

Louis Shear Memoir – 1903-1921

Louis was the oldest of 5 siblings born to Barnett Shear and Kayla Wintz. They fled from Russia to avoid Barnett being conscripted into the Russian army for a second time (he had served from age 14 to 21). The family came from the Mogilev province in modern day Belarus, part of the Pale of Settlement. They settled first in Manchester where Barnett's brother Hyman lived, before moving on to Montreal in 1910 to be near other relatives. Eventually they moved to NY in 1921.

1903

My memories go back when I was 2 or 3 years old.

Manchester England: Mother, Father, Joe and myself. We lived in a closed street, one block long. A cobblestoned street. In the back of us a long, high dark prison which they called Strangeways. Father always worked very hard – long hours, small pay, but Mother in her economical way would always have good food to eat. She would even bake her own bread.

There was an old lot at the end of the street where Joe and I would play with the other kids. Uncle, Aunt and cousins lived on Cheetham Hill Road where Uncle had a tailoring store. I remember when I was about 5 while playing in the lot. I picked up a shiny piece which was a sixpence (about 12 cents). Well, I thought I was a millionaire. I bought candy, peanuts and had a wild time with the rest of the kids.

The following year Cousin Miriam took me and enrolled me in school. I got a great kick out of it. I'll never forget the time I was on my way home from school and I got the feeling that I had to go _____. I walked faster, but was still half way from home when I lost control and boy, did I fill my pants. When I got home Mother had some job getting them clean.

There was a time I remember when Joe took sick. I think it was diphtheria. They had to take him to the hospital. He was there for two weeks. I didn't understand what it was all about. I used to run from room to room looking for him. I thought he was hiding on me. Then when he came home from the hospital I was so overcome with joy I just cried.

Later on we moved to Winter Street where Mary was born. Our circumstances were not much better but it was a nicer home and a better neighborhood.

One incident stands out in my memory at the time. Mary was only a couple of months old and that day she seemed to be crying a lot. Father came home tired and _____ (it was hard to blame him trying to make both ends meet). Mary kept crying so he finally went over to her crib and picked her up, then held her up high over his head with one hand and said to her "if you don't stop our crying I'll throw you out of the window". Well believe it or not – whether Mary understood him or not – she stopped crying

instantly. Of course, the next minute Father was fondling and kissing her and even his temper disappeared.

It was also at that time on Winter Street probably a few years later that Xmas day came around. There was a church in the neighborhood that invited all the poor children to a Xmas party. Father took us along. After a lot of psalm singing and prayers they asked all the children to walk up the aisle to the stage where each child was given a present. Believe me, us kids were in 7th Heaven. It was the first present he had ever received. Mary got a doll, Joe a football and I got a drum and sticks. We went home and had a wild time with our gifts.

It was at this time that Father started getting mail from relatives in Canada. The letters all contained news of how well they were doing and the large salaries they were receiving. Before we knew it, Father was kissing us goodbye and he was on his way to Canada.

Looking back now, I know it was a struggle for Mother. We were three children and I know we were pretty hard on her. Money was scarce and it really was tough going. Sometimes she had to wait several weeks before a draft came with some money.

Several months after Father went away, Mother told us kids that she was going to have a baby. She was crying with bitter tears. She felt so lonesome. It is only after we marry and have children of our own before we realize how she really must have felt. Well, before we knew it, Dr "Moshinka" Shear was born. A few months later, money was sent to use by Father to go to Canada.

Mother must have had quite a job. It meant selling all the furniture, packing and straightening out so many things. She had to do this all herself as we were too young to think of anything but playing outside.

Another incident that stands out is on the night before our departure we were awakened by some men running up and down the street shouting "Long live the King", "The King is dead, long live the King". It was June 1910 and King Edward VII had died. His son George V was the new King.

