

ORAL HISTORY T-0017
INTERVIEW WITH LEON LANDER
INTERVIEWED BY IRENE CORTINOVIS AND WALTER EHRLICH
IMMIGRANT PROJECT (RUSSIAN)
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Today is September 16, 1971, and this is Irene Cortinovic of the University of Missouri Archives and Manuscript Division. As a part of our Oral History series. Dr. Walter Ehrlich of the University History Department and I are here today to interview Mr. Leon Lander who came to this country in 1912 from Besarabia which is now part of Romania. He has been very active in the Jewish community all his life especially in Jewish education.

CORTINOVIS: All right, Mr. Lander, we just want you really to tell us anything you care to tell us about your life in America. But we would really like you to start with your life before you came. Where were you born? Who were your parents? How was it you came to America?

LANDER: When?

CORTINOVIS: Not only when, but why.

LANDER: At that time, it was Russia. Kishinev was the name. By the way, Kishinev is a well known, prominent name. Not in your days, but in 1903 when I was a child, the famous pogrom took place. You know, the pogrom?

CORTINOVIS: Yes.

LANDER: And they killed...they just went from house to house, to Jewish homes, and they killed all the people, the children...broke everything down...robbed everything. That was during Passover...Easter time. That made a terrible impression on the Jewish people who suffered during these years there. We started immigration to leave the country.

DR. EHRLICH: You lived in Kishinev at that time?

LANDER: I lived in Kishinev.

EHRLICH: About how old were you?

LANDER: In 1903? I am now 78, so it would be 68 years...about 10. I was about 10 years old.

EHRLICH: Old enough to remember that pretty vividly.

LANDER: I was a student of the Yeshiva there. I was apt to be a good student. When I was ten years, I had already studied Talmud. And Kishinev had one of the finest Yeshivas. Yeshiva means a high college, a Talmudic college. I was one of them then. I'll never forget how we...I wasn't thirteen yet, so...in Jewish life before thirteen, you are still a child...but the scholars, the students of Yeshiva who were thirteen years old, were appointed to carry to the grave the torn-up Torahs, not people, not bodies, but, you know, these scrolls. They not only killed people, but they went into the synagogues and prayer places, and they tore up the holiest thing, the Torah, we call it, and they became unclean. So we, as religious people, mourned this even more than the loss of the people, because it was so holy to us. And I will never forget that day when we, the students of the Yeshiva...I was not included because I was too young...but the ones who were sick were picked to carry the torn-up and burned Sifray Torah, they call it, the Torah pieces, the parchment, you know. It's written on parchment. And they carried it to a cemetery because that's the only way you could do with that, to bury it just as if it was a human being. Before we did that, we gathered thousands of Jews together in one of the great synagogues and made some kind of demonstrations and speeches which meant a memorial day. This I'll never forget. The name Kishinev is extremely important. Well, this answers, partly, your question. We didn't run away to make money; we didn't come here just for pleasure; we really came here to save our lives and to get freedom because we couldn't there, as a Jew. Not only a Jew, but everyone in Russia in those days. Maybe it's as bad as it is now, or worse...that you couldn't say anything, you couldn't do anything. We, of course, needed a passport. You walked the street any policeman could grab you and ask you...and they did, especially Jews...you had to stop with them and show them your passport, who you are, you couldn't do anything, make a step without that. So my family...the older brothers and sisters left earlier...then we followed. The last ones were my father and mother, my sister and I in 1912.

EHRlich: Was this fairly common for families to be broken up this way?

LANDER: That's right. These were the years of great immigration, you know; millions of Jews left from everywhere. Of course, we couldn't get a passport to leave the country, because at that time I was close to military age. We had to steal...what they called it...to go over the border between Russia and Austria. At one time, they caught us and they brought us back in chains. We were arrested and then we tried again. Oh, we went through... In those days, we did not have any money; we were very poor. Some organization took care of us. I think the Hias was mainly...you heard about the Hias? That was an organization ...it's still existing, but it's not doing as much as in those days. They took care of most of the expenses, but we had a terrible struggle to come here. It took us over three months from the day we left Kishinev, Besarabia, until we got to St. Louis.

ERlich: Do you remember, Mr. Lander, what route you took? What countries ...what cities...you went through from Kishinev?

LANDER: Yes, we crossed to Brod, they called it then, in Austria.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, I know where Brod is.

LANDER: We crossed from a town, Perchayev, a little town. We crossed the border into Brod, and when we came over there, they took us to a terrible place. Not the Jefferson Hotel,

I can tell you. We were sleeping; we were dreaming, and we were scared.

EHRlich: About how many were you?

LANDER: Each group went by itself. Our families were separate; we didn't go in groups. This was our family...my father, mother, my sister and myself. The other point I want to tell you...when we came into Brod, they took us to some kind of an office, and I saw that the Jews went around with the caps on, the yarmulkes, and they were free; we thought that was a Gan Eden.

EHRlich: A garden of Eden.

LANDER: A garden of Eden in comparison with Russia. It was just a few steps from one border to the other, so the other was hell, and this was a garden of Eden, in those days. The main stop we made was Amsterdam. That's Holland. There we got together hundreds of immigrants, all poor. Some of them lost their relatives in the pogroms. And we had to stay there for a month, probably.

EHRlich: Do you remember, did you go by train from Austria to Amsterdam?

LANDER: Yes, that's right. We went by train, not first class, naturally; we were packed like herrings, like sardines. And when we came there, we were treated...they couldn't help it, I suppose...all we had morning, afternoon, and evening was bread and jelly. We didn't see meat for the entire time. We had a potato sometimes; that was a holiday! A potato and bread, just in order to fill up.

EHRlich: It's probably just as well, because the meat probably wouldn't have been kosher anyway.

LANDER: No, they had it at that time. And then to describe...I have it in another book...I have it in my diary, where I describe the boat. It took, I believe, three weeks. We went three weeks from Amsterdam to Canada, to Quebec. Well, we were down, third class, you know...same trouble; we didn't have any air, fresh air, anything decent to eat, struggled an awful lot. We were not the only ones.

CORTINOVIS: It was about two weeks... three weeks...from Amsterdam?

LANDER: Three weeks on the boat. And we had all kinds of storms. I found out that two months after we left, the boat went to pieces. It was a miracle that we made it.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, it is.

LANDER: But it answers your question as to why we left and why we came to America. I want to tell you that as soon as we stepped on America's ground, my feet felt the ground, we really thought that we came to the garden of Eden. I couldn't in my imagination think of such freedom. To us, it was...we could say anything, we could do anything; there was an addition to that...we were not afraid. After all, our life was in danger. Besides that, we felt for the first time like newly-born people. I remember nights I dreamt about it; I couldn't believe that we really were in such a wonderful, free country.

CORTINOVIS: How did you happen to come to St. Louis?

LANDER: My family came here. It so happens, you know...that happened to every family. First one came here went to New York, and then they couldn't they find anything, so somebody suggested that/should go to St. Louis. So the first one went there and took over his wife, my sister...that was my brother-in-law, the first one to come here...and then his wife came...

EHRlich: Who was that, Mr. Lander?

MRS. LANDER: Ben Wexler.

LANDER; No, that was before. That was Landau. We didn't know him. Ben Wexler, you probably know.

EHRlich: W-E-X-L-E-R?

LANDER: W-E-X-L-E-R. So, one took his wife, and then my oldest brother suggested they should come, and then his wife, and then my other brother, and then my other sister. They gradually came to one place.

CORTINOVIS: What about the employment situation? What kind of work were you and your family members prepared to do when you came here?

LANDER: Very bad, as far as that's concerned. I remember, I was supposed nights for me to pray, but they expected it, that the very intelligent boy that everyone talked about, and they wrote to me...

EHRlich: After all, you were a student at the Yeshiva there.

