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Manuel Goldberg oral history interview by Chris Patti, July 29, 2010

Manuel Goldberg (Interviewee)

Chris J. Patti (Interviewer)

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Chris Patti: Okay, today's date is July 29, 2010. This is our interview with survivor Manuel Goldberg. My name is Chris Patti. We are in Osprey, Florida, in the United States. The language is English, and the videographers are Jane Duncan and David Purnell.

Okay, Mr. Goldberg, thank you so much for sharing your time with us today, and for telling us your story.

Manuel Goldberg: Yeah.

CP: We'll start off with the very basics. So, can I get your name at birth and can I have you spell that for us?

MG: Surely. My name is Manuel Goldberg—Manuel in French, of course. M-a-n-u-e-l. Never Manny! (CP laughs) That's one of the problems. Goldberg, G-o-l-d-b-e-r-g. I was born in Paris, France, in 1940, on March 17. And, as I always point out to friends, when else would a French Jew be born but on St. Paddy's Day? (CP laughs) That's one of the lovely ironies of life. Anyway, what else would you like to know?

CP: Did you have any other names that you or your family went by during the period of the war?

MG: Yeah. When we were in Normandy, especially, we used the name Colbert, C-o-l-b-e-r-t, which is a very old and respected French name. Colbert was the finance minister of—I think Louis XIV; it might have been—no, I'm sure it was XIV, not XVI. And he was an extremely bright fellow and did very well for Louis. So, it was a well-respected name. And, because our name was close to it, we just used it; fortunately, there were never any questions. How that worked out—about, you know, being asked for our papers—I don't know. I was too young. But, as I said, I'm sure that's one of the things that helped save our lives.

CP: Can you tell me a little bit about your family, your father and mother and brothers?

MG: Sure. My mother was originally from Ukraine. She and her family had moved to France after the Revolution in 1917. Between the pogroms and the Revolution where everybody, of course, was eager to kill Jews, they had to leave. They got to France and the family settled there because they had run out of money; so it was the classic story where everybody worked, they got enough money to send the oldest son to America, he got here, he got a job, and started saving money until he could get the next son over. Eventually, they got the whole family. By that time, my mother had met Mr. Right and, probably in order to escape from the family, had gotten married and decided to stay in France. That's why we ended up in France. By 1938 or thirty-nine [1939], when they were talking about getting out of France, it was too late. It was not possible to leave. So, we were stuck there during the war.

My father was Polish; he was born in Poland; also came to France for more or less the same reasons: the terrible anti-Semitism. Plus, he and his family were involved in some of the more radical workers' movements, and there was tremendous repression there. So, he got out of there. They met in France and they fell in love, got married, really had no plans to leave France.

So, it was interesting language-wise in the home. They spoke probably primarily Yiddish at home, and occasionally, when they didn't want—I have an older brother, who's technically a half-brother, from my mother's first marriage. Her first husband died, but she had a son by that marriage. And that's Charles, the one who's in France now. And whenever they didn't want him to understand what they were talking about, they would speak in Russian and Polish, because they could understand each other. That worked out for a while, except he very quickly started picking up Russian. He's a fantastic linguist. Anyway—and of course, they all spoke French. Now, because when I was born, by the time I was starting to really learn language, we didn't dare speak Yiddish because it was dangerous. The Germans would have picked us up right away.

CP: So, you understood that, even at that kind of young age, that you probably shouldn't be speaking Yiddish?

MG: No, it just wasn't there. Basically, we just spoke French. So, that was the only language I heard until we got back to Paris after the war.

CP: And can you tell me your mother and father's names?

MG: Yes. My mother's name was Mania, M-a-n-i-a, I guess. In French it was Madeleine. And my father's name was Maurice, or Mozcek in Polish.

CP: M-o-z-c-e-k?

MG: Yes.

CP: And your mother's maiden name, just for the historical record, was?

MG: Mania—you mean her maiden name?

CP: Mm-hm.

MG: It was Bershadski.

CP: B-e-r-s-h-a-d-s-k-i?

MG: That's correct.

CP: Okay. Excellent. And can you tell me—you told me a little bit about your older brother. Can you tell me a little more about him, and also your twin brother?

MG: Yeah. He was born in 1930, I guess. Very bright kid, but—(phone rings)—he suffered in a way much more than my twin brother and I did during the war.

CP: Yeah, I'm actually—can we wait a little bit to get into those stories about your brother's experience during the war?

MG: Sure.

CP: But yeah, we'll definitely talk about that. It's interesting.

MG: He did a variety of different jobs in France. He really wanted to study some kind of engineering, but we didn't have the money; he needed to work. He couldn't work and study at the same time, because his working hours were just too long. So, he really didn't, even though he had some periods of apprenticeship in some machine trades, some kind of machinist, and I don't remember that too well. Then he worked in a—I remember one store where he worked in a jacquard—it's like a knitting-type factory, with fancy patterns.

