-'69.

**Besbris:** See, I am trying to think whether he [Erving] was in Winnipeg before or after.

**Shalin:** There must have been other honorary degrees and occasions.

**Besbris:** This would be the only time he visited Winnipeg that the family would have known about it.

**Shalin:** The article is from the *Winnipeg Free Press* that gave account of Erving's convocation speech. I'll bring it to you.

**Besbris:** Thank you so much.

**Shalin:** If your son is around, he can tell you how to access it right away.

**Besbris:** Except, I don't like to read on computer. I like the paper in my hand. If we can bring it up, I can print it out.

**Shalin:** Or maybe I will type it and show you the text. I don't have an original paper, only a visual image of it.

**Besbris:** I appreciate that. Meanwhile, I will look back and see what names I can pick up for you, people we knew in Winnipeg who may no longer be living here but whose names we can research. You have to understand that they came from the North End, and from the sociological standpoint the North End was very significant in the people it produced and the areas of endeavor that they undertook. It was amazing.

**Shalin:** Also, when you have a chance, look up the photos and memorabilia related to Max, Anne, Erving, and Fran.

**Besbris:** I told you I have the Apache dancers; that's the cute one of the two of them.

**Shalin:** It would be great to see that.

**Besbris:** I'll put it together, with the kids . . . hold on, I have to get your address. I'll mail it to you. OK, I will mail you the picture but not the book.

**Shalin:** Sure, sure.

**Besbris:** Because the cover is falling off.

**Shalin:** Maybe when I see you in Los Angeles.

**Besbris:** I shall bring it. Let me get . . . your address, Mr. Shalin.

**Shalin:** OK, I will give you my home address. This year I am on a sabbatical leave and work at home

**Besbris:** Oh, great! So it is S-h-a . . .

**Shalin:** S-h-a-l-i-n

**Besbris:** Give me that again.

**Shalin:** S-h-a-l-i-n – Shalin.

**Besbris:** That's what I have.

**Shalin:** And the address is < . . . >.

**Besbris:** 89123?

**Shalin:** That's right. Whatever else you may have that you can show me, that would be great. I will check it when I am in LA. Maybe I could make a copy.

**Besbris:** The pictures they are old. It may be better for you to look at them [when you are here]. Remember they are 60 years old and more.

**Shalin:** That's right. When I transcribe our conversation, I will send you a copy, so you can go over the transcript, edit it, redact it – if you feel that something should remain confidential, you can indicate so.

**Besbris:** I am also counting on your discretion as well.

**Shalin:** Yes. You should also bring my attention to what specifically needs to be redacted and what can be shared with Goffman scholars. I will use my discretion but rely on you to decide what should not enter public domain.

**Besbris:** It is Dr. Shalin, isn't it?

**Shalin:** Yes, but "Professor Shalin" is the title I don't use in informal communications.

**Besbris:** My son got a doctorate and I never know how to introduce him.

**Shalin:** His doctorate is in a technical field?

**Besbris:** In pharmacology.

**Shalin:** I see.

**Besbris:** Anyway, to you and yours – all the best, OK?

**Shalin:** The same to you and your family, and I very much look forward to meeting you in person, Esther. It was wonderful to hear your voice and to share all these things with you.

**Besbris:** Thank you so much.

**Shalin:** Wonderful. Take care.

**Besbris:** I really appreciate it.

**Shalin:** Thank you so much.

**Besbris:** Good night.

**Shalin:** Bye-bye.

**[End of the Recording]**