

EI-361

MORTON GREENBERG

BIRTH DATE: MAY 13, 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: 7/27/1993

RUNNING TIME: 50:00

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE

RECORDING ENGINEER: KEVIN DALEY

INTERVIEW LOCATION: DAUGHTERS OF MIRIAM HOME
CLIFTON, NEW JERSEY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 10/1994

POLAND, 1921

AGE 17

PASSAGE ON "THE LAPLAND"

Oral Historian's Note: The buzz of cicadas can be heard occasionally throughout the recording of the interview. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of the Oral History Project, 10/23/1994.

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

It's July 27th . . .

GREENBERG: A government agency?

LEVINE: Yeah. Ellis Island is run by the United States government . . .

GREENBERG: I see, yeah.

LEVINE: It's July 27th, 1993. I'm here in Clifton, New Jersey, with Morton Greenberg . . .

GREENBERG: Right again.

LEVINE: Who came from Poland in 1921 when he was seventeen years old.

GREENBERG: Right.

LEVINE: Well, I'm really looking forward to your story, and I want to say I'm happy to be here.

GREENBERG: Thank you.

LEVINE: And let's start at the very beginning. Tell me your birth date.

GREENBERG: May 13, 1904.

LEVINE: Which makes you eighty-nine.

GREENBERG: Right.

LEVINE: And where were you born?

GREENBERG: The name of the town? R-Y-P-I-N. Try and pronounce that.

LEVINE: R, Rypin.

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: Rypin.

GREENBERG: In Polish it sounds different.

LEVINE: Did you live in Rypin the whole time before you left?

GREENBERG: Born and raised, that's it. Made a couple of trips throughout the state, otherwise right through the whole period.

LEVINE: Now, what was Rypin like? What size town was it?

GREENBERG: Uh, I'll see if I remember that. Population about six thousand. Beautiful location. Mountains, nice places to go hiking with the kids, you know, things like that. And we had no problem like many other towns in Poland, you know, anti-Semitism and all that. We sort of lived off each other, you know.

LEVINE: It was a mixed town of Jewish and Gentiles?

GREENBERG: Mixed town, yes. I'd say about half and half. We had a synagogue, a large one, and a few small prayer rooms, you know. They were the, in Hebrew *mynogdin*, if you understand that, the (?). And then the religious, and ultra-religious, and they

were always fighting, not kidding.

LEVINE: Do you remember what the battles were about?

GREENBERG: No. Religion. "You're not religious enough. Why didn't you come to the, you know what a micvah is? You know, "Why didn't you come to the micvah?" Things like that. And then we also had, after the war, we also had a group of pioneers, charutsim. Ever hear of that, charutsim? Oriented towards Palestine. And that's about it in a nutshell.

LEVINE: When you say they were pioneers, they . . .

GREENBERG: Charutsim is the Hebrew word for pioneers.

LEVINE: And what were they doing? What was their activity?

GREENBERG: Chewing the fat. I'm not kidding. Just . . .

LEVINE: Chewing the fat. (she laughs)

GREENBERG: That's all.

LEVINE: Well, did you go to school?

GREENBERG: Well, that's another story. At the outbreak of the war, the First World War, my father was a, my late father was in the Russian Army Reserves. He served

for four years, or something like that. He did pretty well. He was a good cook from way back, so he cooked meals for the Jewish soldiers, kosher. And that's the end of that part. Aside from that there's the usual thing. We were, I went to Dansig, and I had to wait about two weeks for a boat to take me here.

LEVINE: Okay, let's hold that until we talk more about when you were still in Poland.

GREENBERG: Oh, I see, yeah.

LEVINE: Were you, did you go to Hebrew school, or you went to public school or no school?

GREENBERG: Well, I didn't finish it. My father, when the war broke out, since he was a veteran of four years in the Russian Army, he said he had enough. So he went to London. From London to Germany and from Germany to New York. Two or three years later he brought over a family, and we were quite a large one, eight kids.

