

EI-1058

ELAINE NELSON

BIRTHDATE: NOVEMBER 17, 1904

INTERVIEW DATE: MARCH 20, 1999

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 94

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INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

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FINLAND, 1915

AGE: 10

SHIP: HELLIG OLAV

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: Today is March 20th, 1999 and I'm here in—in Florida with Elaine Nelson, who came from Finland in 1915 when she was 10 years of age on the Helik Olav, the ship. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. Well, I'm delighted to have found you and I'm really looking forward to whatever you can remember.

NELSON: Well, I'll [chuckles] see what happens.

LEVINE: Okay. I know you're 94—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —at this point. And it's been a long time—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —since you came to this country. But we'll—I'm sure you'll remember a lot more—

NELSON: [laughs]

LEVINE: —than you think.

NELSON: Oh—

LEVINE: Okay, why don't you say where in Finland you were born?

NELSON: Virrat. V-I-R-R-A-T, Virra—A-T. Virrat.

LEVINE: Virrat—Virrat.

NELSON: V-I-R-A-T.

LEVINE: Virrat. Okay. And what was your birth date?

NELSON: November 17th, 1904.

LEVINE: 1904, okay. Now, do you remember Virrat? What do you think of when imagine it again?

NELSON: Well, I—well, we had a little [unclear]. My father built a little house. And we lived in that until we sold—my mother sold it when we came here, because my father came here two years before.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, did you say that your father built it?

NELSON: Yeah, my father built a home in Finland. Yes.

LEVINE: What did he—what was it made out of?

NELSON: Logs [unclear].

LEVINE: And can you describe it? What did it look like?

NELSON: Well, it's a—just looked like a regular logs, like you get out of the woods and you clean them and make a home out of it.

LEVINE: Was it—how many rooms did—

NELSON: Just one. It's all big room, one big room.

LEVINE: And then was there a kitchen on, like, one side of the room?

NELSON: Yeah, yeah. One side of the room [coughs] was a kitchen, oven and all that where my mother used to bake, made bread.

LEVINE: Was the oven made out of stone?

NELSON: Yeah, out of bricks.

LEVINE: Bricks.

NELSON: Brick ovens, yeah. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And did you have running water?

NELSON: No, no. We—

LEVINE: How did you get your water?

NELSON: With—we had a pail and we would come from the—it was a—a—now, what's—in Finland, it's called gayu [PH], but I can't think of it. Well, it's just a—

LEVINE: Like a spring?

NELSON: Like a—like here, sometimes out—out in the country they have a place outside where they got the water from outside.

LEVINE: Did—did you have a pump? Did you have to—

NELSON: No, no. You had to drop a pail in there and [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: See.

LEVINE: A well.

NELSON: Yeah, a—that's it. Yeah, a well.

LEVINE: And where was the well from your house?

NELSON: It was—it was right in the yard there not too far from the house.

LEVINE: So it was a well just for your family or [unclear]?

NELSON: Yeah, just for our family. Yeah, just for our—for the house that we had.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then what did—what did the rest of it look like? The kitchen was on one side with the—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —oven. And then where—what else was in that room?

NELSON: Well, then along the walls there, the beds were there and then there was a table where we ate and—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—and what was your father's name?

NELSON: Emil?

LEVINE: E-M-I-L?

NELSON: Mm-hmm.

LEVINE: And your mother?

NELSON: Maryanne—Marianna. [PH]

LEVINE: Marianna. And her maiden name?

NELSON: Multala.

LEVINE: Could you spell that one?

NELSON: M-U-L-T-A-L-A. And there is a—not one telephone book in the United States yet that I found that name.

LEVINE: Wow.

NELSON: My mother's name, last name.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Spell it—

NELSON: It's so odd.

LEVINE: Spell—

NELSON: M-U-L-T-A-L-A.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you have—name your sisters or brother in order of how—the oldest one down.

NELSON: Well, my sister was Ida, the oldest sister. And then I was next to Ida.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: And then was Martha and Tyne.

LEVINE: Tiny?

