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Mr. Phillip Simon

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: I'm at the Oral History Program at the University of Delaware. We're interviewing Mr. Phillip Simon and the interviewer is Myron Lazarus. Where were you born?

Mr. Simon: I was born on a small town. It's called, I don't know if you could spell it even. It's called Stavch, S-T-A-V-C-H would be I suppose.

Interviewer: It certainly sounds like Stavch, yeah.

Mr. Simon: Something like that, yeah. And I was born in 1898.

Interviewer: Okay, you're two years older than my father I think. And how long were you in Russia?

Mr. Simon: I was there when I was 15.

Interviewer: Fifteen years old? And you say Stavch is near where?

Mr. Simon: Near ***[inaudible] [0:00:53]***. It's about five miles something like that. That's the next large and big city, large city.

Interviewer: What did your parents do in Russia? What kind of occupation?

Mr. Simon: My father was, now they were in a family, they had quite a few businesses. They had one of the most business, they're big in the family, his father and two brothers were in the fish business, live fish business.

Interviewer: They sold fishing.

Mr. Simon: Yeah, they're in the fish business. But my father died when I was a young boy. My father was killed when I was four years old.

Interviewer: Right and who took care of the family? Your mother?

Mr. Simon: My mother.

Interviewer: What did she do after that, how did she support the family?

Mr. Simon: After my father got killed she opened up a hardware store.

Interviewer: A hardware store.

Mr. Simon: And took care of us with that. Of course the biggest part would be we're taken care of with my grandparents by my father's people. But my father had an interest in that business and the business was still there.

Interviewer: Run by your grandfather?

Mr. Simon: My uncles.

Interviewer: Your uncles.

Mr. Simon: And naturally we had to ***[inaudible] [0:02:14]*** till the end of the business.

Interviewer: Was it a very big business?

Mr. Simon: Well it was large most owned by his dad but had a couple more businesses besides that. It just wasn't one business.

Interviewer: Was it mainly selling fish aside from the fisherman, it was a retail business.

Mr. Simon: Right, we use to ship like ***[inaudible] [0:02:34]***. We use to ship stuff. But the most of it we would sell it right in the market.

Interviewer: So some would say it was wholesale?

Mr. Simon: No.

Interviewer: No?

Mr. Simon: ***[inaudible] [0:02:45]***.

Interviewer: You said some was shipped to Kan.

Mr. Simon: Yeah, but this whole wheat they were there too.

Interviewer: I see, but otherwise you had – your family had business in Kan?

Mr. Simon: No, we didn't have no business, but anytime that we have quite a number of this merchandise, we ship it to a big market and we have someone there that sell it for us, you see.

Interviewer: I see. Was this a store or was this open?

Mr. Simon: Open.

Interviewer: It's open market.

Mr. Simon: Open market.

Interviewer: On the street?

Mr. Simon: On the street.

Interviewer: So from a truck or…?

Mr. Simon: From baskets. They use to put in fish in baskets and sell it in baskets, some straw baskets, made up of straw baskets like that. But we also see a close basket, they have the straw. Have you seen that?

Interviewer: No.

Mr. Simon: No that's what they were shifting. They use to come and bargain lose, have this straw and use it as they come out of the way and you can put it on the market and stuff.

Interviewer: This was in a market square, right?

Mr. Simon: Right in the market square.

Interviewer: I take that your family is fairly comfortable in this business.

Mr. Simon: Our family was very comfortable.

Interviewer: How did your father die by the way?

Mr. Simon: My father was killed by gangsters.

Interviewer: Is that right? Can you tell us something about it?

Mr. Simon: Yeah. Well my father – let's say if we have another business besides the few businesses, during the time that farmer season, do you understand what I mean, when farmers harvest, do you understand?

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Simon: My father use to go up and buy horses up in the west, do you understand and bring them down to our town and sell them to the farmers.

Interviewer: Buy horses and sell them.

Mr. Simon: Yes, do you understand? And he went up to this trip that my grandfather brought her and two more Jewish people that they work for us and they were traveling. They were up in the west where there'd be – the country that is nothing but way up.

Interviewer: What do you mean? You really mean, in eastern you mean west in Russia now?

Mr. Simon: Yes, yeah in Russia, in Russia. And they were away and they were in the small town where they use to buy out these horses and then they use to drive them back to a town where they had a market for it.

[0:04:56]

Interviewer: And so they buy the horses and then so on.

Mr. Simon: They ship maybe 100 or 200 horses, you understand.? But they went down to a market place and they'd sell it.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Simon: And they were robbing Kan and they were throwing it in the creek.

Interviewer: Robbers along the road.

Mr. Simon: Robbers along the road.

Interviewer: Would he ride back with the horses like the rest?

Mr. Simon: No, these two men, they use to work for him, for our family, they use to take charge when your horses were bought. They were like foremen, they were in charge. They use to hire people there to drive them, see what I mean? But they two were in charge always to take care and we respect that.

Interviewer: Were the horses sent back by train?

Mr. Simon: No.

Interviewer: They're actually driven back here, like our west.

Mr. Simon: Yes, that's right just like our west they were driven. Now this wagon, after work, when my father got down buying with my grandfather brother right then, they would get to a town where there is a railway and they go back home. And they live the horse there. They had two horses, no wagging and all, but all the paraphernalia's that they had by – they used to live it with these two men and they took charge of it. And they met the man and the horses that took place where they was supposed to be. So it's not so easy done as it is said though, you know, special time.

Interviewer: The gangsters were, I guess like horse thieves.

