

EI-014

JULIUS GLADSTEIN

BIRTH DATE: 7/23/1906

INTERVIEW DATE: 12/6/1990

RUNNING TIME: 21:32

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

RECORDING ENGINEER: BRIAN FEENEY

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: ST. JOHNLAND NURSING HOME
KING'S PARK, NEW YORK**

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1993

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 5/1993

POLAND, 1920

AGE 14

SHIP: AQUITANIA

PORT: CHERBOURG

RESIDENCES:

- **Poland: STARAPOL**
- **US: BROOKLYN, NY**

Oral Historian's Note: Within the interview there is confusion about the actual immigration date and age at time of immigration. This age and date represent an educated assumption based on information supplied by Mr. Gladstein. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Oral Historian, 5/9/1993.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, December 6. We are here with Julius Gladstein, who came from Poland in 1914. Mr. Gladstein, where in Poland were you born? Where were you born?

GLADSTEIN: In Poland? In what city? The main city was Starapol. In the province, it was Mikolinza.

SIGRIST: Okay. And is that where your family lived at that time?

GLADSTEIN: At that time my father was here in the United States and we lived in, we were six children, we lived in, we didn't have much relatives there.

SIGRIST: I see. Your father was here in the United States.

GLADSTEIN: In the United States.

SIGRIST: When did he come to the United States?

GLADSTEIN: He came in before the war.

SIGRIST: Yes. And he left your mother and the six children?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. My mother and the six children, she died in Europe. And wewereleft alone, six children.

SIGRIST: W hat was your mother's name?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: Ida. Ida Gladstein.

SIGRIST: I see. What was your father's name?

GLADSTEIN: Samuel Gladstein.

SIGRIST: I see. When he came to America, what did he do?

GLADSTEIN: He worked. He worked. I think he was a buttonmaker.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. A buttonmaker. I see. And did your mother work in Poland to . . .

GLADSTEIN: No. She took care of six children, she took care.

SIGRIST: Did your father send money to her?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. My father sent money to Europe.

SIGRIST: I see. Can you name your brothers and sisters for me?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Go from the youngest to the oldest.

GLADSTEIN : I'll go from the oldest to the youngest. Carl Gladstein, Harry Gladstein, Manny Gladstein, and the sister was name Ellen Gladstein, and the last

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

sister was named Esther Gladstein.

SIGRIST: I see. Where do you fit in to all of that?

GLADSTEIN: I was there before the last.

SIGRIST: So you were the next to the last?

GLADSTEIN: No, not the last.

SIGRIST: Next to the last.

GLADSTEIN: Next to the last.

SIGRIST: I see. And did you live in an apartment with your mother and father, or with your mother . . .

GLADSTEIN: We had our own house.

SIGRIST: You had your own house. Can you talk a little bit about the house? Do you remember what it looked like?

GLADSTEIN: It was a nice house.

SIGRIST: Two stories? One story?

GLADSTEIN: One. Just a flat house. Not two floors up. It was a small city. There was no floor.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: Was there a fireplace or a big stove or something in the house?

GLADSTEIN: No. There was no fireplace, no.

SIGRIST: Did you keep animals at all? Did you ever have any pets?

GLADSTEIN: No. No, no, no.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that. So your father is sending you money, and your mother is taking care of the kids.

GLADSTEIN: The mother was taking care of the six children.

SIGRIST: Did any of your brothers work at all to help bring in some money?

GLADSTEIN: No, they didn't work. There was no work in my city.

SIGRIST: It was a small city, you said.

GLADSTEIN: A small town.

SIGRIST: small town. Do you remember, you all were Jewish, was going to synagogue an important thing? Did you go all the time?

GLADSTEIN: Yes. We went to synagogue.

SIGRIST: It was, did your mother, did you all have to go to school?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: We had to go to school, but we couldn't go to school.

SIGRIST: Why?

GLADSTEIN: Because it was wartime. When I was supposed to go to school I didn't go because it was wartime. The war started just when I was supposed to go to school. And there was no school during the wartime. Because the Russians came right into my city as soon as the war started. So it was no school there.

SIGRIST: Did the Russians attack?

GLADSTEIN: They didn't. They didn't attack the people, but at that time the Russians weren't friendly to the people.

