

CD-1101 Transcription

Max Siger interview [2]. 3 March 1980.

MARC TANENBAUM: So now you're in Baltimore.

MAX SIGER: [I walked by?] (inaudible), and I heard my brother say [to father?] (inaudible). Then I [turned to them?], and they [kept me around?], my brother [kept me around?] and introduced me to my father. I didn't know him.

TANENBAUM: How many years was it since you saw your father?

SIGER: Since I was three years old.

TANENBAUM: So you're now 17?

SIGER: I was... I was... No, by the time I got there I was already 19, 18 going on 19.

TANENBAUM: So you hadn't seen your father for, like, 15 years?

SIGER: Fifteen, 16 years. My brother (inaudible) and my father, and they got on the streetcar. There wasn't too many people [owning?] automobiles those days. And we went from the streetcars to [Pratt Street?], and I say to my brother, "[Did this American?]" --

TANENBAUM: [01:00] And this is 1922?

SIGER: Twenty-one.

TANENBAUM: Twenty-one, OK.

SIGER: I say to my brother, "This America," because Baltimore

was such a beautiful city. And he take me to Pratt Street [to those little jets?], and I wanted to know if that was America, (inaudible) America. And we went to 1923 Pratt Street. That's where my brother lived, on the second floor. And I... And I was there, and my brother said no shop. He won't let me go in the shop, because if I go in the shop, I'll never learned to talk (inaudible) Jewish all the time [I'll never get anywhere?]. He said, "You've got to go to work in the stores [that place?]," but nobody wanted me. I was a (inaudible). I was [deaf, deaf and dumb -- couldn't talk?].

TANENBAUM: What month was this in 1921?

SIGER: [02:00] That was... What?

TANENBAUM: What month did you come into Baltimore?

SIGER: I (inaudible) inaugurated, January, when Harding was inaugurated president.

TANENBAUM: In 1921.

SIGER: and --

TANENBAUM: You know, that was the year I was born.

SIGER: [After five, six?] (inaudible) before you were born.

TANENBAUM: Yeah, that's right.

SIGER: You weren't born yet.

TANENBAUM: I wasn't born.

SIGER: You weren't born yet.

TANENBAUM: Right.

SIGER: I'm going to tell you about that, too. After
(inaudible), and then I'm sitting, and my brother
(inaudible), and what's going to be the -- what's going to
be? Where going to go to?

TANENBAUM: Where was your father at this time?

SIGER: So [Joe?] (inaudible) came to see me to (inaudible)
for these people (inaudible). He says he was (inaudible)
take me to teach me to be a [paper?] (inaudible). [03:00]
So the next day I went to learn to be a [paper?]
(inaudible). And they took me to (inaudible) Park Avenue.
They put on a table a bundled paper, a (inaudible), and I
[had two cases?] of tools. And I carried (inaudible) from
[Lumberg?] and [Paris?], Park Avenue to Lexington and High
Street.

TANENBAUM: Wow.

SIGER: When I put that down, they (inaudible) brought me back
to take a 10-foot stepladder. I took that, and I carried
that down. And when I came they gave me a (inaudible) and
showed me how to scrape the walls, and (inaudible)
appetite. When I came home that evening I had two blisters
on both palms of my hands. The next day, they left me
(inaudible). [04:00] They gave me two buckets of
(inaudible) paste, and told me to come out to Moorland

Avenue, but I thought he said Maryland Avenue. I didn't know the difference. So I get on the streetcar with the two buckets of paste, and I asked the conductor to let me off on Maryland Avenue, (inaudible). He left me off at Maryland Avenue. I go around looking for the address, and no such number. And I'm afraid to put down the two boxes of paste. Somebody might steal them. So I carry them around in my hand, looking for the number. I couldn't find it. I had to take the streetcar and go back home. The next day -- when that evening they got a hold of me and they told me I'm to go to Moorland Avenue (inaudible). As I wait with them a couple weeks they paid me \$5 for the first week. The second week I got (inaudible) \$10. So I went to become a boarder. [05:00] I went to the room, paid balance of month, and the woman would cook for me. And charging --

TANENBAUM: Where was the room?

