

EI-044

GOLDIE BERMAN HAUPTMAN

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LITHUANIA, 1921 RESIDENCES: GETVARITZ; BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN
AGE 7 PORT: DANZIG

SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, May 9, 1991. We're in the Brighton area of Brooklyn with Mrs. Goldie Hauptman, who came from Lithuania in 1922. She was seven-and-a-half years old. Good afternoon.

HAUPTMAN: Good afternoon.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Hauptman, could you please give us your full name, including your maiden name, and your date of birth, please.

HAUPTMAN: My full name is Goldie Berman and Hauptman at the end. And my age?

SIGRIST: Yes. What's your birth date?

HAUPTMAN: May 8, 19 . . . Uh, May 8, 1914.

SIGRIST: Okay. And where were you born?

HAUPTMAN: In Lithuania. They call it, eh, Vilnius, but we called it Vilna.

SIGRIST: I see.

HAUPTMAN: And a little town an hour away from Vilnius, which was called Getvaritz.

SIGRIST: Can you say that very slowly for us?

HAUPTMAN: Getvaritz.

SIGRIST: I see. Can you describe that town at all?

HAUPTMAN: It was a little town, less than a hundred population. And most of the population were relatives in that little town. We were an hour away from Vilnius by a horse and wagon.

SIGRIST: What did the town look like?

HAUPTMAN: Nice. I remember my father's house that I lived in was near a lake, which my father made a platform and my sister would go out and wash the clothes there, on the wooden platform. It was just away from the house.

SIGRIST: In the back of the house?

HAUPTMAN: I don't know if it was the back or front. It was around by that lake. And that's so outstanding because I used to go bathing there, too, at times, when the weather was permittable. And they, when they went bathing, it was children with mothers that were girls, and the other children, they're boys, they went with their fathers.

SIGRIST: I see.

HAUPTMAN: That stands out in my mind.

SIGRIST: Did you wear bathing suits?

HAUPTMAN: No. (she replies softly) It was in the nude.

SIGRIST: I see.

HAUPTMAN: That's where I went bathing with my sister. She would take me.

SIGRIST: Do you, can you describe the house for me that you lived in?

HAUPTMAN: It had a very big kitchen with a big stove.

SIGRIST: What kind of a stove?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember. It was a big stove because my, when my grandmother lived there that was told to me, that when she was sick my father made like a little bed over the stove to be warmer for her because she was cold. So it was a very big kitchen, and bedrooms. I don't remember how many, but it was my, my father owned that home.

SIGRIST: Was it a two-story house?

HAUPTMAN: No. It was a one-story house.

SIGRIST: Was it made out of wood or stone?

HAUPTMAN: Wood, wood, yes.

SIGRIST: I see. Let's talk about your father. What was his name?

HAUPTMAN: His name was Joseph. I don't want to go back. As far as I knew him, he was Joseph Berman. And he used to sell on a horse and wagon. He would go in town, and that would be Vilna, to sell whatever he had. That was his work there. He would work in, like, he had a garden, and whatever he had more than he can use he would try to sell.

SIGRIST: Was it a big garden?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember too much of the garden, but I remember he stored, in the fall he would store, they would go fishing. He would store fish in with, made a lot of, from the lake they would make ice cubes and they would put that in a big ditch away from the house, and that's how they would store food for the winter.

SIGRIST: Hmm. That's very interesting.

HAUPTMAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And this is the sort of thing that he sold, too? He sold food?

HAUPTMAN: I think so, yes. And he also would prepare, like in April you needed an apple and it wouldn't be in April, an apple. He would bury an apple in the earth and it would stay. I remember he would take it out on a certain holiday, but when he needed it.

SIGRIST: So your father loved nature and . . .

HAUPTMAN: Yes, yes. He wasn't a farmer. I don't remember him

as a farmer.

SIGRIST: Just his own little garden.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. He worked more or less for himself. He could have had maybe a little grocery. I don't know. I don't remember that well, because I was there until about four-and-a-half, five years old, that's all.

SIGRIST: Can you describe what your father looked like to me?