The following morning Uncle took us all to the railroad station. We took a train there and in a few hours we arrived at Liverpool. We were really travelling like poor immigrants. We boarded a motor launch that took us out to the steamer which was anchored in the harbor. I don't remember the name but it belonged to the Cunard line. I guess we travelled the lowest class from what I can remember of the trip. We were in a little 2x4 room with one port-hole. There were three bunks one on top of the other. Mother took the lowest one with "Moshinka", Mary was in the middle one and Joe and I took the top one. That was where the port-hole was.

We all had a scare the next morning. When I awoke, Joe was not there. I woke mother and told her, but before she had a chance to really worry we saw Joe on the other side of the room. If he hadn't shown himself we would surely have thought he went out of the port-hole.

When we went for breakfast we found out something new. If you didn't grab your eggs quick enough, you didn't get any. Instead of serving individual portions, the waiter would put a platter on the table

with all the eggs and then everybody would start grabbing. I only missed the first meal. After that I did my share of the grabbing. It was our first ocean trip but I don't remember any of us being sea-sick.

I have mother a little worry one day when I was playing with some chains at the stern of the boat. I was so engrossed in what I was doing that I failed to show up for dinner. Mother was running wildly all over the boat and must have surely thought that I had gone overboard. When she finally caught up with me she just hugged me and cried.

After 10 days we arrived at Halifax, Canada. Before we got off the boat we were vaccinated. After we got off we were all taken to some sort of a hotel. It must have been a place something like Ellis Island is over here.

We spent 4 days there with plenty to worry about, because after the first day Mother surely thought that we were in jail. There were no private rooms. On one great big floor there were probably about 50 cots and when a person undressed they had to use someone else in their family to screen them. The food was terrible and each day was like a year.

Finally on the 4th day we received an OK to leave. We boarded a train and we rode for one night and two days. No pullman sleeper but just hard boards on the seats. I can assure you it was no picnic. We arrived in Montreal during the evening. Father met us with some "landsmen" and relatives. He sure was excited. After hugging and kissing us all he wanted to see "Moshinka" whom he had never seen before. He was overjoyed and took the job of carrying the baby home.

We arrived at a place on Sanguinet Street where Father was boarding with other relatives from the old country. It was very congested and we all had to sleep in one room. We kids had a lot of fun though, running around all through the place.

Within a week we had rented an apartment across the street. Looking back now it was a real dump, but at that time to us it seemed like a palace. The street was not paved and the sidewalks were just composed of wooden boards. When it rained it was awful as the whole street would be muddy.

I must relate some incidents while we lived there. The house had no electricity but was lit by gas mantles. Father felt rich one day and bought a glass chandelier that he hung up on the dining room ceiling. It had all glass crystals dangling from it and it made a musical sound when you touched it. It was the most beautiful thing to us at that time.

Another thing we bought at the time was a gramophone. It was the newest thing out. We sure were thrilled. Every week at payday Father would buy a new record and we would sit all night listening to it. It was the kind that had a great big horn attached to it, like you see on that trademark of a dog listening to his master's voice.

The winters we used to get in Montreal were terrific. From November until May you never saw the ground anymore as it was covered up with one snowfall on top of the other. It was nothing to get 25 or 35 below zero weather.

One night while I was out playing in the snow a neighbor told me that Mother was sick and to hurry and call a doctor. I ran about 10 blocks and finally got the doctor to come over. I waited for 2 hours in the next room before the doctor came out and told me I had a baby sister. That's how Fanny was born.

I wanted to be the first to tell Father when he came home so I waited outside for several hours, but it was worth it to see how excited he was when told him. It was no picnic for her under the conditions the way she gave birth. No hospital facilities and a quack doctor.

While we lived there we had as boarders my cousins Becky and Kopel who were children of my mother's sister. They were very nice and we were all like sisters and brothers. At the time Becky was 18 and Kopel was 21.

On my birthday Kopel bought me my first pair of roller skates. I used them every day. A small truck with kerosene used to drive through the street every day. It had a large barrel with 3 faucets and the man used to draw the kerosene out in bottles for the people who used kerosene lamps. Almost everyone did at the time.