SIGER: -- charging me for what was... The room was in [Even?] Street. The people's name was [Mashal Tavik?].

TANENBAUM: Oh, yeah. I remember (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

SIGER: His wife -- Mashal Tavik and his wife, and [grandmother?]. I still see the children. They grabbed me, and they kiss each other, just like we were brothers. I moved with them two times. But...

TANENBAUM: How many years were you a paper hanger?

SIGER: Coming back to papering, in that time I worked for them about three, four weeks. I thought I was a mechanical (inaudible). They told me they had no more work for me. So my brother says, "My boss has got an apartment (inaudible). Can you do it?" I say, "Sure. [06:00] I'll go, and I'll take the job." I went in there. I went first and got his paper, and I went in there and I scraped and fixed the wounds up, (inaudible) the paper. I [pressed things?] up and up. The paint dropped and went through my fingers, down on the floor. And it was around twelve o'clock on (inaudible). My brother came in [because?] (inaudible). "What's the matter? Why are you crying?" (inaudible), [sent me back?].

TANENBAUM: (inaudible) (laughter)

SIGER: He says, "(inaudible)." We went in, and I (inaudible). And he told me what probably (inaudible) two or three (inaudible) when he came to America. He worked for a boss who paid him all the wages (inaudible). And he had a (inaudible) finger, so he put salt -- [07:00] went [in the cabinets?] and put salt on them. And he didn't trust him, so he went to come (inaudible), (laughter) (inaudible) [mother?]. And (inaudible) the [mother?], you came over and we [took them all up?], [messed it all up?]. (laughter)

TANENBAUM: Why did --

SIGER: (inaudible) tell me all these stories. I went back to my work. And my boss hadn't come in. He (inaudible). He said to me, "What's the matter with you? I thought you know how to do those?" And I said, "[I tried?]. It goes through my fingers (inaudible)." I meant to (inaudible) go up -- [is going up?] -- [I meant further up?], and I made the job. I worked four days on that job, and I made \$30.

TANENBAUM: Oh my!

SIGER: Oh, I was on top of the world. And little by little, that (inaudible) I worked for this paper (inaudible). And (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) --

TANENBAUM: Well, were you [08:00] working the eight years for yourself or for your boss?

SIGER: I was working a little for someone else, a little for myself, and I was doing all right for working for someone else. I (inaudible). I was getting \$8 a day those days was --

TANENBAUM: Yeah, good money.

SIGER: -- my salary. And (inaudible) I belonged (inaudible) - - I was a member of the (inaudible) one of the big shots. I [went right to the?] barbershop. (laughter) And (inaudible) said to me -- my (inaudible) told me, he said, "(inaudible) what's going to give you. Whatever you make, you spend. You

got (inaudible) you want to settle." I said, "All right, I'll bring some money to give to your wife," and they would save it for me. So every week I would give a little of my money, and she would take it from me. [09:00] I think she saved up about \$250, \$300. My brother in the meantime quit his job and went in business with [Chaim Roseblat?] and [Yankee Roseblat?], pens manufacturing. They were [three tailors?], but they were not [three?] business tailors. They could make the pens.

TANENBAUM: Right, but they couldn't sell them.

SIGER: They could [cart it?], they could throw it out, but they didn't know what to do (laughter) after they made it, and they went broke. They gave away a lot of credit, and they didn't pay 'em, and they went broke. (inaudible) says to me, "What we going to do? Bring (inaudible) coming back (inaudible) [got?] money to buy food with." I say, "I've got some money (inaudible)." So he got it. He used that (inaudible) [payment?] [10:00] on 23rd Street. And I was doing my papering. In the meantime I met (inaudible), and I liked her, and we were about to be engaged. So I went and told her (inaudible) maybe you can give me the (inaudible) income. I go (inaudible) come with me. We went (inaudible). [It was a funeral?]. And (inaudible) [to sleep?], and (inaudible) diamond ring for \$250. And I went to give to my

girl, and we were engaged. And we [were married?].