And one day, one of the machines broke: one of the parts of the machine broke, a machine that would take a couple of weeks to get the part, and he asked the owner if he could have two days off, if he could take the part and have two days off. And the owner said, "Well, sure; we're all going to be out of work soon anyway." So, he said, "Well, I'll be back in two days." And he went to the machine shop where he had worked, and he actually made a new part for the machine using the old one, and came back and said, "Try this one." The guy was amazed, and he immediately put him in a much higher position in the factory.

So, he just not only was very bright, but he was excellent in using his hands at all kinds of things. And after we came to the United States, he was some kind of deliveryman, but also he started taking courses at what was then the RCA Institute, in radio and TV repair, and also audio equipment repair. And then, because of that background, when he was drafted into the Army, which was during the Korean War, they sent him to Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, which was the Army communications center, and there he learned how to become—he eventually became professionally a recording engineer. And he was sent over to Germany instead of Korea, which was wonderful.

He said it was great, because the Army's Signal Corps headquarters was in a lovely castle. There was one floor just complete with all kinds of wonderful equipment for him to play with—to work at, you know; for him it was play. And then, the upper floor, very nice rooms for them, and there was a billiards room and so on. So, he said it was really wonderful, and then he managed to get his car and his wife shipped over and they were able to live off base. And every weekend they'd get in the car—his wife was French.

They'd get in the car and go over to France to visit relatives and friends in Paris and then, you know, Sunday drive back and enjoy his work.

So, he really learned his trade in the Army. When he came back, he became a recording engineer, worked for a studio which did primarily jazz, rock and roll, and so on, and worked very closely with a lot of the greats: Oscar Peterson and—oh, I forget his name; he's got a doctorate in music, too. And some of the—Tito Puente and things like that. Recording them, doing their recordings and so on, which is what he continued doing after, when he went back to France, working with studios. I was visiting him in 1962, and he was recording an orchestra. I'm trying to remember the guy's name; it was one of the last of the famous Russian composers. And I said, "Oh, my God!" I was very, very impressed, having been a music major in high school. So, that's what I can tell you about him.

CP: Can you tell me about—what was his name again?

MG: Charles. Charles, you know.

CP: And can you tell me about your twin brother?

MG: Yeah, my twin brother, Michel, M-i-c-h-e-l. Michel and I were, as my mother said when we were younger, "Whenever you're together, you're beating each other up; when I pull you apart, you're crying for each other." So, it was that kind of a typical boys' love/hate relationship. He and I very early showed talent in the arts, he in the graphic arts and I in music. And then, when it was time to go to high school, we applied to the High School of Music and Art in New York. I don't know if you're familiar with that school, but it not only has very high academic standards, but you get in by audition or, for artists, bring your portfolio. And then you actually have a test of your artistic or musical skills. And we both were accepted, I in music and he in art.

He continued with his artwork: he went to Pratt Institute, got his degree from there, and became a graphic artist and went on to do all kinds of large exhibits, designing exhibits, including for various museums. He did one for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the MoMA. They had an exhibit of some of I.M. Pei's works; he did that. And as he got older, he got more and more into the pure art, if you will, in terms of painting and also sculpture. Recently he's had some major exhibits of those works. He's pretty much fully retired now, as far as the "work" work, the graphic arts and design, but he is making quite a name for himself as a painter and a sculptor.

CP: You have a talented family, talented siblings.

MG: Yes, apparently we were. I think my talent now comes out mostly in my breads, and you've seen some of the pictures. They're more—I go for the artistic aspect as well as flavor and texture.

CP: Do you think that that's related to your French upbringing, the bread?

MG: Oh, definitely, the bread, definitely. If you're French, you eat bread all the time, fresh bread—and fresh French bread, of course. When we first moved to New York, we had no problem getting good bread, because you have all kinds of interesting bakeries in New York: you have French, Italian, Polish, Jewish breads. So, it was wonderful. But once I moved out of New York, I said—there was one bakery, and their bread was okay, and they went out of business very shortly after we moved out of there. And I said, “Well, damn, I can cook almost anything; no reason I can't learn to bake bread.” So, I started working at it. It probably took me two years until I could make bread that I was satisfied with. I have to admit, I owe a lot of it to Julia Child, who had this very daunting thirty-five page section on breads, including the chemistry and the physics of bread. I said, “Ah! That's the problem. That's what I haven't been doing!” And that's when I started making decent bread, and I've worked at it ever since. So, that was probably the early seventies [1970s]. I guess I've been baking bread now for almost forty years.

CP: Wow.

MG: Yeah, I'm impressed. You don't realize how it just—you know, you just do it.

CP: It becomes a life.

MG: Yeah. I mean, it just—and it develops on its own.

CP: Going back to some of your roots, you mentioned that your father was a bit of a social radical and that your parents, you told me before, they were atheists and they were pretty socialist. You were very culturally—still culturally Jewish. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

MG: Yeah. My mother actually came from a very Orthodox Jewish family. I know that her father was quite the patriarch, and pretty severe. I think she may have rebelled

against that, and probably found no use for religion. And then, when she met my father, it kind of confirmed those beliefs. So, I was brought up as being very Jewish in the sense that we are Jewish. I am Jewish. You know, with a name like Goldberg, what else could I be?

