

EI-769

MICHAEL MILLER

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RESIDENCES:

- **RUSSIA: SHEPI**
- **THE US: HARLEM AND THE BRONX, NEW YORK
FORT LEE, NEW JERSEY**

LEVINE: Today is July 19th, 1996, and I'm here in Fort Lee, New Jersey, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Miller. Mr. Miller came from Russia in 1913, when he was—well, I guess you were about to turn six in November.

MILLER: Yes, that's right.

LEVINE: Because you left in September, right. Okay, and so today you are eighty—?

MILLER: Past eighty-eight. My next birthday will be eighty-nine.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, so you're eighty-eight years old. Wow, you look good!

MILLER: Thank you.

LEVINE: [Laughs] Okay, so we're going to talk about what Mr. Miller can remember about Russia, which won't be too much, because you were so young.

MILLER: No.

LEVINE: But let's start at the beginning. If you would give your birth date, and where in Russia you were born/

MILLER: November the sixth, 1907.

LEVINE: Okay, and where in Russia were you born?

MILLER: A place called—it was a, I don't know if it was a city or a town. It wasn't a big town at all, though. They called it a shtetl. [PH] That was Shepi, [PH] where my mother lived at the time. We settled in the town near that, was Glebokie, G-L-E-B-O-K-I-E. I have very little recollection of Europe, except that we lived with my grandfather, because my father had immigrated to the United States at the time. And there was my mother, myself, and my sister was born two years after me. So she must have been there, too. My father's folks lived in this town, in Glebokie, and I remember spending a little time in his father's place, which was a shoemaker's shop.

LEVINE: What do you remember about your grandfather?

MILLER: Very, very little about my father's grandfather, because he was always—he was a shoemaker. But I do remember living in the little town, Shepi, where my mother's folks lived. They lived on a farm, and I remember that on Saturdays—they had a big stove in this farm, which was, I think the stove was in what was the living room. And we used to, on Saturdays, we used to go up and sleep in the stove, because it was still warm. On the weekends, they couldn't do any cooking on Saturday because they were religious, so we used the top of the stove. I remember that. I remember an uncle of mine, my father's brother, who we used to play with somewhat. And that's about all I can remember from the other side, except the train ride to—I don't know where I took a train, but we went by train to Antwerp in Belgium, where we got on the boat.

LEVINE: Right. Well, tell me about your shoemaker, shoemaking grandfather. Do you remember anything about, like the shoes, or what he did?

MILLER: I remember he was a shoemaker, and I remember seeing him in the shop, but what he did, I didn't know. I was too young.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. How long before that had your father come to the United States?

MILLER: We came here in 1913. My father must have been here a year or so, or two years before, I don't remember. And he came, and he lived with—he came to Scranton, Pennsylvania, to an aunt of mine who was my mother's older sister. And then he came into New York from there, because I don't think he could make too much of a living there at all. Although he didn't make too much when he was here! But he made less there.

LEVINE: What was he doing in Scranton?

MILLER: He worked with an uncle of mine, who was—I think he drove a bakery wagon, or something. And by trade, he was a tinsmith. And I do remember very faintly, when I was a very, very young child, he used to leave and travel to little places. The big city that we lived near, at what was at that time Russia, was Vilna, which is a center of learning. And he was a tinsmith; he worked on roofs and so forth. That's all I know about it.

LEVINE: What was your father's name?

MILLER: Joseph Miller.

LEVINE: And your mother?

MILLER: Yetta. [PH]

LEVINE: And her maiden name?

MILLER: Swerdling, S-W-E-R-D-L-I-N-G.

LEVINE: And did you have aunts and uncles that were around? Was it a big extended family that you--?

MILLER: No, well as I said, the uncles and aunts—I remember an uncle on the farm. And I don't remember him working there; I think he came there weekends, on Saturday, you know. And my mother had two, two sisters that I know very well, who were in the United States. One of them had gone to the United States and then come back to take a crippled boy into America, for her sister.

LEVINE: She came back while you were still there? Or was it later?

