

Sara: Can you describe where you were born?

Jerry: I'm a native New Yorker and I was born in what would be considered a slum tenement. But in the days when I was born there it was really a location for lower middle class families who were on the second leg of their evolvement from immediate immigration into the Lower East Side sector of New York City. So I was born into 115 East 106th Street of New York City. But my grandparents and their children originally lived on Grant Street in the Lower East Side of New York City.

Sara: Was that the first place your grandparents lived?

Jerry: Well, my grandparents originally came from Lithuania. My grandfather was eighteen years old and my grandmother seventeen when they decided to immigrate to America. The main reason for doing so was that they were in love. He had just been on the verge of being conscripted into the Czar's army. An older relative of his had gone forward with his conscription papers to the authorities and deliberately confused the delivery of these papers so that there was a twenty-four hour delay which permitted just enough time for my grandmother, Chaiah and my grandfather, Lev, to join together. They were not yet married--and to flee.

They left the little town in Lithuania where they were and went to Vilna. And from Vilna they then entrained for Hamburg, Germany and from Hamburg, Germany. Because my grandmother became ill, on the journey, they ended in Le Havre, France and had to remain there for two months. It was there that my grandfather first had his beard shorn and shaped to a typical, sophisticated Frenchmen's beard. He had lovely auburn hair and nearly bright red, just off reddish in colour. This gave him magnificent Van Dyke mustaches, which he sported for a whole lifetime.

Sara: Which family are we talking about?

Jerry: We're talking about my mother's father. This is the Forman family and heritage in my genetic bank.

Sara: How did they survive in France?

Jerry: According to them expenses were minimal. They lived for two months in the Jewish quarter in Le Havre, which was a slum, and it was street level living. But they were two young newlyweds on a kind of honeymoon adventure and the fact that they were travelling and going and they had been given from both sides of the families nearly all of the rubles that the family possessed. I think it was 35 rubles that they had and they needed to conserve 25 rubles for their double ship's card as a married couple. That was for passage.

What they discovered in great surprise when they got aboard the

steamship was that this was really a single bunk stretched out another two inches for a couple to co-habit on. So what they did pretty much when it came to sleeping, and when it came to coupling it was very convenient. They had to learn to become unashamed about their coupling.

Sara: Did they talk to you about this?

Jerry: My grandfather did because he intended for me to become a doctor. He spoke to me very straightforwardly. I was a very bright kid and it was obvious that I understood what we were talking about. So we talked about their constipation on board the ship and a circumstance that he talked about that I understood to be dehydration. They were suffering from severe dehydration and pretty much near starvation because they were extremely kosher and they were with other kashruth observing Jewish immigrants and the food that they brought along for themselves lasted about a day and the journey took nine days aboard ship. By the seventh or eighth day they had lost weight and were haggard and extremely weary and not doing well at all.

What had delayed my grandmother's coming was that on the original journey they had been in a third class carriage with a whole bunch of families and from one of the kids my grandmother had picked up a case of German measles. She was seventeen. Luckily she was not yet pregnant at that point. She was fully recovered from that but not feeling the greatest when they finally departed from LeHavre to Castle Garden in the port of New York City. So that's a quick rundown of how they got to settle in the Lower East Side sector of New York City.

Sara: What languages did they speak?

Jerry: They spoke only Yiddish and my grandmother actually was illiterate in any language. She could not read or write. This was a remarkable feature about her for a lifetime. Although she couldn't read or write in any language she was very alert. She compensated in magnificent ways by developing a storehouse memory that organized information and kept it available for her, so that she was an extremely knowledgeable, non-literate person who got all of her information by word of mouth, through the ear. She was extremely good at mathematics, like amazingly good. She guarded the family's fortunes. She could put dots and slash marks. A dot was a unit a slash mark was a ten, two slash marks was twenty. She was able to do that. She could tell numbers because she kept a cash register when they had a little store, but noone ever knew that she couldn't read or write except her kids.

My grandfather was extremely literate and learned very quickly to read and write English as well. He was a learned scholar and an enormously gentle, patient, understanding man, with great wit and

humour. This is what saved him and his young bride constantly from the buffets of his experience. He was enormously respected by everyone who knew him.

He became a garment worker, with cloaks and suits and he entered a sweatshop and became a cutter, which was a highly paid trade in those days. Which also meant that at the time he got into that work he was fairly constantly, seasonally on strike. So that he would work three months and be on strike nine months. He became a very, very good Klabbash player, playing cards in the union hall. The union regulations required everyone to show up and eight-thirty in the morning, so he was there at eight-thirty in the morning and then took his assignments to be on the picket line. So I remember walking the picket line with my grandfather holding my hand when I was two years old and three years old. The family would go down and bring him his lunch down there and he'd sit on the curb and eat his lunch with the family around him. This is what all Jewish workers would do, those who had families. Then he would go back and picket.

I remember that from when I was very, very young. And my grandfather was always explaining to me what was going on. He sort of used me to say the things that he couldn't tell his own children, who he felt very guilt-ridden about. Because he wanted his children to be accepted in America, not be greenhorns, to become progressively involved in building America as a nation of great unity and accepting Jews as participants at all levels in the life and vitality of the nation. So he encouraged his sons to become businessmen and feel free to do things. He encouraged his daughters so that the girls all had the equivalent of a high school education. Which meant elementary school up to Grade Seven and then a secondary school from Grade eight up to Grade Ten. This turned them out in relation to their peers as very educated persons. They were literate and educated.

From my view as a little boy, because my youngest uncle was only 8 years older than I was, so we had a sibling relationship. From where I observed my aunts and uncles as fellow siblings, I felt they were quite arrogant and self-opinionated and misunderstanding of my grandmother and grandfather's value system and rejecting of it. And I always felt sad about it, especially around the seder table when they would make jokes about the rituals and the proceedings. They wanted grandpa to become modern and grandpa stuck to his traditional view.

It was a very enlightened traditional view because he came from a very poor and learned sector in Lithuania, where people didn't stand on ceremony--there weren't a lot of rich people around. You accepted each other in terms of what you were able to offer each other. My grandfather was a great one for working together with other people and working things out--ideas and conflicts out. In the union he was considered a very good person for someone with a

grievance, even about how the union was operating to come to, to talk something out with. And then he would go and talk to the organizer or to the secretary and get the guy a break or work something out and bring him back into the union because he got thrown out because he got drunk or said things that he shouldn't have said.

Sara: What an interesting role model for you.

Jerry: It's interesting. It just comes to me as I remember the talk around him. But his sons became quite modern. They dressed like businessmen. They dressed very stylishly, in extremely good taste. They were always concerned around looking well and looking proper and grandma made a great thing about her daughters looking properly. Their hair and their shoes and their underwear particularly--it was from my grandmother that I learned that you never went out in dirty underwear because you're likely to have an accident and if they find you and you've got dirty underpants that would be a shame and a reflection on your parents and your grandparents. (Laughs.)

Sara: What was your grandmother like?

Jerry: My grandmother was short, extremely attractive, extremely pert, dynamic, tough, little woman--thin, vivacious, full of vitality. One would not know that she only had one lung as the result of a very severe tubercular attack which she recovered from quite early after the birth of her second to third child. She had five children. She had two more children after that serious occurrence. But she was unbelievable, hard-working, extremely hard-working.