CP: Can you—I totally get what you're saying, but could you explain to me a little bit more? What does it mean to be Jewish?

MG: Well, it's a very cultural thing for me. I'm of the Yiddish school in that I went to a Yiddish school, where we learned to read and write Yiddish, learned about Jewish culture—Jewish holidays, too. So, we learned about the religion from a non-religious point of view, if you will. You know, it's very much part of me. I was once—I remember having a discussion with somebody once, and I said something about being an atheist, not believing in God, and he says, "Well, if you don't believe in God, you can't be Jewish." And I said, "What the hell you mean I'm not Jewish? Of course I'm Jewish! If you don't believe me, look what happened to my father and six million others." But I was so offended, you know. It's like questioning my core. It's amazing.

CP: Yeah, I find that very interesting. So, can you take me back to the beginning? What's maybe your first childhood memory that you can think of, or some time? Do you remember Paris? Do you remember moving to Normandy?

MG: No. I was probably about—not even two years old at the time. No, I was probably—it was probably closer to maybe eighteen, twenty months. So, I don't remember that. I just remember—my first memories are of Normandy, living in a very small stone house, dirt floor, and a fireplace, no indoor plumbing. I can't remember if we had a well or if we actually had to go to the stream for water. We may have had a well, I just don't remember. I do remember there was an outhouse, and that's where you went at night.

As a matter of fact, the funny part was, for some reason, my twin brother and my older brother were afraid of the dark, and when it was time to go to the bathroom before you went to bed—here I was, and I was the runt of the family. I was a sickly little runt. My brother used to beat me up—my twin brother used to beat me up all the time, and, of course, my older brother. Actually, he was almost like a father figure, because he was the only older male around. And so, I would take my twin brother by the hand and my older brother by the hand. "Come on guys, let's go. Time to pee." (both laugh) I wasn't afraid of the dark, and they were. And other than that, I was the runt.

CP: You said you were sickly. What caused that? What was that?

MG: I don't know. I know that I was. And when we came back to Paris, if there was any sickness to get, I got it first, whether it was mumps or measles or chicken pox, all of which I think we had. And there was—it had to do with a program for poor kids, where they would send you to live on a farm for the summer. You know, so you got healthy outdoor living and all that and good farm food.

Well, my brother ended up—and they never put us together; we were in separate places. Well, he went to a farm where they were wonderful people, and they just fed him and loved him and all that. I was in a farm where they were bastards! They were cheap as dirt. My job was to—I'd get up in the morning; you know—you'd get up at daybreak. Sun is up, you're up. And I'd have this miserable breakfast, and they'd give me a piece of bread to stick in my shirt, and I'd take the cows out to the pasture and I'd be out there with the cows, and I had the dog with me. Oh, I'd be out there all day, and when the sun was high enough I'd eat my piece of bread, drink some water, and then I'd come home and they'd feed me whatever they were making, but not enough.

And when I got back to the city at the end of the summer, I was so undernourished they were afraid I had tuberculosis. They sent me to get a chest x-ray, and fortunately, I didn't have TB. But my mother started fattening me up, because I had actually lost weight instead of getting bigger and heavier and stronger. So, that was my luck, anyway. And then, when I hit thirteen and I guess the hormones started kicking in, all of a sudden I started sprouting in all directions and getting muscles, and started beating up my own brother. (both laugh) You know, so I went from being the runt of the family to the tallest one and the strongest one—which was fine with me, of course. So, that answers that question.

CP: Do you have any other memories of that time, the early times in Normandy?

MG: Oh, yeah, a lot. And that's interesting. My twin brother has just about no memories of Normandy. When we get back to France, I have very few memories of school—some, but very few—and he had many. So, I guess he suppressed the Normandy part, which I must have liked because I didn't suppress it, and then when we get back to school I must have liked school more than he did, although he was a good student, and I was still getting in trouble 'cause I couldn't keep my mouth shut. We were talking about that in a French group, how when you're in school if you're bad, you put your hand out like that, and the ruler comes down *whap* right on top of your fingers, and usually on your right hand. And then you have to write a hundred lines "I must not talk in class," and your fingers are killing you. Anyway, it was lovely in those days. They're not allowed to do that anymore.

But Normandy—yeah, I actually had some good memories of Normandy. I told you about in the fall—Normandy is apple country. You don't drink wine, you drink cider—what you all call hard cider; they just called it cider, 'cause you don't drink non-alcoholic cider there. That's apple juice. Anyway, so in the fall they gather the apples, and they have these huge presses, and they press the apples and there's like this big wooden truss leading to these gigantic barrels to make—the apple juice flows down the truss into the barrels. So, we were kids. We would get a straw—a real straw, not the plastic stuff—and we'd just stick it into the trough and drink the apple juice. It was delicious. Well, you drink enough apple juice—oh, boy, did we have diarrhea. (both laugh) But it was a great memory. For some reason, I never remember the diarrhea. My mother told me about it. I remember enjoying the apple juice.

