

EI-431

ROSE GERMAN SOIFER

BIRTH DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 1906

INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 1994

RUNNING TIME: 47:32

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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INTERVIEW LOCATION: ORLANDO, FLORIDA

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 3/1996

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 9/2009

RUSSIA, APPROXIMATELY 1923

APPROXIMATELY AGE 16

PASSAGE ON A CUNARD LINE SHIP, EXACT NAME NOT RECALLED

PORT OF EMBARCATION: CHERBOURG

RESIDENCES: LEFKOVITZ, UKRAINE
EAST NEW YORK, BROOKLYN

ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mrs. Soifer is the wife of Morris Soifer, Interview EI-432. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, 2/1/1996.

LEVINE: This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.
And it's February 20, 1994. I'm here in Orlando, Florida, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Soifer. And Mrs. Soifer, Rose Soifer, came from Russia when, let's see, how old were you when you came?

SOIFER: Fifteen.

LEVINE: Fifteen. When she was fifteen years old, and what year was it when you came?

SOIFER: 1923.

LEVINE: Wonderful. Okay. Why don't we start out, tell me your birth date. Your birth date.

SOIFER: Just a minute. I don't know what you want to know about birth.

LEVINE: Your birth date.

MR. SOIFER: The day, when were you born?

SOIFER: Oh. November 17, 1906.

LEVINE: And where, where?

SOIFER: Russia. At that time it was Russia. Now it's the Ukraine.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the town?

SOIFER: It's a village, yes.

LEVINE: A village.

MR. SOIFER: Speigel [ph].

SOIFER: I wasn't born in Speigel [ph]. I was born in a village. LEfkowitz, Lefkowitz.

LEVINE: L-E-F . . .

SOIFER: Yeah.

LEVINE: K?

SOIFER: O-W-I, Lefkowitz, T-Z.

LEVINE: Did you live in Lefkowitz until you left for the United States?

SOIFER: Yes. Well, we had to go through Roumania, and I was in Roumania almost four years, until we came to America.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, first let's talk about your time in Lefkowitz before you went to Roumania. What was life like in that village for you?

SOIFER: Well, I played with the children, with the Russian children when I was small. I went to Russian school. And then we left, when the revolution

came, I couldn't continue my education. And I waited, it was tough after the Revolution. There was not enough food. But being we had a cow, chickens, geese, a horse and a buggy and, uh, so we had our vegetables, only it was hard to get flour for bread. But my parents had a grocery store, and the people were very nice. They liked my father. We were a few families that lived, sisters and brothers. But my father's store was the biggest. He had all the produce that they needed, and, and they believed, they knew that he doesn't cheat them. And they had fields, they had the corn and the wheat, and they used to sell to my father. Every month a group of men used to go to a different village. We, uh, to make the flour. What you call it?

LEVINE: The mill?

SOIFER: The mill. And they used to, then my father sold the horse. We couldn't have the store any more, because they were because the government took over all the businesses. So we didn't have a store

that, and the neighbors used to sell wheat to my father, and they used to take him along to the mill. And, my mother baked, always baked her own bread. And then we had, as I said we had vegetables, so we got along. We weren't hungry. And then a man that was born in the shtetl that we belonged to was only three miles away from us, he was sent from America for the peoples from this, that shtetl that were in America, they sent the man that letters to families that they want to come to America, they'll get, they'll, uh, accept it. There were husbands that their wives remained there, there were parents. So my . . .

LEVINE: Before we talk about coming to America, tell me about the Russian Revolution, what you experienced first hand.

SOIFER: Well, there were pogroms and we had to hide. There were times we were three days in a neighbor's, uh, where they keep the . . .

LEVINE: Downstairs?

SOIFER: No. Where they keep the hay in the province, yeah.

