

Goldie Singer, interviewed by David Freidenreich, with Sherrie Bergman present

June 7, 2011

David: I wonder if you can start by telling me what it was like growing up here in Brunswick.

Goldie: It was very good for me. My father had a business, a store on Maine St. It was a clothing store. And I didn't encounter any anti-Semitism in those days, not many people knew what a Jew was, really. Because they said to me... they talk about Christmas all the time, and I told them I don't observe Christmas, but we have a holiday, and I explained about Chanukah. To them, because that didn't mean anything to them. They probably didn't believe anything we did, so forth. Those were the days that...they thought, "unless you're Catholic, you won't go to heaven." That is what I was taught when I was a child. In fact, there was a little boy that lived near me, and I worried because he was a Protestant. And his name was Stephen Saint Lawrence. He said, "Goldie when we grow up, you and I are going to get married." I was only a kid, 6 years old. I said to my mother, "He wants to marry me, what do I do?"

David: So wait, he wanted to marry you because neither of you were Catholic?

Goldie: No, not because of that. Because he was a neighbor. We played and everything, he didn't understand anything about religion.

David: But you, as a six-year-old, did?

Goldie: I was brought up... we were brought up very strict. We were Orthodox Jews in those days.

David: What was that like?

Goldie: Well, you never ate out. They used to go to restaurants and everything. The only thing we'd go out for is ice cream. I never went to a restaurant, I don't think, until I was in high school.

David: Was there a synagogue here?

Goldie: Well, it was the Depression years, too. Nobody could afford to go out to a restaurant. They did have a hotel here. That was in case somebody got married. Very important events, and so forth. So, we weren't used to eating in a restaurant. I used to go to Boston, and visit my aunt. I'll tell you, for fifty cents we ate. We go in. First of all they'd bring a basket of breads—rolls and breads and everything. Then they give you a big bowl of soup. I always never forgot that. We didn't have any money in those days! And so we had that, after that there was chicken, steak. You should see the meal we had for fifty cents.

Sherrie: This was kosher, of course?

Goldie: Oh yeah, we would only go to a kosher restaurant. I wish you had seen what it was. I can't believe it, even now when I think of it. The meal now would be a \$50 meal. Really. Because what we had to eat.... There weren't many Jews in Brunswick. And we belonged to the... My father, when he first came to this country, went to Boston. So he belonged to the synagogues there. They had one in Bath that we used to attend. And we never rode on holidays, we'd have to go to Bath and stay overnight. Very Orthodox. It wasn't until, I think when I grew up, that there were other ways to eat. And I wouldn't eat, because we just couldn't. And we wouldn't go in a restaurant and order anything—oh my goodness, that was *treyf*. Ha-ha.

David: Was that common to the Jews in Brunswick?

Goldie: Absolutely. In fact, the Jews in Brunswick didn't have a synagogue, so when it came to High Holidays, they went to the hall, you know some club, and we'd have our services there.

Sherrie: Who conducted them?

Goldie: Well, my father and Mr. Smith, Mr. Smith ran a boarding house with Jewish students that came here.

David: So this is Samuel Smith? He ran a boarding house.

Goldie: He had a boarding house.

David: Interesting.

Goldie: And all the Jewish students came here to eat because...

Sherrie: The Jewish Bowdoin students, yes, they've told me that. Joe Chandler tells that story.

Goldie: Some of the men now, have told me stories that I couldn't believe. This Jewish student from Portland came. He was only a freshman, and he got a call that the president, which was President Sills, would like to see him in his home. He worried: what in the world could anybody want with him? So he thought, gee, are they going to tell him that he is no longer... so he dressed up and went to the house, they escorted him in, and then, the president came over and shook hands with him. He said, "You know, the reason I called you is," he said, "We're going to have a rabbi come and speak to Bowdoin students," I don't know what it was, the wars or the Holocaust or something, and he said, "I want to find out what I should say to him." The fellow was only, I'd tell you, seventeen. He said, "What do you mean?" he said. "What do I speak to him about?" As if to say he was a bishop. Well, he said, "The rabbi is not like a priest or anything, he's a man that studied religion and he's just an ordinary person." And he said, "I thought you could give me some sort of insight." And he tells the story now, he couldn't believe it. So he told him, explained to him, he said now ... a Bowdoin president, those days they were all Episcopalians or... and you know everything is Jewish now. I think it is funny how things have turned around.

David: So when you were growing up, did you socialize primarily with the other Jews in town? With anybody?

Goldie: Well, most of the Jews my age were either older or too young. So no, all my friends were Christian. But you get along fine because nobody said anything except for ... going to their church and so forth. I never had been in a church, ha-ha.

Sherrie: So you didn't have a single female friend who was Jewish?

Goldie: One girl, but she was younger than I was. And an older girl.

David: Who were they?

Goldie: The Smiths. The girl... and her brothers... they had three doctors there. They all went to Bowdoin. And then they went on to medical school.

