

Marge Abraham Lamén

BM: OK, this is Betsy McGinnity and I am interviewing Marjorie A. Lamén who is the daughter of David Abraham, and could I ask you to tell us, just to tell us where and when you were born?

ML: I was born in officially London England and eventually is North England, and it's like a suburb of Newton to Boston.

BM: Ahuh, ahuh.

ML: And, and on October 27th, 1920.

BM: Excellent, OK.

ML: And I was a birthday gift to my father. His birthday was October 30, early.

BM: Excellent, wow! OK, so what would you like us to know about your father?

ML: Well he was, did some beautiful work in woodwork in England and, and I have his discharge papers from the service. His mother died when he was young and he only reached the eighth grade at that time, and then he went to work and had different jobs and then did woodworking jobs. His father was, Bill Charles, and did woodworking in a woodworking place in England. I have letters from my father when he came to this country introducing him to Glory and...

BM: Now when did he come to this country?

ML: He came over on the 29th, what do they call it, the Depression.

BM: Oh, the stock market crash in 1929?

ML: Oh yes, that's when we came to this country.

BM: Oh, when we had our stock market crash.

ML: And my mother had, was one of 13 and my father had I think two brothers and a sister. But all of this is written by Margie in that, you know, a lot of the stories told by Margie is just a few things that she didn't cover, you know, but as I get a little older, when we came over in the boat, what do they call it, steerage.

BM: Steerage.

ML: And we were deathly sick.

BM: Oh, I'll bet.

ML: We were eight days I think.

BM: Oh.

ML: And we saw a little iceberg and but he didn't, he wasn't sick at all until he was about a day out of Boston before it all, but he said oh, I'm fine, no, I'm fine, but we landed with, and my mother had five brothers and four sisters, and they welcomed us into their home in Roxbury, and they lived in an old like a mansion that had been made into an apartment and then the owner had their apartment, and they were very friendly and very nice, and I learned it was on Highland Street, and they used to close off Highland Street and let you coast in the winter time, and that to us as children was quite interesting because (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) wait till we didn't see much now in those days, and but he looked for work and he got a job in a foundry, I guess, in East Boston, and then he got laid off. I think he was a dye maker or something. He got laid off, but when we, then he decided he wanted to go to the country, you know, out from Boston and take the two of us. And then my aunts had put us into parochial school because it was more like the school we were in in England. It was private, you know, and he so, they didn't have any private schools around, you know, and the best of them was parochial. So I was always a little behind and so and David was the bright one, you know. But he was very good in English and spelling. He won spelling bees in Boston, but Dad chose, you know. Oh, we moved to Brighton and... I'm getting way ahead of myself. We moved to Brighton and we, it was a new apartment and it was North Crescent Circuit off of Oak Square, and I went to the Lady of, and David and I went to the Lady of the Presentation School, and so the rate went up and Dad wasn't working.

BM: Oh.

ML: And so he'd go to Boston and look for something to do and he would come home kind of depressed and Mom said I guess they had a little money left. His aunt left him a little money just to get by when he got here. So he, he, so he was talking to Pat Boyle. No, he wasn't talking to, Mama was doing the talking, and Mama got friendly, and so she mentioned it to Mrs. Boyle and she talked to her husband and he said why doesn't Mr. Abraham try over at Perkins where I work. He worked in the Boiler Room.

BM: Oh.

ML: They called it the Boiler Room and so he, he, and then I told him, and so he said well I'll go over there. But he never owned a car, you know, and so he rode the streetcar down to

Watertown and then went up and spoke to somebody. He didn't ring the doorbell. He went up and spoke to, and was interviewed by Nelson Coombs. So Nelson spoke to him and they reminisced about things and so he spoke to Dr. Farrell who had become the head of, Director, so he was hired as a carpenter.

BM: Oh.

ML: But they didn't have the big carpenter shop, you know, and so then he decided that we had to look for a house near so we rented a house. He did a lot of changes in this, this new house. He built the stairs to the attic and we'd have a little playroom up above. We were on the second floor, and he did all this stuff. So then he found a house right next to where Howe Press is today, the Boiler Room, you know, that part, and it was... There weren't any other houses down between. He could go right up, you know, there. So he, I think just before we moved there, you know, I can't remember there. No, before we moved there we moved around in Brighton. We moved to Nonantum Street, and the place that we took the second floor, and so he took one end of it to the other and cleaned it meticulously and of course there were cockroaches and other things in those days, and he took all the fixtures, that were all discovered, they were behind there and he and he fixed everything and painted. So then, that was on Nonantum Street. So then somebody bought it and they wanted that apartment that he fixed up so we had to move again. And then we moved down to [Kenark] Street and then he, it was upstairs and it was a very nice place and while we're moving, the aunts and uncles are moving a door or so ahead, beside us, you know, and then when we were down on [Kenark] Street, they were next to us in a two family house. It was like having the Kennedy Estate. But he, he, let's see. Then he decided he wasn't going to ride, you know, it was too much for him to ride back and forth, so he decided he was going to drive and get a car. So he bought a Ford and it didn't have, you know, like they had some boxes on the back of them, the Fords at that time. So he built a wood one on and you can never tell the difference.

BM: Wow.