SIGRIST: I see. Did, getting back, say, to your mother, was your mother a good cook? Did she do all the cooking?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, she was a cook. She took good care of the children.

SIGRIST: Did she ever make anything that you particularly liked?

GLADSTEIN: She made probably everything, everything.

SIGRIST: Everything was good. I see. Well, let's talk about coming over to America then. Who decided that you would come over?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: My father. My father, he gave all the money, and my grandmother helped, too. My grandmother was here in the United States.

SIGRIST: Oh, she came, too. Is this your father's mother or your mother's mother?

GLADSTEIN: My mother's mother.

SIGRIST: Yes. She had come over . . .

GLADSTEIN: She came before, before the war.

SIGRIST: I see. And did your mother, did you all go over, all seven of you? Your mother and the six kids?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, six. Six children. We all come over here. Six children.

SIGRIST: I see. And do you remember, were you excited about coming to America?

GLADSTEIN: Sure, we were excited to come to America.

SIGRIST: You hadn't seen your father for a while, right?

GLADSTEIN: No. My mother died in Europe before.

SIGRIST: I see. What did she die of?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: She died, she was very sick. I think she died of cancer. I don't know, but I think she died of cancer.

SIGRIST: Who took care of the children after she died?

GLADSTEIN: We took care of ourselves.

SIGRIST: I see. So actually it was just, did the six of you, then, come over to America? Six kids? So your father sent all the money over and you saved it up until you had enough, and then you all came over. Do you remember what port you left from, what port the boat left from?

GLADSTEIN: The boat?

SIGRIST: Yes, where did the boat leave from?

GLADSTEIN: Cherbourg.

SIGRIST: I see. And do you remember the name of the boat?

GLADSTEIN: Aquitania.

SIGRIST: The Aquitania. That must have been a long ride to go from where you lived . . .

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. We went from Cherbourg to America.

SIGRIST: What about, what about from where you lived in Poland to Cherbourg?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

How did you go?

GLADSTEIN: First we went to France.

SIGRIST: How did you get to France? Did you go . . .

GLADSTEIN: We went, all the children. I think we had a delegate that picked us up.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you go on a train, or did you take . . .

GLADSTEIN: We took the train. We went to Cherbourg, and then we went to America.

SIGRIST: I see. Do you remember being on the boat at all? Do you remember crossing over? Was it a smooth trip? Was it . . .

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, it was all right.

SIGRIST: Did you get sick at all?

GLADSTEIN: We got sick.

SIGRIST: You all got sick?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, but we got better.

SIGRIST: What class did you ride on on the boat?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: Third class.

SIGRIST: Were there lots of other people with you? Were there lots of other people travelling third class?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Anybody from your home town?

GLADSTEIN: No, no.

SIGRIST: Anybody who spoke, what did you speak, Polish, at that time?

GLADSTEIN: We speak Polish, we speak German, and we speak Russian. We speak all kind of language.

SIGRIST: I see. But, so there were lots of different kinds of people on this boat from different places. Were you frightened, as a kid? Do you remember?

GLADSTEIN: No. I was just sick, you know, from the boat, throwing up and everything.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when you were coming into New York, did you see the Statue of Liberty at all?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: Tell me about that. How did you see it?

GLADSTEIN: We all looked at the Statue of Liberty, but was no special.

SIGRIST: Did you come up on deck, or did you see it through a porthole?

GLADSTEIN: No, we saw it by the deck.

SIGRIST: You went up on the deck. I see. And you had no chaperon with you, you said. It was just the six kids.

GLADSTEIN: The six kids. No, we had a delegate who was bringing us here.

SIGRIST: Do you remember who that was?

GLADSTEIN: I don't remember the name, but there was a delegate, he was bringing a lot of people in here.

SIGRIST: I see.

GLADSTEIN: To the delegate. He was bringing not only us, but other families, too, he was bringing here.

SIGRIST: I see. Now, when you got to New York, okay, because you arrived in New York, do you remember anything about Ellis Island? Do you remember being processed at Ellis, or . . .

GLADSTEIN: We didn't have no trouble getting in.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: You went right through.

GLADSTEIN: We went right through.

SIGRIST: Do you remember were there lots of people there? Was it empty that day?

GLADSTEIN: No, it was empty, but there were a lot of people there. We just came in with the boat and they sent us right in.

