INTERVIEWS

WITH

SOPHIE (Sorka Minna) STEINBERG nee' ZUBER

Born 14-Feb-1903

Approximately 1972 and October 23, 1978

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in a small town in White Russia. The name of the town was Schedrin. This wasn't too far from the capitol of White Russia, which is Minsk.

Q: How many people lived there?

A: How many people lived in the town? There were about three hundred families. It was a town which was away from the line where the trains go through, I don't know what you call it.

Q: Was it an all-Jewish town?

A: No, it was mixed. There was a … they had a few streets which were gentile people, but the Jewish people got along nice with them. There were a lot of Jewish people who used to work the fields. They were like farmers. And a lot of them make, different people, like there (they) were teachers. We didn't have no government school or what. The children who want, the parents who wanted to educate the children had to hire private teachers so that the children should learn. You know, life went on a very small scale. There wasn't much demand and everybody had a nice life. But of course for the Czar the Jewish people didn't have so good. There were different kinds of problems. But to start from my time, when I started to understand a little bit, when the war broke out I was about eleven years old, and everything changed at once because all the grown men and the elderly men were taken away. The mobilization was, in the beginning they started to take from 18 to 45 years old, so fathers and sons went to war. And it was really very sad.

Q: Did they draft Jews?

A: They drafted Jews just as good as the other people. And then after three years of fighting, in 1917, when the Revolution broke out Kerensky took over. Under Kerensky[1] he gave

[1] On 8th July, 1917, Alexander Kerensky became the new leader of the Provisional Government. Kerensky was still the most popular man in the government because of his political past. In the Duma he had been leader of the moderate socialists and had been seen as the champion of the working-class. However, Kerensky, like George Lvov, was unwilling to end the war. In fact, soon after taking office, he announced a new summer offensive.

Soldiers on the Eastern Front were dismayed at the news and regiments began to refuse to move to the front line. There was a rapid increase in the number of men deserting and by the autumn of 1917 an estimated 2 million men had unofficially left the army. (continued on next page)

Some of these soldiers returned to their homes and used their weapons to seize land from the nobility. Manor houses were burnt down and in some cases wealthy landowners were murdered. Kerensky and the Provisional Government issued warnings but were powerless to stop the redistribution of land in the countryside.

everybody freedom. He said that everybody could do whatever they pleased, but the soldiers had to remain to fight until they would come to a victory. And it didn't take very long, when the Bolsheviks came in. The Bolsheviks came in [to power] in 1918. And everything, whatever they could take for themselves they could take because everything belonged to them. It's not

---

On 19th July, Kerensky gave orders for the arrest of leading Bolsheviks who were campaigning against the war. This included Vladimir Lenin, Gregory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, Anatoli Lunacharsky, and Alexandra Kollontai. The Bolshevik headquarters at the Kshesinsky Palace, was also occupied by government troops.

After the failure of the July Offensive on the Eastern Front, Kerensky replaced General Alexei Brusilov with General Lavr Kornilov, as Supreme Commander of the Russian Army. The two men soon clashed about military policy. Kornilov wanted Kerensky to restore the death-penalty for soldiers and to militarize the factories. Kerensky refused and sacked Kornilov.

Kornilov responded by sending troops under the leadership of General Krymov to take control of Petrograd. Kerensky was now in danger and was forced to ask the Soviets and the Red Guards to protect Petrograd. The Bolsheviks, who controlled these organizations, agreed to this request, but in a speech made by their leader, Vladimir Lenin, he made clear they would be fighting against Kornilov rather than for Kerensky.

Within a few days Bolsheviks had enlisted 25,000 armed recruits to defend Petrograd. While they dug trenches and fortified the city, delegations of soldiers were sent out to talk to the advancing troops. Meetings were held and Kornilov's troops decided not to attack Petrograd. General Krymov committed suicide and Kornilov was arrested and taken into custody.

Lenin now returned to Petrograd but remained in hiding. On 25th September, Kerensky attempted to recover his left-wing support by forming a new coalition that included more Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries. However, with the Bolsheviks controlling the Soviets and now able to call on 25,000 armed militia, Kerensky's authority had been undermined.

The Bolsheviks set up their headquarters in the Smolny Institute. The former girls' convent school also housed the Petrograd Soviet. Under pressure from the nobility and industrialists, Alexander Kerensky was persuaded to take decisive action. On 22nd October he ordered the arrest of the Military Revolutionary Committee. The next day he closed down the Bolshevik newspapers and cut off the telephones to the Smolny Institute.

Leon Trotsky now urged the overthrow of the Provisional Government. Lenin agreed and on the evening of 24th October, 1917, orders were given for the Bolsheviks began to occupy the railway stations, the telephone exchange and the State Bank. The following day the Red Guards surrounded the Winter Palace. Inside was most of the country's Cabinet, although Kerensky had managed to escape from the city.

The Winter Palace was defended by Cossacks, some junior army officers and the Woman's Battalion. At 9 p.m. the Aurora and the Peter and Paul Fortress began to open fire on the palace. Little damage was done but the action persuaded most of those defending the building to surrender. The Red Guards, led by Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, now entered the Winter Palace and arrested the Cabinet ministers.

On 26th October, 1917, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets met and handed over power to the Soviet Council of People's Commissars. Vladimir Lenin was elected chairman and other appointments included Leon Trotsky (Foreign Affairs) Alexei Rykov (Internal Affairs), Anatoli Lunacharsky (Education), Alexandra Kollontai (Social Welfare), Felix Dzerzhinsky (Internal Affairs), Joseph Stalin (Nationalities), Peter Stuchka (Justice) and Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko (War). [http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/RUSnovemberR.htm]

such a thing as one should have the others shouldn't. So of course the soldiers were very happy and they came back home. The first thing what they started to do is to go from house to house. Whatever they found they took it. And if somebody would say, "How could you do a thing like this?" So they would fight and they would see that that's what it is. The government said that everything belongs to us. And after quite a while they destroyed everything.

Of course, we went through a lot of hardships; and during that time, what concerns my family, we suffered the loss of my father who was killed during the riots; and we were left with nothing to hold on to; and, also, we were from the middle class people, by them it was called the bourgeois. We had our own house. We had two cows. We had a nice big garden. We also had land in a different town, which was right away taken from us because the peasants, the farmers used to work, so let's say they took off the crops from the field we would get … like if they had bushels let's say, of wheat, of corn, we would get six and they would get one for their labor. But they didn't allow that. The Bolsheviks didn't allow it. They said whoever could work on the land it belongs to them. So that part of the land was lost right away. And we were something like, it didn't come to exactly like, disclassified [sic]. And they wouldn't accept the children in schools. They opened schools. But just because we were from, how they called it, from a higher class, our children didn't have the right to go to the schools.

