

EI-207

GERTRUDE LIEBLEIN LOEW

BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 6, 1901

INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 1, 1992

RUNNING TIME: 49:41

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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**INTERVIEW LOCATION: HEBREW CENTER FOR THE AGED,
ROSLINDALE, MA**

TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: JANET LEVINE, 12/1992

TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 7/1996

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 2/1993

POLAND, 1922

AGE 21

SHIP: AQUITANIA"

PORT: CHERBOURG

RESIDENCES:

- **POLAND: YORISOTOL**
- **THE US: NEWARK, NJ**

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: There is a curious reverberation in the recording of this interview, accentuated by the powerful vocal inflections of Mrs. Loew. Paul E. Sigrist Jr., Oral Historian, 2/13/1993.

LEVINE: Okay, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here today

in Roslindale, Massachusetts with Gertrude Loew who came from Poland in 1922 when she was twenty-one.

LOEW: My brother brought me to America.

LEVINE: Okay, you were twenty-one years old when you came--

LOEW: To America, yeah.

LEVINE: And today is September 1st, 1992 and I just want to say that I'm very happy that you've agreed to tell me about your story, so we can put it in the museum.

LOEW: (She laughs.)

LEVINE: Why don't you--

LOEW: I came to America. I lived with a sister, a step-sister.

LEVINE: Well, let' start with--

LOEW: A friend of her's introduced me to my husband.

LEVINE: Well, why don't we start with Poland. What is your birthdate?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: When, what day were you born?

LOEW: 1901, August the 6th, 1901.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

LOEW: In Poland, then it was Austria, Austria.

LEVINE: It was Austria before World War One.

LOEW: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was the name of the town?

LOEW: Yousotol.

LEVINE: Do you remember how to spell that?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

LOEW: Yeah, Y-O-U-S-O-T-O-L.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Do you remember Yousotol? Do you remember what the town was like?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember what the town was like?

LOEW: Well, a small village.

LEVINE: What do you remember?

LOEW: And all we had, school up to the third grade.

LEVINE: And what else do you remember about the town?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: What else do you remember about that place?

LOEW: About that town? Nothing. I went to school and (pause) I couldn't learn my Polish because I spoke already German because we went during the war, we went one time to live in Germany. On the German border between Austria and Germany. And I learned German and I spoke Jewish. I spoke a little Hebrew, not much, but a little. And (pause) and I spoke, my mother felt it was a little bit, it was right, she was right to start to teach me Polish. One language on top of the other, she says it will be too much. She says keep up the German and the Jewish and that's it.

LEVINE: Why did you move to the border town?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Why did you move (pause) to the border town, on Germany?

LOEW: And Germany was (pause) Freiweldow, it was the town.

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

LOEW: (Silence)

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

LOEW: (Silence)

LEVINE: No. Okay. And what do you remember about it?

LOEW: (Silence)

LEVINE: What do you remember about it? What do you remember about that town?

LOEW: (Pause) The school there.

LEVINE: What do you remember about the school in Freiweldow?

LOEW: Nothing , it was, they put me into a first grade with the first graders and I went as far as the third grade, then we moved to Poland. We went back to Austria, it was Poland already. So I went, when I came there they put me again in the first grade to start Polish, but somehow I didn't learn much of the Polish.

LEVINE: Why did you got to Freiweldow?

LOEW: Because we were in the fighting zone between Russia and Austria, the First World War. We were not far from the border so they evicted us to Freiweldow.

LEVINE: Do you remember that? Do you remember going?

LOEW; Yeah. We went in, in freight cars from coal and we were small children. In no time we were all black from the dust from the coal. And we had a white kitten. Kitten was black too. And we had a dog, he was running after the train and after a while we lost the dog, whether he got killed or whatever we don't know what happened to the dog.

LEVINE: And then do you remember where you lived?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember where you lived in Freiweldow?

LOEW: No. Oh, we lived in the (pause), they call it, it was a government house.

