

William Mayberg
Narrator

Rhoda Lewin
Interviewer

January 15, 1976
Mayberg's apartment, Minnesota

William Mayberg -WM
Rhoda Lewin -RL

WM: . . . World War II in Montreal, for the primary reason, because that same brother of mine that I talked to you about, went to Montreal because he went to his cousin about and [unclear] to me a [unclear]. You know.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: Because [unclear]. Yes. So therefore, although I was already a married man, and I didn't have anybody to help me out with my expense of coming. But naturally as soon as I got my cousin there, I [unclear], and my brother there. So naturally, my young wife and myself came to Montreal. And it wasn't hard for me to get a job in a learning institution, the Talmud Torah. Not very much money, twenty or twenty-five dollars a month, but that was enough to make a living then. No child, because they didn't come until later.

Then, after a year and a half, I corresponded with some of my nephews, my wife's nephews rather, here, and they thought, they would have wanted me to come here. And they got into contact with principal of the Talmud Torah, which was then on Plymouth Avenue, that they've got an uncle in Montreal and that would be a good [unclear] among . . . for the Minneapolis Talmud Torah. That's what they described me [unclear] to having me here. And we start to correspond and they would have wanted me to come right away but I couldn't very well leave the people in the middle of the season, in the middle of June. I leave in September. September, which means the [unclear] are [unclear]. But at that time they'd got another teacher. So I was without a job and I had a hell of a time getting much of established, and I started to do some other things, and making four or five dollars a week. Whatever I could do, but . . .

RL: Doing what?

WM: Hmmm?

RL: What were you doing?

WM: Peddling dry goods. Dry goods, a lot of dry . . . [unclear] among the . . . among the Jewish women would [unclear] themselves and [unclear] just only a stone's throw from downtown, but

then it would be a job to go downtown to down into the Dayton's to buy their things. So there were several peddlers that would [unclear] to . . . became a . . . had provided there the nice good size dry goods store on Sixth Avenue North but [unclear]. There were another couple or three other peddlers which made goods, but I being the [unclear] I did not do very good. And I had a hell of a time making four or five dollars a week and [unclear] but I got along. Until about a couple of years later, a year and a half or three years later, they opened up a Torah Academy, which was they got me as the first teacher at forty dollars a month. Forty dollars a month, it was a pretty good size, fairly decent pay to start with. And within a year and a half they raised me to seventy dollars a month. Seventy dollars a month, I was [unclear].

However, at the end of the First World War, history knows the record, the Flu Epidemic. People they called it Spanish Flu. It came sort of from Asia or through Spain and hundreds and hundreds of people had died all throughout Europe and America. And therefore they closed all the schools and the Torah Academy, they didn't [unclear] they [unclear] the Talmud Torah. [Unclear] Talmud Torah because a little Talmud Torah was made by [unclear]. But then they stressed mainly this teaching of Hebrew. And most of the Talmud Torah being of the more Orthodox type, they wanted to have their kids all know how to read the [unclear] and the [unclear]. So they thought I would be the one to guide them along the [unclear]. Of course I had . . . personally, I was more of the type that belonged to the Talmud Torah, but we have to make a living. I figured I'll see what I can do.

So when the Flu Epidemic started out, they closed all the schools and ours was also closed. So I came to collect for the half month, the first half month and they say, "You didn't do the teaching so why should we pay?" I said, "Yes, but I've got . . . but could I do something else in the same time?" And what would be of the . . . the women teachers but [unclear]. And [unclear] tell me to clean, you don't tell me [unclear] as long as I saw this [unclear] but after about six weeks, so I couldn't teach them all together so [unclear] Talmud Torah was opening up again, the Torah Academy rather. I had a chance to go into business, into the grocery business with a brother in law of mine that also came in that. And we both invested fourteen hundred dollars in that little grocery store on the East Side, which we did . . . not all our own money, but we had to borrow some from the Loan Association.

However, after the first year, I bought out my brother in law because he didn't really like to work seven days a week. And my sister and her family were yet remaining in Russia and you couldn't get them out, we couldn't even correspond with them during the World War for six, seven years, you know. So he figured, why should he work so hard when he hasn't got his family with him. So he didn't want to . . . so he wanted to sell his part. I said, "Well, I'll buy you out." So I bought him out and my wife's [unclear]. So by 1921 when we first started to hear from our folks in Russia, then my brother who served in the First World War in the Greek Battalion in the Middle East, and he came back after the war, and here to get started. So even I was already was enough economically sound enough to give him three hundred and seventy-five dollars to go to Europe to get the family out. And the expense . . . fare expenses were much cheaper then, than now.

So he brought them into Israel into then Palestine, and he helped them get settled there. And then I helped . . . I sent each one, my brother . . . another brother there, and a brother in law. And my brothers, I sent them each seventy-five dollars to buy themselves a horse and wagon, to be able

to do some dray, you know, dray work [unclear] and now they are all richer than I am, besides my father and mother that [unclear].

Now then . . . what did you want to know? Yes. When I came here, there was a group of young foreigners I knew already with one that had a great deal to do in forming . . . in formulating, rather, the program of the Labor Zionist Organization in the United States. His name was [unclear], a journalist of great knowledge. Understanding socialism and Zionism and he was . . . and there was another one, a Dr. Marcus, between him and Dr. Marcus they established a little weekly paper [unclear] here in Minneapolis. But Minneapolis was too small and it is . . . even Minneapolis-Saint Paul, too small a population to be able to support such a [unclear] publication although it was very informing for us youngsters it was very important. But they had to leave. Both Dr. Marcus and get a job. In fact, Marcus went to Chicago. [Unclear] went back to New York. And he was the editor of the [unclear] which still exists now as Labor Zionist weekly paper.

We had a very nice group of young labor Zionists. We understood that labor Zionism was, among a nation of the idea of . . . the idea of establishing the Jewish . . . a good Jewish settlement, although we didn't dream yet of a state that was going to be created [unclear] so soon. Because it was only a few years after [unclear] who sat on the first congress . . . I know founded the Jewish state that maybe fifty years later that will become a [unclear]. Now it may be a dream but if you want to make it [unclear]. And so it happened that through the fifty years, to the fifty years after Dr. [unclear] authored these words, the Jewish state did become a reality. You've probably heard that if you wouldn't want, if you would want [unclear] you've probably heard about that, too. That if you will not want it, it will not be dream and so it began.

[Unclear]. He had a very nice group. I can name you a few of the people [unclear], who was a brother . . . who was the son of the man that found the [unclear].

RL: Hmmm.

