

**EI-1331**

**MURRAY [MISHA] ZINGMAN**

**BIRTHDATE: FEBRUARY 29, 1912**

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**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

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**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**RUSSIA, 1921**

**AGE: 9**

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**RESIDENCES: OLD CONSTANTINE, VALINSKA GUBARNIA,  
RUSSIA; LOWER EAST END, NYC TO BROOKLYN, NY**

LEVINE: —May the 19<sup>th</sup>, the year 2004. I'm here in Bristol [PH] Park in Tamarack, Florida, and I'm with Murray Zingman, who came here when he was nine years old in 1921 from Russia. And he came from Old Constantine.

ZINGMAN: Tine—Valinska Gubarnia.

LEVINE: Valinska Gubarnia. [clears throat] We're not sure about the ship but it was something, maybe, like Laplank [PH] and p—perhaps from Germany, the port. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and we'll begin at the beginning. If you'd say for the tape your birth date, again.

ZINGMAN: February 29<sup>th</sup>, 1912.

LEVINE: Okay. And do you remember your father's name?

ZINGMAN: David.

LEVINE: David. And your mother?

ZINGMAN: Rose.

LEVINE: Rose. Do you remember her maiden name?

ZINGMAN: Berlant—B-E-R-L-A-N-T.

LEVINE: Great. Now, on each side of your family, your mother's side, your father's side, going back generations, your gran—their—your grandparents, great grandparents, do you think they came from the same area in Russia? Or do you think they came from elsewhere and settled there? Do you have any idea about that?

ZINGMAN: I presume it's from the same area. I don't—

LEVINE: Did you know your grandparents when you were in Russia? Mother and father, or just one of them? Both of them?

ZINGMAN: I think so.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, okay. What do you remember about your grandparents?

ZINGMAN: What do I remember about my grandparents?

LEVINE: In Russia?

ZINGMAN: Well, he had a beard. They baked bread. Can't think of anything else. They baked bread.

LEVINE: W—were they religious?

ZINGMAN: They were religious. They sent me to Hebrew school. I remember they made the bread—the—the rabbi [unclear] Hebrew with the bread.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: They didn't have much money and they exchanged food and things.

LEVINE: Do you remember what your grandfather or your father did for work over there?

ZINGMAN: My father was an ironworker and my grandfather was a baker.

LEVINE: Oh.

ZINGMAN: I think.

LEVINE: Do you remember, like, did he have a bakery? Or did he—

ZINGMAN: He had a bakery.

LEVINE: Oh.

ZINGMAN: I can still smell the bread.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh. Now—

ZINGMAN: [coughs]

LEVINE: I'm not too familiar, but was that the part of Russia that was called the Bread Basket? Do you remember that?

ZINGMAN: The Bread Baskets?

LEVINE: In Russia?

ZINGMAN: [unclear]

LEVINE: But there must have been iron mines, anyway.

ZINGMAN: [coughs]

LEVINE: That's—when you say your—your father was an ironworker—

ZINGMAN: Yes, he was an ironworker.

LEVINE: What does that mean? He worked—

ZINGMAN: He worked for an iron factory, making hospital beds.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. In Russia?

ZINGMAN: I think so.

LEVINE: Or maybe that was in this country? Do you remember?

ZINGMAN: I think it might have been in this country, now that you mention—New York Hospital Supply.

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LEVINE: Oh, okay. Okay, uh-huh. Okay. Well, what else do you remember about—did you go to school in Russia?

ZINGMAN: No. I don't think so. I went to Hebrew school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. A—and did you have brothers and sisters over there?

ZINGMAN: Had a twin sister and an older sister.

LEVINE: Oh. Were you treated special because you were a boy?

ZINGMAN: Was I special?

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: I suppose so. Boys were always special—

LEVINE: That's true.

ZINGMAN: —in those days. It's a shame.

LEVINE: [chuckles] It is a shame.

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: [laughs] Yeah. So—so what was your life like? Just like a—a day, a typical day? Wh—what would you do? What would you see and what—

ZINGMAN: I told you, I used to be a saxophone player, a musician.

