Leonard reading:
"Let me read this to you to see whether this is what you wrote":

February, 1975
I remember the spring of 1909. I was then 16 years old and had spent three years with many sleepless nights and many lonely days in Novo Myesto (= "New Place"), where my paternal grandfather was rabbi and shochat. My job with Grandfather was to help with the butchering during the day and to study at night with him the theory of zoology in Hebrew, from a book called "Tuvat Soris".[1] My job with grandfather was to prepare the front quarters of beef by removing the veins that carried the blood from the heart to the animal, since Jewish law prohibits the eating of blood. To be kosher, the housewife had to wash the meat, salt it, and soak it in water in order to take out any trace of blood. It is perhaps not known to some that by tradition, an Orthodox Jew is forbidden to eat the hindquarters of any animal, because when Jacob wrestled with the angel his hip was dislocated. It is ironic that despite the poor economic conditions of the Jews who lived in the small towns within the Pale, they observed this law, and consequently the cost for meat was twice as high for them than for the Gentiles.

I remember the spring of 1909 when I was 16 years old. I returned home to Samotevitch from Novo Myesto, where I had been with my paternal grandparents. I returned home after three long years of sleepless nights and longing for my family. For the first time, away from home, the most precious place in any language. There's no place like home, the poet said. I was returning to my parents, whom I so much admired, to my brothers and sisters, my maternal grandparents, aunts and cousins, who were all glad to see me back. I was the oldest of my brothers and sisters, and was the most sophisticated adolescent in that I was the only one of them who had seen signs of scientific accomplishment, such as a train powered by only a few pieces of wood that could pull dozens of freight and passenger cars without a horse in front or in the rear and could blow whistles that could be heard for miles. I also saw a horseless carriage driven by a man holding a small wheel, also with no horse. The only sign of science in our town was a girl's bicycle, owned by the daughter of the manager of the still and vodka store owned by the Czar Nicholas government. The liquor was sold through a window, even at 40 degrees below weather. Many years earlier, only Jews had been allowed to sell liquor in Russia, but now the right to sell such

[1] The title is unclear on the tape. [LN]

profitable commodities as liquor and tobacco was appropriated by the government itself.

I was happy as a lark and so was my family to have me back. Those few weeks were the happiest times of my young life. Unfortunately, they soon came to an end when I contracted typhoid fever. No doctors, no medicines were available. I owe my life to our mother, who was my doctor and my nurse, keeping vigil over me for days and nights. I don't remember for how many weeks I hovered between life and death. The one thing I do remember is that Mother somehow got hold of an orange (presumably from Surazh, where my Uncle David and Tante Dobe lived), and every day she would feed me a section of it. I remember this because this was the only orange I tasted in my 20 years in Russia. With the help of my mother and the rest of my family, I recuperated, slowly but surely.

But my luck didn't hold for long: we received a letter from my Uncle Leibe, our father's brother in Ponemun, Lithuania (where Napoleon was in 1812), saying that he needed a boy in his business — his own son was too small — and that I should come right over. My parents were reluctant to let me go and leave home again, but they were concerned about the circumstances at that time, the failure of the 1905 revolution and the economic and political turmoil after the Russo-Japanese war, when Russia suffered many losses in material through the bungling inefficiencies in their military leadership, which blamed the Jews for its own failure. Looking for a scapegoat, pogroms started in various cities, and though we lived in peace with our Gentile village peasants, we thought that moving to Lithuania would be more secure for the family. It was decided that I should go to Lithuania and, perhaps with the aid of our uncle there, find a small business for the family. In the meantime, my brother Sam, who was 14, and Boris, 12, could help our father. Of course I hated to leave home again, but duty and loyalty to the family that was instilled in all of us made me realize that the interests of the family came first. So one early morning, when all but my parents were asleep, with a heavy heart and bitter tears of departing, I was picked up by Ashia (not a relative), the driver of a horse wagon, and taken to Surazh, where I would take my first train ride.[2]

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[2] [Leonard: "Didn't your family have a horse?" Max: "Yes, but Father didn't … to drive me."]

In Surazh I said goodbye to my Uncle David Simon, Aunt Dobe, cousins Sam, Oscar, Mary, Pasha, Yente, and Dvere. From Surazh, I proceeded to Novozybkov (10-12 miles from Novo Myesto) to say goodbye to Uncle Jankov-Mikhl and his family, and then left for Ponemun. The train stopped at Kovno, and I had to walk about 10 miles to Ponemun with my karzhinka containing my tfilin, prayer book, and few clothes. After finding my uncle's house[3] and exchanging greetings, Uncle drove me to the places where I would have to go to work.

There were nine military forts all around the city of Kovno to whose PX's I was to deliver products for which Uncle had contracts, and to collect the proceeds from the two soldiers at each PX assigned to sell these products at the contract prices. The forts were placed along the defense lines from Germany, Kovno being the closest city to the German lines. These forts were underground installations that could not be seen from outside. In them were barracks for thousands upon thousands of soldiers stationed there and ammunition in case of attack. My uncle supplied only the infantry PX's. I had to have a military permission card to enter them.