MILLER: That was later, I think.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

MILLER: But she came back, because the mother was sent back. They couldn't take her; she couldn't take the child in. So she came—that was my mother's older sister. She came in, and she settled with her husband in Scranton, P.A. But

the child had to go back, so my—oh, I think my aunt brought him with her. She was a single girl then, at the time. She was unmarried, rather, I should say. And she brought the child in. He was a hopeless cripple.

LEVINE: So in other words, this is probably an instance where somebody was turned back?

MILLER: That's right. This nephew, his name was the same as mine—this cousin, rather—was the same as mine. And I remember him coming to visit us, or he was brought to visit us, because he couldn't walk or anything else. He was just simply [pause], I remember his arm was sort of like this, and his legs were like this, when he was at my house in Harlem, the first apartment that we lived in Harlem. His father I think brought him there for a visit. That's all I remember about that, although I was very friendly with this part of my mother's family. Him I only remember.

LEVINE: Let's see. Do you remember anything about religion and religious observance in Russia?

MILLER: Only that my grandfather was religious. My mother probably was, too. And they observed—I don't remember any holidays, or anything of that nature, but I know that on Saturdays they didn't work.

LEVINE: They didn't work. Were there Gentiles around in the town?

MILLER: If there were—there probably must have been, but I wasn't aware of them. I wasn't aware of the Gentiles at all. I didn't know the difference between a Jew.

LEVINE: So you never saw any anti-Semitism that you were aware of?

MILLER: No, no, no, not in where we lived. It was a small village. I suppose there was anti-Semitism, but I didn't encounter it, and I didn't know what it was all about.

LEVINE: How do you spell the name of the village, do you know?

MILLER: Shipi would be S-H-I-P-I, I think. Or, S-H-E-P-I. But it was a very small village. They called it a dorf. [PH] Glebokie was a small city, very small, but this place was infinitesimally smaller. I don't remember any streets, or anything, in Shepi. I do remember in Glebokie. We must have lived there, and I was walking over a bridge with my mother, and I fell and had a scar on my head, which I have to this very day. It's a small scar.

LEVINE: So you really—did you go to school?

MILLER: No, no, not that I know of. I didn't go, I don't think so.

LEVINE: So, how was it that you and your mother and your sisters decided to come here?

MILLER: My father probably sent us money, and we came here. And as I said, we boarded the ship in Antwerp. All I remember is the train, going for miles and miles and miles, 'til we got to Antwerp. In Antwerp, I don't know where we stayed, at a hotel or what it was. The one thing I remember from there was the little dogs pulling carts, with bread and so forth. And I remember going to the, boarding the ship. And we went steerage, I'm sure of that, because I had about ten kopeks, which was given to me by some relatives and so forth. And onboard ship, after a while, my mother ran out of money, so she borrowed the ten kopeks from me. I remember it was steerage, because we went out on a sunny day once, and we looked up at second class, the second class passengers, and they threw oranges down to us, which I had never seen before. And she borrowed the money from me to repay some man who had befriended her on the ship. And I think she bought herrings with it, or something like that. That's all I can remember of the ship. I do remember, though, the first thing I told my father when we reached Ellis Island, was that my mother owes, [unclear] borrowed, ten kopeks from me.

MILLER: And then I was married in 1931. Her father wanted to get ten kopeks to repay me.

LEVINE: [Laughs] Well, when you first got here, where did you go?

MILLER: We went to a—that I remember vividly. We went to my mother's uncle. That's right, her father's brother. They met us at the, at Ellis Island, with my father, and that was on the Lower East Side, on Monroe Street, in a walk-up where the toilets, excuse me, were in the hall. And they were all railroad flats. And we lived there for a couple of weeks probably, until my father got an apartment in Harlem, on a Hundredth Street, between the river and First Avenue. It was on the river street.

LEVINE: And do you remember any things that struck you as new and different, when you first got to this country?

MILLER: No, I can't tell you anything new or different, because I don't remember what my thoughts were at that time. I remember living in this apartment for a few days, or weeks, whatever it was, with this granduncle of mine. And we were very friendly with that part of the family when we settled here in the United States.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything about the examination at Ellis Island?

MILLER: The examination? None at all. I never remembered an examination.