(inaudible) signed on it, and (inaudible) title was signed to my (inaudible), and also my (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: What's [*tanoi*]?

SIGER: [11:00] (inaudible) engaged. (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: Well, what do you sign? You mean this is a...?

SIGER: It's like a paper. It tells you that you're getting married, and what the responsibilities you will take (inaudible) --

TANENBAUM: A contract.

SIGER: A contract, right. And we were engaged, and then we got married, and my father-in-law, may he rest in peace -- he was a good man -- he (inaudible), also, and he didn't have much. But he bought me a (inaudible). I'll never forget that little (inaudible) he bought me.

TANENBAUM: What month and year was that? What was the date of your wedding?

SIGER: I'd have to look it up. I can't --

TANENBAUM: You don't remember?

SIGER: I don't remember the exact date, but I know -- I believe (inaudible) married us.

TANENBAUM: Where were you married?

SIGER: In, I believe, [his?] house. And then I [12:00] went and brought the stuff, brought everything in, and we had a

dinner over at my father-in-law's house (inaudible), you know. And the next day we went to Columbus (inaudible). Somebody (inaudible) and said, "[You traveled?] (inaudible) [this time?] with [the shell?] money."

TANENBAUM: Mm-hmm. As a paper hanger.

SIGER: No. I went to Columbus and bought a (inaudible) to sell (inaudible) from house to house in a big [glass?] wagon. And that, I didn't know how to drive. I never drove before.

TANENBAUM: Was this an automobile truck or a horse?

SIGER: No. (inaudible) [recommended it?]. This guy made a lot of money. It was an automobile, a big [glass?] wagon automobile. And I didn't know of the streets and everything so good, [13:00] and I had (inaudible). And then the meantime my wife became pregnant, and she was so beautiful. She was the prettiest thing in the whole world. The whole family was pretty, too: father and mother, the brothers and sisters. They were the most beautiful family. You remember them?

TANENBAUM: I remember.

SIGER: And after a couple weeks I took that truck and put it in the garage, and my [brother?] or somebody gave me just a little bit of money for it, and I sold it, and I went to work for a paper hanger.

TANENBAUM: In Columbus.

SIGER: I came to Columbus with \$1,000 I had saved up, [and it was gone?]. And I saved up enough money to go back to [Baltimore?]. I came back to Baltimore with \$25 to rent rooms, buy [14:00] furniture, and my wife had to give birth to Eunice, my daughter. And we struggled.

TANENBAUM: When did you move into [Light?] Street.

SIGER: We bought furniture (inaudible), (laughter) [paper?]. And then I kept on working at papering. But then we moved - - we [broke the lease?] (inaudible), (inaudible). Then we moved to [Parkwood?] Avenue. Her sister lived in Parkwood Avenue, my wife's sister, (inaudible). We moved to Parkwood Avenue. And Parkwood Avenue, I used to go (inaudible) my brother (inaudible) brother (inaudible) automobile. I think that things were getting a little better there from business.

TANENBAUM: What was Harry doing now?

SIGER: He was (inaudible) business. He bought [himself?] (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: Oh, right, right.

SIGER: [15:00] So after I tell my wife I'm not papering anymore, I'm going to open up a grocery store. So I went along looking for empty corner where to open a grocery store. All the good corners were taken away (inaudible). I

bought a store, and I had (inaudible), and I didn't like it. (laughter) So -- and the guy didn't do no business. He (inaudible) [money?] in the register. I [called up?] (inaudible) [that he put money?] (inaudible) to show me that he's doing business, and he gave me back my deposit. I went away. So I went around (inaudible). In the meantime, I wasn't working, wasn't making any money, (inaudible) [Simeh?], to give birth to Simeh, so [she asked us to come in?] (inaudible). [16:00] So we moved in, and at night when the train would come by the house (inaudible) start [shooting stuff?] and making noise. I would sit up in bed (inaudible), and when the train would leave I'd go back (laughter) (inaudible). But (inaudible) your mother gave birth to Simeh, and she came back home, and we tried -- we (inaudible). So I went to move [her store?], and these men called me up and told me that they've got a good store (inaudible) to sell it, and it's a wonderful corner. I went again to talk to the man. He wants \$2,000. I got \$500. My father-in-law, may he rest in peace, got me \$500 from his family. (inaudible) \$500 [17:00] was \$1,500, and \$500 I can't get. I went to (inaudible) [park?], (inaudible) [parks?] -- I'm not talking about this (inaudible) park -- the big -- the one --