ML: And so he, and so the woman downstairs would take him out, you know, she had had her license and they were the nicest couple. He was a flier operator in Boston, and she worked in Filines and they had one son and a dog that my father fell in love with, and so he, he went for his license and they tried, a fellow tried to trick him and told him to pull over by a hydrant and he didn't what he was supposed to do, and then he got mad at my father, and Betty Powers, she was so mad at them because he was doing the right thing. But anyway, they were close friends and then she kept in touch with them. Later on, they visited, well, she lost her husband but she

remarried and then they'd visit Mom and Dad in Florida when they retired, you know. But then he decided he was going to move over to --

BM: To Watertown?

ML: -- to Watertown and he got this single family house, and I don't know, David seems to think remember that, well they noticed the woodworking he had done and so then they decided to let him go into the Manual Training Department.

BM: Oh, OK.

ML: And he worked with, I know, I've been saying it all morning. He was the head of it, and, but they introduced the automobile too because my father was very good with automobiles; and then the boys loved him.

BM: So he actually taught that course?

ML: He taught that on to 12 years.

BM: Right. And he taught the... We have photos of that when they were rebuilding engines and stuff, that was your dad who...

ML: But he got them to build a boat.

BM: Yes. OK.

ML: And when we sailed again on the Charles and he, see he loved those boys, you know, and they loved him because you know boys, and the boat with a motor on it and it was a Ford motor that had been in it and they reconditioned it and everything and they built this nice boat. So.

BM: Now when you moved to Watertown, about how old were you?

ML: I was going into high school.

BM: OK.

ML: I was, I asked my mom how come I graduated at such an old age. She said I was sick when I was born, I don't know, they never mentioned it. And they never mentioned it. But I would have been, you know.

BM: Yeah.

ML: I was a stumble bum and I still am.

BM: That's just the way it is.

ML: But, so I have a feeling when my father first went to Perkins, it wasn't very known too much, you know. It was a quiet Perkins. All that was known about it, Helen Keller had been there.

BM: Right.

ML: And so but then, then, he did, but he did, but there was, I think now I won't say that it worked around the grounds and and there was (inaudible), do you know what I mean?

BM: No.

ML: There's all stories to that. And then there's, oh, Hal [Pence], he was there quite a while, and there was a fellow that worked at Howe Press. We had pictures of all of them that worked at Howe Press, you know, when they had that hundred and something --

BM: Was it 125?

ML: It was out at some restaurant.

BM: Yep. Yep, it might have been the 125th. Did you want this? Did you want these things here closer to you?

ML: I hadn't found that with any inclination. Did you turn me off?

BM: No, no I'm still got you. So we can talk or.

ML: Well I made all this stuff, I took all the, here's, (inaudible) that he worked for, (inaudible).

BM: Oh, this is...

ML: This is leather work there and...

BM: Oh nice. Nice.

ML: And then when his father left, he got his father's position.

BM: OK.

ML: But this is.

BM: This is the letter of reference. Let's do some more talking and then we'll go through the documents, OK?

ML: OK.

BM: OK.

ML: So this house, you know, he took that house and he, I guess for ramp purposes, you know, because he didn't have that much, he wallpapered and he cleaned the stove and he made everything look like new and he did beautiful things, you know. And he was the type of person, he picked out the wallpaper, and he knew it was going to be a hard job but then when he got it done, he wanted everybody to come in the house, tell me where I started and where I ended.

ML: And of course you couldn't, right?

ML: No you couldn't because it was all like, he loved paisley and the ties he wears, wore on that one picture, and it was one that I picked out with the paisley print, you know, and that's where Christmas was, a new tie.

BM: Wasn't that nice?

ML: A man that had everything he needed, you know, he didn't want you to spend any money on Christmas in a way, and yet he did. He liked it when he could see a train.

BM: Oh he had trains?

ML: He did when David was, when we were young in England, he'd get David a beautiful train track, and he built the cars that go behind the train, and all of the barrels inside and everything, he had it but when his children came along, I don't know where it went. But, that's going back to England, you know, in the place where we lived in England, it was the house that he wanted to have his (inaudible) built.

BM: Oh.

ML: And his sister lived downstairs but they weren't that friendly, you know, and we had just a living room and hallway and bathroom and kitchen at the end, so it was a big, big room and Dad had put a Murphy bed in the wall and then he'd have bunk beds with a curtain around it, and he had a nice fireplace, and he bought a fender for the fireplace and a pretty mirror over the top, and it was a living room in that day, you know, and we had a table in the kitchen, you know. They didn't entertain in those days. We didn't have refrigerators. They had a ladder. They called it a ladder and it was a room with a screen that they (inaudible) in.

BM: Now when you were in Watertown, is that where he started work on the Braille at your house?

ML: I think it was either that house, that's when he got through finishing that house, they said that the son wanted to move in.

BM: Oh.

ML: So we had to find another place, so he went up the hill a little bit and there were some other two family houses, and we moved into the first floor of that, and that's, I think I graduated in 1940 out of, I don't know whether it was the big house, the big house that we had a wedding reception there for my mother's aunt, my mother's sister, my aunt. And then we had a party in the next house for David and, went into the service.

BM: Oh, OK.

ML: And so that would have been in, it was around 1940. And then when we went into the next house, Mr. [Ogolby], whatever his name was, sold that house and new owners wanted our apartment. So we got to live in all those apartments and I think people were thinking we're getting kicked out for not paying our rent, and so he said this is it. I'm going to buy a house.