Three days, three nights, till the pogrom was in shtetl, but we had to hide because we lived on the main street, and they would walk through. And then when we found out that the, it's quiet, my uncle and the family, my zaida [ph] came to us to hide. So they went home. And we came in in the house to make, Mama wanted to make a little soup for us, for the family, for three days. The neighbor brought in just milk and bread. And I was the oldest of my cousins, and I played, and I looked on both sides to see if soldiers are coming. And then I see a man from the, from the town, call me, and he talked, asked me to send out my father. And when my father came out, and he says that two soldiers are asking for Jews, hide. So we went to another, another man, my uncle, and my zaida [ph], the family went back home to the shtetl, and we went to another man that he used to work for my father. He used to buy corn, wheat, bags. So if he had too many for his wagon, he used to hire us. So we went to the, to the other man, and he let us in,

like I said before, in the barn. I couldn't think of the word before, the barn. And when it got dark, he came over, and he say, "You better go in the field, because the kids saw you go in there. In case the soldiers come around, they'll squeal."

So he gave us blankets, and we went there. And, of course, I had a younger brother and myself, slept a little, but the others were just sitting there. In the morning they decided to go home. We couldn't stay there. So we walked to their homes, because even, the people who weren't home, even if they were home, they wouldn't come to him, because they were very good, good neighbors. And when we came across from the house, we saw that the door is locked, the windows are not broken, so we went in.

And we had something to drink, and my mother and my two sisters, uh, lay down in the bed, my father put a blanket in the store. We went to the, in the house through the store. And I played with my brother, to look around there were any soldiers coming. Sure enough, the three soldiers were coming. But I, I didn't run away. I kept on

running around with my brother, and I just told my father that they, and the three soldiers came right across the door. The door was open, my brother and I, we were playing, make-believe we don't see them.

And they stayed there for a few minutes. They were laughing, and they left. So when they left, my father ordered me to go to my uncle that lived about five blocks away from us. We were sure that their kids told them to go there. And sure enough, I came there, and I found out that they came, the three soldiers came there, and they took all their coats, they're going to stay there. And there was only one big room, there wasn't enough for the family. And there was a, what are (Russian)? What are?

MR. SOIFER: (?)

SOIFER: Right where my uncle lived. And people came from the fields. They used to take the horses to pull them off, wash them off. And my cousin went out, there were two brothers, Christians. I said, "Boys, please help me, you know. We have no room

for them, and we have girls in the house." So they came in and they said to the soldiers, "Come with us. You have no room here. Come with us. I'm sure that Mama made a big pot of borscht, and we sleep on the, on top of the . . ."

LEVINE: On the stove?

SOIFER: No, no. On top of the rooms.

LEVINE: Like a loft?

SOIFER: Yeah. Well, they keep there hay or so, we sleep there, and the hay smells nice. And you can stay here. There's no room for you. So they went with them. They slept, and then on next day, the boys told my cousin that they told the soldiers, "Don't touch our Jews. They are our friends. We live together. One has a store, my cousin used to sew for them. Don't dare touch them." So, but they were so stupid, the soldiers, they had ammunition, and when they came they could have killed us and nobody even was there, because there weren't any people during the day in the village. They were

all in the fields. So we were safe there. And then there was time that the generals, after the revolution the generals promised their soldiers if they (?) the other generals, he'll become head of Russia, and he'll give everybody a job. Because a whole lot of villages, and you'll take away everything from the rich people, you'll have nice homes. So they were chasing each other. So after a while, after a few days they got tired, they stopped to rest, but they find out that the ones in the front are further up, and the ones in the back are further down. And they come in in the house, two, three, in each house, and you had to feed them. Whatever you had in the house, you had to give them. And they came in to us. I had two big sisters in the house. Once we had three of them staying, so we all slept in one room. Uh, two were good, but one used to go in the mud, in the village, mud, and come in and walk on the chairs, somebody says they should clean it. So then, you know, Jewish people are smart, somebody in the shtetl found out from the biggest cities, that if

they come in and they find somebody sick in the house, they wouldn't stay. They're afraid to get sick, and the others will come, will kill them. So here we expect them to come, and no one is sick. So I had to play sick. They put me down on the folding bed. We had medication in the house, because I used to get sick. Everybody has colds or something, put that medication on the table, on the little table, and my mother sitting on the chair. I had a towel around my head, and I'm laying there.