CP: There you go.

MG: And also, the picture of the gigantic press and the truss. And that was really very happy. Other memories—I remember my mother getting dinner ready. She sent me down to the stream to pick watercress, so we'd have a nice salad, a watercress salad—which not only was delicious; it was healthy for us, too. So, those were some of the happy memories.

CP: It seems like you also, from talking before, that you remember that transition when things were starting to change in Normandy. There were the planes and that sort of stuff.

MG: Yeah. But just before we finish, one funny memory: We had rabbits that was one of the—we had chickens and rabbits. And whenever it was time, you'd grab one of them and you'd slaughter it and you'd have it for dinner—several dinners. So, my mother decided it was time to get a rabbit. She gets the rabbit, puts it on the table, gives it a bop over the head, starts sharpening her knife to clean and dress him. Well, she didn't hit him quite hard enough. The rabbit wakes up and jumps off the table. And here's my mother running around the table, chasing the rabbit. She finally got it and caught it and gave it a hard enough bop and slaughtered it, and we enjoyed it. But that picture! We all had such good laughs over it afterwards. So, that was life in Normandy.

CP: Did you have any idea at this time of what—the political turmoil that was going on in the world?

MG: Yeah. Not in that sense, but we knew to be scared of the Germans, because of the way everybody spoke about them and how they acted whenever they were around. So, we knew that when *les Boches* came, you just behaved and kept a very low profile. We learned that right away.

My older brother, of course, had some horrible experiences along that line. He worked in a drugstore, I guess, a pharmacy a couple towns away. He was coming home one day, and he was taking like a shortcut, a small path. As he was walking along the path, all of a sudden a very drunk German soldier with a bunch of dead chickens on his arm, which he had probably just stolen from a local farm, asked him—he was crossing one of the big roads. He said, “Where’s a shortcut to such-and-such a place?” At first, my brother acted like he didn’t know what he was talking about. He just pointed to the regular road. And he said the guy just took out his gun, stuck it in his forehead, and said, “Where’s the shortcut?” And he said, “I had no choice but to tell him where it was.” You know, he came home and he was just a mess. He said, “He was ready to shoot me.” So, he really had some horrible experiences.

And then, after the invasion—and we were only about, I think maybe five or six miles from the beaches. So, we could hear the bombardments very loudly. And as they got closer, then there was a lot of bombardments. We would immediately hide under the table or under the bed, and we could feel the ground shaking. We were lucky that our house was never hit.

CP: You told me a story about a specific memory of being in the field with the ground shaking. Could you tell me that story?

MG: Oh, yeah. That wasn’t the ground shaking. What happened was we were coming back from town; town was maybe one or one and a half kilometers away. We were coming through a field, and we heard planes, and then we heard the planes starting to dive. And there was like a little lean-to, just a corrugated sheet, a tin sheet on two sticks, and it was a beautiful, bright, sunny day. There were three of us: my older brother, myself, and a local farmer. And the farmer said, “Quick, let’s get under the lean-to,” and my brother said, “No, let’s just lie down right here,” which we did. And you heard the machine guns, and you looked at the lean-to, and you saw shafts of sunlight coming through it. And that’s how close it was.

CP: Wow.

MG: If they saw something move, they fired. The Americans were at least as bad as the Germans.

CP: So, there’s a reasonable chance that if you had gone into that lean-to, you might not be here today.

MG: I would say there's a 99 percent chance.

CP: Oh, my God.

MG: Mm-hmm.

CP: It's amazing how vividly you can still see that picture.

MG: Yeah. And when I visited my brother in sixty-two [1962], when we went back there and we went through the town, he was amazed that I pointed to a spot and said, "There used to be a building there, and you used to work there." It was like a cabinet-maker's shop. And he said, "Yes, there was." And then I told him that story, and he had forgotten that and said, "You're right. Now I remember it." He had other, more horrible stories he remembered, but I didn't. I either didn't experience or didn't remember.

CP: Since we're talking about your brother, would you share some more of his experience and some of those stories of his?

MG: He and two cousins were walking. They were coming back from some town, not far. And they were passing by one of the bigger roads. They heard planes and machine gun fire, and so they came close to—they saw smoke. They came close to the road. Obviously, there was a German convoy, which was filled with Belgian prisoners. They had been hit. And he said they heard all kinds of screaming, and they could see the bodies burning. And then there was one body that was burning: the head came off, and it was a burning, rolling head, rolling towards them. It just—you know, to this day, he cannot stand the smell of the barbecue and burning flesh. He says those visions are still with him.

CP: You mentioned that the emotion of talking about these things has started to become more acute as you've gotten older.

MG: Yep. Mm-hmm.

CP: Can you explain? What do you think that's all about?

