

EI-150

HILDA KAPLAN SIEGEL

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POLAND, 1929

AGE 15

PASSAGE ON "THE AQUITANIA"

PORT: CHERBOURG

RESIDENCES: POLAND: PRUZANA

US: BROOKLYN, NY

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here today with Hilda Siegel, who came from Poland in 1929 when she was fifteen years old. And today is May 9th, 1992 and we're here in Del Ray Beach at Mrs. Siegel's home. I'm very happy to be here and I would like to start by asking you your birth date.

SIEGEL: You have that.

LEVINE: Yeah, we want to have that on the tape.

SIEGEL: The date is what, August 14th.

LEVINE: August 14, and what year? 1914?

SIEGEL: '14.

LEVINE: Okay. And what was the name of the town that you were born in?

SIEGEL: Pruzana.

LEVINE: Could you spell it?

SIEGEL: Yes, you spell it P-R-U-Z-A-N-A.

LEVINE: Anytime I ask, I ask a word or name that I might not know or be familiar with, maybe if you would spell it for me that would help so that when we transcribe this. Okay, what do you remember about Pruzana? What--

SIEGEL: My childhood?

LEVINE: Yeah, what was the town like? Was it a big town? Was it a small village?

SIEGEL: No, it wasn't small, it was a beautiful city. at my time it was eighteen thousand people, but it was set very nicely. It was like a plus sign, you know, it was a center and there were streets coming out from each side, main streets, beautifully taken care, oh, I can't talk. (She starts to

cry.)

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: Why?

SIEGEL: I don't know.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: Why? Huh?

SIEGEL: I don't know.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: Well, then just calm down. You want a drink of water?

SIEGEL: No.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: You see Larry King, you watch Larry King all the time interviewing people, it's the same thing, so what is there to crack about? If she asks the questions and you just answer her.

SIEGEL: It's a lot to talk about.

LEVINE: Do you remember some things?

SIEGEL: Give me a tissue.

LEVINE: Some things about the town that have some fond memories for you?

SIEGEL: Yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember, when you think of, you feel good about it?

SIEGEL: I feel good about it? Because my father left for America a very early, young age for me and I, and I went to school and I graduated. I had a lot of friends, and I was pretty popular. They like me and I had a good life because my father was here and he sent money and a dollar was very precious there, you know. They give you maybe a hundred slatas for a dollar at that time was, which is worth nothing, at that time was maybe five or seven dollars, seven slatas to a dollar and it was worth a lot more.

LEVINE: Was your family comfortable or--

SIEGEL: We were comfortable because my father, the dollar was, you were able to stretch a long way. That's why he went away from Europe. We were six children and I also, when my grandmother left before, and we were, it was very hard making a living. Jewish people mostly took to business. And it was always, always afraid, you were always afraid because the Pollacks were very mean and the Russians were always ready to take, like the Blacks over here, giving, making a ride and taking. So, we were comfortable because we had the dollar. My father sent every month, sixty dollars I remember and my mother was able to take care of us. We went to a private school. We didn't go

to the government school because we were also attacked, beaten, chased but the Pollacks when they knew you were Jewish.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of Jewish people in your town?

SIEGEL: Yes, they lived mostly in the city. The Gentiles usually lived on the outskirts, on the outside.

LEVINE: Was it like a ghetto?

SIEGEL: No, it was not a ghetto, but Jewish people always helped themselves. They always liked to live better. We were not farmers. We didn't work on a farm. If you were, if a Jewish man was a farmer he was a rich man and he had a lot of land and employed people and, you know, when you have, if you go in a big way you make money; so he was a rich man, But mostly the Gentiles were the small farmers.

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

SIEGEL: Sam.

LEVINE: Sam, and your mother's name and her maiden name?

SIEGEL: My mother's name was Dora. Of course, it wasn't Dora. Dora she got here in America. And her name was Simon. Dora Simon.

LEVINE: And you had five sisters?

SIEGEL: Yes.

LEVINE: And what were their names?