LEVINE: Do you remember, like—did you stay overnight or anything?

MILLER: In Ellis Island? I don't think so. I don't think so. I think this uncle of my mother's came, and met us, and he took us. That's all I can remember; I don't know if there was anything else going on there.

LEVINE: What was East Harlem like? Can you recall that?

MILLER: What was what?

LEVINE: What was East Harlem like when you were--?

MILLER: East Harlem?

LEVINE: Did you live there for a while?

MILLER: Oh, yes! In fact, I lived in Harlem until 1916. I remember that. We lived there three years in that apartment, and then we moved to another part of Harlem, and I went to school there. And we lived in Harlem 'til—I know I graduated from high school there. That was in 1924. In 1925 we moved to the Bronx, because my mother couldn't walk up. We lived on the third—three flights up, and she at that time was beginning to suffer from heart disease. So we moved to the Bronx, on the ground level.

LEVINE: What was the community like? What was--?

MILLER: Well, we lived amongst—in Harlem? When we moved to Lexington Avenue—from a Hundredth Street we moved to Lexington Avenue, between a Hundred and Third and a Hundred and Fourth Street. And the subway, the Lexington Avenue subway, ran along that, and the streetcar ran along that. And we were there from 1916, I'd say, 'til 1925, when we moved to the Bronx.

LEVINE: Was it a mixed neighborhood?

MILLER: Mostly—east of Third Avenue was mostly Italians, and [unclear]. And we lived between a Hundred and Third and a Hundred and Fourth, the bottom of the hill. And on a Hundred and sixth it was an Irish neighborhood. I remember some fellow in school, although I forget his name, befriended me. He was a big guy, and I was a little shrimp. So, I don't know, somebody wanted to hit me one day, or something, and he befriended me. Oh, oh, I know why he befriended me! I was the teacher's pet, I think. And she sent me to find out why this fellow didn't come to school. He was a truant; he was playing hooky. And I went up to his apartment, and didn't knock on the door,

and went down. And then I told him about it a couple of days later. So he was my pal; he was protecting me, because I didn't squeal on him, that he was playing hooky.

LEVINE: So you must have—were you a good student?

MILLER: I was pretty good, yeah. I'm a college graduate.

LEVINE: Do you remember when you couldn't speak the language, when you were first here?

MILLER: Yes, I think I was in the kindergarten for three terms. Finally, I advanced to the One A. And the reason for that must have been because I didn't know the language.

LEVINE: Right, right. And did you start learning the language, and did you learn the language more quickly than your mother and father?

MILLER: Oh, sure! My mother never spoke English very well, and my father didn't either, but he learned it well from hearing it from conversation. Because that area was an enclave. There were a lot of [unclear] there, from Glebokie. And I remember they had a synagogue there, and we used to attend that synagogue. That was on a Hundred and Fourth Street, between Park and Lexington Avenue. And all my boyhood friends are from that. I had lifetime friends that were from that area.

LEVINE: What was it like once you became fluent in English, and I take it you were mostly speaking, what, Yiddish?

MILLER: At home, Yiddish, at home, to my mother, mostly. To my father also, for that matter. But we spoke Yiddish in the house.

LEVINE: What were your mother and father's attitude? Did they want you to become Americanized, or did they want you to hold on to—

MILLER: Oh, no, no, no. My father was never very religious. He wanted me to go to synagogue and go to Hebrew school, which I did. In fact, I went to Hebrew high school. But he never held me back in that respect; he wasn't very religious. He worked on Saturday, when he could get work. And he became a painter. I remember he worked for two dollars a day, twelve dollars a week.

LEVINE: And how about your mother? How did she fare in this country?

MILLER: Well, she died very early. She died in 1931, so she was amongst the—she could understand English, and she probably spoke a few words. I never

spoke in English to her; I spoke in Yiddish to her. And she died at a very early age.

LEVINE: Did she like being here?

MILLER: Oh, yes! I mean, she liked it. I don't know that she disliked the other place, but she liked being here, and in fact, in later life, on my first trip to Israel, I met a cousin, my father's brother's son. And then I met a lady cousin who had survived the war by hiding in the woods, and she was totally crippled. I remember going to see her there in Israel. And then I came back there about three years later, and I saw them again, but that's the last I saw of them. This was 1930—Israel, after the war, 1947.