Mr. Simon: They were never caught. We don't know who they were, in ***[inaudible] [0:06:24]*** you see we've got that they were killing a small town do you understand? It's more of an evening Jewish cemetery there they were the first one before they were buried, they were the first one they were buried, they're on that cemetery, they worked in a Jewish cemetery there on that day they were killed.

Interviewer: Did you work in family's business.

Mr. Simon: Yes.

Interviewer: I mean you were pretty married.

Mr. Simon: Well I stopped, but I worked.

Interviewer: Where did you go?

Mr. Simon: Well I used to sell. I use to have the pack. I work with my older brother. He was most of the time wit my mother in business in the hardware store, so he stayed there. But I helped. I helped a lot when there was to do.

Interviewer: Did you go to school?

Mr. Simon: I have to go school the big part of the day, but then I come by…

Interviewer: Did you go to a public school besides Hebrew school or just the Hebrew school?

Mr. Simon: In our time we had a slim chance to getting to a public school.

Interviewer: Why?

Mr. Simon: We wouldn't shot down to, that's why. Do you want to know why?

Interviewer: Because I want to know.

Mr. Simon: Okay, sure. They just said he made – they used to I think, do you understand but enough more times where they had public schools very few of them they being. We only live in small town maybe 200 families.

Interviewer: All together?

Mr. Simon: Yes. And I know some.

Interviewer: What would be the size of the Jewish community in that small town?

Mr. Simon: Huh?

Interviewer: What would be the size of the Jewish community in that small town?

Mr. Simon: Well let me tell you, the suburbs where were most the Gentiles live, do you understand?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Simon: The Jewish people like quiet 95 of the time, do you understand? But red light is also the – do you understand across the ***[inaudible] [0:08:09]*** and actually where are all Gentiles were even there. There wasn't any Jewish farmers there by all means, do you understand?

Interviewer: But Jewish couldn't own land?

Mr. Simon: No. But they were probably – maybe we had. I wouldn't say we had over five percent of the Gentile people in that town except in the suburbs. Now the suburbs still come on as the same name for the time, do you understand, but the Berlin ***[inaudible] [0:08:35]*** farm land.

Interviewer: But mostly economic occupation was mainly farming, right? The town support itself by the farming of the area?

Mr. Simon: Yes, the town supported itself, it used to come in – it was the business people in town by the time support is held by the people, of course a lot of time in the suburbs.

Interviewer: And the Jews were retail merchants manly in the town?

Mr. Simon: Most of them. Of course possibly Jewish tailors in there, Jewish shoemakers, Jewish harvest men, but all different kinds you understand. But you see Jewish people use to make boat, sell all boat not by factory but by hand.

Interviewer: Craftsman, small craft.

Mr. Simon: Yeah, yeah by hand do you understand and all mechanics of course carpenters, all mechanic, tinsmith. I have an uncle who was tinsmith there.

Interviewer: What would you say the size of the Jewish community was?

Mr. Simon: I don't know. I hadn't got no idea, I don't know?

Interviewer: Over a couple of hundred people?

Mr. Simon: I get it was maybe – well I'll tell you something. Let me tell you, I have fto figure it out. We have five synagogues in that small town I want you to know. So I got to give an average at approximately I don't know.

[0:10:00]

Interviewer: Well the town itself was, you mentioned the figure.

Mr. Simon: I would say I mentioned about 200 families, but maybe it was – I don't know, maybe it was more in a modern way do you understand, but it did approximately was that. Maybe it was three at a time. I've come to think of it that we have five synagogues and I know it was filled all of it put it there. So it goes to show that there were some Jewish people there.

Interviewer: Yeah, it sounds like quite a large Jewish community. You talked about not being able to go to school. Was there much other discrimination against Jews in the town?

Mr. Simon: Well I'll tell you, we didn't – we didn't suffer by very much of that.

Interviewer: For instance the programs occurred about…

Mr. Simon: It wasn't in our time.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Simon: That was mostly in Poe, do you understand. We didn't know of any thing at that time, mostly in Poe, we didn't know from there. We heard it discussed but we were in the practice whatsoever.

Interviewer: These public schools, were they church oriented, sponsored by the church, strictly by the government?

Mr. Simon: They were sponsored by the government and they were no word near that it was attached to any church at all. And we just do a three-school and the suburbs do you understand where the most of the Gentiles ***[inaudible] [0:11:20]*** that suburbs sounded like a mile, a mile and a half in time. But they weren't sponsored by ***[inaudible] [0:11:29]*** to my knowledge.

Interviewer: I ask that because I was wondering why the discrimination, the separating together discrimination.

Mr. Simon: We did not, but it was very hard to get into a university school. We had private teachers that taught us how to write and read Russian. In Hebrew school all we learned is Hebrew, do you understand but we have private teachers like we used to go in the afternoon, two to three hours a day to learn how to read by Russian ***[inaudible] [0:12:01]*** mathematics. But that we had to hire it in private same as they hired Hebrew teachers.

Interviewer: But you said you went to a Hebrew school, yet the teacher didn't come in to the home.

Mr. Simon: No, no.

Interviewer: Because in other areas we noticed…

Mr. Simon: I went to a Hebrew school until I graduate from this school, I went to a higher main. The main had more knowledge do you understand like a great day, one, two, three, I graduated. By they were all – the schools were all in the teacher's home.

Interviewer: How many years did you say you spend in Hebrew school in Russia?

Mr. Simon: Well I spend some 5 to 13, that's what I spend. I thought I'd rather go to a Hebrew school when I was five years old.

Interviewer: Do you have any experiences that you remember about Russia if you can remember? Anything that struck you as something that you wouldn't forget about Russia? Kind of a hard question to throw I think.