Q: Did they discriminate against you because you were Jewish, or because you were middle class?

A; No, no. At that time there was no discrimination. In fact, at that time they opened schools in which you were able to do education in your own language. This was done by Lenin and Trotsky. But after Stalin took over it started little by little to decrease the privilege of learning in your own language. Little by little they took away all the Jewish things. They took away synagogues, and they wouldn't allow the Jewish people to worship, and if somebody wanted, you know, to continue his way of living, there was always, they kept an eye on them that they shouldn't be able to do everything, it all had to be done in a secret way. And it went on like this and after, from my time, when Stalin took over it wasn't at first, but I left for America in 1922. And after that… they took away the house from my mother. This was already when I was here in America. But she wrote to us. They took away one cow from her. They said it would be enough that she would have just one cow. Two was too much for her. Anyhow, she decided the children grew older, she decided that she had to send them to school. They should go and have

an education. So, and her house, after a while her house was taken away also. They just gave her a room to live in somebody else's house. So she decided, and she moved away to Leningrad. Over there the children entered school, and two of my brothers finished for engineers and my sister finished also for airplane engineer and during the time of war of course when I was here it's not necessary to tell what happened to them. And it was what it was in short the life over three years, almost four years I was under Bolsheviks.

Q: What I'd like to hear about now was the period before the Bolsheviks, up to 1917.

A: I was a child then. The memories that I have, life was very simple because I lived in a small town. We were a big family. We were nine children. My father worked and he made a living for us. He was a teacher. He was a shochet. But when the war broke out they didn't allow the slaughtering of cattle because they needed for the Army. This was under the Czar. So my father taught, so he became a teacher. And he taught children from the Lubavitcher Yeshiva. And as I say, life went on very smoothly.

Q: During this time the Czar was instituting many anti-Jewish laws…

A: This was not only during Nicholas II. The whole Romanov dynasty… In my time, when I was about two years old, or maybe less, in Kishinev, the pogroms[2] came out. We also had pogroms in Gomel. There were certain times… The peasants, with the Jewish people, in my town were very friendly among themselves. They were very good neighbors. But if something happened in the big cities, the peasants from the villages around would come into town and they would try if they could do something, but the Jewish people weren't afraid for them. They used to beat them up and chase them out of town. We didn't know anything of bad things because we were in a small town.

Q: The peasants who lived in your town, did they treat you as equals?

A: On the outside, but what they meant inside… But they were very nice, to all the Jewish people. We had in the street where we lived, we had a few gentile families I know, would come in the fall. And they would take off from the fields the crops. They would always bring something to the Jewish families, because the Jewish families, there were a few farmers who used to do their own farming, but like we never did. We had a big garden. We would hire a gentile person and he would plow the field, and then we would do, whatever you call this, all the

[2] Etymology: Yiddish, from Russian, literally, devastation: an organized massacre of helpless people; specifically : such a massacre of Jews

different kinds of vegetables, potatoes, corn, whatever it is. And they, they had a lot of land, and when they took off the fresh crop they would always bring the Jewish people a taste like a little symbol of friendship. And the Jewish people got along with them very nicely. We didn't have no pogroms in our town. In the big cities where the youths, they were revolutionaries. And the Czar was afraid that it shouldn't come to something. So they would send out peasants to make pogroms on the Jewish people, to rob them, to do certain things. But it really, as I say, one pogrom was in 1903, the year I was born. I remember people talking about it. Then the second pogrom was in 1905. This was in Kishinev.[3] And then in the town which wasn't too far away from us, was about one hundred miles away from us, they had a pogrom but I don't remember the year. But this was all under Nicholas II, because this was during my time from childhood. And otherwise, I don't know. During the year, when it was, how old was I, then, about eight of nine years old, when the Bialystock Process was, you know, when they had put that a Jewish man had killed a Gentile child for the sake of taking his blood to bake a *matzoh*. This was also for Nicholas II. And of course all the Jewish people were very much afraid of pogroms. In some areas, it broke out, but we didn't have this in our town.

Q: Were the gentile peasants who lived there White Russians?

A: They were White Russians. There were very few Catholics, like Polacks, from where I come, they were most all White Russians, and they were believers of the Old Testament[4]. This was the same belief that Nicholas had.

Q: Why were the people so friendly in your town?

---

[3] Kishinev - Capital of the republic of Moldova, part of the former Soviet Union, became a flourishing Jewish center in the 18th century, when the growing economy presented new commercial and industrial opportunities. By the turn of the century Jews owned a score of factories employing thousands of Jewish workers; there were 16 Jewish schools with 2,100 students, and 70 synagogues.

The name Kishinev, however, was thrust into the consciousness of the world on Easter Day, 1903 when 49 Jews were massacred by frenzied mobs. April 19, 1903 Kishinev (Bessarabia). Riots broke out after a Christian child, Michael Ribalenko, was found murdered (Feb. 16). Although it was clear that the boy had been killed by a relative, the government chose to call it a ritual murder plot by the Jews. The mobs were incited by Pavolachi Krusheven, the editor of the anti-Semitic newspaper *Bessarabetz*, and the vice governor, Ustrugov. Vyacheslav Von Plehve, the Minister of Interior, supposedly gave orders not to stop the rioters. During three days of rioting, forty-seven Jews were killed, ninety-two severely wounded, five hundred slightly wounded and over seven hundred houses were destroyed. Despite a world-wide outcry, only two men were sentenced to seven and five years and twenty-two were sentenced for one or two years for this. This pogrom was instrumental in convincing tens of thousands of Russian Jews to leave Russia for the West and for Eretz Israel. The child's real murderer was later found. [http://www.jewishhistory.org.il/1900.htm]

In 1905 Kishinev was again the scene of unspeakable horror and violent death when a second pogrom claimed the lives of another 19 Jews. The Jewish community was shaken to its foundations, and a flood of emigration began, which continued through the interim war years. All the while, government endorsed anti-Semitic propaganda stirred the never extinguished embers of anti-Jewish hatred.

[4] Russian Orthodox

A: They got along. I don't know how in other towns was but usually when the time was quiet, when there was no uprising in the big cities, the small towns always lived very good with their neighbors. Not only with their neighbors in the small town. Russia is the kind of land that is divided by a lot of farms and villages and small towns. And usually in small towns the majority of the people were the Jewish people in small towns. In the villages, in many villages the Jews were not allowed to stay. If a Jewish family lived in a village for 32 years he was able to continue living there. But if there was missing, this was in the year 1911 or 1912, a lot of Jewish people were chased out of the villages because they didn't have the 32 years of living there. Even if it was a month before the 32 years they were sent out of the village. This was from the Czar, not from the people.

Q: How was the cultural life, the synagogues, the schools?