And they three come in and they look at me to figure out I'm sick, and I'm just turning my head.

And I see they don't move, and I thought, "Well, I have to do something." I started to cry. I didn't make believe, but I cried because I was afraid they were going to kill my parents, that they fool them.

And, "Mama," I tell them in Russian, "It hurts, it hurts," and I started to wiggle around, so they left. But I had to stay in the house a few days, they shouldn't catch me. And then the man came with the letters from America. My mother's brother was here. He was single. And he sent a letter, if

we want to come.

LEVINE: Tell me your, tell me your father's name?

SOIFER: Avram.

LEVINE: And, uh, his, and his last name, your maiden name?

SOIFER: German. In English it's German. It was, in Russian it was German.

LEVINE: G-E-R?

SOIFER: M-A-N, yeah.

LEVINE: And your mother's name?

SOIFER: Brina [ph].

LEVINE: Brina [ph]. And her maiden name?

SOIFER: Was also the same, because my brother, my father and my zaida [ph] were brothers, so it was the same name.

LEVINE: Okay. And, and did you have brothers and sisters?
How many?

SOIFER: I had two sisters, but one sister left for America before us. I had one sister and a younger brother that we came together.

LEVINE: And, uh, what were your sisters' names?

SOIFER: Leba, one, Gilda, and Sarah, the other one.

LEVINE: And your brother?

SOIFER: Harry.

LEVINE: And, um, okay. So, uh, your father went first?

SOIFER: No, no.

LEVINE: No. You came . . .

SOIFER: We came together.

LEVINE: You all traveled together.

SOIFER: We came together.

LEVINE: Okay. So his brother sent you . . .

SOIFER: No, my mother's brother.

LEVINE: Your mother's brother.

SOIFER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. And, uh, so when you left, do you, did your mother pack up things to take?

SOIFER: Oh, yes. Well, we packed, we sold most of the things. We only packed clothes and bedding, and we went, we had to go to a shtetl not far from a river that separates Russia and Roumania, and there were thousands of people there from Russia waiting to cross. You had to cross during the night, the police shouldn't see. And it was about this time, before Pesach. And there wasn't, we weren't very cold to go over. So we went back home to another brother of my mother's for Pesach, but we stayed with a man that we stayed on his park, and on Friday night three soldiers came in and they took away all our clothes. It was packed in bags, and we remained just with the clothes that we had and the bedding. And then after Pesach we went back for that small town, and we waited till May to cross the river during the night. And we had to stay in the woods the whole day, to come in in the

city in the evening, late in the evening. We came in in a cemetery, that the keeper took us upstairs, and started to bring in pails of water. We were very thirsty. We walked during the night through the fields, we were tired. In the morning, uh, there were people from our town, and also they were in the town there, from Roumania, and they knew that a group came in. So they sent a few children to bring in the children with flowers, make believe we went to, uh, to pick flowers, so the police shouldn't be suspicious, and the adults came in later, make believe they came from a funeral. So we stayed there, there were a lot of, many people in that town. There wasn't enough food. So we got all the leaves, and we went to a bigger town, Beltz, by the name of Beltz, and we stayed there over three years because there were quotas to come into America. First were parents with children, wives and children to their fathers, and then months later single sisters and brothers, and married sisters and brothers were the last quota into the (?). (a dog barks) A higher number.

It's okay.

LEVINE: Can we stop it for a minute? (break in tape)
Okay, why don't we continue now.

SOIFER: So I went to Hebrew school there.

LEVINE: In Roumania?

SOIFER: In Roumania, in Beltz?

LEVINE: B-E-L-T-Z? B-E-L?