My job was to get up at sunup, feed the horse, walk 5 blocks to the cavalry barracks which had a phone, call the forts to find out what they needed, come back to the house, have breakfast, fill the orders, clean the horse, hitch him to the wagon, put the orders on the wagon, stop at the bakery for the white bread ordered, and proceed to deliver these to the forts some 20 miles away. Sometimes 3-4 deliveries a day.

I worked 6 days a week in rain and snow, sometimes until 8-10 at night. There was no cover and no brakes on the wagon. I remember coming down from fort #9, a steep downhill. It was dark and raining. All of a sudden, one of the two harnessing poles of the wagon broke and started hitting the horse's legs. He started to run, and the more he ran, the more it hit him; with only one pole, the wagon careened from one side of the road to the other, since there were no brakes. I was horrified thinking that the wagon would turn over, but by a miracle I managed to steer the horse into a yard, where he finally stopped. I unhitched him, tied up the pole with a rope, and proceeded to walk, holding the horse by the mouth, fearing that being a big cavalry-spirited animal he might start running again. I finally got back to the house at 2 AM, all this for 5 rubles a month. I didn't mind the hard work so much,

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[3] [Max did not remember him; he found the house by asking people]

but I was constantly terrified because on every return trip I had to pass the Napoleon Mountain, where in 1812, after Napoleon's return of his defeated army from Moscow, the frozen bodies were piled up on a flat field by the road, creating the Mountain.

I remember my first gray suit. My Uncle Leibe had a tailor cut down one of his. I used it only for synagogue on Saturdays and holidays. Usually I wore blue denims, a shirt and a belt over that.

I remember July 1911. The entire western division of the army — including infantry, cavalry, engineers, artillery — was on maneuvers in Camp Orany in the state of Tuvalk, one of the largest camps in Russia, 300 miles from Ponemun. Uncle had the contract to supply the infantry PX. They gave us 2 soldiers to sell through a window in a barrack, and I had to be the cashier. I boarded a train in Kovno for Camp Orany in the morning, carrying a large box with thousands of loose cigarettes to be sold there. The train stopped 25 miles from the camp, and another train was supposed to go from there to the camp station; but as usual, that train did not come. Since I had to be there in the morning and it was already dark, I tried to get some transportation. Since there was no town around, I started to walk the 25 miles. The night was dark but moonlit. After many hours I reached the edge of the camp. I heard a voice: "Stoi," meaning stop or I'll shoot. The sentry came over and asked me what the hell I was doing there. I explained to him that I was looking for the infantry division, showed my credentials. "And what have you in the box?" he asked. I told him, "Cigarettes." "You'd better give me some." But he was an artillery sentry and didn't know where the infantry was. "Go ahead and inquire further up." This happened over and over again, until, thousands of cigarettes lighter, I finally found the infantry division when the sun was on the horizon in the east. I shall never forget that night.

I spent the summer in camp, eating the soldiers' monotonous food of borsch and kasha — since there was nothing else to eat — and watched the artillery firing away at night, with huge flares lighting their way. The noise was terrifying. At the end of my third year in Ponemun, disappointed that I had failed to find some sort of business for my family, and with very little to show for my three years' hard work, I gave Uncle 30 days to find somebody to take my place; he got another nephew from Samotevitch. I bought a ready-made brown jacket with a half-belt in back that I wore all the next year and one more year in the USA.

I was very happy to return home to Samotevitch again, after another three years of being away from my beloved family. This was in 1912. I was 19 years old, but had very little to show for my 6 years away from home, only hard work and disappointments, having been unable to find any suitable business for my family.
Boris now being 15 years old, he was able to help our father (also a shochat) doing the butchering, Sam and I found a job hauling logs to the Dnepr River from the woods about 20 miles from home. We took Father's horse and wagon, leaving home on a Sunday, taking black bread and cucumbers, since there were no restaurants around. We slept on the ground in the woods and returned home on Friday. Mother's excellent cooked meals sure tasted delicious after five days of bread and cucumbers. We worked hard, having to walk 20-30 miles a day since we couldn't ride on the logs (that would have made the load too heavy for the horse to pull), but we were compensated by the feeling that we had helped the family some. We finished the summer log hauling, and with the winter weather at 40-50° below, there were no more logs to haul. Sam and I went to the villages to buy hog bristles and dead lambs that had been unable to survive the rough winter. We would return home in the evening, skin the lambs, cook them, and sell their skins. That was the only profession available to us at that time, since the only other occupations would have been shoemaking and tailoring; but those would usually have taken 5 years of apprenticeship and were socially unacceptable for young men whose grandfathers were rabbis and presidents of congregations. In fact, anyone who worked with his hands was socially on the lowest level and was considered ignorant, since to be a tradesman, one had to be an apprentice for so many years and would be deprived of time to study – so unlike the United States, where a tradesman is treated with respect.