BM: Oh, OK.

ML: And so he went out and looked at them up in Waltham and that's where he went. But that isn't where he started the Braille Writer. It started at... But that's when the war was going...

BM: Right.

ML: And we had to shelf the Braille Writer, and I think we shelved it when he was down in the apartment, and when he went up to bed, they don't tell you this, they had a proposition with him that if they kept him as, paying his pension as a teacher. See, he used to teach during the winter months and work on the Braille. He used to teach during the winter with my, and go back to woodworking during the summer months. He'd worked all year round.

BM: Wow!

ML: But he, you know, that's what he was doing, and then when the Braille Writer he worked on, he used to do that instead of doing his woodwork.

BM: Oh, OK.

ML: While the children were away in the summer time, but then when, so they say he wasn't only doing that, but he wanted Mr. [Maibys]'s job teaching, being head of the Woodworking Department.

BM: OK, so Mr. [Maibys], OK, all right.

ML: But they don't mention anything of Mr. [Maiby] and he was a teacher for so long.

BM: Yeah. Yeah.

ML: And he was a wonderful man with the boys but they never gave him enough material.

BM: Oh.

ML: And so that's when it got back to Daddy that Dr. Farrell said he's a brilliant man but he didn't have a college education and my father could do rings around --

BM: Sure.

ML: -- Dr. Farrel, but it hurt him.

BM: Yeah.

ML: And so she said well never mind that. He said, and I don't know whether we had a phone, but I remember putting in the phone and him calling up this Workshop Associates and so they said they'd love to have him on their team you know, and so he used to go, he used to, and then he set up in this downstairs working on more work, and he hired (inaudible) about 25 cents an hour.

BM: So you were doing that in your house?

ML: Yeah, down in the basement, really spotless.

BM: Yeah, yeah. And what...

ML: How long have you been at Perkins?

BM: Twenty-five years.

ML: You weren't there when he was there.

BM: Oh no, no. No, that...

ML: When that was a new shop.

BM: Right.

ML: You could eat off the floor.

BM: Oh I bet, I bet.

ML: He wouldn't let them go home until he taken (inaudible). (laughter)

BM: Good for him.

ML: He'd move around and just look around.

BM: That's good. Now did he continue working at Perkins when you were doing the war work also?

ML: No, no.

BM: He didn't, he left?

ML: I guess the Waterhouses made a condition that he would, well, it wasn't Waterhouse, it was Farrel maybe, that he could, I thought he always said Waterhouse. But Waterhouse went out on leave too to work at General Electric or something.

BM: Oh right, many people did at that time. Many of the male teachers got, went into the service, the younger ones.

ML: Yeah.

BM: And then after the war, they came back, so oh, OK.

ML: But I think that they said that they'd keep him on as, they'll pay is part of the pension if he pays his part, you know, and then Daddy said to me, isn't it awful to think that it takes a war to put you on your feet because he was making, he thought, good money, and then after it was all over, oh they wanted him over there, over, right at the building as well. They wanted him to come over there and work with them, and he would do designing and drawing and everything. I don't know, he never would tell me. I used to ask him, what do you do work on, but it was wool work I guess and he learned to (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). He said we're making (inaudible) fishing lines, you know, so it was like that, and I never thought of it until the other day. That must have been just a, just to throw me off.

BM: Right, yeah, right. That was a line all right. (laughter)

ML: Oh and that's another thing that was in, but we were very close, and my brother chose to go and stay with people at, in Ashland for a while and before he went into the service, and then, and he kind of distanced away from Dad, but I think in later years when he got himself straightened out, he wished he had spent a lot more time with him. But when he was little, my father spent an awful lot of time making him things, boats to sail, and he would, my father was possessed by planes.

BM: Really?

ML: He made a model in brass of the plane and put it on top of the shelf in the kitchen in England and David climbed up and took it down and took it all apart.

BM: Really?

ML: And we never saw that again. (laughter) But you know they were polished when they were small. I can remember my father always walked fast, you know, and as children, we couldn't keep up with him but he'd like say hang on to my arm and so then he'd move and he'd lift and ride up off, you know. He'd be running for the train or something and he lived, thought that was wonderful.

BM: I'm sure he did.

ML: But we took over to, when we went over to England, and we went from the hotel in London out to my cousin's house in (inaudible) and we're going by this place, and I said that looks like (inaudible) Park where you used to say I get boat, David, and he said no, and (inaudible) says yes it is. I couldn't realize that I would remember that.

BM: Yeah, yeah.

ML: I could just picture him over there leaning over the, I have a picture of him with the sailboat, you know, and it just struck me as being some place that we've been years ago.

BM: Wow. That's good, good memory.

ML: Well, I don't know, it's just, you know, struck me right there because it's changed over there so much.

BM: Sure, sure. I mean let's get back to the war years, we get this, we'll get this down.

ML: OK, the war years. And that's what happened, and he was able to put some money aside and then he went back to, one year he went back and then it was twirling up until they got the new building.

BM: Yep, yep.

ML: And things didn't go too right for us Connecticut and I wanted to come home. I've never been away and I had the two children and a dog and Dad said come home. Here they had two bedrooms, one bath, two kids and two adults, so they get my room and we all moved into their room. It was a little bit bigger, and Freddy and he would get up and at seven to get out of the house at seven in the morning and they'd get home at 11 at night.