Mr. Simon: And a lot of question.

Interviewer: Well otherwise you lived a pretty peaceful life in Russia.

Mr. Simon: We did, we lived peaceful life as far as I know. Of course we had, ***[inaudible] [0:13:23]*** like before we came to this country, my mother got sick seriously. And we took her to Kan see where there are hospitals, do you know understand and big doctors. And we took a ride there. I went out with her.

Interviewer: You went to where?

Mr. Simon: I went with her, yes.

Interviewer: With her, right.

Mr. Simon: And I stayed with a man who used to live in that town with Hebrews in the war. Kan Jewish people couldn't live there, couldn't live in Kan, do you understand. They have to have a right and the only way that they have a right to live if they were in the army or wounded do you understand what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Simon: This man was wounded in the Japanese war. And his brother had married a cousin of mine, do you see what I mean?

Interviewer: Was he Jewish? Was he Jewish?

Mr. Simon: Yes. And he had a grocery store in Kan then. And when I went out there, the first I got his address but I couldn't get to him the first couple of nights anyhow, I come in to rent a room some place and I had a very difficult job. They asked me for papers. Just like you who traveled from here.

Interviewer: To another country.

Mr. Simon: To another country.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Simon: So you have to have passport that's all. And I struggled along the first night all around town and I was watching myself that I shouldn't get picked up by an officer because the minute they pick you up do you understand, they don't let you out or they don't fire you, do you understand they let you go.

[0:15:04]

They ship you back where you came from. And they ship you most of the time by a cattle train. And it takes anywhere from three days to two weeks before you get there. And if they stop some place for a two days or three days, you're not going to get a glass of water or something to eat.

So anyway the next day, I thought I went to the hospital, I saw my mother. Of course she was pretty sick then and I told her that I'm going to go and look up and see if I can find a brother where I can stay. So she'd said, "You better go back if don't want to get locked up." I said, "I'm going to take a chance." And I find him and he let me stay. He was glad that I could stay far. Of course he didn't had too many rooms. There wasn't any extra room or something like that, but I slept in a dining room on the cap as long as I had a place of me to stay and then I use to go out every morning ***[inaudible] [0:15:56]*** the whole day in the hospital and come back at night.

Anyhow every once in a while, they raid the town.

Interviewer: Who would raid the town?

Mr. Simon: The cops, the government, the city government see who they can find.

Interviewer: Who doesn't belong there?

Mr. Simon: That's right. So the problem that I used to have – of course he lived in a neighbor also, I mean ***[inaudible] [0:16:18]*** but they were all nice people. And I will tell you the problem I used to hide over the bed. I used to hide when they asked you know ***[inaudible] [0:16:29]***. So I hide in the toilet, they didn't look in there, they got to the bed. I stayed there for about six weeks with him. Two weeks our of Kan, two weeks. It seemed like they just dug in. They clean up. Then I remember he spoke to one of his neighbors a Gentile and he told them to stay. And they hid me. They hid me over night, I think three nights I stayed in ***[inaudible] [0:17:00]***.

Interviewer: Why do they do that? Why do they have this kind of restriction?

Mr. Simon: I don't know why, do you understand. First of all I never went to school to learn their laws from the Russian government, do you understand. They have their laws most at that time and the second thing is, you understand, all I heard, I was only a kid. How can I tell you why, why is the crooked letter in it? I can tell you, all I know that it didn't allow no Jews do you understand?

Interviewer: Well this was only Jews, how about other people from…

Mr. Simon: No, only Jews.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Simon: Only Jews. Yet that's what I told you when we ship merchandise to Kan, we couldn't have sell it you see? We had a woman that used to be like our agent, do you understand? And she got paid for that, you see because we didn't have the rights. We didn't have no licenses. Even if we take our license, you'd have to be a citizen do you understand then you can do it. That's why we ***[inaudible] [0:17:59]*** I can remember. After all of that. I left. I came here 1914 April the 2nd. And that's a few days representing the government. I can remember this is the only incident that I really actually remember the worst.

Interviewer: Was your mother all right after that?

Mr. Simon: Yeah, my mother got better. She suffers a kidney trouble. Of course she still suffered on the life I saw then, but she got better and we were able to go and home.

Interviewer: Now basically why did you come to this country?

Mr. Simon: Well I tell you it's a whole history. I guess I have to tell you that. My mother has a family in this country, do you understand? She had a brother, and one, two, three sisters. And of course ***[inaudible] [0:19:04]*** family, they used to get letters anyhow. She got a letter one time that her older sister died. They lived in Jersey somewhere. Then lived in Broffman Well, New Jersey right near an Island some place, a small little town and at that time it was a Jewish.

Interviewer: Nearby Jewish.

Mr. Simon: Nearby just about 10 miles from Island New Jersey. And afterwards all said and done, they use to kind of have a fun. I was only a youngster

then. And my uncle, her brother told her that he would turn to ***[inaudible] [0:19:44]*** if she come out to this country, come out here for a living. So anyhow things kept on going and they finally decided and they send her the letter.

Interviewer: But basically the reason you… I'm sorry.

[0:20:00]

Mr. Simon: Yeah, she came to this country do you understand and I and my brother were left and we were running the business with the store.

Interviewer: Your mother came here.

Mr. Simon: And my mother came here. And with the trip and all it took her six months.

Interviewer: It took your mother six months.

Mr. Simon: Yeah. When my mother came here, you understand, my uncle, my oldest – my mother's oldest sister, she was a widower and my mother was a widower, a widow you understand. And then they have whatever that happened here, they decided they were going to get married. And that's why my uncle brought up my mother out there for that reason.

