

EI-810

REBECCA ROSE MACKLER

BIRTHDATE: MARCH 12, 1900

INTERVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 27, 1996

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW:

RUNNING TIME: 24:35

INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST

RECORDING ENGINEER: PAUL SIGRIST

INTERVIEW LOCATION: LONGMEADOW, MASS

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 4/2007

ENGLAND, C. 1915

AGE: 15

SHIP:

PORT: DUBLIN

RESIDENCES: IN ENGLAND, HULL

IN AMERICA, SPRINGFIELD, MA

SIGRIST: Okay. Rebecca, my name is Paul.

MACKLER: Paul.

SIGRIST: Sigrist, and I'm from the Ellis Island Museum in New York City and today is Friday, September 27th.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: 1996.

MACKLER: Thank you.

SIGRIST: This is the—this is the Jewish Nursing Home.

MACKLER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Correct? In Long Meadow and can you just say your full name for me, please?

MACKLER: Rebecca Rose Mackler.

SIGRIST: What—what was—Rebecca?

MACKLER: Rose.

SIGRIST: Rose.

MACKLER: Mackler.

SIGRIST: Mackler.

MACKLER: M-A-L-K-E-R [sic].

SIGRIST: And is Mackler your married name?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes. Is your maiden name Rose?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That was—that was your name before you married?

MACKLER: Me? Yeah.

SIGRIST: Okay. Rebecca, do you know what your birth date is?

MACKLER: Yeah. Let's see now, it's—I don't know.

SIGRIST: Okay, I'll look it up with the social services. I think she said you born in 1900.

MACKLER: Yeah, in December.

SIGRIST: You think it's December?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: December of 1900. What country did you come from?

MACKLER: England. Hull [unclear]. [unclear] England.

SIGRIST: England, yeah. And do you remember what year you came to the United States or how old—

MACKLER: Yeah, I was fifteen.

SIGRIST: You were fifteen when you came. Fifteen. Do you—what do you remember about England?

MACKLER: Well, all about it.

SIGRIST: Yeah, can you describe the house that you lived in?

MACKLER: Was a small house. Wasn't so small. Was like this. [unclear] three-family.

SIGRIST: Three-family house.

MACKLER: Home, yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Rebecca, let me get you a Kleenex for your mouth.

MACKLER: Thank you.

SIGRIST: Hang on one second. We're going to just pause. [tape off/on] Okay, we're going to resume. You said you lived in a three-family house.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you know what the house was made out of?

MACKLER: [unclear]

SIGRIST: Yeah. Did you live in that same house the whole time you were in England?

MACKLER: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you remember what games you played when you were a little girl?

MACKLER: Hopscotch.

SIGRIST: Hopscotch. Were there any others?

MACKLER: Jumping the rope. Jumping over the rope.

SIGRIST: What—what town in England were you living in?

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MACKLER: Hull, H-U-L-L.

SIGRIST: H-U-L-L.

MACKLER: Hull.

SIGRIST: Hull. Do you remember where that is in England?

MACKLER: Yes, it's up north. It's between Scotland and Ireland, somewhere around there.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Is it—is it on the coast of England?

MACKLER: It's on the coast.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you remember—

MACKLER: The ships coming in, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember that as a child?

MACKLER: Yeah. Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you do? Did you go down to see the ships come in?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah.

MACKLER: There was a marker place. We called it a marker place.

SIGRIST: What did your family do for a—for a living in England?

MACKLER: My father was a painter. Paper hanger.

SIGRIST: Ah, painting like the inside of houses?

MACKLER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Paper hanger. What was his name?

MACKLER: Joseph.

SIGRIST: Joseph, and do you know anything about his family background?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: No.

MACKLER: He didn't have any family. They were born in Russia and they were killed in the war.

SIGRIST: Was your father born in Russia, too?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Or—so he wasn't born in England?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: Just you were born in England.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Do you remember what his personality was like?

MACKLER: He was very gentle. He was a gentleman.

SIGRIST: Was there something that you enjoyed doing with your father when you were a young girl?

MACKLER: I used to read to him. Show him how to read.

SIGRIST: Did—what language did you speak in England?

MACKLER: English.

SIGRIST: You speak English in England.