BM: Oh. Now was that at Perkins that they were working?

ML: Yes.

BM: Wow.

ML: I mean, you're talking, it's one thing to invent something, but it's another thing to have to put out some of your stuff out to be made.

BM: Right.

ML: And you have to hit the right places to have it all come together, and there were a lot of times they decided they're better off to do it themselves. But Fred and he worked hand in hand for 15 years and they were the happiest couple working, you know, because they'd set up a gizmo during Christmas dinner and they'd go back to Perkins to see if it was running right and, you know, to see how spring was held up, it was like all these things had to be done, but and Freddy had learned a lot about wiring and stuff like that, you know, and he, they seemed to like in that respect where David was more the office and you know he, well he was good at what he did, you know. He was a good draftsman but he hated it.

BM: Oh, huh. Isn't that interesting. Now when they were doing all that, that work until 11 o'clock at night, was that getting ready to manufacture the Braille?

ML: A-hmm.

BM: So they were setting up all the machines that --

ML: He joined him in 1950.

BM: OK. OK. And the first Braille was manufactured in '51? Is that when the first one came off the press I think?

ML: Something like that.

BM: Yeah, OK.

ML: I don't know what happened to the first Braille type. I thought it went to, I thought that, Daddy started getting magazines when, what do you call it. He had...

BM: That one I think is from the Smithsonian.

ML: Here's what I mean.

BM: OK.

ML: I think it was on the top of the record I remember him doing anything.

BM: Oh did he work on that on the Smithsonian piece?

ML: Yeah, no.

BM: OK.

ML: It was, all the (inaudible) is Waterhouse and Friedman, but they didn't mention anything about my father doing it. There was a woman across the street used to live there.

BM: Right.

ML: And she came over here one day and talking to me and she said I think she knew somebody at Smithsonian because the next thing you know she came over with this book when it was, well, I looked everywhere but all I could find out was Waterhouse and Friedman.

BM: Right. I think that one.

ML: But they had all this stuff about the Braille.

BM: Right. A lot of that is Free Braille, though. That one wouldn't focus so much on the Perkins Braille. Do you have a copy of the Perkins History Book?

ML: I probably, this is what I have.

BM: OK. We should, we should be sure you get that too. I have one in the car.

ML: Well when I, you sent me something just recently by (inaudible), is it (inaudible)?

BM: Ahuh, yeah, yeah.

ML: Did you stop to see her?

BM: No I didn't, no. She's... You see, OK, yeah. Yeah, that's the connection, that's how we found, we found each other.

ML: The connection is the little girl across the street. She was born with no iris, was it?

BM: Oh.

ML: And her eyes were shifted around, and that I used to see her and they kept carrying her around, you know, and when she was a little tiny dot, and he was born in London, her husband, so he and I connected. They were a lovely couple, but and she brought her over here and she gave me kisses and asked me, she's so adorable, and so we had Freddy's organ here, you know, and but the kids played it and I sort of had gotten rid of it because I didn't want the kids to ruin it, you know, and so they said you may as well them play it because they're not making it any more, and so I thought well why don't I give it to her. So they tell me she comes in after, you know, after school every afternoon and goes right to the organ.

BM: Oh, isn't that nice.

ML: But I think she's musically inclined.

BM: Yeah, yeah.

ML: She gets into it like, you know, and she hears the music and...

BM: Oh, isn't that nice.

ML: I saw her on the blind on the television recently.

BM: On the air.

ML: Now we can get back to work.

BM: OK. Get back to our story, yes.

ML: This would be so (inaudible) sorting and telling.

BM: Now how long did your father work at Perkins? Do you remember when he, when he retired?

ML: He's 30 some odd years, yeah.

BM: Yeah.

ML: He went, he went there in the early thirties.

BM: Ahuh, and then he worked.

ML: Sixty one, or two, or three.

BM: OK.

ML: Four maybe.

BM: Did they go to Florida right after that or did they stay in the area after he retired?

ML: No, he, he was selling his house and doing that after he retired, yes.

BM: Oh, OK, oh.

ML: I'd say he used to come down here because we had the, had the cottage down here and he used to come down here and, but before that, we moved up from Connecticut to Whalen and we lived with him a year. That's what we're...

BM: Right.

ML: And just Freddy and him, but it got a little bit too much with the kids.

BM: Sure, yeah.

ML: And that, so he said when on earth is that new house going to be ready, but they had more fun.

BM: Oh.

ML: You know, trying to get rid of wasps after the lot and the two of them, my father, if I had only had a picture of him, he had a soft hat on. He was always dressed up no matter where he went.

BM: Ahuh.

ML: And when I was in, living in Kenark Street in Brighton, we took, no I think it might have been when we moved to Watertown, we took a trip over October 12th up to the White Mountains and they decided that they were going to find David and chum across the street from us and Dad and the chum across the street's uncle and father were going to climb Mt. White, white mountain, and I was going with them and I had what they call a (inaudible) or a plaid jacket and boots and ski pants, you know, and so we started at the bottom and we walked up and they said to follow a trail of walks kind of, well we got on to a riverbed and we got lost and he went ahead of us all the way up to the top, and the boys were going to meet us up the top and there was a blizzard by the time we got to the top.

BM: Oh no.