Interviewer: To find a husband?

Mr. Simon: No, this is his brother, her brother send her a ticket. That's a brother in law you see. My brother, Louie, he send her a ticket and they come up and then she come out here naturally why they got together and my mother decided that she's marry her brother in law you see.

Interviewer: Sure.

Mr. Simon: So as far as I know, they got married here and anyhow she come back home.

Interviewer: Back to Russia?

Mr. Simon: Yeah, he come back home.

Interviewer: With her new husband?

Mr. Simon: No, he was here.

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Simon: No. He was here. He was here in fact he had to work four children, four or five children. He was here. Of course we were grown most of them ***[inaudible] [0:21:21]***. He was here. And then my mom, in the meantime when my mother come over he'd gone come we stayed in business and in a little while, it seemed like…

Interviewer: You're talking about Russia now?

Mr. Simon: It seemed like my brother ***[inaudible] [0:21:40]*** for examination, you see before you were 21, they took you for examination for the army you see.

Interviewer: For the army, right?

Mr. Simon: If you were physic do you understand and if you were tall enough and big enough do you know what I mean, they'd take you in the army before you're 21. You don't have to wait until you're 21. So here, the age is 18, there when you were 21 you see. But if you fit all the information that is necessary to throw you a lot ***[inaudible] [0:22:09]*** then they'd take you. So in the meantime they called him I believe. And when they called him, of course my grandparents and my uncle for my father side, they all didn't want us to go in the army or they want my brother to go to the army.

Interviewer: So this was about what year?

Mr. Simon: This was in 1930 I believe this was 1930. So anyhow in the meantime, my mother started talking about suddenly going to the United States. Of course we were going to go against anyhow, but the main point was they try to keep on in the army.

Interviewer: Right.

Mr. Simon: So my brother went to a time where not here, so like, you have to go to port. You have to go to candidate for me. You go to a bigger time you understand. That time that he went to were like here you go to the door, the Catholic said it, do you understand what I mean?

Interviewer: I see.

Mr. Simon: And he went there, they examined them and they told them that he can be off yet for a year, let's call him next year. Well our family heard of it

that they're going to call him next year, that's the time when we start to pack up, do you understand? We sold our house. My father built that house before we went away being in every reason he didn't finished it, he got killed. It wasn't finished yet. We build ***[inaudible] [0:23:32]*** a modern home. And we finished the house and my mother finished it. And we sold the house. We sold our business and we packed up and we came here.

Interviewer: Your brothers and you?

Mr. Simon: Me and my brother and my mother, only the three of us.

Interviewer: But she was going to go back soon anyway for her husband I mean?

Mr. Simon: Yeah in time. Actually when this came up do you understand, this makes them that much – that made them that much quicker, that's like more.

Interviewer: Where did they embark, where did they leave to go to the United States? Did they go to Germany?

Mr. Simon: Yeah, Bremen. We went to Bremen, we took the boat from Bremen. First we want the first class, we didn't have to suffer. We went to first class and we didn't have to steal the what they call in Russia between Russia and Germany. If you went to a place where you get a boat, do you understand, you have to steal that – you have to go across that creek, a river, small river. And that you don't have the passport. If you have a passport, you understand, you will drive through by a train, you do then go to Germany. But if you don't have a passport, you understand, you stop at certain parts of Ukraine or Russia or Poland wherever they use to go.

[0:24:55]

This place is odd where you have to hit in to Germany where you connect one country with the other, you understand. So if you don't have a passport, you have to – they have Asians there that they take your work at night, you understand.

Interviewer: So you pay them?

Mr. Simon: You pay them $50 or $100 then they take over maybe 8 to 10, 20 at the time at night. And as long as you cross that creek, you understand, you're on the German side you're safe. But when you have a passport, you see, you go right on by train right into Germany, we go right into Bremen.

Interviewer: But you have a passport.

Mr. Simon: Yeah, we have the passports.

Interviewer: So you don't have problems on it?

Mr. Simon: We didn't have no problem, but these problems occurred you see. Of course I would say that maybe I don't know, but I bet there are 75 percent of the people, 75 percent of the people didn't want the United States or any part of the United States or to Canada or any place. They have to steal that river, they have to get across do you understand. And then they never had passports.

Interviewer: Because they couldn't get them from Russia this passport?

Mr. Simon: Well a lot of things yeah. They couldn't get them a lot of them more and more problems, birthday, they couldn't find their names you understand. Their birthdays weren't marked down when they were born, you have to go back. They couldn't find no names and no address and no when and no where and no ah. Your father came from my dad, he ought to know the same thing. He was born into this. He knows what it is. They couldn't because the doctors weren't strict about it. They were just midwives you understand. They're very solemn that they call a doctor unless it was very much in trouble, but it was midwives. And as long as they deliver the baby, took care of the mother well ***[inaudible] [0:26:47]*** have to.

Interviewer: Did you landed in New York?

Mr. Simon: No, I landed in Philadelphia.

Interviewer: Is that right? And you went from their to ***[inaudible] [0:26:56]***?

Mr. Simon: I came from there right the – no I didn't go there. I came right here to Wilmington. I got up in one boat, we got on the other boat and came to Wilmington, then they start quarter I came to Wilmington from Philadelphia, that's all it was.

Interviewer: The time.

Mr. Simon: Yes.

Interviewer: Why did you come to Wilmington?

Mr. Simon: Because my mother's brother and one of his sisters were living here. That's why they came to Wilmington. And one brother, one sister was living in Philadelphia and the other said the more and faster way to live in an environment you see. But we came here because my uncle took us off the boat the one that ***[inaudible] [0:27:36]*** you see. And that's why we came here you see and we made a home.

