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Frances Goffman Bay

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Remembering Erving Goffman

Frances Goffman Bay:

At His Bar Mitzvah Erving Gave a Little Speech That He Wrote Himself and That He Called "Ode to Mother"

This conversation with Frances Goffman Bay was recorded over the phone on January 1, 2009. After Dmitri Shalin transcribed the conversation, Frances Goffman Bay read 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 "[?]".

Unidentified Person: Hello.

Shalin: Greetings. This is Dmitri Shalin calling from the University of Nevada.

Unidentified Person: Yes?

Shalin: May I speak to Frances, please? We have set up a conversation for today.

Unidentified Person: OK, hold on, please.

Shalin: Thank you.

[Pause]

Bay: Hi-i!

Shalin: Is this Frances?

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: Greetings, Frances. How are you?

Bay: I am OK.

Shalin: Just OK?

Bay: Is this Dmitri?

Shalin: Yes, this is Dmitri. You suggested that I call on Tuesday. Is it a bad time for us to talk?

Bay: Well, yes. My bookkeeper is coming any minute now.

Shalin: OK, should I call you in a couple of hours?

Bay: Dmitri, I hate to put you off.

Shalin: Maybe some other day?

Bay: What I want to do, Dmitri, is find the papers that Erving wrote and [papers about] him, the news things.

Shalin: Wonderful.

Bay: Unless you have it all.

Shalin: No, I don't. I would very much like to see those.

Bay: Not the papers that he wrote but about him. I have to find them.

Shalin: OK.

Bay: It's been kind of . . . I had a lot of company, and one of them just left yesterday [**laughing**].

Shalin: I see.

Bay: So, I am sorry.

Shalin: That's quite all right, Frances. If there is a better day, let me know. I want to ask you about the Jewish life in Canada at the time when your parents came there, whether Erving had a Bar Mitzvah, things like that.

Bay: He did. And I think it was at his Bar Mitzvah that he made a speech about his mother. Did you know that Erving . . . well, I've got to talk to you much.

Shalin: Yes, we definitely should talk. It is important to let you speak.

Bay: That's right.

Shalin: So when would be a good time for me to call?

Bay: Let' see . . .

Shalin: Any time you tell me is fine.

Bay: What about tomorrow?

Shalin: That's fine. Eleven o'clock?

Bay: Is it convenient for you to talk tonight?

Shalin: Tonight would be perfect.

Bay: You are very nice [**laughing**]

Shalin: Should I call you tonight?

Bay: All right.

Shalin: What time would be good?

Bay: Today is what – Wednesday night?

Shalin: Today is Tuesday.

Bay: That would be fine.

Shalin: Around seven or six?

Bay: It doesn't matter. Seven o'clock would be fine.

Shalin: OK, I'll call you at seven tonight.

Bay: Sorry to be so difficult, but because of the holiday, the bookkeeper comes today. She is coming in shortly. I went to the airport yesterday to take some friends back, that sort of things. OK, Dmitri, that would be great.

Shalin: Wonderful, I will call tonight at seven o'clock.

Bay: That's fine.

Shalin: Thank you so much.

Bay: Bye.

Shalin: Bye-bye.

. . .

Bay: Hello.

Shalin: Greetings, is this Frances?

Bay: Dmitri.

Shalin: How are you doing, Frances?

Bay: Fine.

Shalin: Are you tired?

Bay: No, not a bit.

Shalin: You sure you can talk?

Bay: Of course I can.

Shalin: Wonderful. First I want to ask you if I can record our conversation and then send you the transcript so you can edit and revise it. Would that be OK with you?

Bay: [**Laughing**] OK, dear. Could I delete [things]?

Shalin: You can delete anything you want.

Bay: OK.

Shalin: If there is something you wish to keep confidential, you can designate that as such. No one will see that.

Bay: That's very thoughtful of you.

Shalin: It is up to you what, if anything, you wish to share with scholars who study Erving's life and work.

Bay: You want to talk about his childhood?

Shalin: Yes, yes. Let me tell you what interests me in particular and then

you can take this conversation in any direction you want. And make sure to let me know if you get tired. I don't want to overwhelm you.

Bay: Dmitri, I seat in a wheelchair, I don't get tired. Sometimes my thoughts get twisted up because I am almost 90 years old.

Shalin: You know, my mother lives with me, and she is almost 90 years old too.

Bay: Really!?

Shalin: Yes, she came from Russia in 1991 and has lived with me in Las Vegas ever since.

Bay: Oh, really! That's nice.

Shalin: She is mostly in her room these days, watching her Russian TV and reading Russian newspapers.

Bay: Well, because of my interest, I have a lot of movies and I can watch. But I have some friends, and I have caregivers. They help me with a lot of things, feeding me and all that. I am very active on a wheelchair. I can get all around my house.

Shalin: That's wonderful. I would like to ask you about your parents, the role of Judaism in their lives.

Bay: I'd be happy to.

Shalin: For instance, did Erving and you speak Yiddish?

Bay: No.

Shalin: Did you encounter anti-Semitism at Dauphin, and so on.

Bay: All right, dear.

Shalin: To begin with, a little bit about your parents.

Bay: My parents were from Russia. You know that.

Shalin: Yes, I do.

Bay: My father was 10 years older than my mother. My mother was a very pretty woman. She was an old fashioned type of mother. She could be strict, she was particularly strict with Erving. I am three-and-a-half years older than Erving, and my father, he was a very quiet man. She ran the household, and he would not let my mother spunk me. He spoiled me a lot but I didn't turn out to be spoiled. Erving, however, was so adventurous, he was so fearless, he was so curious that he got into a lot of trouble. When we were living in Dauphin, we had a nice house, and Erving used to go with his friends to steal crabapples. Not really stealing them; they would go ahead and take them, because we had a lot of crabapples in the area. Erving was a scientist; there were big explosions in the basement because he was experimenting with things. The people that knew us, and everybody knew [us] in Dauphin, Manitoba, they thought he was going to be a big scientist, quite the opposite of the way he turned out.