HAUPTMAN: He was a nice man, short, had a beard. He was religious. Took care very well of his children. When my mother died he remarried, but he did not, he did not like the way she treated some of his children so he left her and he went to live back in his own house with the children until we came to America.

SIGRIST: I see. Let me just ask you a couple of questions about your natural mother. What was her name?

HAUPTMAN: Sarah, Sarah Berman.

SIGRIST: And was she from that town, also?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. She had aunts there. Everybody was related to one another there. There was aunts and cousins and

there was a grandmother which, her mother. And my mother's only girl with three boys which the boys went to Africa, Capetown, the brothers.

SIGRIST: Why did they do that?

HAUPTMAN: Huh? I don't know. Maybe they had there relatives or something. And most of my mother's side of the family came to the United States.

SIGRIST: I see. How old were you when your mother died?

HAUPTMAN: I was about past two.

SIGRIST: Very young.

HAUPTMAN: Yeah. I don't remember my mother.

SIGRIST: And what did she die of?

HAUPTMAN: Typhus fever. She died, and a sister, and my grandmother. The three of them died from typhus fever. That's the first thing they get after war, when there's war. War started in '14, yeah. And a lot of people were going, right after the war they were going to America, from the family, cousins. We came. My sister, my older sister and another sister

and a brother, they were taken over by cousins.

SIGRIST: Who were already here.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. So when I came in 1922, I found two sisters and a brother, the brother that took us over.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you a question about, who was the woman that your father remarried?

HAUPTMAN: She was known in the village in that little town that he knew of her, because he married her. Not nice to say, she had no children. He didn't want to mix his children with other children. That's why he married her.

SIGRIST: And what was her name?

HAUPTMAN: Her name was, uh, Rochalaya. I don't know her English name.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

HAUPTMAN: Her name was Rochalaya. And then when we were coming to America, when I got married I told my father, "Why don't you get married?" I was the last one. He says, "No." He can't, because he left her in Europe. She

said to him, when we left, "If you forget from me, God should forget from you." So he took her over. He became a citizen, he took her over. So the last few years she was here with him. But not while my children were at home.

SIGRIST: I see. Let me ask you, some more details about the house, actually. Who did the cooking in your family?

HAUPTMAN: My sister. When my mother died, my sister. There was only seven years older than me.

SIGRIST: And what was her name?

HAUPTMAN: Her name is Rebecca. That was given, the English name in America. In Europe she was called Rifka. That was her name. The sixteen-year-old sister that died from typhus fever, she was supposed to take care of the family, but she died. So my sister that's seven years older than me, she took care of me and everybody.

SIGRIST: Who else was in this household? Who else lived in this household?

HAUPTMAN: It was my sister Rebecca, my brother Sidney and my

brother Max and myself and my father.

SIGRIST: Was this a great responsibility for your sister?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. Yes, she worked very hard. She did. She was so small. That's her there. (she gestures to a photograph) She was a short little lady, and she really worked hard all her life.

SIGRIST: Did you help her when you were a little girl?

HAUPTMAN: I helped her in America, not in Europe. I don't remember helping her in Europe.

SIGRIST: So she did all the cooking in Europe, then.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. She did all the cooking and everything.

SIGRIST: Was she a good cook?

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did she ever cook anything that was your favorite food?

HAUPTMAN: Whatever she made I liked, but she used to make very, she used to make a lot of, you call that wontons. By us we call kreplach. She made it very good. I could

never learn how to make it, because she did it wonderful. She was a good cook and a good, she was my mother. I really loved her like a mother.

SIGRIST: And was your father, because he often went to the town to sell, was he gone for long periods of time?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember much of him in, because I was mostly with my sister.

SIGRIST: Right.

HAUPTMAN: But I remember him more in America.

SIGRIST: We'll talk about him when we get to America, I guess. I'd like to ask you some questions about your religious life in Europe.

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember too much of Europe in religion, I don't. Because it was, after the war they were, my father was busy. I was, my fourth or fifth year birthday that we went to Warsaw, (she pronounces this in a European way) so I don't remember too much of my home life in Europe.