It is 1913. I am 20 years old and Sam is 18, and in 1-2 years we would have to be in Czar Nicholas's army. To be in the army for 4-5 years was a dreadful prospect for a Jewish boy: anti-Semitism was encouraged by the regime ever since it accused the revolutionary movement of being Jewish inspired and Jewish in spirit; and Jews were declared Christ-killers by the Greek Orthodox religion. The life of a Jewish recruit was horrible: no possibility of promotion, having to do the dirtiest jobs in the army, being in the reserve for his whole life, and getting no help after his release from the army. This prospect caused many Jewish boys to maim and cripple themselves by cutting off parts of their body or living in cellars for years to

get TB, in order to get rejected — a terrible price to pay. For our parents, the thought of having to send 6 sons to the army was heartbreaking, but there was one hope left: the USA. Rumors were heard that there was America, and so we wrote to our Uncles Morris and Zellig to please send two shifskarte for Sam and myself.[4] Though we heard that they had a rough time there, we were anxiously awaiting their answer. Communication in those days was only by boat, and it took months for a message to reach its destination. Since there was no mail delivery, we used to walk miles daily to the post office[5] in Haidukovka where the Polish count Halinsky, had his mansion. Count Halinsky owned the post office, the town of Samotevitch, and thousands upon thousands of acres of land, until 1917 when his mansion was destroyed, some of his people were killed, some ran away, and his daughter married a farm boy near Samotevitch.[6]

After many months of waiting, we finally received a letter from our uncles that the shifskarte were on the way for Sam and me. We immediately started to get our passports in order and to get them in time by the time the shifskarte arrived.[7] Our port of embarkation was to be Rotterdam. There was both sadness and gladness in our home: gladness because this was an opportunity to look for a better future in our lives; but for parents to see their two oldest sons leave for the end of the world: Will they get there? Will we ever see them again? Sleepless nights for Father and Mother, worried for us: thousands of miles away, no profession, what can they do? I am 20. I have spent 11 years learning Hebrew and Aramaic, languages used only for studying and prayer, of no use in everyday life; learning laws and traditions

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[4] [LN: "How did Morris and Zellig get to America?" MN: "Zellig ran away from the army and somehow managed to pass the border. That wasn't very difficult." LN: " But how did he get a shifskarte?" MN: "He had some money; he was a barber." "Now why didn't he have the same problem you had? It must have been a shande for the family that he was a barber, since it was his father who was a rabbi?" "That was in general, but he was also a musician." "Like Uncle Getzel. How was Getzel related to you?" "He married my father's sister, Tante Hanna." "Were they married there or here?" "There, but the family wouldn't go to the wedding." "Because he was a musician?" "Yes." "Well how did they get married, then? "Another rabbi married them." "And a rabbi would marry them without the family there?" "Yes, they were over 18."]

[5] [Now the school by the woods.]

[6] [Halinsky let Jews build their houses on his land because he wanted to tax the trade in the market. {This section (276) is unclear on the tape} The nearest other market was in Kostykovich, 20 miles away.]

[7] LN: "You needed a passport?" MN: "Yes, because ..." (303) " Where did you get one?" "In Mogilev." "How far was that?" " About 200 miles." "But how did you get there." " We didn't. We did it all by mail."

that existed four thousand years ago; having no knowledge of modern history, geography, mathematics, or science needed in 20th century society. The same goes for Sam.[8]

The holy days of 1913 arrived, and many tears were shed in the last days of our life with our family in Samotevitch. The final day of parting came, and one day in November 1913, Ashía's horse and wagon stood by the house, and after many, many tears, hugs, and kisses in the house, our father remained in the house, standing by the window, motionless as a statue, without a muscle moving in his face, shocked, afraid to move. Mother, brothers and sisters, and half of the townspeople, old and young, walked with us for a mile out of town.[9] We drove that day to Surazh to say goodbye to our Uncle David, Tante Dobe, and the family. Next morning we boarded the train there to Novozybkov to say goodbye to Uncle Jankov-Michl and his wife Yoche, his daughter Lillian and his son Motl.

Our journey to Rotterdam had really begun. Our only stop was Warsaw, Poland, and then Rotterdam. We were amazed to see the opening and closing of the huge bridges over the many canals, the big dogs pulling milk carts, and beautiful Belgian horses, the likes of which we had never seen in Russia. The location of our quarters was a big warehouse with triple-decker bunks, with hundreds of people, no food, only hot water and cups. We were fortunate that we had a sack of toasted black bread that Mother had prepared for us. We had to wait three weeks for our boat. We stayed close to the warehouse for fear of getting lost, since we didn't know any Dutch language. Days were long and dreary. The only money we had was the 25 ruble gold pieces that our uncle, Sheal-Nochum (my mother's brother)[10] had given us to show at Ellis Island that we would not be dependent on public charity. These were sewn into our garments; in fact, no one asked for them when we arrived in Ellis Island.