Shalin: He is a big sociologist.

Bay: Yes, of course, he is a sociologist.

Shalin: But not a natural scientist.

Bay: No, no, no. Erving experimented with glasses, that sort of things.

Shalin: He did chemical experiments.

Bay: Chemistry, that's right, when he was a kid. He turned out to be quite the opposite, as you know. Dauphin, being a town with a population of 4,000 and only about a dozen Jewish families, my mother and father coming from Russia [spoke ?] Yiddish. They could speak English with an accent, which is fine. They brought us up . . . I am afraid to talk too much.

Shalin: Oh, no, this is very interesting! Please continue. I'm just thinking how lucky I am to hear you speak.

Bay: Well, Erving was fearless. I have to say that Erving physically was fearless. He could be on the top . . . I remember him, when I was nearly 19 years old, jumping on the roof of the neighbor's house and not getting hurt. He wasn't . . . I don't think he was that interested in the sports. He could try anything, and I am not exaggerating about that.

Shalin: He was quite athletic, physically gifted, right?

Bay: No, no, no. He was tiny, he was short.

Shalin: But he was agile, he was active.

Bay: He was what?

Shalin: Active, action-bound.

Bay: A lot of action, absolutely. I can't remember whether he was a good swimmer. We lived near lake in Manitoba. We used to go swimming, but I can't remember Erving doing it. Let's see, so back in childhood he was a scamp, he was curious. I realize now, and I have for many many years, that my mother. . . . Let me go back a little bit. My mother used to spank him because he . . . at one point he took a lot of records, [Dolly Curtis ?] and all that stuff [**laughing**]. He was just a kid. He started the stairs going to the basement and dropped them all. She [Anne Goffman] spanked the hell out of him. He was so curious, we didn't realize that.

Shalin: Only mother spanked Erving, not father.

Bay: No, my father didn't spank anybody. My mother could spank him, because, I realized a long time ago, my mother identified with Erving more [than with me]. Erving looked like an Averbach of the family. I looked like a Goffman. I was interested in theater, in acting. My English teacher in the town got me interested in it, so I pursued that. Intellectually, I wasn't as curious and as brave as Erving was. With my life, I have to be brave anyway [**laughing**]. Does that describe it?

Shalin: Yes, it's wonderful. You say that physically you looked more like your father.

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: And Erving looked more like you mother.

Bay: Everybody thought that I looked like my mother. My face . . . I can send you pictures, if you are interested.

Shalin: I've seen some of your pictures on the web site.

Bay: Oh, you did?

Shalin: So people thought you looked like your mother.

Bay: Actually, I didn't look like an Averbach as much as my cousin did. They

don't realize that I am more Goffman than Averbach as far as the physicals are concerned, but I am tiny as my mother was.

Shalin: Did Erving resemble his father in any way?

Bay: No, he resembled more my mother side.

Shalin: So Erving could get into troubles.

Bay: Of course he did [**laughing**]. He did!

Shalin: Any particular kind of troubles? At home, at school?

Bay: No, not at school. We lived in a town a block away from the school. I can't remember at all whether Erving took part in sports, but with his friends they took crabapples, which were endogenous to the area. We thought he was stealing them, but he was just a kid. It was kind of fun thing to do.

Shalin: Was he caught or did he manage to get away?

Bay: What?

Shalin: Did anyone catch Erving stealing apples?

Bay: Well, my mother spanked him, that's all. It wasn't really stealing, it was his curiosity.

Shalin: What kind of hobbies Erving had? Did he like music, for instance?

Bay: Music?

Shalin: Yes.

Bay: At one point . . . did you read about that?

Shalin: No, I am just curious if Erving liked music, and if so, what kind of music.

Bay: I don't think he listened to music. My mother had old 78 records, and we had a gramophone. You don't know what that is, do you?

Shalin: Of course I do. It's a very old record player.

Bay: My mother would listen to it a lot, but I can't remember that we did as kids.

Shalin: I understand that Erving liked to experiment.

Bay: [He liked] scientific experiments

Shalin: Any other hobbies, things he liked to do?

Bay: He would go down to the basement, you know, we all had basements in Dauphin. He would go down and there would be an explosion in the house. He did that quite a bit. That made the town people think that he was going to be a famous scientist.

Shalin: Interesting.

Bay: That's right.

Shalin: Was he a good student?

Bay: I guess he was. In spite of his fearlessness, he was also very sentimental.

Shalin: How did it show?

Bay: All right, I'll give you an example. At his Bar Mitzvah, he gave a little speech that he wrote himself. At that time he would [call it] "Ode to Mother." I remember it was for mother. He was younger then. Instead of being a tough cold kid, he turned out to be very sentimental.

Shalin: What did he say in his speech?

Bay: What?

Shalin: What did he say in his Ode to Mother?

Bay: Oh, God, I wish I had it.

Shalin: It must have been tender.

Bay: It was very tender, very tender. It was beautiful. I wish I had a recording of it.

Shalin: There is no text of the speech he gave.

Bay: At his Bar Mitzvah?

Shalin: Yes.

Bay: I've seen a lot of articles written by him, more of his writings, but no, I don't have it.

Shalin: It didn't survive.

Bay: Oh, no. I don't think so. It was a personal thing. There were about 12 Jewish families in Dauphin.

Shalin: How many?

Bay: Only about 10 or 12 Jewish families in Dauphin. There wasn't assimilation, but we were friends with gentiles. My mother and father had a strict Jewish practice. For example, on Hanukkah . . . do you know what Hanukah is?

Shalin: Yes, of course. I am Jewish.

Bay: [**Laughing**] All right! I just lit the candles. I had a beautiful menorah; I would light the candles one night after another, remembering how my mother did it.

Shalin: Was there a synagogue in town?