SIGRIST: All right. Well, let's talk about when you went to Warsaw.

HAUPTMAN: I remember going in a horse and wagon to go to the train.

SIGRIST: Is this the first time you'd ever been on a train?

HAUPTMAN: I, yes. And it was my sister Rivi and myself, my two brothers and my father and the woman that my father had married, that she went along to say goodbye. And we got, and we went to the train in order that my father shouldn't have problems. Because if you had bugs, they wouldn't let you go. So he shaved me, and they thought I was a boy on the train. They stopped the train, and my sister had to go off the train to have me, to verify that I was a girl. My sister's hair he saved because she was older. She didn't want to, she was able to say yes and no. I couldn't say nothing. So I remember the train was stopped because they thought my father had a boy instead of a girl. It was very strict those days of everything. And then we got to Warsaw from the train ride. His wife was not on the train. She just went as far as the train. And we lived two-and-a-half years in Warsaw.

SIGRIST: Who, this is on your way to America, right? Who

decided to go to America?

HAUPTMAN: It was decided all along when my brother came to America when he was in the U.S.

SIGRIST: And he had been corresponding with your father?

HAUPTMAN: That's right, my brother Louie. And he was the one that had a mind to take over even my mother, when she had died. He was going to take over the entire family.

SIGRIST: What year did Louie go to America?

HAUPTMAN: Well, it must have been, because I wasn't born, so it must have been in 1912 or '13.

SIGRIST: So your mother was still alive?

HAUPTMAN: Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: And what did he do in America?

HAUPTMAN: My brother was a, he went into the army, I think, right away. He must have come just before war started in America because he was in the army here, and he became a citizen. I don't know how, he must have

become a citizen before we went into the army.

SIGRIST: Did he get a job?

HAUPTMAN: He was a painter. My cousins taught him to paint at that time.

SIGRIST: House painting, or . . .

HAUPTMAN: Yes, house painting.

SIGRIST: So was he sending money to your father?

HAUPTMAN: He must have, because he sent all the monies for us to come with the passbook and to live in Warsaw. Two-and-a-half years we were there.

SIGRIST: Now, how come you were there so long?

HAUPTMAN: Because we couldn't get the passbook, the visas. It was very hard. He had a man working. He was Mr. Schiff, working to help us get the visas. It was very hard to get the visas. It was, he had a very hard time, my brother. It took two-and-a-half years.

SIGRIST: Talk a little bit about that two-and-a-half years. Where did you live during that time?

HAUPTMAN: It was considered a hotel, and my sister must have done the cooking. I don't remember too much. I remember going with my father wherever he had to go. It was also stolen, all the money that he had in passbooks when he got them. And then my brother had to send money in order to get it back from the crooks. He had really a very hard time, my father.

SIGRIST: Indeed, indeed.

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, did you have just one room in this hotel, or did you have a suite of rooms?

HAUPTMAN: I think it must have been, I don't remember how many rooms. I really don't.

SIGRIST: Were you going to school at this time?

HAUPTMAN: No. No school at all. No schooling at any time.

SIGRIST: I see.

HAUPTMAN: I'll tell you the truth, I had trouble with an ear, so I didn't hear well all my life. So when I came to America my older sister tried to help me with my

hearing, and she took me. And it was neglect in growing up in Europe that had to do with my ears. But I helped myself.

SIGRIST: Did your sister try to teach you to read or anything like that?

HAUPTMAN: No. When we came to America they placed me, in 1922 they gave you like a little test. It was a Jewish teacher, Miss Moses was her name. And she graded you. She gave you, like, a little test. They put me in 2-A. That I remember. And my sister was also in school, but a very short time, because she had to cook and do the shopping.

SIGRIST: You're talking about in America.

HAUPTMAN: Yes, in America. See, she . . .

SIGRIST: Did she have any schooling in . . .

HAUPTMAN: That I don't know. I don't know.

SIGRIST: I see. What else do you remember about being in Warsaw, because you'd never been in a big city before, had you?

HAUPTMAN: I remember that they were carrying ice cream on their heads.