LEVINE: So how about school?

GREENBERG: I didn't have much time. Since we had a bookstore

and a printing shop and I had to quit school and help out in the store, a bookstore, mostly textbooks, schoolbooks. That's the end of that.

LEVINE: (Cicadas can be heard in the background) Well, let's talk about your family members. What was your mother's name?

GREENBERG: Clara.

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

GREENBERG: R-A-D-Z-I-K. Radzik.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

GREENBERG: Bernard.

LEVINE: And your brothers and sisters.

GREENBERG: Oh, seven besides me. Two died.

LEVINE: As children, or later?

GREENBERG: Later, already grown up, you know.

LEVINE: Where did you fall in the line of children?

GREENBERG: Number one.

LEVINE: Oh, you're the oldest.

GREENBERG: Yeah. In Hebrew it's bahau. It's a, uh, you know . . .

LEVINE: It's a good thing to be the first?

GREENBERG: No, the number one. And I had to live up to that.

LEVINE: Tell me what it was like. What was expected of you because you were the first boy, the first child and a boy. What more was expected of you?

GREENBERG: Well, the worst thing that happened, I was just, it took measure for a uniform. I was going to enter a, equivalent to a high school. It's called by something else, like gymnasium, you know. In Polish it's different. And that's it, I didn't make it. And since Father was not there, I took his place. Now, from the first day of war until I came here my job was being in the store. Mostly a bookstore, stationary, school supplies, things like that, and that's how we lived.

LEVINE: So you were only about . . .

GREENBERG: A young kid.

LEVINE: You were very young then, when you took over doing that. Did your mother work in the store, too?

GREENBERG: Yes. She had to take care of the kids, provide meals, you know. When she was not in the store, I was there. And I think overall we did pretty well. We were about, I'd say a little lower than middle class in terms of making a living.

LEVINE: Even when your father was there?

GREENBERG: No, Father was gone.

LEVINE: No, but when he was there?

GREENBERG: Then I went to school. And then I was measured for a uniform, to go to high school.

LEVINE: I see.

GREENBERG: But everything fell apart.

LEVINE: When your father was there, were you, would you say you were in the middle as far as how comfortable your family was? Were you sort of in the middle?

GREENBERG: No. I would never, we were well provided for. It was a good store, the only one in the town and, as

I said, mostly school supplies, and that's it. And then once in a while we'd get a check from America, you know, money, and that helped. Many mouths to feed. (he laughs) And our mother kept a maid. She couldn't be in the store and take care of us, you know, so we had a maid, which was pennies compared to what it is here.

LEVINE: Do you remember the house you lived in?

GREENBERG: Exactly.

LEVINE: Describe it.

GREENBERG: Yeah. Well . . .

LEVINE: What was it made out of?

GREENBERG: Brick. It was a good building, an inheritance from my grandfather. There were three apartments. We occupied one. It was a little tight for the whole crowd there but we managed. And that's it. We ate well, never a problem of worrying about money for food.

LEVINE: Was there farming going on right around?

GREENBERG: Yeah, yeah. All farm country. And produce was

brought in, I think, on Tuesdays. Farmers in the surrounding area came to the town with tankfuls of live fish. The other farmers were butter, eggs, produce, you know, things like that, vegetables.

LEVINE: Would you then go out to the farmers' market?

GREENBERG: No, no, no. They're all coming in. They all delivered, and if he, then we had, it was a very beautiful town. About two miles away there were mountains. In the town, a park, a large park. And then fruit, fresh fruit. I remember, as a kid, I'd go down there and pick pears right off the trees. Put it on the scale, and that was it. One had a flower shop, garden. It smelled up the whole town, just beautiful. And that's it, except we were too young to appreciate all that. But now in the life span it comes back. Yeah, it was nice. And I'd say the majority of the girls were beautiful.
(he laughs) I'm not kidding you. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Did they look different from girls here?