Bay: We had one synagogue. There weren't that many Jewish families, so my parents rented it for High Holidays. Except for our parents, we were brought up in a mixed neighborhood.

Shalin: Was there anti-Semitism in town?

Bay: Oh, my dear, there must have been.

Shalin: I have read about anti-Semitism in Canada.

Bay: Well, not more than in the United States. Oh, my father, he was such a quiet man. Maybe you know this, he ran a little store on main street in Dauphin.

Shalin: What kind of store?

Bay: Dry goods store.

Shalin: Dry goods?

Bay: Clothing. Parenthetically, it was two doors away from my husband's family store. That's how we met.

Shalin: Aha!

Bay: But you are not interested in that.

Shalin: No, everything that concerns you and Erving and your parents is of interest to me.

Bay: [**Laughing**] OK, then. I can tell you a lot about that.

Shalin: We'll come back to it. So you say there was some anti-Semitism in town.

Bay: Absolutely. I didn't realize it, or I might have realized it because some kids could play with me and others couldn't. No, I'll retract that. There were six girls in my youth, and we were the mafia in the town. We ran the town socially; we were very active in school. Two of us were Jewish, six of them were not Jewish. We played tennis together and all that. One of them, I think, was anti-Semite. I remember her name, but . . . I don't know how to put it, but of course there was anti-Semitism.

Shalin: There was a lot of interaction between different religions.

Bay: Not religious, but [social] interactions.

Shalin: Would you say that Jewishness was important to Erving? Did he identify with Judaism, its history?

Bay: I don't think he did. I don't know, except for his Bar Mitzvah. The kids he played with were not Jewish. They couldn't be – there were only a few Jews. I married the boy whom I knew when I was a kid, and there was one other Jewish boy, but I don't think the [kids] Erving grew with were Jewish.

Shalin: And your husband wasn't Jewish?

Bay: My husband was very Jewish! Absolutely!

Shalin: His name is?

Bay: Chuck Eli Bay.

Shalin: Ira?

Bay: What?

Shalin: His first name.

Bay: Chuck Bay. Charles Bay. His father was Eli.

Shalin: Oh, I see. Do you remember what social life Erving had as a teen, how was he at parties, did he have a girlfriend?

Bay: I don't know that, dear. I was older and very active in plays and stuff. I went to functions. I don't know, Erving might have been younger.

Shalin: Was Erving active in any social causes, student government?

Bay: That's a very good question, but I don't know the answer. When we moved to Winnipeg, he was active in organizations. He went to St. John's . . .

Shalin: St. John's Technical School?

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: I have heard that in Winnipeg Jewish students protested their teacher's anti-Semitism and boycotted classes for a while.

Bay: Really?

Shalin: I don't know if you have heard about that.

Bay: No.

Shalin: In 1937, I believe, there was some kind of a strike by students in St. John's Technical School, and I was wondering if Erving might have been part of that.

Bay: I am sorry I don't know the answer to this.

Shalin: That's OK. Erving's first wife was not Jewish.

Bay: No.

Shalin: Was it a problem for his parents when Erving married a non-Jewish woman?

Bay: It would have been but my parents . . . and Gillian was . . .

Bay: Angelica?

Bay: Angelica was such a nice person. She was from New England, from a very prominent family, but Angelica, she did not dress fashionably. She was a very straight and very good [person] and an intellectual too.

Shalin: I understand she was a student at the University of Chicago, just like Erving.

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: She was working for her Ph.D. but never defended it.

Bay: That's right. . . .

Shalin: Did you attend Erving's wedding?

Bay: Yes, of course, with Pam and Tom.

Shalin: I am talking about his first marriage.

Bay: I don't remember that, Dmitri. I am very close to Erving's son. And are you going to speak to Alice at all?

Shalin: I would love to, but I don't want to make her feel uncomfortable. She was about one year old when Erving died.

Bay: That's right. She was born, I think, before he died.

Shalin: Erving died in 1982.

Bay: That's right. . . . Parenthetically, Alice looks exactly like him!

Shalin: Alice?

Bay: Alice looks exactly like Erving.

Shalin: What about Tom?

Bay: Tom doesn't.

Shalin: Does he look like his mother?

Bay: Yes, much more so. Tom and Alice visit me, and they are very endearing to me.

Shalin: That's wonderful.

Bay: I don't know, it's a good question. How familiar would he be with the Erving's [Archives]?

Shalin: Marly Zaslov told Tom about this project, so he may be aware of it, but I don't know if he looked it up.

Bay: Dmitri, would you like to talk to him?

Shalin: I would love to, as long as he wants it too. I just don't think he would appreciate me popping up with, "Hey, I would like to talk to you about your father."

Bay: I am going to call him. I'd be happy to. I'll find out from him.

Shalin: But please remember it's fine if he would rather not. I will be in New York in the middle of January. I think he lives not too far from the city.

Bay: What did you say about New York?

Shalin: I am going to New York in two weeks.

Bay: Oh, my!

Shalin: And I know he lives not too far from the city.

Bay: In Virginia, right?

Shalin: Right. I can visit him, take him out to dinner. I'd just like to shake his hand and register my respect for his father.

Bay: Dmitri, I am going to ask him. When I tell him, are you writing a book about Erving?

Shalin: I am thinking about a book that connects Erving the scholar with Erving the man. I feel his childhood experiences and emotions are present in his scholarship.

Bay: Of course, of course. . . . I am [?] to talk, but do you know Gillian, Alice's mother?

Shalin: I do not know her personally. From what I have read, she avoids talking about Erving.

Bay: Gillian would be a good person to talk to.

Shalin: Indeed, but I doubt she would want to.

Bay: No, no. That's a good point. . . . OK [**Laughing**].

Shalin: Now, Frances, you don't remember the wedding of Erving and Angelica.

Bay: No, I don't think I was [there]. I remember Erving's grandson. I was at Tom's son's wedding [it was a Bar Mitzvah].

Shalin: How many children does Tom have?