Interviewer: So you started in Wilmington quite early?

Mr. Simon: I started in 1914, I got here thanks God, I haven't changed.

Interviewer: What business did you get into here?

Mr. Simon: I wouldn't think that you would ask.

Interviewer: We'll start.

Mr. Simon: I don't even know where to start.

Interviewer: When you're starting out, what kind of work did you do?

Mr. Simon: Well, I started out jobs were on plumbing by the end of 1914. We came here just about a month before the war broke out, the First World War. And that's made us more happier when the First World War because we weren't there.

Interviewer: Because you were here, right.

Mr. Simon: When I came here, we lived with my uncle for awhile and I started going, looking for a job with no speech, no language, no trade, a kid, 15 years old do you understand. What can you do that day when an average man a family member is making $8 a week, $7 a week he was a mechanic.

Interviewer: And you were just a kid with no education.

Mr. Simon: No education whatsoever, so where can you go get a job? So I got a job, the first job – I think the first job my uncle give me was in a roofing business and I wanted to work for him for the first job I believe. And I worked for him for a few months. And I worked for two families before me. And then they – all the roofs used to be coated with pitch, if you know what pitch is and half pitch and then slack on the top of it, stove.

Interviewer: They still do that way.

Mr. Simon: Some, not all roofs now, some, very few of them. And then you stay the whole day and keep on pulling up, they have a pulley and they used to be caged ***[inaudible] [0:29:41]***. They use to fill that up.

Interviewer: With a tar, with a pitch.

Mr. Simon: No, with a slack.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Mr. Simon: Because the pitch you have buckets you see. And you stayed there on the second floor or third or fourth floor, you're doing something. So it was too heavy for me.

[0:30:00]

I stayed for about three months where I couldn't – it's too heavy. In face I got a hernia. So that's why I stopped. I couldn't take it. Then I was getting $4 a week. And I left that job and a friend of my aunt took me to – there used to be a union suit factory, top union suit factory ***[inaudible] [0:30:27]*** that was before your time. Top kiss union suit factory used to be a playground there now third in that there used to be a factory there and I got a job there and a basement, spreading goods. It used to be a machine spreader, the long table like buffet across this house and you spread the cure with a machine and then they cut it with and design it and cut it this pattern and all.

Interviewer: I see, you would lay it down?

Mr. Simon: I would spread it, yeah. I have it one end, I'd have that machine to push it on a crack, but on the other hand, I keep the lines would be, it shouldn't be out of the way, it's not like you cut one right then one crooked.

Interviewer: You put a lot of material down.

Mr. Simon: I put on it. As far as that goes, 100 seat, do you understand. That would go from this table going in the other table you see. When this one gets filled up, I do it in the other table. And then I stand them and had pack them, everything in that basement. And I got a job there and I worked for $2.5 a week.

Interviewer: That's less.

Mr. Simon: Yes, but it wasn't as heavy. But I used to work 55 hours a week, 10 hours everyday and about five to six hours on a Saturday give you a break. I had to go up and put ice on the ice cooler, that I had to do. And I have to sweep up the place, you know, and I worked there awhile. I worked there awhile, but I don't know. I don't know, I couldn't.

Interviewer: How old were you then?

Mr. Simon: About 15, 16. Then I left there. I left there. I went to work for a little while, I went to work for – I went to work for a butcher in my ***[inaudible] [0:32:15]***. It's used to be my neighbor Morgan Bank.

Interviewer: Oh, yes, I've heard of her. I fix some things.

Mr. Simon: Well I work for him at that time you understand.

Interviewer: It's on 2nd Street?

Mr. Simon: Yeah. I used to push a push cart, deliver orders all to the town meat and all meat, packages and meat. Well I work for him for about, I don't know, very close to a year. But there, I was getting $10 a month a board, see board and room.

Interviewer: So it was better.

Mr. Simon: That was pretty good. But I used to work from time to time in the Union Street delivering meat and all those push cart and back and we would hall around in streets.

Interviewer: So this was the main center of the town at that time, that 2nd Street.

Mr. Simon: Yeah, but we still have business people living way out there if we had to go out there and deliver meat.

Interviewer: How far?

Mr. Simon: Five Union Street as far as I could remember. As far as they could go and as far as I can go at church Street but it wasn't long before he bought the horse and riding and then I was in class, then I was living. And I stayed and I think close to a year, I don't know. Maybe a little more. And then I had a friend of mine during the war and I had a friend of mine and I asked him, it was hard. He's out from Philadelphia. He happened to be a love for mine from the other side and he got a job in pool man as a tinsmith. And he was a meat man. He was a butcher from the old country. I know

him. And he said, "Go." I sent out. In the meantime when I quit that job, the bank I didn't do that. And so anyhow in the meantime he start to come in to our house and ride up. And he said, "I'll try and see if I can get you home as well," in the tinsmith business.

And he tried and he talked to the former and it worked. And he brought me in there and I got hired. I know a little bit. I worked in gooking seas. So I know a little bit. I know how to hold a hammer or something, but I didn't know how to repair cars, pulling cars. That's all we worked on pulling cars and pulling shop or what happens to the breaks, do you know what it is? Or ***[inaudible] [0:34:38]*** by the railroad. It used to be electric hoses there.

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Simon: Well a little before that, it used be a pulling car shop they use to repair cars. I get on – with the help…

Interviewer: This is the old, the ***[inaudible] [0:34:51]*** railroad?

Mr. Simon: Pennsylvania.

Interviewer: Pennsylvania.