GREENBERG: How different? Girls, giggling girls, you know. That's all. They're not different. They dress

better here. When a girl wanted a new dress they had to go to a store, buy the material, and make it themselves. Altogether it wasn't bad, no. In Poland at that time there were places, small towns and larger cities and all that, where anti-Semitism was ripe, you know. We never had that thing. Somehow we managed to live off each other, you know. The farmers sold us, we sold to them. That's in a nutshell.

LEVINE: What did you do, can you remember anything that you did for enjoyment, like your family get-togethers?

GREENBERG: Well, family, we had no near relatives in the town except cousins, two aunts. And they sort of lived the way they did. Not much getting together, except at funerals, of course. And that's it. There was no, we were busy with what we were doing, and they didn't meddle with us and we didn't meddle with them.

LEVINE: Were you a religious family?

GREENBERG: No, no. That's my only inheritance.

LEVINE: Did you have any grandparents?

GREENBERG: Oh, yeah. Well, one. One died, and I'll never forget it. I stopped off at a garden, a fruit garden and picked up a bag of pears. And I went in to see my grandfather. He was in bed. And he smelled the pears, reached out his hand, and picked one out, pulled out a pear. He started to chew on it and he just passed away, just like that. So that's the end of the, yeah.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about medical care at that time in your town?

GREENBERG: Well, I never needed any for myself. And the other kids, kids that needed it, as I said, we were not well-off, but very comfortable, and we ate well, dressed clean, you know, things like that. And there were two doctors in town, one an old timer, he was the favorite. And that's it. We needed, we got sick, we went to the doctor, or the doctor came to us. That was easy enough.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the kinds of things that were done then for different illnesses?

GREENBERG: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: How they were treated.

GREENBERG: I really don't know. I didn't go around and ask how did the doctor poke you around, you know, things like that. But they were only two doctors in town, so we went to one or the other. And one was a very old man with a long, white beard, and everybody was scared. (he laughs) That's all. It was simple. Nothing sophisticated, except when the, at the outbreak of war the Germans occupied Poland, including our town. We were just a short trip from Germany, Prussia. So it was all right. The Germans brought with them German culture, you know, culture. Like we never had a library in the town, and when they moved in they organized a library, the younger fellows, and the older fellows. Where they got books I'll never know, but they did, successful. And that was it. From there, once a month or so a traveling company brought in a movie. That was the entertainment. And there was a lot of lectures and propaganda and the Israeli business at that time was Palestine. You either were for or against it, same as here. Same as, albeit on a much smaller scale. And we

collected money. Now, there's one thing I'll say which I'll never forget. You know on the Sabbath, the Sabbath meal, the Friday night meal, this is a very, very important thing. On Friday morning somebody, the older men, went around to collect money to buy them the meal for Sabbath, and that was no joke because we all had large families, and that's it. No one, as far as I can remember, no one was allowed to go hungry, right through the time I was there. We were always fed one way or another. That's about it. There were no scandals.

One beautiful, very beautiful Jewish girl became pregnant, you know, single. That was the, (he laughs) they did all right.

LEVINE: That caused an uproar?

GREENBERG: I'll say it did. Well, among Jews there were those who didn't practice religion, and then there were the conservatives and the ultra-religious. As a matter of fact in our building there was a sort of a temple, a small temple, you know, for the ultra religious. Like a, I would know whether it was a typical small town or run-of-the-mill, because we never went outside there, you know. And that's the

whole history. And here I am. I have yet to make my first million. (he laughs)

LEVINE: So your father left in 1914.

GREENBERG: Yes. And he, he stayed a few days in Berlin, and from there he went to London, and from London he came here. And a few months later the rest of the family came.

LEVINE: So you came by yourself?

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: You traveled alone?

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So your father was here for six years before you came?

GREENBERG: That's about right.

