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Contact:

Special Collections, University of Delaware Library
181 South College Avenue
Newark, DE 19717-5267
302.831.2229 / 302.831.1046 (fax)
http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec
askspecref@winsor.lib.udel.edu

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Interview with Mr. Louis Golin, Russian immigrant and Wilmington wholesaler, and Mrs. Golin, August 1969, by Myron L. Lazarus.

Q This is a recording of the Oral History Project of the University of Delaware. We're interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Louis Golin and the interviewer is Myron Lazarus. Mr. Golin, what was the name of the town you said you were born in?

A Smela, S-m-e-l-a.

Q Uh huh. And this was near . . .

A Near Kiev.


A In the Ukraine.

Q And how long ago was that?

A That was in 1912. 1912 when I arrived here.

Q O.K., but when were you born in . . .

A What year was I born? 1895.

Q 1895. And Mrs. Golin, where was it that you were born? I won't ask you when, now.

B I won't tell you. Where, did you want to know where?

Q Yes.

B That's in Starasella [sp]. Can you pronounce that?

Q Well, you've pronounced it, that's enough. Where is that, now?


Q This is in Russia, now.

B Yeah . . . Garaditsh . . . that's also in the Ukraine, isn't it?

A Oh yes, yes.

B It's near Garaditsh. I don't know whether . . . you see, we were in a small area, which is . . . maybe my town wasn't even on the map, who knows. And that's why . . . but it's . . . what else do you want to know?

Q In the southern part of Russia, I gather, in the Ukraine area.
A Oh, yes, it's right near our place, [inaudible - all talking at once]...
Q Uh huh, it's right near Kiev also.
B That's right.
A It's right in the Ukraine, right around ... between there and Kiev. It's still ... in other words, there where she was born is only a short distance from where I was born, maybe 15 or 20 miles.
Q Um hmm. What occupation was your father in? You.
A Well, my father ... actually, as much as they were in business but his original work was he was a teacher in the Russian language, teaching the Russian literature to Jewish children.
Q He didn't work in a Russian public school.
A No.
Q But he was teaching this to Jewish ... .
A Privately.
Q Hmm. What kind of ... you say he was also a merchant? He was in business?
A Yes.
Q Uh huh. What kind of business was it?
A Well, they had a ... we had, rather, I won't say they had ... a wholesale place where they were supplying the bakeries with flour. You know, in our part of the country, you just couldn't walk in like here and buy bread. They had special bakeries where they baked bread and the people would go down there and buy it. And we ... or my father, rather, and my mother, were in this business, in the wholesale flour business supplying these bakeries.
Q What were they ... would they change the wheat into flour, or would they just buy . . .
A No, they would buy the flour. They would buy the flour.
Q From smaller mills.
A From the mill.
Q Uh huh.
A The flour was delivered to us overnight [inaudible] with the horse, horse and wagons, you know, they had no trains . . .
Q No delivery truck.
A No. They would travel the whole night and bring in the flour early in the morning, into the store. And we ... my father would go down there early in the morning, take it off, and later on we would deliver this flour to the various bakeries where they would prepare and bake that bread to sell it to the public.

B Make it a short tape.

Q Oh, no, no, no.

B It'll take too long.

Q No, no.

A No, you cannot make it short unless you ...

Q No, I mean, this is [inaudible]

A Otherwise I wouldn't have started.

Q Would you say your family was comfortable?

A Yes, very much so. Yes.

Q Um hmm. Now ... and he also, you say, taught Russian to Jewish families. Why did the Jewish families have to have a private tutor like this?

A Because they wouldn't accept them in the Russian schools.

Q Because they were Jews?

A That's correct. They used to go to hader ... all. And the moment that had to be taught Russian, they had to have a private teacher to do it.

B Some Jewish families weren't interested to send their children to a Russian school. They were interested in Hebrew. That's why, too. That's one good reason, too.

Q How about yourself, did you get an education this way?

A Yes. I got my education early at what we call hader, you know about hader.

Q Now this was a hader, this wasn't someone coming around ... .

A No, that was a school, was a school for Jewish children.

Q Yeah, right. But this was also true in some small towns in Russia, where there weren't enough Jewish families for a hader, but a man used to go around from family to family.

B That's the way I was taught.
A: No, this was regular schools where 30 or 40 or 50 children were taught.

Q: Um hmm. Hebrew.

A: Just Jewish teaching, whatever they taught it. But the moment they had to... they wanted to be taught the Russian language, then people like my father used to go down to a home and give them lessons.

Q: This was in speaking it or writing it? I mean, what was their native language, their natural language? Was it Yiddish?

A: Yiddish, yeah, their natural language.

