

EI-254

SAMUEL AMADA

BIRTH DATE: MAY 5, 1899

INTERVIEW DATE: 2/24/1993 and 3/1/1993

RUNNING TIME: 1:34:52

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: DAUGHTERS OF MIRIAM HOME
CLIFTON, NJ**

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 5/1994

AUSTRIA, 1911

AGE 11

PORT: BREMEN

SHIP: HAMBURG-AMERICA LINE

RESIDENCES: AUSTRIA: ROSBER

US: NYC

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. It's February 24, 1993, and I'm here with Samuel Amada, who came to the United States from Austria in 1911 when he was eleven years old. Now, we're here today in Clifton, New Jersey, where Mr. Amada lives. I'm very happy to be here, and I'm looking forward to hearing all your stories, since I know you have a very good memory.

AMADA: I'll give you as much detail as you want to know.

LEVINE: Terrific.

AMADA: I'll be glad to repeat them to you.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Okay. Let's begin by you saying your

birth date and the town you were born in.

AMADA: I was born in Rosber, Rosber. R-O-S-B-E-R, Rosber.

LEVINE: Okay. And what date?

AMADA: May the 5th, 1899.

LEVINE: Okay. And what, did you stay in the town of Rosber the whole time before you left Austria?

AMADA: Most of the time. I went to, I stayed with my grandparents for a while. When we were getting ready to leave Europe and go to America we stayed with our grandparents for about a year. We sold everything, all our assets, and we moved in with my grandparents, which were in Chreve.

LEVINE: How do you spell that?

AMADA: C-H-R-E-V-E, Chreve.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, then, let's go back to, then, your first ten years, when you were still in the town, before you went to your grandparents' house. What was that town like?

AMADA: Well, it was a town where we lived. We had a great, big home. We had the biggest house in the place, in that town. And we had a dance hall and a tavern, and we used to entertain weddings, funerals, whatever it was, a wake. They used to stop into our place, and

they used to have their drinks and that was it, the weddings. We used to have quite a few. We had quite a good, big business there in Europe.

LEVINE: Tell me about the festive occasions that people celebrated in Austria that maybe are a little different than they were after when you came here.

AMADA: Well, I don't know, afterwards I don't know. All I know is we were, our house was on a county highway. There were trees all along the highway, and wherever they wanted to go to the city they had to pass that high way in order to get to the city.

LEVINE: What was the nearest city?

AMADA: It was, uh, Brochnic.

LEVINE: Could you spell that, please?

AMADA: B-R-O-C-H-I-N-C. Brochnic.

LEVINE: I see. So on the way to Brochnic they would pass your . . .

AMADA: Our place, yeah. They went, the cemetery was also on that highway, and if they would have a wake after the funeral they would stop at our place and get drunk.
(he laughs)

LEVINE: Do you remember any experiences when you were a little boy?

AMADA: Yes. I remember the time there was a wedding, and my mother was pregnant with my sister, my sister Gertie, at the time. She was getting ready to give birth. And they were carrying on something terrible. So my mother left the house and she went into the barn and she laid down on the straw there and she was already laboring, you know. So then my father took her to her bedroom and he called, got the midwife, and he took, she took care of her. But they were rowdies, these people were all rowdies. My father used to carry brass knuckles. And when they would get drunk, and he made it a practice that twelve o'clock midnight they would be out. And if they didn't get out, he would hit them with the brass knuckles and knock them out and drag them out. I especially remember that, you know. And then one of them got real nasty. He had a whip, and he hit me with the whip and I was afraid to tell my father about it, so I went in and I whimpered, you know. I went to my mother and I whimpered, told her about it. So I says, "You know, if I ever, if I should tell Papa what he did to me, he would kill him, and I don't want nothing like that to happen here." So I kept quiet about it. But, as I say, as time went on I, we had what you call, in our house we had a school, where we used to, they used to have a teacher that used to get paid every three months, and he'd come, and their neighbors would come and give my father, I think they used to pay something like a dollar a week, and he would teach them Hebrew, Polish, some took German. So it, we got along very nicely that way. I mean, it was, we were quite wealthy

there.

LEVINE: Well, in other words a schoolteacher would come to your home.

AMADA: And live with us.

LEVINE: I think we're going to stop the tape recorder. We're having an interruption here. (break in tape) Okay, we're resuming now after someone interrupting us in the dining room where we're speaking. Go ahead, Mr. Amada.

AMADA: You see, we had quite a big piece of property there. And a neighbor of ours who went to America, he stayed here and he earned some money, he came back with quite a bit of money, and he decided, as long as we were willing to sell, ours was a much bigger house, we had, at one time we had a flood in our town, and animals were floating, rats and mice, whatever, they took all, they had a place where they used to conduct services for the Jewish holidays, the Sabbath, and they brought all those things, the Torah and all, they brought it to our house, because our house wasn't flooded. Our house was built of concrete blocks. And so they brought everything over, some of the people were sitting on our roof watching everything floating by. It was really a disaster, it really was. But . . .

LEVINE: How old were you. Do you remember?

AMADA: I was then maybe about eight years old when this

happened.

LEVINE: What were most of the peoples' houses made out of?

AMADA: Well, most of them were log wood, they were. And straw rooves. That's what it was.

LEVINE: And what was your house? It was concrete block.

AMADA: Concrete block, very thick walls, eighteen inch walls, they were. And we used to put ice in the wintertime. There was a lake near us that used to freeze up, and they would cut these blocks during the winter and put the ice into our cellar so that we could keep the beer cool. That's the way it worked out for us and all. We had a terrible fire there one time. Our whole big estate caught on fire and was burning. We had all these kinds of things, but as far as the Gentile people were concerned, we got along very well with them.

LEVINE: Was the town about equal mix of Gentiles and Jews?

AMADA: Jews, yeah. And I say there was no anti-Semitism there. They would, if my mother had to go somewheres to go shopping they would keep their eye on us. They would cook our meals for us, and all. If they had to go, we used to go like, Christmas Eve, they would go to church, midnight mass. We would stay at their house and take care of, watch their children. I'll never forget, they came, the women came back from church. She had these biscuits. I don't know if you

ever saw, that they passed around, the priest passes it around. So she came in and she brought some of those and she asked my mother's permission would she mind if she gave us, to take it, just for the holiness, she thought it was, my mother says, "It can't hurt them. If it don't do them no good, as long as it don't hurt them, go ahead and give it to them."

She was thrilled to think that she was able to do that. These were the kind of things that we had. I'll never forget one time we had a maid all the time.

And we also had a man, when my father was home. Later on we didn't do such a big business in the tavern. We didn't do too much of that. So we just had a maid. We didn't have the man any more working on our grounds. And I went out in the field to the maid, to watch the cattle, and all of a sudden I, a rainstorm came along. Thunder and lightening, it was terrible. Terrible, terrible lightening. And all of a sudden lightening struck something. There must have been a piece of steel there or something. And I stood there, and I got such a shock I opened my mouth from the shock and I couldn't close my mouth. I had lockjaw. She came over and she blew into my ear. She was a former army nurse, and she knew certain things.

She kept blowing into my ear, and it released my lockjaw. I say, these are the kinds of things that really went on in Europe. But otherwise I had a very close friend, a Gentile boy. He was much older than I, and he was going to college. He was studying to be a priest. When he came home for the holidays, he wouldn't go to his house. He used to jump off the wagon, run over to our house, and he brought me a

pearl-handled knife, a penknife. He was so glad to be able to give it to me, he wanted to give me something to remember him by. I say, that's how well we got along there. It was nice living there in every which way. And we have plenty of money. We always had plenty of money. In fact, we had a china closet, and in this china closet we had a little basket woven, like from grass. And my father would come in whenever he went shopping. Whenever he come in, whatever chance he had he used to dump it into that basket. And if my mother needed something from the grocery store somewheres, she told us to go and take the money and take a penny for candy for ourselves, see. So we were always taught to be very honest. We were. We didn't take a penny more than was necessary.