NELSON: Uh-hmm, T-Y-Y-N-E.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—and were you particularly close to any one of your sisters or brother?

NELSON: No, I was—I went away from home and I was living away from home. First, I went to Duluth, Minnesota.

LEVINE: Oh, but when you were still back in Finland?

NELSON: Oh, in Finland, well, yeah, we were close. We were playing together always and going places together and doing things, what kids do, you know.

LEVINE: What—what kinds of things did you do as kids in Finland?

NELSON: Well, we'd ski and sliding just with the—[laughs] whatever would—found to slide with.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah, so we did that.

LEVINE: And where would you go? When you went someplace, where would you apt to have gone when you [unclear]?

NELSON: Well, we went—we didn't go too many places. But we'd go, like—well, sometimes we went to church.

LEVINE: What church was that?

NELSON: Lutheran church.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Lutheran church.

LEVINE: Were you—was your family very religious?

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: No.

NELSON: No, no.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And—and so, when you—when you—you went to school before you—

NELSON: Yeah, I went one year in the Finland. I had one year of school in Finland.

LEVINE: What was that school like?

NELSON: Oh, it was a—all the grades were in the same room and it was a nice, big room. And the teacher, he was—it was a man and he was very rough-like. [chuckles]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was he strict?

NELSON: Yeah, he was there. The—he was always—when I would read, I'd read loud enough so everybody could hear. But he was always calling somebody because they didn't—they were so quiet. [chuckles]

LEVINE: He wanted people to speak up, huh?

NELSON: Yeah. Yeah, so he told me I was going to be a minister when I got [laughs]—

LEVINE: Where did he get that idea?

NELSON: Because I liked talking so that everybody could [laughs]—really get talking so that I would be understood, I guess. I don't know.

LEVINE: Well, what did you feel like when he told you that?

NELSON: Oh, I did—I thought that was kind of nice [chuckles] that he thought that I would be a minister. [laughter]

LEVINE: Well, what was the—was it a village or was it a town or a city? Virrat?

NELSON: No, it's a—well, it's a—it's not a town. It's just like a—

LEVINE: A village?

NELSON: Vill—it's like—yeah, that's it. More like a—like a village, yeah.

LEVINE: And did it have a main street? Were there shops—

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: —or anything?

NELSON: No, there was—well, there was a—a highway went through there but—

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: —there was only one store there.

LEVINE: What was that store?

NELSON: There was everything in there. You could buy everything in there.

LEVINE: Like a general store.

NELSON: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what would people—would people farm? Did people have—

NELSON: Yeah. Yeah, well, there was the farms around there. Sure, there—that's how they lived. I mean, living, that they had fields and sold their products at—

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what about your father? What had he done before he left for America?

NELSON: Well, he was a—a—a—on the logs. He was on the water, on the logs. He was a—what they call—I don't know what they call to [unclear] in Finn—in English. Well, he was a—with logs, they were floating logs down the rivers and lakes at—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: So he—he had—

NELSON: They called—they called them tukovers. [PH]

LEVINE: Say it again.

NELSON: Tukovers.

LEVINE: What's that?

NELSON: Well, that was—the jobs he had. It was that—his job was that, tukover, you—logger.

LEVINE: A logger.

NELSON: Logger.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Is that the word for logger, tu—

NELSON: Well, that I don't really know. That—I couldn't tell you that.

LEVINE: Yeah.

NELSON: But I know that this was—

LEVINE: Could you spell that one? Tukuma or whatever you said? [chuckles]
What did you say?

NELSON: Tukovers.

LEVINE: Yeah, could you spell that?

WOMAN: [unclear] is really lodger.

NELSON: Huh?

WOMAN: It's a lodger.

LEVINE: A lodger.

WOMAN: Yeah, log.

NELSON: Yeah, yeah.

WOMAN: You know, log.

LEVINE: Logger.

WOMAN: Right, you would say—

LEVINE: Can you—can—

WOMAN: He was a logger.

LEVINE: Yes. Can you spell that?

NELSON: Well, L-O—

WOMAN: I would say L-O-G-G-E-R.