Q2: [Unidentified female interviewer] Did you also learn to read and write Yiddish?

A: Oh, definitely.

Q2: In hader or from your father?

A: No, Yiddish, we're talking about Yiddish.

Q2: Yes, I was wondering where you learned the Yiddish.

A: That was taught by the teachers, schoolteacher.

Q2: In hader.

A: Yeah, in hader.

Q2: Then you were taught Hebrew, Yiddish, and then your father taught you Russian?

A: Did my father teach me Russian?

Q: Um hmm.

A: Yes.

Q2: So that you learned three languages.


Q: Mrs. Colin, how about your family? What was their background?

B: I remember we had a store. And...

Q: This was also a small town.

B: Yes. Very small.

Q: Um hmm. And this small town was supported by farming in the area?

B: Yes, yes, that's right. And we had the store and of course we made a
living from the farmers that bought ... general store.

Q Would you say most of the Jews in the area were mainly merchants in the town?

B Yes. Except the shohet or . . .

Q The shohet.

B Yes. Or [inaudible] . . .

A Or people that were shoemakers, tailors.

Q Small tradesmen.

B Yeah, that's right. We . . .

Q You saw . . . you found no, for instance, Jewish farmers.

A No, no.

B No, not . . .

A There were no such things as Jewish farmers because Jews were not permitted to live in Russia actually on farms.

Q Or own land.

A Hmm?

Q They weren't permitted to own land.

A We were not permitted by the Russian government at that time.

Q Now, you say your family had a store. What was it, a general store?

B Yes. Not in dry goods, but food.

Q I see.

B Everything that goes with food.

Q Um hmm. Were they comfortable?

B Yes, yes. Well, we didn't know . . . we were loved by all the farmers and the neighbors and we had no problems at all. Plenty of food . . .

Q Uh huh. Well, this a period of time also when things weren't so hot with Jews in Russia. Did you come in contact with the pogrom or the . . .

B No, we didn't.

Q Especially, let's say . . . you said 1912.
A Yeah.
B Not all over.
Q No, true, not all over. Did you see any discrimination or anything like a pogrom?
A No.
B Thank goodness for that. No. We can't complain.
Q Now, you were old enough to work. You must have worked also.
A No, I ... well ... when I worked, I didn't work to make a living out of it. But I did it as a hobby. I was ... my father had a very dear friend, a dentist, and naturally when he used to go to spend time with him, I went with him as a child and I've liked to have learned how to do mechanical dentistry. And that's what we were doing. I didn't earn a living out of it.
Q Uh huh. Is that how you learned in Russia, you didn't go to school, but you were apprenticed to a dentist?
A Yes, yes. That's where I learned how to ... to the extent that years later in New York, when I arrived in New York, as soon as I was able to talk the English language, I went to a dentist and I went to work, did mechanical dentistry.
Q As a dentist, or . . .
A As a mechanical dentist.
Q That's making teeth.
A Making teeth.
Q Right.
B Laboratory.
Q2 What was a dentist like in Russia in the early 1900's?
A What do you mean?
Q2 Compared to now, you know.
A The very same thing as it is today. The dentist himself? The dental office you're speaking about.
B Obviously they pull teeth.
Q It wasn't painless in those days.
Q2 Well, I mean, you know, was it painless or the mechanics of repairing
teeth, or what . . .

A Oh, just like it is today.

Q It still hurt, huh?

A They had it in a different form. Today they have it . . . naturally they have it more scientifically developed. But in those days there were the same thing and dentists pulled the tooth, they froze the gums and they pulled a tooth just like they do it today.

Q And they drilled to put the fillings in.

A Yes, mechanical work . . . as far as mechanical work is concerned, they are not doing it any differently today than we did in 1910 or 1909 or 1908. The very same way. No different.

Q Excuse me, Mrs. Golin. What was your maiden name?

A Schenken.

Q Schenken. Why did . . . you say you did this as a hobby following the dentist around. Well, why did your family come to the United States? Or why did you come?

A My family did not come to the United States.

Q No, you came, right.

A I came to the United States on a dare and for no other reason in the world. It may sound . . . it may sound . . .

Q Well, that's certainly unusual.

A Yes. You know, I was the oldest in the family, the oldest son, you know, in Russia was the head of the family, so to speak. And it so happened that in 1911, or thereby, my father died. He was . . . it happened so he died, he . . . he went to . . . we were able to send him to Berlin to be operated on. From our place to Berlin, you had to be pretty well a real man to be able to leave a small town like ours to go to Berlin, Germany. And he was operated there and it was cancerous and they brought him back and he died. And after he died, of course my mother took, naturally, control of the business. Although she was there before, too, with him. But when he died . . . and I wasn't particularly very much crazy about being in business.