I was full of mischief one day. While the man was making a delivery I sneaked over to the truck and opened up all 3 faucets. As I turned away the man caught sight of me and gave chase. I ran like a scared rabbit and not being too smart I headed straight for home, straight up the stairs with the man hollering blue murder right behind me. Mother had all she could do to pacify him, and the man would not leave until he was paid (one more of the many reasons of Mother having grey hair). When Father came home that night he took good care of me, and I deserved it.

I was in the 3rd grade at school at the time. I used to go to Aberdeen School. There was a big park in front of it and a large pool at the centre. It was pretty deep and during the winter they would draw out the water and we would have a lot of fun sliding down the sides on ice.

One block away from our school was a French parochial school and during recess or after school there would be plenty of fights between the Jewish boys and the French kids. There was a lot of anti-semitism there at the time which I don't think has changed to this day.

1913

We moved uptown on Clarke Street – a much nicer home and a better neighborhood. There were plenty of open lots to play in. In the back of the house was a great big lot where we used to play baseball. In the evening we would build a fire and roast potatoes on a stick. It was a six room house and in the rear we had a shed which was more or less like an attic room.

Father came home one day with a pair of pigeons that some friend had talked him into. He built a regular house for them and he was all set for them to multiply. It was very exciting when we saw the first pair of eggs that were laid and we would watch the pigeons sitting on them from dawn to dusk.

Finally they broke out of their shells and we watched from day to day how the older pigeons would feed them. The mother pigeon would take some food and chew it and the young pigeon would open its mouth wide, then the mother would put her beak down into the little one's mouth and put the chewed up food there.

After a while we had about 36 pigeons and we used to have a lot of fun watching them flying in and out of their house. One morning we went in to the shed and not a pigeon was left. Someone got in during the night and stole the lot of them. That was that.

It was while we lived in that house that "Moshinka" had an accident. He was playing in the shed and was fooling around with matches. Before he realized it his clothes caught fire. It's a good thing Mother was home – she rushed in and beat the fire out with her hands.

He had an awful big 3rd degree burn right on his chest. I used to take him to the General Hospital every day to change the bandages. I remember very well, and he probably does too, of the torture he went through when they had to change his bandages. Whether the doctors were right or not I can't say, but they used to dress his wound...(can't read line). When I brought him in they would look at the bandage which was stuck to his skin and instead of moistening it and taking it off gradually, they would get one corner of it and rip it off, just like that. It was very painful and how that boy used to cry. Just try ripping a plain piece of tape off your skin and you've got the idea of how he felt, only he had a great big wound under that tape. To this day he has a scar that covers half of his chest. But thank God, Mother was there to save him or there would be no chest at all.

I reached my 13th birthday in this house and had my Bar Mitzvah there. During the previous year while I was studying Hebrew, Father used to sit alongside of me and tell me to read several pages. Every time I got through, a penny used to fall on the book and Father told me it came from Heaven because I was a good boy. I always believed it was true, until finally one day I noticed his arm extended over my head just before the penny fell. If you think a penny doesn't sound much to you now, it was like a million bucks to me then.

I remember one day, Fanny, who was probably about 4 or 5 at the time, was playing across the street on one of the first floor porches. She tumbled off and got a concussion in the head. She didn't cry but she had a very dazed look and her eyes were all bloodshot. Mother and I took and rushed her to the hospital. We had no money for a cab but we had to take the street-car and it took us half an hour to get there. The doctors checked up on her and they told us that she was more shocked than hurt. She still hadn't cried but a day later she started to cry and cried off and on for the rest of the week.

It was while we lived on Clarke Street that Becky and Kopel were married. We felt like millionaire kids when we drove to the ball-room in Hansons. Two beautiful horses drawing the buggy. A fellow with a high hat sitting up in front with a long whip in his hand. It was winter and instead of having wheels on the buggy, it had sledrunners. We sat in the back covered up by a warm fur rug.

The school I went to in this neighborhood was Edward VIIth School on Esplanade Ave. I'll never forget going to school one day and it must have been at least 30 below zero. It was very windy and all of a

sudden I felt a sharp sting on the lobe of my right ear. After that it was entirely numb. That night in the warmth of the house it started to thaw out and I was in terrific pain. A few days later the skin started to peel as if it were a sunburn.