TANENBAUM: (inaudible)

SIGER: -- (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: (inaudible)

SIGER: But (inaudible) --

TANENBAUM: Ernest (inaudible).

SIGER: -- [my father?], or [Ernest's father?]. I went to him in the morning. He was eating breakfast. He says, "(inaudible), I'll be with you in a minute," and he came in, but I told him I want to buy that store, I [can't buy it?]. I got \$1,500, and he wants \$2,000. The man's gone to California, and he can't wait. He wants all the money. He said he'll (inaudible) the store, and it's a nice store. I'd like to buy it. It's a --

TANENBAUM: (inaudible) store?

SIGER: -- it's a [lively?] corner. Yeah, yeah, the store, years back. They (inaudible). It's a [lively?] corner, good corner. Well, [18:00] I went down with him, and he talked to the man five minutes, and he bought the store. Well, I bought the store, but give him the \$1,500, and then (inaudible) the settlement, but I stayed with him two weeks, and that was (inaudible) to do the settlement, and I stayed, and I was making money there. That was [that store?], and I worked from 6:00 in the morning to 12:00 at night --

TANENBAUM: [I know?].

SIGER: -- every day.

TANENBAUM: Where was the store?

SIGER: Freemont and Saratoga.

TANENBAUM: I remember, right.

SIGER: On the corner of Freemont and Saratoga. One car used to go on Freemont Avenue, another [down?] Saratoga Street. The people would come in from one door, and I'd have the stuff ready for them, pick it up, and go (inaudible) and get the streetcar and go [downtown?]. And I had my customers would come from [19:00] (inaudible). I don't (inaudible). I used to buy 10,000 King Edwards at one time, cigars, a thousand (inaudible) in one time. I was one of the biggest customers (inaudible). Mr. (inaudible), he knew all about me. I went down to the telephone company and told them I wanted to put in a telephone booth in my store. It was [much?] place. I told him I'd [break out a window?] and put it in there. He said, "No, we can't give you no telephone." So I got (inaudible) and they got a telephone booth, and they [put me in the?] telephone. I've done so much business on the telephone that they came and put me in two.

TANENBAUM: Right. (laughter)

SIGER: And he told me, he said, "I [used to?] (inaudible) manager from the telephone company. He liked to talk to me,

and I liked to talk to him. He knew all of my business without me telling him. [20:00] He knew everything about me. Well, I stayed there two years and seven months, and I was tired of it. One day I went upstairs to change shoes, and my feet were sweating, and I fell asleep with a cigarette, and I almost burned down. My mattress was on fire. My wife yelled for me to come down. She got busy. She couldn't take care of it. I woke up. I was on fire. My sleeve was already burning. And I had a sink in the same room, and I got water and put out the fire. Well, everybody [hollered?] (inaudible) such a wonderful story, but they didn't stay the seven days and seven nights.

TANENBAUM: That's right.

SIGER: From (inaudible) to Washington. And I bought a store from (inaudible) [Willow?], 4th and [P?] Street Northeast. What a beautiful store. And I put in everything [21:00] that I made up there on Freemont Avenue, Saratoga Street, and I have a good (inaudible) cleaned up, but the (inaudible). My customers were losing their jobs. The Depression came on. My customers were losing their jobs. It was a terrible thing. And before that, when I sold Freemont and Saratoga, I went on vacation in New York to see those people that helped me (inaudible), and then I went to see the (inaudible) [rabbi?].