Q But the family was still well supported.

A In the meantime she dared me about something, whatever it was, I says, "Well, Mom, if you don't like it . . . ." And she didn't know whether or not--she's now dead--I mean, she told me, and I said to her, "Well, if you don't like the way I do things, I'd like to go to the United States, to America." And she says, "Yes, well I dare you." And I took her dare. And I left in a very short time after this . . . maybe just a couple of weeks after that. I did not apply for a passport, for a regular transportation.
But I just simply . . . we used to have agents at that time, they picked up a man and would take him to . . .

B They used to take care of this, agents.

A Yes, they took care of it. Used to say [foreign phrase], if you ever heard that word.

Q And what does that mean?

A Yes, you see, you know what the grenets is? The grenets is the part where it divides one country from another.

B It's the Gaza Strip, that's what it is.

A They used to bring us over there and they paid the . . .

B The agent.

A The agent paid soldiers or whoever who was in charge there, and during the night, they used to take these immigrants over that place, over the whatever that strip . . .

Q The border.

A Yeah, and then you were on the other side, you weren't in Russia anymore. And from there they took you and they took you to . . .

B They delivered you.

A They delivered you to the nearest place where there is ships that they put you on . . .

Q Did you cross over in Germany, do you remember it in Poland?

A No, in Poland.

Q Poland.

A Yes. And in fact we stayed overnight in the . . . on the railroad station in Warsaw, Poland. You know, we sat there 'til morning and then in the morning they took us and they delivered us to where we were supposed to get on a train to take us to the nearest seaport.

B Is that really of any interest?

Q It certainly is. Certainly.

B To me it's so dull.

Q Oh, no. Do you remember the seaport?

A No. No, I don't.
Q Was it still on the continent? It wasn't England.
A No, no, it was . . . no, it . . .
Q You didn't cross over to England.
A We crossed . . . no, sir, we crossed over to Poland.
Q I know, I know. But many people went from Poland or Germany to Liverpool. But you didn't.
A I honestly don't remember. Maybe we did go to Liverpool.
Q Yeah, well, you may not have. You didn't have to.
A I don't actually remember.
Q You could have left from Hamburg, Bremen.
A Yes, you could have. I don't . . . in fact I think we did leave from Hamburg.
Q Um hmm. Do you remember the kind of a boat it was? By the way, how much money did you have with you?
A I'll tell you, it was . . . that's an interesting question. When I left home, I was so provoked at that time with my mother, that transaction, that I said to her, "Now, you have one alternative yet."
Q Now, you were 17 at this time.
A Yes. "Now, I can remain a son of yours by you just arranging my trans-
A A [inaudible].
A B [inaudible].
A Yes. And I said to her, "You give me the 50 rubles, but I assure you that the next day when I get there I'll mail you back the 50 rubles." Which is exactly what I did.
B It sounds like you had a fight with your mother.
A Yeah, yeah, that I did.
Q Did you have any problem with the draft? You were draft-age.
Oh, no. I had no . . . yes, I had a problem. I was too young for the draft at that time, but when time came, my mother had a problem. I had no problem, very much so had a problem. Oh, yes.

Well, tell us about that.

Well, actually, I couldn't tell you because I wasn't there.

But the family has to pay money . . .

They did . . .

Or provide the body.

That's correct. They did. My mother had to pay a certain fine while I wasn't there. But the interesting part about it was this, that I told my mother at that time—or I wrote her, I don't remember—when I'll get over this spell with you, I'll come back home. Because I knew that we had a big business there and I was the oldest son and it wasn't very fair for me, actually, to leave her. It was a matter of satisfaction, a young man's satisfaction.

You mean you did plan to come back.

Yes. Definitely. Oh, definitely. A year later, I was ready . . . I made all arrangements to come back when the war broke out and I couldn't go back.

How many younger brothers and sisters did you have?

Oh, I left three brothers and . . .

Three brothers?

Three brothers and three sisters, which they still live in Russia, which we went, my wife and I went ten years ago the first time in . . .

We were there '59 and '63.

Twice to see them.

They're still alive?

They are still alive except one sister died and now there's a question of my second . . .

Well, that's not important.

[Inaudible] . . . but they're still alive except one sister.

They weren't killed when Germany . . . when the Germans came into . . .

No, they were not killed. None of them were killed.
'Cause this was pretty close to the border. That was where the Germans did come in, into the Ukraine.

Oh, yeah. I don't think the Germans never did come into our town. They didn't. It was taken over by various revolutionary governments in Russia itself. Yeah, there were quite a few changes in various generals that took over for a short time after the revolution.

Oh, I was thinking of the Second World War when Germany attacked Russia and then there were many Jews killed then.