SIEGEL: It was Sonya, she was the oldest, then I came, then it was Florence and Shirley, which passed away in December, and Dorothy. I'm going to visit her soon. She's in--

MRS SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: And Eleanor.

SIEGEL: Yeah, Dorothy and Eleanor were twins. There were four girls and the my mother had two, a set of twins, two girls and that was six. So it was Dorothy, and like I said, I'm going to see her, and she had a sister, the twin was Eleanor, but she died here. We brought her to America, but she died here.

LEVINE: I see. Do you remember the house you lived in?

SIEGEL: Yeah, you can take me now, I'll find it right away.

LEVINE: Really. Could you describe it?

SIEGEL: Well, it was a house like three rooms, you know, but the rooms were big. It was owned b an elderly couple and they lived, it was you walked into, you came into like a small hall

and one side of the door was to be the bog house, what we occupied because we had a big family. Another section, not in them it was like separate, how can you describe it? You came into a hall, the main, the inside were doors for three apartments. So we had a big apartment; in one place the owner lived, in another place lived another couple there, another family. So it was, it was nice. It wasn't, it was a wooden house. Of course, next to us was the street of the Gentile and they, the roofs of their houses were always straw. If, God forbid, they had a fire, we were in big trouble because half of the town went down.

LEVINE: But your house was a wooden house.

SIEGEL: Yeah, it was a wooden house. We had brick houses. We had a baker on my street that had a brick house, yes.

LEVINE: So what did your father do in Poland before he came to the United States?

SIEGEL: Business like, oh yeah, in the summers he used to rent orchards, and sell the fruit. We had people working for him. And he would sell the fruit, like in a market.

LEVINE: What kind of fruit? What was it?

SIEGEL: We had everything, apples, pears, plums, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, all that, yes. But a lot of fruit we didn't have. We never knew what a banana is. We never saw peaches, oranges was a luxury. You had to be rich and sick to be able to buy an orange. Never ate oranges. Never saw grapefruits. Never saw pineapples, we never saw that, yeah.

LEVINE: So it was cold?

SIEGEL: Very cold winters. Was very cold winters. The winter that we left, which was in March of 1929, we, my mother bundled us all up and we went into the sled. You couldn't go by wagon, you know, a horse and wagon. It was as sled, a big sled. She bundled us all up and went to the outside of the city, there was the train. They called it a small train because you took the train to the big train, you know, the big station. So it was maybe an hour ride to the big train. So there, it was so much snow that the small train didn't run. It was snowed in. So we had to go with the sled, the way we were bundled up. The driver took us to the big train. That's how we left Europe, I mean my city.

LEVINE: Do you remember what your mother packed up or what you took with you when you were leaving?

SIEGEL: Clothes, of course, to wear.

LEVINE: Any special things that you wanted to take?

SIEGEL: Yes, we took feathers, pillow, mostly feathers and pillows we made here. We didn't take no blankets. What else did we take? I can't think of it now but the feathers were very precious. I don't know why. There's plenty of feathers in America. Why they all carried that? As far as food was concerned, we were covered with that. We went to Warsaw and we stayed in, Warsaw had, you know, the capital of Poland, and it had, there were people that were renting out for people like us because we always went to the capital

to see a big doctor, to go to the consul, the consul was there. So, a lot of people were coming to America. They were going to Cuba, they were going to Argentina. The young generation was running away. There was no future for them so they were always going to Warsaw to make papers and leave from there.

LEVINE: How was it that you left at the time that you did? In other words, your father had been sending money for several years.

SIEGEL: Yes, it was with the understanding that he would bring us here.

LEVINE: And so he finally was ready to have you come.

SIEGEL: He was ready, yes. And the United States came out with a law that you are, if my father had enough money to support us, we can come within five years. So we came within five years. We didn't have to wait for sixteen for him to become a citizen. So we came here, in fact, when we were here already, when he became a citizen, I took him to the court house, yes.

LEVINE: Was that a proud day for him?

SIEGEL: Well, I don't know. I guess he was proud he was when he brought his family because, you know, he was here five years alone.