David: I have a list of all of the Jews who were of college age during the '20s and '30s in Brunswick. We are trying to find them in Bowdoin. We are talking about the Smiths. Jacob Smith?

Goldie: A doctor.

David: So he attended Bowdoin and then became a doctor.

Goldie: He had two brothers, too. Three brothers in the Smith family, all became doctors.

David: Joseph and Hiram? Not Hiram?

Goldie: No, he didn't. Joseph...

David: Oh, Morris.

Goldie: Morris.

David: Okay. Did they attend Bowdoin too?

Goldie: Every one of them, yeah. He was the one that ran the Jewish boarding house. The father.

David: The father—Samuel. Okay. So Samuel ran the boarding house, and three of his four sons, Morris, Joseph, and Jacob all attended Bowdoin and they all went on to become doctors.

Goldie: That's right.

David: Okay. What happened to Hiram?

Goldie: Who?

David: To Hiram?

Goldie: No, Hyman.

David: Hyman. Okay. Evidently the census taker couldn't write Hyman so he wrote Hiram instead.

Goldie: Yeah, that's Hyman. Well, he got involved with a Christian girl. And I'm trying to think—did he marry her? I think they had broken up. So he didn't have a success like the other boys did. He helped his father in business. He never became a doctor.

Sherrie: And he didn't go to Bowdoin.

David: Did he go to any college, or he just went straight to work?

Goldie: I don't remember him going to college, I don't think so. I think they wanted to enter him in Bowdoin, but if he did he only went one year or something. He wasn't a college graduate.

Sherrie: So who was David Saul Smith? The Student Union, when it was renovated, was funded by a family named Smith and is named the David Saul Smith Union. And Joe Chandler, who was a Bowdoin graduate in the '30s from Portland, who's still alive, they're living at the Cedars. Joe told me that it was the Smith family that took in boarders, and that Mrs. Smith enabled the boys to eat kosher food. And actually get protein all year. So I don't know what their relationship is there, but I can help you find that out.

David: Great. And so you were friends with Ida? With Sadie?

Goldie: Ida. Sadie was much older. Yeah, Ida. She was older than I was, but young enough that I could talk to her. And then there was a Mack family. Sarah Mack.

David: And her sister Ruth, right?

Goldie: I was going to say Sarah and her family lived on Jordan Avenue. I don't know if you know the streets in Brunswick.

David: And so the Mack family and the Smith family were in the junk business.

Goldie: That's right.

David: And what happened to those women? Did either of them go to college anywhere?

Goldie: Ida didn't, no, and Sadie didn't. Those were the days when they found husbands, people match them up, you know. And one of the boys went to open up an office in, I think it was New Jersey. And when she came to visit they found somebody else. That's how they met people, you know.

And there was the Davis family in Brunswick.

David: There were two Davis families, no? There was Myer Davis who was a grocer, and there was John Davis, who had a garage.

Goldie: That was not... John was his son.

David: Oh, John was Myer's... no. Yes, Myer had a son John. But there was another John who had two sons who were even older than Myer's sons. At least in 1920 there was a John Davis in town with two sons, Samuel and Harry. They might not have stayed that long. They weren't around by 1930.

Goldie: Because you see, I was born in 1916. And I didn't know them.

David: It is possible that they left. A lot of folks would have come in and out. So tell me about the Davis family that you did know.

Goldie: They had a number of children. I am trying to think of their names.

David: There was John. He was the oldest.

Goldie: Big family

David: John, Maurice, Edith, Harold, and Donald. And then there were some younger ones still. [after the interview Goldie identified Norman as another member of the family]

Goldie: Right.

David: The wonders of census records, they just didn't list them all!

Sherrie: Is this all Ancestry?

David: All Ancestry, yeah. So, what do you remember about them?

Goldie: I wasn't really friendly with them that much because I didn't associate with them. My mother and father would. When all the Jewish people met together for holidays and everything. Unless they were about my age to play, they weren't interested in me if they were older.

David: Some of them were about your age. Wouldn't Edith have been about your age?

Goldie: She was older. The Davis family, they associated in school more with the gentiles because their family wasn't that religious. They weren't Orthodox or anything.

David: So most of the families were pretty religious, but the Davis family not so much.

Goldie: No.

David: And do you know what happened to them? Did any of those boys go to college?

Goldie: Not really, I remember a couple of them married Christians. Because I said, they didn't associate too much with... their family wasn't religious. One of them married a French girl. They moved to Portland.

And there was an Abelon family. He was a dentist with... Harry graduated Bowdoin.

David: Harry. So yeah, Harry graduated Bowdoin and became a dentist.

Goldie: And then Philip was the oldest son, and graduated Bowdoin. He ran his father's store on Maine St. A little white store, it was a vibrant store.

David: So Philip graduated Bowdoin, but took over the family business. Harry went on to become a dentist. What happened to the others?