LEVINE: Can you think of anything else that your mother and father taught you, I mean, ways to be, ways to live?

AMADA: You see, I'll tell you something. My father was a terrible terror. He was like Hitler. He was mean, very nasty, a very nasty man he was. He didn't get along with the people at all. We had an incident in Europe where the Jewish, the Gentile people were borrowing money from the Gentiles, from the Jews. The Gentiles were borrowing money to send their children to college. They were supposed to pay them interest, and plus. So what happened was that these Gentile people turned around and they were bringing, when they had the harvest, they'd come off the fields, have wheat and oats and everything else, they would put bags of it and taking it to the Jewish people,

thinking all the time they were going to get credit against the interest or whatever it was. What they found out, when the boys got a little educated, they came back and wanted to know, ask if our parents, how they're doing with the loans. And he explained to them, he says, "We paid some of the interest, but I also give them these wheats and everything else." They went to investigate it and they found out that they didn't give them no credit at all for that. So they went ahead and went and complained in the town hall that they were taking these things under false pretenses. So they swore out a warrant for their arrest for taking these things under false pretenses.

My father was very friendly with the head rabbi. There was a rabbi that the kaiser, kaiser (?) was very close friends with him. He appointed him as the head rabbi last year. My father went over and saw the rabbi. He said to him he wants to hide these Jews. There was about seven of them. He wants to hide them and keep them away. They're going to serve them with a summons to come to court, so he wants to hide them so they weren't able to serve them. So he put them in a wagon and covered them up with straw, hooked up a team of horses and he drove them out to this place. While they were away there, my father got together with some of these, some of these people who were, they had associated with, and he talked to them. He says, "You know, if you're going to send these people to jail you'll get nothing. Why don't you get together and see if you can settle this thing? They should sit down with the lawyer and they'll get a lawyer and see if they can't straighten it out and

settle it out of court. They'll compensate them for what they did, whatever they did." So finally what happened was they decided to do that and they withdrew the charges. So these guys came back from the rabbi.

Somebody had squealed that my father was harboring these guys. My father gets up, he was very friendly with the guys in the courthouse. They told him they got a warrant out for his arrest for harboring these criminals, which was illegal. They said, "You're going to go to jail for this." He decided he'll run away, he'll go to America. So he laid out for a visa to go on a visit to America. So he got the visa, and he left, and he went to America, and he was here when they went to serve him the summons to appear. He wasn't there, they couldn't find him, so they couldn't serve him.

LEVINE: What year was that?

AMADA: That was in 1905, around that time, around 1905.

LEVINE: And how long did he stay?

AMADA: He stayed on.

LEVINE: Oh, he just stayed.

AMADA: He stayed on for quite a while. Around 1910 we, my mother notified him that they were having maneuvers in America, in Europe, that the soldiers were staying at our house, they had put in telephones into our house, they let out our cattle, they put their horses into

our stables, they took over the whole migila there. So my mother, so my father, who was also, he had served in the army. He was a corporal in the army. So he asked my mother to investigate and ask these soldiers, they know some of the officers, are they maneuvering with live ammunition. And my mother found out, they said yes. He says, "If they're maneuvering with live ammunition, there's going to be a war." So he says, "You'll have to sell everything and come to America. I'm not going back there. I don't want to get involved there, I don't want to get into the war, and I don't want you and my family to be mixed in in this war." And that's when we decided to sell everything, we sold our property and everything to our next door neighbor, and we got ready to leave. That's how we, that's why we came to this country. We didn't come here for need or anything else, because we were quite well-fixed. And so finally when we got here . . .

LEVINE: Wait a minute. Before we talk about America, let's talk more about before you left.

AMADA: Yeah.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

AMADA: Jacob.

LEVINE: Jacob. And your mother?

AMADA: Hilda.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

AMADA: Was Rosenman.

LEVINE: R-O-S-E-M-A-N? [sic]

AMADA: M-A-N, yes.

LEVINE: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

AMADA: Nine. We were nine altogether. One was born here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So there were eight of you there.

AMADA: Eight was, yeah. The little boy died when he was four years old of infantile paralysis.

LEVINE: And where did you fall in the line of children?

AMADA: I was fifth.

LEVINE: And were you closest in particular to any family member?

AMADA: My youngest sister. She was glued to me to this very day yet. She's staying in Bradley Beach, and I call her, every Saturday I talk to her. When she was home, when we lived in the same city, she would call every day, and I warned my wives, both of them. I says, "Don't feel upset, and don't get upset about it. My sister Frieda calls every day. She wants to know

what's what. And if she don't hear or see me, it's a catastrophe." So I says, until this very day she was very dear and near to me. She had any problems in school, they told her to bring a parent, she brought me. And everybody in the school knew me because I was going to the same school. I was very friendly with the principal, and he accepted me. Because he knew I was supposed to be a smart kid.

LEVINE: How much younger was Frieda than you?

AMADA: Six years.

LEVINE: Six years, uh-huh. Now, how would you describe Frieda as a little girl?

AMADA: Well, she was very obliging for everything. Her mother would want to have something, she would be the first one to volunteer to go and do shopping or whatever it was. My sister, who was two years older than her, she was more on the lazy side. Where my sister would go, she would go with her. She wouldn't move without her no matter what. So this is the way we lived, and that's the way it was all about.

LEVINE: How about you? How would you describe yourself as a little boy in Austria, before you came here?

AMADA: Well, I was psychic. Yes. They would come to me and ask me, "Is it going to rain tomorrow." One guy came to me, he was expecting mail that he was going to get a passport to go to America. He came to me to tell

him, "Is there mail?" Because you had to go to the city to pick up the mail, and I would lay on the, lay on the lawn with my hands in back of my head like this, (he gestures) and I would say, "Don't go, there's no mail." Once or twice he went anyhow, but there was no mail, but he knew. When I told him, "Go ahead, there's mail there."

LEVINE: How was it you discovered that you had this ability?

AMADA: I don't know how I discovered it. I just did those things for no good reason at all. I used to tell them, "It's going to rain tomorrow." "It isn't going to rain tomorrow." Things like that. I was psychic.

LEVINE: Did you have any particularly dramatic experiences with your psychic ability?

AMADA: No. See, I was never sick. In all those years I had measles when I was seven years old. They had leeches, they put on the back of my, here. And I ripped them off. But otherwise I never had a sick day in my life until when I came here they discovered that I had bleeding in my urine and they had me here, they tried all kinds of medications and everything else. It didn't work out, and they finally had to operate on me. But that's the only time I was sick. I was never sick in my life before that.

LEVINE: Well, tell me more about how they treated illness back when you were a boy in Austria with leeches and other,

kinds of things.

AMADA: That was it. When you had, ran a temperature, a fever, they would use leeches. See, that's why our President Washington died. They used leeches on him. Instead of him getting a blood transfusion they used leeches and they took away the blood, the leeches took away, sucked away the blood and he died as a young man, President Washington did. It was the wrong way to treat sick people.

LEVINE: What is the theory behind leeches, that they'll suck out the bad blood?

AMADA: Right. The bad blood, yeah, and your fever will go down. Take out some of the blood and the fever will go down. The main thing was they felt your head or whatever, they saw you had a run in your temperature, you know. That's what they did. That's the first thing they did, used the leeches.

LEVINE: Were there any other kinds of medical or treatment that was different there?

AMADA: My sister, who was two years older than I, she had sores on her head. And we didn't know what to do about it. Under her hair she had sores. She told my mother, who called in a nurse, who was a nurse in the army, and she was the one that treated her with different kinds of things. I don't know what it was she used to have, medications. Then she treated her, she cured her of it. The sores went way. Her hair

came through all right. After that we never had no trouble outside of that. But otherwise I had an uncle who was a policeman, and as he was leaving this prisoner, this prisoner stopped short and my uncle fell over him and he broke his leg. So after that his leg was stiff, they had to retire him. So, but they took him away and set his leg. Yeah.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family?