Because things were getting more and more difficult because of strikes and so on, what they did with their pittance, their savings, was to open in the ground floor of the tenement building where they lived was to open a small grocery store that was typical of the neighbourhood grocery stores. The neighbourhood on East 106th Street at 215 was mixed Italian on one side, and Jewish immigrant on the other. It would be the north side of the street of east 106th. The south side was Italian and the North side was Jewish. These streets were between Third Avenue and Second Avenue and between Second Avenue and First Avenue were the beginning extensions of the Italian markets that began to line all of First Avenue, from 72nd Street North into about 110th Street, 125th Street, on the east side.

Sara: Was it a situation where the Jews sold certain things and the Italians sold other things?

Jerry: The Jews were in the clothing business mainly, had some small grocery stores which mainly and only Jews used. The Italians has a full scale community--Italian bakeries, the

Church, a school was across the street from 215 East 106th Street. There was a convent school run by the sisters for Catholic children up to the age of thirteen or fourteen. The public school that I attended for a very short period of time, later on when my mother was ill was located farther south and to the east of 106th street and Third Avenue. It was around the corner and two blocks over. It may have been P.S. 72. I didn't go there until I was seven years old.

Sara: What's your very first memory. Do you have any sense of that?

Jerry: There's a struggle between very first memories. One very first memory is hearing a new born baby cry and I was about a year and a half old. That was my sister Sylvia being born in our apartment. All the kids were born at home. I should say the first thing I remember was when I was crying.

Sara: That's my first memory, but I always think I made it up.

Jerry: Oh you too? One should always remember that! But I do remember a sudden cry and everybody being excited and wanting to know and my father being told, "It's a little girl." And my father being very sober and saying, Oh good, good, good. You have a sister." And my remembered reaction was, "I have a sister already." So I was puzzled and didn't know if THEY knew I had a sister. How come they didn't know I had a sister, how come my father didn't know I had a sister. That's what I remember, that confusion and the cry.

But vying with that memory, since this was 1915, when I was born, and the United States entered World War One in 1917, I remember the day the United States entered the war because there was a block party parade. My oldest sister was holding a corner of a huge American flag with six or seven other kids and people were pitching pennies into the flag to buy guns and ammunition from way up on the roof. Women were throwing their gold rings in.

I was running along after my sister to hold onto her skirt. She was in a sailor skirt and blouse. I was holding onto the corner of her pleated skirt and she was trying to get me away from her because she wanted to be in the parade all by herself and stand and hold that corner of the flag. I insisted on running along. And she yelled to my mother, "Get him away, get him away," and my mother said with a happy smile--'cause my mother was absolutely exhilarated and patriot and my mother said, "Oh, let him."

So that's a first memory. A memory similar to that is marching legitimately this time with a place given to me, with a little round tin drum--you should excuse me--with a group of other boys, banging the drum in a small group on Armistice Day, November 11th, 1918, because the war was ended. And there was a wild, wild

explosion of joy on the block. Again we had a spontaneous parade and block party, the neighbours all came out. You had to see those events to believe it in New York City in those days, it was a vastly, naively beautiful community, with all the usual street stuff that goes on. Everybody was full of hope and full of joy and expectation and with all one's scepticism full of belief. Because we were street people, naturally street people and so we were skeptical, and naturally critical of all authority. Nothing could tame us. We were determined Wild West pioneers living in the big city.

Sara: You were very young, but do you remember any shifts in attitudes over the course of that war. Like in the beginning there was patriotism and in the end there was relief it was over.

Jerry: I remember in my own family the real worries and the very real fears and terrible concerns, mainly because terrible things happened to relatives. First of all, we had a large family still overseas who were literally ground up between the warring armies in that part of Lithuania. Communication was pretty much lost with families and then ways were found to reestablish communication or to attempt to establish communication. And then you had people who were fakers who would take money from families under the pretense that they were about to go to Switzerland and from here to there and whatever and they would wiggle their way in, and they would find out what was happening, if you gave them twenty-five dollars or fifteen dollars. You would find a way to do that.

We got nipped once that way trying to find out more information about my grandfather's parents who it finally turned out had been murdered off--just plain murdered off--as many people were. Civilian populations were just literally eliminated by artillery or military assault. So there was a lot of weeping. But also you had to remember that just around that time people were coming in from the most peculiar places, from South America, from the West Indies, however they could escape from Europe. You had an uncle here, or a granduncle there or former neighbours, and so on, who were suddenly landing at Ellis Island or Castle Garden. I can remember from the time I was a little boy, from the time I was three, four or five years old that there were strangers sleeping on the floor of our bedrooms.

SIDE TWO TAPE ONE

Sara: You were about to tell me about immigration.

Jerry: But I want to stay on the issue of attitudes. Remember my grandfather worked in a shop and there was a lot of political stuff going on in the shop, so from time to time there would be discussion around the table. My parents were very patriotic, my father's family had come from another small village in Lithuania,

quite a good distance away from the Villna region where my mother's family came from. My father's father was a rabbi.

My father and his older brother were fairly enlightened, poetic, artist sort of bohemian-type radicalized young men as compared to the other young men, which in to-day's definition would never equate to kind of radicalism that we expressed deep concern about in the New Left. But to the people around them they were different, they were quite differnt. I remember hearing my grandfather and my father agreeing in Yiddish that the war itself was an "imperialistischa milchomah", that it was an imperialist war. It was the first time I heard the phrase and I was only a little kid, I was three years old or two and one half years old.

I remember my mother becoming very upset and telling them to keep quiet--"Shhh! And to not talk out loud in front of the kids that way, because they'll talk on the street and then we'll be marked out as an unpatriotic family." And in those days with foreign names, because my father's name ended in a "stein" and had Germanic overtones to it. Since our name was Diamondstein and my father was in the importing and exporting business, even though that was for a British firm in New York City--they were forwarding agents for one of the major British importing and exporting firms--he had to be careful. So he changed his name by deed pole from Diamondstein to Diamond and that was usual. I mean he and thousands and thousands of other foreign-born persons changed their Germanic sounding names to names that would be more acceptable.

But I do recall these kinds of discussions and certainly after the war was over the major overtones among all the family members were strongly pacifist, because that was the mood of the men who came back. And that had great impact and occurred with great surprise. Families were shocked by the attitudes of their returning soldiers. They did not anticipate that the men who had experienced the war overthere were war weary, battle fatigued and gassed. We had a fairly large number of gas victims on our street. What it entailed was they had a great trouble with the ordinary business of breathing and had to be in carefully established dust free environments. They were extremely handicapped persons.

Sara: Were there any other effects that you can think of?

Jerry: Well mainly that's waht I remember. I was just a little kid and I'm giving my reactions to what were the things that I directly experienced that changed my war games around from flying heroic airplanes to running ambulances back and forth. I shifted from being a combat pilot fighting Manfred Von Richtofen, to moving wounded soldiers where I could operate on them and take care of them and restore them to full health again. It was subtlyly shtupt by my grandfather and my father.

My mother was a staunch patriot. She was American born and she and her siblings were Americans. Strongly patriotic to the last moment of her last breath, in her way, interpreted and defined in her way.

Sara: Do you remember any discussion about the revolution in the Soviet Union at that time? You were very young.