SIGRIST: Carrying ice cream?

HAUPTMAN: Ice cream on a tray on their head, and I liked ice cream. And my father changed a hundred dollar bill, an American hundred dollar bill to buy me the ice cream. That I remember.

SIGRIST: Was the hundred dollar bill something that your brother had sent him?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. That's right. Yeah. Because he didn't have no smaller change. And it was called "sachamahruz," the ice cream. That must be a Polish word. That's how they called ice cream there.

SIGRIST: How, was it just in a dish?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember, but I know it was ice cream, and I wanted it.

SIGRIST: Did you have any feelings about coming to America? How did you, what did you know about America?

HAUPTMAN: I was scared. I was scared. I had a lot of fright

in me because everything was happening. The train was stopped with me and I wasn't relaxed. That's why I don't remember too much. I must have shut it out of my mind.

SIGRIST: Was your, was this a, you said this was a difficult time for your father?

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did he, um, did he act sort of frightened and nervous in front of you, or did he try to keep a good front?

HAUPTMAN: He was scared. We were all scared because my sister was even more frightened because she remembers the war that was in Europe. And everybody was going, they called it the pogrom. Everybody was leaving to come, to go to families.

SIGRIST: What happened at that time during the pogrom?

HAUPTMAN: It was German people that came in. It was very scarce of food. And, uh . . .

SIGRIST: Were they actively attacking the Jewish community, or . . .

HAUPTMAN: They weren't too bad. That's what my sister, I don't remember. My sister said they weren't too bad, but they all, they were interested that the families should be well. Because if you were sick they took you away. And my sister that died, Habala, she was taken to the hospital and she came back. My mother hid upstairs in like an attic and because I, she was nursing me, so she hid with me. The children that they knew had to be shown that they're there. My youngest brother got a bad heart because of that. He would go out in all weather and say the family is well. That I remember.

SIGRIST: And who would be doing these checks? Were there . . .

HAUPTMAN: It was soldiers, German soldiers. They would check the house. I don't remember it. I was told, that I heard stories.

SIGRIST: What a frightening thing to have to live through.
(phone rings)

HAUPTMAN: That's my . . . (break in tape)

SIGRIST: All right. So you were in Warsaw for two-and-a-half

years, you said. Tell me about when you finally got your passports, when the visas came through.

HAUPTMAN: When we got the visas, that I remember. We went to Danzig.

SIGRIST: How did you get there?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember. We went to Danzig. And there was a little boat that was carrying canaries to America.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the boat?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. It was the Wittenberg.

SIGRIST: Wittenberg.

HAUPTMAN: The Hamburg-American Line, and the name of the boat was Wittenberg.

SIGRIST: Did you have a lot of luggage with you? What did you take?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember no luggage. My father must have.

SIGRIST: Did you have a toy, a favorite toy or a favorite dress or something?

HAUPTMAN: No, no. I got a toy on the boat. They had a game to run in a sack, and I won dominoes. I was better than the other child.

SIGRIST: Was that exciting for you?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. The domino game was exciting, that I won it on the boat. And there was a handful of people that came. It was carrying mostly canaries to the United States and there was just a handful, I don't remember how many. I had a picture and I can't find it. With another two or three families. That's all the people that were. And everybody was sick on the boat.

SIGRIST: Where were your accommodations on the boat? Where did you sleep?

HAUPTMAN: We had, I remember, bunks, one above the other. There was a lot of room because there wasn't too many people. But it was a small boat, and everybody was sick on that boat. We rode twenty-eight days.

SIGRIST: You were sick?

HAUPTMAN: Everybody was sick on that boat. And it was life-threatening, too. We had lifesavers on because we

came at a very bad time. We came January 8th. There was a lot of ice in a certain area. There was arriving so many, so many, almost a month.

SIGRIST: Did they have safety drills, or . . .

HAUPTMAN: Yes, they did, yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of that?

HAUPTMAN: I remember having a life thing on me when they were, when there was danger. That I remember. That's all I remember.

SIGRIST: Where did you eat on the boat?