AMADA: Well, my father was a big hypocrite. He wasn't very well-educated, but he said his prayers and he thought he was going to the synagogue, but no. And he prayed and he prayed, but he was a miserable character. He was just a miserable individual. And I say I'm going to my grave hating him.

LEVINE: Was he strict with you?

AMADA: Anything that didn't please him, he'd take it out on me. I'd walk past him, he'd whack me one, you know, something like this here. Terrible, terrible. Never knew what it was. Since I was a youngster, I always earned money. People liked me, and I'd do errands for them, and I'd have pockets full of change. If I wanted something, I could go out and buy it myself. I bought my own clothes when I came here. When I came here I came, my mother had a special suit made to order for me. When I came here, it had big pockets, it was loaded with all kinds of money because they used to, while on board a ship I used to go to the canteen and he'd close for two hours, Germans, they

ate two hour lunch. And I'd go and knock on his door and ask me what I want and who is it. "Me." He would open the door for me. And I would buy oranges or lemons for these people because they were nauseated. They were in steerage, you see. We were in second class, the first tier up. We had our own room there and everything else. We all had a room, we had three beds there and all that. So we were living good. But my mother took along a lot of dry fruits and things so that we wouldn't have to eat their food. But most of the time they were fed hot dogs there. I used to go down and visit them down in the steerage there, and it was terrible. And they were scratching and they were lousy and everything else. It was a terrible catastrophe, terrible.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about your mother, before you left Austria. How, what was she like, when you were a little boy?

AMADA: Well, she was a beautiful woman, very beautiful, built real nice and all. But my father wasn't nice to her, domineered her like she was a servant or something. And he showed no respect, no respect. My mother was crazy about my father, though. She was crazy about him. He was a good-looking man. So all in all my mother was, you would say, like a pigeon, I swear to you. She had no gall at all. She tolerated everything. She always took good care of us. To show you how, when we were little, when we were babies, she took sheets and she cut them up, she made tapes. And she would wrap us from here all the way down to our

toes so we wouldn't be bowlegged. And they used to wet them and my mother used to wash them and hang them outside and dry them, and that's how she raised us, to make sure that we wouldn't be bowlegged. That's how careful she was. She was terribly, terrible careful for us. She really was. She nursed us quite a way. She really, she didn't wean us until we were about a year-and-a-half old. She weaned us then. But otherwise she had a terrible life. But she was healthy and strong.

LEVINE: Do you remember any foods that she cooked when you were little?

AMADA: Well, she used to, you see, we had, we had cattle, and my father would take us, if it had a calf and it was a bull he would have it slaughtered. Then we would put it down in the cellar, hang it up, then it would be cold storage. We had that. We had plenty of chickens, ducks, geese and everything else, we had a lot of eggs and all that. We had everything we wanted there. My father used to like roast duck, and I do, too. And when he'd go away shopping, when he'd get home, no matter what time of the night it was, my mother would go there, fix him his meal and give him a dinner. So, but we ate well. I mean, we really did. She used to prepare terrific food. She would bake challah on Fridays, you know. And when they, when they got through with the ovens, she would make a pot roast and put it in this pot, and take the pot roast, put it into the oven, seal it up so that was for Friday night and Saturday she would have this pot

roast already cooked up. And we ate very well. We weren't poor people, you know. We had plenty of food.

LEVINE: You said before that a teacher would come to your house.

AMADA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And teach Hebrew and some other . . .

AMADA: Polish.

LEVINE: And German?

AMADA: Polish.

LEVINE: Polish. Now, was this before you went to the other school?

AMADA: I didn't go to . . .

LEVINE: You never went to . . .

AMADA: I never went to a public school. What we did was once or twice a year they would send for you. You'd have to take examinations. If you passed the examination, you were free of going to school, because in Europe they had compulsory education before they had it here. If you wasn't educated, you paid a fifty dollar fine for not sending your children to school. So he was a very good teacher, and we didn't have to go to school for that reason.

LEVINE: Did he teach you other subjects?

AMADA: Well, you know what he didn't teach us was arithmetic. That's the only thing I had to start from scratch when I came here, to teach me arithmetic. But I took onto it very fast. I was very good at figures. I was terrific. I was a good student. I mean, I went through the whole school about, a little over three years. That's all it took me.

LEVINE: Now, when your father decided that you and your mother and your sisters and brothers should come to America, you sold your home and your land to the people next door.

AMADA: Right.

LEVINE: And then you went to your grandparents. Now, whose mother and father were they?

AMADA: That was my mother's father and mother.

LEVINE: And that was in a nearby town?

AMADA: Another town, yeah.

LEVINE: And what were their names?

AMADA: Rosenman.

LEVINE: Their first . . .

AMADA: My grandfather's name was Zalech Rosenman.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

LEVINE: And do you remember him?

AMADA: Do I remember? It's as if I saw him today.

LEVINE: Tell me.

AMADA: I swear, he was such an angel. He was so different than the others. He was a man you could love. I mean it. He used to teach me, when I got away he was already preparing me for the bar mitzvah. Eleven years old he was preparing me for the bar mitzvah. And when I came here my father didn't send me to no school, no Hebrew school, no nothing, paid no attention to me at all. When it came my day to be bar mitzvah'd I went there, I put on the triullums, I said the prayers and everything else. I remember each and every word that I had to say. And you wouldn't believe it, on top of that, my father wanted me to be bar mitzvah'd during the week because that's the time you put on the trillums, you don't on Shabbos, you see. Only during the week. So he wanted me to go through the whole ritual. So I did. I went, I was bar mitzvah'd on Thursday. Then again he had me in the synagogue again, and to have a bar mitzvah on Saturday. So I read the half Torah there and

everything else. We came away from there, my mother had prepared a big dinner, and my father invited about ten of the shnuras to come to the house and have a big meal, which my mother cooked. And she made stuffed chicken and what have you. You name it. I went to the liquor store, bought a gallon of liquor, and everything else. They sat down and there was singing and everything else. I was outside in the street. I wasn't included in the party at all. I was outside playing with the kids in the street. Not one of those bums even gave me a pencil. They all came, they ate and they sang and they drank. Nothing. As if I didn't exist. Not even a "congratulations." Nothing.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about your grandfather. Tell me about any experiences you had with him before.

AMADA: The only experience is he took me in hand to teach me the different prayers and educate myself. Most of it was in the Hebrew, you see. It wasn't so much in the schooling of the Polish or the German. It wasn't too much of that. But he was most interested. And it finally had wind up, towards the end he said to me, "You'll never be religious."

LEVINE: How did you feel when he said that?

AMADA: Huh?

LEVINE: How did you feel when he . . .

AMADA: Well, I felt, inside of me I felt that he's probably

right, because that's what I already felt. At that age, at the young age, the religion didn't hold me too much. I wasn't too much in favor because they, the whole thing was a big fake to me. The whole, the religion and all this was, you know. This teacher, once he threw me out of the class because we were sitting down and we were discussing about, who was it, discussing about (he pauses) King David. I remember this story that he told us that King David was, had declared war against another group. They went to war and these religious Jews, the Kohaned, you know. The guys with the white socks. They were religious. They advised him to take three hundred men and go out. They spoke to God. That's the way they loved everybody. And they went out, and they lost the war. He came back and he told him, "Take two hundred more and go back, start all over again." He went back, and this is the way the story goes, he went back with the two hundred and he won the war. So I says, "In Jewish there's a saying that if God wills, (Yiddish)." You can shoot with a broomstick. If God wants you to, you can shoot with a broomstick. I said, "Why didn't he, why didn't he take the three hundred, and the three hundred he lost the war, a lot of them got killed?" He said, "Because there were some bad people amongst those people, and they want that they should get killed in the war." So I says, "So why couldn't he take the five hundred men, and the ones that were supposed to get killed, they get killed. There's no reason why they had to take three hundred and two hundred and finally win the war." He took me by my ear and threw me out of the class. "You're not

supposed to question God." That was his answer to me. That disgusted me completely of the Jewish faith. You can readily understand. I followed through on the prayers and all this. I knew all the prayers and all, but it didn't have no real feeling that I accomplished anything with it.