MG: I don't know. I find that, as I get older, I'm more and more emotional about everything. You know, like about a year and a half ago, my son and daughter-in-law were coming down here to visit. We went to the airport to pick them up, and the first thing they said was that she's pregnant. And I started crying; it's just the way I am now, with joy. But I just—you know, I can't stop the tears from flowing lately. I really don't know why. Maybe I can find a psychologist who can answer this for me. But—

CP: Did you talk about your experiences during the Holocaust, your family's experiences, at any point in your life? Or is that more recent, as well?

MG: My mother talked about it, and my brother also talked it about fairly easily. I don't think Michel and I talked about it much, probably because he had so few memories. Like, I remember one experience. We were back in Paris—this was after the war—and I may have mentioned this to you. One of my mother's friends, who was also Jewish and had been in the underground, came to visit. I remember her as a big, big strong woman. She told us how she had been caught by the Germans, and they were trying to get information from her. She said, "I knew that if I gave them the information, I was dead. No question about it. They'd have no more use for me. I'm Jewish, I'm in the underground; they'd shoot me right away." So, she was not gonna tell them.

So, first they put her naked in a freezer, and kept her there for I don't know how long, and she had a lot of lung problems as a result of it. I mean, when I knew her. And then, afterwards, they continued interrogating her, and they started ripping out her toenails. And I didn't believe her. I said, "No, they can't do that." So, she took off her shoes and showed me. She had no toenails. I remember being horrified. And that's what it was like.

CP: What do you do with memories of that kind of—I guess we, as a culture, we all have to deal with the fact that humans did this to humans. But it's pretty personal for you and your family. How do you deal with that?

MG: Frankly, I'm not sure. Mostly, you try to live your life and do the best you can. Every once in a while, you become very much aware of the rage—and it's rage, no question about it.

When my wife and I were living in Hackettstown, New Jersey, which is in the northwestern part of the state, she was working at a local newspaper. There was a local neo-Nazi who had—I think he was arrested for something; I don't know what—and they talked about whether she should go and interview him. And it ended up with she didn't.

But I remember thinking, “I’ll interview him, and I hope he tells me that it’s a good thing my father was killed, because then I’ll beat the shit out of him.” And it would have been more than that, you know. I mean, it just feels murderous, the need for revenge. There’s—you don’t forget and you don’t forgive, never.

CP: You’ve spoken with a number of survivors yourself, as an interviewer, correct?

MG: Yeah.

CP: What was that experience like?

MG: Not directly. I had a job where I was working at the New York Association for New Americans, in New York. Basically, they were helping—once immigrants, Jewish immigrants, from everywhere came to the United States, we helped them with both social and vocational issues. I was working there as a vocational counselor. And we also helped them find jobs in our social department. I would also help them with education, because that was considered related to the vocational aspect. And I got to meet some of the older ones who had been in camps: they’d have the number on their arm. And I would always ask them what camp they were in, and if they had been in Auschwitz, I would ask them if they knew my father. Never, unfortunately, none of them ever did, because—I mentioned before my father was murdered in Auschwitz.

CP: Well, we’ll come back to the kind of later time. But since you brought up your father, could you tell me his story, then, during the Holocaust?

MG: Yeah. He had been in the French Army, and he actually had joined up in thirty-nine [1939], I guess, when France was attacked. And within a short time, of course, he was discharged, like the rest of them, after France was vanquished. He was actually home, and we were able to live together as a family for a while. But then, in 1941, somebody had murdered—or assassinated, if you will—a German officer. Somebody from the underground had, in Paris. So, the Germans told the French police to round up five thousand men. Unfortunately, my father happened to be on the street when they were doing the roundups.

As soon as they found out—well, they were all sent to Drancy, which was a French detention camp. But there were two parts: one was for Jews and one was for non-Jews. The Jewish part was actually like a pre-concentration camp, and they would have the selections. He ended up being on one of the trains and sent to Auschwitz, where he was eventually murdered. So, the last time I saw him, I was probably eighteen, seventeen

months old, and that's why I really have no memory of him, other than what my mother and brother have told me about him, and a few pictures. That's unfortunately about all I can tell you.

CP: Yeah. The first time we talked, I remember thinking that you—you said very specifically and powerfully that he was murdered in Auschwitz. And that kind of links back to—one of the things I've read in researching Holocaust narratives is something that we don't like to hear when we study the Holocaust in America are things that go against our notions of morality. And so, I appreciate that you do say it pointedly. He was murdered, and you do talk about the rage and the need for revenge. I think that's something that we need to hear about.

MG: When you take good, innocent men, women and children and you shove them in gas ovens, it's murder. When you shoot them for no reason at all, it's murder. If you go out in the street here and you go up to somebody and shoot him because you don't like the color of their skin or their nose or their name, it's murder. And when you do it to six million people, it's atrocious murder. How could you not have rage?

And if people are shocked hearing me say that, then they need to be shocked. They need to hear this. They need to know about man's inhumanity to man. They deprived me of my father, and a whole bunch of other relatives. They horribly damaged my mother: her health, her emotional health. She had already been through a revolution and a war, and then this on top of it.