SOIFER: Yeah, B-E-L-T-Z. Beltz, yes. (referring to the
dog) Morris, he barks, he interferences. The
American Federation paid for the children's
education. There were a lot of foreigners there.

LEVINE: Who paid for it?

SOIFER: The American Federation, the Jewish Federation. So
I went, but I got sick after two months, and I was
sick the rest of the winter. Uh, when I got better
I went there, and they wanted me to start in the
first grade, and I think I didn't want. I could
speak, I'd learned Hebrew at home.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SOIFER: Before, I want to know what you said.

MR. SOIFER: The organization HIAS.

LEVINE: Oh, the HIAS. The HIAS is what paid for the . . .

SOIFER: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh. Now, uh, you were, uh, in Roumania all that time. Where were you living? How did you manage?

SOIFER: Oh, we had to rent a house. We rented a house, and my father bought boards, got a carpenter, made a couple of beds and a table, a couple of chairs. And, so I went to a private, uh, Hebrew school, and we had to learn Roumanian. Me, I could read, write Russian. The alphabet is the alphabet, just as you pronounced it, so I wasn't better, uh, too bad. I learned. And then, then we received a notice to come to Bucharest, uh, the capital of Roumania, to get the visa to come to America. And, so we

traveled all week. We traveled about three or four days and nights, but by train. And we came to Bucharest, and took a taxi, not a taxi, it was a horse and wagon, to get a motel somewheres to sleep over. And there are people from our town that they came there before and they told us that the quota closed a day before for another ten months. So again we had to rent a house and start all over again. Finally we got notice to come for the visa.

So we traveled the whole week, day and night, by train. We had to take along food. The leader was there. I don't remember exactly where. We stopped in two places for a hot meal, and we started out Sunday morning, and Saturday we reached Paris, and they took us off for a meal in Paris. I can't say I was never in Paris. After the meal, we had to go back to the train, we had to ride another six or seven hours to the port, to Cherbourg. And this . . . (a telephone rings)

LEVINE: I'll stop this for a minute. (break in tape)
Okay, we'll continue after the wrong number.

SOIFER: So we were at the port waiting to get on the boat. Somehow we lost all the clothes, but a few things remained. Mama had a dish that she used to make jam, so we went from store to store, tried to get kerosene to keep our hats clean. We had clean hats, but still. And she said we used to say at home (Russian), and nobody knew what we wanted. Finally we went into a small store, and there was a man that he was from Russia, but he got stuck, he didn't have anywhere to go, so he opened a small store. He said, "Oh, you want kerosene." So we got a bottle of kerosene, and we were washing our hats, and we gave the other people. And we were taken to . . .

LEVINE: You were examined, were you?

SOIFER: Not in Cherbourg. We were somewhere's else that we were examined, taken, examined the hair, but not, not in Cherbourg. Yeah, at the border. That's where we were waiting. And we were taken, the man in the middle were taken to examine the hat. So I went, my sister and my mother and my father, with

my little brother. So how long does it take a man?

So he came back, and there was a man waiting for his wife. So he says to my father, "Oh, they must have trouble there, your family, three women." And we came back clear, but she had to be combed.

(she laughs) Well, anyhow, we went on, came on the boat.

LEVINE: Do you remember the name of the boat, the ship?

SOIFER: I forget. I should have marked, I forgot. For years I remembered, but I forgot. And we were only four-and-a-half days on the boat. But the boat came in too late to go to Ellis Island, so we had to sleep on the boat. But the boat came in, and my sister and my uncle came to the port, but they wouldn't let them in, to . . .

LEVINE: To Ellis Island?

SOIFER: Not on the boat, but just on the, uh, the bridge, or whatever. You know what I mean?

LEVINE: In Battery Park? In New York?