At this stage of my life I never knew what the rest of my brothers and sisters were doing as we went out with different age groups. I do remember one day when Father and Mother took Fanny, Joe and Larry to the hospital to have their tonsils taken out. I can picture it very clearly. When they were brought home they were all three put in one bed and they lay there like stuck pigs (excuse the expression) with blood dripping from their mouths. It was a pitiful sight to behold.

I remember one night I was awakened by loud screaming. It was 2am. Father was yelling at the top of his voice, "Help, help! Police, help"! I was so scared. I crept further under the blankets and was afraid to breathe. I finally heard Mother talking to Father and telling him that he had a bad dream. Boy, was I scared.

1915

The war had started in 1914 and things were not so good. Father was working "on and off". Finally his trade went out on strike and they struck for 8 months. It was no picnic.

Father got a job in an ammunition factory where they were moving large shells and steel. One day a large steel shell fell on his right toe. He was brought home in terrible agony. He was laid up for 6 weeks. No money coming in. Things were tough.

During the summer we used to have picnics every Sunday. Mount Royal is at the heart of the city. It is a great big park with a look-out on the top where you can get a panoramic view of the whole city. Mother used to prepare the day before with plenty of food for 3 meals. Sunday morning, Joe and I used to get up about 6 o'clock and go ahead. Our idea was to grab a table and benches because later on they would all be taken. The rest of the folks would follow. We used to have a good time. Food always tasted better like this and we spent a nice day out in the air.

1916

Got my first bicycle (two wheeler). I sure got my money's worth.

From where we lived, we were only 2 miles from the outside of town. From there on it was country and farms. A bunch of us fellows would take food along and go way into the country. We used to wear blouses in those days with a string on the bottom to tighten them up.

Well, one day we passed an apple orchard, the apples were still hard and green. We started to throw sticks up into the tree to dislodge the apples. We had no place to put them so we got a bright idea – we stuck the apples in our blouses. We all looked as if we had big stomachs. Of course we had to eat quite a lot of them too. I don't remember about the rest of the fellows but all I know I had the worst belly-ache in all my life. I was sick for a week later.

Across the street was an old barn that had been closed for some time. It was all fenced in. But the place was infested with rats. They were the size of cats. That was our hunting grounds. We would climb over and quietly take our positions in each corner. We used to have home-made slingshots with hard pebbles. We were all pretty good shots and when a rat came out, one of us would be sure to hit him. If the pebble would not kill the rat outright, it was enough to stun him or cripple him. Then we would smack him with a large club. After we had about a dozen or more we would take them along with us and hang them up on some of the neighbors' door-knobs. Sometimes we would run by an open window and throw in a rat. Boy, what a commotion.

1918

We moved to St Dominique Street near Prince Arthur Street. We lived on the 3rd floor straight walk-up. How we climbed those stairs I'll never know. It must have been pretty hard on Mother and Father. Across the street was a furniture store. Every time they uncrated some new furniture, we would grab the wood and bring it upstairs. We used to pile it up on the roof.

Next door was a synagogue. The Shamash was a young fellow but he had a great big beard and all you could see were his eyes. He had a real "Popeye the Sailor" voice. And when he used to call for his son "Y-cheelick!", you could hear him a block away. Their home above the "shool" was filthy. Many a times I remember when the kids would have an argument, they would throw cockroaches at each other. Where did they get them, you ask? They would pick them right off the wall. Any time you wanted them, there they were.

It was at this time that I quit school. Father wasn't doing much and expenses were high. In Montreal, education costs money right from the kindergarden up. In public school you must buy all books, including readers and geography, etc. When you start High School, besides your books you have to pay so much per term for tuition. There's one reason why a poor child has a better chance for a complete education in this country. In those days 90% of us kids went to work after graduating public school.

I got a job for a jewelry concern as an errand boy. I received 8.00 a week. It was downtown and I used my bicycle for 4 trips a day. In Montreal we always came home for lunch. The noon-day meal was the heaviest of the day. Mother always made soup and meat at noon-time, then we used to have dairy in the evening.