Jerry: I know it had a great impact on many Jews. We had very dear friends, very close friends, who had arrived out of the 1905 struggle and they talked with great hope of the new changes that there would be. For the most part many of the Jews who we knew--and there was a large immigration of Jews after World War One up to 1921, between 1919 and 1923--when they instituted very strict quotas. The Jews who I heard, there's no question about it--my uncle David became a member of the Communist Party outspokenly and was a member of the Communist Party for a whole lifetime. My father was an espoused socialist from then on and didn't mind people knowing that that was the position he would now be taking. And my mother's father supported the Soviet Union because it defeated the Czar who he hated.

But there were overtones of despair and worry. First of all, there was starvation in 1921 in those sectors of Europe. Terrible things were happening to people. There was a war going on still and the United States now went into war on the side of the Whites, the Czar. And the confusion among immigrants who wanted to be patriotic and accepted was great. So the way you dealt with this was to keep quiet about it. Because I remember a lot of shushing and a lot of quietening people down and Uncle Dave wasn't allowed to make big speeches around the table, but everybody knew his position. And my father became an American Nationalist Socialist rather than a world socialist, a new brand of socially acceptable socialism.

While my mother on the other hand, became excited about what she began to read and she was very strongly tuned to the women who were emerging from the European revolutionary situations. Rosa Luxemburg became a heroine to her and she read everything that was ever stated by Rosa Luxemburg. Sometimes I would hear her scolding the eldest of her sisters, but not the younger one who she thought was from a different generation and didn't understand and was just a kid out for a good time. She would try to get my Aunt Sara to listen to these ideas and my Aunt Sara was not quite ready and able to take these ideas in.

Sara: So how did this all go down. These are ideas and historical events. You were very little, four, five or six. How would it happen--there would be conversations and then, "shhh."

Jerry: There'd be conversations, there'd be shushing, but more

than that there was no question about the fact that in a peculiar and interesting way that although we were living in America there were root tendrils and root tubers that grow underground and reach into the old country and the subculture. Remember that after 1919-1925 there was a great upsurge in the Jewish community in North America of the attempt to reestablish connection with one's relatives to find who had survived and who hadn't. So in the Yiddish newspapers there's been these long lists of relatives were seeking to make a connection in America with the relatives who were here. And the American relatives who were asking questions about, "Does anybody know where Moishe Forman and his two sons and wife or my widowed mother or my uncle Ben?" So there was a reengagement or a reestablishment of the searching out and reconnecting along family and Jewish communal lines. There began to be a back and forth. I was three years old, four years old and I remember that I had a pair of shoes that were getting a little bit tight for me. But I loved them, for some reason. Somebody had praised them who was important to me. Whatever. I loved them and I saw them go into a box and that box was a box for clothing we collected. It sat right near the front door and we kept putting things into the box until the box was full, and then my mother would take it down to the post office and wrap it up and send it to our relatives in Europe. So I saw my clothes get here and toys--you had to be careful to watch your toys or they would, or books and things as you got older. They all went into the box. Sometimes we used to kid about it. If something was missing I would hear my father say to my mother. "You didn't put it in the box, did you?" His wallet for example. (laughs)

I was puzzled and angry about the shoes and my mother explained to me, "You can't wear them anymore because they'll hurt your feet and there's a poor little Jewish boy who's going to get them and wear them and he's younger than you are. He's as old as you were when you first got these shoes and he'll be able to wear them. No don't you want him to be able to have them. That's a nice boy!"

Sara: You raised you up, was it your mom or your dad?

Jerry: It was an extended family system and a very closely knit one that really gravitated around my mother's parents family system. We were an attenuation and the extension of that family system. Now it's interesting that when the younger siblings in that family married, they moved out and away, in very significant separating steps. But for the first three years of my mother's married life as the eldest child and because of my grandmother's health problem--because the way she was able to get through was by making my mother her surrogate helper--my mother was really needed around to help grow up the other kids and as they grew up she was no longer needed. And she wanted out of that role in

order to be able to have a family life of her own and raise her own kids.

So she and my father finally when I was about 4 years old, moved to Ashford Place in Brooklyn. Now Ashford Place is not too far from the Pitkin Avenue section of Brooklyn and it was newly built suburb of duplex housing. A lower and upper, a lower and upper for blocks and blocks and blocks and blocks, inhabited by Jewish families. This is the very area, that many years later became the seeding ground for the Murder Incorporated group of gangs that emerged and developed later on. In those days it was similar to the Thornhill suburbs of Metropolitan Toronto just outside of Steeles Avenue.

Sara: Because in fact the Irish moved out to Brooklyn and the Jews--it was the place to go.

Jerry: This was as New York City expanded and developed and as upward mobility took hold. My father was doing fairly well economically, so we were able to take what approximated for those days, buying a house of your own. And as a matter of fact, his older sister, when she married bought a house of her own, and then so did his older brother the radical. He bought a house of his own, not too far away, in those same neighbourhoods. So that that family was favoured by upward mobility, prosperity.

We were renters, tenants, but we were favoured tenants in a newly built duplex system with the homeowner living on the first floor. We lived on the second which was the preferred place to live because there was no one above you. It was the second floor, so there were no kids running over you and making noise and it meant that the landlady and her husband had to suffer the noise of three little kids running around. Those were the conditions of their lives for the pleasure of having paying customers help them pay off their property. But it had a beautiful backyard with apple trees, I remember. It was the first time in my life I encountered things like this.

I went to a kindergarten when I was five years old that was three or four blocks away, not too far away. I was registered in that kindergarten, my sister was registered in first grade. It was a public school, an elementary school.

Sara: Why did your parents decide to send you to a public school and not to a Jewish parochial school.

Jerry: That was considered a terrible thing by my father's family. My father's family really became very critical of my mother. Then I discovered that my cousins were not being sent to religious school either, because Uncle Dave, who had three children also--Uncle David and Aunt Mini, radical that he was, would not permit his children to attend religious schools and

have religious training at all--except that they were bar mitzvah'd.

My father and mother were somewhat in an in between--they were emerging out of very tightly constrained orthodoxy into that new kind of North American Jew taht we now call Conservative. We were closer to what we now call a Conservative congregation. There were many liberties that we took, for example my father rode on Shabbas. And when he had lunch, a fancy lunch, he would have oysters, he would eat seafood. But he didn't eat ham, he wouldn't do that. Ham or bacon was forbidden. And interestingly, meat was not mixed with milk, but not for kashruth reasons. It was a serious belief that that would make you very sick. My father developed a health reason for that.

So that when my grandparents visited they would not be offended by our family's maintenance of kashruth. Of course we didn't have seafood at home except for good kosher fish. My mother maintained strict kashruth at home, which never quite met my granddfather's high standards for kashruth and my father's father's standards "avadah nicht", no matter what she did she couldn't meet his standards because he spooked you out. He was an extremely brilliantly trained Hebrew scholar who felt terribly trapped by his personal circumstances and was at complete odds with his children, his wife and his family. As a matter of fact, he used immigration to abandon them for 5 years, when they caught up with him in a funny kind of way.

Sara: Explain more about that!

Jerry: The way they left their little village was in this way: there was a fire in the village and the little shul that he was the leader of and that literally he owned--because in those days the rebbe established a little congregation, people met in that congeregation. In other words, a rebbe wasn't sent out by some central authority, the way it would be in one of the churches, to go and establish a religious community somewhere.