LANDER: They wrote to me that when I come, I wouldn't have to go to work, but that I would go to college. I would go to the university to the Yeshiva, and that would be how I would build a future. The truth of the matter is, when I came here and I saw the poverty the family didn't have anything, I didn't have the heart to tell them they should give me money and send me to college, and I refused. I told them I would do whatever somebody else does. My first job was to make wire frames for hats. In those days, they made the forms with wire.

EHRlich: You were still about ten years old?

CORTINOVIS: No, no, he was twenty-one then.

LANDER: The pogrom was in 1903. I came here; that was my first job; my brother found it for me. I went in there, and my fingers couldn't touch it. The wire...my fingers got awful dirty. I couldn't do anything. Some fellows in those days made \$30 a week, and I barely made \$7, and it was because the manager had respect for me or something. Otherwise, he wouldn't probably keep me.

EHRlich: Do you remember the name of the company?

LANDER: It was...what was the name?

MRS. LANDER: I don't know.

LANDER: It was a small company. They called him by his first name. It was a small place with only fifteen or twenty people working there.

EHRlich: Do you remember where it was located?

LANDER: It was near Wash, Wash and Carr—one large room about seven-teen or eighteen. All of them were green; "greehhorns" they called them, but all the more so; I couldn't do anything. Then I tried tailoring. When the war broke out, they made what they called torbolech sacks.

CORTINOVIS: Like a duffle bag?

LANDER: Bags to put the ammunition in. So I tried that, but every bag I made, I had to tear it up again. When I made my seven dollars a week. Then I tried a shoe company; same trouble, toig nicht. I was no good for this. And I must say, I was struggling, because making a living I was going very badly. Luckily and foolishly, I found this little woman.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, Mrs. Lander has now joined us. LANDER: First, I met a very ugly little girl, and I thought all of them here in America...and I thought I couldn't find any nice...you know, religious people, like to have beautiful wives. All the rabbis, if you'll notice, all the rabbis have beautiful wives. The reason is, besides that, it's really pleasant to have a beautiful wife; the reason is he should not have a chance...I mean, he should not have any desire for sin...to go out and look for others. He has the best. So, I looked at this girl, a very ugly-looking girl, and I thought, "Well, perhaps, they're all [ugly] around here." Then all of a sudden, I met this girl here; oh, she was a cute little kid! She was about sixteen years old.

EHRlich: How long had you been here?

LANDER: Same time. She came in 1912. We didn't meet; we met here in St. Louis. We didn't meet before.

MRS. LANDER: You came about a month or two months later.

LANDER: A couple months. So, we happened to meet. Oh, I don't want few talk too long. It could take hours, but I met her, and she probably was the only crazy little girl not to demand anything. She just wanted me,; she didn't care that I made seven dollars a week. Nowadays, before you get married, you have to have a car, furniture, you have to have a good job. And she had a brother. He was also, he liked me, and they rushed us to get married. We didn't have anything. I tell you, it's a miracle the way we came out. We didn't have a thing. The first time, when we married, we had a little store, a dandy store on Franklin Avenue, on Twenty-Second and Franklin. A little candy store in which we took in, if we took in three dollars a day, we sold penny stuff. We lived in the back. I ate there; I hate to even think about it. Then we moved out to a place, an alley somewhere, on Fourteenth between Carr and Wash. My first child was born. It was an older one.

EHRlich: At that time, the Jewish community. Fourteenth and Wash, that particular area, the near North side...

LANDER: Yes, that was a section. At that time. Grand was considered the end...

CORTINOVIS: Did that section have a name?

LANDER: No. Biddle Street. It was known as Biddle Street.

CORTINOVIS: This was a Jewish section?

LANDER: When I came, it was between Ninth Street and Eighteenth Street. I would say that was the main...

CORTINOVIS: It couldn't have been solid Jewish, though, because my mother was born on Biddle Street, Thirteenth and Biddle, and she came from an Irish family. There were some Irish in the neighborhood.

MRS. LANDER: The majority was Jewish.

CORTINOVIS: That's interesting. I didn't know that.

EHRlich: When I was born in 1921, my parents at that time lived at 1812 Carr which is right in the neighborhood.

LANDER: I think that's enough about gloomy things.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, that was a bad time, I can tell. So, then, it was made doubly hard for you, but you were not prepared to make a living in the United States. How was your English?

LANDER: I knew more English than anybody in my family when they came.

CORTINOVIS: How did you learn it?

LANDER: I studied in Russia before I left. See, they told me that I would have to go, and I was to prepare myself. As poor as I was, I still got a teacher in English.

EHRlich: A private teacher?

LANDER: A private teacher, yes. And I learned...not a great deal... but I could fairly well speak a number of words. I could write. And then, I studied from the first day I came here. I went to night schools. I went to the university and to the college of law...that's later. In the beginning, I just went to evening classes. In all the schools, there were evening classes.

CORTINOVIS: In all the elementary schools. Did you go, Mrs. Lander?

MRS. LANDER: I went, but not too much. I'm sorry. My English is very poor.

CORTINOVIS: Your English was very poor at that time?

MRS. LANDER: It still is.

CORTINOVIS: Not at all. I would just like to ask you where you were born. You came the same year, in 1912, but where were you born?

MRS. LANDER: Well, I was born in Russia, too.

CORTINOVIS: In what part?

LANDER: Volin...they had states like here...Gubernia, they called it.

CORTINOVIS: In southern Russia?

EHRlich AND LANDER: Southwest, in the Ukraine.

EHRlich: My focal point in my background is Yampol. Where was this in* relation to Yampol? Oh, right near there? In southwestern Russia.

LANDER: Let me explain to you. In Russia, the Jews could not live any place they want to. There was only a small section in Russia. They couldn't live in Petrograd or Moscow; you couldn't come in there unless you were a college man or a good mechanic. Otherwise, they wouldn't let in anyone. So there were just about three or four states where all the Jews lived together. We were there. About five million Jews. Russia had about five million Jews. And they were all crowded in a small section. So, practically all of us came. Well, I would say there was approximately five hundred miles between her section and mine. It's very far.

EHRlich: You didn't know each other.

LANDER: No, I met her here on the street. There's a story to tell. It was the night of Tisha B'Av. It was the night when they mourn; it's a fast day when they mourn the loss of Jerusalem 1900 years ago, and they call it Tisha B'Av...nine days of the month of Av. So that night, it happened we were religious traditional Jews, and we found out that a Jewish company, Jewish actors, a company of Jewish actors came, Yaakov Adier, a great actor and his company came special that night to perform there. And we felt terrible about it; we felt that a night like this when people mourn and fast, to have a happy show...so a group of us, as green as we were, we found out in America you can demonstrate. I was about one year in this country; I thought we could demonstrate. The traditional young people decided to demonstrate...to go and protest the performance...went there to break up the performance...like the colored people do. So, I met her on the way, this same night; she also went for that purpose. She came out of a house where they said lamentations...you know, the special lamentations for that night. Do you know what lamentations is?

CORTINOVIS: Yes. Like prayers.

LANDER: Yes. It's mourning; it's a memorial. She came out from that place, and I came out from the synagogue and we happened to meet on the street. I don't know how it happened...who started to talk. I'm sure she didn't start it!

MRS. LANDER: [laughter] I went with a bunch of girls, and he knew one of the girls called

Rose Zuckermann.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, that's the way people always meet.

EHRlich: What is your maiden name, Mrs. Lander?

MRS. LANDER: Rudman.

EHRlich: Rudman? R-U-D-M-A-N?

MRS. LANDER: Yes.

LANDER: So, that's the night when we met, and I liked her. I found out there was a pretty girl in America! I mean, after meeting all these ugly girls...that here was a cute little girl. Here is a picture. [A little bit later.] So, I fell in love with her. And as long as she didn't care for money, that was fine!