LEVINE: Was it comfortable?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Was it comfortable?

LOEW: Yes, it was.

LEVINE: Uh huh. Now, who was it, who went there? Your mother?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Who was with you? Who went with you?

LOEW: My father and my mother and some of my brothers and sisters. We were nine children.

LEVINE: Wow. What was your father's name?

LOEW; Moses, Moishe.

LEVINE: Moishe. And what was his last name?

LOEW: Kammel. Kammel.

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

LOEW: K-E-M-M- (there is an interruption, pause in the interview)

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming now. So that's your maiden name, K-A-M-M-E-L.
So that's your maiden name.

LOEW: Moishe, Moses.

LEVINE: That's your father's first name. Now, what was your mother's name?

LOEW: Lelia.

LEVINE: And what was her maiden name?

LOEW: I can remember my mother's name. (substantial pause) Lieblein. I can remember that name because my parents were only married by a rabbi. They didn't have a legal marriage so I was called "Snubnah", that means you know what.

LEVINE: Ah, (she laughs) you remember that, huh? Who called you that?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Who called you that? (pause) Who called you that?

LOEW: I didn't get you.

LEVINE: Who called you that name?

LOEW: I can remember this name? (unintelligible) and my mother's maiden name. You know they used to get married by a rabbi and my mother came and said, "Yes, it's my baby, I support it." That's all.

LEVINE: Now, do you remember your brothers' and sisters' names?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember the names of your brothers and sisters?
Brothers and sisters? Remember their names?

LOEW: What my father did?

LEVINE: Well, what did your father do?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: What did your father do?

LOEW: I went to school.

LEVINE: Well, what did your father do for work? (interruption on the interview)

LEVINE: Okay, now we're resuming again. Can you tell me, Mrs. Loew, can you

tell me what your father did for work?

LOEW: I came here myself.

LEVINE: By yourself?

LOEW: But I had here a brother and a sister. They were half-brother, sister, just the same father. So, so they brought me to America.

LEVINE: Okay. What else do you remember about Europe before you came?

LOEW: All I remember, cold and hungry.

LEVINE: Yeah. You remember, what did you do? Like what would you do during the day?

LOEW: We were lucky we had a potato a day and a slice of bread. My mother used to say in the morning, "What are you in such a hurry to get up, you? There's nothing to eat."

LEVINE: What did your father do for work?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: What did your father do for work? What did your father do? (pause) Your father?

LOEW: My father, my father used to manage big estates for rich people. And they had a big estate, land, woods and all. My father used to manage those things.

LEVINE: Uh huh, and did your mother work?

LOEW: My mother was a dressmaker. And she was the one earning the living. She used to work for the farmers and they used to bring food.

LEVINE: They would give her food for the dresses she made?

LOEW: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did she teach you how to sew?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Did your mother teach you how to sew?

LOEW; Yeah. I used to work with her.

LEVINE: Now, were you, you had--

LOEW: When I came to America I went to a dress shop to work.

LEVINE: Now, there were nine children?

LOEW: Yeah.

LEVINE: In Poland, there were nine children in the family?

LOEW: We weren't all together. See, my father was married twice. His first wife died and left him with three children. Were two of them. They went to America after he died and one in Poland. So when my father married my mother she was going to be eighteen years old and he was forty-three. And he had three children and no food so my mother started dress making and brought them food.

LEVINE: Were you the youngest child?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Were you the youngest child? (pause) Were you the baby?
Were you the baby in the family? Were you the youngest?

LOEW: The youngest? I wasn't the youngest. My mother kept having babies and babies. Every year she had a baby. I wasn't the youngest. The youngest Hitler killed.

LEVINE: Did your father go to America first?

LOEW: No.

LEVINE: You all went together?

LOEW: No.

LEVINE: When did your, did your mother and father go to America? No. They stayed in Europe?

LOEW: The day I left I saw them the last time.