LEVINE: So did you hear from him?

GREENBERG: Oh, yes. We heard from him, short letters. He forgot, too, the Polish language, you know. (he laughs) So he, short letters, and in every letter, excuse me, a small check, although we

didn't need it. The business carried us, you know.

LEVINE: What was your father doing in the United States for work?

GREENBERG: He opened a small printing shop. As a matter of fact (he clears his throat), excuse me, part of the, uh, was a printing shop. We had a printing shop, and that's it. That's where he went. He went out to work as a printer. Then he opened up a small printing shop of his own, just enough to support one man, you know, maybe a little better. And when I came, as a matter of fact, I went to, I worked there the day after I got off the boat.
(he laughs)

LEVINE: Really!

GREENBERG: A slave driver.

LEVINE: Well, tell me first about getting to the boat. Did your father send you a ticket, or how was it determined . . .

GREENBERG: All we needed is money. I had to stay a while in Antwerp, in Belgium.

LEVINE: Why was that?

GREENBERG: That's where the boat would pick us up.

LEVINE: Why did you have to stay there?

GREENBERG: Well, that was the only boat we could get.

LEVINE: So do you remember leaving your town?

GREENBERG: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Were you, how did you feel about going to the United States?

GREENBERG: Glad to get out.

LEVINE: But life wasn't so bad for you.

GREENBERG: No, but I wanted something better, you know, period. Not in money, better to be in America, be dressed like an American, you know, all that nonsense.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you knew about America before you came, what you thought about, what you expected?

GREENBERG: I didn't know what to expect. As I said, we had a

bookstore. Very little literature, ninety percent textbooks. And once in a while I'd find a book that I read about America. And oh, you know, gold on the sidewalks, you know. I got over that.

LEVINE: So how did you travel from your town?

GREENBERG: There was a small, a narrow gauge railroad to another small town next to Germany, Prussia, to be exact. And then I crossed a wooden bridge into Germany, and from there a railroad took me to, what the heck is the name of that, the German city. And from there was easy. I wasn't the only one going that way. So I wasn't exactly left alone, you know, to drift.

LEVINE: Were there other people from your town that were also coming to the United States?

GREENBERG: Yes, a father and three daughters.

LEVINE: And you knew them?

GREENBERG: I knew them from the town, so it wasn't so bad. And I had money with me. How I got it, I don't know. He probably sent it. My mother gave it to me as I left. And on the boat, in steerage, you

know, third class. And I ate well. For half a dollar I got a whole roast chicken.

LEVINE: On the boat?

GREENBERG: On the boat. Of course, in the dining room they didn't, you know, skip. On the boat.

LEVINE: So . . .

GREENBERG: For half a dollar, sort of a handout.

LEVINE: I see. So you, so was that, in other words, if you were in steerage, people were fed in steerage, but they weren't fed roast chickens.

GREENBERG: Oh, no. Oh, of course, I had a whole gang waiting for it. We split it up.

LEVINE: So who did you buy it from?

GREENBERG: One of the people, a steward.

LEVINE: Oh.

GREENBERG: You know, he stole it and . . .

LEVINE: And sold it.

GREENBERG: And sold it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what, do you remember what you brought with you, what you packed to bring to this country?

GREENBERG: Uh, oh, yes. A change of shoe and a lot of underwear, and a couple of books.

LEVINE: Do you remember what books you brought?

GREENBERG: One was the Bible in Hebrew. I didn't get any religious training, but I was nosy, you know, the Bible in Hebrew, which I don't have any more. And where was the other one? Jewish history in Yiddish, you know, in Jewish. And that's gone.

LEVINE: It's gone?

GREENBERG: I don't know what happened to it. I imagine I lent it to somebody. That's what it is.

LEVINE: So you went to Antwerp.

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you got aboard the Lapland. No, wait a minute.

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: Dansig, or where did you actually leave from?

GREENBERG: In Belgium.