CP: How would you say that it shaped her life? That's a pretty broad question.

MG: I think the most horrible damage it did is that she gave up, and she only lived to provide for her children. She gave up on her own life, and she became a very bitter woman. And this was a woman who was very, very bright, talented, probably with half a chance could have an excellent education, have benefited from an excellent education, and made something of herself. She was a very warm, lively person. Even—she only had four years of formal schooling, and yet, she could read Cyrillic, Roman alphabet, and the Hebrew alphabet. She spoke five different languages. Initially, she spoke Ukrainian, Russian, and Yiddish, because in Ukraine they spoke Ukrainian but they had to learn Russian, 'cause they were under the Russian tsar. Yiddish was the language at home. And then she came to France, she learned French. She came to the United States, she learned English. So, she was fluent in five languages, and that takes quite a bit of brains to start with. She read; she loved opera and music. She could have had a wonderful life, given half a chance, and it was ripped away from her.

CP: Well, thank God she seems to have instilled that in her children, and all of those talents were passed on to the next generation.

MG: She did.

CP: How would you say it's affected you and your brothers' lives, shaped you and your brothers' lives?

MG: The war, you mean?

CP: Mm-hm.

MG: In my older brother's case, he was robbed of a childhood and young adulthood—you know, teenage years. He didn't have to get the education he could have benefited from. Again, a very bright guy, ended up doing quite well in spite of those deficits, which points out just how much he had going for him. And also, it affected him emotionally. He was always—he lacked a certain social assertiveness, both socially and in business. It was so obvious. He said when he got back to Paris and he started being with other young people, he just didn't know what to do and he felt, you know, afraid of everything, practically. It affected him in terms of social interaction, in terms of girlfriends, and he made a couple of bad choices. So, yeah, it had a tremendous effect on him. In addition to which, I was robbed of a proper father figure and role model, as were both my brothers, I guess. So, we had a lot to make up for, and that we've turned out as well as we have, all three of us, is, I think, impressive, actually. Really, when you stop and think about it, could I have been much more? Yes, I'm sure I could have. But I think I did well, under the circumstances.

I remember a friend of mine; he and I happen to have the same therapist. One day, and that's when I was still working on my doctorate and had had a major setback with the cancer, he—I don't know how he and the therapist started talking about me, but he was bitching about me, saying, "What's wrong with him? Why doesn't he do more for himself? Why doesn't he accomplish more?" And the therapist looked at him and said, "Look how much he has accomplished, under the circumstances." And my friend told me about the conversation, and I was surprised. I said, "Well, how come the sonofabitch never said that to me? He always pointed out what I haven't done." Anyway—I just realized, by the way, with the new Supreme Court decision, you won't have to blip all my terrible words.

CP: Oh, yeah, yeah. No, this is history; that's all good.

MG: Oh, okay. Well, it's history.

CP: Yeah, you can say whatever the hell you want, I'll put it that way. (both laugh)

MG: Okay.

CP: Well, I have to ask this, and I think I've asked you this question two times, because your profession, as a psychologist, to me I'm always making this link, thinking that it must be connected to your experiences as a young person. Maybe that's a Freudian link to make, or something. How do you—you said you don't really see it that way; you just happened to kind of go into that path.

MG: Yeah, I really haven't figured out any real link to that.

CP: Through all the learning about psychology and stuff, did that shape your thinking about your experience, would you say?

MG: I don't think so. I think they're much more from the gut. For one thing, the experience, the impact of the experiences, precedes any brain work.

CP: So, any symbolic sense, all that comes after the hit of it?

MG: Oh, yeah. And all the stuff I've read may have helped me understand some of my reactions. It hasn't modified them. You know, it's like I understand that I may be—may have a filterable Epstein-Barr virus that's causing such and such and blah-blah-blah. The bottom line is, I still got a miserable cold, and I'm miserable. That kind of a thing. So, yeah, I understand why I feel this way. I still want to kill the bastards. It's that kind of a thing, and very, very real and very, very strong, even though I may be making light of it at the moment.

CP: Is there anything else? On my list, I have kind of liberation and post-war, so—we have five minutes? Okay. Maybe now is a good time to stop, and we can take a break and then talk about the last couple things.

MG: Okay. Sure.

Part 1 ends; part 2 begins

CP: All right, this is tape two with our interview with Manuel Goldberg. Mr. Goldberg, when we left off, we had pretty much talked about all the stuff that we remembered happening through the war. The last thing we have left is liberation. So, can you tell me that story?

MG: Yeah. They came through, and they were very—as I mentioned before, we were very close to one of the main roads, which had its good points and bad points. The bad points was there was an awful lot of bombing going on, and we were, as I said, very close, so we would dive under the beds and feel the earth shaking and were scared shitless, probably. The good part was we saw the American army go by, and it was endless convoys and troops.