Well, I don't know...

He wasn't there.

I wasn't there.

I know, but your relatives.

They never write.

No, no, they're all alive.

Yeah, because you went since.

Yeah. Our relatives are all alive. All my brothers and sisters are alive. And they had no reason in the world ever to write us what was happening and we never asked them any questions.

As long as they were well and alive, that was [inaudible]...

We never asked them any questions. We were in Russia and we were treated very, very royally by the government and we had no problem whatsoever there and we think it was very nice. That's the only time we went the second time and we wouldn't hesitate to go a third time because we feel that they're doing the right thing there, whatever it is.

Mrs. Golin, do you remember your trip over? Or were you too young?

Oh, no, I remember. I remember I was 14 days on the ocean. I didn't feel too well, that I remember.

Were you in steerage? All the way down?

No, no. We had bunk... bed bunking... bunk beds-bed bugs, too. Bunk beds and we had a room, there were four in a room. No, it wasn't too bad at all.

Why did your family come to the United States?

Well, my mother was the only one that didn't live in the United States. There was two sisters here, right? Two sisters and a brother and they wanted the rest of the family. And when my father passed away, they
wanted us all here, and so we came here. They met us here, they...

Q: Were they from Wilmington, by the way?
B: Yes, you probably know some of them. Did you know the... do you know Dr. Stat?
Q: Stat...
B: Statnekoo?
Q: Oh, yes, yes, yes.
B: Well, Dr. Stat is my cousin. His mother was my mother's sister.
Q: We interviewed Mrs. Statnekoo, the...
B: That's not the same one.
Q: Oh, I see.
B: No, that's...
A: That's a relative of yours.
B: That's not a relative of mine. She is the relative... her husband was a cousin of my uncle, by marriage, which... and my aunt is the one, is my mother's sister.
Q: I see.
B: Do you know the Finkelsteins here?
Q: Yes.
B: Well, Mrs. Finkelstein was my mother's niece. And that's... all these people are... do you know Mr. Cannon here? Dr. Cannon, Norman Cannon?

[Tape is interrupted here.]

Q: Where did you land when you came to this country?
A: To New York.
Q: In Ellis Island? Um hmm. And you said you had relatives here.
A: I had some... yes, I had some... yes, I had a couple of cousins here, which I didn't know from...
Q: Did they know you were coming?
A: No, they did not know that I was coming. I... actually I called him when I got in here, I called my cousin, I knew his address and I told the
immigration department at that time, and they got in touch with him. And then I went and I lived with him, only he was single, too.

Q: Where did he live?
A: He lived in New York on the east side.

Q: And you lived with him.
A: I lived with him about seven months and then I worked for a dentist and at that time . . .

Q: In New York, now.
A: In New York. And at that time the first clockmaker's strike in New York, that was in 19 . . . in 1913, broke out and it paralyzed the entire east side, that's where most of the Jews lived.

Q: Right. And that was most of the occupations.
A: And I left and I lost my job because the dentist couldn't afford to keep me. So I left him and I went to Providence, Rhode Island because I had an uncle of mine lived there and I went there, and stayed with him for a couple of years.

Q: Did you continue the same kind of work that you did . . .
A: No, I did not work there. I worked in the jewelry factory for a couple of years, and then by some combination of things, I had a relative that wanted to start a store in Philadelphia and I came here and I bought a store in Philadelphia.

Q: This kind of a store . . . jewelry store?
A: No, no, it was a grocery store.

Q: Jewelry store, all that money? Where do you get that money?
A: Well, he was . . . now, you had a grocery store in Philadelphia, you say.

Q: Uh huh. Where in Philly?
A: It was 47 and Haverford Avenue, 4717 Haverford Avenue.

Q: When was this now?
A: Huh?
Q: Then was this?
A: Well, that was in 19 . . . probably 1915.
Q: I take it this is around the time you met your wife.

A: Yes, I met my wife in Russia. She was staying... no, she was staying with her uncle which...

B: Who was his teacher.

A: ... was my teacher. And he had a school there and he was my teacher, although I did not go to school any longer there, but I was very close friends with the little children so...

B: He was interested in a young lady there, my uncle's daughter.

A: Well, they were all children around my age and I spent a great deal of time there because we lived out of town, somewhat, and a small town... a small city in this type of cities, or towns, rather, where we lived, when you lived 20 blocks away from there, you were a long... you were a distance away because of the... see, they had no pavements, and if it got wet you just simply had a hard time getting around. And with her uncle, it was an unusual thing. When I was three years old and I started going to school, to a what do you call that, [foreign word], that's the beginner...

B: They wouldn't know what that means.