What would happen would be that a well trained, learned, young religiously endowed person would establish himself as a rebbe, as teacher of children and start a little school going. And it would become the meeting place for a "chedrah", for a community, for a minion, for the ten guys. He would be the leader of them, not necessarily selected by them. They would just gravitate to him. When they got enough money together they would buy a torah and set it up. He and his wife, his wife would work to earn the money so that they could buy the torah. And she did that.

So that set him up in the rabbi businesss. My father's mother did that. She was an educated woen. She was a graduate of the gymnasia, in the Russian pale this was unusual. She came from a rather well-to-do family She as a tall well-built, handsome,

extremely handsome woman. She wasn't beautiful in the kind of sharply chiselled fragile way that my mother's mother was beautiful, but she was handsome and broadbrowed and intelligent and witty and patient and strong. She as a very interesting woman. And made a good rebbetzen. She and my grandfather were a very good team as long as there weren't children around. Because as far as my grandfather as concerned, the children spoiled the whole thing. They introduced divergencies and trivialities that he couldn't be bothered with.

So when there was a fire in the shtetl, with the little insurance money that they got back, he took half and gave it to her, kissed her on the cheek, and left for America. He took the long up journey to Hamburg and left Hamburg and took the boat to New York City.

And it just turned out that he and my mother's father worked in shops that were next door to each other. And when the chevra got together for their prayers--because they would begin early in the morning and the guys would have their minion--it was a workers' religious community. It was more like a commune set up. He would be paid an extra two dollars a month for his services in conducting services for holidays. It was right in the factory.

The workers would pay, not the boss. The boss would come in and daven with them like there weren't these distinctions at that level. Then when the davening was over... There was a workers' shul that developed downtown, the labour shul. It was called the free synagogue. On East Broadway.

In any event, my zaida used to conduct services there but also he was a presad. He was a bull of a guy. He was a strong, broadchested basso. He sang magnificently. He was a really well trained cantor, so he was impressive and sought after. So the guys supported him and hid him for five years. He hardly ever communicated to Augusta over in Lithuania. And she did a significant thing. The village was burnt down, it was rebuilding and what she did was to become the neighbourhood assistant to the blacksmith.

TAPE THREE
SIDE ONE

Sara: So you were just saying that your other grandmother became the blacksmith's assistant.

Jerry: She became assistant to the blacksmith and one of the things that she had to do was to put steel tires on wagonwheels. She had a young helper who helped to lift the cart up step, by step, by step. Now we would use a jack, but they didn't have that in those days. She would describe it to me when she was very old, and I was a favorite "ainech lach" of hers, so we had long conversations when she was in her eighties and she would really elaborate on the stories of

her five years of exile, as she called it. When she had no support, no husband, relatives were moving out to America all the time and the community was shrinking and authority was crowding in on them and persecution was getting tighter. She was left with two daughters and a son, she was left with three children. This was in the Eastern part of Lithuania. It was a little place called Kurinitz. I don't think you'd find it on any map anymore. Kurinitz, Gebornya.

Sara: At that time was that still part of Czarist Russia?

Jerry: Very much part of Czarist Russia. The year, if I can track it back would be in the 1890s to the latest 1901. She was working at the blacksmith and my father was 5 years old when she gathered together enough money from the work that she had done to be able to buy ship's cards for herself, her two oldest girls who were now in their early teens and her two sons.

My father was born 4 months after my grandfather left. So that my father had never seen him. And it was hard, really rough. And they had hardly ever heard. But through other relatives and through neighbours and friends and "lantsman". There were organizations for Lantsman Shaft organizations through which she made inquiries and she kept asking and kept asking. She finally found out the areas where he might be. So she finally brought herself to New York City and set herself up in a little room for herself and for her 4 kids, so all 5 of them. And a little stove and cold running tap and a toilet out in the hall.

She went with the two youngest kids by the hand looking for her "mannein". From shop, to shop, to shop, to shop, to shop. Of course this was not an unusual thing for abandoned wives with kids to be doing this. It happened, sometimes it happened because of persecution and the kossaken riots and people were separated that way. Sometimes it came out of sheer abandonment and stubborn determination to leave the marriage and leave the family.

So she finally came to the shop where my zaida was working and because he was a favorite chazan and rabbi and leader of prayer, in the place, they protected him and they lied to her. And something told her that she had hit paydirt this time. So what she did was to leave and to come back very early in the morning when the men would be dahvening. Because she knew that if they had a cheder [school] if they had a minion, somebody had to lead it. She heard him dahvening and she knew his voice and she came up and she stood at the door with her hands on her hips and she says, "Avram, kim schoen heer. Macht nicht kein mitt mehr spielchiet" [Abraham, come over here! Don't play with me like this.]

This is a family story! Like a beaten child he came with his head down. "oh, mmm, whhnn..." This is my father's remembrance of his first experience with his father was, "And who is he?" And she said,

"Dahs ist eigene diene zihn. Ehr ist deine macheng. Nacher ehr fahr deine futter isst egene genonomen." [This is your own son. He is of your making. He's named after your father. So Avrom arranged and they got together and they made a family and it was a disaster for the two older girls. He was brutal, highly critical, rejecting of the kids.

David became in no time at all a radical "ausvarff"--nothing that the kids could do would be acceptable to Poppa. Immediately my father was sent to cheder that he must learn he's an ignorant child, he's five years old already. He's three years behind in his learning--and he caught up fast. He was a very bright little guy. But he used to run away from cheder and hang out at the Educational Alliance and at the Henry Stret Settlement. And my father grew up as a client of, a product of the Henry Street Settlement.

Sara: Which was?

Jerry: A settlement house on the Lower East Side which became a haven for immigrant boys and girls--it became their centre for education and learning and an area for protection from sometimes family brutality and what we call child abuse now. My father grew up in a child abusing household. My grandfather was brutal. My father never, ever laid a hand on me for a disciplinary reason, not ever. I can't remember ever once. He would freeze up and go--what we knew about my father, my sisters and I used to talk about the look. My father had a devastating look. When we were older kids in our elecents and twelves and early teens, we would kid each other and ask, "Did you get the look to-day?" It was descriptive enough of being in a tensional relationship with my father.

But Mr. Gibney who was the settlement house worker in those days, was my father's hero and ego ideal. He taught my father to keep his hair combed, to shine his shoes, to keep his body clean, to be an active person, to eat a proper diet, to keep a moral outlook on life, to seek education in order to uplift himself. The real stuff. He taught my father how to box, not my father only, but the boys how to box. My father became an extremely good, very proficient athlete, in a semi-pro category. He played in two very good, highly qualified basketball leagues. Baseball was his game. He was an extremely good ball player.

But these were unJewish activities. This was unJewish behavior. His father was beside himself for his doing this. Nevertheless, my father was "Zehr geilehrent." He knew his Chamish backward and forward, but by this time he was an unbeliever. The brutality that went along with his religious education turned him off. He was the greatest deterrent in my lifetime to my feeling the right to enjoy that aspect of my experience that was religious experience. Because my father always looked with great skepticism at it. And I enjoyed some of it, because I wasn't subjected to the same brutality, or if I was it was at arm's length.

Sara: It's an interesting reversal of roles, in terms of how generations operate.

Jerry: I think I'm describing something that happened to a lot of Jewish families in the aftermath of immigration. Not only Jewish families, Italian families.

Sara: So the pattern is that the family comes and the first generation of kids born there would be very Americanized, really soon, and the next generation would be critical of their parents.