MRS. LANDER: I didn't have no home, and he had a home, so we decided to get married.

LANDER: They rushed us into marriage...

CORTINOVIS: To be poor together!

LANDER: ...rushed us into marriage and they decided, "Well, you make five dollars a week, and she makes five dollars a week, so together it would be ten dollars. Ten dollars, we can go on." Well, we couldn't even do it in those days. It was very bad. Anyway, we struggled...

EHRlich: Do you remember who the rabbi was?

LANDER: Yeah, it was when I came there was Rosenfeld and Rabbi Abramovitz. These were the two leading rabbis.

EHRlich: Of the orthodox community.

LANDER: Of the orthodox community. The reformed rabbis was Isserman. No, Isserman wasn't there yet...Harrison, Leon Harrison.

EHRlich: Of Temple Israel.

LANDER: There were only two men, there were only two.

EHRlich: And the United Hebrew Temple?

LANDER: The United Hebrew was an orthodox congregation then. They just gradually changed. United Hebrew was a congregation; they had their place on Kingshighway. And then later, some other place on Kingshighway, and Enright. I remember it was still an orthodox shul; well, I would say conservative; they wear caps and tallaysim and all that. But, gradually, they changed. Let's see, who was the first rabbi? Rabbi Thurman, I think. He was there for a long time.

EHRlich: Was it Messing?

LANDER: Messing, I don't...

EHRlich: Was he the rabbi there?

LANDER: The older rabbi then...

EHRlich: Roswell Messing, Senior.

LANDER: I don't remember if he was in this temple or... Anyway, there were only two; there was Temple Israel, B'nai El was orthodox. I would say, maybe, only one real temple; eventually, they reformed.

EHRlich: But the leader in the orthodox community, the rabbi?

LANDER: Rabbi Rosenfeld. And, by the way. Rabbi Rosenfeld's grandson is the main reporter from Israel you hear from time to time. Rosenfeld and report from Israel.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, Alvin Rosenfeld.

LANDER: Rabbi Abramovitz was a wonderful rabbi and, believe me, I believe he lived as poor as we did. He was a tremendous learned man, a wonderful speaker and so smart, brilliant, a wonderful man to talk to. You know, what he got? The women used to go around with their handkerchiefs to collect quarters, and they gave him...they brought together five, ten dollars on Friday.

MRS. LANDER: Five, ten dollars; then ten dollars was a fortune.

LANDER: That's the way they lived in those days.

EHRlich: Where was the shul, the synagogue?

LANDER: The main shul was on Eleventh and Biddle; they call it the Beth Hamedrosh, and it's still existing. It's now on North and South; they call it the Beth Hamedrosh Hagodol, and that was the Ashkenaz. Do you know the two groups? The orthodox were divided into two groups, the Sephardic and the Ashkenaz. So Rabbi Abramovitz was of the Ashkenaz, and Rabbi Rosenfeld was of the Sephardic.

EHRlich: Where was the Sephardic congregation?

LANDER: They were a little bit lower, on Ninth and Wash. Ninth and Wash was a big shul; they called it T'pheris Yisroel; it's now on 6800 Delmar. It was on Ninth and Wash. It wasn't like now; they didn't have rabbis in each shul, each congregation. This is a late...at the beginning there was no rabbi at the shul. There was only one rabbi for the city. Each congregation didn't need a rabbi. What did they need a rabbi for? Every Jew is supposed to be a rabbi himself. I mean, this I want for your benefit. That to us, a rabbi is not so important. We consider every Jew is so close to God that he doesn't need anybody to help him. We don't need any Jesus, we don't need any angels. We come direct.

EHRlich: He's saying all of this for me; he knows my son is training to be a rabbi.

CORTINOVIS: Oh. I didn't know that.

LANDER: [laughing] You see, we have a sentence in the Chumash, in the Bible, "Bonim ahem", you are children; you are the sons of the Lord. Not one son, see; we are...the Christians think about a Son of God... and here we are all sons of God. So, in those days, they didn't have rabbis in the shul; every Jew, or most every Jew, was a self-learned man, and he prayed and he davened and he learned by himself; what did he need a rabbi for? Later on when the people start forgetting, they didn't learn what they should know, then...nowadays an ordinary Jew doesn't know anything. You know, they know very little; they go through a...I know, I was the director of the schools...and when they left the school, they didn't know much. So they need a rabbi, otherwise they get lost; they wouldn't know what to do.

MRS. LANDER: Well, it's a good thing they have rabbis now.

LANDER: So the rabbis are a necessary thing now; I don't say they dnn't but in those days, they didn't need them.

EHRlich: It's a shame the tape recorder can't pick up the twinkle in his eyes when he says all of this.

CORTINOVIS: Yes. Well, Mr. Lander, I'm really interested in what you had to say about how hard it was to make a living when you came here, and I'd really like to kind of get back to that. Of the people that you knew when you came here, who had the easiest adjustment to make to the new country and who had the hardest, do you think?

LANDER: I would say about 90% had it hard. 90% of the newcomers had it hard.

CORTINOVIS: For what reasons?

LANDER: Because in Europe, they did not have any professions, and when they left, there wasn't such a thing in Europe; in Kishinev, Bessarabia or anywhere, there were no factories. All we had were just stores. And another thing I want to call your attention to is, in those days in Europe it was a shame to be a working man. I don't know for what reason. The lowest thing was to be a carpenter or a shoemaker. You see, they couldn't even find a shiduch. They couldn't find a wife, because they were considered low-grade. Everyone wanted a rabbi...wanted a yeshiva bocher (a scholar), wanted a businessman. So those few, there were only a few who had a profession or some kind of a skilled labor...those few had the best. That's the answer to your question. Those few who were the lowest in Europe, they were not considered anything, and they came here, they were on top. They were the ones who found jobs immediately, and some of them worked themselves up. And the others, those who were on top there, didn't have anything, they didn't know how to do anything, they didn't have any work, so they were the most to struggle. In other words, to make it brief, the lower ones were on top, the intelligent ones those who came from Europe, more or less learned and all that, we struggled more than anybody else.

CORTINOVIS: Yes. For example, what did your family do before they came?

LANDER: My family...my two brothers happened to be in that lower class, what you call working men. They were working men in Europe, see. I was the only one in my family who was supposed...my father wanted to make something out of me. He picked me out.

CORTINOVIS: What did your father do?

LANDER: My father was a sort of a reverend, a rabbi, a cantor, a teacher. He was a nice-looking man, a learned man, and that's what he did, and he was very poor. Very poor; he didn't have anything. Now herring is supposed to be a very—cost a lot. But in those days, herring...you could get a whole herring for five cents...five pennies in Europe. So that's all we had...bread and herring, bread and herring, a little piece of butter. We were poor. So my father was a sort of a...you call a reverend. He wasn't a rabbi; he didn't get any smicha.

EHRlich: Ordainment.

LANDER: He wasn't ordained, but a very intelligent, learned man. He had a sweet voice. He was one of the fine cantors. In fact, when we came here and it took three days that they engaged him; they caught him just in time. We came before the holidays, like this here now. It was September, a few days before Rosh Hashonoh...before the new year, and immediately got the job at the largest shul in town. Ninth and Wash, and we were the helpers and a few others. So this was my father; he couldn't do much for us. We struggled there. When he came here, he worked; he has done better than he did in Europe. He found some lessons and cantor and all that.

CORTINOVIS: What language did you speak?

LANDER: If you'll pardon me, I didn't complete the answer to you. So, my two brothers were working men...one was a tinner, a plumber, and one was a bookbinder. And they didn't have any trouble when they came here; they either worked for the other people or they worked for themselves.

EHRlich: Here in St. Louis?

LANDER: Yes, here in St. Louis. In fact, he had some kind of a store. A little shop on 1105 Biddle Street. That's the place where he had it. The rest of us...