LEVINE: In this country. But let's first talk about life over there.

ZINGMAN: Russia.

LEVINE: You were only nine when you came. So we're talking—

ZINGMAN: Russia.

LEVINE: —about your early life.

ZINGMAN: What the heck did I do Russia? [chuckles] [unclear] away. Frankly speaking, I really don't remember too much.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember the town? Was it a little town?

ZINGMAN: Old Constantine. Valinska Gubarnia. I remember that.

LEVINE: What did it look like? Was it small? Was it large?

ZINGMAN: Small.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Village-like.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was it Jewish? Were most of the people in the town Jewish?

ZINGMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Yeah. Okay. Now, you think maybe your father left first.

ZINGMAN: My father left first for America. And then he sent money, you know, to work, to accumulate some money. Then he sent for us.

LEVINE: Okay. And did you travel with your older sister, your twin sister and your mother?

ZINGMAN: I think so. Yes.

LEVINE: Now, can you remember before you left? Can you remember getting ready to go? Can you remember anything about that?

ZINGMAN: Before we left. Slightly.

LEVINE: What—what comes to your mind?

ZINGMAN: The excitement of going on a boat and the good food we had.

LEVINE: On the boat? Oh. So do you know why your mother and father chose to go to America when they did?

ZINGMAN: I think there was a war going on.

LEVINE: 1921. Well—

ZINGMAN: [unclear]

LEVINE: Sure, it w—it was right after the First World War and I suppose the Russian Revolution—

ZINGMAN: It was—

LEVINE: —was also—

ZINGMAN: Yes, this war going on and Jews weren't very popular, Jewish people.

LEVINE: Right.

ZINGMAN: The Bolsheviks would chase the people. I really don't remember too much.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. So do you remember saying goodbye to your grandparents?

ZINGMAN: Slightly.

LEVINE: And then you left—did you go by horse and wagon? Di—how did you get to the port?

ZINGMAN: Horse and wagon.

LEVINE: Horse and wagon. And then maybe a train? Do you think you went then to a train, probably?

ZINGMAN: Probably went on a train. Horse and wagon and then a train.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Oh, you're bringing back memories galore.

LEVINE: Yeah? Well, whatever comes to your mind, you—

ZINGMAN: You should be a hypnotist. That would help.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Yeah, okay. So now, you get to the port. Did you have to stay at the port for a while before the ship came? Or do you remember anything about that?

ZINGMAN: We got to the port. And we waited for the boat. Frankly speaking, I don't.

LEVINE: Okay. So you got on the ship. Do you remember the passage? Do you remember anything about the—the transatlantic crossing?

ZINGMAN: Passage? I know we were poor people. We went third class, I think.

LEVINE: Were you in steerage? I—that would be—yeah, uh-huh. The bottom of the boat.

ZINGMAN: The bottom of the—bottom of the boat.

LEVINE: Right.

ZINGMAN: I remember that slightly.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: I remember eating like a horse.

LEVINE: So you—you probably—you said that was good food on the boat.

ZINGMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: In steerage. So I guess you hadn't had a lot of good food before that. Yeah, uh-huh. And then—

ZINGMAN: And then what?

LEVINE: The boat came into the New York harbor.

ZINGMAN: Boat came into New York harbor. And there, my father was there to greet us.

LEVINE: Do you think he'd been away a long time? In other words, did you recognize your father?

ZINGMAN: I really don't remember. I think I did.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so, y—did you see the Statue of Liberty?

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did people know what it was when they came in? Yeah? Yeah. And—

ZINGMAN: I can visualize the Statue of Liberty going by with the boat.

LEVINE: Really?

ZINGMAN: It's funny.

LEVINE: Yeah. And then you probably saw the—saw the skyscrapers, New York.

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. And then Ellis Island, tell me anything you can remember about going through Ellis Island.

ZINGMAN: I remember going through, delousing. Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Lot of people, probably. Lot of noise, different languages.

ZINGMAN: You're taxing my brain really back.