LEVINE: So you were ten years old then, when he left.

SIEGEL: Yes, that's right. And a few years later I graduated and we lived comfortable. I remember the special things was when we went to Warsaw. Those that graduated public school and had, they had the money they were able to pay for the trip and stay there. We stayed in Warsaw about eight days. Those children went. There were people that the parents couldn't afford to give them the money. But I did and I went. It was a big thrill to go to the capital of Poland. And, you know, when you go with as a tourist, you see the city. It's like I lived in New York. I think of many places I never saw.

LEVINE: So you'd been to Warsaw once before, before the trip?

SIEGEL: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: So it was actually unusual, was it, for someone, especially a girl, to graduate from school?

SIEGEL: Well, I didn't go alone. I went with the school, with a group.

LEVINE: No, but I mean, to have graduated from school and to have stayed in school that long. Was that unusual? No.

SIEGEL: No. We had a very cultural city, small as it was. We had three public schools, that's seven classes. We had two high schools, one Hebrew and one Polish. We had a, I don;t know how to say it in English, they made locks, a locks place, a trade school for boys to learn how to be locksmiths. And then we also had a college, not a college, we call it, for boys, only teachers, to become teachers. I don't know why it was only for boys, not girls

because it wasn't co-ed, means it's mixed, right?

LEVINE: Uh huh.

SIEGEL: So this was just for boys. They went to become teachers, in a small town. So really there was a lot of teaching, a lot of schools for a small town.

LEVINE: And were you a religious family?

SIEGEL: Not really, no, but we believed in what we are, you know, more or less. We were kosher, we obeyed our holidays. Saturdays, there was no place to travel to go. There was no communication at all, so cars people didn't have, if you went, you went in a horse and wagon, but you didn't go on Saturday.

LEVINE: And it was a mixed town, was about equal as far as Jewish people and Gentiles or was it--

SIEGEL: I really don't know. I think it was mostly Jewish, because we were in the city. On the outside I guess maybe they, yes, they were Gentiles but I don't think there was less than us.

LEVINE: And there was anti-Semitism feeling when you were growing up there?

SIEGEL: Yes, we were afraid to walk into a Gentile street. Yes, we were afraid, that's right.

LEVINE: Did you ever see any violence while you were there?

SIEGEL: Why did we see violence? I don't remember seeing, no. No, in fact, we were, where we were we didn't have any pogroms. We didn't have any attacks like you had in other countries, in other places, because I knew they used to come to us when they had trouble in other cities. They used to come to us and we saw them. They were without shoes, without clothes, hungry, very poor, very poor. So we used to help them. We used to feed them, we used to give them food, clothes, as much as each one was able to. And then we had places that they were able to sleep over. Yes.

LEVINE: So, did that happen often that other--

SIEGEL: Every time from the war, you know, Poland had a lot of war. They were so ignorant that they had somebody, they got to have a king, and the king, the most accomplishment was to fight Austria, to fight Russia, to fight Poland. They were always fighting over other countries, to occupy more land. Right.

LEVINE: So in your time, those fifteen years--

SIEGEL: There were wars.

LEVINE: Many times other people coming from cities.

SIEGEL: Many wars. Right, was, yeah. I remember my mother would out us in the

corner in the bedroom and we would, were sitting together, with the shooting we heard over our heads, the bullets were flying, and, you know, we were little kids, she kept us like a chicken with her little chicks. Right.

LEVINE: And did you have grandparents or aunts and uncles also in your town?

SIEGEL: I had my grandmother, that's my mother's mother. She had a son here so he took her, he brought her over before we. She came before us. But when we came here she came to live with us.

LEVINE: And what was she like?

SIEGEL: (To her daughter in the other room.) You bring me the picture? Yeah, I have a picture from her with my parents and my older sister and I.

LEVINE: Well, maybe you can describe her for the tape.