TANENBAUM: Mm-hmm. Who had come to New York?

SIGER: In New York. I come to New York to see the people. I wanted to see the people that helped me, that took me in, the woman that took me in.

TANENBAUM: The woman that took you in at Warsaw.

SIGER: Yes, who I couldn't find, so I went to the (inaudible) [rabbi?] and he gave me the address (inaudible) in New York, and I went to see her. [22:00] And I was glad to see them, and they were glad to see me. And then I went to Washington, [bigger?] store, but the store had a good name. I was losing customers every day. They lost their jobs. Not because of my... They lost their jobs --

TANENBAUM: Because of the Depression.

SIGER: Depression. But (inaudible) [came?]. I was passing by [Pennsylvania?] Avenue where the [trains?] (inaudible) [march?] (inaudible) Washington, because [they got all this removal?] [to chase them out?]. And I was there, right there.

TANENBAUM: They were the veterans from World War I, weren't they? They were World War I veterans.

SIGER: World War veterans. They were (inaudible) [brothers?]. [They weren't brothers?]. From Washington. And then came [in back of me?] my money, and I was glad to get it and come back. I was gone 11 months, [23:00] [and then

Washington?]. And I came to [Baltimore?], and I went to (inaudible) back in business, and that was the [NRA?], [the Eagle?], and they couldn't get connections (inaudible). They wouldn't let new people in, new business. They used to follow me, like [on the street or something?]. And I was determined and stubborn to go into that business. My brother-in-law, he was [a product?] of [farmers?], and he was [supposed?] to go in with me.

TANENBAUM: [Kerasic?].

SIGER: Yeah, (inaudible) Kerasic. And that was my wife's maiden name.

TANENBAUM: I know.

SIGER: My first wife.

TANENBAUM: Right.

SIGER: So we went as far as Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and they'd (inaudible). But that I knew that we can't get connections (inaudible), and he (laughter) was taking the profit before we got it, (inaudible) [childhood?], [24:00] so we couldn't save that business. And then my brother-in-law said to me, "You [work?] (inaudible) [not used to working?] (inaudible) [profit?]." So he left me. My wife had two little children then. [Evelyn was born?], two little children. She couldn't help me. I can't be inside (inaudible). So I called [F.A. Davis?] and told them I want

to get out of it. So he said, "Bring [him?] in. We'll give you a dollar for dollar." So I took my car, packed it up three or four times, and carried it to F.A. Davis, and I kept the cigarettes, and [shooting?] the cigarettes [at events?], and I made up all my losses from that business. And I went down and bought a store in South Baltimore. There I was a member of (inaudible). I loved them and they loved me. When they got locked up, I was the bailer. When they [25:00] had a funeral, I had to go to the funeral. When they had a party, I had to go to that party. When somebody was broke, I (inaudible) and make some money and pay the guy's electric bill. When they owed me a bill and they (inaudible) milk and (inaudible), [I still gave them?] milk.

TANENBAUM: Where was the store located?

SIGER: When I came to Jackson (inaudible) Street, there was cobblestones. I made a petition, and I had hundreds of signers on that petition, and took it to Mayor Jackson. I want that street paved. And they came here and told me they're going to make it bricks, (inaudible). They can make it a brick street. And I said, "No, I want asphalt." But finally I gave in. They made a brick street. It's still there. Well, I was there [26:00] four and a half years. [I had it?] so good. And I call my brother one day, and I told

him I'm going to sell my store. He says, "I'll buy it. How much is it?" So I told him (inaudible). I sold him the store.

TANENBAUM: And (inaudible).

SIGER: Yeah, even (inaudible). It was a wonderful store.

TANENBAUM: Why did you sell it?