LEVINE: Why did you come to America?

LOEW: Oh, Poland was a terrible place, especially for the Jewish people.

LEVINE: Tell me, what was--

LOEW: The anti-Semitism was terrible, was an awful, was very, very tough for a Jew in Poland.

LEVINE: What was it like? Tell me what it was like for you before you came.

LOEW: Well, we were abused in school.

LEVINE: What happened?

LOEW: Well,--

LEVINE: What would be done to you?

LOEW: The teachers, one day he hit me so badly that my little hand was swollen like this and I couldn't open the door. My mother took back to the principal and said, "I'll report it to the Board of Health. She's only five years old and look what he did." He begged her, "Please don't." (pause) And a business, a Jewish person couldn't run a business. I had an uncle who was a doctor, all he had to go was for his internship and open an office. They wouldn't let him. (pause) It was tough for a Jew in Poland.

LEVINE: Did you work at all?

LOEW: Who?

LEVINE: Did you work before you came here?

LOEW: Before? With my mother. I used to help her out.

LEVINE: Did your other sisters help too?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Your sisters, did they work with your mother? Your sisters? (pause) Your sisters? Did they work with you and your mother?

LOEW: (silence)

LEVINE: Do you remember when you left, do you remember what you took with you? What you brought to America?

LOEW: I brought nothing. What I brought was a change of clothes. I brought one set of bedding which I couldn't use; I have asthma, so they used to throw it out.

LEVINE: And you traveled with someone?

LOEW: Huh, no.

LEVINE: Who did you travel with?

LOEW: No, I travelled alone.

LEVINE: And you remember that you came on the Aquitania?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: You remember the Aquitania? The ship you came on.

LOEW: Aquitania.

LEVINE: You remember that?

LOEW: Yeah, sure.

LEVINE: Do you remember traveling from your village to where the ship was?

LOEW: Yes. I went to a big city called Lamberg in Poland. There I had an aunt, my mother's sister. I stayed with her. Her husband was a soap manufacturer. So when he went to Warsaw for business he took me along and there I got my visa, my, all my papers, I had to pass to be ready.

LEVINE: How did you get the money to go?

LOEW: From America was sent money.

LEVINE: Who was in America that sent it?

LOEW: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Who sent it to you?

LOEW: My sister, my brother.

LEVINE: Uh huh.

LOEW: They came to take it and they send money for fare.

LEVINE: What did you think about America before you came?

LOEW: A wonderful country. Everybody talking about the golden land, America.

LEVINE: You thought that's what you would see? (pause) Yeah. So did your sister write to you before?

LOEW: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what--

LOEW: We used to correspond.

LEVINE: And what did she write to you before you left?

LOEW: That how I have to work and people work hard in America but we have living for freedom.

LEVINE: So, your uncle took you to Warsaw--

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: When you went with your uncle to Warsaw? Your uncle, he took you to Warsaw when he went there on business?

LOEW: Yeah. I have to go to Warsaw to get my visa.

LEVINE: And how did you go? Did you go by--

LOEW: I went by myself everywhere.

LEVINE: Did you go by train?

LOEW: By train.

LEVINE: And then, and then you got your visa--

LOEW: And then I had a address that some people to stay with. My uncle, the soap manufacturer, he used to stay with these people, travel back and forth. So he sent me the address. So I went straight, took a cab and went straight to those people and stayed with them until they got my visa. Went back home to say goodbye to everybody, packed up and went.

LEVINE: Were you excited?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Were you excited about coming?

LOEW: Very, very excited.

LEVINE: Were you sad to leave? Were you sad to, to leave your mother?

LOEW: I couldn't help it. It was no living in Poland.

LEVINE: Did your mother want to come?

LOEW: My mother would have like to go. She had no money. And my sister and brother they didn't have much either, so they couldn't send.

LEVINE: So you went, then you went, do you remember--

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving your village then? What was it like?