SIEGEL: (They are looking at picture.) This is my mother. She was, one thing, a clean woman. I had one sister, she passed away last year, last December, she was just like her, cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, I think she (indicating her own daughter) takes after her, too. (All three laugh.) Cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, cleaning, oh, my God, it's going to get dirty so fast. What the hell do I have to clean so much. (They laugh.)

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: This was her (indicating the picture).

SIEGEL: I was the baby.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: And from there were only the two children.

LEVINE: Well, tell me, as far as your mother and father, grandparents, do you remember any kinds of like, lessons that they tried to instill in you? Ideas that they wanted you to learn about life or--

SIEGEL: Okay. My mother, my mother was an alphabetic, what do you call it?
No, what do you say? Somebody that can't read or write, what do you call it?

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: Illiterate?

SIEGEL: Illit--. No, we have a word for that. I can't think of it. She couldn't read or write, but she was very anxious to teach us. She made sure that I, that we learn. Now I learned everything in Jewish because I went to a private, public school, like I told you. They were afraid to send the children. Some of them went. Of course, in the private school you had to pay. The public school was free. But she was afraid so I went to the private school. And she even taught, well some of them were to learn like, how you say? So I don't, I can't remember why my oldest sister didn't go to school and graduate like I did. I really don't know why. But I was the first one to go to the school and graduate and then she send, she had a private man come to the house and teach us the Hebrew and the praying. So I had my education. I'm very proud of it and I go into the synagogue, I see my friends sitting and they can not read Hebrew. They have to read in English whatever it says. And I can go along with them because I was taught. So she was very anxious, even though she didn't know, she felt

like she has to teach us.

LEVINE: Well, now, after you got on a train and you got to Poland, to Warsaw, how did you go from there? How did the family go after that?

SIEGEL: From there, when our time was to leave, my father was very concerned, it was in March, and Dansk, the port of Dansk. It was a free port but was near Poland, of course. He didn't want us to go there because there's a lot of ice in the Baltic Sea, so he was afraid and, the big ship, I came with the Aquitania, you know, it's one of the most luxurious English boats, ships, you know that, if you ever heard of it. So this luxury boat, only parked in Cherbourg in France. So he didn't want us to take the, a smaller boat and go through the Baltic to France, to Cherbourg, so we went by train. We took the train in Warsaw and we went by train. We went through Germany, Holland, Belgium and till we came to France. We stopped off in Paris.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about that train trip?

SIEGEL: Yes. It was very interesting because the first time that I, we went through tunnels and it was exciting because you, it got dark, and then you went out in the open again. Some people knew what it was and they explained to us. Exciting was they gave us food and they gave us bananas with the food and we didn't know what to do, so we had to ask with the waitress somebody to come and explain to us how do you eat with the food we had. We saw that it must be, but we didn't think you can peel it. So that was the first time that we learned how to eat bananas. And it was very interesting. I went through Poland, I went through Germany at night and, you know how they are,

they're so mechanical the Germans, it was just like a ball of fire. Lights, lights, light, so lit up at night. And Holland was very interesting. It was white. The little houses and their stoop, you know what I'm saying, a stoop to go into the house, white, white, so nice and clean it's like a doll house. That I remember going through, yes. Paris, I didn't see much. We stayed in a beautiful hotel. I remember I never saw, the carpeting we walked on, we just sank in. But my what, Paris had a bad name. White slavery was very popular those years in Paris and my mother had little girls, bigger ones, little ones, so she was holding us and she, even if we went down the street with her we didn't dare walk away from her. So I didn't see nothing in Paris except the people walking with the big, long French breads under their arm. No bag, nothing, just the French bread, that I remember. So I don't know much about French, about Paris.

MRS. SIEGE'S DAUGHTER: You used to say that Paris was very dirty. You said when you first saw Paris it was very dirty.

SIEGEL: Paris was dirty. Poland was, New York was very dirty too when I came here.

LEVINE: When you got to the ship, were you able to board right away?

SIEGEL: No, no, we stayed in a hotel.

LEVINE: For how long?

SIEGEL: Oh, I don't know, must have stayed for a week or maybe more. We waited for the boat to come in.