Mr. Simon: Right in the Pennsylvania Railroad, the 11th Street Bridge. Do you know where 11th Street Bridge is?

Interviewer: Yes, I know.

[0:35:00]

Mr. Simon: Well right by the railroad it used to be. The railroad in fact is high up and the pulling shop is on the other side.

Interviewer: That is the BNO isn't it?

Mr. Simon: Huh?

Interviewer: That's the BNO?

Mr. Simon: BNO is out there. BNO is out there. No BNO. BNO is over there. And I got a job with the help from a few people that I know and him the one that took me on, I stayed down work while I was making mechanic then I was making $0.30 an hour.

Interviewer: Wow, you're getting up.

Mr. Simon: Then I was making that. Every two weeks they used to pay us $32 a week – every two weeks of check. Then that was mechanic's wages, $0.30 an hour in a shop den. And I worked there.

Interviewer: Was it an okay work?

Mr. Simon: Well it wasn't too bad. I worked there for some time, but it wasn't – it's not too extreme, you understand, at 10 days you understand. We used to fix the roofs most of the time and you had to stay on a ladder all day and do work. All of the roof comes up like a little porch off the roof where the windows are on the top of the car, then it comes up like a little gutter that side like where you sleep it used to be do you understand me, cars. And this also you work on that and you have to stay up against this or you didn't work from this gutter and stuff where I was in the bus. It used to be vandalizing. They call it vandalizing for text. And they arrive out do you understand me? They happen to put new post from inside. And it was rough, but it wasn't too bad, it wasn't too bad. It wasn't too bad at all. And I worked there for awhile.

Interviewer: What was your life in Wilmington outside of work though at that time? You're, say, around 16 or 17 years old? You work most of the time.

Mr. Simon: Well I tell you, I don't know what it was in Wilmington, do you understand? It wasn't much you understand, besides it was – we used to go – it used to be the work what I start to remember in the branch.

Interviewer: Yes. You remember the working circle.

Mr. Simon: At one time when I was younger, at one time. We used to gather up, gather a few people and have a have a little that passed, you know what I mean. But most of the time what we've gone along was it wasn't – it had nothing to do in Wilmington for Jewish boys then. I used to go away from the country side when I got down to work from a boat in Philadelphia. And I met fellows that I worked in Pullman and their home was in Philadelphia, you understand. They used to board here. And on the weekend we used to pack up and go away to Philadelphia, you understand and spend our weekends in Philadelphia because there wasn't much here than you can – unless if you want to sit and play. We play rugby all the time, but then you're 17 years old, 16, 18 years old, you don't feel like you want to sit the whole night and play peanut and rugby you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Sure.

Mr. Simon: So, of course, we used to go and it used to be in Philadelphia. It used to be a Jewish shore at one time you enjoy you understand. We use to go to a play or something we'd make up a bunch of us and we'd go. It wasn't ***[inaudible] [0:38:13]***. We used to have a good time on the boat. We used to spend two and a half hours in a boat and have a good time, we would enjoy ourselves and then we would have a nice weekend and Sunday night we'd come back home. That's right Sunday night we'd come back home. And that kept going on like that because it wasn't too much and wonderful as far as having any recreation, young people.

Interviewer: Where did you live in Wilmington, above the store on 2nd Street? Where you live?

Mr. Simon: In ***[inaudible] [0:38:50]*** Street.

Interviewer: In ***[inaudible] [0:38:51]*** Street.

Mr. Simon: We lived base where ***[inaudible] [0:38:53]*** you know where?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Simon: Right there is where we live. We lived there for two to three years. And then that's when two years I believe. And then my mother came to town, he and my stepfather came here, then after we came a little while my stepfather came to Wilmington ***[inaudible] [0:39:10]*** then they bought a business. So I lived with him and a bought a business ***[inaudible] [0:39:15]*** the high motor. Right across it used to be a grocery store, where car was with a basic shop. And across the street was a grocery store and my stepfather and my mother bought that grocery store and then we lived at that you know what I'm saying. And that's where we live. But before we lived on Shipper Street, 227 Shipper Street, my aunt lived there and we had to stay with my aunt. That's where we live. And it was right towards the 2nd Street. And then when we came to build the shoe next door you see, it wasn't our shoe yet, but when we came and when we came they build it. They formed an build a shoe.

Interviewer: What did you do after you're a tinsmith, after you work with Pullman?

[0:40:03]

Mr. Simon: Well I quit that job and I wanted to work – let me see, where did I go to work then? I had more job than I have had in my head.

Interviewer: Well, you know…

Mr. Simon: Well I'll tell you, when I quit there, I think, if I'm not mistaken I went to – I went to work with my stepfather. My stepfather bought another store down 12th and Frank I believe.

Interviewer: You didn't work in the grocery store, when you had a grocery store?

Mr. Simon: No, funny. And I have a part something where I can in the grocery shop. No, but I quit there. I went to work for a baker came to my mind. I want to delivering bread.

Interviewer: Oh you went from a skilled tradesman from delivery.

Mr. Simon: I went to delivering bread. I used to deliver bread with a horse riding. Well I went to work for him and I worked for him for about three months. And he used to pay me I think if I'm not mistaken, I'm not too sure, $20 a week and room and board.

Interviewer: That's quite a lot.

Mr. Simon: With that I started working nine o'clock in the morning and I worked 9 to 10 o'clock at night. I didn't have nor day nor night. I worked there by three months and I told him I was going to leave. So he gave me a proposition. He told me to provide a team. So he bought a horse and wagon, paying so much with the horse and wagon. You keep up the expense as I should and you give me 20 percent. In business I do, he'd give me 20 percent. So a bought a horse and wagon at that time.