Jerry: All of the school teachers were white Anglo-Saxon Protestant women. There were a few men teachers for people over Grade Six. But up to Grade Six, all were white Anglo-Saxon Protestant women who in working with immigrants saw themselves as rescuing these children from ignorance and almost from Satan in many respects. And so they were highly moralistic with the kids. If you accused them of being racist they wouldn't know what you were talking about. But they were racist because they hadn't a clue--they didn't bother to find out and they were terrified to look beneath the surface of what they encountered. They were unbelievably insensitive in dealing with the parents of these kids. Unbelievably so.

The inability to speak English was equated with massive ignorance and so the teachers would be shocked to discover how quickly the children of these presumably ignorant parents developed skills in the arts, the maths and sciences and learned so quickly the curriculum base, while seeming to stubbornly reject their attempts at quote unquote "Americanization" and other dimensions of socialization. Very interesting.

TAPE THREE, SIDE TWO

Jerry: I remember my own experience, like in kindergarten. Very interesting experience I had in kindergarten. I sneezed and I took a cloth that my mother had given me that was clean but was not hemmed. Because my mother bought her clothes, her handkerchiefs and stuff at a second hand shop, remnants shops and she would buy it in bulk. It was clean, it was washed, but it was not hemmed. The teacher grabbed it from me and she said, "You're not going to put that rag to your nose, not in my classroom. You bring your mother here tomorrow."

And I didn't go back to school! My father found me, not going to school and he picked me up under his arm screaming and kicking and took me to school. Because he misunderstood and thought that I was playing hookey. And he wasn't going to have a kid that was running away from school. No way! He plopped me in front of the teacher and he said, "Here is this little rascal, he ran away from school and I want you to know that I brought him back. Put that on the record." And the teacher was not my friend that day. I came home crying to my mother who was bewildered by the whole

experience but she knew something was not usual, because I loved school. So she asked me, "What happened? Something must have happened," says my mother to me. And weeping I told her, "Well Daddy took me to school and I wanted to tell you why I wasn't going. And he wouldn't let me come back to you to tell you. And he thought I was trying to stay home and I wasn't trying to stay home. The teacher took my handkerchief away and she said it was a rag and I musn't use it on my nose anymore. And I had to bring my mother to school today."

And my mother looked at me and she say, "Oh my darling little boy, you were trying to protect me from your teacher." And she went to shcool, storming to the teacher and did something terrible. Instead of talking to the teacher, since she was born in America, she walked into the principal's office and wanted to know, "What's going on around here. You haven't got some dumb immigrant that you're dealing with here. You're dealing with an American citizen." That was my mother's pitch all the time. "I am a free born American. What's going on here!" The principal said, "I don't know. Let's find out." Then the teacher said, "I can't have a youngster using a rag." And my mother said, "A rag! That's good muslin. From American cotton." (Laughter.) My mother!

That was the typical attitude towards the kids from these families. They dealt with us sternly. There as no recourse from their absolute authority and I beleive that that's the way education proceeded all through North America and Canada in those days. I don't think that kids had much of a talkback or respodent relationship to authority in those days. Authority was blunt and harsh and direct. Because we were immigrants they also assumed that the children of immigrants didn't understand.

Sara: There also is the kind of confusion the Japanese went through here in the 1930s and 1940s even though they were third and second generation--their allegiance was totally with the Americas and yet they got lumped in with the Japanese attack on America.

Jerry: I ended up...my mother became very ill. As a result of this it was necessary to break up home. By this time I was seven and a half, nearly eight years old. And we moved back, the three kids, moved back directly to my grandparents home. Previously, when we lived at 215 106th Street, we lived one floor above my grandparents, my mother's parents. Now the three kids moved into my mother's parents home and my father lived with an in-law, a cousin, two houses away, in a back room. It was so sad.

And I couldn't understand it and I couldn't believe it. The kids were put to bed in little put-up beds in the dining room. They would fold all the chairs and the tables away. They were used to doing this for visiting relatives, new immigrants. So there was always equipment and bedding around. So we were now exiles, returning exiles or immigrants back into our old homeland. There was something very

good and delicious about that.

We lived there for seven months, until my mother got better. She was very, very ill. She nearly died. What I finally discovered was that she had had an ectopic pregnancy, which in those days, although they dealt with it surgically, there were not the tools and there was not the equipment or the medication which would have made this maybe a two weeks or three weeks hospital procedure. She developed a very serious intestinal infection that raged through her body finally and literally she nearly, came very close to dying.

As kids, we sat around the living room and the dining room table and around the breakfast table learning about these things through the hushed whispered communications of the adults around us. And from time to time when my younger sibling aunts and uncles became irritated with us because we interfered in their lives, we interrupted them doing their homework, whatever. They would get really irritated with us and they would blurt out facts, "You know your mother's nearly dead, you know!" But that's real life at the extended family level. As well as kindnesses, because I had new protectors and new buddies that I could rely on. My Uncle Al would ride shotgun for me while I would go into the dangerous streets, or make sure I got to school safely. These sorts of things. Because it was a very rough neighbourhood by then. The neighbourhood had changed and gotten tough and it was not what it was like earlier on.

In any event we lived like that for seven months or eight months and then when my mother came out, the very first thing she wanted to do was establish home again and this time as far away as possible from her own parents. Again wanting to establish her own independent home base and get my father back into the home base again and all this. Because she had overcomes of the same thing happening to her as had happened to her mother-in-law when his father had drifted off for five yeras. She was terrified that this would happen. There was not possibility for that but that was her fantasy.

We then moved to the East Bronx and there I was immediately registered in what was to become a rather famous religious seminary. And I was sent to yeshivah. And I was an older boy. It was not exactly an alien environment, because I had had some religious training but not alot. My father made sure that I wasn't cheated, but it was always with tongue-in-cheek and I always had a feeling that he didn't mean it and that there was something funny about what he was teaching me. Not funny but wrong, that he had to do it, but that he really didn't want to for some reason that I wasn't clear about.

TAPE THREE SIDE ONE

Jerry: The way I ended up in the Israel Salanter Yeshivah which had just been moved up North from Avenue A where its origins were.

Because that's where I had my first interview. I was brought down literally by the ear because I was trying to escape.

And they gave me some quick tests, both in English and in...You have to know what this yeshivah was like. It had a dual curriculum. One of the first new yeshivoht--that was the whole idea that your son or daughter. I don't remember any daughters at that time, but later on it became coeducational, it had two sections, not mixed, because girls were not mixed in the same class as boys. In any event, Chalilah [God willing] that your son should become good scholarly material in any way, that he might want to become a teacher. So that they insured that the programme would meet the requirements of the newly established New York State Regents Commission, which was the curriculum establishing system in New York State in those days. So that I quickly caught up with my English levels. English, math, history, civics.

Sara: So you were talking about your new yeshivah.

Jerry: This was a new and interesting experience for me because for one thing it was not like public school in that the classes were really small. We were seven or eight boys, not all of the same ages you should know, in each group, of rather mixed educational background and experience. And a few of the boys in my group all the way through were originally non-English speaking kids. They spoke a foreign language and Yiddish, either Russian or Polish or the Russian equivalent of Lithuanian or the Lithuanian equivalent of Russian. Whatever those things were. Rumanian. But they were mostly Central European and there were no Sephardic families in our group. Not by design but this was not the area of the world where Sephardic families gathered. Yet. That came much later in the New York experience.