LEVINE: But you had such a good feeling for your grandfather. He was a religious man?

AMADA: Very religious. He was so religious that he knew the religion from A to Z. He used to have rabbis come from different towns and ask him advice on different rulings on the Jewish religion. That's how religious he was. He knew the religion. How, inside I felt, I had no idea. But he was very, very well-educated in Hebrew. Very educated.

LEVINE: Do you feel you learned some things from your grandfather that were . . .

AMADA: In one respect what I learned was to like people. And that's the way I grew up. I belonged to four Jewish organizations before I came here, very active there. I accumulated a lot of money for them. I ran all kinds of affairs here and everything else. And I accumulated so much money that at the wind up, when I finally dissolved the organization, when I came here we didn't have too many left, I donated to each and every one of my members, \$1,900.00 apiece. Yes.

LEVINE: Quite an accomplishment.

AMADA: And besides, I gave, UJA, I gave them five hundred dollars. Deborah Hospital, I gave them five hundred dollars. And still, nineteen hundred dollars each got. You'd think that one of them sent me a thank you note? Deborah did, UJA did, but the members, I didn't hear from them, I don't hear from them. Here yet, today yet. Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

LEVINE: Let's go back to Austria first a little bit longer. Your grandmother, what was she like? What do you remember about her?

AMADA: My grandmother, I had one grandmother, my father's mother, she was mean. She had a terrible temper. She moved in with us and she stayed with us a while. And my father was so goddamn mad at her, she was trying to dictate to him that he shouldn't do this. She's telling him what he should do, what he shouldn't do. He was very independent. He never took advice, but he liked to give advice. He took her trunk, packed it up, and threw her out. "Get out!" He sent her away. And after he was gone, after he went to America, I took her back into our house. But she was very domineering. She was ninety-four years old when she passed away. But she was very domineering. My other grandmother had her own little streaks, you know. She felt she was a good mother and a good grandmother, and that was all there was to it. No love, no affection whatsoever. Nothing. You didn't feel like you'd like to hug her, no. Nothing like that. It didn't exist. She was just distant.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about getting ready to come to America.
Do you remember getting prepared?

AMADA: Yes, oh, yes.

LEVINE: What was that like?

AMADA: Well, we packed a trunk. We packed a bundle, also.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything that you brought with you?

AMADA: Well, we brought my father, my mother had a pair of boots made to order for him. She knew his size in shoes. She went to a certain shoemaker who made new shoes and boots. And she had a pair of boots made for him. We brought that with us. My mother had candlesticks that she brought with her, you know. Different things, not too much. But we had, the trunk we full, and the baggage. That was the main thing, and the money. My mother had a money belt for the money. She carried that with her.

LEVINE: Do you remember leaving your grandparents' house?

AMADA: Yes. We left, I had an uncle. He was in this country, and he was studying to be a dentist. But he lived with my, with my, see, one of my aunts, one of my mother's sisters was a beautiful woman. She looked like Elizabeth Taylor, I swear to you. Beautiful. This aunt had no children, so she begged us, my grandmother, to give her one of her children. She

wanted to adopt her. And that's what happened. She went there, and this fellow who came back from this country, and he was studying dentistry, and then he was a barber, he was a dentist, it was all like one. He came back to Europe. My grandfather, this uncle of mine, he had a billiard room for the officers. The army was stationed in that city. It was a fancy city, Yarislof.

LEVINE: Can you spell it?

AMADA: Well, it's with a Y-A-R-I-S-L-O-F. Yarislof. And they had a beautiful home there. They had the best of everything. They used to have a billiard parlor there. The officers and their wives used to come in and play billiards there. And my uncle was in charge. On top of that, my uncle was in charge. He used to supply the government for the army, lumber for the barracks that they used to build, barracks, different places. My uncle was the contractor for the government, and my uncle, he was the one that was in charge of the works. So he decided he's better off to stay in Europe than in America. He had everything he wanted. Horseback riding there and everything else, you know. It was a pleasure for him to live there. He had it real good, real nice. He was the one that drove with us. He went all the way into Germany with us, put us on the train in Austria. And he went, he filled my pockets with bars of chocolate and what have you. And he was crazy about me. He was just, I was well-liked by their relatives. I was supposed to be a cute kid. I had freckles until I was sixteen years

old. I looked like an Irish kid, light hair, curly hair. And so they treated me very well. Every one of them wanted me to stay with them, go for vacation to their homes, and I did. I used to spend a couple of weeks here and a couple of weeks there. I was happy that I could be away from my father. It made me real happy when I came here. That's when it started all over again.

LEVINE: Well, let's take, your uncle, then, went with you on the train.

AMADA: Yes. We went to Germany.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then did you stay in Hamburg very long?

AMADA: No, in Bremen.

LEVINE: Bremen. Did you stay there very long?

AMADA: Yeah. We stayed there till we got ready to leave. We stayed there over a week.

LEVINE: Were you being examined, or were you getting your papers in order, or . . .

AMADA: No. It was all taken care of before in our town. The papers were all taken care of, everything else. There was nothing else until we came to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, tell me about the voyage. It sounds like you . . .

AMADA: Well, I wasn't sick a day. I was, I kept well. I used to do shopping for these people, everything else. I got along with the stewards and everybody else there. I used to eat with the captain quite often. He used to ask me to go up and eat with him. And, but we had some Russian kids there, but they didn't like the Russians at all. This was a German ship. And the fact that I spoke German, you know, I got along very well with them. In fact, while I was there I went to look for the luggage, and because I found out later that the luggage went to Hamburg. I was on the Hamburg Line, but the luggage was sent to Hamburg. I wasn't supposed to be in that. (he sneezes) Excuse me.

LEVINE: Bless you.

AMADA: I (?), and went to locate the luggage. I went to Hamburg, discovered the luggage, and had it shipped to Bremen. (he sneezes) Excuse me. I sneeze about eight times every day. So, but I took care of everything like a man. You know?

LEVINE: You weren't the oldest son, though.

AMADA: No.

LEVINE: You were not the oldest son.

AMADA: No. I had two brothers older than I. I had two sisters older than I.

LEVINE: Well, how was it that you took over, like the man of the family?

AMADA: There was nobody else. We were traveling, see, my two sisters and two brothers came to this country before we did. They were here. And we came over by ourselves. We come over with my three sisters and myself and my mother. So different things that would turn up. But I made sure that everything was well taken care of. I come back from Hamburg after I located the luggage and I, I come back to Bremen, and I didn't remember exactly where the street was. I remembered the name of the hotel. So I went over to the gendarme, the policeman, and I asked him where will I find my hotel. I told him the name of the hotel, "Statte Juden." So I stayed there. A man was walking along, so he called him over. (German) And he told him where he was going. He said, "(German)." He says, "Okay." And I told him where I wanted to go and he took me and showed me where the hotel was. So I had no problems. In fact I remembered while I was hanging around I saw a butcher shop and I saw a midget salami there. So I bought it. I didn't know. I took it into the hotel with myself and I was cutting it and I was eating it. Oh, was it delicious. Till this very day I can still taste what it was like. So the next day I went outside, I was wondering how come that the salami tasted so good. I couldn't understand it. I look up on the top there. There was a horse's head on there. They were selling horsemeat. (he laughs) The salami was made of horsemeat. But it was

delicious. So I say, these are the kind of things that, I went to a circus while I was there.