A: It was very primitive. In the villages they had like a little school. The most thing was they taught the children was how to pray to G-d and how to bless the king. That's all.

Q: Are these the Jewish school?

A: No. The Jewish people had, like a teacher, it's called in Jewish a '*melamed*.' Let's say in here like a yeshiva. They would get together ten, twelve, fifteen people, according. Those children who started first, in the beginning, like over here, let's say, in the first class. They would have a teacher who wasn't too educated. He knew how to teach the children the ABC, and how they should start to daven[5].

Q: Were they taught in Russian or Hebrew?

A: In Hebrew. In Russian you need a different teacher. This was straight in Hebrew. And when the children grew older they hired a more educated man. He would start the Bible and the Talmud, and then when you came still higher, when you learned already the five, how do you call this in English, the Bible is called the *Tamach* in Hebrew. They would hire a still special man who would teach them *Gemara*[6] (also written Gemorah). And it went on like this until some would be sent away to Yeshiva to study. The people who were richer and kept the child at home, so they hired a teacher who would teach them at home.

Q: How old were they at this time?

[5] To recite Jewish liturgical prayers

[6] second part of the Talmud, consisting primarily of commentary on the Mishnah

A: When they started Gemorah, they were some children who had good heads, they started about eight or nine years.

Q: Was this open to boys and girls?

A: Only boys. And the girls, the education for girls was very limited. The parents were interested that they should know the language, know Hebrew, or Jewish, and they should know a little bit of Russian, how to write, let's say you have to send a letter, to write an address. But if you knew already the Russian alphabet, when you knew how to put them together, you were able to write. And some who wanted, they used to take a lot of books from the library, and they would teach themselves. But the basis, to start, they had special teachers for girls. And they didn't have any yeshivas for girls.

Q: Were Jews allowed into universities?

A: First of all, very few Jewish people were allowed to live in the big cities, like in Moscow or St. Petersburg (Leningrad), or different, in deep Russia they had a lot of different Russian cities that they wouldn't allow a jew to come. Only those Jews who served, years and years ago, this was before my time, they used to catch children and give them away that they should be in military service for 25 years. If those children survived and they came back, they were allowed to live in any part of Russia, in the biggest cities. And then there was another group who were big businessmen. They were allowed to stay in Moscow or in Leningrad. But people like this, let's say if you would have to go through Leningrad or Moscow, I could only stay there for 24 hours. After the 24 hours if I wouldn't leave the city, they would send away with soldiers. Police would have to take you by foot. They wouldn't allow even that you should go by train, and send you back to the town from where you came. And then there were skilled workers who were allowed to live in big cities, only when they were recognized by the government that they are really good, skilled workers. And they would have to live, not in any part they wanted of the city, but they had special streets where those people would live.

Q: Were all positions open to Jews? Was employment restricted?

A: There were certain things that a Jewish person could not get into work. They weren't allowed to live in the big cities. The children who had a chance, let's say, that they should get in and get a higher education, the normal was so low that I don't think they would give even 1 percent of the Jewish children to get into a higher school, like in university or what.

Q: Was a Jew allowed to be a carpenter?

A: Yes.

Q: A banker?

A: A banker is a businessman. Of course.

Q: What was the occupation of most of the Jews in Schedrin?

A: Most of the Jewish people, there were a few tailors, there were a couple of shoemakers because in Russia, you take a measure and you make up shoes or boots or whatever, you don't buy, in the small towns. In the big towns you go into a store like over here and you buy. And there were a lot of people who used to do, in Russia they used a kind of coat made out of sheepskin, so there were these kind of people who used to work out from the skin from the sheep to finish off. And then to make the coats. And then there were a few business people, like they had dry goods owners who owners stores and there were food store owners who owned stores. It was just private stores in small towns. And of course most Jewish people made a living from the peasants, from the villages around. They would come into town and buy the products.

Q: Were there many full time farmers?

A: Sure, there were many farmers, and they were very rich. They were, like over here you would call a 'plantation.' And that's what they had in Russia.

Q: They were Jews?

A: No.

Q: Were there any Jewish farmers?

A: There were, but very few. Because not all Jews were allowed to have land. They didn't allow them to. Certain parts of villages were allowed that a Jewish person should be a farmer, an owner of land. The Jews were very restricted. They couldn't open their hands and do what. Young children, they didn't have what to do. They would go in the villages and they would buy certain things by the farmers and by the villagers, and they would bring into town and sell. It was, like, call it a small businessman. And that's what the most Jewish people did. And, in every village they had a blacksmith, they had a shoemaker. And they had one of the tailors to do the work for the peasants to make the sheepskin jackets. So those three, every village had. A farmer, is just like there is a farm and they could have family or two. But in a village, they already, in some villages, had as much as 100 families, 50 families, 25 families, it's according to the size of the village. And that's what Russia is known for. It's like broken up in little pieces of villages.

Q: How many synagogues were there?

A: In our town we had a lot of synagogues. We had eleven synagogues. More than worshippers.

Q: Was Schedrin a rich town?

A: It was like middle class. There weren't very poor ones but there were very few very rich ones. But the most people made a poor living.

Q: What was the role of the synagogues, outside of prayer? Did they have any social events?

A: Just you go there and pray. Each synagogue has its members. I don't know how it was kept up. It isn't like here. Let's say it would come before a holiday. They would put a plate on the table and each member who would come in before you start to daven *Ma'ariv*[7], they would put in a few cents. And that money kept up the *shammas* in shul. And others, people you called to the Torah or whatever, they would give you a few *centa*.

Q: Did they synagogues involve themselves in any social activities? For example, if there were any poor Jewish families, did they have some sort of welfare fund?

A: Yes. They had, as it was called *linzer tzaddik*[8], I think. They would raise money and they would give to poor people. In fact the women would come out before, let's say, *Purim*[9] or Hanukah. They would take a handkerchief in their hand and they would go from door to door, and to ask for donations. They would raise that way money to give to needy families. There were a lot of families who, they took help, but they didn't want it that people should know, so there were just a few people who sued to raise for them and keep them up. This was in all the time, even during the time of the war when the Jewish people were sent out around the Polish areas where they were fighting, where the fighting was going on. And they were sent away to deep Russia. And when they would go through our town to stop off and rest everybody would bring out whatever they had in the house; bread and milk and butter, and feed them. And they would come towards the evening, and they couldn't go any further. Each family would try to

[7] The night prayer service of Judaism

[8] a Jewish or Hasidic spiritual leader; a Jewish righteous person; also called zaddick, tsaddik, tzaddiq. Etymology: Hebrew *saddIq* 'just, righteous'

[9] The 14th of Adar, observed in celebration of the deliverance of the Jews from massacre by Haman. [Hebrew pûrîm, pl. of pûr, *lot (from the lots Haman cast to decide the day of the massacre, Esther 9:24-26)*, from Akkadian pu̲ru, *lot*.]

find a place for the people to get in, stay over night and they were very well cared for. This was always.