SOIFER: Yes. But they weren't allowed to go up. When the guard turned around, my sister ran in. My uncle was a very honest man. He wouldn't do it. And she stays there, and she talks to us, and she asked my father if he has any money, and he says, I think he had ten dollars. So she asked the guard that was on this side can she give us our money? He says yes, so I can go, but I couldn't touch her. He took the money from her and gave it to me. And she says, "Okay, I'm going. I'm going to tell Chaim that I saw you." And about a half hour later, we were on the deck, and we hear our name called. My mother was very sick on the boat. The whole time she didn't eat anything. She used to come up in the morning on the deck, and the evening, the boys used to help her come down. So my mother told my sister. She told my uncle. So he went in the store and bought herrings, and a bread, and took a boat, a rowing boat, hired the rowing boat, he came near our boat, and he was calling. And I looked down, I heard our names, and the sailors came over there and the man from the boat told them, "Send

down a rope for a package." So he sent down a rope, and the package was sent up, and they made a meal. And the next morning after breakfast we were taken to Ellis Island. So, of course, we went, my mother and my sister and I, my father and my brother. So the two nurses there were talking, my hair was very wavy. My mother had wavy hair, but I had very wavy hair. So one took a pencil, and she just went like that, and they were laughing as if to say they wish they have it. And we came out the door, and my father and my brother were there already. And from the HIAS they had a desk there, a man there, and he says to her, "You're very lucky, a family of five, and you got off so soon."

And we were wandering, my sister and my uncle didn't come to meet us. So they took us to HIAS, and gave us lunch, they gave us lunch. And then my sister and my uncle come. The reason was while my sister was talking to us when she came to see us, she overheard a man was talking to his brother and he says, "I heard there's a rumor that they're going to send us back, send you back, they think

that it's too much for the quota." We didn't hear, but she heard. So she went right there, there was, and a family of democrats, so they went to him in the morning in case we were in trouble, so they were late. In the meantime, a telegram was sent to a cousin where my uncle, that where we were supposed to go, that we are here. So they took a, we came by train from Ellis Island, and then they took us to my cousin. We came in on a Tuesday, and my sister was working already, my older sister, and Saturday my uncle, my sister, my mother went out to look for an apartment. We got an apartment, and we bought a bedroom set and a kitchen set. And we started to, uh, get used to the environment. My other sister went to work, but my father didn't know what to do. He wasn't a working man. So, uh, somebody recommended he should open a pushcart, imitation jewelry, downtown. But he went, he didn't make . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SOIFER: . . . much money. And my brother and I went to school. So, I started in 1-A, and the teacher was showing words for the class, and I could read it, because it's like the Roumanian. They were all, things like that. She was watching me, the next day when she showed the same words, so she called me over to the desk, and she gave me a book to read. I was reading, I didn't know what. So she recommended me to the assistant principal. I could read, but I needed spelling. So there were eleven foreign children in the school, just a boy and I that knew. I guess he went there to Hebrew, so he knew it. And they, every two weeks they showed me to a different class. I reached in December the fifth grade, 5-A. Those days was 5-A, 5-B. I started 5-B, I had to go all the time, the six months. And then I, during the summer I went to 6-A, and at my birthday I quit and I went to work.

LEVINE: What were some of the things that when you first got to this country, do you remember some of the things?

SOIFER: For instance?

LEVINE: That struck you as very different?

SOIFER: Well, it just happened that I, I went to night school. I didn't, they didn't want to register me in night school. I went to day school, but I went to night school. But I went to night school without being registered. And I started, it didn't take long, but I started to talk English, and I met my, I had a friend in Bucharest that knew that I'd be going to New York, and New York number one. So it happened I met her sister. And she lived right near me. And so I had a friend. I didn't have other friends. And then little by little most of the time I had her for a couple of years, then I left her. I knew Morris at that time, with his friends. We used to go to dances, clubs, one day boat rides in the summertime. And, um . . .

LEVINE: Were you living in the Lower East Side? Is that where you lived? Where did you live?

SOIFER: East New York, in Brooklyn.

LEVINE: Brooklyn.