SIGRIST: And do you remember being examined at all? Did you have a medical exam?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, they examined us.

SIGRIST: What did they do?

GLADSTEIN: They looked for lice. (he laughs) They looked to see whether we were lousy. We weren't. That we was clean, and that's all. That's it.

SIGRIST: You weren't. I see. And who was at Ellis waiting for you? Was there someone there to pick you up?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, my father was waiting.

SIGRIST: He came from there. And what was that like? Of course, you hadn't seen him for a long time, right?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. We hadn't seen him for a long time. My father was here during the end of the war. When the war was on we couldn't come here, and when the war ended my father send the money to Europe and we came to the United States.

SIGRIST: I see. And your father, your father came and he picked all the kids up, and then where did you go? Where did he take you?

GLADSTEIN: He took us to an apartment. My grandmother had an apartment.

SIGRIST: In New York?

GLADSTEIN: No, she had an apartment in Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Oh, in Brooklyn.

GLADSTEIN: And she took care of us, and my father went back to New York. He had a job in New York.

SIGRIST: What was he doing?

GLADSTEIN: He was a button maker.

SIGRIST: Oh, a button maker. Right. Now, your grandmother, what was she like as a person? Do you remember your grandmother?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: Was she a hard person? Was she a kind person?

GLADSTEIN: She was a kind person. She worked.

SIGRIST: What did she do?

GLADSTEIN: She was working in a butcher store.

SIGRIST: I see. In Brooklyn.

GLADSTEIN: In Brooklyn, yeah. And she worked hard, and then she came home. She took care of us.

SIGRIST: Did, you keep talking about your grandmother. Was there a grandfather that went along with grandmother, or she was alone?

GLADSTEIN: She was alone.

SIGRIST: And she ran this business by herself?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. She did it by herself. She had an apartment, and she took us in there.

SIGRIST: And so you all lived with her for a while?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. For a while, but my older brother got a job.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: I see. What did he do? Do you remember what job he got?

GLADSTEIN: He helped out on a wagon selling bread.

SIGRIST: A bread wagon.

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. The, serving bread.

SIGRIST: So that helped out to support you.

GLADSTEIN: It helped him. It helped him. He took care of himself.

SIGRIST: Did any of you kids help out your grandmother in the butcher shop?

GLADSTEIN: No, no. We were too young. I had a job, I took care of myself, and I helped myself, in a fish store I worked.

SIGRIST: You got a job at a fish store. What did you have to do at the fish store?

GLADSTEIN: Well, scrubbing down the fish. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: And how long did you do that for?

GLADSTEIN: Till I, till I got a job outside working.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you go to school at all?

GLADSTEIN: I went to school, but they didn't. I went to school. They put me in the 1-

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

A. I was fourteen years old and they put me in the 1-A! And the teacher used to march the kids around the block, and I looked very funny.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And you felt awkward too, yeah?

GLADSTEIN: I felt all right. I was fourteen years old and they marched me around the block. And how I came here, I couldn't write and I couldn't read, nothing. So I went to school a lot of time, but then they sent me two notices every time. Because I missed the school a lot of times. I didn't go to school.

SIGRIST: Because of your job or just because you didn't want to go?

GLADSTEIN: I didn't want to go because they put me with the small kids and I had to march around the block. And all the people used to look at me and they used to think that I'm a big dope and I would look back a lot of times.

SIGRIST: Did you, how did you learn English then? How did . . .

GLADSTEIN: I went to school, to night school.

SIGRIST: You went to night school and learned English. And did your brothers and sisters do the same thing?

GLADSTEIN: My brothers and sisters, they went to regular school.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: Yes. Because they were older.

GLADSTEIN: No. The brothers and sisters, they were younger. My sisters were younger.

SIGRIST: Oh, yes. That's right. Your sisters were younger.

GLADSTEIN: My two sisters were younger. They're the youngest. And they went to school and they were all right. One was working for the Department in the City, for the City Department. They were working, they were both working from the city.

SIGRIST: Did your grandmother speak English?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. She didn't speak much, but she spoke.

SIGRIST: She spoke enough.

GLADSTEIN: She had to get along with the people in the butcher store.

SIGRIST: Now, when you went to live with your grandmother, did you maintain a consistent religious life? For instance, did you go to synagogue regularly?