A: That's when you begin to go to school, there's a teacher that only deals with three-year-old children. And I didn't like... the first month I was there, I didn't like it because he happened to give a little boy a beating that I didn't think... at the age of three I didn't think it was the right thing to do.

B: Well, you were just afraid, put it that way.

A: You know, they had... it was the whole business, he took off his little pants, you know, and gave him a... so I didn't like it...

B: Don't go into such things. That's not important. It's not important.

Q: That's all right.

A: And I didn't like it so...

B: It's not interesting.

A: ... so I went to... I went home. And my father had a job what to do with me. He was a very close friend to her uncle, the one who had this school. So he came over and told him the story and so her uncle said, "How can I take him in there? He's that young kid, they'll say that I'm gettin' to be [foreign word], you know, a beginner." He says, "Well, I'll tell you, don't teach him anything. Just let him play around with your children." So, that's how I grew up with her uncle with these... with all the children.
Q And you knew her that many years?
A No.
B Oh, no.
A I knew her when she was on her way to go to America.
B I visited my uncle.
A Visited her uncle and she stayed there a while with her brother because of whatever conditions there are and that's when I met her.
B Leave that to me.
A That's when I met her.
B No, he didn't meet me as a boy and a girl would meet, you know what I mean, because first of all I was too young. But he went in to see the other girls. I just stood by and dragged along whenever they went out or so and that was all.
Q When did you meet romantically, now? That was in the United States?
A Yeah.
B By chance.
Q What do you mean by chance? He knew your family . . .
B Right. My uncle's daughter, who was his teacher, lived in New York. He came to see her and she had visited us, we lived in Philadelphia at that time. And she saw with a change in me, since I was growing up, I was already 15, and from a piny little girl I became a young lady. So when she saw him, she said, "Do you remember that little dried up little string bean that was in our house? She lives in Philadelphia." So he dropped me a note and told me that he was there and that he was coming to Philadelphia, and that was the end.
A It was the beginning.
B It was the end.
Q Now, how long were you in this grocery store in Philadelphia?
A Just a couple of years. And then we bought another store . . .
Q Another grocery store.
A No, at that time we bought a cigar store. And . . .
Q Also in Philadelphia.
A Yes. And . . .
Q2 You say "we"; were you . . .
A Well, I use the word naturally, we. I bought . . . let's say "I" . . . and it wasn't a very paying store.
Q The cigar store.
A We were already married at that time and when my daughter was born, we moved to Wilmington because Finkelsteins, her family was here, she lived in Wilmington for quite a while before she was . . .
B I was going to school here. I lived . . . stayed with my aunt, Mrs. Statkepoo, and . . .
A So that's how we moved to Wilmington. At that time . . .
B Wilmington's my second home, actually.
A Yeah, at that time it was the Delaware Novelty House on Market Street, on 2nd and Market . . .
Q And this is where you went . . .
B It was the Delaware Notion House.
A Delaware Notion House.
Q And this is where you went to work?
A That's where I went to work. And I stayed with them for . . .
Q What was the address again?
A I think it was 213 Market Street, if I can remember.
B 2nd and Market.
A 2nd and Market, yeah. And then I worked there . . .
Q What did you do there?
A I worked inside for a while, taking orders and waiting on customers, and then they put me outside as a salesman.
Q What kind . . . what would be notions now?
A Notions would be underwear . . . at that time it was a complete line, just like the Wilmington Dry Goods today. Everything, they had overalls and ribbons and underwear and . . .
Q Well, notions today wouldn't be all that, would it? It would be little things.
A No, notions would be little things. So I . . .
They started with notions and then became larger and took in more merchandise like . . . perhaps that's where the name notions started.

Where did you go to school in Wilmington?

Number 4 on 4th and Washington, I think it is . . . 2nd and Washington, I think . . . or West, between there. It became an old-aged home after that, if you remember. I mean, if you notice it.

Yeah. And how far did you go to school?

Well, I went as far as the 10th grade.

That's high school, though.

Yes.

Where'd you go to high school?

Then I went to . . . then I didn't want to stay in Wilmington anymore, I wanted to go to Philadelphia where my mother and brothers were. And I went there . . .

In the 10th grade, what school were you in?

4th and Washington.

Still Number 4 School.

Yeah.

Do you remember what that was? It went from elementary through high school?

No, no. Let me see if I remember correctly . . . no, I think it was . . . it wasn't the 10th grade, it was lower. I'm trying to remember. You see, I was older than the rest of the children because I came with Russian knowledge and I had to translate the . . .

Did you have any help in the language in school?

In school, no. They just started going to school and I sat there and listened to the other children and I caught on. Of course when it came to let's say arithmetic or so, I knew. But it didn't take me long to . . .

But there were no special classes considering you didn't know the language.

No, no. No. Well, anyway, I'm trying to remember what grade it was. I don't think it was 10th grade, because when I left I went to Philadelphia and I wanted to work. So I got . . . my brother-in-law got me a job modeling hats.
Q In Philadelphia?
B Yes. And I got $3.00 a week for modeling hats.
Q Can you tell us the date? The date . . . $3.00 a week.
B The date?
Q2 The year.
Q I'm sorry, yeah, the year. What was the year, though, what year was this?
B Oh. From 19 . . . I have to go back because it wasn't important to me to remember.
Q Yeah, I know, it's just interesting to know when it was $3.00 a week.
B It was about 1916 . . . close to '17. And I decided that I wanted to go for higher education and I enrolled in preparatory school evenings.
Q Philadelphia.
B Philadelphia. I remember it was Dr. Brenner's School, it was more of a private . . . he opened that school and he used to prepare these . . . and I went there and I liked it very much. And I would have gone on and on and on if not for this young man. And that's what . . .
Q He took you away from that, huh? Now, Mr. Colin, let's go on from the notion's business, you say you were there a couple of years?
A Quite a few years. And then I went, after the . . .
Q How many is quite . . ., if I may ask?
A Oh, I don't know, about 12, 15 years. And then they went out of business. At that time when they went out of business, I went on my own. I started . . . I had a territory at that time and . . .
Q You were a salesman.
A Yes. And then I started a business of my own.
Q Uh huh. Where'd you get your merchandise?
A In Philadelphia. They used to . . .
Q Basically you were peddling?
A Well, a store, I'd sell to stores. Oh, no, sell to stores. I went up to Philadelphia and bought merchandise and then brought it here and went out and sold it. I used to go every week to . . .
Q But when you sell to stores, it would have to be a bigger volume, let's say, than someone peddling.
A Well, I sold it, you know, when you went out for the Delaware Notion House, you had a tremendous big line. When you had a small line, you just went up to the same customer and you say to him, "I handle shirts and underwear," whatever it is at that time, and that's all you sold him. I didn't have to sell a lot to make a living. You know, it's different when you were working and getting a 5% commission or when you work for yourself and you make 25%.

Q What would you do, now? Would you buy the merchandise, let's say the shirts, and then sell it.

A Buy the merchandise, bring it here . . .

Q You wouldn't get an order and then go get it.

A No, no, no, no, no. Yes, what did happen is this, yes. It happens that even in later years on you get to a point where you walk into the same customer that you were doing business with and he'd say to you, "When you go to Philadelphia next week, I'd like to have so-and-so." So with other merchandise . . . by that time you already had a dozen orders during the week, you'd pick up just what you need and you'd bring it and deliver it. I had a little truck and I'd put the merchandise in and deliver it.

Q Um hmm. How long did you work this way? Because this kind of operation isn't . . .

A Well, it's . . .

B Yeah, well, you worked that way until you rented the store on . . .

A Until I went with Cutler. I worked 'til that time, yes, until I went in on King Street with a partner. I had a man, a fellow named Cutler, that used to have . . .

B You know, actually, we can make shortcuts, it wasn't important with Cutler until you went for yourself on 2nd Street. I think that would be much better than to go into such small details. To me it's not interesting.

A Well, it's not a detail. A man asks a question, you want to answer it properly.

B No, but you went [inaudible].

A So I met this man who used to sell the merchandise and he proposed to me one time that we ought to go to the real wholesale business. He had a retail store on 5th and Union and so we went up . . . we rented the store on King Street and we went in in the wholesale business on a quite a nice scale.

Q This was where on King, now?

A 2nd and King, it was between 2nd and 3rd on King Street, on the east side of King Street.
Q: Now, what was the merchandise you were dealing with, the same kind of merchandise?
A: It was a combination of house furnishings and dry goods. And we were there quite a while.

Q: What was the year, now, that you started this wholesale business?
A: I don't remember now.

Q: Generally, you know.
A: Well, I wouldn't remember. It may be in 1930 or something like that.

Q: Um hmm. And your area was Delaware?
A: Only Delaware, I didn't go out of town... only Wil... not Delaware, but rather only Wilmington. And after a while somehow it happened that I left him, I didn't stay with him... couldn't get along or whatever it was. And I started a business again on my own.

Q: Wholesale.
A: Wholesale. And from there on...

Q: Now, this wholesale type of business, didn't... it doesn't exist now.
A: No.

Q: Because the stores buy pretty much directly from the manufacturers.
A: Oh, eh... no.