SIGER: I had a, I had a boy that worked for me, and then he was (inaudible). He worked for me in [Jackson?] (inaudible). His name was [Moral Shaket?], may he rest in peace. He died since. He talked me in to go with him to buy a kosher butcher shop. So we bought (inaudible) on (inaudible) Street, and I didn't like that business. After I got into it I find out what it was. Didn't like it. [They would?] sell any kind of meat, the kosher meats, and [27:00] I didn't have to do it. I could sell Gentile people red meat, without selling my soul. But I had to speak up until the people came [from their vacation?], and they told me they want to buy it back. I gave it them gladly. In the meantime, I had my partner go and open a store on corner Anderson and Freemont Avenue. And when I got (inaudible) Street I took him in. I gave him a little money. I gave the butcher a little money, and that worked for me. He ran the business. He ran the business, and I took over that store. And I stayed there until about (inaudible) came along, and

Joe Berman [thanked me?] (inaudible) -- little Joe Berman [thanked me?] for the money, and I sold him the store. And [Billy Kaplan?] stayed there and made it success. I (inaudible) [around Billy Kaplan?] to try to teach him -- [28:00] to teach about -- he used to go bringing in meat from the slaughterhouses, you know. And he made a good success. From there, I went (inaudible) [Lundberg?] and [Kellan?] Street. And there I spent 23 years on the corner of Lundberg and Kellan Street. People said that, "(inaudible) Max Siger, he bought a store from two college men. He's going to go broke. How can take a store over from two college men?" I took over the store. I [made?] three children out of that store. I helped them buy homes. And I (inaudible). I'm retired now, it'll be 17 years that I'm retired from that store.

TANENBAUM: [29:00] Didn't you have a liquor store somewhere?

SIGER: And the bar. (laughter) And I bought the store from Mrs. [Park?], and I happen to have two of her grandchildren in my family. One of them is my son-in-law, and one is my granddaughter's husband. Paul Park is my granddaughter's husband, and Richard Park is my brother's husband.

TANENBAUM: Are they brothers?

SIGER: No, they're cousins. One is [Morisa's?] son. Another one is (inaudible) [remember so many things?] -- one of

(inaudible)'s sons. (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: Let's talk -- we've got plenty of time.

SIGER: Now --

TANENBAUM: Yeah.

SIGER: Now, my [mother's?] moved to Potomac. [30:00] First she moved to [near?] Washington. Then from there she moved to Potomac, Maryland. And she invited us for Thanksgiving. We came there for Thanksgiving. Well, I used to go there (inaudible) kind of things [happened?], and painting for them when they bought a house. In that time, [of course?], my [daughter?] was (inaudible) [which I still have it?] but I (inaudible) [for them?]. But now that's out of the question.

TANENBAUM: No, that's not out of the question.

SIGER: (inaudible) --

TANENBAUM: Do you know the poem?

SIGER: No. I got (inaudible). We went there for Thanksgiving, and Thanksgiving Day Richard and (inaudible), they went to a bar mitzvah [parlor?], and (inaudible) the children. My wife [was doing some sewing?] (inaudible) and she said to me, [31:00] "I don't feel good." And then she says, "I don't feel good. I'm very sick." So I wanted to get the children. I didn't know where they went. I went around looking, searching, (inaudible) invitation. And I called up

the place (inaudible) where they were, and they came running quick. We took an ambulance, and we took her to hospital in the...

TANENBAUM: (inaudible) [Spring?]?

SIGER: No.

TANENBAUM: Washington?

SIGER: Washington. [I'm lost?] (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: It's all right.

SIGER: And we took her to the hospital, and she lasted three days, and she died in the...

TANENBAUM: What was her problem?

SIGER: That was -- she got heart attack. They put her pacemaker. They tried [put her?] (inaudible)... [32:00] Once before she got sick when I was on vacation in the mountains, and I (inaudible) she was in the hospital up there. And (inaudible). And I didn't like it. After a year I married [black Jew?], (inaudible) was her name, (inaudible). And we've been married [four?] years now. I (inaudible) [to live longer now?] to reach the (inaudible) generation that my great-granddaughter [Mika?] will get (inaudible). (inaudible) generation.

TANENBAUM: Well, the way you're going, you probably will.