LEVINE: And then the boat came in.

SIEGEL: Yes.

LEVINE: And were you examined and everything before you got on the boat?

SIEGEL: They examined us before. We had to take baths and wash our hair and they examined us if everything is clean. And, you know, those years you couldn't come to America, now they brought AIDS into this country. Those years you couldn't had a bad nail to enter the country. You eyes had to be perfect. Your teeth had to be perfect and clean. They used to have a lot of fun with us, the questions. They looked at my mother. She was so young with six little kids. You know what I mean, six little girls and every one had a big bow in her hair. She always dressed us so nice. So they always looked at us. Half the time they didn't even ask all the questions they wanted (she laughs) and they let us go.

LEVINE: Because they saw you were very well cared for.

SIEGEL: Yeah, very well cared for, right.

LEVINE: Okay. So what was the voyage like? What do you remember about the actual coming here?

SIEGEL: Very sick. Oh God, was I sea sick. And I;m a healthy girl. I was pretty good in my life. I'm not a youngster and I was pretty healthy. No big problems, no small problems either.

But the boat, I was the worst. Sea sick, I couldn't stand the food and, excuse me, they pulled me out and put me on the deck, maybe, throwing up, excuse me, everywhere I went I couldn't hold. It was terrible. And as soon as we came here, out of the Atlantic waters, closer to the shore, I was like a new person.

LEVINE: Did it get calm? Did the sea get calm?

SIEGEL: It must have calmed down. Not, all my sisters, not everybody was sick.

LEVINE: You said that you stayed in a cabin. Was it just your family in the cabin on the ship?

SIEGEL: Yes, oh yes, all together, yeah.

LEVINE: And when you got to, do you remember coming into the New York harbor?

SIEGEL: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember your first impression of the Statue of Liberty?

SIEGEL: Well, we came in kind of late. It was dark already and a mob of people waiting for their arrivals. And, of course, a big tumult, you know how it is.

LEVINE: You mean Ellis Island?

SIEGEL: No, no, no, we stopped over the port, I don't remember which one.

LEVINE: New York.

SIEGEL: New York. Which one would it be, Staten Island? No.

LEVINE: Well, it was probably Battery Park.

SIEGEL: Battery Park. When it came for us to get off, they were looking at the papers and they weren't satisfied. My father didn't put enough money. Because he wasn't a citizen, I guess he didn't have enough money \declared on the papers. So they told him that they have to take us to Ellis Island and he had to prove that he had, probably they gave him a certain amount that he had to prove he has, and then he can come tomorrow and take us out. And that's the way it was.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you first saw your father?

SIEGEL: Yeah. Very exciting, only five years it wasn't that much different. Yes.

LEVINE: So you went to Ellis Island and then do you remember your impression of Ellis Island? What do you remember about that?

SIEGEL: I remember it looked like a, I wasn't much, oh yeah, one thing I remember. My sisters got scared before we got off. There were a lot of black people. We never saw black people.

The kids started screaming, the twins, they got so scared. We were a little older, we figured, well, they weren't doing anything bad, they were just going about their work like everybody. So finally they quieted down. But that was the impression of first seeing a black person.

LEVINE: So you stayed overnight. Do you remember where you slept? What was that like?

SIEGEL: It was like cots we were sleeping on. Very morbid place, the walls were grey. I think it was a cement floor, if I'm not--a very morbid place. But we had no choice. Lot of people. There were a lot of people, maybe they were stopped for other reasons but this was why we were taken there, yes.

LEVINE: So then what happened the next morning?

SIEGEL: The next morning my father came and I guess he showed them the papers that, what they asked for and they let us off.

LEVINE: And do you remember your first impression of New York City?

SIEGEL: Dirty. (Daughter and Levine laugh.) Dirty, yes, very dirty.

LEVINE: Where did you go first?