HAUPTMAN: On the boat, in a dining room we had there.

SIGRIST: What kind of food? Do you remember?

HAUPTMAN: No. Not too, I don't remember too much.
Because . . .

SIGRIST: You were sick.

HAUPTMAN: That's right. Most, my brothers were sick, my sister, we were all sick.

SIGRIST: Was your father sick?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember. I have no idea. And then I remember coming into Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was that like?

HAUPTMAN: It was very outstanding. That's why it pulled me to go back when, I probably wasn't feeling well when, the first time you gave donations to have your names on because I would, well, I told you. So, but the following, when I heard it on, I didn't ask my children. My children did it for me.

SIGRIST: Yeah. That was nice of them.

HAUPTMAN: I didn't ask. They said it would be nice to have my name and their father's name. And my youngest son, he's an assistant principal. So he took me to Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: And that's where you got the Oral History Form.

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was the date that you arrived?

HAUPTMAN: January 8th, and we had, because my brother didn't answer to one name, he answered to two, we had to sleep over.

SIGRIST: Okay. Let's back up a little bit. How did you get from your little boat to Ellis Island?

HAUPTMAN: (she pauses) I don't remember.

SIGRIST: What do you remember of Ellis Island? That was a big building. And you probably . . .

HAUPTMAN: I remember the big room with the benches, and when we had to sleep over I remember we slept on cots upstairs. That I remember. And that's about all.

SIGRIST: Did the whole family get to sleep in one room together?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. We were two brothers, my sister and myself, and my father.

SIGRIST: Now you said that your . . .

HAUPTMAN: Army cots, we slept on.

SIGRIST: Did you have a mattress or blankets?

HAUPTMAN: No. It was army cots. That's how, because the next day my brother, my brother came there January 8th, but he couldn't get us off. So he came the next day and got us.

SIGRIST: You said your brother answered to two names. Now, explain a little bit to me, what was the system?

HAUPTMAN: When they call the name, when we came there January 8th, they called the names. And my brother Max answered, they called "Motel Berman," he answered on Motel Berman. Then they called again, "Max Berman?" And he answered on that. That's the reason we slept over. We couldn't go out that day.

SIGRIST: And they thought that something was . . .

HAUPTMAN: My father, they thought my father had another child that he didn't report the name. Yeah, because there was three names. There was Sidney Berman, and Motel and Max Berman was one person. Yeah. On account of him we had to stay over. Isn't it, but they, that's

what they did, Ellis Island.

SIGRIST: How did they treat you?

HAUPTMAN: Very nice. The first time I saw a food, a banana, was there.

SIGRIST: What did you think?

HAUPTMAN: I didn't like it. And a tomato I saw also there for the first time.

SIGRIST: Where did you see the tomato?

HAUPTMAN: I don't know. Somebody gave it to us there, and I didn't like it either way. We had to eat. Somebody must have given us food, but I don't know who. I don't know if it was Ellis Island or it was my brother. I have no idea. It must have been Ellis Island, because how would I see a banana? I saw it there.

SIGRIST: Were you fed at all in the dining room at Ellis?

HAUPTMAN: No, no.

SIGRIST: So you said you slept upstairs.

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: In the cots, and all of you slept in one room together.

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Then what happened the next day?

HAUPTMAN: The next day it was again downstairs waiting until my brother came.

SIGRIST: He came.

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: And, um . . .

HAUPTMAN: And then they let us out. They must have checked records or something.

SIGRIST: What was it like seeing your brother?

HAUPTMAN: I was very timid in those days. I was quiet. My father, in my father's household it was more listening and answer when you're spoken to. I was a quiet child. Maybe because of my, I didn't hear too well, that I wouldn't know.

SIGRIST: Where did your brother take you all?

HAUPTMAN: To 214 Moore Street in Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Morris?

HAUPTMAN: Moore.

SIGRIST: Moore Street.

HAUPTMAN: M-O-O-R-E. Moore Street in Brooklyn, 214. My sister lived there, my older sister lived there, and she had a candy store downstairs.