MACKLER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Your father, too?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What—what else can you tell me about his job? You said he was a paper hanger.

MACKLER: And a painter.

SIGRIST: And painter. Did he have his own shop somewhere?

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MACKLER: He had his own house—home. Just a ladder. A ladder I remember and scissors. His own.

SIGRIST: Did people work with him?

MACKLER: No, he liked to work himself.

SIGRIST: All—all himself. Did he—did he decorate the inside of your house?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you remember what color—colors the inside of the house—

MACKLER: Paper because he was mostly a paper hanger.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you remember your bedroom?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what the paper looked like in your bedroom?

MACKLER: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: It's a long time ago.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

MACKLER: Sarah.

SIGRIST: Sarah. Do you know what her name was before she was married? Her maiden name?

MACKLER: Orkin. Orkin, O-R-K-I-N.

SIGRIST: O-R-K-I-N. Where was she born?

MACKLER: In Russia.

SIGRIST: She was born in Russia, also. Tell me a little bit about what your mother did in England.

MACKLER: She didn't do anything, just took care of the kids.

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SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What were some of the household responsibilities that she had?

MACKLER: She had responsibilities, kept us clean. Us kids. We were a lot of kids.

SIGRIST: How many kids?

MACKLER: Eight.

SIGRIST: Eight! And how—how do you fall into those eight children?

MACKLER: I was the fourth. Third or the fourth.

SIGRIST: Third or the fourth, uh-huh. Was there a brother or sister—

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: That you were particularly close to when you were a child?

MACKLER: Well, they're gone now. They're not here anymore.

SIGRIST: But which—but which brother or sister did you enjoy playing with the most?

MACKLER: My sister.

SIGRIST: And her name?

MACKLER: Was Florence.

SIGRIST: Florence. What did you and Florence do when you were kids?

MACKLER: Skip rump. Jump rope.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

MACKLER: Play jacks.

SIGRIST: Did you go to school in England?

MACKLER: Oh, sure.

SIGRIST: Yes? Can you describe the school for me?

MACKLER: Well, it was in—inside. Inside. It was the yard and there was—there was a schul and a [unclear].

SIGRIST: A schul?

MACKLER: [unclear] on the opposite side. We used to see through the window, when there was weddings or something. So we used to look through the window. When we went to bed, the kids, we all went to bed early.

SIGRIST: What time?

MACKLER: About seven o'clock we were in bed.

SIGRIST: What time did you have to get up in the morning?

MACKLER: Well, for school around six.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

MACKLER: Seven.

SIGRIST: When you were in school in England, was this a Jewish school?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes. So everybody was Jewish in the school. [someone walks in talking]

MACKLER: No, they weren't all Jewish.

SIGRIST: They were not all Jewish?

MACKLER: No, some gentiles.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Let me just say for the sake of the tape that your daughter has just come in. What is your name?

LUTZ: Isabelle.

SIGRIST: Isabelle.

IL: Yes, Lutz, L-U-T-Z.

SIGRIST: L-U-T-Z, and you're going to sit down and listen to us?

IL: I can—yeah, sure.

SIGRIST: Sure. We're going to pause just for a minute until you get seated.

IL: Okay. [tape off/on]

SIGRIST: We're now resuming.

MACKLER: All right.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Lutz is seated and—

MACKLER: Yeah, thank you.

SIGRIST: Going to join us for a while. We were talking about schul.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did you learn when you went?

MACKLER: To school?

SIGRIST: To school.

MACKLER: I learned how to speak English, how to read and write because I was in the sixth grade when I came here.

SIGRIST: You were in sixth grade.

MACKLER: Yeah, I came here and they put me in the sixth grade, too.

SIGRIST: I see, and what language did you speak at home. If you were learning how to speak English in school, what language were you speaking at home?

MACKLER: Mostly English because I wanted my parents to know how to speak English.

SIGRIST: What language did they speak?

MACKLER: Jewish.

SIGRIST: They spoke—which would be Yiddish.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Right. Did—did your—did your mother know how to read and write?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: No. Did your father know how to read and write?

MACKLER: He—he was learning. He went to night school.

SIGRIST: But in England?

MACKLER: In England.