LEVINE: Okay. It'll get—it'll get easier when you—

ZINGMAN: It's a wonder I can remember anything.

LEVINE: Well, when you get to—when we talk about—okay. So you left Ellis Island. Do you remember where you went? Where did the family settle?

ZINGMAN: The Lower East Side.

LEVINE: Oh, really? Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: The Lower East Side. Sharif [PH] Street.

LEVINE: Sharif?

ZINGMAN: Sharif—Sharif Street.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay. [chuckles] And wh—what struck you when you first got—those first days, weeks, months? What st—

ZINGMAN: The tall buildings.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: The Woolworth Building, the Statue of Liberty, all the food available.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Now, was your father already working—

ZINGMAN: As an ironworker.

LEVINE: As an ironworker, making the hospital beds.

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: When you first came, he was doing that?

ZINGMAN: Yeah. He sent—he sent for us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so, describe in as much detail as you can remember what the Lower East Side of New York was like when you—when you were living there?

ZINGMAN: What the Lower East Side was like. The ghettos. Gitlet's [PH] Delicatessen. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Which delicatessen?

ZINGMAN: Gitlet's.

LEVINE: Gitlet's. [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: I remember the name. [chuckles] Gitlet's.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: And Broom [PH] Street, Hester [PH] Street, where the peddlers were, pushcarts.

LEVINE: Yeah, right.

ZINGMAN: Do you remember it too?

LEVINE: Well, I—I wasn't there as early as you but I—I know the Lower East Side. Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Everybody was in business for themselves, trying to make a living. I remember working in a donut factory. My uncle had a donut factory and—

LEVINE: Was it there in the Lower East Side? Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: And I remember squeezing jelly into the donuts.

LEVINE: Huh. Did you go to school soon after you arrived?

ZINGMAN: P.S. 22. I remember the [chuckles] school name. I remember the teachers there, Mr. Fite [PH].

LEVINE: How was learning English for you?

ZINGMAN: Not too difficult.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. So what did you—

ZINGMAN: I was considered a smart kid. Not as smart as you.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So y—so you went to school with your sister. What was her name, your—your twin sister?

ZINGMAN: Sylvia.

LEVINE: Sylvia. And your older sister?

ZINGMAN: Frieda.

LEVINE: Frieda. And they—you all went to school? Uh-huh. Now, how about organizations? Do you remember going to the Educational Alliance or any—any places, like, after school where they had programs and you learned things?

ZINGMAN: The library.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: I remember going someplace, Hebrew school. I really don't—

LEVINE: Can you describe where you lived? What it was like?

ZINGMAN: The Lower East Side? There was a stoop, what we called a stoop, steps walking up to the hallway. And [clears throat] I remember my uncle had a donut facto—factory in the basement. And I used to work there after school, squeezing the jelly into the donuts.

LEVINE: And how about your apartment? Do you remember that?

ZINGMAN: It was a cold flat on the fourth floor. We all walked up steps.

LEVINE: Yeah. The bathroom in the hall?

ZINGMAN: Oh, yes. Bathroom in the hall.

LEVINE: How about electricity?

ZINGMAN: I don't think we had electricity then. We had those gas lamps.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ZINGMAN: Whatever you call them.

LEVINE: You put money in? Is that what you had to do?

ZINGMAN: The meter. I think we had to feed the meter.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

ZINGMAN: Boy, what memories. [singing in foreign language]

LEVINE: I wanted to ask you that. Did—were—was there a certain music that the immigrants played that, you know—

ZINGMAN: Usually played violin. I played saxophone.

LEVINE: Oh, tell me how you started playing an instrument.

ZINGMAN: I went to Arthur Kremen [PH] Music Hall where you pay 50 cents a lesson; that lasted about 10 minutes. They loaned you the instrument. You used to—you brought in your own mouthpiece. Gosh, memories.

LEVINE: Wow, wow. How did you know you wanted to—wh—what—what prompted you to take music lessons?

ZINGMAN: What? I just wanted to make money, I guess.