GLADSTEIN: Not much. Just the holidays I went, but not much.

SIGRIST: I see. Was your family musical at all? Was your family musical at all? Play an instrument or sing?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: No, no, no.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that. Well let's, okay, so you have your job in the fish store, and what was the next job you got?

GLADSTEIN: The next job, when I started work, I worked in picture frames, a picture frame shop.

SIGRIST: And how old were you?

GLADSTEIN: I started when I was sixteen years old.

SIGRIST: Yes, sixteen.

GLADSTEIN: Before I couldn't get a job because they wasn't allowed to give me a job.

SIGRIST: And what did you do in the picture frame store?

GLADSTEIN: Picture frame, I made frames.

SIGRIST: You made the frames.

GLADSTEIN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you were very artistic. You were very talented.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: Yes. I liked the work, picture frames, I was working, better.

SIGRIST: And they were very elaborate frames back then.

GLADSTEIN: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about that. What exactly did you do? Did you mold gesso, or did you carve . . .

GLADSTEIN: I used to put it together, the frames together. Knock them together. And that was a good job.

SIGRIST: You did that for a long time?

GLADSTEIN: Oh, I worked about twenty years. More than twenty years. I think about forty years I worked on that job. Forty years I worked.

SIGRIST: In the same shop?

GLADSTEIN: Not the same shop.

SIGRIST: No, different shops.

GLADSTEIN: First I worked on a cheap line making cheap frames. And then I worked on a good line where we made good frames, in a very fancy, fancy work. I used to work, I forgot the name. I forgot the name of the shop. Anyhow, but it was very good frames that we used to make.

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: And you really enjoyed doing that.

GLADSTEIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: It was, let's talk a little bit about what happened to your grandmother, because all the kids, I assume, eventually left, right?

GLADSTEIN: She died.

SIGRIST: When did she die? Do you remember?

GLADSTEIN: Well first, the first two kids, one of them got adopted by a different family, and another one worked, all worked, I don't know what kind of work. I don't remember. And my brothers and sisters, my brothers all had jobs already by that time. My one brother helped in a wagon of distributing bread, and another brother also do some kind of work. We all had work by that time.

SIGRIST: So your grandmother really didn't have to take care of you any more.

GLADSTEIN: Yes. And my father, my father died later.

SIGRIST: When? Do you remember when he died? Were you an adult when he died?

GLADSTEIN: Yeah. We were adults. We were all working already.

SIGRIST: I see. Did he ever remarry at all?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

GLADSTEIN: No, no.

SIGRIST: Never married again. All right. Let's just talk a little bit about you now. You did, you made picture frames for a long time, and did you marry? You said you had a son, so . . .

GLADSTEIN: I had, sure I married, and I had a son. And . . .

SIGRIST: When did you get married?

GLADSTEIN: I don't remember the year. I don't remember the year, what year. But I have a son, and he's a doctor.

SIGRIST: And you stayed in the picture frame business all that time.

GLADSTEIN: I stayed in the picture frame, and that's how I brought him up. I wouldn't be able to bring him if I didn't have a good job. I had a good job and I supported him.

SIGRIST: And what is his name?

GLADSTEIN: Sheldon Gladstein.

SIGRIST: I see. And is he talented with his hands too, like you are?

GLADSTEIN: What?

EI-014/GLADSTEIN

SIGRIST: Is he artistic like you are? Is he?

GLADSTEIN: No. He's a doctor.

SIGRIST: Right.

GLADSTEIN: Not artistic. But he's very good at his job. He practices in psychiatry.

SIGRIST: I see. I see. How long did you, you lived in Brooklyn for a long time.
Right.

GLADSTEIN: I lived all the time in Brooklyn. I lived in Sheepshead Bay and I was
very good. I was working, I was, I happened to be very good
circumstances. I didn't have no trouble.

SIGRIST: Good. Were you happy that you came to America?

GLADSTEIN: Oh, sure. I wasn't forgot about it all.

SIGRIST: Well, it's good. I think that wraps up, you know, our little talk. I want to
thank you very much for giving us your time so that we could talk to you
about the old country and coming over and I think that that will be it for
now. This is Paul Sigrist. (he mispronounces his name) I can't even
talk. This is Paul Sigrist signing off for the National Park Service.