When our boat arrived, we were overjoyed in boarding it, looking forward to the first boat ride of our lives. Unfortunately, it was not going to be wonderful for me. My first and last meal for 14 days came two hours after we boarded. They served us beef stew with very fat meat; we had never had anything like it. It tasted delicious, and since we hadn't had a cooked meal for several weeks, we ate dish after dish of it. The waiters and stewards

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[8] LN: "Had Sam studied as much as you had?" MN: " No, a little less, because he was younger."
[9] LN: "You were the first in Samotevich to go to America?" MN " Mm-hmm."
[10] LN: "Did your mother's family all live in Samotevich?" The unintelligible answer was apparently yes.

encouraged us to eat more and more. They knew that for most of us, they would not have to serve any more afterwards. Next morning I got seasick, due no doubt to the fat food. My brother Sam was not affected. He used to drag me out of third class, with its sickening smell of oil from the engine, out on deck. The pain was horrible, and if I had had the strength to climb over the rails I would have preferred to jump overboard and end the suffering. This lasted 14 days that seemed like 14 years.

We finally landed in Ellis Island. The sight of the Statue of Liberty was the most beautiful sight in our lives. Thousands of people were not allowed to land because of physical disabilities, some crying bitterly at their failure to get into the country. But Sam and I had no trouble, and after being checked out, we were taken to a railroad station, where we boarded a train for Philadelphia. Someone gave us a box of soda crackers, which we thought was manna from heaven. We had never tasted any before. These crackers were the only food I had tasted since that first meal on the boat.

On arriving in Philadelphia, a man from some Jewish organization walked several blocks with us to Uncle Zellig's place: one bedroom, a living room, and a kitchen — the living room being Uncle's barber shop, where he charged 5¢ a shave, 10¢ a haircut. Uncle worked very hard. He and Tante Etta were glad to see us, and did all they could to make us feel at home. They had Louis, age 3, with long curly blond hair, a sweet boy who slept with them in the bedroom, and we slept on cots in the kitchen. The morning after our arrival we began looking for jobs, and Dora Yevelson took us around to various factories, but all said no openings. Since I had some experience in clerking, I found a job in a store owned by a Jewish fellow. Since my vocabulary consisted of *job, yes, no, thank you*, this was my best bet, though the store opened at 7:00 and closed at 11:00, six days a week, all for $2.50. My job was to roll all the barrels of food out of the store onto the sidewalk, weigh up sugar and potatoes in bags, and at closing, roll the barrels back into the store. Sam worked in a candy factory. I paid Tante Etta $2.00 a week for board and room, and saved 50¢, and so did Sam. When we had accumulated a few dollars, we sent them to our parents.

After a few weeks, I asked my boss to let me off at 7:30 so I could start night school. He refused, since he said he could not roll the barrels in himself. When Tante told me the store she was trading in needed a boy, I quit my first job and got that job. This one was a little different. Two brothers, very nice bachelors, had worked for Stetson hats and were suffering with

emphysema from the steam. My job was to deliver rolls and bagels for breakfast, and in the afternoon to go ask their customers what they needed for dinner, and then make deliveries to two three-story apartments. No elevators. My wages the first week were $5.00, and I could leave at 7:30 to go to school. They liked me and every month raised my wages a dollar.

In the meantime, our Uncle Harry —a flute player himself —was conducting a Hawaiian guitar band at that time for a Chinese restaurant in Chicago. He bought a grocery store and wanted me to help him run it, since he didn't know anything about the business. Since Uncle Jankl and Tante Leah, Sophie, Jenny, Anna, Mae, Mary, and Albert, as well as Tante Sora and her family were there too, I decided to move to Chicago. The grocery store that Uncle Harry had was in a neighborhood location, but by that time shopping centers had been introduced and people wanted to do all their shopping in one location, and he was forced to sell. I then moved in with Uncle and Tante Glusker for food and lodging. They had a 3-bedroom flat with one washroom. Besides their own seven in the family, they had as boarders Joe Kahn, Lou Wilensky, Sam Cherin, myself, also my brother Sam, who moved here soon after I moved from Philadelphia. Albert and Mae were attending public school, and the rest were all working and had to be on time for work. You can imagine the line at the washroom in the morning. Sam Cherin, who was married to Mary and had an ice route, decided to move to Detroit, and my brother Sam bought his horse and wagon and started selling ice and coal. He was a healthy strong fellow, and liked the business. I tried, but I couldn't make it. I found a job at the Chicago Screw Company, manufacturing all kinds of screws, 10 hours a day, 16¢ an hour. But after a few months they changed to making bullets for the Allies, who were in the First World War in Europe, and though I missed my job and the saloon across the street, where for 5¢ they gave you a glass of beer and a dish of beef stew, I quit the job, since I was afraid my bullets would kill a human being.