WM: [Unclear] was a very, very [unclear] man. He was born of our most important members, Saadia Gelb's father, Mr. Gelb, Simcha Gelb was his name. He was one of the best teachers of the Talmud Torah. A few other people. In fact, I got a list of those names. About, oh, about twenty-five years ago we talked [unclear] relation of the names of the first [unclear] of the Labor Zionist group in here. And but I think [unclear] should be mentioned, and Mr. Gelb. [Unclear] after that, there was printed an article written by him in the Hebrew monthly, this is called [unclear] about the theory of Einstein. He [unclear] the whole theory of Einstein, which you know it's been told there would be [unclear] people that understand it. And it was a wonderful article, and I used to receive that monthly. So after I received I thought that article should be in the [unclear] family here. And I gave it to [unclear] was his brother and it probably now remains in the . . . in the family of my [unclear]. And now it's going [unclear] to be in the family for years to come.

RL: Is this Malcolm [unclear]'s family?

WM: Malcolm [unclear]'s father.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: Malcolm [unclear]'s father, yes. I think Malcolm [unclear] was here [unclear] two years ago and he had his daughter here. And his daughter asked me . . . he wanted . . . he brought his daughter to [unclear] to have his daughter ask Mr. Mayberg [unclear] who knew his father's father and who he was and what kind of a man he was. Yes. Ah . . . well, what else can I tell you? [Unclear].

RL: Well, what did you Zionists do? Did you have regular meetings?

WM: We had regular meetings. In fact, we had regular meetings every week or so. And . . .

RL: Where did you meet?

WM: We were meeting . . . well, it used to be Sixth Avenue was to be . . . was then the . . . we used to call any kind of a Jewish settlement that was really Jewish, like reminded you of the ghetto towns in the old countries, used to call it [unclear]. And Sixth Avenue, [unclear]. At that time when I came [unclear] Avenue was just here and there you would see a Jewish [unclear]. But Sixth Avenue was the [unclear] there. And we lived, I said like, we had to like, just like in the ghetto in the old country, you know. We used to meet every week and we used to go around collecting what we called for a while the [unclear Arbiter] Fund. The [unclear] Fund was . . . we were collecting nickels, dimes, we had [unclear] once in a while. Either for the [unclear] Fund, which . . . the little fund we used to send to Israel to help those people because they did need some help then. Only now we give dollars and hundreds of dollars and thousands of dollars, and then we gave nickels and dimes because a quarter was a big [chuckles] big giving already.

Later on, it was a few years later, they started to call . . . they gave it then a bigger name, and it became more popularized under the name [unclear] Campaign. [Unclear] is a German word, you know, of a campaign for the workers, so we called it [unclear] campaign so in order . . . there were some people that were not regular Zionists. But as socialists from the [unclear] and others, they figured those Jewish workers in Israel, in Palestine, are worthy of help, getting help from the Jewish working men here, which are viewed with the same general idealism of socialism plus Zionism together.

And the [unclear] campaign [unclear] already started to be active. And she came . . . it was about 1926, she was a young girl then, maybe twenty. Well, [unclear] she was there about twenty-five, twenty-six years old. [Unclear] was already married. So I lived in Saint Paul, because in 1946 I was living in Saint Paul. So a friend of mine, [unclear] came to me and said, "Bill, you know [unclear] a very nice young woman, she is going to appear at the meeting [unclear] women supporters of the labor Zionism. And [unclear] somebody, she would ask for money, for support about you trying to pledge a good size sum, maybe twenty-five, thirty dollars, otherwise people will start to [unclear] and dollars. Maybe let your wife come up with a bigger sum so it would be . . . it would help other people to give then ten or five or fifteen." Alright. Sure. I agreed to it.

And so a week later, they came [unclear] and took out a check for [unclear]. So we . . . they took [unclear] thirty dollars [unclear] my wife said thirty dollars and I wouldn't . . . I wouldn't have [unclear] it was another time, a few years later. It was already after the war. Or at that time it was already . . . the [unclear] Fund also, so both took [unclear] among them one of the founders of the Labor Zionism in the United States. He just died a few years ago. I saw him in Israel a few years ago when I was there. So he was [unclear] in Saint Paul, too. And we had a meeting. Money was needed. It was already after the war but before the state yet. And maybe it was the middle of [unclear] I couldn't say exactly. It might [unclear] already there.

So he . . . actually, a nice big meeting among all there. And we asked for people to continue to [unclear] for the [unclear] fund for the Israel [unclear]. So I said fifty dollars. I was already in business then, I was already [unclear] then I had to [unclear] her but I was in a position I could save fifty dollars. And other people gave a dollar or two dollars or five dollars.

So after the . . . with the sum [unclear] received . . . it wasn't very much money. [Unclear] was very much disappointed. And he showed it on his face. [Unclear] tell you I have somebody . . . if anybody else, no matter how many but that be one or twenty-five, would double their pledge from a dollar to two or from five to ten, I will double my pledge from fifty to a hundred. There wasn't [unclear] but I gave the hundred dollars that time. [Chuckles]

Because I'm a Zionist from way back and I remember the [unclear] and I was already ninety years old, ten years old in 1897. I remember the first . . . I remember the pogrom in [unclear]. In fact, the other day, [unclear] of the Jewish Family Welfare, mentioned about how some of the people of the Jewish immigrants had started to come here on the wave of the immigration in the first decade of this century. And he mentioned the fact that the [unclear] tried to . . . I didn't like to [unclear] but I will tell you. Tried to . . . instead, the Jewish immigration has been coming toward the Eastern ports, you know, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, even the poor Jewish [unclear].

Later on, they started to take a little bit more to address what it was . . . the American Jewish community under Jacob [unclear] and although they saw that the Jewish population in New York is growing by leaps and bounds, and partly, maybe they were afraid of [unclear] but they also were afraid that . . . at that time somebody says New York is not America. Some people even say it now, New York is not America, you know. [Chuckles] Then they tried to . . . get some of the Jewish immigration through South, to Texas into a small part of Galveston.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: The fact was it was [unclear] American Jewish Committee, it was then the breakdown, so to speak, of their hope of Zionism that originally thought or planned of getting a charter from the Sultan of Turkey. And by that . . . those negotiations broke down to . . . some of the original Zionists broke away from the mainstream of Zionism and they formed another group. They called themselves Territorialists. We find a territory anyplace, wherever we can. In fact, [unclear] was proposed. And you remember I wrote about the fact that the Jewish . . . and mostly those Jewish people that they needed the protection for, for their Zionist . . . name of Zion is now going from the fact that to . . . to save the Jewish body, but they also meant Zionism as a Jewish

home for the Jewish people that have been longing for all throughout the milleniums, you know. They were the ones against it. And they had the Territorialists who were looking for territories all over the world to determine [unclear] committee proposed to turn around immigration through Galveston, Texas, they will be [unclear] into it.