ML: And they closed the Tran way, and nobody believes it, and I, and we got to the top of it, this Bill Parson, he worked at Howe Press for a short while too, he used to work at Waltham Clock, so Daddy had him working with him for a while. But they, so they, they, we finally got up and he must have climbed that mountain twice, you know, going ahead of us, and we were, I was finally had finished, but I was scared, so my father was going up ahead and wondered if I'd ever see him again, but we got down. We had to come down the road but the boys were up there and we all came down the road, but my mother and Mrs. Lynch were in the bottom waiting for us. We left at nine o'clock and we got down at five.

BM: Oh. (laughter). Wow!

ML: We got to the top, they called down but you couldn't see where you were going because the top was all covered with snow.

BM: Yeah, yep.

ML: And you're climbing over big boulders as you get to the top.

BM: Boy.

ML: But when we got half way, we got up to the lake or something, and we asked these other people, they had all these ropes around their waist, I thought they had a soft hat on and an overcoat, but we asked and they had, you know, these bunch of nuts you know, and they said it was just around the corner, but that could have cost us our life you know.

BM: Wow.

ML: And David had his soft hat on too come to think of it because he has, I have a picture in there. He's looking over the mountain.

BM: Wow. Wow.

BM: But we came down the road and I guess we finally, I tell the kids that story and they look at me, yeah, right mom.

BM: Now you said you worked at Perkins for a while too, right?

ML: Three years. I worked with my dad in the office for a while doing inventory and then I went out in the shop. It was when my brother was sick and I guess, there was a little bitter scandal going around, but I went through that one. But there was a lot of love in the family and you know it was a family, you know --

BM: Yeah.

ML: -- that really worked together and that, and now David's family is such a beautiful family to me. I know not my own but... Mine are today's families. You know, I had a good, well I would have been married 60 years.

BM: Wow.

ML: May 25, and we celebrated our 50th year and he passed away a year or so later.

BM: Oh, oh.

ML: But a lot of my friends said that they thought we wouldn't make it, you know, but so they, the set up was the biggest thing and they worked so hard at it you know, but then it seems as they, in the articles that they wrote, that Farrel had a lot to do with it, you know, his ideas and not, I have some letters and I'm not supposed to show them but from [my brother], he's trying to help me write the story and he's the best one that could have written it because he used to write stories when I was little, you know.

BM: Oh.

ML: And that were all Nancy Moore's or something like that, and I'd wait and wait for the end of the story.

BM: Oh. Wow.

ML: But he was smart. He'd even write poetry and everything.

BM: Oh.

ML: Like, you know, Howie, or Howie, Valentine party and yeah, holidays, Valentines holiday. I sent my Dad a Valentine one day. I picked it up and it was a plank and it said on it I plank my love on you, and I sent it through the mail, and he sent it through the mail back and he had drawn a nail right through it and he says I nail you for this. (laughter) I wished I had saved it, you know.

BM: Yeah, yeah.

ML: I save the craziest things.

BM: Tell me a little bit more about your brother. Now is your brother still living?

ML: No, he passed away.

BM: No. He did, OK.

ML: The year before, that's another thing I have. His funeral was just beautiful, you know, I mean they had you, he was cremated and he belonged to the Unitarian Church and they, all these people spoke about him. I have a tape of it some place, and you know people loved him so much, my brother, and they had a just layout and they had the Braille Writer and said that, and right in the report says that he became a part of history over the Brailleur, the drawing that he had done, anyway.

BM: Yeah. Yeah.

ML: But they never, never mentioned him and he was such a part of it. Oh, and then he had one given, and he was always the underdog, David was, you know. And Daddy was like that too, you know, and he had a lot of funny experiences he would come home and tell about at Perkins. Another thing, anyway, I've gone off my track now. Isn't this awful? I say you're never getting anywhere, I'm telling you. I said have you got a week? (laughter). I was married to a clown. I've gotten way off. Come on Fred, help me. (laughter) Well, you should have heard me up at the, the banquet they had up in where it was... First off, they had it, I forget now, but and we had a terrible storm and Freddy and I drove up there and we got to the place where they're having the banquet and it was supposed to have been the presentation of the plaque for my father on the 100th Braille Writer.

BM: Oh, OK. Yeah.

ML: Was it 100, it's in there in the den.

BM: OK, could it be the 100,000th, is that what it was?

ML: Hundred thousandth, yeah.

BM: Yeah, yeah.

ML: And so we went all the way up there and we got there and nobody was there. They called it off and hadn't told us.

BM: Oh no!

ML: So we called, I guess somebody showed up, came back and showed up, but she hadn't happen there. I think it was Derosio or, I don't know who it was, but I was running with the Murphy.

BM: Leon, yeah.

ML: The first (inaudible), and saying things so it (inaudible). But my father was funny. I didn't like to do too much, you know, getting in with anybody, you know, because he was very protective of me, you know, and he didn't like, even Freddy he didn't like. He liked to, he was funny that way. He was always that way I guess. He kept us to himself, you know, he's that type. But he had, we had so much fun with him. He really was funny, but and then, (inaudible) came out and it said that he so on should and never seen him so laughing, you know, and he hasn't seen him, really seen him (overlapping dialogue; inaudible), you know, and I didn't like that picture of him because they thought he looked like an old man. They only had the one picture they kept on putting in is this one.

BM: That, you know, we don't have pictures of him.