It was during the war yet and the draft was on. We call it conscription. During the day they used to have M.P.'s stationed at all corners of the main streets in town and anybody that looked like he was old enough to be in the army was stopped and questioned. I was about 16 or 17 then, but I was a husky and tall kid. One day I got stopped and the M.P. would not believe my age. Not having any papers of identification I was taken down to the barracks. I was there all day until they got in touch with Father. He had to go to a notary public and have regular papers made out as to my age, etc, before they finally released me. After that, no matter where I went I had to carry the papers with me.

At the corner of Prince Arthur and St Dominique Street was a large hall where they would have catered affairs such as dinners and weddings. Every Saturday night there was bound to be a wedding. That was my day. My friend and I would dress up in our Sunday best and we would be one of the guests. In those days there was no such thing as separate tables with the guests' names. They would set up several long tables and whoever was there grabbed any seat. We made sure we sat next to a couple that had no children and we would fill up plenty. After the regular meal we would fill up our pockets with candy and fruit and bring it home.

Half the time we went to the movies it wouldn't cost us a cent - especially during the summer. We would go to the back alley and the doors were always open to let in some air. If you walked in standing up the usher could easily see you. So we would get down on our stomachs and crawl in under the first few seats which were near the screen. Most of the time those seats were empty so we had no trouble getting through. After we got past the first few rows we would get up and sit down. Sometimes if we were a little nervous about sneaking in we would.....had to go after them.

There was one time when we sneaked in we had no sooner sat down when the operator's machine went out of commission. Everybody stamped their feet and clapped their hands for about half an hour. But they could not get the picture started again. So what happened? Everybody had their money refunded including yours truly.

1919

We moved to City Hall Ave. I was in my prime. A nice strapping fellow of 18 years. I was starting to look sideways at the girls and learning how to dance. We were four friends about the same age and every Saturday night we would have a party at one or the other's houses. We chipped in a dollar apiece and bought fruit and ice cream. We each invited our best girlfriends and had a nice time. "Spin the Bottle" and "Post Office" and we were in Seventh Heaven.

I'll never forget the time we had a party on the other side of town. Until that day I never came home later than 12 o'clock as Father was very strict about too late hours. Well, the party was going strong and we left about 12.30. By the time we got to the street-car line it was 1 o'clock and we were told that the cars don't run any-more until 5 o'clock in the morning. There was nothing else we could do but go back and continue the party. Finally we left at 5 o'clock and I got to my house at 6 o'clock. My heart was in my mouth. We had no telephone home, so I couldn't call up and let my folks know.

I had no key to get in, so I rang the bell. Father came to the door in his "gatness" and when he saw me he said "where were you"? So I thought fast and told him that I got up early and went out for a pack of cigarettes. He believed me because they all went to sleep about 11 o'clock and father did not miss me until I woke him. I was glad it turned out that way as he would have worried plenty.

At this time I was about 16 or 17 years old. And as it was natural for a fellow my age, I used to hang around the pool rooms and became quite a shark. There was many a time I lost my week's spending money "shooting craps". Well, I was only a normal boy growing up, so don't blame me.

Every summer they used to advertise for help to work on the farms in the Canadian Northwest. When the wheat became ripe it had to be cut down fast and they needed thousands of extra help during August, September and October. In order to make it enticing for us city fellows the railroads would charge us half a cent a mile to wherever we wanted to go. The Provinces represented were Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta – either Province was over 1000 miles from Montreal. It took a long time to convince Mother and Father that I could take care of myself (this was the first time away from home).

The day finally came around and we went to the railway station. I was going with three other pals of mine. Mother gave me a half dozen sandwiches and Father gave me a ten dollar bill. That's all I had with me outside of my grip with extra clothes. I thought, and so did everybody else, that this was an overnight trip, but we found out different. The train consisted of about 18 cars all filled up with fellows like us and older men all going to the farms. Our first destination was Winnipeg, Manitoba which is northwest of Chicago.