LEVINE: This was your first time away from Austria.

AMADA: Yeah.

LEVINE: What struck you as different? Do you remember what struck you as different?

AMADA: Well, the difference was Germany was clean. It had wide roads. The roads were very wide, nice and clean. The stores were beautiful. Nice window displays and all this. It was really nice. The people were nice. You could see the students when they come out of the college. They would all swirl little canes about this big (he gestures) and they would twirl them and always walking with a certain step. They behaved very nicely. They were very well behaved. Everything else, one incident we had, you see I'm a very light sleeper, always was. When it came at night, my mother use to take off her money belt. She put it under my pillow. So we went to sleep. About five o'clock in the morning they start hollering, "Fire, fire, fire!" Everybody ran out of the rooms, including my mother. I didn't budge. I stayed there. And these guys were running in and out. They were looking under the pillows. They were stealing. False alarm, they were stealing, going under the pillows stealing the people's money. And when they came, they took one look at me and I asked them in German, "What do you want? Get out of here!" I said "Get out!" He went

out all right. He didn't steal no money. So I say my mother knew what she was doing, and she knew she could always depend on me. I was the man of the house.

LEVINE: Well, now, it was during this week that your family was in Bremen that you went to Hamburg and got the luggage and came back?

AMADA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. I see. Well now, tell me about the ship. When you were on the ship you had a little business going?

AMADA: Well, I used to do the shopping. Buy oranges, lemons, because that's what the people were nauseated and they were throwing up. They thought they were going to die. So the money didn't mean a thing to them. They used to tip me like crazy. I use to tell them, "Don't give me so much money." "Ah, what good is the money? I'm gonna die anyhow." They were so seasick that they thought they were gonna die. All of them thought they were going to die.

LEVINE: Where did you get the oranges and lemons?

AMADA: From the canteen.

LEVINE: So you would buy them from the canteen.

AMADA: Yeah!

LEVINE: And sell them to the passengers.

AMADA: I didn't sell them. They would give me the money and I would pay for it.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

LEVINE: I wasn't buying and selling.

LEVINE: I see, I see.

AMADA: They'd give me the money and I would buy what ever they wanted, the lemons or the oranges. Whatever they wanted I would get it for them and pay for it and they'd would tip me after I got through. But the guy in the canteen was not a nice guy. But to me he was very nice, exceptionally nice to me because I was polite about everything. When I asked him to do me a favor and open up, you know, because he was on his lunch hour, he didn't want to open up, but he did for me. So I got along very nicely with him.

LEVINE: And tell me about going down into steerage. How did that strike you?

AMADA: Oh, I was so frightened, so disgusted. The people were all lousy, scratching, they were dirty. They didn't get no attention. At least we had a shower in our room, we could shower, keep clean and all this. But nah, it was terrible. Terrible feeling with the way those people were living there. Got off the boat,

got into Ellis Island. Ugh! They were sitting on the benches scratching and scratching from the lice. They were loaded with lice. And I tried to stay away from them as far as I could, you know. So we hung around there. Do you want to hear the Ellis Island situation?

LEVINE: Definitely.

AMADA: Well, we got there. It was about twelve o'clock noon time. We hung around. We were examined by the eye doctor, the other doctor. We were examined. We all passed all right. We were all in good shape, good condition and all. And we hung around. I says, "Now what are we doing now?" He says, "Well, you have to wait until somebody comes to get you." The ship was two days earlier. Make good time, and we got there two days ahead of time. I said, "I have no way of letting my father know that we are here." I had a sister here too, was living not far from my father, and no way of getting in touch with them. "What do I do about this?" He said, "Well sorry, this is it. You'll have to make contact somewhere, somehow, with your father." So finally, it got to be a little over three o'clock already. I says, "What time do you close up this place?" He says, "Five o'clock." I says, "So what do you do by then?" "You'll have to lay on a bench and fall, go to sleep." I says, "That's not possible. I'll get lousy in here. I can't take this. Why do we have to stay here? Why can't we go to my father?" "Well," he says, "there has to be a certain amount of financial

responsibility." I said, "What are you worrying about finances? We got plenty of money." "What do you mean you got plenty of money?" "Yeah, we have plenty of money. My mother's got it in her money belt." They took my mother, they took a nurse. She went into the room. My mother undressed and she took out the money belt and they opened it up. (he laughs) He took one look at it. He said, "Oh, my God, I haven't seen so much money in years!" He says, "You don't have to stay here. You've got the money." "So what do I do?" He says, "You'll take a ferry boat from here. You see, a ferry boat will come here. It goes back and forth to New York." He says, "And you'll get on there, and you'll go to New York." "Okay." So we packed up and we left. We got on a ferry boat. We got to New York and we got near the post office. The trolley car was turning around there. So I said, "How do I get to New Jersey?" And they told me I have to take this trolley and go over to the Hudson Tubes, and over there you take the Hudson Tubes. And that's what we did. We went to the Hudson Tubes, we got on. We rode to Newark. We got to Newark. I got on Springfield Avenue. And I stood there and I asked them, "Do you talk German or Jewish or Polish?" Whichever it was. And I finally got a hold of a man there and I showed him the address, where I was going and he told me, he knew I wouldn't be able to read The Springfield Avenue Trolley. He says, "Take number twenty-five. You know how to read?" "Yes, okay." "You see the number twenty-five, you get on there and you tell the man who runs the trolley to let you off at this street. And show him the street." Which I

did, and we drove. We went all the way up to the street where my father lived. We got off, and I had the number of the house where he was. And I knew to look at the houses, you know, I looked at it. And I walked. We were a block and a half away from where we got out. There was my father sitting on the front steps in front of the house. And I recognized him, and I was delighted. And that's how we got in. My father had a four room house, a four room flat there.

LEVINE: And what was the reunion like with your father?

AMADA: Well, we was excited, of course we were. But there was no affection from him. No real affection, nothing. As though he saw us yesterday. So we moved in and, uh, what happened, he was in business there. He had a livery stable, right across the street from where he lived. He had horses there, you know, stables. The landlord came in and my father showed him that the floor, in the living room floor, had a hump in the floor. He says, "You better get a carpenter or someone to scrape it down, because it's going to." He says to my father, "You want something done? Do it yourself." He says, "I'm not going to do anything." My father got mad and he opened the door. He went to kick him out and my father fell and broke his leg. So we had a picnic with him. They put his leg in a cast. Right away I got busy with the horses. I became the whole "Geschafft." I became the whole boss there. And my father says, "We are getting out of here." And he had a man who was a lawyer, Greenbaum, and he spoke to him, and my father asked

him what he should do, how he could go about it. And so my father says he wants to buy a house. Okay. So, he says, "I got the idea." He says, "My father's got a house a block away from here with stables, with everything else, all cut and dry. A one family house." "Fine." So my father had this money my mother had brought and that's what we did.

LEVINE: Before we get more into life in America. I know you have a wonderful memory. Describe Ellis Island and your impression of the place.

AMADA: Well, there's nothing too much to describe. It looked like a great barn with benches. They had benches all along there. We all sat on these benches. It was no thrill, it was nothing fancy. It was a big barn. That's what it was like, Ellis Island. That was it. Driven in there like a bunch of cattle.

LEVINE: Okay, okay. Well, now, your first few days or weeks in America. Do you remember anything that struck you as different here from what you knew before?

AMADA: What I was disappointed in, and I am till this very day. They got in touch with my sister. My sister was living with a girlfriend. She came over to the house, and she was fixing us a meal. And of all the things she made up a salmon salad. She got a can of salmon and she made up the salad. I tasted it. I didn't like it. I'm thinking I'm gonna get a duck dinner, a roast chicken or whatever, something. I was terribly disappointed. Till this very day I hate salmon salad.