MRS. LANDER: It was a wonderful place to raise children. You know, the bookbinding business.

LANDER: Yeah, they still have a fine factory here...oh, not a factory... they call it "Lander Bookbinding."

CORTINOVIS: Oh, so, that's your brother?

LANDER: That's my brother's children.

MRS. LANDER: He's dead already, but the children have it.

LANDER: By the way, we came here, six of us...I mean, eight of us with the parents...father and mother...six of us...three brothers and three sisters. I'm the only one left. All five of them gone. I mourn each one of them. All five of them gone. Did I answer your question?

CORTINOVIS: Yes. I would also like to know what language you spoke in your home to each other, and how people went about learning how to speak English.

LANDER: We spoke Yiddish...that's not Russian...in every home...in my home, they spoke Yiddish.

EHRlich: I still speak Yiddish fluently.

LANDER: For a long time...they started the English...they started speaking English just about thirty-forty years ago. The children grew up and brought in the English; the children would go to school and when they came home, the children asked questions in English. So the mother learned from the children.

EHRlich: I think it's rather interesting. You'll notice the difference in the way Mr. Lander is so fluent in English. Mrs. Lander has much more difficulty. My parents are exactly the same way. The man of the house who went out to earn the living learned the language; the mother of the house learned the language primarily because she had to answer the questions of her children who went to school. My mother speaks, well, Mrs. Lander speaks English fluently compared to the way my mother speaks English.

CORTINOVIS: Oh, is that so?

EHRlich: Because the only English that my mother ever cared to use was when she heard it from us. She still speaks to us in Yiddish, but we answer her in English.

LANDER: There's a point I want to make. Another reason how they learned English, they use the Yiddish and the English. They used every fifth word English. They call it a window, a table, this is not Yiddish; in Yiddish, it's a tisch.

EHRlich: "Effen off the window," instead of "effen off the fenster."

LANDER: "Setze bein tisch the chair!"

EHRlich: "Setze bein table."

LANDER: That's how we got in a number of words. As I said, every fifth word. Even the mother who didn't know any English had to learn these words. She couldn't talk to the child or to anyone. A "fenster," a "flech," a "kich," ...so, "kitchen," "table," "window," "chair," all these words were taken in into the Yiddish language. In fact, some newspapers... I was careful I never did that in my writing...but there were some newspapers, Abe Kahn, used to use the English just like they speak. They used it in the articles, in the writings. They used it just the way they spoke. They said, "That's the way we should write; the way we speak it." So that is the other reason how they acquired the English language.

CORTINOVIS: Do you still speak Yiddish in the home? Here at home?

LANDER: Yes, between the two of us.

MRS. LANDER: We taught it to the children and the grandchildren, because we wanted them to know. They understand, but they can't answer in Yiddish.

LANDER: There's a joke. When they count money, they say in Yiddish, it counts better, "eins, zwei, drei, vier." The truth of the matter is, I know English, but I know Yiddish still more easier. In Yiddish, I'm swimming.

CORTINOVIS: You're running in Yiddish, but you're walking in English.

LANDER: I learned a number of languages in my life. Naturally, I know Hebrew. I speak Hebrew, by the way, almost as good as English. And German and Russian. I speak five-six languages fluently, but now using it, naturally, I get...

CORTINOVIS: All right. Let's see. In your description of when you came to America, we left you at the candy store. So you and Mrs. Lander had a little store. And after that, what did you do?

LANDER: After that, we went bankrupt! It started when we had five dollars a day...that was prosperity! Then, we went bankrupt. We couldn't go on, so I looked for jobs. So I went...I don't remember if she went Back to work.

MRS. LANDER: No, you wouldn't let me go back to work.

LANDER: So, I went back to work and I made my eight-ten dollars a week. I told you all these things I made. The wire frames...and then, I became a bookkeeper. I became a bookkeeper..the first business was Sam Gold Jewelry. It was the Sam Gold Jewelry Store on Franklin Avenue. I think it was 15th and 16th and Franklin Avenue. And he engaged me as a bookkeeper. I should write his letters for him. I was only about a year and a half in this country, and he engaged me. I should write his letters. Figures was very easy for me, but then I had to write his letters. So, I'll give you a picture. He sat down in a chair and he started to dictate to me to write. He was a very ugly man in his behavior. It was terrible, and he was very rough in what he said. And he started a letter, "You son of a...you didn't pay against your...you're a terrible boy. You bought things," and he asked me, "Did you write it?" And I'd have to read it back to him. So every day, I'd get sick; it was terrible to go through with that, because I had sense enough not to put in those terrible words. But some of them I had to. I had to read it back to him. So, he dictated and I wrote. Terrible. I can't understand it. He used to on the telephone, too. He used to pick up the receiver and the other fellows who got jewelry, diamonds, they didn't pay him. If they didn't want to pay, they just stopped paying. And he picked up the receiver, and he told them over the telephone. Believe me, it was worth it...worth five dollars to listen to the language he used on the telephone. I tried to change him, but it was impossible. So that's what we had to go through. So I was a book- keeper and I was a letter-writer, a wire-frame maker, a schuler, a shoe- maker...not a shoemaker... I used a hammer and knocked on the leather pieces, a shoemaker, a bookkeeper, a...what else? And then a tailor...

MRS. LANDER: You made the bags for the soldiers then. LANDER: Yeah. And the end

was, I started to do something fairly good. That was when I became a dry goods peddler...sold things on time payment. Most of us were people who couldn't do anything else, so I remember somebody went with me to a wholesale place...to a Syrian. We couldn't sell just regular things; we had to sell fancy things in order to attract. We used to buy some laces, all kinds, in those days. What was the name of that lace?

MRS. LANDER: Madiera.

LANDER: Madiera, and all sorts of things like that. So I bought that, I remember that. I spent about fifty dollars. I don't remember where I got the fifty dollars. I borrowed. I know you didn't give me nothing. I went to this Mr. Tofle...took me...I don't know whether you know...he went to the Syrian on South Broadway, and he helped me pick out fifty dollars' worth of merchandise. And he took me out on the streetcar somewhere and he started I should knock on the doors and show them my merchandise. And in the beginning, it was terrible; it was against my nature. My nature was not the type. I'm not a good salesman. I mean, I'm a good salesman, perhaps, if I have something really to sell, but to just beg people to buy, I couldn't do it. So I struggled again, but gradually I worked up a little route what they call it. I worked up to about fifty customers, and they paid me 25 a week...50 a week. Gradually until I built up some kind of a business, a route, and from then on, it started to get better. But I struggled until I came back to Jewish life. I didn't do much good.

MRS. LANDER: Well, you did all right in the stores. He went in partners with his brother-in-law...he was a very fine man...and for a few years, it was good but then it collapsed. His sister was working on the side. She got sick and died and they had trouble.

LANDER: And don't forget, together with this, I had to go to school. You know, university and college...do you remember City College of Law on Grand and Olive? City College of Law. So, that was my main...

CORTINOVIS: What were you studying at that time?

LANDER: Law. I didn't get a degree, but I learned thinking through a course at law. Then I took courses at Washington University, at St. Louis University between...just between making a living and struggling and all that. Until...if you could read Yiddish, I would read to you... until some people discovered me...if you call it discovered me. One, his uncle was one of them, Leon Gellman. Leon Gellman was the editor of this Jewish newspaper, Jewish Record. So he talked to me, and we were very good friends. We worked together for Zionism...that's another world...Jewish National Fund was my baby. You heard about Jewish National Fund? In those days, it was the Jewish National Fund.

CORTINOVIS: Now, this would be in the early '20's?

LANDER: It started in 1901, but I was very young then. I was the first president here in St. Louis. Here's my picture as president of the Jewish National Fund.

CORTINOVIS: And what year was that?