LEVINE: Antwerp.

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: Antwerp. But the ship was the Lapland.

GREENBERG: Yeah, the name of the ship.

LEVINE: And . . .

GREENBERG: And I have all the documents if you want to see them. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Well, tell me what the ship was like, the Lapland.

GREENBERG: I was never on a steamer, so that was it. We were comfortable, sleeping on, you know . . .

LEVINE: Bunk beds.

GREENBERG: Bunk bed. I was near the ceiling. Of course, the bigger guys took the lower, you know. So . . .

LEVINE: Were you in a big, open space with lots of beds?

GREENBERG: Yeah, a dormitory, next to the bakery, bread. Fresh baking bread woke me up.

LEVINE: So did you have any experiences that happened to you aboard the ship in particular?

GREENBERG: Oh, that was boring, except one. One Belgian, who traveled with us, he was a concert pianist. And they had a piano in the, all the way down. We had beautiful concerts, you know. And that was, that was the payoff, was really good. We had a young girl who studied piano. I'm surprised that her father allowed her. He was ultra, ultra-religious. And she, she studied music. Now, the sheet music fell apart, so she came into the store and asked me if I can paste it together, you know. All the leaves were torn apart.

LEVINE: She came into the store?

GREENBERG: To ask me if I can fix it for her, a bookbinding job. I did, and she, so she invited me to go to her house and she played for me. And that was the beginning. Beautiful! For Jews, I never believe it. I can remember now the way she played. No kidding.

LEVINE: Now, where was this?

GREENBERG: Where I was born, the town I was born.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

GREENBERG: And that was very rare for a Jewish girl with an ultra-religious father who allowed that. There was a lot of, a lot of gimmicks there.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. Do you remember things like customs in that town, like do you remember how weddings were celebrated?

GREENBERG: Oh! Well, various ways, because it depended, it depended on how much money you had, you know.

LEVINE: Were marriages pretty much arranged, or not?

GREENBERG: In some cases, yes, in some cases. There were two young couples who were forced to get married. They were both already pregnant. In other words, same thing all over the world. Here on a larger scale and there on a, that's all.

LEVINE: Do you remember, like, funerals? Was there anything different about funerals?

GREENBERG: Altogether different, yes. Altogether different. I went to a couple of funerals. Now, the, there

was a group, a group of men who were in charge of arranging funerals. There was a cemetery about a mile out of town, and the rest was a funeral like here. A horse-drawn wagon took the casket to the funeral, and the gravediggers and the rabbi performed the necessary, and that was it. Dead is dead, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. So do you remember when the Lapland sailed into New York Harbor?

GREENBERG: No, that I wouldn't. I wasn't (?), I don't think I remember the date. I had no calendar. I have no reference, so what's the difference.

LEVINE: Do you remember Ellis Island?

GREENBERG: Yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember about that?

GREENBERG: The same as when I saw it, except they put a coat of paint on that. (he laughs) That's all. The same thing.

LEVINE: Was it, how did you feel, I mean, you hadn't ever been exposed to so many different kinds of people,

and was it . . .

GREENBERG: No, I didn't, but you make friends, you know. And you grow closer together. And in the, what is it called, the big hall there?

LEVINE: The Great Hall.

GREENBERG: And then about an hour or so later the woman walks over to me and she says, in Yiddish, "You come with me." So I look at her. My aunt. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Had you ever met her before?

GREENBERG: No, never. I heard of her, but never met her. And then she got off the, walked over to the Second Avenue El, and we rode up to where she lived in Manhattan.

LEVINE: What did you think of the Second Avenue El? Do you remember?

GREENBERG: I was afraid. Right up in the air, you know. (he laughs)

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about Ellis Island, the examinations or any other thing?

GREENBERG: Oh, fast look, you know, in the eyes, and that's it. No problem, that's it.

LEVINE: What was your aunt's name? What was your aunt's name?