But the classes were small. The rebbes, the young yeshivah teachers were qualified teachers, which was unusual. They had met the quote, unquote, New York State qualifications for teaching. They had teaching licenses, which was most unusual for these kinds of young rabbonin. They were all the new, dynamic, young, very inspired, highly vitalized, very challenging--there were no ugly guys among them in terms of guys who would pull you by the hair or by the ear out of your seat. It was not like the downtown yeshivah my father went to, or the chedar that my grandfather went to. Where a rebbe would come along if you were talking to another kid and either slap you or poke you or pull your ear or pull you out of your chair or throw you down. There was a lot of physical abuse in the chedars. The kids behaved because they were knocked into place, it was not too different from the early days in British educational institutions, not at all different, with some of the same purposes and ideas behind it. Spare the rod and spoil the child concept.

Here it was really somewhat different in some respects, because to a certain extent this group of young, religious, dynamic, very inspired

guys were tougher to deal with. There were times when we would rather have gotten a kick in the tail and gone on our way than to have to listen to the stern admonitions and lecturing of a young, inspired guy who if he caught you with a Baseball Digest under your book instead of doing what you were supposed to be doing, would give you a stern lecture that would encompass your entire future for the next thirty-five years. In terms of the dire consequences, and the subsequent implications for cheating. "What kind of children are you going to raise and what kind of a standard for adult behavior. What kind of examples are you being confronted with by your parents." "Och und Veh", I'm telling you!

It was somewhat puritanical in some ways, but in other ways extremely interestingly challenging. For example, I was nine years old and we were studying Leviticus. And among the things that we were studying had to do with the fact that there was a kind of impurity that during the Exodus you had to deal with. And that was the impurity of the monthly cycle of the woman. Now eight year old boys did not know a lot about menstruation if anything. So we talked about impurity and that was alright, that was superficial stuff. They were impure and tarroom, tarroom, tarroom.

And then kids like me and my friends would ask, "Rebbe, rebbe, rebbe. Tell us. Voss isst dahs? What is it? What are you talking about? Be fair, either tell us what you're talking about or we'll just give you the answers that you want." They didn't like that kind of attitude. They wanted involvement because regularly we sat as an audience while the scholarly, the really knowledgeable scholarly kids were being encouraged to sit around the Gomorrhah-tisch, where a learned scholar would be going into every aspect of a Talmudic question, from every side with contemporary and ancient commentary. And what one scholar said and what another scholar said. We knew from the live interaction that these kids really knew what they were talking about. And as a result of that they had to be mathematicians, they had to be lawyers, they had to be naturalists. You had to be able to balance scientific knowledge in a real sense with a theological mythology about the genesis of the world and God's gift to human kind, giving humankind this world of natural life that you are the stewards of. And there were different theories and we really flashed back and forth and whatever.

And an interesting commentary on this is that I was in this process until it was necessary to attend one year of a regular high school, in order to achieve our Regents. In order to be able to take our Regents examinations in order to be able to qualify for university. So I attended Evander Childs high school in the last year of my high school experience. But until then I had already graduated from the high school equivalent of the yeshivah. And some kids were going on to become rabbonen--they were continuing in their religious education sector of this and the others of us were going into the Haskalah learning, in other words into regular universal learning. We were going to go to university if we could get admitted. All of us were

applying to City College because we were all poor kids. There was an occasional kid who was going to go to Columbia or New York University.

Close friends of ours attended a yeshivah, a completely old fashioned yeshivah on Washington Avenue in the east Bronx. And we communicated back and forth. This whole bunch of kids sort of gravitated together and had a great influence on each other in those early days. Our yeshivah was brand new in this new mode and there was a lot of question as to if parents would maintain the tuition that was necessary to keep it going, because you paid tuition and you had to have enough money. Things were getting rough by that time although the Depression hadn't hit yet. It wasn't quite yet that bad, but a number of families were being seriously economically effected.

What was interesting about the subsequent experience of this whole group of kids that I was with was that all of us became very important participants in two aspects of political life. One of them was that we became of course ardent Zionists in the new mould...

By the time I was 16 or 17 years of age I was very active in the De Leonist movement which was the Socialist Labour Party. When I was seventeen this was in 1932, so that I was in my first year in university, in City College. And all of my other friends were in the same school with me, not in the same department because I was in the department of sciences....

Sara: I want to go back. There's a whole lot of things that got skipped over. To go back to when Rose was sick and you were in the position of taking care of the girls?

Jerry: Well, not the girls, because my older sister wouldn't stand for being taken care of by me. She was a year and one half older than I was and there was a long and attenuated problem you could call it, between the two of us because my oldest sister basically was born with certain handicaps. She was a brain damaged person who developed slowly but was not a retarded person at all. She was very bright, but she learned to speak late. I was born a year and a quarter later, but that 14 months later thing was an irritant to her in that when she was first learning to speak, so was I. I could already articulate phrases and at 14 months I was a big shot. I was walking and running and doing all the things that you were doing. By the time you were fourteen, you were a gonser macher, you were a person in your own right, a self-determinative human being. You were, even ahead of Larry and he was an early developing person.

And there was my sister slower in development so there was a rivalry thing that I was constantly trying to avoid getting into with her because behind the scenes the end result of that was that she beat the shit out of me. Like whenever she had a chance she wailed away at me. Yeah. Or blamed me for something. And I had to move out of being scapegoated. I was really not wanted in her way.

And then along came little sister who was really a quick grower and developer, like really quick. Like if the two of us were bright-- because older sister was a very bright person with it all--little sister grew ever faster as a young child in our family environment than I had. Because she didn't have older sister on her back all that much. And part of it was because my mother was sort of diverted away from and committed to caring for and making up the gaps for older sister. So myself and younger sister were sort of the kids apart from Mother, Father and older sister as the primary family system--we were a sub-system consisting of the two siblings who were mutually parenting each other, or I was at least parenting or subparenting my younger sister in a fairly constant way.

For example, I remember changing her diapers and I was only thirteen months older than she. You see my older sister was 14 months older than I and I am 13 months older--Sylvia will be 70 in August and I will be 71 in October. That's the difference.

And if the ectopic pregnancy had taken we would have had another succession of two or three more kids. So that was a fairly natural thing for me. I didn't sense it as a burden or whatever, it was what you did. Because I had the example of my mother being the sibling surrogate to her siblings. In the extended family it was a natural thing. In the extended family system for other kids to monitor kids. It was not unusual if I was going out for my grandmother to say to my Uncle Alex, to keep an eye on Yankel when he goes out side

because...and then for Morris to have to keep an eye on his younger sister Betty. He never wanted to do that, but Momma would say, "You do that." So delegating responsibility down the line was something that gave you the honour of being the older sibling. It designated you. It was a form of recognition. We were stupid enough to believe that, to get conned by that.

Sara: You once told me an amazing story about your mother dealing with Anne's disability and its effect on learning language.

Jerry: She would take Anne's hand and put it on her mouth and she would say a work, "Momma". And she would put Anne's hand on her mouth and say, "Make the same motion." So she taught her to do that. I remember other things, like at first I was taught to read when I got to school, they used to give us little word charts. I felt terrible about that because I already knew all the word charts by the time I was 4 years old, three and a half, I was reading when I was three and a half. When I was three and a half I remember picking out the headlines in the Yiddish paper or in the English paper. I could tell what the big news for that day was.