Goldie: Well Esther, she worked at the... she was a secretary at the hospital. And she worked at Abel Abbott's station... jobs. In fact, she was my next-door neighbor, so we were close. She was seven years older than I was, but after you graduate high school you don't think about age. We used to go on trips together, you know. She was Orthodox, too.

Sherrie: So she was a real friend.

Goldie: Yeah, she was a friend.

David: So she never attended college?

Goldie: No. Well, she attended business college, I shouldn't say ...

David: Okay, where did she go?

Goldie: She went to Portland... business college.

David: Do you know what one?

Goldie: I did know, I'm trying to think. I think it was Shaw's, called Shaw's. In those days, she was seven years older. So she didn't associate with me until after I graduated, when we became adults. Because she graduated in... I graduated high school in 1935, and she graduated in 1928. So seven years difference.

David: So what about Lena Abelon, or Israel Abelon?

Goldie: Lena was the oldest girl in the family, and she became a beautician. She married somebody in Portland, then they moved to Arizona. Because her husband had asthma, so in those day that thought that would be a good place to go. She has children that still come to Brunswick to visit.

David: And Israel Abelon?

Goldie: He was the youngest son. And he worked for his father, his father had a junk business.

David: Wait—I thought Louis had a dry goods store.

Goldie: He did, but he also had this... when his son took over, Philip, he went in the junk business.

David: Oh, so Philip took over the dry goods store, his father Louis then went into the junk business, and Israel helped him out in the junk business.

Goldie: That's right, he drove the car and everything for him. Picked up the junk, ha-ha!

David: So we've got three different Jewish junk businesses in Brunswick in the '20s and '30s. Two dry goods stores, plus a grocery store. And then there was Daniel Rosen, the furniture merchant.

Goldie: Yeah, he used to have a place near Bowdoin College, and the boys used to come, from Bowdoin, they needed second-hand furniture. So he was the second-hand furniture company. Now, he had a son that graduated Bowdoin, too.

David: Now, which one was that? Would that be Lawrence?

Goldie: No.... Dan Rosen was the father. Maybe it was Lawrence.

David: Well I didn't find his record, I'll have to go back and take another look for it. What did he become?

Goldie: I'm trying to think what he became, too, I do not remember, see those were my mother's days, see they were so much older...

David: Okay, and do you know what became of his sisters, Mary and Agnes?

Goldie: They married and left Brunswick.

David: That seems to be the story! Everyone who marries leaves Brunswick!

Goldie: Unless... if they married a boy from another town, there was nothing for them to do here. They went off to Massachusetts and New Hampshire. They never stayed here; there is nothing for them here. Unless they married a girl from Brunswick, you know!

Who else do we have for names?

David: So we've gone through the Abelons, we didn't finish the Davis family. So, Myer's kids. Do you know what happened to them?

Goldie: Well a lot of them, as I said, married Christians. There was Edith, there were two girls. Only one in the family married a Jewish boy. That was the youngest girl.

David: I didn't write down the youngest because she was too young for my research. There was Inez and below her.

Goldie: I really don't remember. They weren't Orthodox, didn't go to temple and everything. I just knew of them.

David: I wonder if you knew of the Gold family. Philip Gold? Tell me about those kids.

Goldie: He had two children. One was a lawyer, he wasn't practicing. His name was Isadore.

David: Yes, Isadore Gold, I got him.

Goldie: And his sister....

David: He had two sisters, Esther and Sylvia.

Goldie: One of them died. I think Esther was the one that died. Their brother became a lawyer.

David: Was he a Bowdoin student, or did he go elsewhere?

Goldie: See, they were so much older than I was. It doesn't seem like it, but it was in those days. I just knew the family, who the older ones were, and so forth.

David: So Esther died young. Sylvia....

Goldie: I think she married and lived in Portland.

David: And then Isadore went somewhere to college, because he became a lawyer. And then he came back and practiced law here.

Goldie: He could have gone to Colby for all I know, now that I think.

David: If he went to Bowdoin I can find out. And so Mack, Sarah and Ruth Mack, neither of them went to college, to the best of your knowledge?

Goldie: No, she married a Weinstein in Portland. And she worked for Day's Jewelry store.

David: And this is Sarah? Okay, Sarah worked for Day's.

Goldie: And Ruthie married a Jewish man, she moved to Waterville.

David: Oh! Wait a minute, whom did she marry in Waterville?

Goldie: What was her married name? Once she went to Waterville, I didn't know her anymore. I just heard from Sarah that she was doing fine, with children.

David: I know most of the families in Waterville, but I'm not recalling a Ruth, so I'll have to take a look for that.

So we were talking about the Rosen family, Lawrence.

Goldie: And Mary. And who was the other one?

David: And Agnes. And did you know what became of Mary or Agnes?

Goldie: I think they got good jobs. They were very smart. But I don't remember what they did. They were so much older. See, my sister and I were fifteen years apart. I was the youngest. And I'd hear all these names and so forth, but...

David: So you don't know whether Mary or Agnes attended business school or anything like that?