Q: Since you've mentioned the good relations between the Jews and the gentiles, did the synagogues ever help a gentile family?

A: I can't tell you because I was a youngster. I don't know the things which were going on, they used to talk about in the house. When the war broke out I wasn't quite 16. And then, when I was, three or almost four years later I went to America.

Q: What was the government like in Schedrin?

A: The city government, the only thing was like a policeman. Over here, a single policeman, and one a little bit higher. The higher one was called a *noradnik*. It meant he took care of a certain amount. And the policemen were called *strasnik*. So if anything happened or whatever those were the ones in the shtetl, from where I come in town, they would complain too. But, a little further, you see it's not the town alone which is separate, but they had the village around. Over there they had already, almost like a court, and they had had a higher man who solved the problems. And of course there were all these fights about the landowners. They were always fighting, and there were always courts.

Q: What about a rabbinical court?

A: Those who wanted to go to a rabbinical court, it was different. They would go to a rabbi. We, in our town, we had one rabbi. And my father, he should rest in peace, was there, and you needed a third man. And let's say you brought a complaint against me. You would explain whatever you have against me. I would explain whatever I have against you. And they would have to decide by the way the complaint was made who was right. And they have this in the *Gemara*[10]. But, when it came to more serious things, not everybody wanted to depend on the Jewish court or the Jewish decision. So they would bring this in the regular court.

Q: Was there a mayor, a city council?

A: Not in the town itself, but in the area. Our town was Schedrin. We belonged in the Bobroisk county, and to the Minsk government.

---

[10] The second part of the Talmud, consisting primarily of commentary on the Mishnah. [Aramaic gəmārā, completion, from gəmar, to complete.]

Q: In your town it seems that you had an easier life than a Jew in other towns. You had no pogroms. You got along well with the neighbors.

A: Yes, well, I'll tell you something. Our town was very far from a railroad. It was also far from a river. So we were like, on the side. It didn't pay for them to come and look for trouble. And the Jewish people got along very well with the gentile people in our town.

Q: What was the family life like, the position of the father, the position of the mother, the position of the children?

A: Well, among the Jews the main thing was if one was a very good scholar. He was an educated man in his own belief. Those people were very much honored. And also, there were a lot of people who were very charitable. They were well off, and they would give money for poor people because they had a certain group which used to see to the poor people they shouldn't starve. Those people were honored. And like this, as I say, everybody had a quiet life, no excitement, nothing.

Q: Here in the U.S. there is a stereotype of the "Jewish mother." What was the role of the Jewish mother and father?

A: In the Jewish family, if you want to know, the father was the one who gave the word. The mother obeyed. The mother took care of the children, but the father took a very big interest in the children. And if the father said: "now it's day", it would be day, even though it's night. You see, over here the mother is really the one who raises the children, because the father has to make a living. He goes away when the child is asleep, he comes back and the child is sleeping already for the following night. In the small towns in Russia there wasn't such a thing. There, that family whose father was worker, he worked in his own house. There wasn't like over here, you have to go to work in a shop or what. Or maybe in Russia, in the big cities may be they had special shops. But in the small towns, let's say I was a tailor. I had my little shop in my house. If I kept a worker or two. And the same thing with any kind of work. So the father was always with the children. He always kept an eye on them.

Q: How did the children behave?

A: I'll tell you how the children behaved, if you want to know. One thing, in the house, was raised, years ago and in the orthodox homes, how much G-d have one to have, that's how many they bring into this world, let's say. By us we were raised nine children, and our house had only four rooms. Children are children wherever they should be, in Russia or Kalamazoo or

wherever. They have to play and they have to do their exercise. And when the children would start to fight my mother would only say "Pappa is coming." You could hear in a pin would fall on the floor, you would hear everyone, all the children would turn around, in their own place, and it would be very quiet. And my father, I know about my father, and everybody else knew about their fathers, he never hit a child. He never hollered. But we were so afraid, and the honor and the dignity of the father, don't even ask how it was. Whatever a father said, it was obeyed. With the mother not as much, because you're always with the mother and she could give you a hit, and she could give you a curse and whatever it is, but the father was very much obeyed with honor.

Aunt Rosie was the oldest, and then Uncle Yisroel, should rest in peace, after whom you were named, and after Yisroel was a little girl who passed away, and then I came. And then Uncle Nutta came and then Chana came. And we were all one after the other, not even two years, a year and a half or a year and three quarters apart from each other. We were all a house of small children, but if my father said something it was said and it was done.

Q: So Aunt Rose helped raise the younger ones.

A: Yes.

Q: When you were older, during the revolution and afterwards, what was your position within the family?

A: Well, at the time it wasn't a question of what concerns my family how important because my father was killed in 1919. And I had to take over.

Q: The two older ones had already gone to America?

A: Aunt Rosie was in America, and Uncle Yisroel was in yeshiva in a city in Russia which was called Cremenshook[11]. He was there and I was the oldest, which I wasn't fully 16 years old. And I had to take over and make a living from the family. And what to do. I didn't have anything, a trade in my head, and then there wasn't what to do. So I speculated. I used to buy certain things and bring from one town to another to sell. It was a very hard life.

As a general picture, after the revolution it was chaos for everybody. Those who had and those who didn't [have], because those who didn't have anything they wanted to grab everything to them. And those who had, let's say, hated to give away. But they came in and they took

[11] Hermaniszki, Lida uyezd, Vilna-Grodno gubernia, Latitude: 54º08' Longitude: 25º22' Also known as Germanishki, and Kreminshok

anyhow. All-in-all nobody was happy. The only [one's] who were happy, in the moment, when the Bolsheviks took over, and they said to the boys in the fields, go home, and everything belongs to you. This lasted a very short while because afterwards they mobilized again and they sent they boys back to fight.

Q: You said that Lenin abolished the anti-Jewish laws?

A: No, not right away, not I my time. When Lenin and Trotsky took over, they were the first. And they had fights, of course. First of all, the religious people, the priests, were very much against then because they came in as atheists, and the Russian peasants were very religious, and they fought for it. And so, everything stopped off. There was no products coming in, nothing. It was a very hard time to live for everybody. There was no food because whatever there was it was destroyed.

Q: You said that Lenin removed restrictions on the Jews, or that, whatever the laws were, they were not enforced. Jews had more freedom.