GREENBERG: She married a Greenberg, a second cousin or something. Very cozy.

LEVINE: So you went to her apartment in Manhattan?

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: Where, do you remember?

GREENBERG: At corner, corner of 92nd Street, corner of Fifth Avenue. They were pretty well-to-do.

LEVINE: So was your father there?

GREENBERG: Yeah, but he didn't come to pick me up. He sent . . .

LEVINE: How did you . . .

GREENBERG: He sent his sister, as I said, my aunt.

LEVINE: How did you feel when you had your reunion with your father?

GREENBERG: Nothing I can remember. We said hello, and the next day I had to go to work, the next day.

LEVINE: Did you remember your father? Would you have recognized him?

GREENBERG: Oh, sure.

LEVINE: Did he look very different?

GREENBERG: No, except he shaved his beard, that's all. No problem there.

LEVINE: Now, was he living with your aunt?

GREENBERG: No. He had his own apartment in a not too good a neighborhood. And I went there. I had a bed to myself, and that's all. That's how we went on and on and, you know. Then I had a, then I was talking about going to school, you know, I wanted to go to school. And he was hedging. I don't know why. And then he enrolled me in a prep school, preparatory school, on 125th Street. I didn't do so well.

LEVINE: So you went to work the next day in his . . .

GREENBERG: The very next day . . .

LEVINE: . . . shop.

GREENBERG: Huh?

LEVINE: In his shop.

GREENBERG: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then, and then you tried going to school.

GREENBERG: Oh, I did go to school, evening school.

LEVINE: Oh, evening, uh-huh.

GREENBERG: Yes. And after a day's work, more than once I fell asleep. This is no way to go, you know. It's all right you have a desk job. It's a little easier, I imagine, but I had to do it the other way.

LEVINE: So do you remember anything about night school, what it was like?

GREENBERG: Yeah. There was nothing exciting. The teacher was very thorough, helpful. And we spent a lot of time correcting my English. He was very good. And he

told me what to read. He gave me a list. He called, if I remember he called that high school required reading, fiction.

LEVINE: Oh. Do you remember any of the things that he had you read?

GREENBERG: Yeah. It was, I got the habit of reading, and that was very, and then all, like, it seems he liked Dickens, Charles Dickens. I went right through them, so I read Dickens. And then I went on my own. That's how it is. Nothing exciting. You can probably multiply my story by the million. Since you have nothing to do, you can check each one of them.

LEVINE: (she laughs) Well, let me ask you this. Did you stay working for your father, or did your father expand his business, or what?

GREENBERG: He did expand slightly, and I had a hard time. He didn't offer me an allowance, so I really smoked at that time. I didn't have money to buy a pack of cigarettes. So I decided I like to smoke, and maybe I like a bar of chocolate, and things like that. So I told him one day, "I'm quitting." I

went out and got my own job. Way, way back. And I got it, I was lucky.

LEVINE: What did you get?

GREENBERG: A job in the same line, printing.

LEVINE: So what was your father's response to your doing that?

GREENBERG: I don't know, but I believe that he didn't care, and maybe wanted to get rid of me. Not that I was a problem, but he had to feed me. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, so you also moved out then?

GREENBERG: No, I didn't. No, I stayed with him until I got married.

LEVINE: And you came here when you were seventeen. How old were you when you got married?

GREENBERG: Uh, late nineteen or twenty, something like that.

LEVINE: So you . . .

GREENBERG: We were married for sixty-one years. And we fought all the time.

LEVINE: (she laughs) You, how long did you stay working for your father, then, about?

GREENBERG: Not long after. I know I worked for him before I got married, you know. And then I figured I have to, and I got out, and that's all. I've been out.

LEVINE: And then did you stay working in the printing line?

GREENBERG: Yeah, till the last day, until I retired.

LEVINE: How did you meet your wife?