Goldie: I'm sure they did, I think, but I really can't... I'm sure they did because they were always smart in school.

Sherrie: I wonder whether Judy would know some of this, Goldie's niece.

Goldie: No, she doesn't know any of it. First of all, she wasn't born yet. And she only knows people from Lewiston. See, they were brought up in the synagogue there.

David: Were there many families here with Lewiston ties, or was it just your family?

Goldie: The Brunswick Jews went to Portland, the synagogues and stuff, but the reason my father came to this country, his brother had a place in Lewiston, a business, you know. And he came to work for his brother.

David: Who was his brother?

Goldie: Abraham Singer. He did very well in Lewiston. He bought property and he became very rich. And my father used to work for him, and peddle, you see. In those days they used to, ha-ha, peddle, they go out in the country... farms and everything, and sell, and they did good.

David: So your father peddled in Lewiston, and then when he established his own store, he established it here in Brunswick.

Goldie: That's right, yeah. See, his brother, he married a woman that... her family lived in Ohio or something, she came from Portland. So she went to move over there, and he opened up a fruit store over there, ha-ha.

David: In Ohio?

Goldie: Yeah, and my father took over the business. And my mother, when she first came, she lived in Lewiston with my father. And my sister was born in Somersworth, New Hampshire.

David: Did your parents meet in Lewiston or in the Old Country?

Goldie: They met here. My father was in Lewiston, and my mother came to New Hampshire. And a salesman told my father that he's got a girl for him, in New Hampshire, and he wants him to meet her, so he arranged a meeting. Ha-ha! The fellow came and took my father, and fell for her right off, and we kept the love letters that they wrote. I don't know who has them now. We laughed so much. It tells how he took her out. And how he's anxious to see her again! Oh, it's a riot!

Sherrie: And they're in Yiddish.

Goldie: And they're in Yiddish.

David: And this is all from 1900 or so?

Goldie: Yeah, my parents were married Labor Day 1900. Exactly. They had an outside wedding in New Hampshire. And it was a famous rabbi from Boston that came. It was beautiful outside, they said. I had pictures of my mother and father. I don't know if I still have them or not.

David: So when did your family move to Brunswick?

Goldie: When my sister was about eight years old.

David: So Rebecca, Isadore, and Morris were all born in Lewiston? But then Joseph, William, and yourself were all born here?

Goldie: Right. Three of them.

David: So tell me more about your siblings.

Goldie: My brother Joseph was a judge of Brunswick, he was a lawyer. He graduated Bowdoin, then he graduated Boston University School of Law. And he married a girl from Lewiston, a Jewish girl. And they had three sons. And one of them went to Colby, Philip!

David: Oh! Okay!

Goldie: And William married a girl from Portland. And he had two children. One is a doctor in Springfield, Massachusetts. And the sister lives in Israel, she became very religious.

David: Wait, whose sister?

Goldie: William's daughter.

David: Did William go to college? I don't think he went to Bowdoin.

Goldie: No, he didn't go to Bowdoin, he went to a business college.

David: Do you know which one?

Goldie: In Portland.

David: So it seems like the Jews in Brunswick who are going to school, seem to be going either to Bowdoin, or to Portland for business college.

Goldie: Yeah.

David: So William goes to business college, Joseph goes to Bowdoin and becomes a lawyer and a judge right here. Morris attended Bowdoin but didn't graduate?

Goldie: No, in those days, that was the Depression. And the banks closed with no money. So he didn't want to be a burden to my father, whatever he had... the banks closed and he lost whatever money he saved. So he quit, he moved to Boston, lived with my aunt, who didn't have children, and so he had a wonderful home, and so he got a job, he was a manager of a grocery store there.

David: Okay, so Morris managed a grocery store.

Sherrie: In Boston.

David: And what happened to Isadore?

Goldie: Isadore became an insurance agent, and he lived in Bath. He married a Jewish girl and had children. One son now: Stephen, he works for the sheriff department, but he used to be a high school principal.

David: And did Isadore go to college at all?

Goldie: He got in the insurance business. Brunswick. And he worked for Prudential for all his life.

David: And what happened to Rebecca?

Goldie: Rebecca married a Jewish boy from Saco, who originally came from Bangor. And they opened up a business, Lisbon Falls, it was a department store.

David: So, I'm struck by the fact that so many of your siblings went on to college. It sounds like three out of the four boys went.

Goldie: In those days they wanted... the education, they wanted their children to have a better life of sorts. And they sacrificed everything they could to send them there.

David: Was that common among your non-Jewish friends?

Goldie: No, the Jewish people all did that. They all sacrificed so that they could go to college. It was a different life.

Sherrie: Sounds like mostly the boys went to college, through all these families.

Goldie: Yeah, I was going to say it was more important for them to... if the girls get married that will... if they did, it was business college or something.

David: Did you go to business college as well, or no?

Goldie: I was lucky. When I was going into work... The War broke out, the Second World War, and I got a good job at the Bath Iron Works. Then I worked at Bowdoin for 35 years.