LEVINE: Is there anything you can think of about the New York neighborhood that was Harlem when you were growing up that you, that sticks in your mind, about what life was like in New York at that time?

MILLER: Well, we all lived in tenement houses, and all our—the street was mostly Jewish, and it was divided into three parts. I mean, the groups. There was my part, and in fact, I became—I had lifelong friends there, people that I continued to see until recently. How long ago did I—did we go to the Markowitz's [PH] in Florida? The Markowitz's in Florida? You don't remember. Well, in fact I kept up with them always, in fact, until a few years ago. Before they died, we met them in Florida, and—yeah, it should be.

LEVINE: Can you remember as a boy in that neighborhood, like, the kinds of things you did?

MILLER: Well, yes. We all belonged to the Union Settlement, which was on a Hundred and Fourth Street, between Third and Lexington Avenue. It was a settlement house. And our particular group formed a club, and we met there. We played basketball and so forth, and we pretty much knew each other until we got married, when we sort of drifted apart.

LEVINE: You tended to keep going together in school?

MILLER: Yes, we had one boyhood friend who gave me my first job in the accounting field. Then he gave me, he introduced me to the first job. And he worked—that was the Fulton Fish Market. He worked there, and he was in his early forties, he was killed one day. Then I had other friends there. I had one lifelong friend, who I don't know whether he's alive today or not, but I haven't been in touch with him since my wife died.

LEVINE: So, when did you go to work for the Fulton Fish Market?

MILLER: I didn't work for the Fulton Fish Market; I worked for an accountant who had clients in the Fulton Fish Market, and to this very day—my brother took over the practice, to this very day. We had a pretty nice practice. I mean, things were altogether different. I went to work there, this friend of mine who—we went to college together, and we both graduated. And he went to work as a bookkeeper there, and I went to work for twelve dollars a week as a junior accountant. And he knew about it, and then some accountant who was taking care of his books lost his assistant. So he called me up, and I—from a salary of twelve dollars a week, working for one accountant, I went to twenty-five dollars a week for this accountant. And that was a munificent salary at that time! It was very, very good.

LEVINE: What year was that?

MILLER: [Unclear] 1926.

LEVINE: So what happened—did the Depression affect you in a particular way?

MILLER: Not particularly me. It hurt my father very much, but I was making twenty-five dollars a week at that time, and that was a great salary! I was able to drive a car with that. I bought a car for two hundred dollars, a Chevrolet, that was one year old. That's the way things were then. And I gradually worked up to where accounts were paying us tremendous sums of money. These people, the market became big. And then about four years ago I turned over—my brother took over. He was with me all the time, but I stepped down and retired.

LEVINE: Your brother? So your mother must have had a baby after she got to this country?

MILLER: Oh, there were three children afterwards.

LEVINE: After she came?

MILLER: After. There's my youngest brother, who was born in 19—he'd seventy years old now—seventy years ago.

LEVINE: What's his name?

MILLER: Seymour. Then we had—he was the youngest. I had another brother, Reuben, who took over my practice, who is an attorney and an accountant today. And then we had one brother who we lost in the war. He was killed here in Florida in a plane crash. He was driving an oil truck on the air field, and the plane went into him, and they were both killed.

LEVINE: What was your sister's name?

MILLER: My sister was Fanny. My sister lived on 'til—how long is Fanny dead? About eight years or ten years?

END OF SIDE A
BEGIN SIDE B

LEVINE: So when you look back on it now, about coming to this country when you were just a little boy, and living out your life here, how does it seem to you? The whole idea of you coming, immigrating, and changing--?

MILLER: Well you see, I have very, very little recollection of life in the old country. My entire life, from six years on, was spent here in the United States, and except for the first five or six years, when my father couldn't make a living, since then it was pretty good. I can't complain.

LEVINE: So when you first got here, when your mother and you and your sister first got here, it was a tough period of time--?

MILLER: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Just because your father was having trouble working?