Interviewer: Whenever bakery goods you sold, you got 20 percent.

Mr. Simon: Well yeah. Well I accumulated a few dollars then already. So I paid him $300 for the team and I worked for myself. And so I sold bread to his customers, all of his customer. Of course by finding their bread, they knew him and took them about all of his trade and I used to do pretty good. I used to do pretty good. I used to knock out about 40, 50, $60 a week. Of course there were some weeks, some weeks you sell more, you got more. So that's how I got sold. And that was it. And I was pretty much in for about two years. And I decided I want to go in business.

Interviewer: You so.

Mr. Simon: And in the meantime I think in the noon time I was going on with my business, but I figured ***[inaudible] [0:43:22]*** I went down to the doctor and I got examined that and the doctor that I was going through told me that I'd better be operated. So I went and I was operated on my hernia. Then I was clear right up. And at that time, it used to be the whole position and surgeon hospital, you don't remember, ***[inaudible] [0:43:40]***. We went from general it's called, now it used to physician and surgeon hospital right at the parking ***[inaudible] [0:43:47]*** parking on. And I was operated in and when I come out of that, then I want to, with my stepfather, the grocery store. I didn't want to work too hard. So he had a grocery store 12th from French. He sold the one in 11 ***[inaudible] [0:44:02]*** and we had those that throw the French. And I went with him. Of course I didn't want to work hard. So my mother was in the house and my stepfather naturally and I lived home anyhow. So I stayed down the store and I helped managing the store. I sustained the store. I use to get nice good pay. And it's a nice way just to get paid. And in the meantime, when I was working on tinsmith, I met my wife one time here.

Interviewer: In Wilmington?

Mr. Simon: Yeah. She came down for a visit to see some friends in there.

Interviewer: She was from where, Philadelphia?

Mr. Simon: Yeah. And so I saw her there. Then I used to go around with. He lived in that house and he asked me say the – the lady say there were some girls of course coming up, how about you come up with me?

[0:45:00]

And so I went out there and there was – our main ***[inaudible] [0:45:04]*** were out there and was probably from New York or two, only or two and I met my wife and her sister and a girlfriend out there when I met them. So I'm going to spend the Sunday there and ever since I hooked her. And that's what happened. Then when I decided that I was going to get married I went to business for myself.

Interviewer: What kind of business now, the grocery store?

Mr. Simon: The grocery store. A grocery store at ***[inaudible] [0:45:31]*** West.

Interviewer: Okay. And how long were you in that business?

Mr. Simon: Been that for eight years. And then I sold there and now I come to Europe, to Europe at that time when I met your father. I sold – I stayed up right here and I had two children, two boys. So I decided a family business and I went ahead and I bought I don't know if you remember. I decided I'd give up grocery business if that didn't made me do it, I don't know what. And I bought that building across where we used to live in the apartment ***[inaudible] [0:46:15]***.

Interviewer: This is on West Street.

Mr. Simon: 8th Street.

Interviewer: 8th Street.

Mr. Simon: 8th and you lived in the 18th West.

Interviewer: You lived in 19th West.

Mr. Simon: You lived 19th West for awhile too.

Interviewer: Yes, the Lion apartment.

Mr. Simon: That's right.

Interviewer: That's right.

Mr. Simon: What do you mean 19th West? You lived 18th West.

Interviewer: We lived in that apartment, that's right.

Mr. Simon: That's where I met your dad. And I decided that I was going to sell the grocery business and I made a garage out of that big building. And I had an auction. So your mom used to have a horse then, you don't remember?

Interviewer: No, I don't remember.

Mr. Simon: I made a garage there and that's where I went broke. The Russians came along and they cave me out. That's when I went broke, penniless.

Interviewer: And what did you do during the depression?

Mr. Simon: Well I didn't do nothing, I through help, my family have bought a new store, a grocery store, 32nd Monroe. It used to be a little candy store at

that. My wife stayed there and my older son used to come out of school. And I went to work for a bakery, I'm on the bread wagon again.

Interviewer: Back on the bread wagon.

Mr. Simon: I used to be back on the bread wagon about 14 hours a day and I didn't even make a half about what I used to make before. I made $25 a week, but I would like to get the job of course because of the depression. If it would have been a friend of mine, I couldn't have got it. And I worked on that bread wagon and then with my two, three truck it was nicely done, I came home and I have a bite and I take a nap and I get up and stay open for the store till it closes 11 o'clock at night. I close the store then I have to leave my wife. And I have to stay in the store until 11 o'clock at night, close up 11 o'clock and then I get up three o'clock in the morning and go back to the wagon.

Interviewer: A 24 hour affair I might.

Mr. Simon: My mother lived with me at that time and the house that we had there only had two bedrooms, there was no bath, but I put a bath in a little room and I made a bath out of it. To have a bath ***[inaudible] [0:48:30]*** toilet, there was no bathroom in the house. And there was an old heater. We lived with cola stoves. We don't remember that much I guess, but we lived with coal stoves and my room was small too. In fact my daughter where she was born was just four there only by a year old or so and we stayed there. And my mother got sick and mother passed away. Of course her husband passed away even before, about five years. And my mother passed away and then I don't know. That's going to be nothing for my boat so I where I felt bad I guess, I was worn out I guess anyhow. So I turned around and I – my mother died and I had a small insurance policy, very small. I turned around and I took that policy and I went to a guy that owned the corner on 38th in Madison Street. Do you remember Dave Waxman, do you remember the Waxman brothers?

Interviewer: Yes.