SIGRIST: What was it like being a little girl and seeing New York City for the first time?

HAUPTMAN: Very happy. I was happy to meet my sisters. I mentioned, my sister had two boys.

SIGRIST: Did you ride on a subway?

HAUPTMAN: No, I don't remember. I don't remember how I came.

SIGRIST: But he took the whole family . . .

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: . . . and you went to Moore Street. What kind of, what kind of place did he live in?

HAUPTMAN: It was a tenement house. He had an apartment for us. And then he got us a better apartment a year later, which was 409 Bushwick Avenue.

SIGRIST: Bush?

HAUPTMAN: Bushwick.

SIGRIST: Bushwick.

HAUPTMAN: Avenue. Corner of Barrett Street. That was a nicer . . .

SIGRIST: All right, describe that apartment for me.

HAUPTMAN: That apartment was a railroad flat. It had a big kitchen at one end and at the other end, in between was bedrooms, three bedrooms, and the other end was a dining room with a bathtub in the kitchen and a bathroom for two people outside. It was in the hall.

SIGRIST: Did it have electricity?

HAUPTMAN: Yes, it had electricity. It had a boiler of hot

water, and my brother had a lovely apartment.

SIGRIST: What floor was it on?

HAUPTMAN: It was, I think, on the second floor.

SIGRIST: And who lived there?

HAUPTMAN: The landlord of the building lived there. He had a furniture store underneath. Yes.

SIGRIST: So it's all your brothers and sisters?

HAUPTMAN: My brother that took us over, and my two brothers that came with me, and my sister and myself. We were five children . . .

SIGRIST: And your father?

HAUPTMAN: And my father, in three bedrooms.

SIGRIST: Who, did your brothers, or did you and your sister, because you were too young, but who got jobs? What jobs did they get?

HAUPTMAN: My older brother Max, he got a job, somebody asked him, I don't know if it was family or friends, asked him, "Do you know how to drive?" He said, "I drove a

horse and wagon in Europe." They put him on a truck, and he knew how to drive the truck and he was delivering ice cream for, at that time it was candy stores and drugstores. So he got the job. And my brother Sidney got a job as a salesman in a store. He was more educated. He was educated in Europe a little, my younger brother. And that's how they got jobs.

SIGRIST: What about your dad?

HAUPTMAN: My father didn't get a job. He was older, but he went to the services. In synagogue he went. So by going to synagogue he got like a little job in a synagogue.

SIGRIST: Doing what?

HAUPTMAN: Taking care of the synagogue, taking care of the books. And he was honest, that he even saved enough money to buy the synagogue. Yeah, he was very well-liked by a lot of people, yes, my father.

SIGRIST: What about your sister?

HAUPTMAN: My sister never worked.

SIGRIST: She was busy in the house.

HAUPTMAN: She was busy, yeah. I was the only one that went to school. And when I went out of school, it was in the ninth grade.

SIGRIST: Let's talk about being a little girl in school. You said you started in 2-A.

HAUPTMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: You didn't speak English.

HAUPTMAN: Well, I picked it up quite fast?

SIGRIST: How?

HAUPTMAN: Through the children. In my father's household we didn't speak English. We only spoke Jewish. But I picked it up in school.

SIGRIST: Was it hard for you to learn?

HAUPTMAN: No, it wasn't. The teacher was very nice. They had a special class, 2-A, with a teacher that would speak to you in Yiddish.

SIGRIST: This is Miss Moses?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. And in English. She would explain you the words. And then you went on from there on.

SIGRIST: Was school scary for you?

HAUPTMAN: No, school was nice.

SIGRIST: You liked school.

HAUPTMAN: Yeah, but I just didn't hear too well, so I couldn't learn. But I was pretty good. I went out in the ninth grade, and I wanted to go to work because my father couldn't afford to give me what I wanted, so I went to work.

SIGRIST: What was your first job?

HAUPTMAN: In a factory.

SIGRIST: Doing what?

HAUPTMAN: Shirts. Being, a man in the family taught me, took me up first on a Saturday to teach me how to work the machine, and then I started to work at ten dollars a week.