Bay: One.

Shalin: Do you know what he is studying?

Bay: I don't know. Tom is a doctor, you know. He . . . was associating with a different area [for a while], not medicine. I don't know whether he has gone back to it or not. But we are very close and I could talk to him any time.

Shalin: That's great.

Bay: You never come to the West coast?

Shalin: My daughter is graduating in May from the University of Southern Illinois [actually from the University of Southern California], and I plan to be at her graduation.

Bay: Really?

Shalin: I would love to visit with you then.

Bay: I would adore it. When it will be in?

Shalin: Her graduation is in May.

Bay: How nice!

Shalin: She is graduating from the University of Southern Illinois.

Bay: Illinois is not here.

Shalin: No, no, I mean from the University of Southern California.

Bay: Oh, really.

Shalin: From USC.

Bay: I am so close to it.

Shalin: You know, a few days ago my daughter told me that "Happy Gilmore" was playing on TV.

Bay: It is?

Shalin: The movie that you are in. My daughter said, "Dad let's see it together," and we did. I loved it.

Bay: You know what, Dmitri, I have done a lot of it. Do you know that Erving wrote a lot about theater too?

Shalin: Of course, he is the founder of the dramaturgical perspective in sociology.

Bay: What?

Shalin: Dramaturgical sociology.

Bay: Absolutely.

Shalin: He sees the social world as a stage where people are bit players.

Bay: That's right.

Shalin: That's why I am intrigued about the connection between you, a famous Canadian actress, and Erving Goffman, a famous sociologist.

Bay: [**Laughing**] You've got it. I don't have Erving's kind of cap.

Shalin: Well, both of you have a "Yiddishe kop," but his is a kop of a scholar, yours is a kop of an artist. So you recall that Erving's marrying a non-Jewish person was not a problem.

Bay: That's a good point.

Shalin: Parents did not raise it as an issue.

Bay: No, they didn't. They didn't reject her at all. As a matter of fact, my father and mother were friendly with Angelica. But maybe they were a little intimidated because of the culture they were not familiar with. But [ours] is a culture that she may not be aware of.

Shalin: So parents and Angelica got along fine.

Bay: What?

Shalin: Angelica and parents liked each other.

Bay: Yes, they were very respectful of each other. Whatever they were feeling, they didn't show it. As a matter of fact, I have a snapshot of Gillian [Schuyler] and Tom when he was a little kid. I've got to find them if you want to see them.

Shalin: I would love to. But you are talking about Angelica and Tom.

Bay: Yes, she was brought up in Boston, in an upper class society in New England.

Shalin: Yes, there is a famous Choate prep school that her father or grandfather set up.

Bay: Yes. That's right. You know all of that [**laughing**]. She didn't show that. She met Erving at the University of Chicago, is that where they met?

Shalin: They both were students when they met.

Bay: That's right.

Shalin: They were writing their dissertations, but Erving was at the sociology department and Angelica was at the anthropology department, I think. They must have married in 1950 or 1951.

Bay: Oh, good for you.

Shalin: Anything else you remember about her? As you know, she died tragically in 1964.

Bay: Yes. She was reserved, warm. We were ladies with each other, and we cared for each other in a way that you could. And she was wonderful about Tom having a relationship with us.

Shalin: That is Angelica you are talking about, Erving's first wife, not Gillian whom Erving married later.

Bay: I don't know when they were married.

Shalin: So you are talking about your warm relationship with Angelica.

Bay: Yes, of course. Let me put it this way, I don't know if I am imagining it, but we cared for each other and we were ladies with each other. We wouldn't step over the line. I am not explaining it very nicely.

Shalin: No, I understand what you mean. You were civil to each other.

Bay: Absolutely. And Gillian is a wonderful wonderful person, and a very accomplished person.

Shalin: Gillian is a scholar.

Bay: Oh, yes, absolutely. She is from Canada, the best of Canadian in a way.

Shalin: I didn't realize Gillian is a Canadian.

Bay: That's right, yes. Are you going to talk to her at all?

Shalin: Only if she wants to. I've heard that she doesn't welcome inquiries

about Erving.

Bay: I didn't know that.

Shalin: And I would hate to impose.

Bay: Oh, that could be a point, a very good point, Dmitri.

Shalin: Now, when did your parents move to the United States?

Bay: Oh, God, I should know.

Shalin: Wasn't it around 1952?

Bay: It could be. My husband and I and our son were living in LA. My husband went to Harvard University, he is a businessman. He died some years ago. He was a curious guy who loved to further his work, so we moved to Los Angeles.

Shalin: When?

Bay: Oh, God, I should look it up.

Shalin: Was it in the 1940s?

Bay: No, I was in Canada during the war. We got married in 1946, and two years later we moved to LA.

Shalin: So it was in 1948. And then did your parents join you?

Bay: They joined us after we had moved there.

Shalin: I believe your father died in 1954.

Bay: That's right.

Shalin: I think he moved to Los Angeles in 1952.

Bay: It could be, yes.

Shalin: That's what his obituary says.

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: Erving was at Berkeley between 1958 and 1968.

Bay: What?

Shalin: He was at Berkeley . . .

Bay: Oh, yes, yes.

Shalin: Your mother must have been in Los Angeles at that time. Do you know if Erving saw his mother when he was at Berkley?

Bay: Yes, he would visit us, visit her, and spend like two days with her. He was happy to do that. He didn't spend too much time. He was honorable with her. He would visit us. . . . Erving would admire my clothes. . . . I felt the relationship was based on . . . I am putting it very badly. He loved me, and I adored him, but our minds were so different. I have never been an intellectual, neither a scholar. I went to the university, was more interested in theater, and dropped out in my last year. I regretted it all my life. Erving, he didn't put me down a whole lot, but I thought he was nice with the family, and the fact that he visited us was wonderful.

Shalin: Mother and Erving had a good relationship.

Bay: A very good relationship.