Mr. Simon: Well, there was Dave Waxman and Reverri Waxman. Reverri Waxman was the younger one, Dave Waxman was later before he died, he was at Madison Street at one time if you remember ***[inaudible] [0:49:51]***. And their father had a grocery store and wasn't doing enough and there was just nothing.

[0:49:56]

So I went to the guy that owned that store, building and I bought the building. And I got a contact from a bill with half money and I got a guy who would give me a mortgage. Of course I paid him for it. And we opened up the grocery store and moved from there. The 32nd Monroe was sold and I had to get out, see. I had to get out there. There was nothing else for me to do but to get out in there, so I had to break in. He was going to remodel it and to make it a big store, but there is nothing there, nothing. So I bought that building and I moved over whatever I have there. I moved in there and I had a six-room house. And I didn't do nothing for the house, of course I couldn't, but I did remodel the house and I moved in there and stayed there until I would die. And I stayed there 30 years. In 1934 to 1964.

Interviewer: Wow. Where is your wife from?

Mr. Simon: Philadelphia.

Interviewer: I know, but before she was in Philadelphia.

Mr. Simon: He came from Russia. He came by around ***[inaudible] [0:51:07]***, I told you. She came from around that part of the country. She came in 1910 I think. So she came in 1910. Her father came before, but they were – he brought up six children. They came in 1910. They came home with their mother.

Interviewer: You said how many children you said you have?

Mr. Simon: Me?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Simon: Well I have two boys and two girls. I lost my oldest son in the war. That's my oldest son.

Interviewer: This was World War II?

Mr. Simon: Yeah, 1945, April the 6th – April the 5th. This was about a month before Hitler. Drove him by the 19 and drew him by April the 7th. My son got killed April the 5th. That's my oldest boy. This is my youngest son. This is my oldest daughter. She is the only one that I have living in here.

Interviewer: What does your son do?

Mr. Simon: My son is the chief psychiatrist in a university and a Jewish hospital in St. Louis, Missouri. He was just home from a week vacation with the kids with the four boys. They just left last week for a week. He was home for a week.

Interviewer: These are your grandchildren?

Mr. Simon: This is my youngest daughter's grandchildren. And this is my younger daughter here. Can I move?

Interviewer: Yeah sure.

Mr. Simon: Right there, is my youngest daughter, that her children.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr. Simon: She lived in Boston. And he lived in St. Louis. And my grandchildren, some of them are already ***[inaudible] [0:52:38]***.

Interviewer: How many grandchildren do you have?

Mr. Simon: I got 10 grandchildren, only about three girls and seven boys. I got 10 grandchildren. The oldest granddaughter is 14 years, would be 14 years old in April and that's my whole fortune. And that's my whole history.

Interviewer: Okay. Final question, what big differences do you notice in Wilmington now than when you were a young man?

Mr. Simon: What a big difference, I have no idea. What I can tell you is after all, when I came here 54 years ago and it's not considered, absolutely no comparison. First of all you understand, the trolley used to go as far as 26 in Washington then they moved it to 38 in Washington. What difference can I tell you? I can't begin to tell you the distance in this town that it is to where it used to be. Where can I compare it to? And we never know that there is – we used to hear it in this lake, but we didn't know that they used to walk over there with bridges. Now, you had to walk over a bridge if you want to go from, I would say, you want to go over here any place around the vicinity from 25th you understand?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mr. Simon: From 25th, anything you have to walk over a bridge, you might get to a certain street across around the creek. A little creek you couldn't go over, you could get fall in a mud. That's what I can tell you. This used to be

called East Lake. See the lake, see with the lake, that's what it was. And so what's different, what can I begin to tell you. I wouldn't know what I could tell you what's different. It's so much improve and so much different that I've seen that it's unbelievable. That's all that I can tell you. You used to see as you go just like it was and probably you'd say in any country years ago, you'd probably go far some place you work, that's all. You went out in the street, you see tons and hundreds of people like in big cities, you see tons of people. Who would ever thought I'd spend cars for? I mean you make $2.50 a week or $4 a week or $8 a family man make, a mechanic for $10. Who would ever spend tons of things like that you understand. It was unbelievable.

[0:55:02]

Of course it was, but that was a big difference in this time.

Interviewer: You think it's improved, I mean it's bigger?

Mr. Simon: Oh it's bigger, twice the size of Houston fresh the bottom.

Interviewer: Do you like it better?

Mr. Simon: Well I like it anyhow. I tell you the truth, I'm in love with Wilmington but that's all. And I'd rather stay in Wilmington and be a clown.

Interviewer: I could see, you told me.

Mr. Simon: I don't mind the cold weather.

Interviewer: Well do you like it because your friends are here, because you know the town well?

Mr. Simon: Right. I simply I really like the town because it's like a home town, you know what I mean? It's small. I've been in New York and I've been in Boston. I've been in St. Louise and I've been in places you understand and they can still have a mall and keep them. I'm glad when I go to New York, the minute that I got out of there, I'm the happiest man in the world. I don't like that commotion. I don't like that excitement. I don't like that running. I don't like it. I don't like them so great and I know ***[inaudible] [0:56:02]*** business for me, they wreck me in no time. I don't like it. And I used to because I came from a small town and I live in a small town.

Interviewer: Sure.

Mr. Simon: And that's the way and I like it that way. I like it that way.

Interviewer: Have you been a member of a temple? What temple have you been?

Mr. Simon: I've been a member since1921 I think of the ***[inaudible] [0:56:25]***.

Interviewer: Oh that's Scottish.

Mr. Simon: And I've been a member there since 1921.

Interviewer: Well you're very close, originally close.

Mr. Simon: That's all I can remember.

[0:56:38] End of Audio