LOEW: Sad. Very sad, leaving the family, friends, the school, coming to America, starting again. I went to night school. I went to high school.

LEVINE: And, then when you got, you left your village, you took the train again?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: When you left your village, did you take a train?

LOEW: Yeah.

LEVINE: Then what?

LOEW: They put me on the train and they wrote instructions where to change trains and where to go, and that's it.

LEVINE: So then you got to the boat. And where did you leave from? Where was

the boat?

LOEW: When I left yet for Poland then to Lamberg to stay with a aunt. And from there I went to Warsaw to stay with some people. I don't remember their names or address.

LEVINE: And then where did you get on the boat?

LOEW: On the boat? In Cherbourg.

LEVINE: In Cherbourg. How did you get to Cherbourg?

LOEW: By train.

LEVINE: You went all by yourself? Were you alone?

LOEW: Alone.

LEVINE: Was that scary?

LOEW: Everywhere, I went everywhere by myself, all alone. Well I was twenty-one years old. I wasn't a baby, but it was scary.

LEVINE: Describe yourself. What were you like when you were twenty-one?

LOEW: I don't know. Well, they claim when I came to America that I was pretty.

and the, then I was a couple of years here, I met my husband.

LEVINE: Okay. Well first tell me about, did you, the steamship company, did you have to have an examination? When you went on the Aquitania, the ship, did they examine you?

LOEW: I had a cabin with two others, it was a woman with her daughter, from our town, traveling to America. So she kept an eye on me. (extraneous noise)

LEVINE: Good. So you were in a cabin?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: You were in a cabin. A small cabin?

LOEW: No, it wasn't. It was two beds, bunks down and two upper. So the woman has one bunk and the girl and I had the other one downsteps.

LEVINE: And what do you remember about the ship?

LOEW: The ship? Was a very comfortable, luxurious, I thought it was like a hotel. It was very beautiful. The food was very good. And you know they had kosher food on the boat. I went on the Queen Mary.

LEVINE: Not on the Aquitania? I thought you went on the Aquitania.

LOEW: I went on the Queen Mary to America.

LEVINE: Oh, now what did you, did you go to a dining room? Your meals were in a dining room?

LOEW: We walked to the dining room. We found where the dining room was. The food was very good and I was very hungry (they laugh). I remember the first meal. I got on the boat on a Saturday and when I came on the boat, I was going to supper and they said they gave me a quarter pig, duckling, some sweet potato, I don't know what it was! And vegetable, sour spaghetti. Was a beautiful meal. And I was hungry.

LEVINE: Did you have a nice trip?

LOEW: Yes, pretty good.

LEVINE: And do you remember coming into the New York harbor?

LOEW: Oh, when I saw the Statue of Liberty, I just wished I could over and kiss her.

LEVINE: And then you took a ferry to Ellis Island.

LOEW: Yeah, I went to Ellis Island. I was in Ellis Island from Friday night till Tuesday morning or noontime.

LEVINE: How come you stayed there so long?

LOEW: I came on Friday night. Saturday, Sunday was Armistice Day, so they

couldn't get me off and they celebrated Monday, Armistice Day. So I stayed till Tuesday.

LEVINE: And what was it like?

LOEW: Well, they gave you regular meals but I didn't like, they used to lock me in, in a cage. A pillow without a pillow case.

LEVINE: Were you alone in the cage or were there other people? Other people in the cage?

LOEW: No, alone in the cage.

LEVINE: You mean they locked you in the cage at night?

LOEW: Yes, they used to lock me in and they let me out in the morning to eat, put me back in the cage till about noon time, they took me out for my lunch, put me back, locked me up.

LEVINE: So you didn't get to talk to people all day long?

LOEW: I didn't like it but, look, coming to the golden land of America, I'd do anything. I'll tell you, everybody looked over [to] America for salvation. America. You know, nobody appreciates America like those people that went through hell like I did. We appreciate the freedom, the beauty, everything.