SIGRIST: In England he went to night school?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes. And you said earlier that you helped him?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You used to read to him.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you read to your father?

MACKLER: Just the news from the newspaper and different small items from the newspaper.

SIGRIST: When your father wasn't working, what did he do for his own enjoyment?

MACKLER: He used to go to the show. Show.

SIGRIST: What kind of a show?

MACKLER: Movie.

SIGRIST: What—you mentioned that your mother worked in the house.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Can you—do you remember in your house, did you have electricity in England?

MACKLER: Yeah. Yes.

SIGRIST: In England you had electricity?

MACKLER: I think so.

SIGRIST: Yes, very possible.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how your mother did the cooking?

MACKLER: On a stove. On a coal stove.

SIGRIST: Where did the coals come from?

MACKLER: We bought it. We bought the coal.

SIGRIST: And what kind of food did your mother cook for you when you were young?

MACKLER: Just plain. Just plain cooking.

SIGRIST: What is that, though? What kind of food?

MACKLER: Just plain cooking like [unclear] rice. Things like that, that's all.

SIGRIST: What would your mother cook for a special occasion?

MACKLER: She'd cook Jewish stuff. A Jewish dinner.

SIGRIST: Which is what, can you describe it?

MACKLER: Krepla. [PH]It was dough with meat inside the dough and cooked.

SIGRIST: And what was the name of that?

MACKLER: Krepla.

SIGRIST: Krepla. Can you describe for me in England how your family celebrated Passover?

MACKLER: Well, they were very, very strict. They each had matzo.

SIGRIST: Matzo.

MACKLER: Yeah, and [unclear] meail. M-E-A-I-L, meail, and—

SIGRIST: And what—what kind of ceremony would the family go through? What did you have to do for Passover?

MACKLER: We had to learn—just—not learn, but just read the—in the bible.

SIGRIST: The girls and the boys?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, everybody had to do that.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you go to the synagogue on Passover?

MACKLER: Yeah, yeah. It was right in the school. After school.

SIGRIST: Where did you sit when you went into the synagogue?

MACKLER: Downstairs, I remember. Because the ladies sat separated from the men.

SIGRIST: And how did they separate the men from the women?

MACKLER: It was the banister.

SIGRIST: And so then am I to believe that you sat with your mother?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Then? Uh-huh. How often did you go to the synagogue?

MACKLER: Not too often. Just a few times a week.

SIGRIST: And how did you practice your religion in the house?

MACKLER: Just—just said the prayers.

SIGRIST: Is there a prayer that you remember that you learned as a child that you could say for me right now?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: No? Okay. Well, who wanted to come to the United States?

MACKLER: My father.

SIGRIST: Why?

MACKLER: Because my uncle came here first.

SIGRIST: Where did your uncle settle?

MACKLER: In Springfield.

SIGRIST: In Springfield, Massachusetts. And what did he do for a living?

MACKLER: My uncle had a store where he sold garments.

SIGRIST: Garments? Like a clothing store?

MACKLER: Yeah, like a clothing store.

SIGRIST: Whose brother is he? You say he's your uncle, but whose—was he your mother's brother or—

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: Your father's brother?

MACKLER: He was my mother's brother.

SIGRIST: Your mother's brother. Do you remember his name?

MACKLER: Name was Louis.

SIGRIST: Louis. And—

MACKLER: Orkin. Orkin.

SIGRIST: Orkin, like your mother's maiden name. So it was your uncle that convinced your father that he should come?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Had your father ever been to the United States before?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: When you were a little girl, what did you know about America?

MACKLER: Just that it was very nice to live here.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you felt about leaving England?

MACKLER: Well, yes, because I was born there and raised there until I was in the fifth grade when I came here.

SIGRIST: How did you feel about having to leave your country?

MACKLER: I was sad. Very sad.

SIGRIST: Did your mother want to go to the United States?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: She did. Did—did all of you go?

MACKLER: Yeah, we all went.

SIGRIST: You all went.

MACKLER: My father saved money, bought tickets for all of us.

SIGRIST: All eight children?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And mom and dad.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Wow. Do you remember what your family packed to take to America?

MACKLER: They just packed their clothing. Some clothing and beddings. Like a pillow or something. That's all. They didn't take very much.