To get back to the train – it was just one jump ahead of a cattle car as far as accommodation was concerned. All the seats were plain boarded bunks. Nothing but planks to lay on and you had I also want to say that every type of character, good and bad, was on this train – hoboes, card-sharps, gamblers, crooks, clerical workers, young kids, old degenerates and what not. Well, the first day and night out was a picnic, everybody was feeling good, making friends and enjoying themselves.

By the next day my sandwiches gave out including everybody else's on the train. There was no dining car and the train did not make any stops except for water and coal. Everybody was getting mad but there was nobody to

The following morning (which was the 3rd day out) it stopped for a 15 minutes at a small hick town to allow us all to buy some food. Right by the station there was one little general store and everybody rushed for it. We all meant well. We intended to pay for our food, but there were so many of us that the farmer and his wife could not take care of us fast enough and as everyone of us knew we only had 15 minutes. We were getting panicky.

Well, to make it short, a lot of the fellows started walking out with different things. Before you knew it, bedlam broke loose. They were taking stuff off the shelves including things you couldn't reach such as brooms, polish, bags of sugar, flour and what not. Within 15 minutes that store was completely empty with the exception of the farmer and his wife who were hollering blue murder. And in a matter of seconds everybody was on the train and we were off again.

There were plenty of cards and dice games going on and before I knew it I got into a crap game and in a few minutes I was broke. As I look back now, I should have been plenty worried. Going on a long trip, a thousand miles from home and not a penny in my pocket. But as kids are, this never entered my mind and it didn't bother me.

The following morning the train stopped about 5 o'clock in the morning to take on water at a small town. About a dozen of us got off the stretch our legs and get some fresh air. Right opposite the railroad tracks was a little country school house. We got in through one of the windows and had a wild time there. Some of us started to write dirty jokes on the blackboard, some were going through all the desks picking up little things here and there. My friend and I saw a rope dangling from the ceiling and upon investigating we saw that it was attached to a bell up on the roof. This was the bell the teacher used to announce school time. Well, as you have guessed, we pulled that rope and kept ringing that bell. A few minutes later as our train was leaving, we looked out and we could see a lot of kids running like hell to get to school, and this was only about 5 o'clock in the morning.

During the afternoon we stopped at another town and most of us got off again to "buy" some more food. When we got to the general store it was closed tight and all the windows were boarded up. The owner and half a dozen men were in there with shot guns daring us to come in. Well, we didn't. It seems that the sheriff from the other town had telegraphed them to be on the lookout for this train, so they were all prepared for us.

On the 6th day we arrived at Winnipeg which was the last stop for this train. Winnipeg is the largest Western city in Canada. In the station there were agents there, who had a list of every farm town and how many men each town needed. They would tell us what town to go to. Fifteen of us were sent to a small town called Bradford in Manitoba. It took us another day before we arrived there.

This was a real one-horse town. Six stores on one side, six stores on the other. That was Main Street. When you got to the end of the sidewalk you were out in the woods. When we told some of the farmers that we came out for work, they told us that the wheat wasn't ready to be cut yet and it may take another week or more. They had to pay us 6 dollars a day and board so they didn't want to take us on until they actually needed us. In the meantime, we had to eat.

Some of the fellows took on odd jobs, such as chopping wood, and other things for a meal. I went to the railroad station with two of my friends and we got a job unloading bricks out of a freight car. This was tiresome work. We had to take brick by brick out of the car and load it onto a flat truck. When we got through we drove with the truck to the brickyard and had to unload brick by brick into the yard. We got \$5.00 a piece for this job. We all went to the local restaurant and had something to eat.

When evening came around we didn't know where to sleep, so while hanging around the station we noticed an empty freight with the doors open. We climbed up into one of the cars and fixed a place to sleep. Well folks, we slept like logs, we were so tired out. But when we awoke we found that we were on a moving train, going so fast that we could do nothing but wait till it stopped. We rode most of that day without a stop and we were plenty hungry and thirsty. Finally, it stopped at a small town and we couldn't get off fast enough.