SIGER: That's part of my life. [33:00] I didn't describe the First World War (inaudible) game and the trouble there, but

then the trouble there (inaudible) and we went around
(inaudible) kill the Jews (inaudible) [Russia?].

TANENBAUM: Well, let's talk about that. Do you feel that you
can talk about that?

SIGER: Well, I don't know I'll remember a whole lot more than
I've already said about that, the [washing?] of the
(inaudible), all that.

TANENBAUM: Well, you just talked about it a little bit.

SIGER: I lived through [Easter of life?], [the life Easter?],
I lived through: the First World War, the Second World War,
the radio, the airplane, the television.

TANENBAUM: (inaudible)

SIGER: (inaudible), reaching to the moon. By the way, my son-
in-law Richard worked four years [34:00] on the thing that
went to the moon. He worked for [Mountain Marietta?].

TANENBAUM: Talk about some of your personal life experiences
outside of... What you've done was describe primarily your
business life. How about, you know, some of the things that
you felt --

SIGER: Oh, I was engaged in everything. Everything I was
engaged on. The first thing was [a club?]. I was a big club
member. Then [High Tide?] member. [They showed up?]
(inaudible). She (inaudible) my store on (inaudible) Street
and said, "Max gone to get some (inaudible)." From that,

they organized a little parade, which we had. We used to [gather one?], or [35:00] [one of them?] once a year, and [get ahead?]. And so [we'll picket?] and make money and send to the poor up there [in the town?]. We had a little (inaudible), which I appointed my stepbrother to be one of them to oversee (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: What does that mean?

SIGER: They had \$1,000 (inaudible) [loan officer?] there, that when somebody comes and needs money, and you know that they can pay you back, to lend them again, and we would repay it. We used to send (inaudible) money, (inaudible) [before?] (inaudible). And we sent money from (inaudible), and we sent money for those. (inaudible) for money.

TANENBAUM: (inaudible).

SIGER: (inaudible). Well, bank give a loan [36:00] in the Second World War. (inaudible) [again?]. I became a member of the [Navy League?]. So --

TANENBAUM: I remember that.

SIGER: And I'd go up there with [Kook?], and we went to the (inaudible), and I was one of the members. I was (inaudible), but I was a member. There was some outstanding people involved in it. (inaudible) [but the big?] (inaudible) after he died. It's funny, [I can't recall names?] (inaudible). After a while I'll get it.

TANENBAUM: I know. I know.

SIGER: (inaudible). And such people like [Martin Bowman?], people like that that were members, and (inaudible) went to the [37:00] (inaudible) [Gardens?], and we [entertain the sailors?], we cooked for them, we fed them. When they were off duty they'd come to Navy League, and there'd be shows for that, and dances and those kind of things. That was the Navy League. (inaudible) they would close the premises, and I (inaudible), so they weren't able to have ammunition for our soldiers. So I went out collecting scrap. Well, (inaudible) I want to collect scrap. I was (inaudible). People would come and help me. Nobody [saw that?]. One fellow [would serve me?] (inaudible). He came around. His name was [Eric?]. He came, and there was no truck, no [belt for the truck?]. Well, I went down [38:00] and I went to the truck from the rental company, [Hertz?] rental company, and we went around, and they collected the truckload of metal, and we took it to the Fort Meade. We dumped it up there. The next Sunday, when my store was closed we went again. And every Sunday I'd go out to there and we'd collect scraps. And then when I start collecting it, the police told me, "You can't do it on Sunday. It's against the blue law." So somehow that, the (inaudible) papers got a hold of everything. They came and they got the story of

it. (inaudible) the papers. And the next day the police came to my store, and they asked me if I'm trying to show off or I really [39:00] mean it, and they saluted me. And then I was called from the radio station from the (inaudible) on [North Avenue?] (inaudible), and they wanted me to go to Fox News as a patriot, but I did not do it for that. I done it for the purpose of collecting the...

TANENBAUM: Scraps.