SOIFER: We lived in Brooklyn. Morris lived in Brooklyn, too, yeah. And that's how it was, on and off, going. And when we got married, and we moved to the Bronx because Morris worked there. We have two children, a son and a daughter.

LEVINE: What are their names?

SOIFER: Well, now we all lived in New York, but now our son still lives in New York State, our daughter lives in Denver, Colorado, with three daughters.

LEVINE: What are their names, your children?

SOIFER: Hyde [ph] is the son, and Napo [ph] is the daughter. Morris, show her the pictures.

MR. SOIFER: Hmm?

SOIFER: Show her the pictures.

LEVINE: So how do you think it changed your life starting out in Russia and coming here, and going through all those things?

SOIFER: It was a new life. I had to learn a new life.

MR. SOIFER: Which picture?

SOIFER: No, the picture.

MR. SOIFER: This here?

SOIFER: Yeah.

MR. SOIFER: The picture, the picture. That's our son.

LEVINE: Oh, wow. That's beautiful, lovely.

MR. SOIFER: That's her there now.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SOIFER: I don't know what happened. He must have sat in a, we are not on speaking terms, to our regret. But our granddaughter, from Denver, was visiting during Christmas vacation, so she went with her husband to visit his mother in Long Island, so she went to visit her uncle, and took this picture. And he was sitting in the chair. Show her ATtel's [ph] picture.

LEVINE: Can you think of any attitudes or ideas or values that your mother or father tried to, uh, instill in you?

MR. SOIFER: That's our daughter.

LEVINE: The daughter, uh-huh.

SOIFER: You should see our son-in-law now.

MR. SOIFER: Big corporation.

SOIFER: Well, even though we lived in the village, my mother wasn't educated. In her time women weren't educated, and even men, they just went to cheda [ph] to be bar mitzvahed. But we had a clean house. We had a tablecloth for the meal. We had to wash our hands before to the table. I ran around barefoot, although I had sandals and socks for the summer, but I played with the kids. I didn't want to be a showoff. I ran around barefoot. If I stepped on a glass, I put on a dirty cobweb and a dirty cloth, and a half an hour later it was healed. Here I would get an infection. But four o'clock, about four o'clock I

had to wash my feet and put on shoes and socks before the meal time. Our heads were clean. It just happened that we had nice clothes. My mother used to go twice a year in a bigger town, travel, my father used to take her, and she would buy material for clothes, and bring in the seamstress from the shtetl for a week's time. She'll make everything to fit, and my father used to go every day to the shtetl. He'd go in and ask the seamstress girls if they need her, if they need her, that they didn't know how to cut or something, he would take her and she'll prepare and come back.

And she hated to go back home, because here it was in the summers she would have fresh milk and fresh vegetables. In the winter my mother used to make knishes and all kinds of things. And then the seamstress for underwear, for linens, the same thing. She hated to go home. So we were, uh, we were taught to be gentle. My sister used to read a lot. She used to, uh, subscribe books from St. Petersburg. And when I started to read, she used to get books for me, too. She had nice friends.

She used to take me with her to her friends and, uh, we acted, we acted nice, not running around.

LEVINE: Did you, how did you observe the religious holidays?

SOIFER: Oh, we used to, my father used to, uh, get a room for us for Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, so we used to go there. There's, our zaida [ph] used to take us before Rosh Hashanah and come the second day come and take us home, and Yom Kippur the same thing. Used to take us, and come next, Yom Kippur, and then take us home. But, like, uh, shabbos, Pesach, my father used to walk to schul, because women didn't go during the holidays, just Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur. And my father used to walk. Of course (?). I was eight, nine years old, I used to walk. And I didn't tell you that when my, uh, my father suggested, suggested to his brother, to the family, the father's, we should take in, a man, to teach us Hebrew, one of my aunts had, our apartment, one room was built for a store, but she didn't have a store. So they paid the rent, and the teacher used

to stay with the family a couple of weeks. And he hated to go home for the weekend. (she laughs)

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So it sounds like you were comfortable when you were living there. I mean, you had a comfortable life.