LEVINE: No, I mean in Finnish.

NELSON: Well—

WOMAN: Oh, my [chuckles]—

NELSON: It would be L-O-G-G—what's g in Finnish?

WOMAN: [unclear] I don't really know. I've been trying to say [speaking Finnish alphabet].

NELSON: I don't know either. Gay—what's gay?

WOMAN: K—[unclear].

NELSON: G.

WOMAN: U—no, that's y. But g, that gets me.

NELSON: Yeah, the Finnish letters don't have that letter.

WOMAN: A g?

NELSON: Yeah.

WOMAN: They don't?

NELSON: No. Well, you think of it now? You—

WOMAN: Oh, no. Well, I don't mean that one. I'm simply saying—

NELSON: Yeah.

WOMAN: But—

LEVINE: Well, that's okay. We can just—

NELSON: Logger.

LEVINE: —note that it's—it means logger.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—and that's—that will be—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —fine.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: In English.

WOMAN: [unclear] logging.

LEVINE: Yes.

WOMAN: You know.

LEVINE: Yeah. So he was a logger.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And were your mother's family and your father's family from the same area?

NELSON: No, no. My—

LEVINE: Like, your grandparents?

NELSON: No, no. My grandparents—the others were from [unclear], Finland and my mother's were from Virrat. And my mother and father met in Tomberry, [PH] city of Tomberry.

LEVINE: I see. And do you remember? Did they ever tell you how they met?

NELSON: No, I don't remember.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. But they—but both sides of the family had—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —come from Finland?

NELSON: Yeah, and they had—well, but they met in—at Tomberry. My mother was working in a place where she made linens. See, they made linens.

LEVINE: And what did she do? Do you know what she did?

NELSON: Well, she did—made linens, you know, on the looms and all that.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. I see. Now, did you ever meet your grandparents on—

NELSON: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: —either side?

NELSON: Both sides. I met them. Both sides, yes.

LEVINE: What do you remember about either—any of your grandparents?

NELSON: Well, my father's parents were very quiet people and nice. They lived quite a ways from where my mother's family is from.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: I—I was there one summer. I was there and there was a nice lake, right by the lake. And I could go and walk in the water. Well, I didn't know how to swim then yet. I was a little kid.

LEVINE: And what—how did they treat you, your grandparents?

NELSON: Very nice. They were nice.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. If you had to describe the personality, what would you say about them?

NELSON: Nice and quiet people.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and how about your father's family?

NELSON: Same way, very nice and quiet.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah. And—

WOMAN: See you later.

NELSON: Okay.

LEVINE: Okay. Bye-bye, now.

NELSON: [chuckles] Bye.

WOMAN: Bye.

LEVINE: So, let's see. So when your father—why was it that your father decided to come to this country?

NELSON: Because there was no work in Finland. It—people were so poor that we were lucky to be able to eat.

LEVINE: What did you eat? What was typical of what you ate?

NELSON: Oh, well. Oatmeal and stuff like that. We didn't have very much meat. Once in a while, because my grandmother's house, they had cows and they had lambs and that. So we had lamb once in a while, whatever we could get for what Grandma used to give us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what about fish? Did you have fish?

NELSON: Oh, well, we—not too much fish too.

LEVINE: No?

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: And what were the foods—did you grow? Did you and your mother and—did you—did you grow certain kinds of foods that you ate?

NELSON: No, no. No, we didn't grow anything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: We had—our place was just a small yard.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: We didn't have [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: But over at my grandma's, there was fields of everything and they raised potatoes, lots of potatoes, and carrots, beets. Those were vegetables. Those are the vegetables I remember. I don't remember any other vegetables.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. They sound like root vegetables that grew under—

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: —the ground.

NELSON: Yes. That's [unclear].

LEVINE: Can you think of any dishes that your mother or your grandmother prepared that you remember from Finland?

NELSON: No, I—everything was just like a—like potatoes. You'd—just plain cooking.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. And how about bread?