LANDER: That was in 1928. That wasn't right in the beginning. That was when I got tired already. In fact, in here it said they put my name in The Golden Book as a reward for all my

work. That was in 1928, and 1928, that's 43 years ago, so they put my name in the Golden Book and they thought that was the end of my activity. 1928. Was I done now? In fact, since 1928 I just started! So I was very...and now I'm thinking how could I do all that... making a living, so to speak...education, and very active in all these groups...the Jewish National Fund, the Mizrahi, I went to conventions...! never missed a convention. Where I got the money, I don't know. I went to every yearly Zionist convention.

MRS. LANDER: He always left me with the children, and he went to the convention.

LANDER: You know the way I went to the convention? I didn't stay at the finest hotels. I didn't get to sleep on the train. I made it cheap, but I wanted to be there. There are three...! don't want you to stay long unless you have time.

CORTINOVIS: No, I have all day.

LANDER: I emphasize there are three things which interest me more than anything else in my life. In fact, my book...that Yiddish book...is divided into three parts. Why did I divide it into three parts? Because these are the three most important ideas. The first one is religious life in America, Jewish religious life in America, and its interests, and the congregations and all that. More than that, I was interested in Zionism, Zionism and the Jewish state, and the third one is Jewish education. These are the three subject which I gave my life to.

CORTINOVIS: I believe that you were going to tell me then that you had a big struggle as far as making a living was concerned 'til you got back to Jewish life. Was this where you really began teaching then?

LANDER: Well, I started with the Jewish Record. At first, I was writing...

CORTINOVIS: Oh, you began to work for the newspaper, the Jewish Record? I see.

LANDER: But in the beginning, I didn't make any money because the Jewish Record itself was struggling. But then his uncle (Leon Gellman) talked me into becoming a part of the Jewish Record to get paid, and here are the articles about it. They praised me when I accepted that job, and I was a part of that job...they called it at that time, the Director of Subscription Department. You see, I was well-known in town; they knew me all over, and Leon Gellman thought that I could do some good to increase the subscriptions...that department...and I became one of the directors. And they made a big fuss out of it, and they introduced men and that Helped a lot, and that's when I started to make a dollar from Jewish life. Up til then I was just from the goyim, from the outside world, and they didn't do so good for me. But then this was the first dollar I made when I started at the Jewish Record as the Director of the Subscriptions. And then the real job that I got was in 1935 when Dr. Reiss left. The schools, the Hewbrew schools, were in very, very bad condition; they had a lot of children, and a lot of schools in those days, but they didn't have any money to carry on.

EHRlich: David Reiss taught in the public schools in St. Louis and was also connected with the private Hebrew schools.

LANDER: That's right, he was with the schools...

EHRlich: He taught at Soldan High School.

LANDER: High school. In fact, he was the chairman of that teachers' college. I think he created, or he helped create, that teacher's college here in St. Louis. Then he started teaching Hebrew in the high schools.

EHRlich: He was unable to get the private Hebrew schools to function properly, and this is where Mr. Lander came in.

LANDER: Then came the bad times of the 1930's. We couldn't carry on, and he left. People suggested that I was the right man to take the job. You can imagine what my salary was then. It was very little. But, gradually, we worked it up and we created ten schools with almost a thousand children, and then I laughed at the tremendous salary of \$4,000 a year. I never dreamt in my life in those days that was in 1935-1940, \$4,000 a year. That was an awful lot. That's when I became a wealthy man!

CORTINOVIS: What was the purpose of these schools, Mr. Lander?

LANDER: The purpose of the school? First of all, as I told you before, we believe every Jew has to know the Talmud. He has to know the Torah, the Bible. Without knowing this, he's not considered good as a Jew. That's a part of Jewish religion. It's a part of Jewish religion to study. To study itself is one of the mitzyos, one of the commandments. The learning commandment... without learning, you are not carrying out the commandment. That's one thing. The second thing, we have a tremendous heritage. So much to learn and so beautiful, and we want our children should get something out of it. The third thing is, we are losing them without this. You know, the Jewish people up to about 22 years ago, they didn't have a state. There wasn't a Jewish state. Just here and there. They didn't have any place and for two thousand years, the Jewish people were without a foundation. And they were not only without a foundation, they were killed and robbed, and they had all kinds of decrees against them. It is a wonder how we carried on, how we remained, how these twelve or thirteen million Jews still went on. According to sensible things, according to history, to world history, there shouldn't be one Jew left.

PARLEY: I don't understand what Yiddish is.

EHRlich: Yiddish is a separate language. Yiddish and Hebrew are two different languages. Hebrew is the language in which the Bible was written; Hebrew itself dates back thousands of years. Yiddish is more of a central European language. Yiddish is the language that came out of the Jewish community of Russia, Poland, Germany; it's actually a combination of old Hebrew and Polish, Russian and German...there are very, very striking similarities, for instance, between Yiddish and Hebrew.

CORTINOVIS: It's far more a spoken language.

EHRlich: A spoken language. A good deal has been written in Yiddish. Slalom Aleichem stories, for instance. The background for Fiddler on the Roof, these were all written in Yiddish then translated into English, in contrast with the Hebrew.

PARLEY: Then, you say, it's sort of a European Hebrew?

EHRlich: Yes, you see, the letters are the same. I could show you something that's written in Hebrew...something that's written in Yiddish. The same alphabet is used, but the vocabulary is a different one.

PARLEY: I see.

EHRlich: In the same sense that the French and Spanish and Italian and English all use the same alphabet, but they developed different words, and so these are two completely different languages. But you'll find that Yiddish is concentrated among Jewish people; very, very few non-Jews, I suppose, have ever spoken Yiddish. Now, the community here is this. If we were to go, let's say, to Hong Kong and go to a synagogue in Hong Kong, the chances are very likely that the Chinese Jews wouldn't know and, incidentally, there are some because...

CORTINOVIS; I know. Rabbi Isserman went there for awhile.

EHRlich: Yes, and my cousin who was in the Foreign Service was there for a while, too, and you go there and you would find that they speak Hebrew, but they have very little knowledge of Yiddish. Evidently, Yiddish is known among those only who are descended from the European community.

LANDER: Walter, you know, there is another Yiddish type of Jew. The Asiatic Jew...that's a Ladina. That's a language similar. No similar, but takes the same place as Yiddish in our country. It's a mixture of Yiddish, not Yiddish, but Hebrew together with the other languages... Chinese and Indian and all that. So they have trouble in Israel when these two groups come together. Their Yiddish...we speak Yiddish... they speak Ladina. The only thing which can combine or unite us is...

EHRlich: Hebrew. This is a universal language that unites the entire...

LANDER: That is the reason why we want our children to study. As soon as we got the Jewish state, the State of Israel, there was more reason for our children, Jewish children, should study Hebrew, because this is the language they use. It's the official language. It became alive after two thousand years. After two thousand years almost forgotten. But it came alive, and they use it for everything. They did use it all these years for prayer; you see, we didn't forget it altogether. All the prayers are in Hebrew; the studying, we had a lot of studying in Hebrew.

EHRlich: Your interest in Israel is much more than just recent. Part of your life here in ST. Louis has been your very, very close connection with the Zionist movement. Who are some of the people who were involved in the Zionist movement in ST. Louis? People with whom you worked, and what are some of your recollections?

LANDER: The greatest personality that we all loved was Gustave Klausner, Dr. Klausner.

EHRlich: He used to be at St. Louis University.

LANDER: In fact, I have an article for him here in this book. Next to him, or maybe before him, is your uncle, Leon Gellman.

EHRlich: ...who is still living and is in Jerusalem.

LANDER: Yes, I had dinner...we had lunch together three years ago. The new ones, I really don't know too well.

EHRlich: But these are the two back in the 20's and in the 30's, Professor Klausner and Leon Gellman.