A: That's right. They were able to go wherever they wanted. They could have moved away the first day, the first night, when Bolsheviks took over, they could have gone and settled in any big city in Russia they wanted to. Which to this very day they could do it. They could do it wherever they want, but the only thing is, they took away whatever pride or possession the Jewish people had, it was taken away from them. They can't, how should I say, live in their own atmosphere, in their own culture, it was taken away. In the early years, when I was [there], they opened schools in the Jewish language and the Jewish children went and they did their studies where their professors, whatever they got was in the Jewish language. But when Stalin took power, Stalin's was Lenin's firsthand. Stalin was the one that got rid of him. But as I say in the beginning when Lenin took over it was all right. The land was hungry, we didn't have any food and there was, everything was stopped off, nothing came in.

Q: How did the Jews view Nicholas II?

A: He himself, Nicholas, wasn't a bad man. But his people, with whom he worked, they were big anti-Semites. Rasputin, he was a crazy man altogether. He got into the Czar like a snake. He ruined him, he ruined the whole family.

Q: So the Jews looked up to the Czar as being a good man?

A: When he was crowned, this was before my time, but I remember how, you know, you come together and what you do you talk, even in those days people talk about what concerns

them. They said that when he was crowned they had a lot of hope for the Jewish people would open their eyes for a while because the whole Romanov dynasty, one was worse than the other towards the Jews. But the thing is, he had his groups, he had one who was in his second hand, Stolypin[12], he was a general or something, he was one of the worst animals in the whole world. And then Rasputin came, all right, he was a fanatic altogether, a faker. The other Czars, they were bad people. The whole dynasty was bad, they were crazy altogether. Nicholas was different, they said, because he was a weakling.

[12] Piotr Arkadevich Stolypin 1862-1911, Russian premier and minister of the interior (1906-11) for Czar Nicholas II. He sought to fight the revolutionary movement with both severe repression and social reform. He instituted a regime of courts-martial to suppress revolutionary terrorism and peasant disorders, and hundreds were executed in 1906 and 1907. To stem peasant unrest Stolypin attempted to create a class of peasant landowners that would be conservative and loyal to the czar. The roots of unrest lay partly in the Edict of Emancipation of 1861, which had given land to the village communes, instead of individually to the newly freed serfs. The commune usually distributed scattered strips to provide families with generally equal allotments. Stolypin's land reforms of 1906 gave the peasant communes the right to dissolve themselves, entitled each peasant to own and consolidate the strips given him by the commune, and provided financial aid to peasants who wished to buy more land. The land reform was designed to transform the peasants gradually into landowners without hurting the interests of the large landowners. At the same time it enabled peasants to seek industrial employment in the cities if they wished to leave the land. It was opposed by the leftist majority in the first duma , which favored extensive expropriation of the land. The first and second Dumas were dissolved, and Stolypin made sure of a conservative majority in the third Duma by altering (1907) the election laws. Some of Stolypin's measures were opposed by the Socialists and liberals, others by the extreme reactionaries. His agrarian reform came too late to conciliate the peasantry as a body. When the Russian Revolution of 1917 broke out, the number of small holdings had increased but not sufficiently to create a conservative peasant class. His attempt to extend the government's policy of Russification to Finland, where he restricted (1910) the authority of the diet, met with wide opposition. While his secret police continued their repressive activities, the government took no action against the anti-Jewish pogroms organized by extreme reactionary societies. Stolypin was assassinated by a revolutionary terrorist who was also a police agent. [http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/S/Stolypin.asp]

Interview with Sophie Steinberg, October 23, 1978

Q: How about if today you talk about how you came to the U.S.? Why did you decide to leave Russia?

A: Russia was a very undesirable place for us, for Jewish people, especially for religious people. My father was a *shochet*[13]. My father made a nice living for us. But what concerns us, in general we were very disappointed. In the beginning we thought that all the pogroms and vicious things the Czar used to do to the Jewish people, we thought we got rid of it. And we were very happy. Jewish people thought it would open a new world for us. But as it turned out, there were a lot of pogroms, my father, should he rest in peace, was killed, by somebody who was in the government. And we were left a family of small children, one after the other. I was the third oldest. The oldest was Tante Rosie, then was Uncle Yisroel, and then I came. And after me was Uncle Nutta, then sister Chana, then a brother Leib, then a brother Meishe, then a sister Leah, and a brother Avramel. And they were all born one after another. Uncle Nutta was in the yeshiva, and uncle Yisroel was in the yeshiva, and I had to take over to make a living for the family. Tante Rosie was in America. She left Russia in 1914, just before the first World War broke out.

Q: Why did she leave?

A: She couldn't stand the religious way of life in the house. She had an aunt whose husband escaped the Japanese war. He came to America and he took over his wife and family. And went my sister Rosie was against the way of life was going on my Aunt sent for her and she went to America and settled in Scranton, Pennslyvania. And I had to try to make a living. The speculation was very big. My mother, should rest in peace, used to say where you go they'll try to take away from you whatever you've got to bring. So I said to my mother, "If I wouldn't go the children would die of hunger." So we went. We didn't have any connections to America. So I wrote to my sister about what happened to my father. Right away she sent affidavits for me and my sister Chana we should come to the United States.

Q: And this was…?

[13] In Judaism, the shochet who is responsible for the killing of the animal is not regarded merely as a butcher. He is expected to be a man of exemplary piety to whom is entrusted the act of killing an animal for human consumption in such a manner that its death will be as quick and as merciful as possible

A: This was 1922. And we went the illegal was because we couldn't get a passport from Russia to get out, so we had to go on the sly. Like to steal across the border.

Q: Where did you cross the border? How did you do that?

A: We had people who took, in gold, they wouldn't take in paper money, fourty rubles in gold, for each one to go through. And being we were a family with honor, so the man who handled that said that he would take me and my sister over for the same forty rubles. And I gave him forty rubles. My mother had a bracelet, so she gave this to me and I gave it to the man, in Schedrin. And they took us over in Schevesh, a small town in Russia.

Q: Where was it, near Riga?

A: In fact, I stayed in Riga when I went over from Russia, they left us off in Riga, in Latvia. And there I went in to the American consul and showed him the papers, from people who knew us. I didn't have enough money for Chana, so Chana stayed in Luchin, it's also a small town.

Q: Who did she stay with?

A: She stayed with a lot of different immigrants who escaped from Russia. Also people from Schedrin. They were people from the same town, but they we'rent any relations. But we left her. We were a group of nine people who went that night across the border. And when I came to Riga it was just before Passover.

Q: In 1922.

A: In 1922.

Q: So you were just twenty years old?

A: I was past nineteen years when I came to this country. So when we came to Riga we were a group of young children. We were happy that we left Russia. And we came in Latvia, which at the time was independent. And we tried that we should get the right to stay in a house until we got the visa for America. So when I went to the American consul. And I showed his the papers and the whole story, so he took maybe two weeks. He sent for us and said we should get ready, for we were ordered to go to America.