And then Galveston is a small port. And people didn't have enough to do there. Now [unclear] so somehow the immigration from there started to come along the route, straight through to almost from Texas to Minnesota, into the Dakotas. In fact, now, I just saw the other day, some . . . by the way, you know I missed one thing with the other. There is an organization, too. Some of them, some of the immigrants from Galveston, they came up to Minneapolis, to Duluth, to Saint Paul. And some of them also took homesteads in Montana and in North and South Dakota. And now there is a movement that some of them . . . I don't remember, Mr. [unclear] told me about . . . they had tried to get the names of all the people that got homesteads and later on, Jewish farmers, some of them, offered up [unclear] and after a while when their families became bigger and they wanted their daughters not to marry [unclear], they moved to Minneapolis and Saint Paul and to Duluth, you know. And it was part of that Galveston immigration business.

RL: Now could you backtrack a minute and tell me about this farm that you had for training young Zionists who wanted to go to Palestine?

WM: Yes. That was . . . then, as now, maybe we see now as then. It was the idea of the older Zionists to see their young forces, young people, boys or girls shall come to Israel and settle there. How to get them so we had . . . there was even before the *achsherah* started. So some of the older Zionists like [unclear] and Malinsky's daughter, that was around here, and some people came from as far as Cleveland and others to be on the farm we used to call [unclear]. [Unclear] means preparing people for our later aims, you know. And the idea of [unclear] here for two or three years in Champlain, Champlain is like [unclear]. And the [unclear] was a very wonderful school, preparatory school for the youngsters that later on came to Israel and be settled, some of the kibbutzim. Like Malinsky's daughter and Saadia Gelb, then they settled, they kibbutzed in the north, in Galilee. That would be one of Kfar Blum.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And I know my young . . . a niece of mine from Detroit, there were several [unclear] throughout the United States, about three or four. There was one of those here, one that was around near Detroit, and there were some around New York, New Jersey. And they were . . . from these [unclear] came the first kibbutzim, some of the first kibbutzim. Some of them became . . . were formed from those that would [unclear] but the [unclear] that was several kibbutzim from [unclear] was born. And they . . . they also have some Minneapolis people in the [unclear] and Kfar Blum [unclear] that I know from . . . that came from the American . . . and several more, like [unclear] there were several more kibbutzim that were . . . In fact, I had . . . I have [unclear] one my students now is a girl that was [unclear] and she went for a year to study at University of Jerusalem. And she came back and she finished university here. During the time [unclear] she kind of [unclear]. She found [unclear] that knows a little Hebrew. Somebody told her about it. So she comes in two or three times a week [unclear].

[Static]

WM: . . . Russian and also [unclear] journalism from the . . . from the Hebrew press.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: And it's surprising. I get lots of [unclear] for seeing how well she does. And the fact that she plans to go to Israel again next year to a kibbutz, that they are planning to form several . . . several people from several towns close and far away from here. And she goes there every . . . two, three, four weeks. She'll go to Chicago for a weekend, preparing themselves for laying the groundwork for the future kibbutz that they intend to form.

RL: Oh, that's interesting.

WM: Yes.

RL: Who bought the farm? How did . . . did you have a fund drive to raise the money or did somebody give it?

WM: Well, that was each one . . . each one put . . . It was a good farmer, I don't remember the name. He really got a very small amount for his farm, or he couldn't broker it himself, and it was in the Depression that you probably couldn't sell any farms. So it was through . . . or there was . . . oh, Joseph Ball. He probably . . . you don't . . .

RL: Oh . . .

WM: Joseph Ball . . . but Joseph Ball's father was the farmer that he helped those youngsters knew as much about farming as I know about going [unclear] out in the woods. So now those . . . did he sell them or give the farm, but he was also helping them in organizing the farm. And the farmer did it for two or three years back then.

RL: Did they live there? Or did they just go out and work?

WM: No, no. They lived there. They lived there. [Unclear]'s daughter was there and there was a lot of people that [unclear] while they were there [unclear]. And now [unclear] daughter's now in Kfar Blum, with Saadia Gelb in Kfar Blum. Yes.

RL: Yes. Did he actually have a son, [unclear]?

WM: [Unclear] was a [unclear]. No.

RL: Oh.

WM: No. No, he never . . . he lived in Israel, alright.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: But he never lived . . . he went to a [unclear] family [unclear].

[Static]

RL: [Unclear] happened . . .

WM: . . . on the North Side, by [unclear] in Minneapolis . . . no, no. I lived . . . my first business in Minneapolis was on the East Side.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: And then my second business was on the South Side, on First Avenue South and Twenty-Fifth Street.

RL: Where was the one on the East Side?

WM: On the East Side [unclear] Third Avenue and [unclear].

RL: Hmmm.

WM: It was where Seventh Street and East Hennepin and Eighth Street get together . . . well, where East Hennepin goes . . . East Hennepin goes [unclear] and then it [unclear] off to this here street where [unclear] goes all the way straight to Saint Paul. But on the border between Minneapolis and [unclear] Avenue.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: [Unclear] Avenue in Saint Paul is a continuation of East Hennepin in Minneapolis, you know.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: But after my first store in Saint Paul . . . and Minneapolis I've been through a small store on First Avenue South and Twenty-Fifth Street. And well, you know, I'm [unclear] you know, I started to [unclear] you know that a Jewish person has a little money they would invest it in real estate. And the real estate was so good so you have to train your business to cover up the real estate business, so I [unclear] real estate business [unclear] I'm not worrying about it now.

RL: This was in . . .?

WM: I lived in Saint Paul from 1926 to 1946.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: In 1946, 1946 I was [unclear] and I thought to retire at that time. Well, I didn't have too much money, but the kids were married already so I thought, well, okay, gets a little bit easier. But somehow it was too late in life to start teaching again and I was still too young, fifty-nine, sixty years old, I was just too young to just retire completely. So I put [unclear] in the business. Actually, within a couple of years, two, three years, they [unclear] that business people can also become eligible to Social Security by their contributing to it. I thought it would be a good idea and [unclear] about it. [Unclear]. Maybe on welfare, I don't know. But somehow this helped me quite a bit to . . . [unclear] get on my feet. The Social Security [unclear]. Now I just . . . teaching is hobby and I . . . I love it. Almost every day that I love doing it. The students. [unclear]

RL: What business were you in?

WM: I was in the grocery business.

RL: The grocery business.

WM: Yes. Oh, it was about forty-five years

RL: Hmmm.

WM: From 1919 to . . . let me see. Through 1919 to 1960. Forty-one years [unclear]. No, 1918, it was. The end of . . . [unclear]. So forty-one or forty-two years, that's about it.

RL: Yes. For many years you weren't in a Jewish neighborhood.

WM: In a Jewish . . .

RL: [Unclear].

WM: Then I was [unclear] that was a Jewish neighbor [unclear].

RL: That was from nineteen . . .