SIEGEL: First we went to the Bronx. My father took an apartment with some furniture. I had an aunt, an American, she was here in America, an aunt, my grandmother's daughter-in-law. And

she says, "What do you have to buy furniture, the greenhorns, it's good enough for them/" And when my aunt and her daughters looked at us, I thought she was going to drop dead then. My mother looked like as my sisters. They thought we were three sisters, my oldest sister, my mother and I. (She coughs.) She always dressed herself beautiful. And, as you can see, she was a beautiful woman. She even thought she wouldn't have enough clothes, she bought a pair of shoes in Paris yet. And when my aunt saw her with those high heels and she wore the heavy Oxfords, the black ones with shoelace--

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BEGINNING OF SIDE B

SIEGEL: --Anyway, the apartment there was no good. It was a cold water flat. And my mother said, "We're not staying here." So right away my father went and he got a five room apartment--that was four--with heat and they start furnishing it up and we bought new things and my sister, yeah, I was here fourteen or fifteen years-- Any way my sister went to work and I went to work and the Board of Education was after me everyday. So one day I went and four or five days I didn't. Because I was a big girl they put me into a class with all ages just to teach me English. And I didn't like it. So I used to go one day and two days I didn't go. And I got a job. So my boss--

LEVINE: What kind of job?

SIEGEL: In the dress line. And the boss was very nice to me so he let me go to school once in a while until I was sixteen. Until sixteen, then I went to continuation school for half a day a week until I finished. I went to 30th, 31st

Street, it was the needle, Central Needle Trade, near 7th Avenue, was on 33rd or 1st or 2nd, yes. And I used to see, and right across the school was a church and I used to see the people shivering, don't forget it was March, it was March, April is still bitter cold, even May isn't so hot yet. And they used to shiver. There was a bread line. They used to give them soup and bread, the people. And how the people, some were standing selling apples and pears by the piece and warming themselves in those pails with the coal, warming themselves up. This is America, boy, and then they start in the papers how people were throwing, the banks closed and start throwing themselves off the roofs. My goodness, what kind of tumult we have here, it was a shame.

LEVINE: Was it worse here than what you left? How did you feel?

SIEGEL: In Europe I didn't have a daddy, there was financial problem there. Some people were very poor. They didn't have. They peddled, they worked, they cleaned, they-- When it came before easter, when they were making the matzos, you see how the poor girls used to go and work twelve, fourteen hours a night, a day and rolling out the matzos for Passover. But that's only a short time. We had a factory in my town, the cigarette factory. I think they had, they made oil, also a factory where they were producing oil. Cooking oil, not, not car, you know, for commercial use.

LEVINE: Can you remember some of the things that struck you when you came to America that were new to you, that were different than what you had been used to? Or any of the ways that people were?

SIEGEL: I don't know. One thing I remember, we were very polite. We

spoke to each other because, first of all, we didn't know the language. So when we spoke Yiddish we whispered. You don't know the language, it may be annoying. Why should we speak a language out loud when your people don't? What happened to the people here now? Tell me, O often wonder, why were we so polite? Really, we were. And we weren't taught to be. It was just natural with a respect, an older person respect. Here, it's wild.

LEVINE: Did your mother and father want you to become Americanized? Or were they wanting to hold on to traditions from Poland?

SIEGEL: No, there was no special traditions. We were going along with life. The little ones went to school. The bigger ones, like my sister and I, were going out and dressing nice. And I joined my organization that people like me came from different parts of Poland. It was a Socialist Party, a Young Socialist Party. So we belonged there and we met nice friends. In fact, I met my husband there.

LEVINE: How did you meet your husband?

SIEGEL: Well, in that club, the club like I went with my friend. I have one friend left over, my friend Gess. I met a friend when I came here to this country. She went to school with my younger sister and my younger sister came home one night and said to me, "Hilda, you know it would be nice if you would meet this girl. She's just like you. She told me she graduated public school. She's just like you." I said, "All right, bring her over." She brought her over and I'm friends with her until today. We met two friends, each one married one fella and I just spoke to her this morning, we're going to see her tomorrow. We're going to celebrate Mother's day together tomorrow. She lost her

husband, too.