SIGRIST: What year was that?

HAUPTMAN: I don't remember what year. I'm very bad. But I was a year, my father had to make me a year older . . .

SIGRIST: To get the job.

HAUPTMAN: To get the job. I was fourteen when I got out of school, but I couldn't go to work. I had to be fifteen. I had to go to continuation school till seventeen. So he made me a year older, which I have that birth certificate. So I'm my right age and a year older.

SIGRIST: Did you like being out on your own and working?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. Because I was able to clothe myself. My father did not take any money from me, so whatever I earned I kept.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

SIGRIST: When you were living in Brooklyn in those early years, did you ever experience any bigotry because you were Jewish or anything like that?

HAUPTMAN: No. Not in the neighborhood.

SIGRIST: Was it a Jewish neighborhood that you lived in?

HAUPTMAN: Yes, yes. It was a Jewish neighborhood. After living at 409 Bushwick Avenue, my father did something in the apartment. The landlord didn't like it.

SIGRIST: What did he do?

HAUPTMAN: Like, knock a nail in the wall. He said, "You can't knock a nail. It's my building." So my brothers went and bought my father a small house, a one-family, a two-family house. Right around the corner, was 197 Barrett Street.

SIGRIST: So he moved out of there. But you all stayed?

HAUPTMAN: So we stayed. We had already, at that time my sister Rivi, the one that cooked for us was also in this 197 Barrett Street.

SIGRIST: So she pretty much stuck with your father.

HAUPTMAN: Yes, until she got married. And then I took over when she got married.

SIGRIST: Did you move in with your dad?

HAUPTMAN: I lived, yes. I lived with my father until I got married.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. So you sort of took over where she left off?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. My older brother that took us over taught me how to cook a little and how to make a chicken kosher and so forth. It was my brother that taught me.

SIGRIST: Did you have to quit your job?

HAUPTMAN: No. I did it while I was working. I was able to put up, I would put up the dinner, my father would shut the light, more or less. But I didn't work as hard as my sister did.

SIGRIST: How did your father feel about being in America? Was it a hard experience for him?

HAUPTMAN: He didn't really want to come to America, but he felt three children are there, and the other children wanted to come, so he had no, he felt he had to go with the other children, otherwise he'd have . . .

SIGRIST: Did he always resent coming?

HAUPTMAN: He didn't want to come, he really didn't, because

some people said it was nice, and some people said it wasn't. But he was very happy when he was here.

SIGRIST: He didn't miss the old country?

HAUPTMAN: No, he didn't. Because he had that synagogue that he went morning and night, and he kept himself busy in that synagogue. And then he started to teach children Hebrew.

SIGRIST: How old was he when he started doing that?

HAUPTMAN: I really . . .

SIGRIST: Older?

HAUPTMAN: Older. Because I must have come to him and my mother as a change of life child because I was . . .

SIGRIST: Because they were older when you were born.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. So he must, my mother must have been in her late forties, and he must have been also in the late forties or fifties. But I know he lived to ninety-one.

SIGRIST: Wow. But you said he didn't really want to come?

HAUPTMAN: No, he didn't.

SIGRIST: But when he got here he liked it.

HAUPTMAN: Well, he figured, he said many times, he said three children were in America, and the other children wanted to go. He said he had, he felt it was the best to go.

SIGRIST: Did he ever learn English?

HAUPTMAN: He became a citizen. I taught him, in order to take over his wife.

SIGRIST: Oh.

HAUPTMAN: He became a citizen. Through him becoming a citizen I became a citizen.

SIGRIST: Was he hard to teach?

HAUPTMAN: No. He knew all the questions and he, they failed him the first time. I'll tell you why they failed him. They asked him how many children he had, and he said, "Seven." And that was wrong, because he left a child in Europe. He had to say, "Eight." That's what they failed him. So he went again. And the reason I

wanted him to become a citizen, when I was getting married, that he shouldn't be alone, because he couldn't divorce that wife that he left. That's, so by becoming a citizen, he was able to take her over.

SIGRIST: And when did she come, do you remember?