WM: Well, from 1947 to 1954, then I was retired in 1946 and [unclear] for about four months. When I came back, I tried to do other things. [Unclear] other grocery men. But I didn't like the way some grocery men treated [unclear] because I knew I treated my children better. I thought to myself, to hell with it. I'll go back in the grocery business. So I was there but I didn't need too much. I didn't . . . now I just had some kids that helped me in the afternoon. So from 1947 to 1955, 1954 [unclear] Plymouth Avenue. And then I had a heart attack and I thought then that it was enough. So I quit and I retired then at that time. I could get along [unclear] so this happened until my brother came back.

So I bought another store in the same neighborhood only about half a block away. But [unclear] I couldn't sell it. I gave it up completely. I didn't want to wait until I got a customer because I was too interested to get rid. And [unclear] pretty much the same neighborhood, so I kept it nine quarters and as soon as he left I still had among the books for another quarter to make up the

[unclear]. But [unclear] and I [unclear]. And then he tried for the Social Security and couldn't get it. And then I started . . . as soon as he went out, he left in December and I had [unclear] on the books until about March. But in June I had to change the [unclear] then I picked up on something that I liked to do. And I traveled for the Yiddish paper.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: There was a nice Yiddish paper, most of [unclear] a Yiddish paper [unclear] everybody knows about [unclear]. The [unclear] is now, is the only Jewish paper left outside of the Communist paper. And he's a little bit more inclined to [unclear]. But the other times the [unclear] was more socialist only, and against the Zionist movement, the [unclear] and I was traveling all the way to all the Oklahoma and Texas border and to Nebraska and to Ohio and to Northern Minnesota in my own car and I just loved that. Until [unclear]. Then I guess from 1960 to about nineteen . . . it was about 1967, because within about . . . within about five years, now it's 1976, it's been about four or five years since I [unclear] and I quit about half a year or so before [unclear]. And then I thought I was old enough and that I can't drive anymore. It's enough.

RL: Now . . .

WM: So I picked up the hobby of teaching now.

RL: Yes. Now you said when the . . . you had the Zionist group.

WM: Yes.

RL: There were also . . . there was a [unclear] group in Minneapolis?

WM: [Unclear]. There was a [unclear] group but I . . . I don't believe they ever . . . although there were more of them. The [unclear] group was the type of people that [unclear]. People without much intelligence, you know. Working, the plain working men, nothing else. No intellectuality. But our type of people were people with . . . they had their heritage with them. They brought it with them from home or through adversity grew [unclear] and they [unclear] in Jewish learning. And so our group was more . . . Dr. Goldman.

RL: Yes.

WM: You still remember Dr. Goldman?

RL: Oh, yes.

WM: Was with us, all the united labor Zionists, but in his heart, his best friend, well, he was Zionist you know because he couldn't [unclear] synagogue and the [unclear] synagogue but he couldn't find the type of people that he could converse in this type of Hebrew, he couldn't find as many there as he could in the labor Zionist group. That's where [unclear] so Mayberg and a few others like this, that he felt more at home with us.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: Than he did with the others. That's what I think now. [Unclear] there's about eleven hundred members, you know.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: But I haven't heard of one person to converse with along these lines. I talked to [unclear].

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: I talked to . . . he came to [unclear]. So now, you know, I'm good friends with him.

RL: Yes. Are any of those old [unclear] still around? Are any of them still around?

WM: I just belong to this . . . for the reason why I belong to both [unclear].

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: I belong to [unclear] these groups. And for a reason, because I [unclear] in Saint Paul from the fellow that was that kind . . . as I have explained that they wouldn't touch me to belong to that fraternal organization as part of the [unclear]. After two, three years he didn't. But after two, three years, he talked to me and I couldn't say no to him. So I joined. And I still pay through the nose, my insurance, because they are originally [unclear] that as you grow older you pay more. See, and during the Depression, I had a good insurance from . . . you know, about twenty thousand dollars, I had pensioned everything because I thought you had . . . I had real estate. And in that business [unclear] so the . . . into the real estate business.

So I canceled the insurance policy so then they said I need it, talked to me. I thought, alright, I'll get something, like a thousand dollar policy. But that policy was decided as I grow older I pay more. I got a thousand dollar policy so I still pay almost now, and they reduced it a little because I complained. So they reduced it, so I still pay a hundred and twenty dollars a year, but if they didn't, I would have to pay two hundred and eighty dollars a year.

And a few years ago at the age . . . I was then seventy-seven. And that would be about nine years ago. I was a delegate to that convention and I told them. I wish to God, you make [unclear] pay so much a year and that all, not every more and more and more, you know. They said, have you got any dependents? I said, well, I've got my kids [unclear] but I got two kids who are married and all that [unclear] particularly dependent [unclear]. I said well, what . . . if I canceled it now [unclear] what can I get now [unclear]. I think I was then already seventy-nine. I thought a person doesn't know but why should I [unclear]. Since then, since then I've paid more than this thousand dollars. And God knows how much more. [Chuckles] So that [unclear].

RL: [Unclear]. How come you didn't go to Israel, when the rest of your family did?

WM: Yes. I'll tell you about it. [Unclear].

RL: Oh, yes.

WM: [Unclear] but I sent my brother to Israel, to Europe to get the family out. And I had five thousand dollars I had [unclear] in the business because I suppose the business [unclear]. So [unclear]. I can't go because he has [unclear] but you've got a wife and two kids, do you know what you're going to do? So I, to this day, today, and my father used to write to me, but I [unclear]. Why don't I invest a few dollars in Israel. I mean I had bought bonds and although . . . I bought bonds for my grandchildren already [unclear]. But to invest in Israel I didn't [unclear]. I've got a friend that invested in those years, in the early 1920s maybe, in some kind of . . . in some [unclear] but he thought he'd never get it out. And he sold it a few months ago. He became a rich man.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: He probably invested maybe two-, three thousand dollars and he got over fifty thousand dollars for it. So probably would have had the chance to invest, able to invest or [unclear] or free money to invest, but I didn't. Because when my wife died, I was so broke. And then come the depression and all sickness and all of that. I was just with my back to the wall.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: But [unclear] I [unclear] need anybody's help in doing that. But that's why I used to be [unclear]. In fact my father, when he came, after a year or two, some of these Labor Zionists of the Institute bought a piece of land near Tel Aviv, in the suburbs of Tel Aviv. There was nothing. [Unclear] two, three miles from the center, three, four miles from the center of Tel Aviv. And able to build . . . I mean there he was to make a kind of a socialist colony. A real with equality and fraternity and all that, [unclear] liberty. [Unclear]. So my family bought in on that. They paid with their own money but they transferred it to the Jewish National [unclear] it would be like it belonged to the Jewish National [unclear]. But then so my father got from the Jewish government a piece of land to build a synagogue on. So then I come, when I first came in 1946. And that was in 1943 when they built the synagogue. And my father and a few other [unclear] you know. [Unclear]. So when I first came and I saw the little synagogue, you know, so I just had a fountain of tears come out of my eyes, you know.