NELSON: My mother made all the bread. She made the bread we had. Rye bread, mostly.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Can you describe the bread, what it looked like and—

NELSON: Well, same as here. Now, my mother made the same kind of bread here as she—she made in [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So there was no way for your father to make a living.

NELSON: No, it was—

LEVINE: The logging wasn't—

NELSON: Yeah, yeah. It was no good. It wasn't good either. You know, in the wintertime you could be out there [unclear] logging. No, that's why he came here, because—and he was just lucky. He was trying to get loan to get the money to come to here. And he didn't get the loan and he could have been on the Titanic.

LEVINE: Really?

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: Why?

NELSON: Titanic sank.

LEVINE: Yes.

NELSON: And he would have been on the Titanic if he had gotten his loan for his ticket money. But that—that fellow that was going to loan him the money, he didn't have it exactly at that time. So a few months later, he got the loan from that fellow. And then we—he came on. But I can't think of that boat and that boat sank also but not—not when my father was on it.

LEVINE: Wow.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did your father write to you and your mother—

NELSON: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: —when she—when he was here?

NELSON: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: What were the kinds of things he said about the United States when—

NELSON: Oh, he—well, he liked everything. He liked everything.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: He described that he liked it, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: And he was just waiting and waiting for the day when we get there, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: And it took two years.

LEVINE: And what did he do once he came here?

NELSON: Worked in iron mine in Ishpeming [PH].

LEVINE: An iron mine in—

NELSON: Ishpeming, Michigan.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Upper Peninsula.

LEVINE: I see. Now, why did he go there?

NELSON: Because that's where they were all—everybody was going [chuckles] there because of iron mines.

LEVINE: I see. So other people—

NELSON: And also, copper mines up there.

LEVINE: So there were other people he knew.

NELSON: Yes. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Did he have any family in this country?

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: No, but he knew people—

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: —from—

NELSON: Who had come here.

LEVINE: From Virrat?

NELSON: Yeah, from—from there. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And so he went to work in the iron mines.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Did he write about that, what it was like working in the iron mines?

NELSON: No, I don't remember him writing about that but I know that what he was getting paid, 25 cents an hour. That's—

LEVINE: Was he able to send money back to you and—

NELSON: Well, he—yes, he sent a little bit home somehow.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: Them days, everybody was living on that kind of money, you know.

LEVINE: Yes. So you knew a lot of people right in your village who had a father, let's say, in America.

NELSON: Well, knew a few people. I didn't know very many. There wasn't too many but there were a few.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And what was your father's personality like?

NELSON: He was very nice man. He was a very good father. Very good.

LEVINE: In what way was he a good father?

NELSON: Because he never—like some fathers, they give you lickin's and all. My father never did that to anyone.

LEVINE: What were the kinds of things that he tried to teach you, that he wanted you to know and to learn and to be like?

NELSON: Oh, well—well, he just wanted us to be honest with everything, not to be lying about things and anything like that, and not to be fighting with everybody.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: So he was very nice father.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: [chuckles]

LEVINE: And how about when he was in America and your mother was—was your mother working in the factory on the loom?

NELSON: No, no. My mother was working for peoples, like cleaning and—

LEVINE: Right in your village or did she have to—

NELSON: Yes, right—right in the village there. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Was—were most of the people in the village Lutheran?

NELSON: Yes, everybody was Lutheran.

LEVINE: Everybody.

NELSON: I did—we didn't know—I didn't know about anybody else. There was all—all Finland, right now, even, is Lutheran.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And so you were 10 years old. How did you feel when you learned that you were going to America?

NELSON: Oh, happy, that—we were very happy. Real happy.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Did you have any friends that you felt sorry to leave?

NELSON: Well, yes. You always—kids have a—play with, so you hate to leave it but—

LEVINE: Yeah.

NELSON: —you [unclear] anyway.

LEVINE: Did you—did you bring anything with you as a 10-year-old little girl? Did you take anything that you wanted to have with you when you came to the—

NELSON: No, no, no.

LEVINE: —new country?