SIGRIST: Do you remember packing something that was yours?

MACKLER: Pictures. Pictures.

SIGRIST: Pictures of what?

MACKLER: Of the family.

SIGRIST: Do you remember say—were there family members in Hull that you had to say goodbye to before you left?

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MACKLER: No, no family. Just friends. Because all my friends were family. Such good people.

SIGRIST: Where did your family go to get onto the ship?

MACKLER: We went to—to Dublin.

SIGRIST: You went to Dublin. Do you remember how you got to Dublin?

MACKLER: Yeah, it was in a ship.

SIGRIST: Yeah, and do you remember the name of the big ship that you took to America?

MACKLER: No, I don't.

SIGRIST: No. So your family went on a small boat over to Dublin.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And that's where you got on the big ship.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you thought when you saw the big ship? How did you think?

MACKLER: Well, I thought it was very pleasant to take a trip.

SIGRIST: Do you remember where you slept on the ship?

MACKLER: See, there was bunks. I remember bunks.

SIGRIST: Do you remember if your whole family stayed in one area?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You think they did?

MACKLER: Yeah, we did.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. How long did the ship take to get to America?

MACKLER: Took about eight days.

SIGRIST: Eight days, and do you remember what you did on the ship for those eight days?

MACKLER: No. I read books.

SIGRIST: Did you get seasick?

MACKLER: No. Yes, I did.

SIGRIST: Did anybody else in your family get seasick?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: Just you?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you remember where you were fed on the ship?

MACKLER: In our—near our—where we were stationed. Because we took—we had to take third class because my father [unclear].

SIGRIST: Right, right. So the ship took eight days to get to the United States. Do you remember when the ship came into New York City?

MACKLER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Yes. What happened?

MACKLER: Nothing. Then my father had to have a certain amount of money to show them that he can afford to keep and take care of us kids.

SIGRIST: And you remember him doing that?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes. Do you remember, did you go to Ellis Island?

MACKLER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Is that where that happened?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did anything else happen while you were at Ellis Island, that you can remember?

MACKLER: No, I can't.

SIGRIST: Were you examined at all?

MACKLER: Oh, yeah. Yes, my eyes were examined and my hands were examined. Yeah.

SIGRIST: And did you pass?

MACKLER: Yeah, I passed.

SIGRIST: I guess you passed. Where did your father take you when you were released from Ellis Island?

MACKLER: We went to my uncle's house.

SIGRIST: And that would be in Springfield?

MACKLER: Yeah, on Butler Street.

SIGRIST: Boston Street?

MACKLER: Butler.

SIGRIST: Butler Street. And how did you get from New York City to Springfield?

MACKLER: That I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Do you remember, had you—did you know your uncle?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: Had you—you'd never seen him before? Did you stay that first night with him?

MACKLER: He had a cottage, yeah. He has girls of his own, daughters.

SIGRIST: How long did your family stay with him?

MACKLER: Only about a week.

SIGRIST: And then where did you go?

MACKLER: [unclear]. My father found a tenement and we moved to a tenement. It was on Congress Street.

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SIGRIST: Congress Street. Do you remember the—you stayed overnight that first night with your uncle. Do you remember what you did your first full day in America?

MACKLER: No, I don't remember. No.

SIGRIST: So your family moved to the tenement. Did you get—you went into school?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yes.

MACKLER: Chestnut Street School.

SIGRIST: Tess—

MACKLER: Chestnut Street.

SIGRIST: Chestnut Street. Tell me what it was like to go to an American school for the first time.

MACKLER: It was beautiful.

SIGRIST: Yeah. Why? What was so good about it?

MACKLER: It was clean and nice. The teachers were nice. Kids were clean.

SIGRIST: And that's different than it had been in England?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Yeah. The tenement where you moved to, was that a Jewish neighborhood?

MACKLER: No. Yeah. Partly.

SIGRIST: Yeah, partly. Do you remember some of the—the businesses in that neighborhood?

MACKLER: There was restaurants. There were grocery stores. That's all I remember where I lived.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Can you describe for me the apartment that you had in the tenement?

MACKLER: It was on the first floor. It [unclear] steps.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how many rooms?