David: What did you do there?

Sherrie: Everything!

Goldie: I did everything! After I left, I did the payroll, all the three payrolls: the weekly, biweekly, professors. I was the one that... everyone at Bowdoin still knows me because every person that came to Bowdoin had to see me, because I was assistant personnel. Who did the work? Me. They always introduced me... "Goldie, this is professor so-and-so." I did all the work. Ha-ha. But we loved it!

Sherrie: Who was the director you worked for?

Goldie: Tom Libby. Do you remember him?

Sherrie: No, he was before my time. I've been here nineteen years, but I know the name.

Goldie: He was the town manager before he worked at Bowdoin. Nice looking guy. We've always been friends, even after. We had a good association. So now, everybody at Bowdoin, when I go to the reunions, even the governors, "Hi Goldie!" I can't get over how all the governors and everything knew me.

David: That's great. Did your brothers tell any stories about what it was like for them to be students at Bowdoin?

Goldie: They had a good relationship. They had a fraternity for people- Jews, Negroes, all those, you know...

David: What year was that? While your brothers were there?

Goldie: My brother graduated 1933. Depression years, you know. Then the war broke out, two of my brothers went to war.

David: So when your brother Joseph was here, was there already a fraternity for Jews?

Goldie: Well it wasn't for Jews. They called it for...

Sherrie: Was that ARU, All Races United?

David: I thought that was founded after the war.

Sherrie: I think so too.

Goldie: My brother graduated 1933. I'm trying to think what he did. They just got together and planned it or something; it wasn't like it is now.

Sherrie: It wasn't an official fraternity.

David: So even before there was an official fraternity that accepted Jews, the Jews sort of did their own informal fraternity thing?

Goldie: That's right, they used to get together. He called it... there was a name, but I can't think of it. What they called it. Anybody, Blacks, had no other place to go either.

Sherrie. So this was before ARU.

David: Was this The Common Club?

Goldie: No.

David: And so, I assume he lived at home, rather than on campus?

Goldie: Because of the times, you know, nobody had any money.

David: How did your father pay for them all to go to college?

Goldie: Well, because my brother also got scholarships, they worked for it too. Bowdoin has all kinds of prizes, if you write... if you belong to a government thing... they have

prizes that other people—alumni—have left. And if you write a thesis on that, you get money. And my brother got a lot.

David: So they put themselves through Bowdoin on prize money?

Goldie: Prize money and scholarships. Then they worked in the summer. They did lawn work and everything.

David: So they sort of paid their own way through college, rather than counting on your father.

Goldie: Yeah, well, yeah. He agreed to help, but yeah.

David: Did they socialize a lot with the other students at Bowdoin? Or did they feel that because they were Jewish they needed to keep separate?

Goldie: No they... in fact, my poor mother, when it came to Jewish holidays, of course they wouldn't eat *treyf* and everything. So my mother invited them all, ha-ha.

David: All the other Jewish students, you mean?

Goldie: Yeah. Not all because they had the... Smith. My brother's friends, you might say. Have them over for dinners, and stuff like that. In fact, one of the mothers came, knew my mother, and asked if they would take them in for Passover. See, they didn't want them to eat... now can you imagine anybody doing that now? Because they were brought up in home never to eat any pork, or this or that. Oh no, my goodness, no. And they kept it up at college, too.

David: So the Jewish students who attended Bowdoin from elsewhere, did they all tend to live at Sam Smith's boarding house, or some of them lived elsewhere?

Goldie: Oh, no, they lived in the dormitory. See, they came to eat. Their mothers, their parents, came and found out where they could eat Jewish meals... Jewish people in town. They asked my mother if she could take them in. So she took them in for holidays, but she didn't do that all of the time. Six children of her own! And she helped my father run the business. Those were the days when they didn't have TV, so I can see my mother now... sewing... socks from yarn.

David: Was she darning socks for the kids or for the store?

Goldie: No, she wouldn't do it for the store. This was for her four sons.

David: Only for the sons because you darned your own socks? Is that how that worked?

Goldie: No, I never wore socks. Ha-ha!

Sherrie: Women didn't wear pants in those days.

Goldie: No they don't, that's why we never... yeah.

Sherrie: The one Bowdoin alum who told me about the Smith boarding house was Joe Chandler. He's at the Cedars now.

Goldie: I can remember the Smiths from... my father... in Brunswick, too, they would go to Bath for holidays. Bring their families and everything. So they hired Younger Hall [?] here, they had a Torah, they bought.

Sherrie: They bought a Torah!

Goldie: Yeah, they bought it. And after it broke up they gave it to Bath. The Bath still has it. Bath has two or three.

David: What kind of relationship... did the Jews in Brunswick spend a lot of time in Bath? I was struck by the fact that... there are a number of Brunswick Jews who attended Bowdoin, but almost nobody from Bath. Was it just seen as being so far away that there was no...