NELSON: No. I am sorry that I—that we didn't take, like—my grandfather, he was a—he could make furniture. He had a place where he made furniture and sold that [unclear]. And he made dolls for us from wood, wooden dolls. And that's what I missed, that I never brought those dolls.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah.

NELSON: They were cute.

LEVINE: Yeah. What did they look like?

NELSON: Well, they looked like—you see some wooden dolls. Here, even I've seen—somebody had some. They just—

LEVINE: They were carved?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did they have dresses on them?

NELSON: Well, just like you'd have a skirt on.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: You know, like skirts and—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow. And how about your mother? What did she take along with her when she left?

NELSON: Just her regular clothes and that. Nothing special. Nothing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Do you remember leaving? Leaving your house? Leaving your village?

NELSON: Yes, I remember that Grandpa—Grandpa took us to the station [unclear].

LEVINE: What did he take you to the station in?

NELSON: Horse and buggy.

LEVINE: Hmm.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And where was the station?

NELSON: Oh, it was quite a ways but I can't think of the name of the station now. Quite a ways from where we were living.

LEVINE: So you had to travel in a—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —horse and buggy.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: For some hours?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Some hours, yeah.

LEVINE: And then once you got to the station, you got a train?

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: And where did that take you?

NELSON: Oh, God. Where that took us—way out of Finland. I don't remember how many places we stopped in Finland, but then we came to Oslo, Norway. And we were supposed to get on the boat there but the boat had left. We were left behind. [coughs] And—and we had to wait for this boat. We were almost, I think, four—four days in Oslo in a hotel.

LEVINE: Do you remember those four days?

NELSON: Yeah, it was fun because they had—oh, in Norway, they [coughs]—

LEVINE: [unclear] Would you like me to get you a glass of water?

NELSON: No, no. There was feather mattresses in the hotel. And when you hop into bed, the mattress folded right over you and you was right inside the [coughs]—that was fun. That was really cute.

LEVINE: So it was your mother and you—

NELSON: Yeah, and my sister, older sister, and then brother and two sisters. We were four girls and one boy when we came here.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And do—when you were in Oslo, did you see some things that you had never seen before?

NELSON: Yes. Oh, yes. We—and we were running around the whole town. I don't know how we didn't get [coughs] lost. [chuckles] But we were having fun anyway.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then you got—you—the—the next ship came then.

NELSON: Yeah, uh-huh. That ship that we came on, the Helik Olav came and we got on it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and when you got on the Helik Olav and—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —what was the voyage like?

NELSON: Well, it was—one day we were scared because it was war, you know. First War.

LEVINE: Oh, that's true. It was 1915 so—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —the—World War I—

NELSON: And then they told us that they were—they told us to stay—not to run on the deck, to stay below the deck, because the Germans stopped us and they got on the boat. And they searched the boat.

LEVINE: Do you remember that?

NELSON: Well, I remember that we were—had to stay down below, not to go on the deck all day that day they were there searching. They searched the boat, I guess all of it.

LEVINE: Do you remember anything else about World War I, before you left or anything, how it affected you or your family?

NELSON: Well, it didn't affect—I don't remember it affecting us too much. I don't remember that—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: —that we were—had any concerns about that.

LEVINE: Do you remember when the Helik Olav came into the New York harbor?

NELSON: Well, yes. I remember we got into the New York harbor and then, naturally, they got us ready and they got us out of there. You know, walked—we walked down the plank down to—below. And then from there we were taken to—I suppose that's when they went to the Ellis Island place that—in that big building.

LEVINE: And describe—describe Ellis Island as you saw—

NELSON: All I can remember that night was a big building and the [unclear] were so gray. The building was—it wasn't really nicely made building.

LEVINE: Hmm.

NELSON: [unclear] looked like that now. [laughs]

LEVINE: But you remember it as a big, gray—

NELSON: Yeah, gray. Just gray and then those benches that were—so then we were running on the benches, hopping from one bench to the other, going all day long until that evening. They took us out [unclear]. And I thought—always, I thought that we left from New York. We didn't leave from New York but I can't remember where we left from, because they took us out of New York and put us on that train and sent us to Canada.