MACKLER: It was about seven.

SIGRIST: Seven rooms.

MACKLER: Because we had to have a lot of bedrooms.

SIGRIST: How old was your oldest brother or sister at that time?

MACKLER: Well, my oldest brother was about seventeen.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

MACKLER: Sixteen, seventeen and my—that was my oldest brother.

SIGRIST: At that time.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And you think that you were about fifteen at that time.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: When you came?

MACKLER: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Yes. Tell me—tell me what work your father got?

MACKLER: He did paper hanging and he did any kind of work he could get to provide for all us kids.

SIGRIST: Did your mother get a job?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: She stayed at home.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What about you? Did you go out and get a job?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What was the first job that you got in America?

MACKLER: I went to the needle shop and worked in the thread factory.

SIGRIST: In what kind of a factory?

MACKLER: Needle.

SIGRIST: Needle.

MACKLER: You know, sewing needles.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh.

MACKLER: Machine needles.

SIGRIST: Oh, making the needles.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: I see. I see. Do you remember exactly what your job was?

MACKLER: On the machines. It was a comb—called a combination machine. There was different kinds of work on the machine, cutting, you know, the length and stamping the name.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much you got paid for that job?

MACKLER: Yeah, only seven dollars and something.

SIGRIST: Seven dollars a week?

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, and do you remember what your hours were during the day? When did you go to work and when did they release you?

MACKLER: I went to work about—had to get there about seven and we'd leave about eight or something, eight thirty.

SIGRIST: Eight at night?

MACKLER: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Uh-huh, and did you work with any other immigrants?

MACKLER: Yeah. No. No. No.

SIGRIST: Not that you remember.

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What were some of the jobs that your—your other brothers and sisters got?

MACKLER: Well, my oldest brother, he got a job in the sewing machine store.

SIGRIST: In a sewing machine store.

MACKLER: And he learned how to run the sewing machine. He made my sister a little jacket. He had enough material just for a little jacket.

SIGRIST: Now, the money that you made and your brother made, what did you do with that money?

MACKLER: We'd give it to my mother.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh, and then what would she do with it?

MACKLER: She took care of it. She bought the grocery and she bought clothing and different things we needed.

SIGRIST: Did—when you moved to the tenement, how far away was that from where your uncle lived?

MACKLER: Just around the corner.

SIGRIST: So he lived nearby?

MACKLER: Yeah, nearby.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What was there to do for entertainment back in those days?

MACKLER: Well, we'd go to the show. The movies.

SIGRIST: What about at home, how did the family—

MACKLER: Well, we all worked on puzzles.

SIGRIST: Puzzles. Uh-huh. Do you remember from back then, was there a synagogue in that neighborhood?

MACKLER: Yeah. Yeah, there was.

SIGRIST: Yes.

MACKLER: But—

SIGRIST: Was your—was your family a religious family?

MACKLER: Well, partly.

SIGRIST: And do you have any memories of going to that synagogue in Springfield?

MACKLER: Oh, yeah. Sure.

SIGRIST: What sticks out in your mind about that particular synagogue?

MACKLER: A lot of steps to go up.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. Okay. Did your parents ever want to go back to England?

MACKLER: No.

SIGRIST: No.

MACKLER: We liked America.

SIGRIST: Did any other people that they knew from England come over to the United States?

MACKLER: I don't remember that.

SIGRIST: Did you ever go back to England?

MACKLER: Oh, yes. Once.

SIGRIST: Once.

MACKLER: Few years ago.

SIGRIST: And did you go to—to Hull?

MACKLER: Yeah.

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SIGRIST: Yes, and how did you feel when you went back to the town that you had been a child?

MACKLER: Well, I was anxious to see what it was all about. If there was any improvements. There wasn't many improvements made.

SIGRIST: Still looked like it had?

MACKLER: Yeah, hundred years ago.

SIGRIST: A hundred years ago. Well, great. I think that's all the questions I have for you. You did a great job.

MACKLER: Thank you.

SIGRIST: You have a good memory, and I thank you very much.

MACKLER: Welcome.

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Rebecca Mackler.

MACKLER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: On Friday, September 27th, 1996 with her daughter in attendance. Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]