I don't eat it. I still don't eat it. These things, you know, it was distasteful to me altogether, the food and everything else. But I got along very well with the boys. They immediately taught me how to catch a ball. I never handled a ball before. But they liked to play with me they used to, Italians. They lived upstairs. I got along with them. I didn't speak English, but I managed little by little. In less than two years' time, I was already giving a boy, who is now a dentist, elocution lessons. I gave him the cards with the words on it and I would ask him to pronounce it. I would go in the cloak room and I would ask him to pronounce it. I was with him for about a month or so. And I finally discovered, I said to the teacher. I says, "There's no use. He isn't slow learning. He's got a speech impediment, and that's why he can't pronounce the words properly." That was the whole situation there. So I say. But I was, they liked me very much. Anything that they wanted anywhere in the school they use to call on me. They always made sure they put me in a class where there was a telephone. So when the office needed something in the city hall or whatever it was, they'd call me and I would go. I was treated real nice by the principal and everybody else. I was, I was.

LEVINE: Okay. I think, and here we'll pause because I want to change the tape, and we will continue with a new tape. Okay. This is Janet Levine and I am talking with Sam Amada, and this is the end of Tape One.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm here starting the second tape of an interview with Sam Amada at the Daughters of Miriam in Clifton, New Jersey. It's March 1, 1993, and Mr. Amada came from Austria in 1911, when he was 11 years old.

AMADA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, I'm glad to be back, and we'll just finish off the rest of the story.

AMADA: Okay.

LEVINE: And we're going to start, you were leading the way and you arrived at your father's house in Newark, New Jersey. Okay. What struck you as different about the United States when you first were here?

AMADA: What I was surprised, to see so many black people here. In our country the only black people we knew were the Gypsies. And I was under the impression that that was what I was seeing, Gypsies. But it didn't make sense to me to see all these black people. And that's what was so different to me. That's what the whole impression. I was dissatisfied with the first meal I had here. Which was my sister came, she was living with a friend of hers, so she came to my fathers house and she prepared that salmon salad which I was very much disappointed to think that I came here

all the ways to the United States and this was what I'm being treated to. I thought we would have a roast duck, a roast chicken or whatever. We had all that in Europe. We had all those things. But this is what I had, and I was terribly disappointed. Then I was very much surprised that the boys in my neighborhood where I was living took to me right away. They wanted me to play ball with them. I never handled a ball in my life. But they put me to catch ball and they would batting it and so forth. I got along very nicely with the families. We had a family upstairs, who lived upstairs over us, an Italian family. And it came Sunday, so they prepared a dinner out in the backyard, spaghetti and what ever you have, you know. And they invited me to the dinner with them. So I sat down there and they start singing. And the man from upstairs, he says, "You don't know the songs or anything. What you do is you just, when we sing you go, 'Chum-bapa, chum-bapa, chum-bapa, chum-bapa.'" And that's what I did. But I enjoyed being with them and they made me feel right at home. I felt pretty good. And the next thing we knew was we waited until in the summertime. We hung around the house, you know. And a funny thing, what happened was the landlord came in to collect rent from my father. My father complained to him about the floor being wavy. And he asked the landlord to send a carpenter or somebody to go grade it down. And the man says to him, "If you want anything done you do it. I'm not sending anybody here. My father decided to kick him out of the house so he opened the door and told the guy to get out, and he went to kick him out and as he

did he went down and broke his leg. Well, I don't have to tell you, as young as I was it was my job, I had to go into the stables, take care of the horses that he had there, feed them water them and what have you, bed them down for the night and all. It wasn't the easiest.

LEVINE: Did you have to stop school then?

AMADA: I didn't start yet.

LEVINE: Oh.

AMADA: You see, we didn't start school because it was already in the spring and it was, they thought it was late in enrolling me into school. They didn't enroll me into school until September. That's when I was enrolled in school. And I don't know, do you want to go into detail about that? (voices are heard speaking in the background)

LEVINE: I'm going to close this door. Just a minute. (break in tape) Okay. We're resuming after an interruption. Why don't you tell me about learning English?

AMADA: Well, this is what I am getting at. As I was playing ball and what have you with the boys in the street, I picked up some words, you know, and I picked it up pretty fast. In the fall, in September my mother enrolled us all into, my sisters and myself, in the school. They put me in the first grade. I was only

there a very short time, and I picked up the English language pretty good, very fast. Within a few months I was already in the second grade. And I kept skipping from one grade into another. And I picked up the language very rapidly. In fact, we had a fellow who came from Russia, his whole family came from Russia. And he couldn't pronounce the words too well.

So the teacher took me, who was the greenhorn. Took me, I was only here a couple of years, and gave me a card, different cards with words on it, and I should tutor him. And they put me in cloakroom, and I was tutoring him. And after I had tutored him for a few days I realized, and I told the teacher, "That's not his problem so much. The accent isn't that much a problem. He's got a speech impediment." I says, "There isn't much I can do with that." I says, "I don't think I can. So it ain't gonna do you no good putting me in the cloakroom with him and me trying to teach him how to pronounce the words. He'll never pronounce them properly no matter what." And I went on like this here. I kept skipping. In three years I was in the sixth grade. And my father turned out to be a regular Hitler. He was so mean. He had a nasty disposition, a very nasty disposition, mistreated me right along. He thought that I should. And he told me I was too studious. He said, "You're not going to be no lawyer. You're not going to be no doctor. You don't need books. You are going to be a businessman. You got a head for business. And that's what he wanted me to be, a businessman." And he never let me study. He took the books, threw them out. But I didn't pay much attention to him. I was what they

knew in school as one of the bright kids. And the principal knew about me and, in fact, he selected me to take care of the inventory that they had in school of the books and what have you and I was checking them and double checking them in, stamping them with the school name on it and everything else. And we used to put me always in a class where there was a telephone in case they needed anything in the school from the city or the Board of Education, they would call up my class and ask for me. And they would send me to go and get these maps or whatever they needed. And that's the way I got along. The principal was crazy about me. He thought I was the greatest. And I was known as a real bright, intelligent boy. So, but what happened was I couldn't stand my father's dictating me and everything else. So I, my sister helped me get my working papers. I got myself a job right away. It was people who were customers of my father's. They liked me an awful lot. My father was sort of jealous of me because I always had money. Because the customers liked me and they used to tip me a great deal. There were times when they asked my father permission to take me and take them, take care of their businesses. And I used to ride with them on a wagon, you know. I used to help them and they used to pay me. So I always had money. My father, in all of his days, never gave me a nickel for an ice cream cone, never gave me money for movies, never bought me a suit of clothes. I bought it all by myself. I bought everything. I provided everything for myself and when I got the job and went to work I paid my mother every week, gave her a few dollars from my pay.

So that's the way I got along, right along all those years. But he was mean, as mean as he could be.

LEVINE: So what happened? In other words, you were a bright boy and you could have gone on to school.

AMADA: Yes.

LEVINE: You didn't.

AMADA: I did. I thought I would take up law school. I snuck away. I went to night school. He didn't know about. But I could see the people were all ignorant people in the class. I couldn't stand them. They were, the things they said, they did and everything else. And the funny thing was when I got to be, I had the job and I learned business. When I reached seventeen years old my sister had lived in Passaic and my brother-in-law was in business and he went and bought a piece of property in Clifton. This was in 1917. 1916 it was. And I moved out here, stayed with my sisters and I had a store, a vegetable market, right here in Clifton. I was doing pretty good. But then I heard that my father was abusing my mother terribly. So I decided, I had a horse and wagon. I hitched up the horse and wagon. I went to the house and I said to my mother and my sisters, "Come on. You're getting the hell out of here. Leave him. Don't stay here. You don't stay here another day. Out you go." And they listened to me. They knew what I was talking about. So I took everything that belonged to my mother. In fact, when I was home I bought my mother a sewing machine. She had an old dilapidated one. I

bought her a new one. So I even took the sewing machine and all. And my father threatened to split my head open with a bottle, an empty bottle because I was doing what I was doing. I said, "Don't you dare try it on me, because I'll knock your teeth down your throat," I says, "if you try to touch me." I says, "You're through manhandling me. You've had it, and I've had it with you." This was it. And what I did was I took my sisters and my mother. We all moved to Clifton.