Who was President was Wilson. I could remember picking out Wilson and then certainly picking out Harding. I remember learning to tell time when I was about five and a half, 6 years old. I remember an incident in a barber shop. This was out in Brooklyn. I was sitting and I was only 6 years old. My mother gave me a quarter to go to the

barber to get my hair cut. And I got into the chair and it was right after school and we were due at chedar at 3:30. And I got to the barber's at 3 o'clock and if he did his job I would be out by 3:15 and I would be out by 3:30.

And there was a boy from our chedar class brought in by his mother and the boy was very anxious as he sits in the chair nad he's waiting a few mnutes for the second barber to get to him and he says, "Momma, momma, I'm going to be late." And I looked up at the clock and I saw it was only a few minutes after three o'clock and at first I wondered, "Well, why is he worried?" And then it struck me, "Well, he doesn't know how to tell time." I couldn't beleive it. A boy from my chedar doesn't know how to tell time. I didn't say anything, but inside me I got reeally worried that maybe I knew things that other boys didn't know yet. And I noticed that there were some things that I could do that they couldn't do intellectually. I got very worried about that. I felt a big responsibility that has stayed with me for a whole lifetime, to make good use of my learning, of my knowledgeability that this is a responsibility. Another kid might have felt really proud about being smarter, I felt, "My God, What a responsibility."

TAPE THREE SIDE TWO

Jerry: ...watching my mother teach my sister. I knew all of my older sister's lessons and all of her material and I kept quiet. First of all I didn't want to get pounded by her because she resented that because it made her feel clumsy and dumb. It's terrible. But second of all it puzzled me, I didn't understand how that could be, it almost felt unfair and I felt sort of guilty.

Sara: It's kind of an interesting system that you're describing. Were you closer to one or the other parent?

Jerry: Much closer tp my mother than I ever became to my father. This was another thing that made it difficult to assess what I really knew and to take possession of it appropriately. My father was disappointed in me on one level because I was not a robust large person. I should explain that I ended up being the smallest boy in my class until the second year in university. Literally the smallest boy in the class until my second year in university. And in my third year in university I grew from four foot nine or ten, to five foot nine and one half, then I grew to five foot ten, ten and a half, nearly six feet tall. If you had told me then that that would happen to me you would have released me from bondage. I would have stopped worrying. Also I wouln't have developed some very important skills.

You should also know that I was the smallest boy in the class but I was also one physically very tough little boy. Like if you dropped me I bounced six feet high. I was not accident prone, my whole lifetime as a young person I only had two minor accidents, never had a broken limb until I was an adult and I experienced a broken hand as

a camp counsellor and then in the army I experienced another broken limb and then as an older adult I broke a wrist. But that was not my schtick. I had a very good sense of my boundaries and very good high level reflexes, high level reaction time, very good. In the military I passed very high in reaction time.

So those were not my problems except that I was a little guy, and my father didn't know what to do with this, because he was a magnificent athlete and he was looking forward to being able to nurture a shining example of leading Jewish professional baseballism or basketballism. So I became an extremely good basketball player, an extremely good baseball player, very good through a lifetime of working with kids and young adults I became a very good coach and I knew all the rules and regulations of all the games. We didn't play golf, we didn't play tennis. I became a golf caddy to earn money and got to know the game and had enormous contempt because of the class differences. I came from a different class group and the places I hung around the game of golf was for rich people, it wasn't for blokes like me. But at other sports became extremely good, I was a swimmer. More than anything what I became was a very active scout and learned my woods craftsmanship extremely well. I became a Star Scout which is a high recognition.

I didn't want to become an Eagle Scout because by that time in my life I was into very radical activity but I saw it as linked to a future to a chalutz in Israel and one of the things that I would have to do would be to make do on the ground with whatever we had. I had great inspiration for doing these things. So did other Jewish kids who were in our group to do this. We made it our business to learn to tie knots. If boy scouts had to learn to tie knots, we could tie those knots in twenty seconds where it took other kids a longer time to learn them. As far as we were concerned these were not passing things, these were things we were going to have to use in our lifetime. To save our lives. We either were going to go far out West and work with the Indians or we were going to go to be chalutzim and make a new life out of sheer drudgery and toil in the holy land.

But my father--it was a terrible puzzlement--my father was a leader in the Boy Scout movement, but at no time did he ever express pride in my achievements as a Scout, not ever. When I say he was a leader, he was not merely a Scoutmaster, and he was not only the District Leader in the Boy Scouts, he became the Scout Marshall for all of Manhattan for about 11 years, 12 years. Marty was well known in the scouting movement, he was famous. He was a really well known scout leader. And because he was in Mr. Gibney's ego ideal mode, he was really living it out appropriately and well.

I remember my dad bringing home kids, all these kids from the slums of Manhattan to our backyard in the Bronx and teaching these kids how to box and how to wash up and clean up and sit around the table. And my mother would set up a buffet and all the kids would sit around and eat and then all the kids would be delegated an assignment for

cleaning up and he would signal to the family kids to pitch in and take our turn in cleaning up as if we didn't do that, because my mother would make sure that kids didn't sit around and do nothing. In her household you didn't do that because she hated housework so she used all the help she could get. She was a very smart lady. That was my father's schtick and he would go off with his groups of boys and I would be envious. I would watch his going off on Sundays and holidays.

But, we had family picnics too and we did all of those kinds of things and that's where I learned to set a proper campfire with this stern person standing behind me and clocking me and saying, "Sorry, you're gong to have to do better than that and walk away. And there was this gorgeous campfire burning and I wanted to sit around and tell ghost stories and instead I had to go clock how to start a campfire in order to do it the right way. But I became good and I was going to bear his system.

But that was a piece of retaliation for another part of it. We would sit down and have discussions and I would realize that my father didn't know how to analyze the news. He really was not the least bit interested. He was a poet, he was interested in poetry, which was okay.

For a Socialist he knew very little about socialism, but he knew the people. He knew Eugene V. Debs, so I met Eugene V. Debs, He knew all these people through his older brother and through other associations that he had. It was more on a personal level that we got to know more about the socialsit movement in New York City and involvement with Jewish workers and the union leaders who were expending great energy in organizing. So I got to know them as people.

My mother's own attitude and connections to it were very different. They were at the street level, organziing housewives too. Because there were real problems for consumers in relation to exploitation in the food market. They were destroying food in order to maintain food prices. There were all kinds of scams going. There were no regulations or standards. As far as milk, you got watered milk or you got contaminated milk. Health standards weren't observed. You had to go fight with the Board of Health to do its jobs, they were graft ridden. My mother was constantly organizing housewives to get off their asses and do something about it, "You know, stop complaining about it. You can't be a yenta. You gotta go out there and go do it." In Yiddish, with her fellow Jewish housewives. They became a very potent force.

They came after her to look for her, because she had power at the neighbourhood level. She didn't go looking for them. The left. Then they discovered that she was politicized. She had politicized herself. She had read and read and read, constantly. my mother would read that stuff. My father would never read that stuff--it was

badly written. It's the truth. He would sit and criticize it, "the sentences are too long, this guy really doesn't know how to express himself. I can't stand it!"