It didn't make much difference to us as one town was as good as another. They all needed help for the harvest season. They were also not ready to cut the wheat yet, so we got a job building a barn. We didn't know anything about carpentry, but the regular carpenters needed some helpers and as long as

we could drive a nail we were hired. They paid us 75 cents an hour and we worked at it over a week. At least we were getting money enough to eat and a place to sleep.

The next week we split up. I went to work for a farmer who only needed one man. It was about 5 miles outside the town. It looked like an old rundown bunkhouse. It was like camping out. We used to cook our own meals (mostly ham and eggs). We slept together in one bed. Before we fell asleep at night we would talk and he would listen for hours about the big city, which to me at that time was Montreal. He was thrilled about the street cars and the 10 storey buildings.

Work was hard – no spare hours. Sunrise to sunset. Saturday nights we would go into town and I would meet some of the other boys who were also in for the evening. There was a little _____ that used to open once a week on a Saturday night. We met a lot of the farmers' daughters there. They were some flirts. You would think that they would act shy, but they were worse than the city girls. Two minutes after you said hello they were looking into your eyes and expecting to be kissed. And they were.

Going back to the farmhouse at night was a lonesome trip. I walked back the 5 miles with the farmer. Every once in a while you would hear howling over on the right side of the road. Then you would get another howling from the left side. They were coyotes (in the wolf family). They were pretty vicious but the farmer explained to me that they would not attack us in the summer time as they had plenty to eat amongst the smaller animals. He told me that in the winter they were most dangerous as they had been known to attack children going to school.

After three weeks the farmer was through with his fields and I went to work for another fellow who had more land and had 10 fellows working for him. Here is a working day routine: Get up in the morning around 4.30 or sunrise. Go to the stables, clean out the horse manure and give the horses fresh hay. (One morning on my way to the stable I saw two bright eyes shining at me from the bushes. It was just getting light but I could see it was a wolf. I threw a rock at him and off he went, but I sure was scared.) After leaving the stable we were ready for breakfast. One thing about these fellows, they gave you plenty of everything to eat. Hot cereal, cream, bacon or ham and eggs, homemade rolls and milk or coffee. Then off to the fields we'd go.

These wheat fields were all flat ground and for miles and miles you could see the wheat waving in the fields. You'd think you were looking at an ocean the way the wheat was swaying just like waves. One big machine which was the cutter was hooked up to six horses. It would cut the wheat, tie it up in bundles and drop it to the ground. Our job was to follow behind, pick up each bundle and stack them up about 6 bundles to a pile, the wheat end up so that the sun could dry it.

12 noon we would stop to eat lunch, then we would work until about 4 o'clock and stop again for tea and muffins. After that we would work right through till sunset, which usually came about 8 o'clock. It was a strenuous day. I used to watch the sun like you would watch the clock. Then we would go back to the house for a big supper.

When it rained we did not work, but we also didn't get paid. But many a time when I saw them clouds in the sky, I was praying for rain. In the evening there was a lot of card playing going on amongst the men and the money was going back and forth. I was only about 17 at the time and more on the bashful side but I know that some of the older men were having a wild time with the farmer's two daughters. My two eyes don't lie.

Out there on the prairie, there were millions of gophers or prairie dogs. They are about the same size and appearance as a squirrel but do not have the bushy tail. They were a real menace to the farmers as they would ruin the crops. The county was offering 2 cents for every dead one you brought in. If you brought in the tails it was ok too. We used to go out on Sunday killing them. They live in holes in the ground and we used to stand by a hole and wait for them to stick their heads out and we would hit them on the head with a club. It was great sport.

By the beginning of November we were all finished and paid off. I received \$340 for my work. By this time I did not know where the rest of my pals were as we were scattered all over the country, so I had to go home alone. The first stop I had to go back to was Winnipeg. I arrived there in the afternoon and was told I could not get a train to Montreal until the following morning.