MILLER: Yes, yes. We lived in an apartment on the first floor, and they had a little roof—there was a grocery that ran the entire length of the building in back of it, and then there was only one—there was a rood on top of that. I mean, the building didn't extend all the way past the grocery part. And I remember that we were bathed in tin tubs. That was the bath. I had to take the water from the sink, and get it hot, and then my sister and I were bathed in there. We lived on the first floor, and people threw garbage down at this extension of the building, which almost landed outside our—it did land outside our windows, you know? In Harlem we lived in a tenement house; we lived three floors up, and we had fire escapes. And the subway ran right past our door, and the streetcar ran past the building. The subways, it was underneath. And in the summer time, when it was really hot, we used to sleep out on the fire escape.

LEVINE: Were a lot of people doing that?

MILLER: Oh yes, in those days! It was the only place where you could get a breath of fresh air. And then we had no refrigerator as we have today. We had a stove, and outside the stove we had a window box where we kept food to keep it cold in the winter time, or in the summer time to air it out. And we used ice in the ice box.

LEVINE: In the window box?

MILLER: No, in the ice box.

LEVINE: Do you remember the coal and ice man?

MILLER: Oh, yes. Some friends of ours were, that lived in the apartment below us, were ice people. And during the winter, our father and friends of his used to get a job clearing the snow from the streets in Harlem. Snow piles used to be way up, and we used to play in the snow, but the city would clean the snow, and they used private people and paid by the load to take the snow away, and dump it, probably, in the East River.

LEVINE: Did your father ever—did he ever earn a living at something that worked out for him in the long run?

MILLER: Yes, for a period of time, he was doing painting when the city of New York was building a lot of schools. And he got a job as a painter with a contractor, and became a foreman, and then he made a nice living. In fact, when I went to, when I graduated high school in 1924, we had a little party and so forth, and he wanted me to continue, to go to City College, during the day. And I said, “No, I won’t go during the day; I’ll go at night.” And I did graduate at night, in 1928. I went four years at night.

LEVINE: Why did you say no?

MILLER: Because he couldn’t afford to send me to college! I knew that! To send me to school, you know? This way I went out and worked; I made my own way, to a certain extent. I mean, I contributed to the house also.

LEVINE: So you stayed living at home--?

MILLER: I lived at home until I was married.

LEVINE: And did you say you went to Brooklyn College?

MILLER: No, City.

LEVINE: City College.

MILLER: On Twenty-Third Street, in Manhattan.

LEVINE: What was it like, City College, at that time?

MILLER: Oh, God! In fact, one of my classmates was Abraham Beame.

LEVINE: Really? He's also in this interview collection.

MILLER: I met him a few years ago when a very dear friend of mine's granddaughter was married, married a nephew of his. And we went to the wedding.

LEVINE: So was City College really a--?

MILLER: Well, City College was a hot shot college. City College at one time, the Jewish boys couldn't get in, or couldn't afford to go to the regular schools like N.Y.U. or out of town, or anything like that. So we wound up in City College Day, and City College Night. There was a day school and a night school. And I went for four years to City, on Twenty-Third Street and Lexington Avenue, before the—it was an old, old school built in the fifties, in New York—not 1950, but the 1850's. And then they got this place uptown on Thirty-Ninth Street and Convent Avenue. But the original City College, the business college was down on Twenty-Third Street and Lexington Avenue. And that's where I went for four years.

LEVINE: So you finished college in four years, going nights?

MILLER: Yeah, well I didn't get a degree. I got a diploma as a graduate in accountancy.

LEVINE: I see, uh-huh. So what did you do? Did you work during the day while you were taking these classes at night?

MILLER: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! That was the idea!

LEVINE: What did you do for work, while you were going to college?

MILLER: Well, for the first few years, I got the first job I could get, which was with an insurance broker. I was a clerk then. And then I left him when I was making about twenty dollars a week, and I went to work as a junior accountant for twelve dollars a week, because I always wanted to be an accountant. I also did some bookkeeping work for a delicatessen, or a butcher, to supplement my income. I always had something to do, and I was always a little bit better off than the average youngster of my age then.