Goldie: From Bath, they had what's his name.

Sherrie: Povich?

Goldie: Yeah, Povich family. And then there's others, too, from Bath, I'm trying to think of who else. There was something "-kowsky," the name, they changed it. [after the interview, Goldie noted that the name was Mickelsky] They had a furniture store. I think they went to Bowdoin too. Their name was Michaels. They all did a wonderful job, became doctors. They were so much older, it's hard to remember.

Sherrie: You were a baby, you were a little kid.

Goldie: See, my sister was 102 when she died. And so smart, she was the valedictorian of Brunswick High School. And I was salutatorian. My hands are handicapped, I don't know what it was, using bookkeeping machines, and all that stuff. Those hands... worthless... all crippled up and everything. The day she died... you should see the beautiful penmanship she had.

Sherrie: This was Judy's mother.

David: So Rebecca was valedictorian, you were salutatorian, neither of you went on to further education after high school.

Goldie: I didn't have to. Because you see, the war broke out, and they wanted people in the Iron Works to work.

Sherrie: Bath Iron Works.

Goldie: I was one of the first two girls that came and worked.

Sherrie: Really? At B.I.W?

Goldie: Yeah, because you couldn't get help, the boys all went to war. They told me that when the fellow, that I took his place, came back from the war, if he did, I had to give up

my job, and I did. I worked three and a half years there. And then he came back, so he took his job. So that's when I went to Bowdoin.

David: What did you do before the war, because you graduated in 1935? Right?

Goldie: Yeah, yeah, well I worked at a Jewish shoe factory office in Freeport, the Jews had shoe factories there. Two or three of them.

David: Really! I didn't know about these before.

Goldie: I worked the payroll, that's how I learned the payroll.

Sherrie. But there was never any talk about your going to college.

Goldie: No, didn't have to, see I learned by, what you say, "front and center."

David: And the same thing with Rebecca?

Goldie: No, she graduated Maine School of Commerce in Auburn. She did that, she had a teacher certificate. She worked as a secretary at a chocolate factory in Cambridge, I forgot the name of it.

Sherrie. In Cambridge, Mass.

Goldie: She did a wonderful job. The salesmen would give her all kinds of gifts. Cedar chews with ice bark, with chocolates in it. When she got there, they told her in the factory, "any time you want, you just go there and get chocolates," they do that purposely... chocolates after all. Smelled it all. So she sent it to us. The six children, then we love it, and was I popular in school! I brought it to school, and oh my goodness, people couldn't afford, they'd be lucky to have five cents.

I can remember that our treat was this: every Saturday afternoon, we'd go out the movies, ten cents. And then we were given five cents to buy candy, we would go to the candy shop. These people had such patience, when I think about it now. We'd look through the glass thing, and say, "how much are those?" Swirl bars and all of those... He'd say two for a cent. Then we'd say, "how much is this one?"

Sherrie: You'd stand there for ten minutes, picking them out.

David: So even though your family was Orthodox, and you only kept kosher, you would go out to the movies and buy things on Saturday afternoons.

Goldie: I don't know if it was okay, I don't think they liked it very much.

David: No, I was thinking about Shabbat.

Goldie: Everyone in the neighborhood all went. And they went to the movies, and I said, "can I have ten cents?"

Sherrie. What about Shabbat? You didn't go on Shabbat to the movies?

Goldie: Well yes, sometimes we did. We didn't have any services in Brunswick. You know, the Saturday services in the hall.

Sherrie: So for children, it was okay to go to the movies?

David: Well, did your father work on Saturdays? Or did he close the store?

Goldie: No, he worked on Saturdays. My mother would go and relieve him and so forth, you know. But he hired help. He says, "It's a French town." My mother and father both spoke French.

Sherrie: Because the help spoke French.

Goldie: In fact, when I took French in high school, my mother helped me. She knew everything, it was so cute. And we went to the movies one night... I remember my mother, she loved movies. And people who had stores were given free tickets at the theater because they advertised for [unclear word]. My mother loved the movies, my father, okay, now and then. So anyway, we would go, Monday night, or whatever it was, and my mother spoke French fluently, and so she saw two people in front of her, they couldn't speak a word of English, just French. So they laughed and everything. So my mother tapped one on the shoulder, before the movie, and she said, "Can you understand what's going on in here?" They don't speak English. She said, "No, I can't." But every time, in the movies, they would laugh, so she said, "do you understand?" and she says, "Well I see you laughing. And we laugh when everybody else laughs!" Ha-ha! When I think of all the things that happened...

Now, I went to New York, this has nothing to do with this, and my nephew Philip had a good job there, so I stayed with him. And he had to work the day, so I said, "I'll go to the movies." So I went to one, what's the name of the place, they dance and everything.

Sherrie. Radio City?

Goldie: Not Radio City, but the other one. People go to see shows any everything else.

Sherrie: A night club?