I was warned before I left the farm to be careful when I got to Winnipeg as there are a lot of confidence men who are looking for fellows like us knowing that we were on our way home with our salary. I was a little nervous with the money in my pocket so I went to a bank and deposited \$300 and kept \$40 in my pocket.

I went out to eat and started to walk around to see the city. I happened to pass one of those penny arcades and I noticed where they take post-card pictures of you, 3 for 25 cents. I thought it would be a good thing to have some pictures to take home so I went in. There was a small booth over on the right where the photographer was. I went over and told him I wanted 3 of the post-card pictures.

He took me over to a corner and had me pose. After he snapped me, a beautiful girl walked in and stood behind me with her arms around my neck and her cheeks next to mine. She said "Hello honey" and said this would make a nice picture. What could I do? The photographer said it would cost me another 25 cents, so I said ok. After he snapped the photo, she said let's try another so she sat on my lap. I felt proud that a nice-looking girl like her was paying me so much attention. So I said, "go ahead, snap another one". Afterwards I asked the photographer how much I owed him and without flicking an eyelash he told me \$50. I smiled and I said to him "OK – what do I really owe you"? But he didn't smile and he said \$50. I said that for 3 or 4 poses at the most should be a dollar or so. He told me that I was taking portrait sized, colored pictures and a few other things.

I felt that I was being gypped so I started to argue. While we were arguing a big bruiser walks in with a toothpick in his mouth and looks at the photographer and says "Hello Harry, Is this fellow giving you any trouble?" Well, I knew what I was in for, so I told him that all I had was \$40 and he would have to take that. He accepted the money but told me that if I reported this to the police they would deny getting the money and also take care of me later on. My conscience told me to forget the whole thing and charge it up to experience.

But as I walked away I realized I had no money to eat or sleep with. I could not get my money out of the bank until 9 o'clock the next morning. I had no dinner or supper and that night I slept on one of the benches in the railroad station. It was a long hungry night and it seemed like ages before I finally went to the bank and got my money out. I could not get out of town quick enough.

I finally got back home to Montreal and the folks were sure glad to see me and vice versa. Joe, Mary, Moshinka and Fanny would listen for hours as I told them of my trip. But Father said "Enough of this foolishness. Go out and get yourself a job."

In the apartment above us lived a widow who had a son and a daughter. The son worked for the railroad as a "railroad agent", selling magazines, cigars, cigarettes, candy and so forth. He used to travel on different trains from one part of the country to the other. The daughter was the homliest looking girl you ever saw. The mother was trying to talk Mother and Father into a "shidach". She promised them that she would give us a few thousand dollars for a wedding present and also get me a good job. Of course as far as I was concerned the marriage deal was out, but the job intrigued me. She told me that her son would get me in with the railroad. You were paid 20 cents on every dollar's worth you sold and besides you travelled all over the country. I liked the idea and in a short time I was working at it.

For a few months I worked on the Toronto run, then I went to Ottawa, which is the capital of Canada. I was all through Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec.

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Father was still working as a tailor in a clothing factory. The pay was small and it was a tough grind making both ends meet. I remember the day he said that he spoke to the boss about a raise telling him that he had 5 children and it was hard to get along. The boss refused and also told Father that if he had 5 children and had all the fun, why should he (the boss) have to pay for my Father's pleasure.

At this time Uncle Sam in Brooklyn was writing Father and telling him about how much money there was to be made in a cleaning store. A few letters back and forth and Father was out in New York to try his luck. He went to work for my Uncle in his store on Avenue H, Flatbush at \$35 per week. He was out there for 6 months and sent money home every week to Mother. Finally he came home and told us we were going to sell our furniture and move out to New York.

One fine summer's day we all got onto a train and we were off to the "land of honey", the good old USA. We arrived at Grand Central Station late in the evening. Uncle and his family were waiting for us. Uncle would not think of taking a cab but the whole lot of us got into the subway and rode for an hour to Coney Island. When we got off at 14th Street (Coney Island) we had to walk to 23rd Street, baggage and all. He stuck us in a one room bungalow where we slept that night. Mother cried all night. She was so unhappy. We all did not know what was in front of us for the future.