

**EI-892**

**HERMAN GOLDBERG**

**BIRTHDATE: DECEMBER 7, 1908**

**INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 27, 1997**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 88**

**RUNNING TIME: 15:19**

**INTERVIEWER: PAUL SIGRIST**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: PAUL SIGRIST**

**INTERVIEW LOCATION: WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**RUSSIA, 1923 [?]**

**AGE: 15**

**SHIP: COSTANZA [PH]**

**PORT:**

**RESIDENCES:**

SIGRIST: Okay. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service.  
Today is Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997.

GOLDBERG: Right.

SIGRIST: I'm at the Hebrew Home in West Hartford and I'm here with Mr.  
Goldberg. What's your first name?

GOLDBERG: Herman.

SIGRIST: Herman. Herman Goldberg. We just interviewed Mr.  
Goldberg's wife, Myrna Goldberg, a minute ago. Mr. Gol—  
Goldberg, what country did you come from?

GOLDBERG: Russia.

SIGRIST: You came from Russia. And how old were you when you  
came?

GOLDBERG: I came—they wanted a special quota, like I was an orphan. That's why I made a—an exc—exception and they let me in. I came as a 14, 15-year-old—

SIGRIST: Around 15 years old?

GOLDBERG: That's it, yeah.

SIGRIST: And do you remember what your birth date is?

GOLDBERG: Birth date?

SIGRIST: Yes.

GOLDBERG: June 8<sup>th</sup>—oh, the birthday—

SIGRIST: What's your birth date?

GOLDBERG: 1908.

SIGRIST: 1908. June 8<sup>th</sup>?

GOLDBERG: Well, we used to joke about it, Pearl Harbor Day.

SIGRIST: Labor Day?

GOLDBERG: Pearl Harbor Day.

SIGRIST: Pearl Harbor Day. So that's December.

GOLDBERG: Yes.

SIGRIST: December the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1908.

GOLDBERG: Right, right.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the year that you came? To the United States, remember what year it was?

GOLDBERG: Well, it was 1908.

SIGRIST: That was the year you were born.

GOLDBERG: Y—oh, yeah.

SIGRIST: And what year did you come to the United States?

GOLDBERG: I don't remember exactly.

SIGRIST: Okay. But you were around 15, you think?

GOLDBERG: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Around 15. Great. What do you remember about growing up in Russia?

GOLDBERG: Not too much.

SIGRIST: Tell me what you do remember about being a little boy in Russia.

GOLDBERG: Just—just how to follow the crowd and take things that they tell you to, those days and we took it from there.

SIGRIST: You said that you were an orphan. Did you live in an orphanage?

GOLDBERG: No, but a—according to them, used to—t—there was a quota. You couldn't go into this country. But they let me in as an orphan, 15, 16 years old. They made an exception.

SIGRIST: I see. Do you know what your father's name was?

GOLDBERG: Itzach [PH].

SIGRIST: Itzach.

GOLDBERG: Itzach, yes.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

GOLDBERG: He didn't do much. He just—what comes natural.

SIGRIST: How did he make money?

GOLDBERG: He didn't have to make money.

SIGRIST: He didn't make money. Who made the money in your family?

GOLDBERG: He didn't make no money. He lived [unclear] and they got by that with the style of living those days.

SIGRIST: What did you eat when you were a boy?

GOLDBERG: [coughs] Excuse me. I got a cold.

SIGRIST: That's okay.

GOLDBERG: We ate whatever it—

SIGRIST: Whatever.

GOLDBERG: —it—you didn't make much issue of it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what your mother's name was?

GOLDBERG: Bruha [PH].

SIGRIST: Bruha?

GOLDBERG: Yes.

SIGRIST: And do you remember what her maiden name was before she—

GOLDBERG: Kramerman [PH].

SIGRIST: Kramerman.

GOLDBERG: Yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And do you have any memories of your mother?

GOLDBERG: Well, she—she was a mother, a Yiddishe [PH] mama.

SIGRIST: A Yiddish mama. Did you have brothers and sisters?

GOLDBERG: Yes. I was one of five in the family. I was the youngest.

SIGRIST: You were the youngest. Do you—

GOLDBERG: [unclear]—

SIGRIST: Go ahead.

GOLDBERG: And I remember that. I was the youngest in the family.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you did for fun back then? What did you do for fun when you were a little boy?

GOLDBERG: Not lot to speak of. You just—it's—it's hard to figure out what I did.

SIGRIST: It was a long time ago.

GOLDBERG: It was a long time ago is right.

SIGRIST: [chuckles]

GOLDBERG: Yes.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, d—did your parents die?

GOLDBERG: Yes.

SIGRIST: They did? H—do you remember how old you were when that happened?

GOLDBERG: I was—in the—in the 40s, I think.

SIGRIST: And—and why did you want to come to the United States?

GOLDBERG: That's the only solution, those days, which [unclear] you could come the live in a—in a—in a world, in a peaceful world with—that everybody's not afraid. And we made a—the rounds.

SIGRIST: Do you remember being on the ship to coming—to come to America?

GOLDBERG: Some of it I do remember, yes.

SIGRIST: What do you remember about that?

GOLDBERG: The same as she said.

SIGRIST: Well, say [unclear] again, please.

GOLDBERG: She mentioned—yes. I came and I was in the hull of the ship because I came the special. And—and I remember I was watching people eat and I was—envied them because I didn't have anything to eat. And this is the way we—we came by.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the ship?

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GOLDBERG: Costanza.

SIGRIST: Costanza?