SIGER: The scraps. And we had a big scrap collection, and I was in the news (inaudible). And I remember one man who was the caretaker of the synagogue. He brought from Europe copper [pans?]. They were priceless. And he gave them to me to give them away in the scrap, and I took them and I (inaudible) them, because in order somebody shouldn't steal them. I was aware of that. And we collected hundreds of pounds of all the scraps. The Mayor got jealous, [40:00] Mayor Jackson. So he ordered everybody to put the scrap out, but wasn't too many of them going out to collect it. They had to get the soldiers from Fort Meade to come out and they would select it. When I was on the job, I had (inaudible). I had 10,000 people on the corner of (inaudible) [McGovern?] Street, where my store was. I had a stage built. I had the preacher from the Union Square Church up there on the stage. I had a (inaudible) ceremony.

We had [10 bands of?] music, with the help of [Arnold Lincoln?], who was a well known man to Baltimore. We organized that. I had a flag stretched from (inaudible) my store had crossed [East?] Street, and the mothers of the boys [41:00] in the service.

TANENBAUM: What did you do for the people in [Alik?] who were trying to run away from Hitler in World War II?

SIGER: Well, we didn't know anything of it. We didn't know. We didn't know. When we found out that (inaudible) [Israel?], then the government [and I?], [believe it or not?], in one day they collected \$1,000 and we sent it to them. When I was in Israel, I gave them some money for the food that they [want?]. They wrote a book about Alik. I have one. I had two. I loaned one to my rabbi, and it got lost (inaudible) he can't find it. But what a (inaudible). [42:00] In that book is a write-up about [my own group?], who was called (inaudible). It was (inaudible) [little town?] where people used to go for vacation, and (inaudible) up there, and then when the war came they were fighting around there (inaudible), and from there they came to Alik, and [a little?] rabbi (inaudible). So he became rabbi for Alik, and he was rabbi [in a little group?]. He didn't need no money. All they had to do is learn and tell people from (inaudible).

TANENBAUM: Max, what do you think... When you think back on your whole life, what gave you the most pleasure? What did you do that made you the happiest?

SIGER: [43:00] Well, everything I did, I'm satisfied with my life regardless whatever comes. I'm a person that's satisfied. When you're satisfied, you (inaudible) [and everything else?].

TANENBAUM: But do you remember any one thing, or any --

SIGER: Well, my family. I love my children. I love dearly my first wife and [I like this one, too?]. But you can't say the same as the other one, because the other one, we grew up together. We had children together. But I try to treat her the best of my knowledge. And I like her. I like her very much.

TANENBAUM: If there was something in your life that you could do different, what would it be?

SIGER: I don't know what else I could do. I think my [44:00] [life?] was fulfilled. If I could help somebody, I'd be more than glad to do it. My happiness [grows?] when I help somebody. I (inaudible) who could get somebody a scholarship. I don't want to mention the name exactly, but it's a well to do, well known lawyer in Baltimore. I got him a four-year scholarship to go to college. I took a man to my (inaudible). I took a man that was locked up in jail

all the time, and he was told to walk around the place
(inaudible) he shows up. That would give me [amount of?]
pleasure, then I could do it. And a lot of other things
that I've done, little things.

TANENBAUM: Right now, what are the things that you're doing
now in you life [45:00] that make you happy?

SIGER: Right now, (laughter) it's me and my wife, my
children. When I go, my children, when they graduate or
something like that, and I go and I see it, and I
(inaudible).

TANENBAUM: You know, in future -- you have -- [*kina hora?*] -
- you have four --

SIGER: I've been to Israel with my first wife. I've been to
Israel with my second life. I've enjoyed every bit of it. I
(inaudible), because (inaudible) [with me?].

TANENBAUM: (break in tape) do you want your children and
great-grandchildren to remember you?

SIGER: Well, I want my children and my grandchildren, great-
grandchildren, I want them to have a name [46:00] like I
have through Baltimore, because I've spent most of my life
here. I want them to be in the right steps so people would
say, "[Here goes?] Max's granddaughter, such a fine woman,"
or "Such a fine man." Max's one of the... That's my hopes.

END OF AUDIO FILE