Goldie: No, a famous movie theater. So I went there, and he said, as soon as he got out of work, I should meet him at a restaurant next door. So I said, "Fine," and I went to a movie, so I was sitting there, and it was Thanksgiving time, when they have the Christmas show. From Thanksgiving to Christmas. So I sat down, and there were Jewish people there, and all of a sudden, lights went out, and they had a baby in a crib and everything, supposed to be Jesus, all that stuff came out, the lights, and everybody's looking, and I heard them talk in Jewish, so I kind of looked, she thought that I probably thought that what she was saying was nonsense. She looked at me and she said, "Nice, ah!" Ha-ha! I should have said that I was Jewish too because it made her feel... Because they were talking Jewish and she saw me looking at them because of that. I never forgot the way she said "Nice, ah!"

So we had our fun, too. They were hard times, but we didn't know it. No one else had anything better than we did.

David: So was your family better off than many of the other families?

Goldie: Well, my father had a great big garden, my mother... you should see what... we lived on Federal St. In those days, they didn't have any restrictions. My father had so much land, in fact, he had a cow, and a horse. Chickens, everything. He loved animals. We had our whole milk. My mother got sick of making cottage cheese, she gave the neighbors so much milk. And when the kids left home, I was the only left, and I used to say, "I don't like that kind of milk! I like store milk. It's cold." So they had to get rid of... my father loved the animals so much that he had to find a good place for it, so he found a family in Harpswell that were religious... what were they? Very kind people... Quakers! And so they bought the cow from him. And don't you think, my father used to go visit the cow! Ha-ha. And then he took a turkey, when it was small. And he thought, for Thanksgiving we'd have a turkey. You think that... it became a pet! My brother said, "If you have that Turkey killed," because my father went to a *shochet*, he said, "Don't expect me to eat it!" It's a pet! So he couldn't do it.

David: So where was the *shochet*? Was there a *shochet* in town?

Goldie: The *shochet* came once a week. To all the Jewish families and killed their... Can you imagine? Where there's a will, there's a way. He'd go from each place, kill all our stuff. I can remember my father, after he pulled out all the feathers.

Sherrie: And the intestines, and all that stuff.

Goldie: I don't know how he did it! How did they do it, when you think of it. All they did is work for their family. It brings tears to my eyes when I think of it. They worked for their family, kind and good. My father was a very gentle man, you see, he couldn't kill and animal, he's not that type of a person. So I was brought up with his kindness, you know. Nobody ever hit me, nothing like that. No temper. My mother was also kind... people took advantage of them because they couldn't say "no" to anybody. When the Jewish mothers came, she thought, it could have been her son. So if you had ten people, she could make food for twelve. They worked so hard. Another thing is they had two sets of dishes, for Passover. They'd bring them up, and wash them. And oh! When I think of that... They were both brought up in Europe, so... my mother came here, a little girl, I think she was about eight years old. My father came at fifteen, and he went to work, right off. In those days, you had to learn to speak English. At that time, my father went to night school, and they had to know how to write and everything. I think of the hardships they had. And they didn't mind, they were proud to be able to write, my father's writing was beautiful. I can't get over it, my mother too. Beautiful handwriting, and smart. See they studied, and they really enjoyed it. They went to night school and everything, my father got a certificate that he graduated high school.

Sherrie: From Lewiston?

Goldie: Yeah. They worked night and day. My father died at 94. My mother, 92, that's pretty good for what they went through.

Sherrie: Your father was from Warsaw?

Goldie: No, I forget the name....

Sherrie: So who came from Warsaw? I thought your family came from Warsaw.

Goldie: No. There's a famous place, people go there to become a rabbi, and so forth. In Lithuania.

David: Vilna.

Goldie: Yeah.

David: So are your parents' families from the Vilna area?

Goldie: Oh yes, in fact my father came from a family with seven children. And one boy had a deformity, so he couldn't leave; he had to stay there. My father's father worked with skins, what you call that? A tanner. So he'd write home. And we'd get letters, and we saved four people. Two of them came to America. And they went to South America, two of them, a boy and a girl. And brothers came to Lewiston, Maine. I had an uncle who was rich, so he saved four out of the family. And was very sad because they had a sister there. They did pretty good, they had a grocery store in Vilna. And the Nazis came, and everything, and they asked if they had any Jews. And they decided, the workers, the Lithuanians, they took a chance to take it over, so they said to them, "Yes, he owns this store." He got that, very sad. Everybody lost in the Holocaust. Vagrants, we have some saved, that have families, so we did have some good stories there, but... everybody lost somebody, you know. Innocent people. Never hound anybody. In some places they're still doing it now.

David: Thank you so much for taking the time to talk. I appreciate all of the memories that you shared.

Sherrie: Did you go though all of your names?

David: I went through all of my names.

Sherrie. How did you get all of these families, David?

David. Looking through the 1920 and 1930 census. The census asks place of birth, father's place of birth, mother's place of birth, and if you're born outside of the United States, native language. So everybody who has a native language of Yiddish...