Shalin: Did Erving argue when mother punished him?

Bay: When he was a kid?

Shalin: When he was a kid.

Bay: My, God [**laughing**]. He couldn't do that! In those days you could punish a kid, but she didn't beat him or anything like that. We wouldn't have done that. My father wouldn't have allowed it for one thing. But she spanked him, particularly when he dropped the records.

Shalin: What was Erving's response – was he angry?

Bay: When he was a kid?

Shalin: Yes.

Bay: He might have apologized. Are you reaching for something that might have turned him [angry ?].

Shalin: Some students who worked with Erving recall that he could be abrasive.

Bay: Oh, very much so.

Shalin: I am puzzling over Erving temperament.

Bay: This is a very good point. There was one point when I saw him with students who were coming along and trying to shake his hand and he wouldn't do it.

Shalin: Shake hand with whom?

Bay: That is something I remembered. He was speaking or whatever.

Shalin: As an adult?

Bay: Oh, he was an adult [then].

Shalin: And he refused to shake hands?

Bay: Well, maybe he thought it was like a false thing, [it was] a dishonest person.

Shalin: Oh, I see. He didn't shake hands with someone he did not respect.

Bay: There were a few students. I am trying to remember. My head is so old.

Shalin: It's coming together, Frances.

Bay: I do remember I have heard about the lecture and I went to visit . . . Oh, yes, maybe he was doing an address and students were so happy to be there. I do remember that a lot of students loved him very much. They didn't know he was sick.

Shalin: He had devoted students. But some remember that he could tease them.

Bay: [Laughing] He had a mind to do that, of course.

Shalin: Do you remember if anyone in the family was teasing when you were growing up?

Bay: I don't remember that at all, Dmitri. Mother and father teasing him? Not a bit. They were too strict, too parental [for that]. My mother could spank him for stealing the crabapples, but no, they wouldn't tease.

Shalin: Do you remember the books he liked to read, the games he played when he was growing up?

Bay: I'll tell you one thing – he loved to play pool. My parents bought him a table, it was on our veranda in Dauphin, and he played on it.

Shalin: Was he good at it?

Bay: I can't remember. I didn't play it.

Shalin: Did he play chess?

Bay: A good point, I don't know. Maybe you can find out from Gillian if you talk to her.

Shalin: Did Erving smoke?

Bay: I don't think so. No, he wasn't a smoker.

Shalin: Did you and Erving play any games when you were growing up?

Bay: I will tell you something that I was ashamed of all my life. We lived in a nice house and my mother and father put us in the same bedroom when we were just babies. And I would tell Erving stories and make him cry.

Shalin: What kind of stories?

Bay: Fairy stories. I was just a kid, and he would listen to them. Maybe that's why he wrote some of the papers that he has on behavior. I do remember that we had a window that looked up on the street, and the birds would come up through the window and we would talk to the birds and I would tell Erving stories. I can't remember whether I made them up or what.

Shalin: He was sensitive.

Bay: What?

Shalin: Sensitive, sentimental. He was emotional.

Bay: Of course, he was.

Shalin: You say he cried listening to your stories.

Bay: That is a very good point. I think he was far more emotional than he wanted to exhibit.

Shalin: Very interesting. He was emotional but he didn't like to show it.

Bay: I think so.

Shalin: At that time men were supposed to be strong and silent and show little emotion.

Bay: That's right [**laughing**]. Well, when he was a child . . . I keep remembering the speech that he made, ode to his mother, when he was 13 years old. He wouldn't behave like that, he wouldn't show [his emotions] when he was older. He would still come to visit her, as I said before.

Shalin: Erving showed respect for his mother.

Bay: Of course, he did.

Shalin: His Bar Mitzvah speech shows that.

Bay: Of course, absolutely.

Shalin: You don't remember anything in particular about this speech.

Bay: I am so sorry!

Shalin: Oh, that's OK. You have that emotional memory of Erving and his kindness, just not specific words.

Bay: The fact that he could speak the way he did at his Bar Mitzvah meant an awful lot to my parents.

Shalin: How did they respond?

Bay: [It wasn't] strictly religious . . . I am not putting it well. . . . On a personal note, when we moved out of Dauphin, cause we lived there for a long time, I was going to college, and my father sold his store, where he was very comfortable, and he moved us to Winnipeg so that I wouldn't marry a gentile boy.

Shalin: That's why he moved to Winnipeg?

Bay: I think so. He also wanted me to be sociable. Well, I was sociable at school in Dauphin, but he wanted me to be where [there were] more Jews.

Shalin: That is interesting. Could you tell me a bit more about your father?

Bay: He smoked a cigar, and he felt a lot of things emotionally. I remember he wouldn't express them. I remember . . . oh, God, I remember I almost married a gentile boy. I met Chuck Bay when I was 9 years old, fell in and out of love with him, you know, as kids do. At one point, when I was doing radio, I was going out with a lot of people in Winnipeg, and my father was so concerned that I might marry a non-Jewish [man].

Shalin: Did he tell you that?

Bay: Yes, he did. He wouldn't forbid me. He just said very simply, which touched me deeply, that he loved me so much. You expect that. He wouldn't want me to be hurt in my life. . . . At one point, and I will never forget that, maybe during the holiday . . . I did work in Toronto and Montreal and came back to Winnipeg, and he thought I was going off to Toronto with somebody else that I had a crush on [**laughing**]. He was afraid that I would not marry a Jewish boy.

Shalin: What did your mother think? Was it important to her as well as it was for your father?

Bay: Well, we just assumed . . . it wasn't an issue, except that my father was [concerned] that I was seeing one young man too much, and he was afraid of that. My mother, I don't think she ever doubted it. She didn't doubt it, she loved what I was doing.

Shalin: You parents supported your professional activities.

Bay: Very much. I am sure if they understood it, they supported Erving too.

Shalin: Were there books at your home, a library?

Bay: Yes. My mother had a lot of records.

Shalin: She liked music.