I got a job at Sears & Roebuck, packing merchandise to be shipped to customers: 10 hours a day at 16¢ per hour. I started night school at the YMCA, but this time the work was so hard that by the end of the day I had no energy left for school. On Sundays we would walk about 5 miles to Ashland Hall for lectures on social and labor problems. We walked in order to save the 5¢ carfare. Sometimes, when there were no lectures, we spent the 5¢ for a nickel show. I remember one May 1st when hundreds of us walked in the rain to meet the great labor leader from New York at the

railroad station in downtown Chicago;[11] we waited there for hours because the train was late. We were also active in collecting money for the Russian political prisoners in Siberia. Joe Kahn, a pocket-maker for Hart Schaffner & Marx, was the oldest of us and the most socially oriented; he was responsible for our interest in the social problems of the world.

After paying Tante Leah for board and room, I managed to save a few dollars and bought a laundry route. I picked up the laundry bundles and at the end of the day took them to the laundry shop; at the end of the week, I picked them up and delivered them to the customers. The route consisted of customers living all over the city: east, west, south, and north. Fortunately, the mare I was driving knew the route better than I did. She was the smartest animal I have ever seen; she knew the exact place to stop and when to start when she saw me come. She had only one fault: when 6:00 came she would leave for the barn, regardless of whether I was on the wagon or not, and many times she was picked up by the police. One time I had to appear in Judge Fisher's court, trembling for fear that I'd be sent to jail for life for a crime like that. But Judge Fisher was more scared than I, seeing my desperation, and he ruled the case dismissed.

The time was 1915. Over a year earlier, in 1914, a few months after we arrived in the U.S. on December 13, 1913, the First World War broke out in Europe. As long as the post office accepted money to Russia, Sam and I sent what we saved, but soon after the was started, mail stopped, and we were terribly worried about what had happened to our families. Those were tragic days, months, and years waiting to hear from them.

In 1917, after the Russian revolution, when Kerensky became head of the government, a representative of his by the name of Bachmétyev came to Chicago as ambassador of a free Russia and was greeted with much joy. But soon after, the Bolsheviks headed by Lenin and Trotsky attacked the liberal representatives meeting at the Duma and arrested them. Kerensky left Russia dressed as a woman. Though Lenin signed a separate peace treaty with the Germans in Brest-Litovsk, the civil war between the Red and White armies continued, and conditions became critical for the population: killings, robberies, starvation. We tried to bring our family over from there, but by then the United States had joined the Allies in the war with Germany, and the doors of the USA were closed to immigrants.

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[11] LN: "It must have been Eugene Debs."

In 1918 I was called to the U.S.A army, since I was a declarant, having applied for citizenship papers, though not yet a citizen. I joined the army in 1918 and boarded a train for St. Louis. As I sat down to read a book, *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, a fellow by the name of Meyer Shapiro introduced himself and brought over three others: Sam Teradash, an anarchist; Cooper, a boxer; and a biologist whose name I have forgotten, but who was the director of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan's Home. I was a socialist, Meyer a strict Orthodox Jew. We discovered that we lived within two blocks of each other on Albany Avenue in Chicago. Although our political views were different, we became good friends, through the entire time until we were discharged and even after that. We managed to stay in one squad, which helped to make life bearable.

Our first stop was St. Louis, then Fort Crook, Nebraska — where the government gave me my citizenship papers — and Camp Funston, Kansas, where we were stationed till the end of the war seven months later. We were fortunate in meeting the Jewish chaplain, Rabbi Singer, was the first rabbi I had known who was a real spiritual leader. Our camp commander was the famous General Wood; our captain was Cooper, of German descent; our sergeant was a Pole who was an S.O.B., and our friend Cooper once kicked the hell out of him when off duty. We were all assigned to the infantry, but in the end I was assigned to the M.P. I remember one day they wanted to harden us up. They got us up early in the morning to put on full packs, but leave our water containers. We weren't told where we were going. The heat was 110° in the shade. We walked 25 miles without a drop of water or food, and when we got to the trenches, the rain started and filled them knee-high. I was assigned to be a runner for the captain to find various locations, and after many hours of orientation, we spent the night in the wet trenches. It was dreadful. We got paid $12 a month, less $7 for insurance.

By that time Joe and Anna Kahn had been married and had moved from Chicago to Veedersburg, Indiana, a hundred miles south of Chicago, on the advice of Simon Hutner. Simon had been a well-to-do grain buyer in Chotimsk, Russia, where Anna and Jenny had had a grocery store, and he now had a dry goods store in Veedersburg. Our brother Sam also bought a grocery store in Yeddo, Indiana, and was busy buying chickens from the man who stole them from Sam the night before. Sophie was helping Sam in the store. When I was discharged from the army, I came to Veedersburg to visit Joe and Anna. Sophie and I got married in February 1919 in Danville,

Illinois, and joined Joe in building shelves on a truck, in order to trade groceries for farm products with the farms around there. But the unpaved roads were full of holes, and we spent more time being pulled out by horses than driving, and we were forced to give up this project.