So I learned a lot from her and also the kids were closer to the ground level thing that the mothers were involved in because in those days the fathers were remote figures. My father worked in an office all the way downtown on Broad Street. When I went down to his office to help him run errands, and finally he taught me how to process papers at the customs house and these kinds of terribly important responsibilities--I took a look at something like a bill of lading for goods that were going on a ship. It was worth tens of thousands of dollars and that piece of paper, the bill of lading was worth tens of thousands of dollars. If someone stole it from you it was transactional the way a 10,000 bill could be transacted. Here was a little kid, I was twelve years old, eleven and a half years old, when I first went to the customs house, with this little brown wallet sized manila folder that the bills of lading were carried in. It was done with a waxed seal so that when I presented it to the customs house man he could see that the seal had not been broken and he would be the first one to break the seal. This was an honour, it was heady stuff.

But remote, like way out there. It didn't even have anything to do with earning a living, because everyone I knew who earned a living either worked in a tailor shop and he pressed clothes, or he ran errands, or he drove a horse and wagon, or he pushed things in a push cart, or he lifted and loaded things, or put them in boxes and got them ready for someone else to pick up. Those were the people that I knew on a daily basis or else they were mothers who were going shopping and sending you on errands and getting ready for Shabbas.

You got ready for Shabbas beginning Wednesday night and all day Thursday. If you weren't ready for Shabbas by Thursday afternoon at four o'clock Shabbas wasn't going to happen anymore, forget it. And not only that, you had to be in the spirit of it. My father used to always kid about that, but damn it, he never forgot. But he used to tease about it. He would say to me, "Yankelah, are you ready for Shabbas?" And I would take a look and he didn't have the twinkle in his eye like my zaida. My zaida, my mother's father would ask, "Ah, Shabbat, de Shabbasdiche yingele." He used to look at me by Wednesday afternoon, "De Shabbasdiche yingele, Choene." And I would look at him and he would look at me and we understood, we were in the mood. 'Cause something good was going to happen.

Shabbas was a day when you tuned out and you could fantasize and all kinds of things happened in your head. He didn't have worldly responsibilities. We were really educated to do that by our rabbonen. Like man, fly on Shabis, turn your head on. It's okay, do it. Shabbas is for thinking, feeling, ideating, dreaming. You're allowed to do it, really you are. So you take a shpitzier but you don't turn your head off. Like you can have a vision, you can have a dream,

it's alright to daydream on Shabbas, even a bad daydream. But nobody made us do anything. Nobody was telling us what to do on Shabbas.

My grandfather and I used to go to shul together and a maple leaf would come down, one of those double buds from the maple, seedlings, with those two winged seeds, would come floating down. And my zaida would wait until it got down and then he would say, "Oh, Yankele, treff, woss isst dahs." [Here find out for me what is this?] And I would say, "Zaida, ich verschteh dahs nicht." [I don't understand this.] And he would say, "No, no, no. Geh und finnf dahs aus." [Go find out.] And next week I would come back on Shabis--and I would go to the library, I would read the Encyclopedia Britannica, I would ask one of the rabbonen, if the rabbonen didn't know, if I went to the dentist that week, I would ask the dentist. The dentist was like a doctor, I found out. They had the same training and all that.

He would want to know all kinds of things. Like when you take salts, "sahlitz", why does it make you move your bowels so much. Because when he was a greenhorn on the ship, prior to their leaving the ship, they gave everyone a dose of epsom salts, because everyone was constipated. If you came to the doctor and you hadn't moved your bowels in eight days the doctor would say, "There's something wrong with him, send him back. His machinery isn't working." So the doctor would ask you, "Did you move your bowels?" And you could answer, "Yes, yes this morning," because they gave you the prune juice and epsom salts. So now my grandfather wanted to know, "Why did they do this to him and how did it work?" If I'm going to be a doctor--but he never said that to me. He never, ever once said it to me, "You're going to be a doctor."

I guess the reason that I never went for it was that when I was seventeen years old he died suddenly in a very peculiar accident. It was a great loss. I went into literally, for a year, year and a half, a kind of a terrible mourning period, that was very painful.

Sara: Because you were closer to him than to anybody.

Jerry: Than to anybody. I began to realize that in my early thirties when I began to hark back and to look back. I also discovered when I was older and could talk very straightforwardly with my father that he was very jealous of my relationship with my grandfather, but he saw it as inevitable once we had gone back into that household, when he sort of gave up. Because he lost his kids, "That's when I lost my kids."

Sara: That's a big responsibility to lay on the kids.

Jerry: Yeah. That we should have kept up more contact. I remember going and visiting my father and weeping and urging him to come and stay with us at grandma and grandpa's house and urging him to come and stay with us there. He said, "Because they haven't got the room." and then I wondered, "How could my father not set up another

household for us alone. I would wash dishes, I would cook, I would do anything. If he only told me what to do." I remember, that was a very, very painful time.

So he was crying about one thing, because he was missing his family and his wife and his independence and he hated the place where he was and he felt humiliated and degraded and also blamed. See, I didn't know what the reason for my mother's being in hospital was, but in those days ectopic pregnancies amongst recent immigrant Jews was not well understood and my mother was not beyond holding him accountable for all her pregnancies and certainly that one because he certainly was involved with it in some way.

Sara: It's weird that she had an ectopic pregnancy, women didn't use IUD's in those days.

Jerry: I don't know what happened. My mother was very interested in birth control, I've gotta tell you. She really was, and I have no idea of what experiments she was into. In those days it was not unusual for some women to use what they called a gold button that was not different in appearance from a collar button. It was a kind of a plug that was put into the neck of a uterus. It would not corrode.

Sara: Similar to an IUD and with the same dangers.

Jerry: It's interesting that you raise the issue and you make the connection now and I do believe that you're correct..... Maybe a place to stop at is to give my father some credit for something because it sounds so negative, because I think the piece that you do have to know about him, is that just as I had an enormous respect for him, he was in awe of me. He didn't know what to do with me or about me.

But I once overheard him talking to his partner about me, he didn't know I was there. His secretary had gone out to the washroom. I sat down in her chair to wait for him to return to announce me, and I was 14 years old, it was a year after my bar mitzvah. And I had such a joy to hear--I was in a basketball game, the smallest kid in the group and I'd racked up two good scores. And one of the bigger kids on the other team fouled me and the referee didn't call it. The other guy, feeling that he was free to do so, made the serious mistake of underestimating me and attempted to foul me again. And ended up flat on his back by an easy simply direct action that my father taught me, which is so similar to what you do in judo, which is that you use a bigger man's momentum to throw him down, his weight and his momentum to throw him down if you get the proper leverage. Because he had hacked me across here and I had the ball and I had let go of the ball and grabbed his wrists and with one pull he went over my shoulder. He nearly broke his head.

The referee blew the whistle and called the foul on me whereupon my team and my coach protested like loud noise and I had the marks on my

hands where he had hacked me. So what the referee wanted to know was, "How had he landed on his back, flat out, but I mean, flat out and asked me--and my answer was, which my father thought was hilariously funny, "I think that he was too enthusiastic, sir." That he was coming at me with such force and his enthusiasm was too great, sir.

So my father's telling Mr. Michaelson this story. "Jerry is really a terrific kid. He's not only a fantastic athlete, but he's very, very smart." That's the only time I ever knew that he might know. And the rest of the time, he was like in awe. When I went to City College for the first time, he came to me, in preparation, with a little leather case, a tobacco case and a little leather box and he gave me my first pipe, because a university man has to smoke a pipe. Not cigarettes, not cigars, but a pipe because he's a thinking person.