Bay: She loved music.

Shalin: Classical or popular?

Bay: I wouldn't know that [**laughing**]. Of course, I love it very much.

Shalin: Were there books in your home?

Bay: I have a lot of them now.

Shalin: And back then?

Bay: Not as much as Erving would have, but I am very interested.

Shalin: Did your parents have books?

Bay: It's a good question, Dmitri. I can't remember.

Shalin: That's all right. You say your family was comfortable. Would you say you were middle class?

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: Upper-middle class?

Bay: Middle class Jews.

Shalin: Did the Depression affect your family much?

Bay: Oh, yes, it did! It sure did. We had written about it when I was doing the Walk of Fame thing. For 50 cents you could go to the theater, the whole family could go to the theater. We lived just two blocks away from it. I didn't realize that we were going through the Depression. My mother cooked to make sure that we were comfortable and well fed, but my father had to worry a lot during the Depression. He did work a lot and he did worry a lot.

Shalin: Your mother stayed at home.

Bay: Yes, she didn't have a career at all. In Russia she learned to sew, and she sewed clothe for me, for my dolls. Something's happening [**the line breaks**]. There is a signal on my phone.

Shalin: Do you want me to call you back?

Bay: Would you mind? It is < . . . >.

Shalin: Should I call right away?

Bay: That's fine.

[**Break**]

Bay: Hello.

Shalin: Are you there, Frances?

Bay: It's the same phone.

Shalin: Can you hear me?

Bay: I can hear you, yes, but I am hearing these beeps in between.

Shalin: I am not sure what the problem is.

Bay: Is this the only phone you have?

Shalin: No, I gave you the other number.

Bay: Oh, I didn't write it down. I thought it was the same. Let me write this one down.

Shalin: It is < . . . >.

[**Break**]

Bay: Hello.

Shalin: Is it better?

Bay: It is strange.

Shalin: I think it is better now.

Bay: OK, dear.

Shalin: We were talking about your father. You said he was a quiet man.

Bay: Very much, very much.

Shalin: And he smoked a cigar.

Bay: All the time!

Shalin: What did he do for fun?

Bay: He liked to play cards. He was very good at that.

Shalin: I think Erving also liked to play cards.

Bay: Exactly [**laughing**]!

Shalin: He was playing cards in Vegas.

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: I think he trained to be a dealer in Las Vegas.

Bay: I knew that he was doing that, but I didn't talk to him about that very much.

Shalin: Did your father have a car?

Bay: Of course, we had a car. And he was just a warm father. He had a good sense of humor. Erving might have gotten his sense of humor [from him]. But my father didn't know how . . . my father didn't make tart remarks. . . . My father was uneducated. My mother had more schooling than my father had.

Shalin: Did your mother finish high school?

Bay: I think so, yes.

Shalin: And your father?

Bay: I don't know that he did.

Shalin: I understand that you were an announcer during World War II.

Bay: That's right [**laughing**]. I was a girlfriend of the Canadian forces. I had [a job ?] on the radio.

Shalin: Which radio?

Bay: CBC.

Shalin: Was it a weekly program?

Bay: Yes, it was. I was already past college age, and because I loved acting so much I would do anything to be part of it, and radio [played a part] that TV had subsequently taken over. Radio was the way to do it. I did a lot of stage plays too. But you are not interested in that.

Shalin: I want to have a special conversation with you about your career, but I don't want to get too far from you and Erving at the moment. Maybe we can talk about your career another day. It is a special conversation.

Bay: I am sorry about that, Dmitri. It would take too long.

Shalin: Not today. First, let me ask you if you are tired? We can continue some other day.

Bay: [I hope] you come to visit me.

Shalin: I will do that.

Bay: I want to know about you, too.

Shalin: I will tell you, sure. I was born in Russia. My mother was Jewish, my father was Russian. They were not religious. I never met my father, who disappeared before I was born.

Bay: Really.

Shalin: I had a stepfather who was in my life maybe 10 or 11 years, then my mother divorced and I grew up with her. I studied philosophy at the University of Leningrad, defended my Ph.D. In 1975 I Left Russia when Russian Jews were allowed to emigrate, and in 1976 I came to the United States.

Bay: You were able to get out of Russia.

Shalin: That's right, I was a lucky one. And then I studied at Columbia University, got my Ph.D., taught at Illinois, and later I came to Las Vegas. Since 1991 I have been teaching at the University of Nevada.

Bay: Oh, my goodness! You were teaching sociology?

Shalin: That's right.

Bay: That's wonderful.

Shalin: Now, Frances, what do you know about Erving's politics – was he conservative or liberal?

Bay: How he was politically? My family . . . I am an Averbach and a Goffman. Of the Averbachs, one was teacher, several were socialists. I was a socialist at one point, and I am sort of [on the] left.

Shalin: Left of center.

Bay: I am very left of center.

Shalin: And Erving?

Bay: I don't know that he had that. I don't think he bothered with it, or maybe he did but he was quiet about it.

Shalin: And your father?

Bay: Oh, I don't know. I don't think he was political at all. But he was very respected in the town. When you come here, I have pictures. By the way I have some articles about Erving, *The New York Times Review [of Books]*. You probably have it, right?

Shalin: No, a lot of that I don't have. Do you have any letters from Erving?

Bay: No, I don't. I have nothing.

Shalin: Any photos of Erving?

Bay: I have photographs when he was a kid. I have some grownup pictures

of him, of course.

Shalin: I'd love to see them.

Bay: All right. You've got to come visit me.

Shalin: I meant to ask you, apparently Erving did not serve in the army during World War II, right?

Bay: Aha, I don't think so.

Shalin: He came to the States to study sociology in the late 1940s.

Bay: That's right. At that time I was living with three [?] girls in Toronto, and Erving was studying at the University of Toronto. He would come to see me and my girls, the gals I lived with. He loved them very much. Their names were "Marshall" and their father was a religious man, but they didn't practice. Erving would come to my house that I shared with three other gals in Toronto. He would stay with us for dinner and then he would leave. We would say, "Stay on!" He was friendly with them and he was a lot of fun.