LEVINE: Oh.

ZINGMAN: I was—I was an ambitious kid. My family was poor. They couldn't send me to school. I remember saving money and paying for the lessons, 25 cents a lesson.

LEVINE: Okay.

ZINGMAN: They loaned you the saxophone. You brought your own mouthpiece, for sanitary reasons.

LEVINE: Yeah. And then where did you play after you learned how to play?

ZINGMAN: Oh, I played catering halls. I was an ambitious kid. I used to go to a catering hall and promised to give them so much for any job they recommend.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: And I wasn't a very good musician but from no jobs at all, I got a lot of bookings.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: I had a lot of chutzpah.

LEVINE: Did you stay in school too, or did you drop out of school?

ZINGMAN: I think I dropped out of school.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ZINGMAN: My parents weren't school conscious. They were interested, I go to work and make money to help support the family.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So—and—and the family stayed religious in this country?

ZINGMAN: Stayed religious?

LEVINE: Yeah. Did they keep up the religion?

ZINGMAN: Well, they kept up the faith. They weren't very religious.

LEVINE: Oh, I see. Uh-huh, uh-huh. How about the Yiddish theater? Do you remember that?

ZINGMAN: I remember Molly Picon [PH], Laurie Schwartz [PH], Aaron Lebedev [PH]. Yes, I remember that.

LEVINE: Tell me anything you can remember about it, what it was like, how you got to go—

ZINGMAN: Oh. I used to go, sit way in the balcony, high. I remember seeing Laurie Schwartz in the Dibik [PH]. Is that a show he played?

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: You remember Di—

LEVINE: I've heard of it. No, I don't remember.

ZINGMAN: [unclear] Jewish actors, Aaron Lebedev, Molly Picon [PH]. I remember her singing "Dor staht Yonkula." [PH]

LEVINE: She was a—a comedienne too, right?

ZINGMAN: Yeah, Jewish—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: —comedian.

LEVINE: Yeah. And—and did a lot of the people from the Lower East Side go to the Second Avenue to the theater?

ZINGMAN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: They went to Second Avenue and saw [unclear], Aaron Lebedev, Laurie Schwartz. I remember all them names. Isn't that funny?

LEVINE: Did—did you really enjoy it?

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Did your mother and father go too?

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah.

ZINGMAN: Sit way in the balcony.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And everything was in Yiddish, right? Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Good old days.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: [singing in foreign language].

LEVINE: You want to sing something for the tape? You remember any particular song that you could give us at least a good part of it?

ZINGMAN: Part of it, maybe.

LEVINE: Okay. Go ahead. It'd be nice to have it on. [interruption] Wait, wait. Okay.

ZINGMAN: [singing in foreign language]. Ah.

LEVINE: Very nice. What did it say? Wh—wh—what were the words saying?

ZINGMAN: "Sheari die lavna" [PH] means "nice like the sun." "Lehtig mi die Steran" [PH], "light like the stars." What else?

LEVINE: Now, was that a song that people knew from the Old Country? Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. T—Can you say anything about the music that the people who came to the Lower East Side that—that they played that had to do with immigrating, that had to do, coming to this country? Do you remember any of those records that were popular when you were young?

ZINGMAN: The—the melodies?

LEVINE: Well, the songs. Can you remember any of the songs that—that were real popular among the immigrant people? They were probably in Yiddish or—

ZINGMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: —maybe they were in English with some Yiddish words or—

ZINGMAN: Yiddish, sheili del lavorno [PH].

LEVINE: That's what you just sang, right? Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Yes, [several words unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, right.

ZINGMAN: Yossel [PH]. [singing] Tra, la, la, la, la, yossel, yossel, yossel. Ta, la, da, da, la, la, la, la, la, la. La, la, la, la, la, yossel, yossel, yossel. Ta, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. La, la, la, la, la, la, la. [clears throat] La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la. La, la, la. Boom, boom.

LEVINE: What's Yossel?

ZINGMAN: Joseph.