GREENBERG: We were both born in the same town and she came about two years later, after me. And I got a phone call, and she introduced herself and I went out to see her in the Bronx, and that was it.

LEVINE: You fell for her right away.

GREENBERG: I didn't fall for her. I had to sell myself.
(he laughs) You don't fall for, she was too smart. And that's the end of that.

LEVINE: So, but then what? Your mother and . . .

GREENBERG: My mother and the children and my father, they lived in an apartment in Harlem, the good part of

Harlem, and that's it.

LEVINE: And they came about a year after you did?

GREENBERG: A little more than a year. And then my parents had a hot fight, you know, a little squabble. So I said, just talking. I didn't want to get in between there. There's no point, they were both a little silly, nothing really to fight about. So I said, "Why don't you go back to Europe and see your family, you know, getting older and you want to see them." "Oh, yeah, yeah. How about money?" I said, "We'll get the money." Getting the money was a, they didn't leave till she changed her mind. She didn't want to go. (he coughs) We had to get together about ten thousand dollars for a long stay, and bring some money from America. You don't go there empty-handed, you know. So, and nothing happened. And then Mother got very, very sick and we had to put her in a nursing home, and that's it. And she died there.

LEVINE: Did she die a lot earlier than your father?

GREENBERG: Oh, yeah. Not a lot, but enough. About five years older.

LEVINE: So when you got married, then, where did you live?

GREENBERG: Oh, we rented an apartment.

LEVINE: In Manhattan, or in the Bronx?

GREENBERG: In the Bronx. My wife had her father living in the Bronx, so we didn't want to get out and just leave him alone. He lived in a rooming house. Then he died. They were still plugging away. Now, do you really see any interest in this?

LEVINE: Yeah! It's very interesting.

GREENBERG: What part of it mostly?

LEVINE: Well, I mean, just the whole way your family, what you described about the town and your family, why your father left first.

GREENBERG: I'm still impressed, I still know how nice the town was. The surroundings, everybody knows everybody. Everybody can reach everybody, you know. And the customs and the, it was a life, you know. It was a life. So now I'm trying to teach my, teach, argue with my co-religionists that there can be very decent people without religion. Ah, religion is

the most complicated thing in the world. I don't want to talk you about that thing. Are you Jewish?

Oh! (he laughs) Don't sell it short.

LEVINE: Well, tell me. Did you have children?

GREENBERG: One daughter.

LEVINE: And what's her name?

GREENBERG: Leah. Now, that is a photograph of her. A very pretty girl. This is my girlfriend, my right hand. Accountant, auditor.

LEVINE: Great. Well, does Leah have children?

GREENBERG: Two sons.

LEVINE: And what's Leah's last name?

GREENBERG: Right now? Uh, you know, I don't remember. I remember all that sixty years. I don't remember her name. Katz, K-A-T-Z. That's her second husband.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you have two grandchildren.

GREENBERG: Two grandsons, each one a little on the (?), you know. And that's it. One is doing pretty well,

and the younger one, in computers, he got a fine job, and he's got a girlfriend, number two. And I've tried to talk him out of it. At your age you should play the field, you know. He didn't listen to me.

LEVINE: (she laughs) Well, what are you most proud of that you've done in your life? What makes you feel good about . . .

GREENBERG: As far as I can remember I've done the best I could, period. And that's all. I didn't do too well, but I was always comfortable. In all the years there never was a day that I didn't have a job, you know. I worked, now, first of all, I had a crummy idea. It was easy for me to get a job in those days. And they saw me, I was in the back of a crowd and they saw a little guy standing there, you know. Grab him, he'll work for him. It didn't work out. So, that's it. Then I advanced and advanced, and finally had retired.

LEVINE: Do you think, having been born in Poland and living there for seventeen years, how do you think that influenced the rest of your life? How did it

affect you?

GREENBERG: Not a trace of it.

LEVINE: Really.