LEVINE: And then did they stay in Clifton?

AMADA: They did. The family stayed, but my mother decided, she went back. She felt sorry for my father. She loved my father, see. He was a good-looking man. Mean as hell, but he was a good-looking man, powerful, very powerful. So she decided to go back with him. We didn't go. I stayed away, I lived in Clifton, I stayed in Passaic. I lived in Passaic and Clifton till I was twenty years old. And my oldest brother, that stayed with my father, he was the only one who stayed with my father. He had a disposition just like my father, a terrible temper he had. He came to me and he said to me I should come back home. He says, "We want you to be home with the family. We'll get along all right. Let's make it a family." So I went back, and I stayed there a while. And then my father said he decided to sell the house that we lived in, get rid of the business and buy a house someplace else. That's what he did. He sold the house and everything, and we bought a house on Jelloff Avenue in

Newark, a three- family house, we bought. We lived on the first floor. All improvements, steam heat and everything else. So it was going along and we were getting along pretty good. My sisters were getting married one after the other. I got married.

LEVINE: How did you meet your wife?

AMADA: Her brother was in my class in school, and we were on the trolley going someplace, and I met him with my, well, my wife was then working in the courthouse. She was an intelligent individual. She worked in the courthouse, typist and copywriter. And he introduced me to her, and I told him that she had, she was living around the corner from where I was working in the vegetable market. So I asked her for a date and she was agreed, and we went out together for quite a while.

LEVINE: What did you like about her?

AMADA: Well, she was an intelligent and a beautiful person, smart, clean-cut and good-natured like you'd never saw anybody in your life like she was. She was a regular pigeon, she was. I liked her in every which way. And she took to me like a duck takes to water. She always bragged about it. She, what she found, she had a brother who was younger than her. He didn't keep himself very clean. And she was clean crazy. So she says she used to size me up when I'd call on her, I was very neat and clean, and this hit her but real good. She admired me for the way I carried myself and

everything. And she thought I was very good-natured, because I was, you know.

LEVINE: What was your wife's name?

AMADA: Rose.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

AMADA: Eisenberg. Her brother has a pharmacy. He had it, in fact, he had it, his last pharmacy he had in Cranford. He had a drugstore in Cranford. He did a very big business there.

LEVINE: Did you have children, you and Rose?

AMADA: We had four boys.

LEVINE: And their names?

AMADA: The oldest one was Leonard. Then there was Herbert, Bert, and Jerry.

LEVINE: And what would you say you're proudest of that you've done in your life?

AMADA: What I was proud of, the fact was that they were home until they got married. They didn't leave home at all. They went into the army. I followed them around, wherever, to North Carolina. I followed them down there, Fort Bragg.

LEVINE: What do you mean, you followed them? You moved?

AMADA: No, I just went there, stayed there for a few days, you know, with them. And I admired them. The only one that didn't go into the service was my youngest son. There was no war on any more or nothing. And he was taking psychology, and the government had offered him to join the army so he could select the people, you know. And they offered him five hundred dollars a month. And he came to me, he says, "Dad, you know, that's quite a salary to get into the army. They were only getting them fifty dollars a month, I'm offered five hundred dollars by the government." I said, "Oh, no you don't. You're going to finish college if it's the last thing you're going to do." What happened was he was taking accounting to start with. He was very good at figures, a very bright boy, very good at figures in every which way. He could read books. When he was five years old he used to read the comics by himself. He could tell time, count money and all this. So he went to college. He took two years accounting, and then I was very friendly for the Senator Williams. He was the one that was giving out scholarships in Rutgers University, and that's where my son was going. He offered me a scholarship for him. So I says to him, I used to call him Pete, his name was William. "Pete," I says, "I appreciate your offer, but my son doesn't want to stay with accounting. He wants to make a change. He's sick and tired of the figures. And I know if you give me the scholarship, he'll have to stay with accounting." So I says, "I appreciate your offer, what you do. Take

the scholarship you're offering, give it to some poor family. They will appreciate it. I've been paying my son's schooling, I'll keep on paying it," and that's the way it worked. He stayed with Rutgers University and a scholarship he didn't accept and I kept paying.

He got his Master's degree in Rutgers University in New Brunswick. And from there they gave him a job taking care of babies of hospital, retarded children and so forth. But then he decided that he didn't want to stay there for the money they were paying him, only five thousand dollars a year. When he complained about it, that the woman who had the job that he did, she was getting eight thousand dollars a year, and they were only paying him, well, he discussed it. And they told him that they were sorry, he was only out of college less than a year, and that's the allowance for the job. The first year they can't pay you more than five. I was very friendly with the governor here.

And I was going to a friend of mine, who was a judge.

He was having an anniversary party, and he was, the governor was invited, and I was invited. And I said to my son, they were then contemplating, you know, putting on the state tax. So I said the fact that they're going to have the state tax, they'll have plenty of money. I'll talk to the governor and ask him and see that you get. He says to me, "Dad, don't interfere. I'm going to get what I want to get by myself. I'm not going to ask no assistance from you.

You've done all you possibly could. I'm not going to impose on you. Leave well enough alone. When I get through with them here, I'll see to it, I'll advance myself. Forget about it." Okay. "Well, okay, okay.

Do whatever you want to do. But I think you're doing an unfairness to yourself." "No." By that time he got married. See, his wife, who is now, she was going to the same school he was. She was getting her masters in New Brunswick. And they got friendly there. They met there and they got friendly there. So I, right after they got married they took an apartment in Trenton, and that's where he was staying.

Finally he came to me, he told me he's moving to California. The Jewish Federation has offered him a job to take care of some boys. They had seven bungalows, and each bungalow I think had six or seven boys in there, they're boys that were giving them trouble, and he was to go out there and straighten them out. And that's what he did. He went to California.

LEVINE: Well, tell me about you, though. What were you doing? You started out with a grocery store.

AMADA: Vegetable market.

LEVINE: Vegetable market. And then what?

AMADA: Then I went, my brother wanted to go into business. He knew the delicatessen business. So the thing of it was this. He needed money but he didn't have it. My oldest sister was pretty well-fixed. My brother asked her to loan him a couple of thousand dollars that he could fix up a store, a delicatessen store. She says, "Under one condition." She says, "What's that?" "That Sam goes with you." He don't want no, whether

it's a partnership or whatever it is, "I want him to go with you and he'll sign checks with you."

LEVINE: This is Frieda, your sister Frieda?