Q: Do you remember the name of the boat?

A: Celtic. The Black Star Line was the company. We sailed to America. It took us ten days. In July the 24th I came to America. And the ride took us three days by the small boat and five days by the big boat.

Q: What did you do in Riga all that time?

A: Nothing. Just sitting there. My brother-in-law wasn't a citizen. He had just taken out the first papers.

Q: Your brother-in-law…

A: Tante Rosie's husband. I arrived in Riga it was already Passover. The night before Passover we came over and there was a governor in the Duma… They had a Duma at that time, from the Jewish people there was one, like a Senator over here. We were young, we were glad that we were in the country, but we didn't have a penny, we were nine people, so we went to the place where they have, like charity, to give us to have a room to sleep. It was late, so the governor, he was a religious man, so he wouldn't hold the telephone because it was a holiday, so he got somebody to speak to the other people, in the Duma, and he said, I told you about the nine people, that you shold get a place for them to stay, and the other governor said I saw them outside, laughing by the window, so they're not so bad off. So anyhow, whatever it is, they made for us permission we should be able to get a room to stay in. And they all laughed, they said, we are here for months. G-d knows how long we have to stay. And I went to the Consulate, and he looked through the papers and then two weeks later I got the visa, but I couldn't take Chana with me. So I left her, and we were waiting and finally they gave for her also permission.

Q: So you arrived in the U.S. in…

A: July 24, 1922, in Scranton.

Q: Didn't you have to get off in N.Y.?

A: They wouldn't let us get off. They took us over by train from the boat to Scranton. And when I came to Scranton and went off the train somebody came, they wanted to take me to my sister's house, but I said no, I'm not going, my sister is supposed to come and take us. And he went for my sister and she came and took us to her house. And I stayed with her for almost two years. Then I went to see *landsleit*[14], and somebody to whom I came was also from the shtetl, but she came a year before I came. She got for us to stay there, and introduced me to Poppa, and this is how I cam to New York.

Q: Did you go to Ellis Island?

---

[14] Plural of landsman. [Yiddish landslayt, from Middle High German lantsliute, *natives, compatriots* : lant, *land*; see **landsman**[2] + liute, pl. of liut, *person, people* (from Old High German. See leudh- in Indo-European Roots).]

A: I stopped in Ellis Island, but they didn't hold me back.

Q: What kind of work did you do when you came?

A: My bother-in-law got me a job in a factory, in ladies garments, suits and coats. So I worked there. I was a finisher. To finish off, like to put in the lining. They wanted to model me, that they should put the models on me, but I refused, because I thought it's a terrible thing.

Q: What did you do about working on Saturdays?

A: I did. And I was crying. There was a father with six sons and a son-in-law, they all ran the factory. So he used to go on Shabbos to shul, with tallis, and he would come in the factory. So one day, I thought, the first Saturday I had to work, and I couldn't. I was sitting there crying. So he came over to me and said, why are you crying? And I said, "I can't, every time I use the needle." He said, "I go to shul. Nobody forces me to come into the shop. But I go into the shop to see how you are working. You'll get used to it."

Q: How much did you earn?

A: I earned plenty. $12 a week.

Q: That was a lot?

A: It wasn't a lot.

Q: How many hours did you work?

A: A full week with a half-day on Saturday.

Q: Were there unions at the time?

A: I wasn't unionized. There were unions, but they were still fighting. After a while they wanted to model on me and I didn't want it. So they called me in to the office, and they said that if you don't want to do what we ask, we like to keep Jewish people, but we cannot do it. So I didn't say anything. I finished the day's work, and then on the following day when I came and told my brother-in-law, so he went and he got a job for me for men's caps.

And then I worked in a factory for men's caps. It was called Gross and Grossinger's. They gave me fifteen dollars a week. But I knew Poppa already didn't want me to work no more.

Q: Why didn't he want you to work?

A: He wanted that I should be in the house until we got married.

Q: How long was that, until you got married?

A: A couple of months.

Q: What did your sister Rosie do?

A: She worked in a factory, in ladies garments.

Q: Did they have any children?

A: Yes, when I came she had two children and one was on the way. Ida, and Lillian, and Myron came when I was here already. I came in July and he was born in January.

Q: Was she working when the children were small?

A: Years ago three wasn't such a thing as once you got married forget about work.

Q: What did uncle Bennie do?

A: He used to sell fruits and vegetables from a horse and wagon. A peddler.

Q: Did he come from Schredin?

A: No.

Q: Within two years of being in the U.S., then, a friend introduced you to Poppa?

A: I came to New York. They used to have a yearly evening for all the immigrants to come together and to celebrate that we left. So I went to a lunch and she introduced me to Poppa.

Q: Where was Poppa from?

A: Kishinev, Besarabia in that time. It's a big city. It's near Odessa.

Q: What did Poppa do?

A: He was making bagels.

Q: What was Poppa like?

A: Well, when he came to this country he was eighteen years old. When I met him I think he was something like 29. We met in 1923.

Q: Did he have brothers and sisters?

A: When I met him he had a sister. He had a mother in Kishinev. He had family there, but none of them came here. He also had a brother, Uncle Shimon, who married Tante Esther, was there. He was the oldest brother in the family. He came just before the first World War. And his sister was Nechamah, Tante Nechamah. Uncle Baruch was her husband. He was the one who got Poppa into the bagel business. He didn't want to be a baker. He came, he got himself a job in a restaurant. He didn't like it. He was a baker from home, so he got into the union and became a baker. In those years if you made $65 a week you made a good salary.

Poppa and Uncle Shimon, when they came here they stared selling oilcloth. They loaded up a pushcart, about who would push the cart. Uncle Shimon said Poppa should do it because he

was younger, and Poppa said you want to be a peddler, you push. At that time it was a calamity, but now we can laugh about it.

So Uncle Shimon then got himself a candy store. And Poppa got into the, he worked for about a year, then he because a union man and he made a living.

Q: And you met him in 1923. When did you get married?

A: In 1924, June 21.

Q: Then you lived in New York. Where did you live?

A: The first was Newport Street, in Brooklyn. It was a nice area, a new area. They had just put up new buildings.

Q: How much rent did you pay?

A: Forty-four dollars a month for three rooms.

Q: Was that a lot of money in those days?

A: Yes, it was a lot of money. The house was six months old.

Q: Grandpa worked where?

A: Greenberg's Bakery. He worked there almost his whole years. It was at 317 Georgia Avenue.

Q: Did he work regular hours?

A: He worked night hours. Let's say he would go away to work at two o'clock in the afternoon, he would work until twelve o'clock.

Q: How much did he get paid?

A: His pay was $13 a night, and by the week it came to $65 dollars.