GOLDBERG: Yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. And do you remember how long it took to get to America?

GOLDBERG: Took too long to suit me.

SIGRIST: [chuckles] Did you get s—

GOLDBERG: Three weeks.

SIGRIST: Three weeks.

GOLDBERG: Yes.

SIGRIST: Where did you leave from? Do you remember what—what port you left from?

GOLDBERG: Costanza.

SIGRIST: You left from Costanza. That's where you got the ship.

GOLDBERG: Right.

SIGRIST: Right. And do you remember being on the deck of the ship?

GOLDBERG: Yes, I—

SIGRIST: What did you see when you were on the deck?

GOLDBERG: [chuckles] Not too much. All you heard is the—the rumbling of the waves. You know, you were way in the hull of the ship—

SIGRIST: How did—how did that make you feel to be deep in the boat?

GOLDBERG: It didn't make me feel too good. I was counting the days. Three weeks on a ship like this, it's enough to—but we made it. That's all.

SIGRIST: Do you remember when the ship came to America? When you got to America?

GOLDBERG: Not too much.

SIGRIST: What—where did you go to live once the ship—once you got to America?

GOLDBERG: I—we—we finally got there and I remember—I remember a man came over, a Jewish man. “[unclear] America? Where you come from?” And I told him. “Okay. Come with me.” And he took me and he bought me dinner and a—you know, this—and he—he start living. And he took me down and he explained to me the situation. And there’s plenty world went by since then. I remember a lot of things. But we made it. That’s the main thing. We made it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what town you lived in? When you first got to America, what town or city did you live in? Did you live in New York?

GOLDBERG: Uh-hmm.

SIGRIST: Mrs. Goldberg says New York.

GOLDBERG: Yeah, we came to New York.

SIGRIST: You lived in New York.

GOLDBERG: Yeah.

SIGRIST: What—can you tell me how you learned English in New York?

GOLDBERG: After a while, you learn. And we managed.

SIGRIST: Did you get a job when you came to America?

GOLDBERG: I got a job after a while and I can remember—it’s one thing that I pride myself, those days, that—about the greenhorn business. The—a guy came over to me and he asked me, “You got to make a living. How you gonna make a living?” So I told him, “If you pay me \$3 a—I’m not going to be able to make a living.”

SIGRIST: So what kind of a job did you get?

GOLDBERG: I got [coughs]—

SIGRIST: That's okay. Take your—

GOLDBERG: Ironing.

SIGRIST: Ironing.

GOLDBERG: Ironing, shirt ironer. Was a friend of mine, he taught me how to shirt—to iron shirts. And the—to iron shirts for piecework and all that stuff, he went through the—the mill. But we made it. That's all.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you liked about America?

GOLDBERG: Well, those days, I liked everything. I liked everything.

SIGRIST: Did you become a citizen?

GOLDBERG: Oh, yeah. Became—became a citizen.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how old you were when you became a citizen?

GOLDBERG: [unclear] 1915, I guess.

SIGRIST: 1950? Is that—is that what he said, 1950? 19—well, did you ever go back to Europe?

GOLDBERG: No, no.

SIGRIST: Did you—

MRS. GOLDBERG: He did.

SIGRIST: [laughs] That's okay. Mrs. Goldberg says you did go back to Europe.

MRS. GOLDBERG: [unclear] to go to Russia.

GOLDBERG: Oh, we went visiting. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Went visiting. I—yeah.

GOLDBERG: Yeah.

SIGRIST: How did it make you feel to be back in Russia?

GOLDBERG: It didn't make much difference to me, those days.

SIGRIST: How do—how do you—how do you—do you think of yourself as being American or Russian? How do you think of yourself?

GOLDBERG: There's so many things that I went through since then, good and bad. I—I went through a lot of things in my life there.

SIGRIST: Do—I—is there any story you'd like to tell me about something that happened to you during your life? What do you think the most important thing you've ever done was?

GOLDBERG: To meet her.

SIGRIST: To meet Mrs. Goldberg?

GOLDBERG: Huh?

SIGRIST: Mrs. Goldberg is saying you're a cantor.

GOLDBERG: Well, this is—this is one of the better things already.

SIGRIST: Can you—can you talk about that a little bit? How did you become a cantor?

GOLDBERG: Because I had a good wife and I—and I was singing.

SIGRIST: Can you—

GOLDBERG: And people liked—people liked me for that.

SIGRIST: Can you sing something for me right now, like a—

GOLDBERG: [chuckles]

SIGRIST: —like a—a Hebrew prayer? Can you sing for me? Go ahead.

GOLDBERG: [singing in Hebrew]. I'm nervous.

SIGRIST: That's great. That's wonderful. Thank you.

GOLDBERG: [chuckles]

SIGRIST: What were you singing about?

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- GOLDBERG: [unclear]—
- SIGRIST: But what—what are you saying?
- GOLDBERG: That's a Jewish—Jewish motif, you know. Davening, mostly davening.
- SIGRIST: How does it make you feel when you sing?
- GOLDBERG: How does it make—makes me feel very good.
- SIGRIST: Well, Mr. Goldberg, thank you very much for letting me ask you these questions. You did a good job.
- GOLDBERG: You're welcome. Thank you.
- SIGRIST: Happy to—
- GOLDBERG: Thank you—
- SIGRIST: I'm happy to get the singing on tape. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Herman Goldberg on Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997 at the Hebrew Home in West Hartford with Mrs. Goldberg in attendance. Thank you both very much.
- GOLDBERG: You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]