And [unclear] the synagogue [unclear] because he was here to the last day of his life. I said Dad but I've got all my possessions in America. My children and grandchildren are there. Not one of them still living there. To this day I come, I come to my own synagogue there. In fact, a few years ago I gave them a hundred dollars because they remodeled, made it bigger because of the [unclear] grown now [unclear]. And it's a city just like Saint Louis Park. They've got about sixty-five thousand Jews there. But I gave them a hundred dollars [unclear] family go into the synagogue because they aren't religious like you. [Laughs] And I don't like to preach. I never preach. I always say I'm the teacher but not a preacher [unclear].

If you find in some years you . . . a lot of people because [unclear] they're just as much a few years ago as there was a trend to hippie-ism and McCarthyism and all that. There's just as much of attention as that of the Jewish youth, they look for something else. [Unclear] and other things that [unclear] you'll maybe know more about it than I do. But I think that more [unclear] Jewish youngsters seek something. And they try to come and [unclear]. That's why I get so many and I wish to God there would be more people like me that they could bring to the fold . . . or maybe an extra five or ten every year, you know. It would mean something. But there is nobody you can talk to.

RL: Do you know anything about the Jewish Labor Organization, the unionization. You know, like Lenny Finkelstein and [unclear]?

WM: I . . . no, no. I don't know. I never [unclear].

RL: You knew them.

WM: No [unclear].

RL: Not [unclear].

WM: I'll tell you sometime maybe of the . . .

RL: What is this now?

WM: The [unclear]. Yes.

RL: Oh.

WM: [Unclear] right now there are only about twenty or twenty-one members left.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And all of them are old people. And as I say, they are not very much to talk to. But [unclear]. I've got a lot of material there, but I [unclear] through it, most of them . . . most of them, but I don't like to [unclear] but very plain primitive people, you know, the others.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: [Unclear] about the type of people, they were more intelligent. I mean some of them are better than others, of course. But these, whenever I come across something, there's so little, they couldn't even spell [unclear] decently, you know. They couldn't even express themselves in Yiddish.

RL: Yes.

WM: In a nice manner, you know.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: So I don't know whether I [unclear]. If I was a little bit younger, maybe I would take up all these dusty papers that I have and try to see if I could find anything. But I don't know, it's really hard and [unclear].

RL: Yes. [Unclear] do you remember details about your childhood in Russia and about anything?

WM: I don't [unclear] too much personally. Now I could tell a lot but . . . it . . . I [unclear] one of the identities.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: I wrote about the small town.

RL: Yes.

WM: And there would be a whole lot more, but it would be too personal. I don't think it's . . . it wouldn't be right, I don't think.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: Too really . . . too much individualism, you know, I don't like it.

RL: I thought, you know, like maybe your education.

WM: Well, I . . . as I say, it's . . . I don't like to be a little bit too much repeating of myself and showing myself out, and I don't like it really. The . . . in the Jewish ghetto, in the Jewish . . . we lived in a life of our own, a small towns there was [unclear] and there was about an average . . . the average small town was about a mile wide and a mile long, you know, within . . .

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: Something like that. And with only Jews. And there was no [unclear] anything, you know, plant sidebox and every Jewish boy the age of three was brought into [unclear] to a *melamed* [teacher] that gave to the . . . the *melamed* had about forty or fifty kids, you know. It was like a nursery school. But the *melamed* didn't know enough how to [unclear] but [unclear] about twice a day, a ten minutes to read with [unclear] it took maybe two months until the three [unclear] as [unclear] two months. Then he learned then [unclear] if there's a [unclear] at the end the [unclear]. See the 'g' . . . the 'g' is again, you know, the 'g' is a [unclear] and the 'r' is [unclear] and the [unclear] so it makes a syllable and connects the syllable [unclear]. So that was the third step, you know. And so on until he would be able to get together all words . . .

[Recording interruption]

WM: And it took the average child two years from the beginning, from three to five until he could read together a whole line. And then the child was able to put together the wording to read it. And to read it more or less fluently, they started to learn [unclear].

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: They started to learn [unclear]. They started them in a certain place [unclear] what place. But certainly they all started a certain [unclear]. And they interpreted each word separately by [unclear] and [unclear]. The child could put the sentence together. He didn't really know what it . . . he had the interpretation of his word . . . of his word separately. But they could learn two or three words all through the whole week or two. And that's how the . . . as time goes on they learned a little bit more. It took them a whole year to be able to put together maybe a half a page during the week. As they got to be able to get a page, so then in the next year he gave them something they could learn, two pages a week, until a year later, he started to [unclear] with them what they called [unclear]. I'll show you. They call [unclear].

[Rustling noises]

This I got in my Shul.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And [unclear] it, so I gave him five [unclear] because I wanted to take it along. And this I found, also in my Shul. And I came and I said to the [unclear] I wonder if you can get me a [unclear] to read. He said, "Oh, you'll pick up a [unclear]." Alright. [Unclear] exactly. And yes, this [unclear] was my father's [unclear]. So I took it when I went. I've got it at home, it's around . . . maybe it's around here somewhere. Anyhow, this is the [unclear].

[Rustling noises]

So [unclear] here as it happened here . . . happened . . . yes.

[Sounds of turning pages]

Can you read at all Hebrew? You can't read at all. So we read like from here to here. This is the first week.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And then as time went on, for about a year or so, we read what you'd call a whole [unclear] a whole [unclear] up to here. The second would be a little bit more, and then we became a little bit more proficient. This is an interpretation and a comment. The sides, they all say comment of the . . . on mine. But like from six to eight, that's as much as I could accomplish. A little bit more of the Talmud also after this. A little bit of the Talmud, also very, very little. At

the age of eight, my father couldn't pay the *melamed* anymore. He couldn't afford. I had an older brother, and between the two of us he would have to pay the *melamed* twenty rubles a season.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: And that was too much. We were poor [unclear]. So my father was a knowledgeable person [unclear] because he used to look after the farmers every day. Farmers were around the town, it was a farming community. Everything [unclear] and whatever you could buy, ah, maybe ten, fifteen dollar ruble's worth. And you could make maybe a ruble for the day or less and then they had to feed the horse, too, you know. And then [unclear] so before he went, and in the evening when they came back, he roomed with us for three years, from eight to eleven. He roomed with us, he roomed throughout the whole, almost the whole time [unclear] and all through these [unclear] these [unclear], what you call [unclear]. And also [unclear] and not in this, another one; took me three years. And also part of the prophets, of the earlier prophets. And when I was eleven years old, they founded a Talmud Torah for poor children.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: So, and there was nobody poorer than me, so we were included into that. I have a [unclear] because I had the chance to learn from my father. I was in the highest grade. I came into the highest grade and I was the best of the grade. Partly probably because I had the better . . . I don't know, this was probably because my father was a better teacher than those of the other boys, he was more . . . he was . . . well, maybe because he was better devoted.