SOIFER: Till the revolution.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

SOIFER: Yeah. We had nice clothes, nicer than all the others. Of course, my father had the store, and he used to buy the wheat and all, so he made a nice living.

LEVINE: Did you have grandparents?

SOIFER: Just one zaida [ph] I knew. All the others were gone. My father's father had three wives and twelve children. So about the time I was born, and my mother's mother died young because she must have had lung, she was told to eat pork, so she'd rather die than eat pork. So this uncle, that brother, he was a teenager, and he considered my mother like

his mother. He lived with my zaida [ph], had a nice house, and the older son took the house. But the zaida [ph] and the boy lived with them. But this uncle needed something, he came to my mother, clothes, or shoes, my father used to buy for him. So he went to America. The two other brothers were married. They had two children. And he was a young boy. It was time for him to become a soldier. So they went to America. But the two brothers, married brothers came back, and he remained here. But he thought a few years later to forget about them, so he worked, and he was saving money. He said my father should save his money. He didn't, he didn't trust his father, because the brothers would take, take it from the (?). He sent to my father, and he saved the money, he came back. But he was, somebody squealed on him, so they took him as a soldier, and my mother made warm underwear for him, and my father brought it to him, and he says to my brother, "Being in America a couple of years, I'm not going to be a soldier. Bring me the money." And there was a boy in town, that was like

4-H. He had a white ticket. He says, "Go to him and pay him as much as he wants to get, the white ticket, and bring me the money." So my father brought him the money, and by the time my father came home, got a telegram, but he's in Poland already. He paid the night watchman where he was, and he had the money. He went near a village, and they took him to the port and got, he went back to America. So, we got married, and we were in business. We had a fruit store. I helped Morris.

LEVINE: In Brooklyn?

SOIFER: I worked, he worked, no, in the Bronx, in the Bronx. I worked till, uh, times started changed. Puerto Ricans came in, and we weren't doing business. So we sold the store. Morris went to work, and I couldn't get a job. It took me time. I went to work in a department store. And I fell, and I injured my ankle, so I stopped, I stopped working. Morris worked till he was sixty-nine years old, and then we came here.

LEVINE: So what do you feel proud of that you've done?

SOIFER: I really don't know what to say.

LEVINE: So what makes you feel satisfied?

SOIFER: I'm lucky that we got to America.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

SOIFER: We were very lucky. And the club that is here, they only want to get entertainment, nothing in religion. Oh, they, they, uh, make lunches, Hanukkah, Purim we're going to have Thursday a luncheon, but nothing to talk about. A new president, a woman became president, and she suggested we should pledge, pledge allegiance to the flag, American flag. And Morris says, "How about our flag?" And they said, "It's not a Jewish flag. It's an Israeli flag." He went, he went to the, uh, director of (Hebrew), he went to the Federation, they couldn't do nothing, because it's a private. So, uh, there's a woman in the club, that she lost her first husband in the war, so she's after the flag, American flag. So if it's not on a, in the rooms, she goes out and she brings

it in. And she says to me, "I hope Morris wouldn't mind." I said to her, "You know what? We are more proud of the flag than you, because you were born here. This flag saved our lives. It's very dear to us."

LEVINE: Maybe that's a good place to end. That's a . . .

SOIFER: A what?

LEVINE: That might be a good place to end. That's a . . .

SOIFER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Is there anything else you want to say before we close?

SOIFER: No, nothing.

LEVINE: Okay. Well, thank you very much for a very interesting rendition of your life. Okay. This is Janet Levine. I'm signing off. I've been speaking with Rose. (addresses Mr. Soifer) I'm going to speak with you on another tape, okay. Rose, uh, Soifer, and, in Orlando, Florida, on February 20,

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1994, and this is Janet Levine signing off.