Shalin: Do you know anything about Erving's social life in college? Did he have a girlfriend?

Bay: That's a good question. I get mixed up, Dmitri, with the way Erving was and how Tom is. Now, I think he did have a girlfriend. He did associate with a lot of good writers. You must know that.

Shalin: Oh, yes. And he read a lot of literature.

Bay: Yes.

Shalin: He often cites in his works novelists and philosophers. He must have read a lot.

Bay: You bet he did. And he associated with good writers.

Shalin: I see a possible connection between Erving and Anton Chekhov, the Russian writer. You must know his plays.

Bay: Not only did I know, I acted in his plays [**laughing**]!

Shalin: Really! I would love to see you acting one of Chekhov's plays

[**laughing**]. You must have some reviews.

Bay: Indeed.

Shalin: Chekhov wrote a story called "Ward No. 6." It is about a mental hospital where people are kept against their will, even though they are not necessarily crazy.

Bay: That sounds like Erving.

Shalin: Exactly! And that's why when I saw you in "Happy Gilmore" as a grandma warehoused in a nursing home, it was like you were in an asylum, in an institution where you lose your freedom.

[**Laughter**]

Bay: Erving wrote about [such] institutions.

Shalin: Right. Do you remember when Tom was born?

Bay: Yes, of course. They were living in . . .

Shalin: Chicago.

Bay: Yes, in Chicago, and subsequently . . . oh, I've got to straighten that out . . . I remember when Tom was a little baby, not a baby but a young boy. As a matter of fact, I have some pictures of him. You don't know Alice.

Shalin: No, I don't.

Bay: Alice is a sweet version, a happy version of Erving.

Shalin: How interesting!

Bay: In fact, she should be a sociologist.

Shalin: She is a sociologist! She is writing a dissertation at Princeton.

Bay: That's right.

Shalin: Did you have a chance to observe Erving with his son, the two of them playing together, was Erving strict with Tom?

Bay: Dmitri, they were not living with me. I don't know how they

interacted. But Tom is devoted to me, and Alice [too]. Maybe be because they don't live here they don't have to put up with me [**laughing**].

Shalin: Did you see Erving when he moved to Philadelphia?

Bay: I don't remember much about that.

Shalin: He lived at Berkeley from . . .

Bay: I remember visiting them a lot. I visited them and they would come to see me, and as I said before, they were very respectful, but maybe I was a little intimidated, not [?] but because they were so much brighter than me.

Shalin: You were intimidated?

Bay: Yes, of course. Not that they intended to do that. Angela was very warm with me, but intellectually I was not a pal of her.

Shalin: Frances, you are an artist. You don't have to feel [intimidated].

Bay: Well, I am not expressing it right. We were warm to each other, and we cared for each other. I guess, I am more certain these days because I am an old woman, more certain of my mind as far as relating to people like that. Erving had a sharp sense of humor. You know that.

Shalin: Oh, yes. He was something of a wit, very smart. When you visited Erving or he came to see you, did he like to do anything in particular?

Bay: We would go to dinner, we interacted . . . well, maybe we would go out to dinner.

Shalin: He liked to go out for dinner.

Bay: I loved it how he was living at Berkeley. I don't remember seeing Erving that much in Los Angeles.

Shalin: He didn't come that often.

Bay: No.

Shalin: Did Erving like movies, theater?

Bay: Did he like theater?

Shalin: Yes.

Bay: He wrote about it.

Shalin: Of course, but did he like to see the plays?

Bay: Of course, absolutely.

Shalin: Did he like to watch movies?

Bay: I don't know how often he went to the theater, but he was very serious about it. I didn't realize back then, Dmitri, that he was that involved in theater. It's my fault, not his.

Shalin: Erving pioneered a perspective in sociology that explores society as kind of stage where we put our show on.

Now, Frances, do you remember how Erving responded when Angelica committed suicide?

Bay: I was fond of her. Of course, dear, it was a very tragic thing.

Shalin: Do you know what happened?

Bay: Well, I don't know how it happened that she drowned herself that way, but maybe . . . maybe there was confusion in her mind, a battle in her mind, confusion more than a battle. I don't know . . . this is something I don't want to talk about.

Shalin: Sure, we will not go there. Erving lived with his son, right? And he was a very devoted father.

Bay: Very good, pretty strict, but yes. As a matter of fact, they would visit me and I would visit them. Was it in Los Angeles?

Shalin: They lived in Berkeley.

Bay: Well, I am close to Berkeley. He was living in the Valley or something. I am trying to remember, at one point in his life when Tommie was a kid, they were living in Cambridge.

Shalin: Erving moved to the University of Pennsylvania in 1968.

Bay: That's right, but how come he lived close enough for me to see him?

Shalin: You lived in Las Angeles and he lived in Berkley, around San Francisco.

Bay: That's long way from me.

Shalin: But you lived close enough to see him.

Bay: I remember seeing Erving when we went there. I keep saying Cambridge, but it wasn't Cambridge. . . . Back to the theater, I have a vision of Erving going there.

Shalin: Was Tom with you?

Bay: I can't remember that.

Shalin: Did you see Erving and Tom playing?

Bay: Yes, of course. He might have been strict with him.

Shalin: Was he?

Bay: He was strict in what he [Tom] ate, what hours he had, but . . . you see, Dmitri, I wasn't living with them. I don't know how strict he was at home.

Shalin: Did you think Erving treat his son the way his mother treated him?

Bay: Oh, I don't think so. You see, when my mother spanked Erving, it was love. I know this sounds contradictory, but it was to make him . . . I don't know how to put it. In those days you could spunk a kid if you wanted to teach him something. If you wanted him not to get into trouble, you could spank him. They don't do it these days, do they?