LEVINE: Do you remember what it was that made you feel early on that that's what you wanted to do?

MILLER: No, I don't remember. I had heard the word accountant, and so forth. So I went for it, that's all. And I knew the reason I went for accounting was because I wasn't a very good English student!

LEVINE: But you were good in math?

MILLER: I was good in math, so—I did what I, the best that I could for myself.

LEVINE: So then, where were you in your career when you got married? Were you already finished with college?

MILLER: No, I was—oh, I was finished with college. I finished college in 1928, and I was married in 1930.

LEVINE: And how did you meet your wife?

MILLER: When I worked for the insurance broker, there was an office next door, also an insurance broker. And there was a young boy there; I became friendly with him. He was the son of one of the brokers there. And he [pause] we became friendly, and then one day he asked me if I wanted to go to a party or something, to take his sister to the party. And that was the end!

LEVINE: So did you—what was your wife's name?

MILLER: Helen.

LEVINE: And maiden name?

MILLER: Weisenfeld. [PH]

LEVINE: Weisenfeld?

MILLER: Feld, yes. They were all from the [unclear] side, if you know what that is. You're Jewish, I'm sure, but you don't know what a [unclear] is? It was a different sect, that lived in Poland. They spoke a little different dialect, that's it. Their dialect was a little different from ours.

LEVINE: But did she also come over from--?

MILLER: No, no, she was born here.

LEVINE: She was born here. And how about—did you have children?

MILLER: Yes, I have one daughter.

LEVINE: And her name?

MILLER: Joan. And I have two great grandchildren.

LEVINE: Well that means you must have grandchildren, too. [Laughs] You have a daughter, grandchildren, and two greats?

MILLER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay, well when you look back on your life, what makes you feel satisfied, that you did?

MILLER: I made two wonderful marriages.

LEVINE: And what's your present wife's name?

MILLER: Sophie Tartikoff.

LEVINE: How do you spell it?

MILLER: T-A-R-T-I-K-O-F-F. That was her married name.

SOPHIE: My maiden name was Fleisher.

LEVINE: Fleisher?

SOPHIE: F-L-E-I-S-H-E-R. And then my married name was Tartikoff, T-A-R-T-I-K-O-double F.

MILLER: That's a famous family. Brandon Tartikoff, who was the head of paramount pictures at one time, is her nephew.

LEVINE: Oh. So what—so you made two wonderful marriages. You're saying what you feel satisfied about having done?

MILLER: Oh, yes. She was introduced to me, or I was introduced to her, by my sister-in-law, my wife's sister. She taught in the same school.

SOPHIE: She was a friend of mine, [unclear]. And when her sister died, she said would I like to meet her brother-in-law. And she put us together, and we've been together for twenty-eight years.

LEVINE: Wow! She must have had a good sort of instinct about bringing you together.

SOPHIE: She was a good friend.

LEVINE: And how is this time in your life, now that you're not working as an accountant, and you're--?

MILLER: If my wife felt well, I would be enjoying, we would be enjoying our life very much. We did until a few years ago. But we have to complaint as far as finances are concerned. We have a home in Florida; we have an apartment in Florida which we own, and we own this apartment. So—we don't lack for anything. We're not millionaires, but we don't lack for any money. Anything we want to do, we were able to do.

LEVINE: Do you think you lived out the American dream, in any way?

MILLER: I think so, from our—I never thought of it that way, but from our lowly beginnings. I mean, living in Harlem, the way we did! I think this is paradise by comparison. In fact, the only reason—the reason that we're here is, frankly, we lived in Brooklyn, and we lived in Flatbush. You know, Flatbush area? And one day I was walking from synagogue on one of the holidays. And I came back to my wife and said, "Sophie, we're moving." She said, "Where are you moving?" I said, "Anywheres. We're getting out of this neighborhood," because it was changing. The Blacks were in, and so forth. And now Flatbush is—

SOPHIE: [Unclear] change.

LEVINE: How about—are there any things of either a political or a current events nature that happened over the course of time that you particularly remember, or particularly affected you? Do you remember, you know, maybe when World War Two was over, or anything?