ML: One I gave Murphy is he's leaning on the, he's laughing, you know, and he's leaning on the Winnebago that Diane and --

BM: Oh!

ML: -- Diane and her husband drove down in. I have a beautiful picture of him that I love but my aunt Ellie and I are in the background, and if I could just have us removed, you know, it's like in, you can hardly see it's us and that but his picture and he's getting his ticket out for the plane to England.

BM: Oh.

ML: And he's laughing, you know, and it's the nicest picture I've ever.

BM: Well if there are any...

ML: I've been cutting pictures out of them, they were together, that I had taken down in Florida, because he very seldom smiles. There's another picture, Mom and Dad are, this side is when they first went down to St. Petersburg.

BM: Well, if there are any...

ML: You want the rest of that?

BM: If there are any pictures that, that either I can take a picture of I can borrow to copy, I'd love to add some to our collection because we don't have very good ones at all of him.

ML: Well I've got a lot of things that he has done that I wanted to show you too.

BM: Good.

ML: And you know he didn't go out in a boat. He never owned a boat, you know, like Leon had been doing.

BM: Oh, OK.

ML: You know, and people think that he lived in a plush little place, but he lived in a townhouse at the end like I'm going into. That's why I fell in love with this one down there. But getting back to why he came to this country, he wanted to get into metals because of his love of airplanes and he didn't work too good at home building an airplane so but he liked to have gotten over here and get into the building of airplanes, I think that's what he told me.

BM: Oh I see.

ML: And he was tired of wood because wood was so unpredictable. You'd spend all this time and it would check. He'd do all this French polishing and then it started checking on it, you know, and it was time consuming...

BM: Right.

ML: But it didn't last you know, and so he wanted to get into metals and, and he went back into woodwork when he got here, but then he, when I guess the Braille Writer was suggested to him, it was a challenge and then he took it and went, you know.

BM: He sure did, yeah.

ML: But I have, and then he thought that he was going to be down in Florida and that they use him as, what do you call it, an advisor or...

BM: Yeah. Yeah.

ML: But he had many wonderful things they could have done for him that they didn't do, and his one wish was to go to Australia, and they never had the money to do that, and maybe in later years, you know, after he worked on (inaudible) he was able to pay up his mortgage, which was six thousand dollars.

BM: Wow, yeah.

ML: He got his car, his green car, he got that black car and built that one here, so he traveled with that and he loved it, and then he decided he'd get a green car, an apple green. He got away from the dark and he got a Ford and he kept that so beautiful. He used to call him Swifty. He used to travel with that.

BM: Now one of the things I wanted to ask you about is there's a legend at Perkins that your father was a perfectionist and that if things weren't just right with a part that he would shut down the whole production.

ML: I never heard of that.

BM: Really! No? Oh!

ML: Yeah, I never heard of that. Maybe if it was something in a (inaudible) and it was coming in and he didn't want them to be put together, you know, or something, but I never heard of that. Of course the guy that could tell me isn't here, and I didn't see enough of my brother, you know. My brother was out in the office more or less working out in the... But they got some nice people there. I like that [Wicoft] and the woman that worked with her, I still have their picture in one of the old magazines, and Sid [Durphy] and Mary because it's, no Sid [Durphy] is the piano, what's his name, Sid [Durphy], yeah, and Mary and Chub, Mary and Albert Chub.

BM: Yeah, these are before my time so, yeah.

ML: Friedman first came in, he wanted to change the color, did they change the colors of...

BM: Of the Braille?

ML: Yeah.

BM: They're introducing, they're keeping the standard color, but they're introducing a blue and a green.

ML: Well are they? They did that before, and Friedman started that, so they put all their colors out in these machines. And these are two people that are blind, and they put the original one that my father had done. He didn't test the color as much as the quality of the finish, but they felt that one and they didn't like the other colors. It was back to that gray one again, and my father was amazed.

BM: Yeah, yeah.

ML: But now his, and another thing is he made it certain that he didn't want these salesman coming in with gifts to him. He wanted quality. That was his main thing in their work and he didn't want extra gifts. So there's more bottles went down the in the, well, I don't know if they still have the back room where they dumped all the water and something. Yeah, he was through with them bringing in, some... Before he left, I think it was his last year, he got a bottle and he said we'll take it to Frank, you know, and so he said that if you take this to Fred, we got to buy Margie a box of chocolates. (laughter) My mother and he had, but no, he didn't like that. And then he got a rotisserie after Christmas and it had traveled all around trying to locate him and he gave it to me but he said he didn't want to accept it. What did he have to do, he said I want quality in their work.

BM: Right, right.

ML: My mother used to go on rides to this friend's company and, you know, the spring company and that, certain places they'd go.

BM: For parts?

ML: To pick up springs, you know, and then but he was, and then when he thought that he'd, but he met this woman. I never met her, down in Florida when they got to this [Vendom] Village that they lived in. It was a town house, you know, joined, he helped people that live around there, the woman next door, her husband died of a heart attack and things she needed, you know, he'd help her, and he thought the world of the husband, and he said that's the way I want to go, you know, but he kept, they lived on the outside and he needed, he made a little workshop in his garage and he put shelves in and, and Freddy would supply him with care packages, bits of metals and stuff like that, and he put them in a tube, you know, and send them down to him, and he loved that but many, when we go down there, he'd show me all new gadgets.