AMADA: No, my oldest sister, Rose. So he says, "That's the only way you're going to get money from me." So I went with him, but he had a terrible, nasty disposition. So I decided I'd, I parted with him and I bought myself a little store, a delicatessen store, in Arlington. I was running it, but I was in the wrong town. They were all Scotch people there, and you couldn't get the right time out of them. So I decided, I closed up the damn store, I gave it up, and I went to work for one of the big stores, delicatessen stores. And they paid me a nice salary. Considering what the others were getting I was getting a very nice salary. And they put me in charge of this big store. And, but what happened was my wife gave birth to the baby, and a funny thing, my first baby. And I got the, she gave me the check on the end of the week. He gave me the check, and I said to the boss, "You made a mistake on the check." He said, "What?" I said, "You got five dollars more on my check." He says, "No, I didn't make. That's for the gift for the baby." So I says to him, "You know something? I was under the impression that you were giving me an increase in salary. Me, a man, the way I am, I'm not a youngster, I'm not an old guy either. But the way I make money for you, I do the pickling and I do the dressings. And I'm, I'm the whole works in the place, and I thought you were only giving me a five dollar

increase. You want to know the truth?" I says, "You don't deserve me, and this damn business doesn't deserve me for my knowledge, for the way I work and everything else. I'm giving you a week's notice and I'm quitting." "You have to be kidding!" I said, "No, I'm serious about it." So I used to stay evenings. Came in the evening, he's taking a ride with me in the cab. He's taking me home in the cab. And on the way he says, "Sam, let's ride around a while. I want to talk to you." I said, "Okay. Go ahead and talk." He says, "I'll give you that raise of five dollars." "Uh-um, I'm not staying. You're not buying me off with a five dollar raise." "I'll give you a ten dollar raise." "No. I decided I'm . . ." "You got another job?" I says, "No, I don't have a job, but I'm walking out completely." "I'll give you a fifteen dollar raise. How that strike you?" He says, "That's more than anybody in the business gets as a clerk." I says, "I don't want your raise, I don't want your money. I don't want to stay in the goddamn business. I'm walking out without a job, I'm telling you right now." But he didn't know that a man came in that I knew was in the cleaning business, this man was. And he says to me, "Amada, what are you doing behind the counter?" I says, "Why?" "You're too bright a boy for something like this here, standing behind the counter there day in and day out. What are you getting? How far are you getting? Come to work for me. In my business you have a chance to advance yourself. The more business you do, the more you learn. You're not just going to depend on what the boss is going to give you." So I

says, "Okay." I quit the job and I went to this man's house. I says, "Here I am. Oh, I'm awfully sorry." He was sitting home, he was mourning. He lost his father in Europe, and he was in mourning, what they call sitting shiva. So he says, "Gee, I don't know what to say to you." He says, "You go to my place of business and there's Milton. You know Milton." I says, "Yeah, I think I do." His father was a butcher. My mother buys meats from him. "Go and talk to him. Tell him I said he should put you on. He'll give you a truck, you go out soliciting for business. He'll give you a lot of names and what have you." I said, "Okay." So that's what I did. So I stayed there a while, and then all of a sudden I had a relative who was in the wholesale dry cleaning business. And they had an understanding, there was three bosses, no relations to the work there, can't hire no relations. So, okay. Somewhere, somehow I went into a house and it seemed to me a woman had quite an order, and we only got paid in commissions only on the collections, not how much business, but how much you collected. How much over two hundred dollars, you had ten percent commission and so forth. So it seems, I was in the house delivering an order, and the woman says, "I'm awfully sorry. Have you got change of twenty?" I says, "No, I don't have change of twenty." She says to me, "Well, I'd like to pay the bill." She says, she didn't know anything about what I had in mind. So I turned to the two women. I said, "Are you going shopping with this lady here?" They said, "Yeah." I says, "Well," I says, "why don't you two women chip in, let her pay me my bill, she'll give you the

twenty, you change the twenty and you'll get your money back. You can't lose nothing by that, can you?"

So they agreed and they paid me my bill and I walked out. What I didn't know, I got a call the next day from her husband. She happened to be a relative of mine, which I never met her. I didn't know her. He tells me he'd like to talk to me. I says, "What is it about?" He says, "Well, I want to talk to you." I said, "What is it?" "Come and see me." So I went to his place of business. We sat down and he says to me, "How would you like to go into, this schmoe here, he's always busy minding everybody else's business."

LEVINE: Okay. We've got about five minutes left on the tape, so I want to finish with what you did.

AMADA: So I took the job. I'd made him notice. I said to him, I says, "I got to give the boss notice. I don't quit without giving him notice." Later on he told me if I didn't do what I did he wouldn't have given me the job. It was never heard of before, a man should come off the street and go into the wholesale dry cleaning business, because they made so much money that it was unusual. There wasn't another salesman that went out that made the kind of money we made in the wholesale dry cleaning. I stayed with that business for fifty some odd years.

LEVINE: Wow. And then your wife died.

AMADA: My first wife died after we were married for forty-seven years. Three years later I got married. My

sister . . .

LEVINE: And who did you marry the second time?

AMADA: Second time we were married for seventeen years.

LEVINE: What was her name?

AMADA: Huh?

LEVINE: What was her name?

AMADA: Turk, Minnie Turk. Her son, her son was top engineer for AT&T. He was getting three hundred and twenty thousand dollars a year.

LEVINE: Wow. Well, I want to make sure, I want to ask you what regrets you have and what you're proudest of.

AMADA: What I promised?

LEVINE: What you're proudest of.

AMADA: I was proudest of my children.

LEVINE: And do you have any regrets?

AMADA: Regrets? The only regret I have, you wouldn't believe it. I hated my father so badly that I'm sorry when I got to be about fifteen, sixteen years old, I regret that he didn't kill him.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

LEVINE: What about the fact that you were born in Austria and you lived there for a time, and then you came here? How do you think that affected your life, the fact that you started out in another country and you made a whole new life here?

AMADA: The switch that I made from one country to another had no affect on me whatsoever, none whatsoever. Because I lived a pretty good life over there. When I was there my grandfather was very good to me, very nice. The whole family were very nice to me. And I was the cute one in the family. Since I was a little tot, I was always the cute one in the family. So I had no regrets of Europe. I had no regrets that I left Europe. Because when I came here I looked forward to seeing something nice, you know. We didn't have too many automobiles in Europe at that time. We didn't have too many here, neither, but, at that time. But I appreciated this, what they had to offer here, the education. I appreciated getting the education that I got, because I wasn't taught arithmetic at all on the other side, and I missed it. But when I came here I took on it like a duck takes to water. I was terrific. I was like an adding machine. When it came to adding, I used to make up orders behind the counter, I didn't need to mark it down. I used to add up the items and just put them in a bag and add them up, and everybody knew me for that, you know. (he

clears his throat) To me it meant a lot, these things, the privileges that I got. The way the customers, afterwards when I was in the wholesale cleaning, didn't accept me like a salesman, they accepted me like a friend. They used to ask me for an opinion, for advice, or what to do, how to do it. I used to teach them how to promote their business, increase their business. So I didn't have to. I took a route that was doing seventy-five dollars a week from a fellow. I built it up to six hundred dollars in no time. Then I turned it over to another fellow.

I turned over the business to him, and I went and built another route, one after the other. I was building new routes all the time, and I was getting well paid for it, too. So I say I lived nice. I went for vacations. I took my wife for vacations. We went to Bradley Beach, we went to Asbury Park. We went to Atlantic City. We went all over. My second wife, in fact. The first one I couldn't, the doctor wouldn't give her permission to fly. So I waited, you know, I wanted to go to the State of Israel. In fact, B'nai Zion as a member, they offered me a trip to go to Israel, and stay there for six weeks and review people there and see, bring back a report. But I was in business and I said, "I'm not giving up my business and leave my business." You couldn't do that. But later on, my second marriage, we took the trip to Israel. We stayed there three weeks. From there we went to England. You know, we did a lot of traveling, my wife and I did. We went different places. We went for vacations. I lived, I lived like a man. In fact, my stepson even said to me, after my wife passed away

her son said to me, he says, "Dad," he says, "don't you feel too badly, because I know how bad you feel about losing Mother. But you have to remember this one thing, she always used to boast how good you were to her. She never had it so good in her life like she had it living with you."

LEVINE: That sounds like a good place to end. I think it's a great place, and I want to thank you. You've been most interesting. I'm very happy to have had the chance . . .

AMADA: Thank you very much for giving me the time and anything, any time at all, if I can assist in any shape or form I'll be glad to do it.

LEVINE: Okay. Thank you.

AMADA: Any further information or whatever it is, I'll be glad to give it to you. It's been a pleasure.

LEVINE: Well, thanks. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

AMADA: To have you interview me. I enjoyed it.

LEVINE: And I've been talking with Samuel Amada, and we're here in Clifton, New Jersey, and I'm signing off.