LEVINE: What happened after, on Tuesday what happened to you at Ellis Island?

LOEW: On Ellis Island, nothing. Nothing!

LEVINE: Did you have an examination? A doctor?

LOEW: In the, I had them all in Cherbourg, in France, and then a second one in America. I was healthy all right. (pause) And I was clean. They looked at the hair. I was clean. My mother was very fussy to keep us clean.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you were wearing? What did you have on?

LOEW: Yes, I had a pleated skirt with a midi blouse.

LEVINE: Was that like your nicest clothing? That was your best clothing you wore? Yeah. (pause) So then did someone meet you? Did someone come to Ellis Island to meet you?

LOEW: Yeah.

LEVINE: Who?

LOEW: My brother came, my sister. They were very nice to me. They were coming every day to see me, tell me not to worry, they'll get me out. My brother kept saying, "Don't worry about the change of the name, I'll get you out." He put away a thousand dollars security, he got me out.

LEVINE: Now, your name then, when you came through Ellis Island, was Gertrude Lieblein?

LOEW: I went to my brother's house.

LEVINE: No, your name. The name you had when you came to America.

LOEW: Lieblein. (There is a pause. Mrs. Loew writes her maiden name.)

LEVINE: Let's see, it was Lieblein, Gertrude Lieblein, right? Here, it was this (showing the written name to Mrs. Loew). It was Gertrude Lieblein.

LOEW: Lieblein.

LOEW: Moses.

LEVINE: Moses. And was his last name Kammel?

LOEW: Kammel.

LEVINE: Okay. And what was your sister's name?

LOEW: (pause, the tape recorder is turned off, while interview is paused)

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming now after Mrs. Loew has written Moses Kammel,

was your brother, Lena Friedman was your sister, and Isadore Schacter was your brother. He would be your brother that your father had before?
No.

LOEW: He went on his mother's name. And I went on my mother's name. That was a problem.

LEVINE: I see.

END OF SIDE A

BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: So, then when they met you, when they let you go from Ellis Island on Tuesday.

LOEW: On Tuesday. When I came home, before I went to America, they told me that my parents were not married. I said to my mother, "Are you and father married?" She said, "Poor you, of course we are married." The rabbi married them, that's all. I said, "I was told that you are not married and I'm your snubnah", that means illegitimate. I was so ashamed, oy! I

was terrible embarrassed to hear that. And you know, my father tried to marry, my mother said to my father, "Moishe, we getting married whether you want to spend the three dollars for license or not! We're getting married. I'm not going to have all my children go through lies like this. They have to know father and mother are married." They got married.

LEVINE: Oh, good.

LOEW: Good. (pause) But what I went-- When I came there was no passport written, Miss Snubnah, that means not legitimate.

LEVINE: How do you spell that? How do you spell that?

LOEW: Snubnah?

LEVINE: Yeah.

LOEW: I know a Polish words, here and there, but hold a conversation--

LEVINE: Well, now tell me what happened when your brother and sister met you at Ellis Island and took you to New York. What do you remember about your first few days in America.?

LOEW: On Ellis Island?

LEVINE: No, after you left Ellis Island, then what?

LOEW: Well, they used to take, have visitors, landsmen people, people that knew me from Europe come to the house, and my brother used to give us a family, cousins here and uncles used to come. I was very busy with the visitors and all but I felt, "How lucky I am to be the only one to be able to come to this beautiful country, America!" And right away I went to school. I wanted to learn the language, read and write, and I did learn.

LEVINE: You went to school at night?

LOEW: Night. I went to school nights with the old people and the morning with the children. (pause) I made it and I went to high school! I made it my business to learn English, to be an American. I wanted to be an American! (Mrs. Loew bangs her fists on the table for emphasis.) I am an American.

LEVINE: Did you learn English? Do you remember what it was like to learn English?

LOEW: I went to a modern school in Newark, New Jersey. But I can't remember the high school in Irvington, New Jersey. But I can't remember the high school.