Q: Could you describe the bakery?

A: The bakery was in the basement of the house. It was a whole family house. On the top lived the boss of the bakery. In the basement the workers worked.

Q: How many people worked there?

A: There was a joke going on with how many workers. There were two, three workers. One by the stove, the one who made the dough, and the one who put the bagels in the kettle so it should boil the bagels. The bagels are not put in raw to bake, but first they have to be cooked, or boiled.

Q: Did they have a shop that they sold to other people, or did they sell to other stores?

A: In those years, you had to get them in the grocery stores.

Q: I want to go back to something. You said when you came to the U.S. you had to leave Chana, your sister, in Riga…

A: No. Chana came with me. But while I was in Riga we couldn't bring her. When we crossed the Russian border we crossed without a penny. Whatever we had they took away. The agent took everything away and we couldn't bring her. Tante Rosie sent for us in Lithuania, and we crossed the border in Latvia. It's a different country. There was a family with three children, the children went over but the mother and father remained in Luchek. And we made up if I had money, Tante Rosie sent cash…

Q: So the two of you came to Scranton together, and lived with Tante Rosie?

A: Yes,

Q: When you got married, what happened to Chana?

A: She stayed on for a while, then she came and stayed with me. She stayed until she got married.

Q: How many years was that?

A: How many years? When did she get married? In 1927. I really don't remember.

Q: And May, your first child, was born when?

A: In April 1925.

Q: What was it like having a baby in those days?

A: You screamed and you had a baby. She was born in a hospital. I had a cousin, she used to have a baby every year. Once she went out to milk cows, and she came back wearing an apron, and carrying a baby.

Q: Meanwhile, you still had other brothers and sisters in Russia. Did others come out?

A: Uncle Nutta came a year later.

Q: Who paid?

A: We all paid. We paid and he came. Then after he came, Uncle Yisroel came. He came in 1945, I think, from Sweden.

Q: And your other brothers and sisters?

A: One brother Hitler took away, with his wife. Three children. Schedrin was all wiped out. There was nobody, just one old man who lived in a barn, under hay, and at night he would go out and find something what to eat and this is how he went through the war, but like this, the whole town was burned down.

Q: Did you try to get your other brothers and sisters after Nutta to the United States?

A: There was a dispute between Stalin and Trotsky. My brother Mishki, he was an engineer. He worked for the government. And something went wrong. Being a Trotskyite[15], so they accused him and they killed his there.

Q: Did you try to get your other brothers and sisters?

A: There was only one who wanted to come, Leibe. He was a family man with children, but we couldn't get him in.

Q: Why not?

A: That's a question why not? I don't know. And he was killed by Hitler. One brother was killed by Hitler. And one was killed by Stalin.

Q: And you still have a brother and a sister in Russia?

A: Yes. The youngest brother and sister in the family. The youngest brother was in the Russian army and he got a lot to buy a little house for himself. He changed his name, he doesn't go under his name. We don't know his name. We don't have any connection to him. When I write a letter I write to my sister-in-laws and they give over the letters to them because they are still with the government.

Q: When Chana went to Russia didn't that brother go to see her?

A: Yes, he did. His name was Abraham Zuber, but not anymore. Mishki's children are still there. I used to send bundles to Mishki's children.

Q: Do any of them want to leave?

A: Who could undertake to bring them here? And who knows the circumstances where they are? When the revolution broke out we had no rights whatsoever. Everything was taken away from us. My mother had a house. So they took the house away and gave her a room to live in, in Schedrin. When she came to Leningrad [it] was already alright because the children couldn't get into school in Schedrin. First of all, there was no higher education. And second, they couldn't because we had lost everything. So they went to look where they could accomplish something. So they went to Leningrad. So Leah's daughter already was in Leningrad. And Abraham's in a small town near Leningrad where he has his own little house.

---

[15] Trotskyism (TROT-skee-iz-uhm) The doctrines of the twentieth-century Russian political leader Leon Trotsky, who believed that communism should depend on the cooperation of the proletariats of all nations rather than on domination by the Soviet Union. Trotsky's ideas were opposed by Joseph Stalin, the Soviet premier, who sent Trotsky into exile, made him a nonperson, and eventually had him assassinated.

Q: I remember you said you used to send money to Russia…

A: We wanted to bring my mother. So in order to get a passport you had to give a hundred dollars. So we sent away three times, each time we would send, they would arrest her and keep her till the following day, when they would take her to the post office and she would take the money and give it to the police. Three times we tried and the same thing happened. And then my sister wrote it's no use to try because momma cannot come out of Russia. So we stopped trying. And she remained with my sister. When my sister was sent away to Novosibirsk she took my mother with her.

Q: Why was she sent to Novosibirsk?

A: I don't know what it was. Her husband was working for airplanes for the government. She was also an engineer, and they both worked there. How and what, from Russia you can't get nothing to say how and what it is. And to this very day, Leah's retired. Her husband's not retired yet. She would want to come to Leningrad and live near her brother. She can't. So she stays in Novosibirsk, it's already about thirty some years.

Q: Where did your mother die?

A: She died in Vilna. With Mishki's children. So the last letter that we got she wrote that Grandma makes her own bed when she gets up in the morning…

Q: Mishki's children wrote that to you?

A; Once, I used to send bundles. The last bundle I sent we bought galoshes for them. They never received. I used to schlep in New York, the bundles.

Q: By the time of the Depression, in 1929, you had one child, and another on the way…

A: We weren't affected by the Depression. Poppa had his job. We had in the bank a few dollars. The interest we didn't get but the cash what we deposited we got back. So we weren't really wait to get something. We didn't have to do that.

Q: Grandpa kept his job throughout the whole time?

A: Yes.

Q: When did you move to 94th Street?

A: About 1931. We moved to 95th Street, then we moved to 94th Street. We stayed there for over forty years.

Q: When you moved you said one of your brother-in-laws called the house on Newport street "Riverside Drive." Why did you move? Was the rent higher at the new place?

A: The rent was a few dollars higher, but Poppa said it was all right.

Q: And then to 94th Street?

A: There we had four rooms. We had two children, so we needed more rooms. It was $44. I wanted to move from there because it was on the second floor and I had to carry the children up. But Poppa didn't want to move because it was near where he worked.

Q: And during that time did his salary go up?

A: No. His salary stayed in one place. It was unionized, and they would get whatever. The only ting they got was a week vacation.

Q: And what would you do?

A: We would take another week and go to the country. We'd go every summer for two weeks. In the mountains. Not the swell hotels. We used to go to Liberty, the same house for years. We changed, we went to Livingston for one year. Fleischmann's Station we went for a couple of years.

Q: When Jerrold was a little boy, where did you go?

