

BS2 – Ben Siegel, "How My Father Got a Job in Bridgeport"

Time Line: Decade III, Local and National Events, General, end of Time Line for this section.

Transcript: pp. 14-15

BS: In Bridgeport -- I said to Pa one day, "You know, Pa. It's strange that Uncle Isadore got you a job and he can't get a job himself. He's not working."

I: [laughs]

BS: So Pa said in Jewish, "Cousin Isadore didn't get me the job. I got it myself." I said, "You got it yourself?" Now, let me interrupt you by saying that Pa was totally illiterate and never did learn how to speak English or write in any language, and particularly in English. What he tried to do was phonetically tried to sound out certain words that he thought he would understand the meaning of. For example, BAD was bade. TO was toe. He learned these few words. So he figured that they were things that he could read. So I said to him, "Pa, how come you got the job and Isadore couldn't?" He said, "I got the job myself." I said, "How did you get the job yourself, Pa?" He said, "Well, I read a sign on a fence in front of Duponts." I said, "You read a sign on the fence, Pa? What did it say?" He said, "It said 'family help wanted.' And I'm a family man with six children." My older sister had died by then. So I'm a family man. So I went in, and they gave me a job." I said, "Pa, I never heard of a sign that said, 'family help wanted.' How do you spell it?" He said, "FEMALE."

I: [laughs] Female.

BS: That's how we came to Bridgeport, because Pa read the sign on the fence for family help. [laughs]

I: [laughs]

BS: How do you like that?

I: That's probably the best one yet! [laughs]