LANDER: There used to be a Dr. Garland. Do you remember him? Dr. Wolk and Mrs. Garland. I have some pictures here.

EHRlich: What position did you hold?

LANDER: I was president of almost every organization; I was president of the Zionist organization. I was president of the Mizrahi, the religious group. I was president of the Jewish National Fund seven or eight times. I couldn't get out of it. I was president of the shul, I was even president of a union, I remember, when I made six-seven dollars a week, and gr>ine fellows made thirty dollars, but they couldn't speak, they couldn't handle anything, so I became president. The cheapest fellow who made the least a week!

EHRlich: What were some of the activities in the St. Louis community that you directed?

LANDER: It...first of all, education was the most...was my job. Jewish education was the most time that I gave effort and energy for Jewish education. The second is the Jewish National Fund which is Zionism, but it's the collecting agency of the...

EHRlich: And I can still remember as a little boy going out from door to door with those little blue and white boxes, and flags, going from house to house...

LANDER: Flower days, and we had flag days...

CORTINOVIS: What year was that, Walter?

EHRlich: This was when I was a kid in the 20's and 30's.

LANDER: I was always the head of these things most of the time. I couldn't get out of it. I see your uncle, Leon Gellman, writes in 1928 that he heard that Leon Lander is going to quit, going to leave the Jewish National Fund, and he starts to urging me "Don't do it. You have to stay." In 1928. But since 1928, I still carry on. I couldn't get out of it until recently.

CORTINOVIS: Well, I would like to hear you discuss for a little while the changes that you have seen in the Jewish community from the time that you and Mrs. Lander came here in the earliest days, and from what you consider now the Jewish community is all about.

LANDER: In a few words, I would say there are two ways that you can look upon it. There's the good. It improved and it went back. It improved the national feeling of Jews. I'm talking from a Jewish standpoint. The national feeling of Jews increased. There was a time when we couldn't get in...I mean, I remember when I was a child when I started the Jewish National Fund, and I'd go around with the box in Europe yet, in Kishinev. I remember I was thrown

out of every Jewish synagogue. I couldn't come in, because they thought it was not the proper thing to do. We should not build any Jewish state. From a religious standpoint, we have to wait until the Messiah comes. Have you heard about that? The real religious people, there are still some in Israel against the Jewish state. They call them the Neturah Karta (led by Rabbi Joel Blau.) They claim that this is not the type of a state that we are waiting for. We prayed for a state that would be God and Angels and the world would be in its Messianic age, and now you could up a woman, Golda Meier, and she is the main one. How can real religious people look upon this thing that this is a Jewish state?

EHRlich: Also this comes from a group that feels that there should be strict segregation between the sexes, too.

LANDER: So we were fighting on two sides. We were thrown out from both sides. From the religious, the real orthodox synagogue, we were sinners. We couldn't go on. And the other side was terrible...the Reform, the Reform temple, the Reform Jews. They scratched out from their prayers, you know, in our prayers in practically every prayer, we have the prayer for Zion, for Jerusalem, we want to return. Every prayer has it, and the Jew who prays says it all day long, morning, afternoon and in every prayer there is that. So...

EHRlich: Do you recall in the story Fiddler on the Roof...have you seen it? At the very end when they're leaving the small town, and the woman who is the matchmaker, she's going and she says, "Remember how in all of our prayers every year at Passover we say 'next year in Jerusalem'? Finally, I'm going to Jerusalem." Well, this is what Mr. Lander is talking about. That throughout the prayer, there has always been that hope that next year, next year we'll be in Jerusalem.

LANDER: But the Reform element...I don't know how much you are acquainted with that, the Reform started in France at the time of...what was that great king? Napoleon. Napoleon freed everybody, and so he called together the congregation of Jewish people and they decided that they had such a wonderful country, France, that we don't need Israel. So, to make it brief, the Reform Jews scratched out everything from the prayers that has to do with Zion and Jerusalem, and they didn't want to mention the word because we have our land, our country here in Paris; we have our country in New York. They were afraid to touch it even.

EHRlich: At that time, the reform movement was fundamentally to get away from this old stuff and become a part of the crowd.

LANDER: But now they changed. Now they became close, and they are a part of the Zionist movement. They put back everything. I don't know if the prayers are put back or not, but anyway, they are helping the cause. So, you asked me what changes took place since then. This was wonderful that the Reformed Jews came back. The orthodox, most of the orthodox, Jews came back, and we are a united people now working for the State of Israel, for the glory of Israel. And every Jew feels great! There was a time when you read a Jewish paper, a Yiddish paper, on the streetcar, you'd cover it with another English paper being ashamed that he is a Jew. Now, thank God, I see young people carry the Hadoar. and everything is free and we are proud of it. And I had a store, by the way. I had a bookstore also ten years. I didn't mention it yet. I had a bookstore, and we sold a lot of things from Israel. So I remember in 1945, there wasn't a Jewish boy or girl that didn't get the Mazuzeh or a Mogen David. It was

tremendous. People were ashamed of it, so they came everyone, and we sold thousands upon thousands of Mogen Davids and Mazuzehs and Hanukkah Menorahs. It became tremendous. A Mogen David is the 6-pointed star. So upon this standpoint, we had progressed. It became, I mean, it's good for the Jewish people that we became closer. On the other hand, we lost; we became ignorant. In my days, when you talked to Jewish people, they knew more about learning, about Torah, about prayers. Nowadays, you come in, let's say, to the college to the campus, the university, Washington University, I guarantee you that nine of each ten Jewish students don't know anything about Jewishness, their history; they're not interested; they don't know; we neglected them. This we suffer very much and we are losing them. Of course, I don't know if you are worried, but I am worried; we are losing them with inter-marriage. A lot of Jewish people go away to other people...almost in every family. Almost in every family, they have one who has gone away and left his people, married a Gentile, and all that. Of course, to you, maybe, it is a good thing, but to us, it is a tragedy we are losing them. According to figures, we should be about a hundred million Jews. If everything would be normal, there should be a hundred million Jews in the world, according to figures...mathematics. The way history goes, even if you start in Egypt, we started with 70 people, and when they left Egypt, there was 600,000 in just a brief time. According to these figures, we should have a hundred million Jews and we have only about 13 million, 14 million. Well, where is the rest of them? A great deal of them were killed...a great deal of them assimilated...left us. We lost them in various ways.

CORTINOVIS: Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of Jewish life in the United States?

LANDER: Yes, I am for one reason. I am for one reason, because...we don't see it in St. Louis but we do see it in New York and in Chicago... they still have great Talmudic Colleges. They still have young men, young women who are devoted to Jewish learning, and they are so extreme. I mean, they are still as strong as ever. So, thanks to these youngsters, I think we hope that...and then in Israel, they have so many Talmudic... I believe that in religion tradition must go in it, you can not just be a Jew like any American. I don't know whether you have ever thought of that, the differences between a Jew and any other people. That Jewish people... to be a good Jew, you must take in a lot of Jewish tradition. You must take in the Jewish holidays, the Jewish prayers. Otherwise, you see, you can be a good Frenchman, you can be a good German, you can be a good American without these things as long as you just love your country, fight for it. Are you leaving?

EHRlich: Yes, I have to go. I have to be at the University.

LANDER: I'll give you that book.

CORTINOVIS: He's got one.

LANDER: So, the differences. You, young lady, get this point. That the differences between a Jew and a member of another people is that a Jew is not only by nationalism, by nationality, but he must take in traditional religious part, otherwise, he cannot be a good Jew. For instance, you heard about the Seder, Pesach we have...they carry around the Esrog and Lulov, on Succos they carry around like a lemon, a citron. Briefly, it is if you would leave it just to nationalism to say you have a big state, the State of Israel, and you want that country just to

be...to love the country...to know the language is not sufficient, not to be a good Jew. To be a good Jew, you have to be a part of a religion, of a tradition... if you don't want the word religion, you call it tradition...and this is being carried on in many places, but the great majority of Jews don't have it especially the young people, the students. you

CORTINOVIS: Can you be a Jew or are/still a Jew if you marry a Gentile and never go near Jewish worship?