LEVINE: Where did you live?

LOEW: I lived in Newark with my sister, on Prince Street.

LEVINE: Then when did you meet your husband?

LOEW: When did I meet my husband? I got married in '29, I think '27 or '26.

LEVINE: Were you working by then?

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: You were working?

LOEW: Yeah, I was working. I went to work right away. I told my sister right away, " I don't want you to support me. I'll give you something, whatever I'll earn, I'll be able to give you back." Got ten dollars a week, I gave her five. She wasn't a wealthy woman.

LEVINE: So you were in high school in the day.

LOEW: Huh?

LEVINE: First you went to high school in the day. High school, then you went to night school.

LOEW: At night, always at night.

LEVINE: Oh, always at night, I see.

LOEW: I worked in the day time, went to night--

LEVINE: So right away you started to work. In the dress making?

LOEW: I did. It helped a lot. My sister had children and they only spoke English, so (pause) that helped. You'd be surprised.

LEVINE: So, were you working in dress making? Dress making? In Newark?

LOEW: Dresses. I used to get thirty-five cents to make a dress. Imagine how many I had to work out to make thirty dollars a week. But I appreciated this beautiful country and I was willing to work and do all right. So I did all right.

LEVINE: What did you do for fun?

LOEW: At night? Study English books and newspapers, even the dictionary.

LEVINE: And then did you become a citizen? Did you become a United States citizen? A citizen of America? (non-verbal communication) Yeah? So tell me about meeting your husband.

LOEW: He followed me around but I wouldn't be a pick-up. Oh, no, my mother says--so one day I went over to a push-cart to buy myself an apple for lunch and he saw me and he used to follow me around! And he saw a woman kiss me. He went over to the woman, he said, "You know her?" She said, "Yes, I know her. Her sister's my customer." He says, "I want to

meet that girl." She told my sister about him and my sister says, "If he is nice, bring him up." She brought him up and my brother-in-law says, "That's the one and don't tell me any different because you're too fussy," to me he said. "But he is the one."

LEVINE: Did you like him right away? (pause, Mrs Loew gave non-verbal communication.) No. (She laughs.)

LOEW: My mother used to say that under the chupah, you know what a chupah, you pray for whatever you want and God gives you. Under the chupah I prayed for one thing. I should love him. I should learn to love him. And I did. I did learn to love.

LEVINE: Well, why did you marry him if you didn't love him?

LOEW: Well, I wasn't married yet to him.

LEVINE: But you prayed that you would--

LOEW: I wanted a little home, a husband, a home. (pause) Look.

LEVINE: But you learned to love him.

LOEW: I had it.

LEVINE: What was your husband's name?

LOEW: My husband, Jack Loew. He was one of the brothers from the Loew's Theater.

LEVINE: Did he have theaters then? What was he doing then?

LOEW: Who?

LEVINE: Your husband.

LOEW: My husband, he used to work for his brother. He worked in the theater, show business.

LEVINE: So then, where did you move to? When--

LOEW: When he died he left me nine dollars and two small children.

LEVINE: When did he die?

LOEW: He died (pause) in 1943, but I made up my mind, my children are not going to go through what I went through. I gave them a good education. I have one daughter in California. She has a Ph.D., and education in psychology. I have the daughter here, Harriet Rosen. She's a graduate of the Conservatory of Music and she worked at the Turfside Museum with the animals. I worked hard but I made good money and my children got a good education.

LEVINE: Good for you. Good for you. What's your other daughter's

name? The one in California.

LOEW: Leanne Estelle. Dr. Leanne Estelle. Oh, my mother (daughter) says, "Don't ever forget Doctor. I worked hard for that Ph.D."

LEVINE: Are you glad you came to America then? When you think back over everything, when you think about your life, are you glad that you came here?

LOEW: Oh, no, I could never have given my children an education that I did.