So anyhow, so I went to Talmud Torah, it was from eleven to thirteen, or really eleven and a half to thirteen and a half. And at that time . . . so during the Talmud Torah we learned a little bit more grammar and we learned old . . . already the later prophets, and we learned a little bit more into the Talmud. So at that time, since then, I was on my own. I started to teach myself. What did I teach? I'd teach the people that lived in the field, an owner or a renter . . . a renter of the men, of the farmers. The farmers were not the type of [unclear] you know, [unclear] you know. It's how I managed [unclear] but then he had three kids. And there was no Jewish person that would like, that would now teach his children how to read. So it was nice young little boy [unclear], and he came to my father and my father let me go there.

It was about six miles from town, from my home. For the season he gave me ten rubles. Ten rubles for both the [unclear] and [unclear], and . . . alright. And then I kept a lot to myself, too. And at the end of the semester I came home for [unclear]. And as it happened, you can make [unclear] I mean, if you care to. [Chuckles] As it happened, as I had . . . I had [unclear] and then came and talked to my father, too, for the next season. So my father said that I think my son is worth fifteen rubles for the season. So he agreed. He was a very nice man. And I was a likeable chap, you know.

As it happened, so the man that I rode with back to that village, you know, it was not . . . it was in the middle of nowhere, you know. So we had to go from our town to the next town so [unclear] to go there. He figured like, heck, you know. You know, I didn't weigh so much. And I rode with that man to stop at my place. That man that hired the [unclear] the [unclear] you know,

was born of the benefactors of the Talmud Torah. “Where are you going, Mayberg?” “I go so and so.” “How much are you getting? What do you get?” “I get fifteen rubles for the season. Last [unclear] I got ten and now I get fifteen.” “Fifteen rubles. [Whispers] You should be getting more than that. Or else, I’ll tell you, [unclear] you in the Talmud Torah to be helper to the others.”

I came in the morning, came at twelve o’clock, as soon as I came in. So the man and the wife had to go to the town and they left me with the youngsters. So I kind of mulled this thing over. And I took the same package as I came with, my things. And I walked right back home. And I think it was about four or five miles from home, so I walked there. I came home towards evening, I got back. It had been about two o’clock, and about it took me three or four o’clock before . . . it was almost dark when I came. “What are you doing here?” I said well, [unclear] this man was . . . his name was [unclear]. [Chuckles]

RL: Mmmm.

WM: I don’t know whether that had happened for a reason. But [unclear] and I was riding with him. And he told me [unclear] should I do that? Why should I give my talent . . . ? I could know nothing. So I just became a part teacher at the Talmud Torah and then I got into a few lessons from all the other kids, you know. And I was probably making twenty-five or thirty rubles a season then, and I probably chipped in already to help others, for the younger kids already.

But then I kept on learning myself. We learned only the . . . I mean in the Talmud Torah, we learned only addition, subtraction, multiplication grid. I started to learn fractions, I started to learn algebra. I started to learn history; I started to learn geography myself. Later on, I got a little bit older—maybe sixteen, seventeen or so—I started to learn French and German and Latin, and all by myself. And then I started to learn . . . then I learned at the age of seventeen, I asked myself how to . . . Another fellow also in [unclear] on the other side of the town, over a few miles. And I was told that that man, a very nice man, he’s willing to give twenty rubles. There would be board and room. And I had to teach two partners, lived there in a double house, two parties, and teach them [unclear] teach both groups of kids, you know. So I was a part of that.

And more of them with whom I had my board . . . And see, I was supposed to have board and teach one month, you know—or two months, whatever it was, I don’t remember exactly. So he asked me one Friday night . . . I liked the man and he liked me. He liked me like his own child. And I liked him. He was a very Hasidic type of a man.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: He said, “Well, [unclear] how do like . . . ?” I mean in Yiddish. “How do you like your job?” I said, “I like it very well. But I . . . with teaching, I don’t make enough money.” He said, “What do you mean it’s not . . . ? [Unclear] you didn’t ask for any more.” I said, “Well, the fellow that recommended me to you told me that that’s all you have intended to give, so I didn’t ask any more.” “That’s not business-like. What do you mean?” I said, “I’ll tell you. I realize it. But if the pupils do that for me, I would be happy.” At that time, they started to publish a new Hebrew daily in Warsaw. It came from Warsaw. Warsaw was a big cultural center.

RL: Sure.

WM: And that new Hebrew daily, that summer I was able already to read . . . I was a seventeen year old child, you know, how much can you read journalistic, you know. But that gave out, as it started out, in order to compete with some dailies that were there before, they gave a monthly paper in which [Hayyam Nahman] Bialik wrote his very best poems in that year. I said, "If you would do me that favor to subscribe with a year's subscription . . ." They gave a half a year's of the monthly papers of the *Ha-Tsofeh* was the name of the monthly. Like *Atlantic Monthly* or *Harper's Magazine* or something, you know. And this [unclear] . . .

[Telephone rings]

WM: [Unclear]. If you'd do that for me, I would appreciate that very much. He said, Okay. So I get. So that really started me on the new modern literature.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: I started to read [unclear] that was the . . .

RL: Mmmm.

WM: [Unclear] the reconstructionist movement started by [unclear] has been inspired through [unclear] teaching some philosophy. [Unclear] only came here as a three, four year old but [unclear] he had a good [unclear] education. And he was inspired by [unclear]'s writings. [Unclear] was . . . was the [unclear] of a fraternal organization of elite people. I don't believe there are . . . exists in America [unclear] they call them the name [unclear]. It's also Moses. In other words, they were not religious in the old style religious type. They were imbued by the ethics of the Torah more so than by its beliefs, you know. And it was called by the name [unclear] and all this philosophy was based along these lines, and he also was this . . . of the old Zionist [unclear] the [unclear] name Zionism came into being to . . . in 1897 that [unclear] coined that phrase, Zionism. The previous [unclear] that started in 1881 of the first . . . of the first settlers of Zion that was . . . the first . . . settlers of Zion were a bunch of students of University of [unclear] and Moscow and it was in 1881 they led the [unclear] and it led to become [unclear]. And they were the ones that were the founding, that founded what [unclear] home of the Zion, the [unclear] of Zion.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

[Pause – recording interruption?]

WM: . . . newspaper and your modern Hebrew paper, [unclear] when that started, my modern Hebrew education, which I never abandoned since then, and I still . . .