LANDER: Well, we can't drive him out. If a Jew like that continues to be a Jew, wants to come to the synagogue, he wants to participate, we don't drive him out unless he changes religion. If he officially accepted the religion of the other group, then he's out of it. As soon as you accept Christianity or Mohammedanism or whatever it is, then you're out of it. But as long as you didn't, then you can have even a Christian wife; of course, she cannot participate, but he can go on. She can become, but you cannot do both; in plain words, you cannot have a cross and a star at the same time.

CORTINOVIS: It's a very complex question, because there are so many different ways of looking at it. There is a Jewish way of looking at what makes a Jew and then there is the outside way as to what makes a Jew. Outside, to outsiders who are not Jewish, there are different criteria for judging Jewishness, I believe, than for Jews to judge Jewishness, don't you think so? Isn't that right?

LANDER: But my opinion is that without tradition, you cannot be a good Jew.

CORTINOVIS: There are two subjects more that I'd like for you to cover before we quit, Mr. Lander. One is, of course, we're interested in St. Louis and I would like to know if the...what is your opinion, especially in the early days, of the feeling of other people in St. Louis about Jews?

LANDER: How the Gentile world looks upon Jews?

CORTINOVIS: Yes, did you experience much discrimination?

LANDER: They are much better than in the old country, that's one point. The worst in America is better than a fellow in Kishinev. They are more intelligent, they are not as rough. I can't go into what they think, but they behave in a great deal better way than those anti-semites over there. I would say that among the Gentiles, we have various classes. There are some very nice liberal people. I come together with some fine people. They admire Jewish learning and love Jewish people. Not too many, but there are some. But the majority of Christians are just misinformed; they have some feelings against the Jew because they are misinformed. They don't really know the truth about Jewishness, about Jewish learning, about Jewish morale, about Jewish ethics. If they would know about these things, you see, when they meet; that's the whole trouble. They meet Jews, either a businessman, strict businessmen that are looking for the dollar, and they think this is the Jew. A Jew is just after the dollar. They meet ignorant Jews that they know nothing about. They ask them questions, they don't say anything. They can't answer. So that is, I don't blame the Gentile people; they don't have such a high opinion of Jews because they haven't the opportunity to find out. Because we were unfortunate, we were going from land to land, we were going from place to place; this

is the only land, the best country in the world to be certain, and we're doing wonderful things here.

CORTINOVIS: For example, you mentioned that if you were on a streetcar and you were reading a Yiddish newspaper, you would cover it with another one. Would people make fun of you?

LANDER: You had the feeling that they would.

CORTINOVIS: Did you ever experience it?

MRS. LANDER: Well, we didn't do it, but there were other people that used to do it. Nowadays, they don't read so much Yiddish.

LANDER: I can't tell. I didn't say anything about the Gentiles. I talked about the Jews. The Jew didn't feel the freedom to read a Yiddish paper in front of so many goyim, I mean, the Gentiles. He didn't want to look like a stranger. See, in the early days when we came over here, we tried our best in every way possible to mix, to come in and become one of the Americans, and by sitting in a corner and reading a Jewish newspaper, and all the other people don't know what it is, so you had the feeling that that made strangers; you would be a stranger to the rest of the people, and now we are not afraid anymore. Now, the people understand better, and we understand better; we know the language. This one can read an Italian paper, that one can read a French paper, and this one can read a Yiddish paper.

CORTINOVIS: But as far as real discrimination in jobs, did you ever experience anyone turning you down for a job because you were a Jew?

LANDER: I personally didn't because I never went to a real job. But I know a number of cases. You can't deny that. There is a discrimination, especially in a higher...suppose you come into a bank. They say that Jewish people are bankers. That's what they used to call us. If you come into a bank, very seldom you will find a Jewish person there. In the Jewish neighborhood, you go into this Delmar Bank, and it's all, practically 90% Jewish there. I can count on my fingers, perhaps, three or four people out of fifty, even worse than the colored.

CORTINOVIS: Are Jews.

LANDER: Are Jews.

CORTINOVIS: The other thing I want you to cover before you finish, you've spoken a lot about beinsso interested in Zionism and working for it even as a child before you came here in 1912. Why have you been so interested in Zionism? What is it behind your feelings?

LANDER: From two standpoints: first, from a religious standpoint, that we felt that we want to go back to the land where the temple, our holy temple is there and we carried on from our forefathers and all that, from a religious standpoint. And the second thing, out of necessity. We decided...we found out that we are not secure any place. Wherever we live, we have trouble; of course, thank God for America. I'm not including this. Outside of America, outside of America, there isn't a country in the entire world where Jewish blood was not shed. Every country, the most liberal country...it's in England...in France...in Spain...every

country you mention, the Jews suffered tremendously. They were not safe and secure. So, how can you...when I lived through our pogrom when innocent people...they killed them and robbed them, just because they were Jews, for no reason at all. I mean, there weren't Communists then. Just because they hate Jews...want to kill them. So, can't you understand why we wanted to find a place for ourselves? That we should be the owners, that we should live in freedom? So, these are the two things. From a religious and historical standpoint. And being I went through that pogrom and all other troubles, so that is why I became a Zionist. That's a simple answer.

MRS. LANDER: Well, you know, now, recently, even in Germany...the German people are supposed to be smart and educated and all this. Well, I don't have to tell you what they did to the Jews. So we feel that we Jews are never...how shall I say it?

LANDER: Safe.

MRS. LANDER: We were never safe any place till we came to America. Thank God, America is all right. Maybe some people don't like us too much, but I hope and pray that America will always be like it is. Like it was, 'til now. Like it is now.

CORTINOVIS: Would you like it if some of your children had gone to live in Israel?

LANDER: My children did live..in fact, some of them just came back a couple months ago.

CORTINOVIS: Oh, really? They've made their home there?

LANDER: My daughter lived there for eight years.

MRS. LANDER: She was a young girl and she wanted to go.

LANDER: She married there.

MRS. LANDER: The marriage came later. But she came in 1948, and we knew there would be trouble in Israel.

LANDER: '47.

MRS. LANDER: '47, yes, and everybody begged her, and I cried and I begged her with all this...she shouldn't go..."You are a young girl, you can go later, but not now when you know there is going to be trouble." But she made up her mind that when she stopped school...she went to Harris Teacher's College...then she went to Israel...and in a few months the war broke out. Was it the Six-Day War?

LANDER: In 1948, the war broke out.

CORTINOVIS: It was a bigger war.

MRS. LANDER: Yeah, it was a big war. She was in Jerusalem then, and she went through all this, and still she didn't want to come home.

LANDER: She just came back.

MRS. LANDER: She went for a year, and she stayed there a year and a half. And every letter we wrote to her, we begged her to come...we wanted to see her, "If you still have your hands, if you have your feet."

LANDER: That's Dorothy Lander in Israel. That's my daughter.

CORTINOVIS: So, then, she went back again then?

MRS. LANDER: Then she did us a favor, and she came home. I'll never forget that great day she came in the house and she says, "Momma, I came here for a visit, and I want you to know it and I want you to accept it, and don't make any trouble for me like you did before. I'm going back."

CORTINOVIS: So, is she living in Israel now?

MRS. LANDER: No, she married a young man. He came from Russia. He went through all the pogroms in Russia as a little boy, and he wanted to come to America, because America is everything here.

LANDER: I've been there three times, and my wife two times.

MRS. LANDER: So, she didn't want to come back here, and we wanted her to come back here...that was going from a fight for a few years till he won and they came back and she said again, she left everything there, and she came jus for a visit, but then he came here and he wanted to stay here. So this was...when did he come here? Sixteen years ago.