Now, my mother was comfortable with blacks 'cause she had seen quite a few of them in Paris, so it was no big thing for her. The local peasants—and I should have talked more about local peasants, by the way. They were good Normandy peasants: very Catholic, very little education, still in the twelfth century. They didn't want to believe that we were Jews, because we did not have horns, we did not have tails, and we looked like normal people, we worked like normal people. So, they really figured, "Well, maybe they are Jews; they say they are, and why would they say they're Jews if they're not?" But we didn't fit the image. And when I talk about horns and tails, I'm talking about literally. They really literally believed that Jews had horns and tails, 'cause that's what they had heard all their lives. Anyway, they had never seen blacks before, and they were scared.

Another big problem, of course, was nobody spoke English. We didn't speak English, and certainly the peasants wouldn't have. But I remember seeing these twelve-foot-tall guys—remember, I was the runt, too, we were small to begin with. And they were all very friendly and smiling all the time, and they, of course, loved little kids. We'd go up, and they wore these fatigues, the old-style fatigue pants with the big patch pockets on the side, and we'd go up and we'd bang on the pockets, and they'd go into their pockets and pull out candy bars and Tootsie Rolls or whatever candy they had and give them to us. We were thrilled.

Anyway, one of the big problems we had, though, was food. We never had enough food. And one day, my brother finds this big can—it turned out to be a five-gallon can—of something he knew was food. Opened it up, and here is this kind of light brown greasy looking stuff, had no idea what it was, because we didn't read English, so we had no idea what "peanut butter" meant. You know "peanut butter"? (CP laughs) That's what it

sounds like when you read French. So, they tasted it; it tasted terrible. They tried frying it; didn't work. Boiling it; didn't work. You name it, we tried it. Finally, we ended up having to very reluctantly throw out a five-gallon can of peanut butter. It was inedible, to the French taste. Of course, I suppose some Americans would have said pâté is inedible. Anyway—

CP: And you also told me that still, to this day, you're not a fan of peanut butter.

MG: Well, I'm very slowly starting to accept it. I mean, I love to make a nice Thai peanut sauce, and that's really delicious and it's peanut-based. And then, because Rachel loves them, I have started making peanut butter cookies. I find, "Hey, they're not bad. They taste a little bit like peanut butter, but basically they're not bad." So, those disappear pretty quickly. But peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? Not for me. No, thank you.

CP: So, what happened after that point, after the Americans came in? Normandy was one of the first places to—

MG: Right, to be liberated. Well, life continued pretty much as before, until after Paris was liberated. My mother decided—my mother and brother decided to go there and see what was happening. They left us with some local family, who we knew and we knew would take good care of us. I should mention the local family who owned the farm we were staying at were absolutely wonderful. They saved our lives. We were very, very close to them. They had a daughter who was maybe a little older than my brother, my older brother. She was our big sister. Obviously, she adored us. We went back to visit them—I went back to visit with my brother, when I visited him in sixty-two [1962]. It was very much homecoming.

Anyway, so they went back to Paris, my mother and brother did, found the apartment, which our landlord had kept for us for some reason, and I don't know the details. The apartment had been broken into by the Germans, completely ransacked: all the books were lying on the floor torn up, and so on. We found out they came—they broke the door down two weeks after we left, to get us. So, again, a close call. Anyway, my mother was able to find that she could get employment, came back—or they came back, and got us, brought us back. I think initially, we were staying at some relative's apartment while they were trying to clean up the place. Excuse me. And then, we moved back to the apartment. My mother was working, my brother found some kind of apprenticeship job, and my twin brother and I started school. And life was relatively normal, until my mother's family in the United States was able to have us brought over, which took quite a while because I guess there was a backlog and all kinds of red tape and paperwork. So,

we didn't get here until December 1948. So, I guess we spent about—a good three-plus years in Paris.

CP: What do you remember when you ended up getting to the United States? So, you were eight at that time.

MG: Right. Eight, almost nine. Several things: We came across on the *De Grasse*, which was one of the French line boats, and it was like a fairy tale to us. It was, to us, a gorgeous boat. It was—even though it was the oldest and least luxurious one of that line. It was, I think, a nine or ten-day trip, very rough seas, in December. I remember where they had a chain across the front deck, because there were sixty-foot waves crashing on the deck, so you weren't allowed to go there, obviously. And I was the only one who didn't miss any meals, in spite of seasickness. I was very proud of that, 'cause I was still the runt, remember.

It was very luxurious. They would play—there was an orchestra that played every evening, and they played “La vie en rose” to death. I remember there was a big staircase leading to, I guess, the dance floor and dining room, and there was—what do you call that? There's like a young boy who's working on the ship; in French it's called *un musse*. Not a purser, but anyway, he's like an apprentice, something like that. And he was always trying to be really brave, and one day, I see him kind of leaning on the railing, looking kind of green, and I say, “Feeling a little sick?” “No, no, I'm all right.” But as I said, it was the most wonderful vacation. I had never been on anything that luxurious.

And then, getting to New York Harbor in early morning and seeing the Statue of Liberty in the fog! Very emotional, because everything you've heard about it—it really is incredibly emotional, especially there is in the fog, you know, rising out. And then we got here, and of course it was total bedlam. We didn't speak a word of English. Nobody spoke French. But somehow, we managed to get to my grandparents' apartment.