By this time, our Uncle Harry had moved to Kentucky and had his Hawaiian guitar orchestra playing in a movie theater. He found an empty store on a side street in Lexington and wanted us to come there to live, but since we had no money, we were reluctant to move. But our friend Simon Hutner, who had been our best man at our wedding and whose ring we had used for the ceremony, said he would help us by guaranteeing an account for us with a wholesale house in Cincinnati. We decided to accept his generosity. He took us by train to Cincinnati, where we purchased $500 of Jensen ladies' furnishings for the store that Uncle Harry leased for us. When we arrived to Lexington, we were unable to find a place to stay, so Uncle, Tante, Benny, Nathan, Lillian, Sophie, and I slept in one bed, crosswise, until we found a room a few days later. I still wore my army uniform, and Uncle would stand outside and say to passers-by, "Give a soldier a chance!" He had a heart of gold. We lived in Lexington for a year keeping busy replenishing from the wholesale house there the few things we had sold the day before. From churches in Lexington we also bought some merchandise donated to them. The Rosenberg family, who had a store across the street and had two grown daughters, wanted a storeroom and, since we had a one-year lease, they sub-leased the store from us. We were unable to find a vacant store, so the Rosenbergs bought our merchandise and we moved back to Veedersburg.

Our friend Simon, who had bought another dry goods store in Pine Village, 25 miles away, had a preacher running the store for him and was losing money. He made a proposition to sell us that store on monthly payments. We signed the notes and moved there. Pine Village had a population of about 300, but a farming and shopping community of about 10 miles in radius. We stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Jacobs for quite a while until we found a house to rent. They refused payment for board and room. They were wonderful to us. The house we rented for $25 a month had no electricity, no water, and no washroom facilities. We worked in the store from 8 AM to 11 PM. Soon after, Sophie gave birth to Frances, a sweet little girl. We were so happy to have her. She filled our life with joy for a while, until doctors found that something was wrong with her. We were shocked, but hoped it was something that she would outgrow. We took her to Chicago's best

neurologist, and also to Mayo's in Rochester, Minnesota, who gave us some hope.

We lived in Pine Village for three years, paid off our notes to Simon, and bought a Model-T Ford for $460. Pine Village was the most tolerant community in the USA, free of anti-Semitism. Everyone respected us when we closed our store on all Jewish holidays. We knew the names of everyone around, every family, and were invited to every organization and function. This was the ideal U.S. community.

We moved to Attica, Indiana, about 12 miles south, where we leased an empty store and moved the merchandise from the Pine Village store into it. Attica had a population of 4,000, had the Harrison steel mill, the Poston brick quarries, and a trading area farming community 20 miles in radius. Helen was born on the day the bridge over the Wabash River was opened, and so was our store. Soon after, our Uncle Morris and Tante Lillian moved to Newtown, Indiana, from Los Angeles; Uncle Zellig, Tante Etta, and family also moved back to the Midwest from Los Angeles. And every Sunday we visited each other.

I remember the year 1923. We received a pathetic letter from our family that the little they owned had been confiscated by the drunk and crooked authorities in Samotevitch, and the money Sam and I had sent them had no value. And as a consequence of the government policy to take away most of the food produced by the peasants to send to the big cities, the more they took away, the less the peasants produced. The result was famine and starvation. Some people were eating tree bark to survive. If we could send our family shoes and cloth, they could trade them for food. We immediately sent them, and they were saved from starvation by that trade. We tried to get the family out to the USA, but since the USA had no diplomatic relations with the USSR at that time, this was difficult to arrange. However, after several months we were finally able to send them the papers they needed. In 1924 the family was able to move to Latvia on the Baltic Sea to wait for their quota number to come up. They lived there for about a year in fair comfort with the money that Sam and I sent them. Life there was good: fish was cheap, and everything was available.

The family finally came to America on July 4, 1925. The days, weeks, and months awaiting their arrival seemed like years. After 11 years of waiting, they arrived. We left Attica for Chicago a day early. We waited at the