LEVINE: Did you have a long courtship or did you get married?

SIEGEL: Yes, a long time. Oh, yeah, we went--how old was I? Seventeen, I got married, no, must have been less. I got married when I was nineteen years.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: Tell her what you told him before you got enraged to him. What you wanted.

SIEGEL: Oh yeah, he gave me a beautiful wrist watch and I love diamonds. And the wrist watch was with diamonds. It looked like it was very expensive. So I said to him, "You spend a lot of money on the watch, but I prefer a diamond ring." He says, "Don't worry, I'll give you a ring, too." (All laugh, especially daughter.) And that was her father. Died a very young man.

LEVINE: Now, what was his name?

SIEGEL: Max Titlebaum.

LEVINE: And you had one child or more?

SIEGEL: No, I have three.

LEVINE: What are your children's names?

SIEGEL: Gloria, she's my first, then I have a son, Seymour, and a younger one. I lost my mother here and I was very heart-broken. So the doctor says to me, "Why don't you have another child?" I says, "I have three. Three is the ideal family." He says, "Go ahead," he says, "you're going to feel better." And I did it. And I had a little girl and I named her my mother's name.

LEVINE: What's you mother's name?

SIEGEL: Dora, but I didn't call her Dora. I called her Doreen. And then she says she doesn't like the name. (They all laugh.)

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: She always says, "How did you let that--"

SIEGEL: And then I was so fussy, I went home and I didn't name her because I couldn't pick out a name with a "D." And we got a book, my sister got a book and we looking for names and being the name was Titlebaum, I couldn't take the other name that--what else did I want? Dietree, whatever, I-- anyway, I think Doreen is beautiful. And everybody asked me, "Where did you pick that name? Hoe did you come to Doreen? You didn't hear a Doreen?" And now she says she doesn't like it. But how did I ever pick Doreen? Well, I said, "You're stuck with it. That's it. I'm not changing it now." (They laugh.)

LEVINE: Okay. Well, before we close, is there anything else that you can think of that you'd like to say either about Poland or coming here or having your life here or anything else?

SIEGEL: Everything would be good and fine but there's a lot of (pause) I lost a

lot of people. (She is moved.)

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: But everybody lost a lot of people, not just you. That's life. It's been a long time.

SIEGEL: I became a widow very young. My husband was only forty-one, with three children. So, you could imagine, I had a--

LEVINE: So you raised the children yourself?

SIEGEL: Right. I raised them myself and, thank God, I did the best I could.

LEVINE: (pause) Well, thank you.

SIEGEL: And that's all.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: Her name is different than his because she did remarry.

SIEGEL: I remarried, yeah.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: That's why her name is Siegel now instead of Titlebaum.

LEVINE: I see.

SIEGEL: Very good man. I wish he was alive. Very good man.

LEVINE: What was his first name, Mrs. Siegel?

SIEGEL: Joe.

LEVINE: Joe Siegel.

SIEGEL: If anybody says something about a second marriage, I feel like yelling because it could be better than the first. Because the first you're struggling with children, you raise children. The second one is already established. Now, he gave me, he did for me, he couldn't bring me down the moon, everything else he did.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: But you have to realize--

SIEGEL: Because they're already set, you now what I mean.

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: She was a widow for almost eighteen years before she got married again. So it wasn't that she married him a few years later.

SIEGEL: I wasn't married with the children, no I was--

MRS. SIEGEL'S DAUGHTER: With the children so it came after that time,
you see?

SIEGEL: I didn't want--

LEVINE: But it was a happy marriage that you had.

SIEGEL: Yes, he took very good care of me, even left me, I have no mortgage.

LEVINE: Wonderful, wonderful. Well, thank you very much.

SIEGEL: You're welcome. I hope I was helpful, I mean I--

LEVINE: It's been a pleasure. Very helpful, very good story. I'm so glad I got to talk to you. Okay, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's May 9th, 1992 and I'm here with Hilda Siegel in Del Ray, Florida.

SIEGEL: Can I give you a drink?

END