HAUPTMAN: She came, I got married in '35, so she must have come in the thirties.

SIGRIST: So she would have been older at that point.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. She was older than my father.

SIGRIST: Now, you had left a brother . . .

HAUPTMAN: In Europe, yes.

SIGRIST: And did your father ever, you never saw him again?

HAUPTMAN: No.

SIGRIST: Did your father correspond with him?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. He was killed in the Holocaust. His wife and him and the children. He was saved. Somebody, a cousin of our's came from Boston and told us that he came over under the second war, the Holocaust. But

when he found out his family was gone, he didn't want to live. Yeah. They hid out in the Second World War. But when he felt his family was gone, we couldn't take him over. We were able to take him over from Canada, but his wife didn't want to come because she was the only girl and her father and mother were there, so she didn't want to leave her parents.

SIGRIST: I see.

HAUPTMAN: The woman that he married was a cousin of our's because her mother was a great-aunt. So we were related.

SIGRIST: I see, I see. Well, I guess my final question for you, we've kind of sped through your life here, is, as a girl you were frightened about coming to America, right? It was a scary experience.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. Yes, very scary.

SIGRIST: Are you glad you came?

HAUPTMAN: Yes, very glad. If not for my brother, I wouldn't be here sitting talking with you. We would have been all gone if we had remained. From that little town,

everybody was gone. Because my brother, when he remained he had my father's house, and there's a house that he got when he was married, and then he sent the money to come to America, and she didn't want it, so he took that money and he made himself another house. So he was, more or less had income from renting those houses. We couldn't take him over. We were only able to take him to Canada, thinking from Canada he'd come here, but his wife didn't want to.

SIGRIST: But your family, your brothers and sisters, all did very well for themselves.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. We, if not for my brother Louie I wouldn't be sitting talking with you. So I'm very grateful. My sister Rivi was very grateful to my brother, that he took us over. She always spoke of it. She said, "If not for him, we wouldn't be here today." There was nothing there in Europe that people could say they loved it. The reason people didn't want to leave was because family, you left family. But we were very happy that we came to America. Meeting my other sisters, and my brother.

SIGRIST: The whole family.

HAUPTMAN: Yes. Seven children were here, and one was left in Europe. And through my father becoming a citizen, I became a citizen, and my sister.

SIGRIST: Did your brothers ever become citizens?

HAUPTMAN: Yes. They became citizens on their own, because they were past twenty-one. But we were children under my father. So my sister, in fact, I have the citizen papers someplace. But I became, you can't become a citizen twice, but when I was older, I didn't want to vote on Berman's name. I wanted to vote on my marriage name, so I took out papers on Goldie Hauptman. So my brother had to go to verify that I'm a legitimate child of Joseph Berman. My brother Sidney did that. He closed the store. Because he knew I wanted my own papers.

SIGRIST: Was that a big moment for you when you got your citizenship papers?

HAUPTMAN: Well, I felt good. I wanted to use my marriage name. I didn't want to vote under Berman and then put Hauptman.

SIGRIST: Was that a big moment for your father when he got his citizenship papers?

HAUPTMAN: Well, the only reason was that he would be able to take over his wife.

SIGRIST: Yeah, I see.

HAUPTMAN: That was, he didn't gain anything by it, and he didn't lose anything by it. He gained that he brought her over. But he had, she was a very sick lady when he brought her over.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Well, I want to thank you very much for giving us your time . . .

HAUPTMAN: Thank you.

SIGRIST: And telling us your story.

HAUPTMAN: Thank you.

SIGRIST: And I'm glad . . .

HAUPTMAN: I relived my whole life.

SIGRIST: Yes, indeed. (they laugh) And it was an exciting life, actually.

HAUPTMAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: It certainly had moments of great drama.

HAUPTMAN: It was nice being with sisters and brothers.

SIGRIST: Yeah, to have the whole family all together.

HAUPTMAN: It was very nice when we made holiday.

SIGRIST: Yeah, well, again, thank you. This is Paul Sigrist
signing off for the National Park Service.

HAUPTMAN: Thank you.