railroad station for several hours. It seemed an eternity, and when the gates to the track opened and I saw Father and Mother coming out, my heart stopped and when I finally came to, I was paralyzed by the excitement. I rushed to them and after embracing them we were glued together, unable to move. Our brothers and sisters were barely recognizable: eleven years had changed them so much. I remember the look on my father's face when I set him down on the front seat of the Chevy we had bought for $460 in monthly payments. It was open, had no sides. He asked me if it was ours. He had to pinch himself that it wasn't a dream. He was proud of me, since he thought that only presidents and millionaires owned cars. Everyone was jubilant and so happy that after 11 years we were finally together again. We took them to Sam and Mae's apartment, where a delicious meal was served. This was the happiest reunion of all our lives. We reminisced all day and all night. The next morning we took Dorothy and Morris with us to Attica, where they started public school. The rest of the boys started to work with Sam on the ice wagon. The family moved to their own apartment and Sarah started public school. Everything went nicely for about two years. Lillian got married to Sam Fogel, a very nice young man, and everyone was happy. But the next morning Father complained of a cold and high fever. We took him to a Chicago hospital. I was with him when they X-rayed him. When they gave him the fluid to swallow, it went down to a certain spot and stopped. The doctors pronounced cancer, but refused to operate, though he was only 56 years old and had never been ill in his life. We were shocked with grief to think that after all the suffering he had gone through, he had only two years of human living. After 30 days in the hospital, he passed away. At the last, his whole family was with him by his side.

March 10, 1975
Dear Father,
This being the 48th year of your passing, our hearts are full of affection and love for you.[12]

[LN clears his throat and continues] I remember 1928. In November our store had a fire after all the merchandise was in for Christmas trade, and as I stood by looking, the water nozzle of the hose was accidentally dropped, hit me a quarter inch from my left eye, and knocked me down. I was taken to the doctor's office and sewn up. We had a fire sale. People stood in line for two blocks. The big store that the president of the Attica bank owned

[12] At this point there is a long period in the tape when the narrator breaks down and joins with Max, Zena, and Fritzi in weeping. It was an incredibly touching moment.

closed, and we bought the building for $25,000, put in a modern front, added the space where he movie had been, combined the two, and for 35 years this was known as Newmarks' Department Store. In the store we had leased before, we opened a ten-cent store, but we had to close that for lack of the right help.

1929 and 1930 came, the stock market crashed, and people jumped out of windows. Ours were too low to the ground. We survived it somehow. About 1932, Sam and Mae, Ruth, Mirriam, and Leah had moved from Chicago to Attica, where he bought a man's clothing store. One night, Sam and I played basketball with a merchant's group, something that neither of us had done before but that we both enjoyed very much. After playing for hours, perspiring profusely, we started for home, a few blocks away in 0° weather. The next morning, Sam could not get up. We took him to St. Elizabeth Hospital in Lafayette, Indiana, but the doctor diagnosed his case as infantile paralysis and he was put in an isolation room. We called a diagnostician from Chicago, and he agreed with the doctor in Lafayette. We took Sam to Chicago in an ambulance. He had no muscle control from his waist down. He was in the hospital for about a year. Only Sam could live through that year of agony. His doctors admired Sam's spunk, his optimism and mental attitude; they gave him the best attention and never charged him a penny. After recuperating a few months at home, another tragedy. Their daughter Ruth, who was 12 years old, fell from a swing in the park near their home and broke her arm. She was taken to the doctor, who set her arm but did not know about using anti-tetanus shots. We took her to the hospital in Danville, Illinois. She developed lockjaw, and after a few days in the hospital, passed away. A sweet little girl. What a tragedy.

I remember July 1934. Sam Simon, whose parents and family were still living in Surazh, Russia, decided to visit them and asked me to join him. I still had my uncles, cousins, and friends there, and since the U.S. recognition of the USSR the year before made it possible to go there, I accepted Sam's invitation. I boarded the train to Youngstown. Sam, Sadie, and I drove their car to New York. We stopped at Sadie's aunt in New York. Her son and the daughter of Joe Kahn's sister came to the boat to see us off. We introduced them, and a few months later they got married. Sam and I boarded the S.S. Paris, arrived in Plymouth, England after five days, and took the train to London. While watching the changing of the guards, a man approached us and asked us whether we wanted a guide. We asked him how he knew we were foreigners. He said, "By your shoestrings." He showed us all the

interesting places in London, where we stayed for three days. We crossed the English Channel overnight, landed at Hoek van Holland, and took the train to Berlin. The Nazis were in power already, and the big department stores with Jewish owners were confiscated.

Our next stop was Riga, Latvia. The Russian train to our destination, Leningrad, where our Uncle Sheal-Nochum's family lived, arrived the next day. Our first disappointment came when we stopped in Vítebsk for an hour. We went into what used to be a first-class restaurant in the station. We found some black bread, a piece of old fat covered with flies, and hot water. Needless to say, we didn't touch any of it. There was a wide board with a big hole in the floor for a washroom. On arriving in Leningrad we both found the building dark, unpainted in 17 years, everyone except officials wearing sneakers, no leather shoes to be seen, no taxis, and only a few official cars. When we went to see our uncle's family that day, we saw Uncle, Tante, Mary Nichámeh .... They were living in one room with two kerosene burners, the paper in the room covered with fly specks, and sharing one washroom with six families on the same floor,. But for us the worst was to see our uncle's face, He had been tall and handsome and had a beautiful beard; now he had not a hair, nor beard, nor whiskers, but had horrible-looking sores on his face. When we asked him what had happened, he declined to answer then, but when we went downstairs, he told an agonizing story: A few months before we came, two GPU men had knocked at the door at 2 AM, arrested him, and put him into a jail room built for 6, but now holding 59 others. The human need vessel was in one corner, and its stink was choking him. They were kept standing up for three days, with no food or water. Some died standing up. After the third day, he was taken outside, in 40° below zero weather, and asked where he had hidden his gold and U.S. dollars. He told them that he had a $5 gold piece that his parents had left him for the stone on his father's grave, but they insisted that he had a lot more. They kept him there for thirty days and continued the torture every night. He begged them to shoot him to release his suffering. Finally, his sons found out where he was being held. As members of the Party, they were successful in getting him freed. This was the conclusion of his 30-day inquisition. Such torture had the name "gold inquisition," and was also experienced, we found out later, by some of our neighbors in Samotevitch who had a son in the USA. Many people died from the fear they experienced in these inquisitions.