LEVINE: Oh, Joseph. [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Okay. Well, [clears throat] let's see. How about—remember when the Victrola came in or the radio?

ZINGMAN: I remember when the Victrola came in and I remember when the radio came in.

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences, any incidents? Did the family sit around the radio or h—how—what happened?

ZINGMAN: They used to sit around the radio and listen with the earmuffs.

LEVINE: Well, didn't it have that big horn that came out?

ZINGMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Jeez, what memories. It's a wonder I remember anything.

LEVINE: Well, you remember a lot. What—tell me more about the Lower East Side, what life was like, what you did—you—you just worked after school? You didn't—did you do anything for enjoyment? You went to the Yiddish theater?

ZINGMAN: We played ball. Baseball, soccer, basketball. I worked at a donut factory.

LEVINE: Was it mostly all Jewish people or were there Italian people too who had come—just come over?

ZINGMAN: Mostly Jewish people.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. In school too?

ZINGMAN: No, in school, I think there was a mixture.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

ZINGMAN: Boy, you're asking from years back. It's a wonder I remember anything.

LEVINE: Well, this is great. Whatever you remember is terrific. Okay. So you dropped out of school and you started playing at—

ZINGMAN: Saxophone.

LEVINE: —people's—people's events. Right?

ZINGMAN: Weddings.

LEVINE: Weddings.

ZINGMAN: Weddings, bar mitzvahs.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Funerals.

LEVINE: Yeah. And—and then is that what you did for work, as you became a man?

ZINGMAN: I think I worked in a shoe factory putting on heels, house slippers.

LEVINE: In—in Manhattan?

ZINGMAN: Gee, [unclear]—then I worked in a dress factory delivering dresses on these wagons on Seventh Avenue.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Did you know anything about unions in the garment industry?

ZINGMAN: No, I belonged to the musicians union.

LEVINE: Oh. Could you say anything about that, what it was like? How—did it help you? Was it a good thing? Was it not?

ZINGMAN: It was a—a place that helped me get jobs. I'd get in a union floor and that's where musicians used to get together.

LEVINE: Remember where the union hall was?

ZINGMAN: I think it was 50<sup>th</sup> Street and Seventh or Eighth Avenue.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what? You'd go up to the union hall to see about any jobs?

ZINGMAN: You got up on the floor and the floor was crowded, musicians. And everyone would know everyone. And you'd stop this one. And I was considered a leader. They called me Ziggy. They'd say, "Ziggy, you got the weekend for me?" And I would look and say, "Yes, I got a wedding Saturday night, a bar mitzvah Sunday afternoon and a bar mitzvah Sunday night."

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Four dollars a job.

LEVINE: Wow. And did you play with other—other musicians? Or were you mostly playing solo?

ZINGMAN: [sniffs] With other m—with—those that I hired played with me.

LEVINE: I see.

ZINGMAN: Those other musicians.

LEVINE: Like, how many would you usually hire?

ZINGMAN: Four or five.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did you enjoy it?

ZINGMAN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Especially the suppers.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: The free suppers.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Dinners.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. So did you do that—all your adult life, were you doing—playing music?

ZINGMAN: As far as I can remember. I worked at a shoe factory.

LEVINE: So what would you do? Work in the shoe factory in the day and—

ZINGMAN: Day—

LEVINE: —then—

ZINGMAN: And play at night.

LEVINE: —play at night. Uh-huh. Yeah. Now, di—how long did you stay in the Lower East Side?

ZINGMAN: As long as they allowed me to. [chuckles]

LEVINE: [chuckles] I mean, did you live there?

ZINGMAN: Ninety-five Sharif Street. I remember.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Then we moved up to Williamsburg [clears throat] where the rich people moved.

LEVINE: Y—you—you moved to Brooklyn, Williamsburg. Yeah. And then did you stay in Williamsburg?

ZINGMAN: I think so.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And how about your sisters? How—what did they do?

ZINGMAN: What did they do? My sisters. Sylvia, I guess she got married. Frieda, I don't remember.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

LEVINE: Did—did your mother and father learn English?