GREENBERG: Not a trace of it. This was altogether different, very comfortable. I was, the only thing I was worried about, I had to learn English, you know. In my trade, I had to. And it worked.

LEVINE: How was that, learning English? What helped you in learning it?

GREENBERG: The trade itself, and I read a little, and one of, once somebody gave me an idea and he was right. Read English, have a dictionary beside you, and read out aloud. That helped a lot. I sort of caught myself, you know, copying others. That's the end of the story.

LEVINE: What did you do, when you got here to America and you got a little bit on your feet, what did you like doing here for entertainment?

GREENBERG: I had no time. Oh, occasionally we went to a movie, period. And then I went on my own, and I

was roaming around. I was all over the place. And that's about it, and that's all. Now, you come back in ten years, and compare notes.

LEVINE: Yeah. That would be very interesting, wouldn't it?

GREENBERG: Huh?

LEVINE: You'll be around in ten years.

GREENBERG: Ah. I'm stubborn.

LEVINE: (she laughs) All right. Is there anything else that you'd like to say, like anything else about the whole experience of coming here and establishing a life here, before we close?

GREENBERG: Uh, in my own opinion I had no time to go out of line, period. I was always busy. And that's it. That's a good way to go, always busy. I was never in a police station. I never cheated on my income tax, never. Not because I'm so honest. The man who helped me with my income tax return, he was born in the same town. We were friends until he died. And he was a stickler. If I put down something that he didn't think was right, "Explain. Let's see." He was the most pro-America that I

ever met or heard of. I told him, I'll buy him an American flag. Just a beautiful man. I liked that.

LEVINE: It sounds like you had a lot of friends who were born in your town here.

GREENBERG: Not too many. Oh, yeah, there were quite a few, but I never, I never, they lived in Brooklyn and all over, you know, Staten Island, very seldom. And in that small town we had very little in common. Each, we each went different ways. Different friends. We were all chasing the girls, you know, stuff like that.

LEVINE: And are you enjoying this phase of your life when you don't have to be busy, busy, busy all the time?

GREENBERG: I'm busy, not necessarily as I was before. And then my wife was ailing for years, you know. And that was a, that was an awful thing. No, I'm not busy. I don't want to be busy. My own time, I get some time for dinner, period. And then I'll go off into my girlfriend's room on an upper floor and we watch television together. And she's crazy about baseball. She puts on baseball. I say goodnight,

then I beat it. (Dr. Levine laughs) Simple.

LEVINE: Well, it sounds like you have a full life.

GREENBERG: To the brim. (they laugh)

LEVINE: Great, okay. Well, I think that's a good place to close. I want to thank you. I think you had a lot to say, and it's very interesting to me, and I'm sure it will be to other people.

GREENBERG: You know, in here, I don't know, back a year-and-a-half till we go. I had to be interviewed in the office there where the nurse is. And he comes in, you know, and he questions me, more or less like you did, not in all detail. He wanted to receive I am crazy or sane or whatever, you know, routine. And then he asked questions and I answered him, in brief. He didn't, I don't want to bore him with all the other stuff. Then I needed from the nurse, my case history. I never had any history, but I had to go to a doctor here in the, in that little nursery. And so I took the file. She pulled the file out from, oh, yeah. I went to a skin man. I have itchy skin in the back. And he wanted to have my, I gave it to him. You know, on the way I

walked there. And I, while I'm walking with the file I open it up and read some of this stuff. Well, I don't know what the guy was, a busybody or a psychiatrist, who knows. And one of the notes there was, "He likes to talk a lot." (they laugh) I'm not kidding you.

LEVINE: Well, it's interesting anyway, so that's all right then.

GREENBERG: Now I know. (he laughs)

LEVINE: Okay. Well, today's July 27, 1993. I've been speaking with Morton Greenberg. I'm right here in Clifton, New Jersey.

GREENBERG: USA.

LEVINE: USA. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and I'm signing off. Thank you.