Economic conditions were critical. Lines were blocks long. Everything was rationed, even bread. This was caused by the collectivization of the peasants, when millions of them were deprived of their land and banished to Siberia.

We exchanged some American dollars with a friend, at 50 rubles for a dollar. When we tried to buy some food to take to our relatives, we found only two pounds of rice in the biggest department store in Leningrad. And when we brought it to Sam's parents, Tante Dobe divided it with the neighbors, because they all had dysentery. After a few days' visit, Sam Simon and I took the train to Belynkovitch [13], where we hired a peasant with a horse and wagon, who drove us to Samotevitch, the town that I was going to see again after 20 years. My parents' house was still there, across from the well. Most of the buildings were still there, and so were some of our friends, but quite a few had left for bigger cities after the 1917 revolution. I took two pictures of Sam's family, and a neighbor who was Sam's friend asked me to take another picture, that of a little boy about six and a little girl about the same age, who was holding a dead horse leg, trying to scrape off some meat. When the neighbor developed the pictures, all of them but that one were returned to us, and that was because an order for my arrest had come to my uncle in Leningrad (while I was already with my uncle in Lithuania). After a very pleasant visit with Sam's parents, I left for Ponemun to visit Uncle's family on the way back home, and after a few days their daughter Sarah joined me, and we left for Paris, where we met up with Sam and left for Le Havre, the good old USA, and our lovely families.

We were so happy to get back, after experiencing the controlled life that Russia imposes on its people. Listen [? Track 02, 16.23] to the stories of our cousin Mary in Leningrad. She was working in an electric bulb factory and developed a goiter. The doctor advised an operation, but the manager said that he had to fill his norm, and refused to let her off to have it. When two cousins working in a match factory had to have operations, they got the same response from their factory manager. God! How cruel can humans become in the name of Communism! I had had a dream, but what a disappointment now, and what a joy to have my dear family spared that inhumanity to man.

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[13] Belynkovitch? This is the nearest (about 20 kilometers from Samotevich) town on a railroad line indicated on a map. I can find no town spelling that looks anything like Presbychovitch, which is what seems to be on the tape in any gazetteer or map. [LN]

1974

After the 1929 stock market crash when millionaires were committing suicide, and the following years of depression when homeless men were selling 5¢ apples on street corners, we mostly weathered the storm ourselves, though in 1929 we had bought 100 shares of Chrysler Motors at $135 that went down to $6 a share. And our stock of merchandise decreased about 50 per cent. We managed to survive because our credit at the bank was good. Interest was 3-4%, and we had no taxes and no rent to pay. All we had to do was sign personal notes any time we needed money. We were blessed with a lovely family. Frances was now 14, Helen 12, Zena 8, and Leonard 6. All in public school, they all came home for lunch, school being only two blocks away. We had a French girl, Odette, helping Sophie with the cooking and housework. She adored the children, and the children her love. She was with us for 20 years and was like one of the family.

In 1935 we bought a 400-acre farm at $35 an acre. It was terribly rundown, and couldn't raise even 10 bushels of corn per acre. We put in new fences, fertilizer, bought a tractor, a plow, and all other useful equipment. We bought a carload of Angus stock steers to feed at 10¢ a pound with corn at $1.35 a bushel, and after a year of feeding them, sold them at 10¢ a pound, not a very profitable transaction. Next year we bought milk cows, beef cows, work horses, saddle horses, and though farming was not a profitable business, it was a very pleasant part-time occupation for me, being only 3 miles from Attica. It had a lovely picnic ground where our families would get together: Sam and Mae and family, Boris and Anna from Kingman, Lou and Sylvia, Uncle Morris and Tante Anna, Uncle Zellig and Tante Etta and families, Joe and Anna Kahn, Sam and Mary Cherin families. We all enjoyed these lovely weekly gatherings. On holidays we would go to Lafayette, Indiana, where we belonged to an Orthodox synagogue and a Reformed temple. Our store would stay closed during those holidays; and would also close on Sundays. There was a Jewish ladies' group in Attica that would meet often.