ZINGMAN: My father did. My mother, a little bit, I think. A little bit.

LEVINE: Well, she could along probably—

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: —speaking Yiddish in the neighborhood, right?

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. And [clears throat] [gap in tape]. Okay, the tape recorder cut out so we're going to try to recapture some of the things that were said most recently. You th—you mentioned that you met your wife. She was at a—an affair that you were playing music at.

ZINGMAN: Yes.

LEVINE: And what was her name?

ZINGMAN: Millie. Mildred McDonald.

LEVINE: Right. And I asked you if it—if it bothered your family that she wasn't a Jewish—

ZINGMAN: Jew—

LEVINE: —girl.

ZINGMAN: At first, but they got to like her almost immediately.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. And then I asked you about a car. So tell me what you bought for a car.

ZINGMAN: The first car I bought, remember. I think it was a Buick Riviera.

LEVINE: Convertible.

ZINGMAN: Convertible. You had a good memory.

LEVINE: [laughs]

ZINGMAN: And then I advanced to a Thunderbird, Ford Thunderbird.

LEVINE: Wow!

ZINGMAN: Real classy. And I can still visualize her—my wife, Millie, riding in it with a bandana around her head. And I was so proud of her. Yeah.

LEVINE: And you mentioned that you did not learn to drive. Why didn't you drive?

ZINGMAN: Because she was a good driver.

LEVINE: [laughs]

ZINGMAN: Didn't encourage me.

LEVINE: I see. [chuckles] Okay. And—and you said you were living in Williamsburg then, and it was also a Jewish neighborhood. And let's see. Oh, I asked you what you were most proud of, what gave you satisfaction about what you had done.

ZINGMAN: Becoming a musician, being able to take care of my family, father and mother, staying healthy, I guess.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you said you thought your father became a citizen. Your mother really didn't learn the language that well.

ZINGMAN: No.

LEVINE: And you, yourself, became a citizen.

ZINGMAN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Yeah. And when the—I noticed the tape recorder was off, I had said, "Do you remember the—the Great Depression and how it affected you and your family?"

ZINGMAN: [clears throat] I remember the Depression. I remember me going out to work in my uncle's bakery.

LEVINE: You stopped working in the shoe factory then? Or you hadn't—you didn't work there yet, maybe?

ZINGMAN: I really don't remember.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. But you said you—your family had food. You—you weren't—

ZINGMAN: Yeah, we never were hungry.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So you were kind of the man of the family. Was your father working at that point?

ZINGMAN: I think he stopped working for—he injured his hand or something, I remember, in the iron factory. I really don't remember it much.

LEVINE: So then you were really the support of your mother and father from then on.

ZINGMAN: Right.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And once you got a car, where—where did you go that you wouldn't have gone otherwise?

ZINGMAN: To the Catskills.

LEVINE: T—talk about that.

ZINGMAN: I used to be a musician in the Catskills. I played saxophone and clarinet.

LEVINE: Right. Yeah. And t—talk about what it was like in the summer in the Catskills.

ZINGMAN: Oh, it was beautiful. The husbands would leave the weekend and we musicians would take over—

LEVINE: [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: —the wives. [laughter] Them were the days.

LEVINE: In other words, they'd go back to the city during the week to work. Is that what you mean?

ZINGMAN: Who, the husbands? Yes.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. And come up on the weekends.

ZINGMAN: And come up on weekends and we would step aside. [laughter]

LEVINE: Yeah. And—and what was it like? Were you playing in those big hotels?

ZINGMAN: Not a—too big hotels, in medium hotels.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Saxophone and clarinet, a caterer through a Jewish clientele.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: And they give us room and board and a salary. Enjoyed it very much.

LEVINE: So you'd spend the summers up there, would you? Uh-huh. And then would your wife come up too?

ZINGMAN: I don't think I had a wife then.

LEVINE: Oh, this was before you got married.

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Ah, that's how. That's why you were interested in other people's wives.

ZINGMAN: That's right.

LEVINE: [laughs]

ZINGMAN: That's right.

LEVINE: I see. [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: The weekend.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And let's see. How about, like, places like Coney Island? Did you—did you go there?

ZINGMAN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Could you—could you say anything about what that was like back then?

ZINGMAN: Coney Island, Steeplechase. I can still smell the hotdogs.

LEVINE: Nathan's?

ZINGMAN: Nathan's, yes, from the stands and I can still feel the breezes of the ocean. Them were the good old days.

LEVINE: Yeah? So you liked your life.

ZINGMAN: No complaints.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, great. Great. [clears throat] Let's see. Did you think of yourself—do you think of yourself as a—do you think coming here as a—as a—immigrating here, do you think that made a difference in you, in your personality? In other words, that your family had come from somewhere else, came to a new country, started over again, do you think that made a difference in the way you look at things, the way you are?

ZINGMAN: Yes. When I came here, I admired this country and it sure made a difference. I met new friends, new people, new life. I thought I was very fortunate in being accepted here as one of the American boys.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh. Did you ever run into prejudice because you were Jewish in this country?

ZINGMAN: I think so, once in a while.

LEVINE: Do you—do you remember any instances? What it was about? What—

ZINGMAN: I remember not being allowed to go into some restaurants.

LEVINE: Oh. In New York? Uh-hmm. Yes.

ZINGMAN: I remember signs they had out, “Jews not allowed.”

LEVINE: Hmm. Did you feel like you—did that—did that have a—were you sensitive about that? Yeah, uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Of course, you know they had signs, “Irish need not apply. Ital”—you know, a lot of groups had that. Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah. Now, let’s see. So when the Second World War started, where were you in your life and—and did you—did you do anything? Did you sign up or—

ZINGMAN: I was drafted.

LEVINE: Oh, you were drafted. Uh-huh. Into the Army?

ZINGMAN: Army Air Corps. I remember them coming and picking me up. I remember the drill sergeant, “You’re in the Army now.” I remember I had a tough sergeant who hated Jews and blacks.

LEVINE: Where would you—where’d you go? Where were you taken to?

ZINGMAN: Where was I taken to? Camp Stewart [PH].

LEVINE: Where’s that?

ZINGMAN: Savannah, Georgia. [clears throat]

LEVINE: And then were you sent overseas? Where did you go?

ZINGMAN: Germany, where I can still visualize riding on a boat. What a terrific appetite I always had. And I can say I enjoyed the Army life.

LEVINE: Really?

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you see action?

ZINGMAN: Not too much but I saw action.

LEVINE: You were in the Army Air Corps, did you say?

ZINGMAN: In the Army Air Corps. Maybe—yes, I was in a plane. But I really don't remember much.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So do you remember—did you see—when you were over there, I mean were you there when—when the war was over? Were you in Germany?

ZINGMAN: The war was still on.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: I remember I was in the Army of Occupation after the war was over. They were good days, the Army of Occupation. You didn't want to go home.

LEVINE: What were your duties? What were you—what did you have to do then?

ZINGMAN: What did I do? I think [clears throat]—I think I was trained as a cook. [clears throat] I think.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Were you there when they liberated the camps? Did you see that? Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Army of Occupation. Yeah.

LEVINE: Hmm. When you think back about the period of your life when you were in the service and you were in Europe, how do you think about it now?

ZINGMAN: I think they—they were happy days, more or less.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ZINGMAN: Of course, when I was a boy, I didn't have much of a playtime.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ZINGMAN: I was always busy working, helping support the family. When I got in the Army, I felt free.

LEVINE: Hmm. Were you married at that time when you were in the Army? That was before you got married?

ZINGMAN: No, I don't think I was married.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah. Okay. Were you—did you ever get yourself involved in politics at all?

ZINGMAN: Not that I can think of.

LEVINE: Hmm. Okay. And—

ZINGMAN: I was not a politician.

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: Like he was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. [chuckles] Uh-huh. And let's see. How about the American dream? Do you think your mother and father had an idea of what the Ar—American dream was?