MILLER: Well, I was affected by the war, naturally, losing a brother, a younger brother. And I was never interested in politics. We had the ordinary life. We lived ordinary lives, nothing sensational. We, when we were younger, we took plenty of vacations. I've been to Israel three time. We did a lot of traveling, went around the world. I mean, what else can you expect out of life? I have no regrets.

LEVINE: How was it for you? Are you the person who visited Ellis Island? Is that how this [unclear] came about?

MILLER: My brother, my two brothers and myself. We made an appointment one day. Didn't we go with Ruby and Seymour? We went to Ellis.

SOPHIE: Ellis Island? Yes.

MILLER: And we became members and we left a donation there, and so forth.

LEVINE: Was it particularly moving to you to see the place, or you couldn't really remember?

MILLER: I couldn't remember it very well.

SOPHIE: It was still very moving, the experience [unclear].

LEVINE: Yeah, I find it moving, also.

SOPHIE: Yeah, I mean, I was born here. I didn't come to Ellis Island, but being there, and seeing all those names—

MILLER: Oh yes, that was—

SOPHIE: Very impressive.

MILLER: We spend quite a bit of time there, the one time that we went. But I'm since a member of something. There's some sort of an organization.

LEVINE: Do you have your name on the Wall of Honor?

MILLER: Yes. We put my mother's name on, and my sister. What?

SOPHIE: [Unclear]

LEVINE: Can you think of any attitudes or ideas that your mother or father tried to ingrain in you, that perhaps you also tried to instill in your daughter? But can you remember anything like that, ways to live by, or ideas they had about how to be?

MILLER: I don't think we ever had any discussions of that. I love my daughter dearly, I mean, and she loves us. She's very happily married, and she has two boys and two grandchildren. And I can't get—I can't wax enthusiastic about anything, but thinking, of course, to me it seems it was all part of life. To tell you, I didn't get the thrill that I got when I went to Israel the first time, and watched the parade that they had for the, the twelfth birthday. I mean, that to me was—and seeing cousins of mine that I didn't know, or anything else. That was a wonderful experience! And marrying the second time was great! And that's all I can say. We've been very happy. We—our, there's no animosity in either my family or her family about myself or her, or anything else. We get along beautifully.

LEVINE: Well, that may be the proper point to end on. I want to thank you very much.

MILLER: You're very welcome. I hope I've given you some information that you can use.

LEVINE: Very good.

MILLER: Just in general.

LEVINE: Well, you had an interesting life in Harlem, which is an area that not too many people went to.

MILLER: Oh sure, I remember LaGuardia, and so forth.

LEVINE: So that's also of interest. Okay, this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service, and it's July 19th, 1996. I'm here in Fort Lee, New Jersey, with Mr. Michael Miller and Mrs. Miller. And Mr. Miller came from Russia in 1913, when he was six, about to turn seven years of age.

MILLER: No, September 12th, 1913. I was born in 1907, so I was about to turn six years of age.

LEVINE: I thought I said that. I said something else?

MILLER: Yeah, you said—

LEVINE: Seven?

MILLER: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, okay, about to turn six. Okay, well I want to thank you very much, and I'm signing off.

MILLER: You're very welcome. I hope I've been of some help to you; that's all I can say. [Tape off/on]

LEVINE: Okay, we're resuming here with something Mr. Miller just remembered.

MILLER: When we were crossing the Atlantic, aboard ship, we were in steerage, and I remember on a nice, sunny day once, we went out on the deck. And the people of a certain class threw oranges to us, which I had never seen. My mother had never seen them, or anything else. It was a delicacy.

LEVINE: Do you remember what people did upon seeing an orange for the first time?

MILLER: No, I don't remember what we did, but that was the first time I saw an orange.

LEVINE: When you got here, were there many things that you saw, different foods, that you hadn't experienced before that?

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MILLER: Not in the beginning. It's only in later life. But in the beginning we—herring was the big thing in our life [laughs]. Because you could get one for a penny! And I paid—how much, eight dollars? For two herrings here, recently.

LEVINE: Okay, we're signing off now.

MILLER: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW