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# Mr. Louis Weiner

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: This is a recording of the Oral History Project. We're interviewing Mr. Louis Weiner and the interviewer is Myron Lazarus.

Mr. Weiner, where were you born and when?

Mr. Weiner: Russia.

Interviewer: You're born in Russia.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, I was born on December the 25th, 1888.

Interviewer: And where in Russia were you born?

Mr. Weiner: I was born in a colony which the government give the people chance not be taken in the army...

[Cross talk]

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Weiner: That's what the old – my grandfather took their thing in that ground and then receive and then he was in the colony. He was by the – near Odessa.

Interviewer: Near Odessa. And this was a farm community?

Mr. Weiner: A farm community, I was born upon.

Interviewer: Now did your father have his own land there?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah.

Interviewer: And he was a farmer.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Which is kind of unusual for a Jew, isn't it?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, but all of it was not unusually taught.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah. Just like in Jerusalem. That's when we have over there.

Interviewer: How large was the farm?

Mr. Weiner: You know we had a big farm but then my grandfather divided to six sons. So we had six farms that's been divided. And then when the children come up we didn't have enough farms since *[inaudible]* **[0:01:29]**.

Interviewer: Did he do anything else beside farming?

Mr. Weiner: With cattle, we used to deal with cattle and trade cattle and sell cattle. And sell cattle seem we used to buying up in a winter time and that *[inaudible]* **[0:01:49]** in the summer time they used to send up to *[inaudible]* **[0:01:51]**, Odessa, all big cities for beef. And this was near – all near of them.

Interviewer: About how far from the Odessa was it?

Mr. Weiner: They used to drive by foot toward Odessa. I know it wasn't too far away.

Interviewer: Was this colony mainly of Jews or...?

Mr. Weiner: All Jews, not for few Jews but it was – it was 15 *[inaudible]* **[0:02:20]** over there and 15 miles away. Over here is different *[inaudible]* **[0:02:27]** got water gold in the Black Sea than call the Russian *[inaudible]* **[0:02:35]** Black Sea to Odessa by water and we was over this side and the other side used to belong to Romania and Russian took it away. They call it the *[phonetic]* **[0:02:46]** this Arabian. That's what we was doing with there with those colonies.

Interviewer: And you say...

Mr. Weiner: Not beyond economy, was more economy.

Interviewer: Oh yeah. But you say people were settled here. They had a choice of settling in place like this or going into war.

Mr. Weiner: Those days they used the grandchildren when my grandfather they used the grandchildren and send them away in the army for 25 years interruption. But he told him that anybody wants to get like United States give some land some far away if you want to move over there they give you the privilege.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Weiner: So they give us a privilege of – they took the flower and they took all they could take it around each one to – only could take it around. They think they got enough, you know? So, then after awhile, it wasn't enough.

Interviewer: Because of the sons.

Mr. Weiner: The sons.

Interviewer: Did you live comfortably? Did your family live comfortably until...

**[Cross talk]**

Mr. Weiner: Not – over there it's not too comfortable. The – you know, what we had is tempted to eat, you know what I mean? And but over there we didn't make much money.

Interviewer: All right.

Mr. Weiner: Couldn't make a lot of money.

Interviewer: Were there other things beside the trading in cattle that your father did?

Mr. Weiner: No, that was the old thing.

Interviewer: How about education?

Mr. Weiner: Education we have to have our own school, see, only in Jewish that's where we add them **[inaudible] [0:04:15]** Russian too but we have to pay their own teacher.

Interviewer: I see. Otherwise the Jewish community...

**[Cross talk]**

Mr. Weiner: Hire their own teacher, yes.

Interviewer: I see. How are large was the community?

Mr. Weiner: We have there about 130,000 or 16 towns.

Interviewer: Remember the name of it?

Mr. Weiner: The call it colony. This is a **[phonetic] [0:04:41]** Warren Cova, that's what I remember.

Interviewer: What is it?

Mr. Weiner: **[phonetic] [0:04:44]** Warren Cova.

Interviewer: **[phonetic] [0:04:45]** Warren Cova.

Mr. Weiner: **[phonetic] [0:04:46]** Warren Cova, yes, colony, yes. That's a **[phonetic] [0:04:53]** Podolski govin.

Interviewer: **[phonetic] [0:04:55]** Podolski govin.

Mr. Weiner: **[phonetic] [0:04:55]** Govin. Of course, the way you look - everything looks funny do I...

**[Cross talk]**

**[0:05:04]**

Interviewer: Not at all, not at all. Because I've interviewed many people and it's the first time I've come up with something like this where Jews are settled or with – they rule themselves or that the government have assigned his colony or whatever.

Mr. Weiner: In his colony we have the man he says he was a Jewish man and he belonged to the federal government. But anything happened **[inaudible] [0:05:30]**. And most in awhile a bigger fee for you have to come a little bit **[inaudible] [0:05:35]** and ask him what things goes out and they gathered everything and paid for everything.

Interviewer: At what age did you go to school? You said you're born in 1907.

Mr. Weiner: No, no. I'm not.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, you're born in 1888.

Mr. Weiner: I come to America in 1908 and 1907, yeah. Well, I remember I'm going to school **[inaudible] [0:06:02]** about 13 or 14 years old.

Interviewer: And you started school when?

Mr. Weiner: Well, when I was a kid. I don't remember exactly when.

Interviewer: Now, do you have any other memories of Russia where – for instance, do you remember anything like the *[phonetic]* *[0:06:18]* program. This is about the time of the...

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, we had the *[phonetic]* *[0:06:22]* program is – me and my wife over there which she's catching over this as I remember it was at 1905. There was a *[phonetic]* *[0:06:30]* program.

Interviewer: How about in this colony where you were?

Mr. Weiner: We did not know. We don't know. No, we didn't – let nobody come and to fight.

Interviewer: Now, when you were planning to come in this country, was the whole family going to come in this country?

Mr. Weiner: No. No, I went away with another boy; we run away. That's all I remember. I remember my mother gave me four, five gold pieces and we put it on boat underneath, shouldn't lose them and that's where we come here. We stole their line over to...

Interviewer: Stole the border.

Mr. Weiner: The border. We stole the border to Austria. That cost us \$5 a piece

Interviewer: That was cheap.

Mr. Weiner: Not maybe one in the cold water than the water like this year and that this is go over it *[inaudible]* *[0:07:22]* to go over it.

Interviewer: But you were the only one in the family to go.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, we gather after a while we brought all the family.

Interviewer: How old were you now when you came over?

Mr. Weiner: I was around 18 years old.

Interviewer: Eighteen years old. And you went into Austria and how long did you stay in Austria?

Mr. Weiner: In Austria we went in to a small town *[inaudible]* **[0:07:43]** and we worked there like over here in the oil – you know, the oil *[inaudible]* **[0:07:49]**. It was a Jewish refinery there.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Weiner: And then we made a little money and we travel further.

Interviewer: And from Austria where did you go?

Mr. Weiner: They land at Germany.

Interviewer: Germany.

Mr. Weiner: And then we went over the line to Liverpool. In Liverpool we take the ship to come over here.

Interviewer: You mean you went from Germany to Scotland?

Mr. Weiner: From Germany...

Interviewer: You took a boat to Scotland?

Mr. Weiner: There's a new boat that I lowered to England.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Weiner: From England or I don't know if you call it Scotland or England. From there we went to Liverpool. And from Liverpool we come over to Philadelphia.

Interviewer: I see you went from Austria, to England, to Liverpool.

Mr. Weiner: From Germany *[inaudible]* **[0:08:43]**.

**[Cross talk]**

Mr. Weiner: Liverpool.

Interviewer: Okay, I see. And then you went to United States.

Mr. Weiner: And then we come to United States.

Interviewer: Was there's money enough that your parents gave you...

**[Cross talk]**

Mr. Weiner: No, I worked my way.

Interviewer: What kind of a ship was it you took?

Mr. Weiner: We was on the corner line. This is, you know, there were ships 13 days, you know, cattle of ships.

Interviewer: And what kind of – I mean, was the life kind of bad on the ship?

Mr. Weiner: I'm not sure *[inaudible]* **[0:09:16]** getting a lot of this and not so hot. But then it didn't cost us a lot to come over because the corner line of the fiber, the other companies and then we will stay there about few weeks until the price come down, the price there were \$60 sum and then 40 and 30 and 20 and cost today's dollar \$8.50.

**[Cross talk]**

Interviewer: That's fantastic. Where did people sleep on a boat like that?

Mr. Weiner: Oh, in the boat they got the bed, you know, bunks.

Interviewer: How about the food.

Mr. Weiner: Well, they give you what the other food, I don't know, we couldn't eat them. We can't eat because, you know, the ship throws you around. You can't eat.

**[0:10:10]**

Interviewer: And you got sick on it.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, you got sick. When they give you – what you want is like desiring something little union and a garlic anything to keep you going.

Interviewer: Now you landed where when you came in the United States?

Mr. Weiner: In Philadelphia.

Interviewer: Philadelphia. Did you know anybody here?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah. Those days when I told you about the – they used to grab those people from *[inaudible]* **[0:10:38]** for 25 years and soldiers and my mother's side or brother – his father *[inaudible]* **[0:10:48]** was four years already *[inaudible]* **[0:10:50]** he was here in United States. So he bought me a pair of shoes, put a dollar in that and says, go ahead.

Interviewer: And this is in Philadelphia?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah. Call me, go ahead, look for a job, that's all.

Interviewer: But did he meet you at the boat? I mean...

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, he met me by the boat.

Interviewer: And you lived with him for awhile?

Mr. Weiner: I lived him not with them for awhile that I – my – I had a brother already coming though by the time between bedtime and me and I've stayed with him.

Interviewer: What was your first occasion in there in Philadelphia?

Mr. Weiner: I learned to be a cutter.

Interviewer: A cutter.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Cutter.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, *[inaudible]* **[0:11:34]** cutter and they gave me \$3 a week and the former took – I have to give him \$1 week to learn. So deliver him that – deliver him \$2 a week.

Interviewer: This is in Philadelphia?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, in Philadelphia?

Interviewer: Do you remember where you live in Philadelphia?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, I live in Monroe Street.

Interviewer: You're with your brother?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was he on the same occasion?

Mr. Weiner: No, no. He was working something else where we can put a bakery.

Interviewer: This was an older brother.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, older than me. Yeah. His wife still living in Philadelphia he was right up and, yes, he still lives here.

Interviewer: Now how long did you work at this cutting trade?

Mr. Weiner: Oh, I worked for a long time. I learned to be a cutter, then I learned to be a pattern maker and...

Interviewer: A cutter involves what? If you put in the chair...

**[Cross talk]**

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, we left and they have the material and...

**[Cross talk]**

Mr. Weiner: We cut it up...

Interviewer: According to pair.

Mr. Weiner: We got the marker up *[inaudible]* **[0:12:42]** we have to have a marker, they have to know people how to mark and then they cut it and they operate this and make market on the sizes and the bottles and they upgrade this. They have to make it up.

Interviewer: I see. And then you say you became a pattern maker.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, to make the – you got to have patterns to make this *[inaudible]* **[0:13:03]** then for a while I...

Interviewer: That's a better job.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, for awhile I try a little luck. My boss's brother a little factory of the same year but that didn't go either. So...

Interviewer: You mean you tried to make your own in awhile.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, own factory.

Interviewer: Nice.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, great. That's just waste.

Interviewer: Why does it turned waste?

Mr. Weiner: Just the waste is what *[inaudible]* **[0:13:29]** and the waste.

Interviewer: I see. The waste did stop.

Mr. Weiner: They wasted the tops.

Interviewer: And you were concentrating pretty much on the way...

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, the beginning. Yeah, that's the *[inaudible]* **[0:13:39]** everything.

Interviewer: Now when your business failed, there's other business here, what did you do then?

Mr. Weiner: Well, I tried to do everything. I opened my store. I opened his. I do everything.

Interviewer: What kind of store did you open up?

Mr. Weiner: I have a dry goods store that remains on waste and I know about it, you know? And I try to make a living then my brother and my father and mother and two sisters and a brother-in-law, another sister with a boyfriend but I lost them all.

Interviewer: Now, what you made in these factories, there's *[inaudible]* **[0:14:24]** you were able to bring the rest of your family...

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, little by little, paid it off. But I...

Interviewer: They came into Philadelphia?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, *[inaudible]* **[0:14:34]**.

Interviewer: What were some of the others you said you were in many businesses? What else beside retail store or the dry goods did you have?

Mr. Weiner: I don't know. I bought a cigar store then I had a butcher store, the grocery store and everything, tried to make honest living.

Interviewer: That's a variety.

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, but that's – and we have little trouble there. They call me and the **[inaudible] [0:15:02]** World War II directed me seeing that time I had a wife and two kids. I'm not supposed to take with two kids. But for the time they call me, they examined me already but they let me **[inaudible] [0:15:16]** and by the time they called me this divorced stopped.

**[0:15:20]**

Interviewer: I see. Well, you met your wife in Philadelphia?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, Philadelphia.

Interviewer: Did you take part and impart in community life in Philadelphia when you're working there?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, we had the societies and all that kind of stuff. And we do lots of good things. We used to do but time has gone, you know, you forget all about those things.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. How about the religious life? Did you take part in any religious community?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, I'm going to **[inaudible] [0:15:55]** every day, yesterday was twice and then there's Déjà vu and I'm going to **[inaudible] [0:15:59]** in the evening every day.

Interviewer: I see. Now what occupation you finally hang on to. Did you...?

Mr. Weiner: No, occupation and **[inaudible] [0:16:10]** the business was bad in 1929, '30 and '31 and you trust the people, they took away from the store or whatever they have and from there nothing, no more. So when liquor come back I went in business.

Interviewer: You have a liquor store.

Mr. Weiner: Liquor store.

Interviewer: In Philadelphia or...?

Mr. Weiner: Here, here at Wilmington. *[inaudible]* **[0:16:28]** this is 1920.

Interviewer: What made you come to Wilmington?

Mr. Weiner: See my wife and sister over here. They come over here and I didn't *[inaudible]* **[0:16:37]** to do so they bought a liquor – I mean, a cigar store.

Interviewer: Where was the cigar store?

Mr. Weiner: 19 Scott.

Interviewer: 19 Scott. How long were you there?

Mr. Weiner: We was there about couple of years then we moved *[inaudible]* **[0:16:55]** and I stayed there for 26 years.

Interviewer: Now in *[inaudible]* **[0:16:58]**, this is a liquor store.

Mr. Weiner: No, we had a grocery store *[inaudible]* **[0:17:01]** bigger store.

Interviewer: How long was your grocery store *[inaudible]* **[0:17:05]**?

Mr. Weiner: It wasn't – the grocery business in 1934.

Interviewer: 1934. So then you became a liquor store.

Mr. Weiner: *[inaudible]* **[0:17:16]** liquor store and we're still there about 15 more years in 1945, '46 and I sold it out.

Interviewer: And then what did you do after that?

Mr. Weiner: We had a home down in *[inaudible]* **[0:17:34]** we bought and we stayed there for a year and then we build this up in '46. And later they moved in over here in 1946 we're still here.

Interviewer: After you sold your liquor store, did you retire then?

Mr. Weiner: I took about one year and then I bought another liquor – a bought liquor store on *[inaudible]* **[0:17:57]**, stayed there for about 13 years.

Interviewer: Why did you *[inaudible]* **[0:18:05]** just to retire there or...?

Mr. Weiner: Where?

Interviewer: In *[phonetic]* **[0:18:07]** In Vetnir you said.

Mr. Weiner: When the *[inaudible]* **[0:18:10]** where to go. We couldn't get in a whole year. We gave up the house where or the liquor and didn't know a place where to go. We had to – place where to go until this house will be build up.

Interviewer: Oh I see. Why didn't you live in apartment in...

Mr. Weiner: Where?

Interviewer: In *[phonetic]* **[0:18:29]** Vetnir.

Mr. Weiner: No, we bought a home there *[inaudible]* **[0:18:32]**.

Interviewer: Do you have a family, large family, children? Do you have children?

Mr. Weiner: Yeah, I got a daughter. *[inaudible]* **[0:18:44]** after that.

Interviewer: Do you take part *[inaudible]* **[0:18:53]** today?

Mr. Weiner: No, I don't take part, nothing, just *[inaudible]* **[0:19:00]**.

Interviewer: Well, I want to thank you very much.

**[0:19:02]**                      **End of Audio**