Q: In dry goods?
A: Yeah, they still have the same jobbers who they had... there was no different change in... so to speak. There's quite a change in the way of doing business, it's a long story now the way things are. But normally it was run the same. It was about the same thing on a smaller scale. Today they have it on large scale. And today you have to... the retailer is going out of business when they have to put out for the Wilmington Dry Goods and... I don't know if you know that or not. The small stores are all dropping out anymore. There are no small stores left anymore.

Q: Well, specialty stores don't [inaudible]...
A: No, no stores, actually no stores. There used to be a store on every corner in Wilmington, and today you don't see 'em hardly at all. They just can't stay in business and compete with the stores like Wilmington Dry Goods and other...

Q: Who don't buy from wholesalers. They buy from manufacturers.
A Who?

Q Stores like the Dry Goods.

A Wilmington Dry Goods? No, that's another question you ask, that's something else again. It's an entire revolution in the business today. Today it's right back, the Wilmington Dry Goods has to buy some merchandise from us, as we are doing . . . of course today we have a large wholesale house, the Delaware Novelty House, I don't know whether you know about it or not.

Q This is your business now.

A This is our business now. And it's got to a point today where Wilmington . . . some merchandise, the Wilmington Dry Goods have to buy from us. Or all department stores . . . Woolworth's and Eckerd's stores buy from us. It's cheaper for them to buy from us than warehouse the merchandise themselves.

Q Oh, I see.

B Buys more quantities.

A So they can buy what they want, but they don't have to have a warehouse and warehouse man and we deliver them, you know.

Q That's the service, basically, that you give them, though, that you can store the merchandise.

A The what?

Q You can hold on to the merchandise and they can get small quantities.

A That's correct. Instead of them have to buy from a manufacturer and buy so much merchandise for each item for a delivery and from various manufacturers where they have to warehouse all that. Instead, we are actually their warehouse. It's cheaper for them for us to warehouse, it costs them less money. In other words, we charge them less money than they can warehouse it themselves by the rental.

Q Um hmn. Because I remember the big thing in the Dry Goods was the buyers going to New York. And I suppose it's still true in terms of some merchandise.

A Oh, of course, definitely. Definitely. I said the Wilmington Dry Goods would buy from us, too, certain merchandise, where it doesn't . . . they either can't but it direct, their manufacturer will not sell 'em direct, because they only sell to jobbers, not to department stores. They have to buy it from us . . . if they want to handle the merchandise. Of course they can stop handling it. But if they need the merchandise, to buy from us. Just like we are the distributors for Schrafft's Chocolates in this area. If Wilmington Dry Goods wants Schrafft's, if they want it, they have to buy from us, or . . . they can do without it, but if they have calls for it and they want it, they have to buy it from us. And
And that goes with a lot of other merchandise. They have to buy it from a jobber, they cannot buy it direct.

Q I see. Um hmm. Well, you were talking about a revolution in the retail business.

A This is the revolution in the retail business. The small storekeeper completely dropped out. You can walk up on 4th Street, for instance, and . . .

Q Well, you don't mean the revolution is the wholesaler or the jobber. You mean the revolution is the large department store.

A Yeah, the large department stores took over and the retailer, the small retailer, had to drop out, he couldn't do enough business to exist.

Q When do you think this started?

A What?

Q When do you think this sort of . . . this change took over.

A Oh, that's been not so very long ago, maybe just about six, seven years.

Q Um hmm. And you think the decline of Wilmington is because of this, not so much because Wilmington itself is declining.

A Oh, no, no, no, no. That happened throughout the entire country.

Q Yeah, that's what I'm asking you about.

A The same thing happened in Philadelphia as has happened to Wilmington, the very same thing. In New York, the very same thing. The small retailer had to get out of business.

Q Well, some people get the impression that this business failure in Wilmington is because of the decline of the city, and the movement to the suburbs and so forth.

Q2 The middle class moving out.

A It doesn't make any difference. It doesn't make any difference. It happened the same thing, that when Eckerd's stores opened up in the outskirts and alongside of 'em . . . well, you see these new developments, you go into the section where you have the Eckerd stores and you have Penny's stores and you have Hoy's 5 & 10 and you have one next to the other, and they've taken over the section. What chance has a small storekeeper to open up a store? He hasn't got the merchandise, he hasn't got the capital, because if he would have it, he'd be a big man, too. But he hasn't. So what can you open up, a little store. A customer won't go in . . . they want to walk into a place like Eckerd stores or Hoy's stores or all these department stores and they can buy anything from "A" to "Z" and why should he go up to a small storekeeper.

Q What about the specialty shops like women's dresses or women's sports
dresses, or . . .

A Well, that's already different.

Q Or baggage, or . . .

A Well, that I can't answer. This woman can answer you. They still have specialty ladies stores where they do nothing but specialize, you ought to know that. Dresses that you like to go in there and buy.