Goldie: Well my mother had a tough time. It seems like when she came from Europe, her father came here first, and he lost, ... his wife died when my aunt, Annie they called her, was born, so the grandmother, in Europe, took the baby, because she couldn't afford to take the others. So the father decided to come to America, you get a better life and everything, and he said he'd send for my mother, and her brother Samuel, as soon as he'd get established, which he did. Meanwhile, somebody from Europe was sick or something, they sold their passage, so my mother was eight years old, so it was for a boy, so she dressed up as a boy. She said she was so scared, she didn't understand what it was all

about. They had to get her out of there and send her to Germany, and then from Germany to... you know Germany wasn't bad for the Jews then. So she said she didn't understand what it was all about, they didn't tell her, they told her they are going to bring her to her father. And she remembered him, naturally. So what happened is she just remembers coming there, and there was a Jewish society in Boston, where she landed, and by the way these people are from Jewish people that never ate any products or anything, so what they did, is they used to take old bread and soak it and eat it with water. That's how they lived. Terrible. And so she said that when she got here, the Jewish people gave her a banana! She never saw a banana. She held it, she didn't know what it was. So her father caught her, he said, "what's that?" she wished that they hadn't given it to her. Ha-ha!

Sherrie: My grandfather said that he ate the peel, and he said, this food in America is terrible. He said they gave him an apple, he thought it was a tomato, or vice versa.

Goldie: Yeah, they didn't know, they never saw that before, or anything. So she held on to it until she went to her father. Ha-ha! He told her to eat it. I said, "Did you like it?" she said she didn't know much about it, and she was hungry, and he told her that it was good for her and everything. So she got over here all right, and I said she was dressed as a boy, isn't that awful. Because they were able to buy that for half price. Ha-ha! Its laughable now, but you could see the fright that she had. Puzzled, she didn't understand, she said that when she was in her father's house, oh, she was so happy! And she loved school, she was very good at it too, see they were interested because they wanted to make better themselves, see she loved it, but she only went as far as the sixth grade. And then her father had a business there, and he needed her. He was getting older. And she learned to speak French. Imagine, she never took a lesson in French. Listening, I mean, they wanted to do it, they did it. You should hear her talk French! They had a business in Brunswick, the panels store, that's what they owned. My father sold that to...

Sherrie: Is that still the same store, near Greater Pasta?

Goldie: They have pictures, my father had all his stuff in the store.

Sherrie: It was called Singer's?

Goldie: Yeah, so we'd laugh because... a lot of people stole things, because he had my mother and one French girl. So while they were... other people would come in at night and look around and steal. And they found it. My mother, she knew she saw this woman looking at stuff, and when my mother wasn't looking she would put it in her breast or wherever she would put it, so my mother knew who she was, she lived on Mill St., so my mother went, look how brave she was, too, a girl, just married, she was only like 20, she went to the house, she could speak French, and she said, "You took this and that." And the girl, she cried she said, "No, no, my father, he'll kill me!" she said, "I work in the mill, and I'll give you five dollars... she took, I think, twelve dollars or something. And she has to give her father so much, so she says, you'll get it by six weeks, but she said she would promise to come and give her two dollars, that's what her father gave her. And that's all, she didn't have any money. It was really pathetic. So anyway, my mother said that one day the priest came to the store, it was springtime, when they go for Easter. They have to confess their sins and everything. And they told the priest they stole from my

father's store. They came from Canada, these priests, they were very strict. So my mother said that the priest came in the store, and said, "Is this your merchandise?" So my mother looked, some of it was, some of it wasn't. So she said, "Well, this part is mine, but these are the three that are from our store." So the priest said, "How come I never see you in church?" My mother said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You're French." She said, "I'm not French, I'm Jewish." He said, "What!" He couldn't believe it, he said, "You got the French ways!" She said, "That's because I was taught that way, to talk with my hands!" He said, "I knew Jewish people in Canada" in Montreal and everything. He said, "But they didn't speak like you do. You got that common French, not that Parisian French." He got the biggest kick out of her.

Nice stories.

Sherrie: Lovely stories, and now David has them all tape recorded, too.

David: When I or my student prepares the transcript, I will be sure to send you a copy.

Goldie: Aren't you nice! There's humor and everything, too.

Sherrie: Well you find humor in everything; you see the good side of everything.

Goldie: I know, people say, I've got cancer, I've got melanoma, I've got everything. But it doesn't affect me because I'm taking medication for it, and so far it hasn't spread or anything. They say, "With all your cripples how come you..." But I don't look at life negatively. I'm able to walk, I'm able to see, I'm able to hear. A lot of people at 95 can't hear. They have hearing aids. They said "What!" I feel so fortunate. I can hear, I wear eyeglasses, but nothing bad or anything. So I appreciate that. I go to all the events. I do everything I can. My father loved humor, he was very funny. I think I get it from him, and my brother Joe was the same way! Everybody liked Joe because he was full of fun.

David: Great. Thank you, again.