[Static]

WM: . . . and I still do it right along.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And that is how my education started. So [unclear] served me as a model toward how [unclear] and I'm pretty sure that . . . that [unclear] as I mentioned him, probably started his education the same way, or maybe Simcha Gelb probably started his education. That's how many of us started our education from nothing, from ourselves. So somebody asked me, did you go to a yeshiva? I did not. The yeshiva been to me. [Chuckles]

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: [Laughing] [Unclear]. I never had . . . and I never had one day's schooling here when I came to the United States. I tried . . . as I've told you, I learned French and German and Latin. And I liked it. I never was very proficient in it, you know, but I . . . [unclear] almost write a small letter in French [unclear].

RL: Yes.

WM: And I loved the Latin especially, because the Latin, the structure of the Latin sentences somewhat reminds you of the Hebrew, the way you make from the same word, you bend it in different ways. I don't do that, I don't you, I bought, you bought, or I build it, or . . . something, also on the same . . . in the same word, where you . . . where English has a word for everything. In Latin, they did the same word is included . . . they do the word and the doing.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And it's something that is done up in the word . . . in this . . . along the [unclear].

RL: Oh, yes.

WM: And it's all the same, you know.

RL: Yes.

WM: And so, anyhow, but I also tried to learn English, but somehow I didn't get rid of . . . couldn't get rid of [unclear] you know. So I credit . . . but when I first came to this country, I knew I had to learn English, so I bought myself a self-teaching book from Russian to English. And that was I think before . . . yes, the year before the First World War. And when the First World War came I was already able to read the headlines and news [unclear] going on [unclear] you know.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And after that I learned some [unclear]. I never was . . . I didn't learn much of English literature, but [unclear] I can pick up any book and learn and I [unclear] too. [Chuckles]

RL: When did you . . . ?

WM: But I . . . but, believe it or not, I read . . . I read Hiawatha in Hebrew translation about maybe in 1905 or 1906. I also read The Last of the Mohicans by Fenimore Cooper, a Hebrew translation right around that time, too. Yes. And that's how we got our Hebrew education also much of . . . most of our subjects. [Unclear] I'm not the only one and people of the small towns . . . in the larger towns they had more . . . more chances, you know.

RL: Yes.

WM: But in small towns we tried [unclear] got ourselves up by our own bootstraps, you know.

RL: Yes. Now you were married in . . . ?

WM: I was married in the year . . . in the . . . I was married in Russia. I came here with a wife at the age of twenty-six.

RL: Oh. You were twenty-six then.

WM: Yes. I think . . .

RL: Yes.

WM: In 1913. I was born in 1887, you know.

RL: Yes.

WM: Exactly to my twenty-sixth birthday I came here then.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: The reason why, because I looked . . . well, [unclear]. [Chuckles] I came to visit my . . . whatever it is. Anyway, and my father didn't have . . . I didn't have any birth certificate for other reasons. I think my father [unclear] army, you know. So he didn't have [unclear] completed he made the regular list of the family [unclear] years later. So as I didn't have any birth certificate, I was called first to see [unclear] to look at me to see if I fit [unclear] on the list, by my looks, you know. So they looked at me and I looked exactly like sixteen [unclear]. [Chuckles] And I was twenty-one, twenty one and a half. So that they would have the [unclear] well, this guy looks too young. He cannot be . . . he cannot be twenty. He can't be more than sixteen. So they sent me back.

Came back at the age of twenty-five. I fell in love the girl . . . with the woman that I loved, I guess, when this happened, you know. And . . . and then we got married. But [unclear] intelligent person wouldn't get married before you through the army. In the army I was at the age of twenty-one. At twenty-four [unclear] so I could get married before the army but my father in law

was [unclear] and he had two daughters [unclear] a bigger family and he wanted to marry them off. He wants to get married again [unclear] about sixteen or seventeen. And [unclear] very nice [unclear] so I couldn't get married [unclear] to his daughter, you know [unclear] that if there is not [unclear] years later. He's not going to go to the army [unclear] you'll probably go to America anyhow. So [unclear] get married now. [Chuckles]

So then, sure enough, I [unclear] call me to the army and I sort of looked good enough to go. But they let me go home for three weeks. So I went, you know, that's when they used to take you in the army and then let you out for three weeks to arrange your things and then come back. So instead of coming back I turned my way to America. I came here. So then when I came to America at the age of twenty-six [unclear] how I got to learn English [unclear] I could learn French. And I knew French but I figured English is more important than French. So French I let go and English I learned and, as I say, everything I [unclear]. And I have done [unclear] English [unclear].

And later on, that is, two years later when I came to this country, and I tried to peddle dry goods [unclear]. So I came into [unclear] to be a [unclear] you know. [Unclear] and I used to deal with them. So I had to [unclear] salesman, probably was . . . he was an old man of at least seventy, and he probably came at the age of thirty. But yet I told him that I just knew that [unclear] about English and I am not [unclear]. Oh, he said, I thought you was born here. [Chuckles] He could . . . he taught me to [unclear] probably has been thirty or forty years in the country. But on me he couldn't tell much about my accent. It's still noticeable, but not enough, so not a very thick accent. He said I couldn't tell that you weren't born here. Because I . . . and I . . . as I came here, my son was then four and a half months old. He was born in April of 1915. And when I came here in the middle of September he was four and a half months old. [Unclear]. So I remember at that time he used to be [unclear] you know. [Unclear] it was before your time, probably. [Unclear] and I didn't even know, I didn't hear of much talking [unclear] before I learned it myself. In other words, I learned [unclear]. [Unclear] beginning. [Chuckles]

RL: [Chuckles]

WM: So my son throws it out [unclear]. How I learned . . . how I . . . I tried to teach him English with [unclear]. [Chuckles]

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: Later on, [unclear]. [Chuckles]

RL: Yes.

WM: He always throws it out with [unclear]. But I [unclear]. But later on my wife started to help me with the business, you know. And my wife [unclear] she never had a chance to talk in English at all, so she didn't know much English. So . . . but she had to [unclear] customer. She learned the best she could, you know. So I tried to correct her. So she said, [Unclear] don't correct me. I'll learn [unclear]." [Laughs] "[unclear] don't correct me. [Unclear].

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: You know, don't correct me because I can . . .

RL: Yes.

WM: First of all, she . . . I suppose she felt bad that I corrected her in front of people because, as I said, [unclear] she tried [unclear] very good anyhow. And [unclear] with my son . . . with my brother in law, I told you he bought his store first.

RL: Your brother or your brother in law?

WM: Brother in law.

RL: Mmmm. Yes.