LEVINE: Maybe you left from New Jersey, from Hoboken.

NELSON: Yeah, that's probably it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So how would you describe yourself as a 10-year-old girl coming to this new country?

NELSON: Just happy. Just very happy that I could [chuckles] move.

LEVINE: And what was your personality like? How would you describe what kind of a personality you had as a 10-year-old?

NELSON: Well, that I was nice to people and people were nice to me. I always think of that, that we were never squabbling with anybody.

LEVINE: It sounds like you were very active.

NELSON: Oh.

LEVINE: Jumping around and running around and—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: And then when we came to this country, then we—if somebody needed help, you know, we'd go and help them.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay, so is there anything else? Was—was Ellis Island crowded?

NELSON: No, it wasn't crowded but there was [unclear]. And we were scared.

LEVINE: Why?

NELSON: Because my brother had—he couldn't—he had ear trouble. He—in fact, he was deaf all his life.

LEVINE: Really?

NELSON: Yeah, so we were afraid somebody was telling—[unclear] somebody was telling us that they are not going to let us into America with his ear trouble. And we were worried—worried but there was no problem at all [unclear].

LEVINE: Did they examine him?

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: You just went through?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Nobody made an issue of it.

NELSON: No, no. There was no issue made of that at all. No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you remember the examination that you had?

NELSON: No, they just let us through. They just looked at us and let us through. You know, "You just march right through everything."

LEVINE: And how about your mother? How—how was she faring with four children—

NELSON: Oh, she was [unclear]. She was just [unclear].

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

NELSON: We help her if there's something to do. We'd help her with—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: [unclear].

LEVINE: So your oldest sister was what, about 12 or—

NELSON: Yeah, she was two years older than me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

NELSON: She died December 7th, this year.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh. Wow.

NELSON: Sure. That's the way the life is.

LEVINE: So she was—she was 96 or—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, okay. So then you got on a train. Do you remember the train ride to Michigan?

NELSON: Well, we were in Canada.

LEVINE: Oh, to Canada. That's—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —where you went first.

NELSON: Well, first, yeah.

LEVINE: Why did you go to Canada? Do you know?

NELSON: I don't know.

LEVINE: Hmm.

NELSON: That's what was so funny about that, that they put us to go to Canada.

LEVINE: Did you stay in Canada at all?

NELSON: No, we just were—stayed on the train, and right through from there they took us—that one train—they put us on the train from there and came right to Ishpeming [PH].

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Say the name of the town.

NELSON: Ishpeming.

LEVINE: Ishpeming.

NELSON: Michigan.

LEVINE: And when you got to Ishpeming, did someone meet you?

NELSON: My father was there.

LEVINE: At the train station?

NELSON: Yeah, he was there at the station. Yeah.

LEVINE: And what—

NELSON: And then he had rented a house already. Some fellow who was—whose wife had died, so he rented the whole house. Everything was in there. We just went right in there.

LEVINE: What was it like seeing your father?

NELSON: Oh, we were happy there [unclear].

LEVINE: Yeah.

NELSON: It was nice to see him because we always thought he was so nice to us.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then you moved right into a house. And was it—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —a big house?

NELSON: It was a fairly good—because there was two bedrooms and a big living room, very nice house. Very nice.

LEVINE: Was there running water in the house?

NELSON: Yes. Oh, yeah. Ishpeming was a real town then already. Yes.

LEVINE: So it was quite different from what you had left.

NELSON: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: And what did—and how did your father seem after—after two years? Did he—

NELSON: Well, he—

LEVINE: Do you think he had changed? Did you think—

NELSON: No, I don't remember seeing that he had changed. I don't remember that at all because it was two years before [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did he talk at all—when you were a little girl in Michigan, did he talk about work in the iron mines?

NELSON: No, we never heard him talk about it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So did you start school soon after you got there?

NELSON: Yeah. Yeah, right when we came, this—we went to school right away. And then we went—[chuckles] going to Sunday school and then the school board came and told us we can't go to [unclear], because it was in Finn, that we [laughs] had to give up Finn school.