Q2 Well, it's also a service store in that you get a special service when you go into a specialty store.

A Well, you can tell better . . . you know the reason why you would rather walk into just a specialty store.

Q2 For fitting and for style or [inaudible] . . .

Q Well, style . . . styles, they specialize then.

A Yeah, they specialize and they're . . .

Q Whereas a department store wouldn't have as much sport . . .

A Not only that, but they walk in these ladies and walk into these smaller stores and she wants to spend $100 for two dresses and for the storekeeper it's a big sale, and if he hasn't got that, he'll make sure that he'll tell you that you come back Thursday and I'll have it for you and they immediately call up Philadelphia because when he sells you a $75.00 dress, they make $50.00. So he makes sure and calls Philadelphia . . .

Q I won't buy 'em anymore.

A He calls Philadelphia or whatever it is and they send him out a couple of dresses for approval and you walk in there and he calls your home when they come in and you walk in there and if you happen to like it, why you made a sale and you made some money. That's why some of these specialty stores can exist. But we're talking about the type of smaller stores where they used to sell cigarettes and candy and . . .

Q More general stores, you mean. O.K.

A These stores are actually all closed up. In the first place, they don't do enough business to exist. And today a man that would like to have a store and he opens up the store, even with these smaller wares that he thinks he's going to make a living, he finds out pretty soon that he can't do it because he needs $100 to $150 a week for his own living, to exist. And he cannot do enough business even to make half of that.

Q So he has to offer something that a large store doesn't have.

A But he can't.

Q "-ll, I mean, like a specialty shop.
Well, this is already wear, we're talking about specialty shops like ladies wear. But a normal store like used to be the corner grocery store, the corner candy store [inaudible]...

Oh, yeah, oh, that's gone.

Well, the rent was small, his wife worked with her husband and if he made $10.00 a week or $12.00 a week, he was, you know, he was satisfied.

A "Ma and Pa" store, they used to call it.

But today, he is a family man, he has two or three children go to school, if he can't make $150.00 a week, he just can't exist. And you cannot do enough business to make that kind of money. Therefore, they all dropped out. You can walk up 4th Street, it used to be . . . and you can go up right from Front . . . from Market Street to Union Street, and you won't find three stores. You won't.

How was it years ago?

Years ago they had a store on each corner.

From Market . . .

From Market Street down to Union Street. Each corner.

You mean like grocery stores and candy stores and things.

Grocery stores and candy stores and little shops and whatever it was, every corner, they had 15, 20 stores with soda fountains and you know, with sandwiches and ice cream and what not. Not anymore. Well, you live in Wilmington, you ought to know. You go on 4th Street, start right at Front and Market and go right to Union Street and you see. I'll show you, four stores. There's a restaurant, you know, or maybe one ice cream store. I can't even picture. But they're hardly . . . not speaking about Front Street, you know, Lancaster Avenue. God, they used to have a store on each corner. You start in right now from Front and Lancaster Avenue and Market and go all the way down to Union Street and see what you got there. You won't find four stores.

Is that also because of the condition of the neighborhood?

No. Because you find it all. You have the same people living and the same . . .

The neighborhood's changed, too.

But why should they go to a store when they can walk into Hearn's on Lancaster Avenue, and a woman, you as a housekeeper knows that. That you walk in, for instance, to Hearn's or any other, you can walk in there and you can make a list in the house and there isn't a thing in the world . . . when you walk out of Hearn's, you pretty near got everything that you need. You don't have to go to another store. Why should
you go to seven small stores and buy stuff when you can buy everything in one place.

E Now why is this important in the . . .

Q Well, I think it's a very good description of business in Wilmington.

E Well, you wouldn't want that on tape.

Q I certainly do.

A Otherwise he wouldn't ask these questions.

Q I'm the one asking the questions. Have you been active in any community affairs, either one of you.

A She is.

B Well, I belong to the Hadassah and that's all. That's enough. If you want to spend money, give a little to Hadassah.

A We belong . . . I belong . . . we belong to shul.

B We belong to B'nai Brith . . . in fact I happen to know because I just got a bill for it.

Q And what temple do you belong to?

B Adas Kodesh.

A But normally I happen to be not very active and I let Eddie Salus, my son, do that.

Q You have two children, you have a son and a daughter.

A Yes. My son-in-law is Norman Salus . . . I don't know if you know him or not.

Q No, I don't think so.

B You interviewed his father.

Q Yes, we interviewed a Salus.

Q What was his last name?

Q Salus.

B S-a-l-u-s.

Q I guess I didn't go with you.

Q Well, I want to thank you very much, I don't want to take up more of your time, but I certainly appreciate it.

B You're quite welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]