A: Swan Lake. This is where I enjoyed. I didn't like the two weeks. The first week was alright. The second week everything repeats.

Q: What did you used to do?

A: I made food. Like this, to sit outside you sit outside anyhow. I don't play cards. I don't do special exercises or what. We would take walks. It was to rest up. Poppa was a hard worker. To work with the bagels wasn't so easy.

Q: Neither of you drove?

A: Poppa had an accident in his younger years. There were four boys, going to the mountains, and they wanted to show off, so they were in a car accident. They were lucky they weren't injured, just frightened. Since then he wouldn't even want to think about driving.

Q: Then how did you get around?

A: If you wanted to go somewhere you never thought of anything, there is no other way to go but with a car. There were trolley cars. There were subways. There were buses. And you went. If you had to wait by the corner for a while, so you would wait and get there when you did.

Q: When you used to do your shopping, did you have to do much traveling?

A: No. It was all in the neighborhood. One thing, the shopping was easy, because you had

private groceries, you had private butchers, you had private fish stores. Whatever you wanted you'd go in, and they knew who was a good customer. I used to buy by Drucker, chicken. If they used to open up a chicken they'd see something they didn't like they used to say this is for someone who calls on the phone. I'll get you another one.

Q: Did they used to take live chickens and slaughter them right there?

A: No, they would bring them slaughtered but they didn't clean them. You would buy them with the feathers. There was a man who plucked them. And if it was cleans then you would examine them and tell them to open them to see what's doing inside.

Q: So shopping would take you a long time?

A: No, it's not like now. Usually people used to shop twice a week, on Tuesday and on Thursday. You couldn't prepare like you prepare now, you pick up a freezer or a refrigerator and you could get along from week to week. In those years you had an icebox with ice. So I used to keep, for a dollar a week he would fill it every other day.

Q: All the time you spent at the butcher, there were other people you knew there?

A: Yes, of course. You would come, you would gossip a little, you would talk a little. There was one woman, she would come in, she had a store on Church Avenue. Children's wear. She would come in and say, let me, because my husband is by himself in the store. So, we would let her. After she got older, she used to stay and talk with us.

Q: You spoke in Yiddish?

A: That's why I don't talk so well in English. For all those years I should have been better with my language.

Q: Where did you learn to speak English?

A: When I came to this country I went to night school. Tante Rosie was pregnant and wasn't feeling good. You used to go three times a week for English. I couldn't. It would be Thursday I would help her with certain things in the house.

Q: What about…you kept on practicing the Jewish religion?

A: I'm not what I used to be. But it comes naturally. When you're used to a thing you can't thrown this away. That's what it is. So I keep a kosher home. I call on the telephone, which I shouldn't on Saturday. And there are certain things I shouldn't, like I go down with the elevator. You're not supposed to. Otherwise, I think, I keep a kosher home.

Q: And all through the years?

A: On the holidays I used to go to shul. Now since I don't feel well I don't go.

Q: What other things did you do? Did you go to movies a lot?

A: No. Mommy liked, what was his name, Dick Powell. So I used to go. One time we came out from the Ambassador. One side was the Ambassador, and on the other side was Blue Bird. And you saw Dick Powell on the sign, you were able to read already. And you said, oh Mommy, I want to see. And I said, I don't remember now if we went in from the Ambassador to the Blue Bird. I think we did, from one movie to the other; and the whole thing cost fifteen cents, before five o'clock.

Q: You used to go to Radio City [Music Hall].

A: This was in the later years. There was a special show once, Poppa was holding Esther on his lap, there was a line it went around the block. Poppa used to like the stage show at Radio City. The movies he didn't care for much.

Q: Did you go to see vaudeville?

A: When I came it was the end of the vaudeville show. Theater, every time a new show would come out, we would cover it.

Q: What sort of theater was it? Yiddish theater?

A: Yiddish theater.

Q: Only Yiddish theater, or did you go to see English theater?

A: Only one show I think we went to see. But there used to open in the winter time ten, eleven shows. Jewish. We didn't miss one.

Q: Did you leave the children with babysitters?

A: In those years who ever knew of babysitters? So if we were going out we took the kids.

Q: Did you ever go to museums in Manhattan?

A: Sometimes. When may grew older, she used to like it.

Q: What were the schools like?

A: I used to take them.

Q: But were they English schools?

A: Many went to Hebrew school also. Estelle as a child was always sick. Any little thing she would get congestion. So we were afraid to send her to school.

Q: For how long?

A: For a couple of winters. She had bronchial asthma.

Q: When did you become a citizen of the U.S.?

A: Shortly after I came to New York.

Q: What was that like?

A: Whatever I studies, whatever they asked me, I answered good and I got it. Poppa was very nervous about that. He was afraid that he wouldn't get it because uncle Baruch took it a couple of times and failed. So he said if he failed why shouldn't he. But he didn't I studied with him.

Q: I ask because for many people it is a special day.

A: Listen, you want to have a land where to live in.

Q: What about the Second World War?

A: I really cannot tell because nobody dreamt that the Second World War would bring such chaos to our nation. To pick up from under the ground where you are and to send you to the oven to be burned. Whoever talked about it. You were worried. You had grown children. You were afraid the children would be called to the military. But you never thought of a thing like this.

Q: It wasn't in the papers?

A: In the later years, but the people who went through the chaos didn't believe it. How many German people, Jewish people, helped Hitler become what he was, and how many people said they are not Jews, they are Germans. It's their country. And they gave their lives for it. So who could tell anything.

(Comment by Estelle Evelyn Steinberg Keilson, Sophie's daughter) The Jewish papers were very aware of it. They used to have articles about, I can't say the Holocaust per se, but the various… There were stories.

A: There were plenty stories, but people couldn't believe, how could you believe a thing like that, to take a nation, and kill out because they were born a different nationality. People go to war, they get killed. You raise children, you send them away, you can't help but this you take just because you are a Jew to kill.

We had the Spanish Inquisition. If someone wanted to become a gentile he got a good position, he got everything whatever he wanted to. Over here it didn't help. They dug out

people who didn't know they were Jewish and they said they had Jewish blood I them and they killed them.

Since civilization, and since the Jewish people became a nation, they had all different kinds of periods of time which wasn't so good, but not one like this. When the first World War broke out the Jewish people had an expression which said, some people are happy with the war, because they become rich, and some people have to tie a coat around their neck an hang themselves up.

It was known when the boat, the boat of the Jews, the St. Louis. Every day they used to have articles about it. And they came to the waters of the United States. And Roosevelt didn't allow them to get in. It was plenty written about in the papers, but the people who weren't touched by it didn't care for it.

Q: But you were touched by it.

A: Of course I was. It's hard to express the feeling that you have that you stretch out a hand for somebody to be helped and there is nobody to give you a push to help.