LEVINE: Is that what your proudest of? Are you proud, is that the thing, what are you most proud of?

LOEW: I'm proud to be an America citizen. And I'm proud of this country. I'm proud of the president. I'm proud of everything that this country stands for.

LEVINE: When you worked so hard to put your children, to get an education for your children--

LOEW: I worked hard, I'll tell you.

LEVINE: Were you sewing?

LOEW: No, my brother-in-law had the theater, so I asked him to give me a concession in the open-air theater. I picked the theater. He said, "You picked a bad one." I said, I know," because my husband worked there. I

used to come and help out. I knew. They wanted the children and I said, "Oh no, children, they're mine and I'm going to educate them in what they want. And they're my children and nobody's going to take them."

LEVINE: So you ran the concession in the open-air theater?

LOEW: I was running the concession. I made it into a lunchroom. I took in hamburgers. Meat was rationed and I had hamburgers without stamps. Oy, oy, oy, was that a business! I was shoveling money.

LEVINE: How long did you do that?

LOEW: So I had hamburger. I had tuna fish for Friday night. (she coughs) I had coffee I made in the laundry room.

LEVINE: Good for you.

LOEW: I had the best hamburger. You know what I used to do? I used to get the hamburger and I, instead of putting in bread, I used to soak the bread in evaporated milk and mix it all. The best hamburger you ever tasted. (pause) People use to come, say, "How do you make it? What do you put in?" I never told them. (Levine laughs) But they used to stand in line to get my hamburger. The evaporated milk.

LEVINE: Is there anything you would like to say, anything else you'd like to say before the tape runs out? You want to talk about anything else? Anything else about your life?

LOEW: (pause) Isn't that enough?

LEVINE: Well, I think it's wonderful. You told a very nice story. I'm very happy I got to talk to you.

LOEW: But I brought up my children. I used to get home, get myself home, one o'clock in the morning from Lynn to Hyde Park by buses. Then one day I got out of Union Square, Haymarket Square in the station, I saw a black man, unzipped his pants, pulls out his (Yiddish word), shakes it. I said, "Oy, he's going to rape me." I started to scream. An officer came up. He said, "I got him with the goods. There were complaints about him, but I never got him with goods. Now I got him with goods." He arrested him. I said, "What you going to do with me?" He said, "I'll take you home." He said, "Know you live in Hyde Park. I have a car downstairs. I'll take you home." He took me home. But I had a car in the garage. I said, "Stupid idiot, you have a car in the garage, learn how to drive." And I did. I learned how to drive. I used to drive to Lynn every afternoon and come home late at night. And I had a German Shepard. He was very clever. I used to tell him on the stoop, "Frankie, lay down here. Don't let anybody in or let anybody out." I used to come home and Frankie used to go "Woof!" He was right there. I used to bring him a hamburger. Oh, he deserved it. I used to bring him a bag hamburger and used to take him one o'clock in the morning for a walk. But I learned how to drive. I was forty-two years old, I learned how to drive a car.

LEVINE: Good for you. Good for you. Well, maybe that's a good note, that show

your spirit, that shows your good spirit. And I want to thank you so much for talking with me. Okay, this is Janet Levine and I'm here with Gertrude Loew and we're here in--

LOEW: One of my brother-in-laws, the big shot in the family, said to me, "You know, you did a terrible job with your children. I never thought you'll be able to do it, but you were a little pipsqueak, a nothing. I never thought you'll be able to do it but you did terrific." I said, "Coming from you, I pat myself on the (gestures)--

LEVINE: Wow, I think you can be proud of yourself for what you did.

LOEW: I am!

LEVINE: Good.

LOEW: I am. When I look at my children I am proud of myself.

LEVINE: Okay. Thank you very much. This is Janet Levine on September 1st, 1992 and I'm talking with Gertrude Loew in New Hyde Park.

LOEW: When I look at my family I say, "Mama you did it."

END OF INTERVIEW