EBNDER: Yah, almost sixteen years ago.

MRS. LANDER: And thank God! They have three children here, but her heart is there.

LANDER: The children were two times in Israel.

MRS. LANDER: She kept on saying she wants to go back, but he didn't want to go. But four years ago, I think, his father was sick, soe he went there for a few weeks with the children. The children were little, and still they wanted to stay there. So now, thank God, she had her dream; she went there for two months. This summer she just came back, and though she doesn't talk about it, she cries, that's how bad she feels. She wants to go back. But she has a girl from fifteen years and she just...she didn't want to come back, she wanted to be in Israel. My older daughter was there for four and a half months...still likes it... but still they wanted to come back and they wanted to live here. But with her, I don't know what it is. She just wants to be there, and that's the way her older daughter is, too. "I just have to wait a few more years till I finish high school and then you can't keep me here for no money in the world."

CORTINOVIS: Oh, so she's going to do the same thing that your daughter did? Well, is there anything else that either of you would like to add? That you think we didn't cover? I'm interested in the fact that you've kept a diary, Mr. Lander. How long have you kept that?

LANDER: Well, I started it when I was 18 years old. I carried on. I stopped it a few years ago. It was written in Hebrew, most of it. The last was in English. I started it still in Russia, and I carried it on until probably 1955 or so, or 1960. I described, just as I say, I traced the country where we lived, our trip to America, our trip to Israel. I had a very busy life, very busy.

CORTINOVIS: It sounds like it. Are you retired now?

LANDER: As I said, I retired as far as making money is concerned, but I still do some teaching without pay. I'm teaching a class in the JCCA every Thursday, and I teach here in the congregation. I'm writing every week a small short column, a short column in the Journal, the JCCA Journal. I write every week for four years already. It's short. It explains the Bible and every week goes on.

CORTINOVIS: Now, you'd make the heart of any archivist happy with all this, because you're such a saver. I see you're such a saver.

LANDER: It's for myself, you know. I think my long life is due to that. Because I'm busy. Otherwise, I would...I'm 78 years old, and I still understand things. I still write.

CORTINOVIS: It sounds to me, although some times have been hard, that you really have had a wonderful life and enjoyed yourself immensely along the way.

LANDER: Well, spiritually, I've had a wonderful life. I would say that physically, from an economic standpoint, I didn't. I had almost all my life struggled, but I wouldn't say struggled; we didn't care, we didn't care for all these fancy things and the same thing with my wife.

MRS. LANDER: We didn't have much, but we were satisfied.

LANDER: The greatest blessing is that I have a good wife. We are married for 58 years.

CORTINOVIS: I'd like for my husband to be able to say that.

LANDER: We were married for 58 years, and from time to time she bawls me out!

CORTINOVIS: She has to keep you in line!

LANDER: It's good; it's necessary, but usually she's a wonderful person. She doesn't hear it, but she's not selfish. Never cares much for pleasure for herself, and that really helps a lot.

CORTINOVIS: Well, I don't want to take up any more of your time, but it really has been a great pleasure to have both of you.

LANDER: I'm busy writing speeches, and writing editorials and teaching.

CORTINOVIS: That's terrific.

LANDER: This is the fourth year that I, and people see me on the street, this here is the Jewish paper to around sixteen thousand people every week.

CORTINOVIS: To the JCCA membership?

LANDER: Yes.

PARLEY: The St. Louis JCCA?

LANDER: The Jewish Community Centers Association...that's the largest organization here in St. Louis with sixteen thousand members. I remember people greet me on the street and say, "The first thing when I get the Journal, I look for your column."

CORTINOVIS: Good!

LANDER: This takes the place of every week of the portion of the Chumash, of the Bible, that we read every Shabbos in shul. And I am getting the whole thing into a short few lines; it's really a very hard job to do; I would rather write six pages than write just a few lines. But I am doing this for the last four years, you see, every week another piece, each one is different, not the same. So, I'm enjoying it.

CORTINOVIS: Ellen, was there anything that you wanted to ask?

PARLEY: Well, these may be things that you know already, that's why I didn't ask. When you first came over, how wide-spread was the Jewish press in St. Louis? And how important was it to immigrants?

LANDER: The Jewish press, you say? How important was the Jewish press? In those days, the Jewish people who came here didn't know English, that was really the only newspaper they read here that was a weekly, and then there were some daily newspapers from New York. So, the Jewish press was extremely important. I mean, that kept them alive, because in those days, they didn't have television, they didn't even have a radio then, very few had telephones. So all they had was an old time record player with a big horn.

MRS. LANDER: They did, they had the news and everything, and the papers kept us alive.

PARLEY: Did the papers concentrate mainly on events that would concern the Jewish community?

MRS. LANDER: No, they had everything.

LANDER: Whatever they could get. They had everything; the Jews learned about everything from the Jewish newspaper.

CORTINOVIS: It had national and international news?

LANDER: Yes, everything. They were interested about what's going on in China and the wars and all that, but they got it all from the Jewish newspaper. Even today, you have the Jewish newspaper gets everything from everywhere. It's not only a Jewish...not only a religious newspaper.

PARLEY: Besides the JCCA, is there still a Jewish newspaper in St. Louis? That has

national news?

LANDER: No, there is...each group has a little bulletin, like B'nai B'rith, Ebn Ezra, for instance; each one has a little bulletin of four- six pages; some other little groups have small bulletins. But newspapers we don't have.

PARLEY: It concentrates on religious activities.

CORTINOVIS: The Jewish Light, does that have national news in it?

LANDER: Yes, there's the Jewish Light. I forgot all about it...the Jewish Post and the Jewish Light.

MRS. LANDER: From New York.

LANDER: No, the Jewish Post is in St. Louis and the Jewish Light is in St. Louis.

CORTINOVIS: Are they both in English?

LANDER: Yes, they are both in English.

PARLEY: What do you think the Jewish newspaper was the most? The time when it was the most influential, the most needed, the most widespread? The high point of its existence in St. Louis?

LANDER: The Jewish news, the Jewish news was from Palestine in those days they called it Palestine, from Russia, Russia was a great Jewish country then; in my days, they had five million Jews, almost as many as in America. It was a tremendous place where culture came out, the Yeshiva, and we had the philosophers, and we had so many great men came out from Russia. There was a city of Odessa, the city of Warsaw, great, historical men, men who would be remembered for generations came out from there. It all depends on the type of the reader. A reader who was intelligent naturally he would be interested in...

CORTINOVIS: I think what Ellen means is what were the years when the Yiddish press was the most important? In St. Louis?

LANDER: It was until about when the first children were born, I would say. In the twenties...up till about in the twenties...then English started to appear. I mean, it came out in the Jewish homes and people started to read. Let's call it from after the first war.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, now this is the Jewish Light here. You have mentioned Mrs. Meier. Do you think that's all right for a woman to be...

LANDER: It's all right with me, for another reason. She belongs to the labor movement. She's not religious, as far as we are concerned.

MRS. LANDER: But we are not against her.

CORTINOVIS: This is from New York, the Jewish Press?

LANDER: It comes out every Friday, 48 pages and a real religious orthodox newspaper, all in English.

CORTINOVIS: What congregation do you belong to?

LANDER: Well, Mizrachi would be mine, the religious Zionists' organization,

CORTINOVIS: No, I mean, here in St. Louis...what shul?

LANDER: I'm the rabbi and president of Beth Yehuda; Beth Yehuda is a congregation right here on Cates Avenue, a small congregation, Beth Yehuda.

CORTINOVIS: Oh, and you're the rabbi now?

PARLEY: Where is this published?

MRS. LANDER: In New York.

CORTINOVIS: Well, thank you, ever so much.

LANDER: Thank you. It's been very pleasant.