ZINGMAN: The American dream. [clears throat] Milk and honey. "Come to America." I really don't remember too much.

LEVINE: Do you think your mother and father were glad they had come to this country?

ZINGMAN: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Getting away from the pogroms of Russia.

LEVINE: Hmm.

ZINGMAN: I can't believe I was there.

LEVINE: Right. You got away before it was the Soviet Union.

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Okay. Well, is there anything else you can think of, relevant to coming to this country as a nine-year-old and your family coming to this country and living out your life here? Oh, let me ask you about this period. So you were in Williamsburg and then, eventually, you came to Florida. When did you come to Florida, roughly?

ZINGMAN: When did I come to Florida? I don't know. Was it 1993? I really don't remember.

LEVINE: You were retired already when you came here?

ZINGMAN: Was I retired? [clears throat] I guess so. I don't know.

LEVINE: Oh, you worked once you got down here. Do you remember what you did?

ZINGMAN: Musician. Shoe, put on heels in a shoe factory. [clears throat].

LEVINE: How about—

ZINGMAN: Working in a beauty salon.

LEVINE: You remember that part?

ZINGMAN: Slightly.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: Isn't that funny? You forget—

LEVINE: It's the more recent—

ZINGMAN: —some things.

LEVINE: —things that it's harder to remember. Right.

ZINGMAN: Yep. I used to do hairdressing, hairstyling. Permanent wave specialist, that's what I was.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh. And did you work for someone?

ZINGMAN: No, I didn't. I worked for myself.

LEVINE: You had your own shop.

ZINGMAN: I guess I did [unclear] school. I had a beauty school.

LEVINE: Oh, you had a beauty school. [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, what led you to that? Do you know how you went from musician—

ZINGMAN: [clears throat]

LEVINE: —to beauty school?

ZINGMAN: I couldn't get any jobs so I became [chuckles] a teacher.

LEVINE: Wow, uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: Yeah, successful beauty school.

LEVINE: Good for you.

ZINGMAN: Miami Academy of Beauty Culture.

LEVINE: [chuckles] Uh-huh.

ZINGMAN: The years go by but you remember.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, I can't think of anything else but we have a little bit more time on the tape. I'm thinking maybe you could sing us another song, either from way back or anything that you remember as a—and that you particularly like.

ZINGMAN: I used to sing to my wife.

LEVINE: Oh, well, then, good.

ZINGMAN: [singing] "I'll be loving you always with a love that's true always. Needs a helping hand, I will understand."

LEVINE: [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: "I will understand always, always. La, la, la, la, la." Look at them grinning.

LEVINE: [chuckles]

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ZINGMAN: “Always. La, la, la, la, la. Always. Not for just an hour. Not for just a day. Not for just a year, but always. Always.”

LEVINE: Great.

ZINGMAN: “Always.” Ah!

LEVINE: Well, that’s a beautiful place to end, I think. So I want to thank you for a lovely interview.

ZINGMAN: Thank you.

LEVINE: You’re most welcome. And I have been speaking with Murray Zingman, who came in 1921 when he was nine years old from Russia and has done a lot of different things in his careers here. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, signing off.

WOMAN: Thanks, thanks.

ZINGMAN: Now?

LEVINE: Yeah.

ZINGMAN: [singing] “[unclear], please let me explain.” [singing in foreign language] “La, la, la, la, la.” [camera shutter clicking] “La, la, la, la, la.”

LEVINE: [chuckles]

ZINGMAN: “La, la, la, la, la”—

LEVINE: Keep going.

ZINGMAN: “La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la.”

LEVINE: That’s great.

ZINGMAN: “La, la, la, la, la, la.” [camera shutter clicking] “La, la, la, la, la, la.”

LEVINE: I’ve got one left.

ZINGMAN: “La, la, la, la. La, la, la, la, la, la-la-la. [unclear].” [camera shutter clicking]. “Please let me explain.” [singing in foreign language] “Da, da, da, la, la, la, la, la. [continues singing la, la].”

LEVINE: Thank you.

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ZINGMAN: You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]