Shalin: Erving wouldn't do it to his son.

Bay: No, I don't think so. He might have used some words, but no, physical [punishment], you don't do that anymore.

Shalin: After Erving moved to Philadelphia, did you see him then?

Bay: Not very often, because we were at a distance, but at Berkley . . .

Dmitri, I lived in so many places that I get a little confused.

Shalin: Erving moved to the University of Pennsylvania after 1968, and he taught there until he died in 1982.

Bay: That's right. We visited each other. Was he married to Gillian then?

Shalin: He married her in the early '80's, I suppose. He was a bachelor before that, raising Tom all by himself.

Bay: [**Laughing**] Really?

Shalin: I was wondering if Erving did not remarry because he was a committed father. I know that Tom went to a medical school . . .

Bay: He is not doing that now.

Shalin: . . . and that as a single parent raising his son . . .

Bay: And he did a good job.

Shalin: Was Tom getting into trouble like his father used as a child?

Bay: Did he travel?

Shalin: No, was Tom getting into trouble like Erving was in Dauphin?

Bay: [**Laughing**] I don't think so. . . . When Erving took those crabapples in Dauphin, Manitoba, it was a different kind of concept, different kind of living.

Shalin: Right. By the way, I remember reading somewhere that at a high school prom Erving created some kind of a commotion.

Bay: Tom did?

Shalin: No, Erving.

Bay: Oh, it could be, it could be.

Shalin: He did something that had made everybody turn around and see who did it.

Bay: [Laughing] Could be.

Shalin: Did you attend Erving's second wedding?

Bay: I am really close to Gillian.

Shalin: Were you at their wedding?

Bay: I can't remember whether I was at their wedding or not, but I was at Tom's wedding. . . . They have a wonderful son, Jimmy.

Shalin: How old is he?

Bay: He could be like 16 or 17. . . . But Alice is the one you've got to speak to. She looks so much like Erving. And Tom looks more like his mother's side. I am very fortunate that they are very close to me.

Shalin: Frances, when Erving got sick in 1982 he knew that he was dying.

Bay: I know, dear. I visited him. My husband, who died some years ago, was very close to Erving. Chuck Bay was tall and Erving was short, and there were three and a half years between them. In Dauphin they hang around together a lot. I have a picture of the three of us. I've got to show it to you.

Shalin: Maybe I will visit you before my daughter's graduation.

Bay: Please do it!

Shalin: I will be in New York on January 14, I am coming back on January 21, and maybe I will come to visit you at the end of January?

Bay: I would be delighted.

Shalin: When you visited Erving in 1982, what was he like?

Bay: We didn't talk too much. My husband who died five years ago, he went to see Erving.

Shalin: Did he share with you his impressions, his thoughts? Was Erving stoic in facing death?

Bay: Dmitri, it's really close to me. I can't talk about it.

Shalin: I understand. I am sorry, Frances, I brought it up. You know what, I have already taken too much of your time. We should probably stop.

Bay: Oh, no. My time is all yours.

Shalin: Perhaps we could talk again, this time about you and your career in theater.

Bay: Are you interested in that?

Shalin: I am very much interested in that.

[Laughter]

Shalin: But not today.

Bay: I can tell you a lot about that.

Shalin: I don't want to tire you too much.

Bay: Oh, that's OK. I should tell you more about the cities we lived in, mostly in LA. Erving would come to see us on a Friday night . . . we'll talk about that.

Shalin: We will. Frances, I am so grateful that you found time to talk to me.

Bay: I am grateful to you, Dmitri, for talking about my family.

Shalin: I want to preserve your memory. I will send you the transcript or bring it to Los Angeles.

Bay: Please, bring it.

Shalin: And you can revise it, delete parts that are confidential, change it in any way you want. And if you find anything in your archives . . .

Bay: I have some photographs.

Shalin: Anything that has to do with your parents . . .

Bay: You don't want to have copies of those articles.

Shalin: Yes, I do.

Bay: Do you have *The New York Times Book Review*?

Shalin: I subscribe to it, but I don't have back issues, not the publications that came out 20 or 30 years ago.

Bay: Yes, but they are a little torn, you know.

Shalin: Maybe I can copy some of them. Anything that has to do with your parents is of interest.

Bay: OK. Should I call you?

Shalin: You can call me anytime. And I can call you, just tell me when is a good time.

Bay: I have your number, don't I?

Shalin: You have it, and Marly Zaslov had it. You called me a few days ago yourself.

Bay: That's right. By the way, have you met Marly?

Shalin: I have not met her in person, but we communicated through email.

Bay: Marly is just wonderful.

Shalin: That's my impression. Marly recommended that I speak to Esther Besbris.

Bay: Oh, yes, absolutely. You know, Esther is close in age to Erving, and they used to go with each other.

Shalin: I called her and left a message. I don't know if I should try again.

Bay: I speak to her every day.

Shalin: Tell her that I am trying to reach her.

Bay: OK, dear, absolutely.

Shalin: I may call her next week.

Bay: . . . She takes care of her grandchild.

Shalin: Just tell her I look forward to talking to her.

Bay: OK, dear.

Shalin: And Frances, I hope some of the best years are still ahead of you.

Bay: I don't know, I had some pretty good years before, dear.

Shalin: Good for you [**laughing**].

Bay: You have a happy New Year.

Shalin: And happy new Year to you, too. If you speak to Tom, you can mention to him what I am doing.

Bay: You are talking about whom?

Shalin: Tom Goffman.

Bay: Oh, yes, absolutely. Are you going to be in touch with him?

Shalin: Only if he cares to.

Bay: I think you are right. I'll call him and ask him first if he would welcome the discussion about Erving.

Shalin: Make sure he understands that I don't mean to impose, just let him know about the importance of his father's work in the lives of many people.

Bay: All right, dear.

Shalin: Thank you so much, Fran.

Bay: OK, good night.

Shalin: Bye-bye.

[End of the Recoding]