BM: That he built?

ML: Made.

BM: Oh. Now you had mentioned that he took up sewing.

ML: He took up sewing but he took up art too.

BM: Oh, oh.

ML: And he painted one, two, three, four, about five pictures, and because of David did this and he said I'd like something to do, and he says I think I'll buy some good paints and some good brushes and go down the library and maybe I'll buy some books and I'll take my crutches that I got for my leg and make an easel and so he started painting and they wouldn't believe that he had painted and he thought they were pictures because he had to have everything perfect.

BM: Do you still have those paintings?

ML: I have one in the den, and I have the last one he started for me, and he passed away, but he kept on saying that he was going to tell the nurses that this is for Margie. He says she's thinks I'm not going to finish it but I'm going to finish it but he didn't.

BM: Oh.

ML: So when I had it framed, I asked them over at Hyannis, and I said leave it the way it was. But he had every star standing up as straight as he could. And I said to him on the other one that I have in the den there, I said Dad, when you're doing oil painting, you're supposed to see the brush marks, you know. He said did you ever see a marble statue that had brush marks? (laughter) And I said to him on the other painting he did, you know, he had to do two of them on his wall, and he didn't want anything on his wall, but he did have two of them and then he put the plaque in the center, and then, but he had a measure and he had to stick a piece of tape where it was going to go exactly and then he couldn't find the tape. It was stuck on the bottom of his shoe. (laughter)

BM: Oh no!

ML: We'd write letters, you know, oh funny. He'd write these letters. Then when he was down in, they moved into an apartment and he didn't like it because he could smell everything that everybody was cooking and when he said that, and he didn't have any place to work, you know, and so he said I'm going to go crazy, and so we were saying we'd look through the paper and we'd see if there was any place that, you know, he could go, and then we saw these places being

built and he went and moved in right away. He said he couldn't wait for us to go down and see it, you know.

BM: Oh.

ML: But that's what we do when we go down there, the three of us. Mama would stay on, you know, and he'd, we'd go all through the building, you know. They do a lot of this brick. We have one house with beautiful, but it wasn't expensive you know, but he didn't like it because he used to break and he'd clean it all up and the dog next door would come over and do his business and we'd throw it back. And his friend standing there, he had an Englishman that would kid him about peeing in his door.

BM: Oh dear.

ML: You know they say about, he'd get down and he kept on. He'd have bleached the whole around the deck with all that stuffer like, and he'd get down on his hands and knees bleaching it. He took the, they had (inaudible), they took and cleaned all the (inaudible) himself on his hands and knees, and it was big, a big house, and then he would go in, they'd stay and they'd go over there and see how they were doing you know, and there was a little Italian man, I think he said, and he, he was trying to put up, they didn't do too much wood working, and he was kind of (inaudible) and.

BM: Oh a girl?

ML: Yeah, that little. She's going to school, well she's out of school now.

BM: Right, yeah. This is the father.

ML: And so, Mara, (inaudible) Perkins, yeah.

BM: Interesting.

ML: Did you know about her?

BM: I knew that Mara had met you. I didn't know about the little girl.

ML: Oh.

BM: Yeah.

ML: She was involved in getting some kind of work or something.

BM: Early intervention, yeah.

ML: Yeah, yeah.

BM: That's what she does, yeah.

ML: There was expected to be an operation but I guess it wasn't.

BM: Didn't work.

ML: Well I guess the teacher got in a nervous state, I don't know, but she, you know, right up there.

BM: Yeah.

ML: So, would that be.

BM: When I talked to you earlier, you had told me that when, when he went to Florida, he made all their clothes, right?

ML: Me and my mother, dresses, but that's another story. See, after he moved down there, I don't know if it was before or after, Ray Morley that was one of the best assemblers in the --

BM: Howe Press?

ML: -- Howe Press in the assembly room, left and went down to, I don't know whether it was because of Friedman or not, but anyway they went down to Florida and Midge Morley, she was German and they lived away from my mother and father, but they had friends and they played cards and then my father and mother got in with them, you know, and then when Ray passed away, Midge was a good sewer and she must have, and he picked it up, you know. I'm talking to her, but he didn't need to be taught. You know what I mean? He just picked up. Oh, he bought a cheap sewing machine in Sears and did some work on it and made a foot pedal to it, you know. It was really antiques but it was so good, just plain stitching, you know. But he took, they had these drapes made for their living room and he didn't like the way they hung and they were supposed to have been done professionally, so he laid them down on the floor, pinned them, cut them and did what he wanted to, and put them up and they hung perfect. He had to do everything that was, and sewing, he came up for the 120 thousand, and that's the picture you see there. So he went over to, oh and that was when Diane was going to her prom, she graduated and once, in 1965 I think, she graduated.

BM: And Diane is your daughter?

ML: Yeah, his baby. Yeah. Margie was too, but he didn't see as much of, mother had Diane all the time, you know, and she, yeah, until she started liking boys and then he had a fit.

BM: So he was up here for her prom.

ML: Yeah, well no, he. He was up here for this occasion.

BM: Right.