WM: My brother was the one that left my sister in the old country and . . . And so but I . . . yes, he had a nice little business. When I got through with my . . . [unclear] more competent to deal with the customers because my brother in law [unclear] was an intelligent man in his own Hebrew, but in English he wasn't. So when I [unclear] I could do two customers. I would deal with my customer and he [unclear]. So I tried to take over his customers [unclear]. So [unclear] I learned, and you learn from life, you know. Life teaches you.

RL: Yes.

WM: So that [unclear] I know how to take care of my customers, I do the best I can, you know. [Unclear] very good [unclear] English [unclear].

RL: Yes. [Unclear]. Did you keep your store open on Sabbath?

WM: Sabbath . . . seven days a week.

RL: When you were in the non-Jewish neighborhood?

WM: Seven days a week from seven thirty to nine, ten o'clock in the evening. Seven days a week. But . . . but in Hebrew it said when Jacob said and that . . . in [unclear] on his way back home after the twenty years for his two wives and two concubines . . .

RL: Yes.

WM: He said, [unclear]. I [unclear] with love with my father in law. So [unclear] Hebrew letters have also numbers. Each [unclear] means two hundred. He said, [unclear] it means, I [unclear] but it's six hundred and thirty [unclear] I kept. So no matter how hard I worked and how many days I worked, day and night, but I kept all my [unclear].

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: I [unclear] I see people that come home probably with the same amount of knowledge . . . to the . . . maybe a little less knowledge, but to the same . . . they were not interested in anything even and they forgot, what little they know they forgot, you know, not enough to read the Yiddish paper or English paper and it taught me so much, you know. Of course, now, I got used to it. But at first when I turned around the newspaper, people that I know, they come from the same [unclear] I've come [unclear] many years [unclear]. But I never lost interest in studying [unclear].

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: So this type of people of my generation and my background, they kept on, like [unclear] and Simcha Gelb and Mister . . . what was his name? He's a very good teacher. [Unclear].

RL: Oh. [Unclear].

WM: [Unclear]. Yes, [unclear].

RL: Yes.

WM: [Unclear]'s boy was . . . [unclear]'s son is a rabbi. He was courting my daughter when he was about in his marriageable age, you know, about twenty or twenty-one. So that [unclear] Center, you probably remember [unclear].

RL: Oh, yes.

WM: So he came to this type of [unclear] of others, and with this type of knowledge. And he never quit. We never quit. We kept up our studies.

RL: Yes.

WM: And then some of [unclear] became members of that congregation. [Unclear] congregation.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: I didn't [unclear] congregation because I was in business and I . . . and I had a hard time. Some people came [unclear] came and then right away [unclear] if they had enough sense to start a young business or a good business they became rich and they became more [unclear].

RL: Yes.

WM: And I had a chance . . . to this day I'm sorry we . . . why I didn't start in the insurance business. Why didn't I start? I would have. I would have. When I first came, I saw an ad in the Tribune, [unclear] looks for an insurance guy. So I went into the man, probably from the [unclear] office. I came in to him and I [unclear] he looks at me and oh, my gosh, this is just a

nice looking guy, very nice, presentable fellow. And the more he talked to me, the more I thought, I'm not going to take the job. Why didn't I take the job? Because when I first got the job in the Talmud Torah, in Montreal, Canada, so the man whose job I got, who left the job before I [unclear] took it, became an insurance man. You know what insurance men do? They go to try their friends first. So he came to my wife and tried to [unclear] so my wife started to cry. [Chuckles] And you could say I didn't [unclear] from the death of my husband.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: So when he told me, I thought to myself that I'll go to try to show people [unclear] they cry . . . my eyes, my face. So I didn't take the job. See then I was plenty sorry afterwards why I didn't take the job as a young man because I probably would never [unclear] and I had . . . I had . . . maybe you heard of [unclear] in Saint Paul. A young man, also my . . . my type of person, knowledgeable person. And he raised a big family of eight children and gave them all a very nice, lovely education. [Unclear] man. And I could have done every bit as good as he.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And I didn't do it. I had a hard time in my life, you know, I [unclear].

RL: Yes.

WM: I wouldn't have been in the [unclear] that I am if I hadn't had my [unclear] if I did that. [Unclear] a few more years until [unclear]. But then it was I had to [unclear] business in order to [unclear]. So I [unclear] that.

RL: How many children did you have?

WM: Two.

RL: Two.

WM: Two more were born dead, you know.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: So [unclear].

RL: Yes.

WM: But you learn. I've got eight grandchildren, I've got six great grandchildren and seventh on the way. [Chuckles]

RL: Now do they live here?

WM: No. My son lives here, my daughter lives in Chicago.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: Yes. But my son's children are kind of scattered. Now one . . . he's got one son in law, a doctor, he just finished [unclear] doctor [unclear] finished last June. And another daughter whose [unclear] doctor, too, and lives in Chicago. [unclear] you know.

RL: Hmmm.

WM: He's got a son here and a daughter here who was divorced a few years ago and I was looking for a husband for her and I can't find any! [Chuckles] Because they are very few and far between. [Chuckles]

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: So it's one of those things. Yes. And so [unclear] I can't complain. I've had a long life, too. And I have . . . thank God that I am still able to continue to contribute to society in whatever way I am able to that at all.

RL: Mmmm-hmmm.

WM: And [unclear] for another twelve years I'll be very happy. So you know, I . . . two years ago I was eighty-six years old. And one of my grandsons in Chicago had a boy, a little boy. [Unclear] godfather and [unclear] and that's a little bit too much to expect. But his bar mitzvah I would be ninety-nine. I said if father . . . Abraham could father a child at ninety-nine, maybe I can [laughs] at the bar mitzvah of the boy. [Laughs]

RL: Right. Right.

WM: So it's so far so good, I can't complain at all. I'm planning [unclear] sometime this coming summer.

RL: Mmmm.

WM: And I plan [unclear] through Chicago to my daughter and to Detroit. I've got a sister [unclear] I have cousins and in Detroit . . . in New York I have a niece. And then to Israel we stayed there about three or four weeks and then come back and maybe it'll be my last trip to Israel. Although I said last year, too, but they said, oh no, you can't do that. You've got to come and visit more. [Chuckles]

RL: [Unclear].

WM: But I . . . but if . . . I wouldn't go now yet, like, you know, but . . . because [unclear] Montreal last September. And we were growing up together and [unclear] in Montreal. So I want to be [unclear]. And that wouldn't be done until sometime this summer and I don't know then

[unclear] but then I'll find out when they plan it so I'll plan my trip to be around that time. So I'm planning my trip. Most of my trip, and I hope I'll be around to be able to enjoy.

RL: [Unclear].

WM: Then I'll see my friends . . .

[End of recording]

[William Mayberg was born December 15, 1887 and died in January 1978.]

Jews in Minneapolis Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society

Transcription by Marilyn Olson-Treml
September 2011