We were living with my grandparents and my aunt, and that was difficult, because my mother could communicate with them fluently in Yiddish, my brother, my older brother, could communicate them probably with broken Yiddish, but enough to communicate pretty well. Michel and I did not know any Yiddish, 'cause we'd never had a chance to learn. At home, we spoke French. And that's when we started learning Yiddish, because it was the only common language—and learning Yiddish and English at the same time.

And within a few months, they had us enrolled in public school, and we were lucky that there was one teacher who spoke some French. So, they put us in her class, which I think was fourth grade. We may have been a grade below what we should have been, because

of the lack of English, and the fact that she spoke some French. But I remember being shocked that the kids were just learning simple arithmetic, and we already knew long division and stuff like that, and multiplication tables. But English was a problem. My poor brother, who somehow managed to have more problem with English than I did, one day he went up to the teacher and he said, “May I have a shit of paper?” And she said, “No, no, no, not like that.” She corrected him, “That’s a sheet of paper.” Unfortunately, he had trouble with the long and short E, and made the same mistake again, and she wasn’t as kind about it the second time.

Anyway, but we caught up quickly. Socializing was difficult, at first, and kids would pick on us—well, because we didn’t speak English, and we talked funny, and were called “Frenchy” and kind of silly stuff like that. But that didn’t last too long. We were young enough that we were able to not have too much of an accent in English for very long, although in high school they made both Michel and me take speech class. There was one English teacher who was very British, Dr. MacLeod, and he said to Michel, “Michel, I know your French accent is devilish with the young ladies, but you must get rid of it.” But it was devilish with the young ladies! (both laugh)

Anyway, so that was life after we got here. I went to City College in New York, and they had a lot of foreigners there. So, of course, we had a small group of French students, or French-speaking, so we had our little clique and the Estonians had their little clique, and so and so on. And it was nice. For one thing, I took French as a foreign language in junior high and in high school and in college, primarily—well, obviously it was easy for me, but also, you know, I was not even nine years old when I left France, so I still had a lot of French to learn: grammar, et cetera, spelling, vocabulary. So, I felt it was important, because I didn’t want to lose my French. My family strongly supported that; they didn’t want us to lose our French. I mean, it’s part of my culture.

I really have three different cultures. I’m French, I’m Jewish, and I’m American. And when I go to France, I realize how American I am, not just in my beliefs but also—I mean, you see somebody walking on the street in France, if they’re American you can tell just by watching them walk. And your thinking is different here. We think differently. It is freer, in a way. France still has a very bureaucratic mentality in everything, and everything has seven different forms in triplicate, and you get to stamp here and stamp there.

I remember going to the French Consulate for—the first time I wanted to go back to France. I figured, well, here I am—I was what, twenty-two? The Algerian War was still going on. I’m still considered a French citizen by France, even though I’m a naturalized American citizen. I’d better have a French passport and a letter of deferment, ’cause I didn’t want to come off the plane and be greeted by two gentlemen in uniform saying, “We have a free uniform for you, and a free trip to Algeria.” So, I went there, and no

problem. There's a very officious guy, and he is filling out this form, and he's very carefully writing everything—beautiful handwriting. And he's stamping it and he's stamping that, and finally I get this very fancy looking passport, which I still have, you know, with my picture and everything in it. It's kind of fun.

CP: Was there anything else that you'd like to talk about, or anything that we didn't cover?

MG: We've covered a lot of things. I've talked about how important it is to have a history of this, to know how it's affected people, good people, and how important it is for the world to know about it, especially the younger generation. It's extremely important to fight the Holocaust deniers. And, hopefully, this can make a better world, I'll be happy. I want to thank you and your crew for doing this. I think it's so important.

CP: Well, thank you very much. It's an honor to do this talk with you and to work with everyone else. Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure.

MG: You're very welcome.

CP: Thank you.

Pause in recording

CP: Okay, well, we remembered one other point, a very important point.

MG: Yes, how we got to Normandy. My uncle, my mother's brother, who had traveled more in France—including working in Normandy—had met a woman there, fallen in love, and gotten married. She was a Christian. They came back to Paris, and she and my mother became good friends. Unfortunately, and I hate to mention this, but the reality is that my family looked down on her because she wasn't Jewish. My mother, fortunately, was not prejudiced, and as I said, they became good friends. As things got worse in Paris, she said to my mother, "Madeleine, you have to get out of here. Here's an address to go to in Normandy. They will take care of you. Take the kids and go, now." So, my mother just packed up a couple of suitcases and the four of us—my mother with one of us in her arms and my older brother with one of us in his arms—got on the train, the bus, and whatever else, and went out to Normandy. And these people took care of us. They were Righteous Gentiles, and they saved our lives. It's very important for people to know about people like that.

CP: Well, thank you very much.

MG: You're welcome.

CP: I'm glad we got to share that.

MG: Yeah.

End of interview