ML: But he took the time to go and take her shopping for her prom gown and when they got home, it had to be shortened so he cut all around and he had to take the stiffener from underneath it, it had like a bustle on it too and it was like taffeta, and so he had to take that off and then take a piece out and then sew it back on again. So we used to kid her, not everybody had their grandfather buy your prom dress and then take it home and fix it for you. So that was a big thing, yeah. But he took his, he went out and bought a suit at Kennedys and the fellow measured him, when he got home one leg was longer than the other. He says to heck with it. I'll fix it myself. That's the picture of these, kind of, but then when they moved down to Florida and they lived in [Vendo] Village, with Midge Morley and her sewing and everything, and he got making Mama's dresses and that and he'd get one pattern and go and pick out the material with her, and then when I'd go down, he'd go with me and pick out some material for me that I was going to make, and I started making all my own clothes.

BM: Oh you did? Oh.

ML: And then he was proud, you know, and the things I did, I didn't get a chance to show him what I was doing, you know.

BM: Yeah.

ML: But he got mad at me when I was 16 because I did some embroidering but I took an old sheet and made a tablecloth and did all this embroidery on it and he was mad because I didn't get some sturdy material.

BM: Yep.

ML: And he used to get me wool up at the school, you know, to make afghans and he'd get so excited when I'd make something you know.

BM: Oh that's neat, yeah.

ML: Yeah.

BM: Yeah.

ML: But I did a picture for him, but he didn't get to see it. He was gone by then, and it was Margie that was interested in cross stitch, you know, and she got me into, so I went down to South Carolina and we went into cross stitch store and I said gee, look at that gorgeous painting, you know, that he took, and she says Aunt Margie, she says, you don't start out with something like that. You start out with something simple, and I said I'm going to do it, so Freddy was my savior. He took the chart and he increased it, bigger, you know, and did it in nines so it would have one like that to follow and I had one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine patterns to go by, and he'd have to take the middle one first and then center your (inaudible). I had that on the wall at the end.

BM: Oh. We have to go look at things. I brought a camera so if it's OK with you, I'd like to take a photograph of the paintings and maybe your cross stitch, so we can have that too. That would be nice. I'm wondering if...

ML: Pictures taken are the pictures that I don't have.

BM: Oh good. Oh.

ML: I think the only one I haven't a picture of is the last one.

BM: Oh.

ML: But I have pictures of, and I framed them, the pictures that he did, the three of them, I framed, and he thought that was great. We had him up here, I don't know whether it was last time or the time before that. He was up and I was allowed to bring him up in October, the two of them, and but he was cold all the time, and but I think it was maybe the time before, but then there's so many different things that we, you know. But he, he was, and then when he got sick, she was there, he took over for her health with all of the preparations of burial and things like that, and she just adored him, you know, right... And I think while he left in kind of a funny feeling, but that doesn't seem to go much to Morley but he was a nice fellow, but Daddy did, you know, and he enjoyed the friends that they had the, he gave money to Midge to take him to the doctors or something like that, you know, to help her out, you know, and then he, they were close friends, and I kept in touch with her for quite a while. But I don't know whether she went back to Germany or what happened, and then all of a sudden, she was in an awful accident in the apartment she lived in, and I just ran into her down there, you know, and then we got, you know, oh, but you met the people that belong to [Panamus] Park, you know, Association of the Blind through this other woman that was in there...

BM: Oh.

ML: She used to do Braille for calendars at Christmas time and stuff like that, and she was a brilliant person and a wonderful person, and she lived around the block and I became very friendly with her, and when he was sick, she used to pick an amarellus from her garden and bring it and I'd put it in the bedroom, yeah. He'd say who is that from, and I'll tell him, his mind would wander back and forth, you know, but another time, he was looking into that sink and a flash seemed to come before him and then he got this terrible pain over the side and then he had to go to the eye doctor and that and he lost the sight of his eye, and but that wasn't going to stop him. He was going to still go to the store and that, but he'd map out, he'd go around the block, so he turned with the good eye all the time until he got home.

BM: Yep, yep. Wow.

ML: When we went across the horse way and we were supposed to go to the Social Security place, or taxes place, and he missed the turn, you know, and so he got frustrated, I don't drive. I don't know why he (inaudible). At least Midge I think goes, see, but so I said just keep on going and I said go back, you know, we'll go back and so I said don't get frustrated because I don't know what I can do. So we did, we went back, but when I went down there, and, but Mama had met Gussey [Haudrit] and she, she'd started talking about Braille, what she was doing, and then Mama said what Braille Writer do you have, she said do you ever look at the name on the front? And so the next time she so she says, my lord, I never knew, you know, and so then they, that's when she became friends, and then Dad would, you know, wanted to see if anything happened to it, you know, because he had found somebody that used that Brailer.

BM: Oh, isn't that funny.

ML: It's just he wanted to be connected to it.

BM: Sure.

ML: Yeah, and there were a lot of things that, but, you know he didn't, they didn't, oh and when he was sick, he said to Tommy, David's son, he said, he said I don't have anything to leave you, and he said, but a bunch of old planes, and I thought well, and he said something about your sons, but he got confused because we had a son and David had a son, but he thought that Tommy had two sons, you know, but so I, and so I said, father, don't talk like that. What about the Braille Writer, and he said oh, that was a quirk.

BM: Oh no! Wow. Wow, if he ever knew the impact.

ML: He knows I think.

BM: Yeah, that's true. Should we take a look at some of your things?

ML: Yeah.

BM: Do you want me to stop this?

ML: Yes please!

BM: OK. (laughter)

End - Marge Abraham Lamén