LEVINE: Really? You were going to Finn school on Saturday.

NELSON: Yeah—

LEVINE: And the public school—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —people said you couldn't go anymore.

NELSON: Yeah, the public—public school came and told you we can't go to Finn school. [laughs]

LEVINE: And how did your family feel about that?

NELSON: Well, we were kind of funny, stunned about it because, you know, we were used to going to Sunday school. You got used to it and forgot all about it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you—did you—how was it for you learning English?

NELSON: It was nothing to me at all. It seemed like it came naturally, just like it—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So you must have learned English more quickly than your mother.

NELSON: Oh, yes. Yes, yes.

LEVINE: And how about your father? Was he able to speak English?

NELSON: Little—very little. But I think my father spoke less than my mother. My mother did better than my father. But they got along.

LEVINE: Were there a lot of people from Finland right in your community?

NELSON: Yeah, Ishpeming is very Finn—those Finns were coming there for that mining, because there was mine, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: There was a copper mine also up there. There still is. They closed the copper mine and there's a gold mine. And that's only operational when the gold prices are right.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Sure.

LEVINE: So—so what kind of a social life did the Finns, who lived in your community—what—did they have clubs or was there—

NELSON: Yes. Oh, yes. Finns—like here, even now, they have clubs. Like this place even, this—they have a club here, you know.

LEVINE: And what would you—what would happen? What would be the activities that the club had in Michigan when you came there?

NELSON: Well, there was a—they had their—sometimes about two weeks worth, there was coffee and [unclear] served. And then somebody maybe gave some kind of speech. Well, of course, I—as kids, we never listened to those speeches. We were running around. [chuckles]

LEVINE: And how about dancing or singing or—

NELSON: Well, dancing—well, of course, I learned to dance when I left the home. I—[unclear] but I learned to dance. There was a young fellow. He taught me to dance. [chuckles]

LEVINE: In—in the—in the United States?

NELSON: In—yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: So I was already working outside, working when I learned to dance. This fellow taught me how to dance.

LEVINE: Were these Finnish dances or American dances?

NELSON: Finnish.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And so he was a Finnish boy?

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Very nice fellow.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Okay. Let's see. So how long did you stay in school?

NELSON: Well, I left school when I was fifth grade. I left the school when I was in fifth grade.

LEVINE: And why did you [unclear]?

NELSON: Because I went to work. I thought that I have to go to work because I thought we need—my father needed money, although he was working all the time. But I always thought that.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B]

NELSON: He wasn't working or—[coughs] in fact, when we came here to Ishpeming, there was a family that was related to us. And they had a farm or big place, anyway. He—in fact, he was in—that man was in logging business. So he had a lot of people around and he was in business. And my sister went there to help that woman that [unclear].

LEVINE: And she worked in her home?

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: Doing cleaning and—

NELSON: She—yeah, she was—yeah, well, washing dishes and doing—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: Yeah, so—

LEVINE: Now, so you—so you did have a relative.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Was it a distant relative or was it—

NELSON: No, I don't know if they were distant or not. I—I couldn't say that. But they were a very nice family.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Yeah, so—

LEVINE: And did people keep up with the Finnish ways?

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: What kind—

NELSON: Well, like here. You're—there's—Finnish ways are all the way here. Even I see that.

LEVINE: Yes.

NELSON: Yeah, I—I'm wishing that they would—in fact, I think this place has to change. [laughter]

LEVINE: Well, what are the—what are the Finnish ways that people tend to keep in this country?

NELSON: Well, I don't know. I couldn't explain it. I couldn't explain it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: [unclear]. I couldn't explain it.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, I suppose it's the language, partly.

NELSON: Yeah, that—

LEVINE: Speaking—

NELSON: Yeah, the language is—yeah, like here, a lot of them there just speak Finnish.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So what have you stopped school in fifth grade, what did you do for work?

NELSON: I went to wash dishes in a boarding house.

LEVINE: Oh, and what was the boarding house? Who was in the boarding house?

NELSON: Well, all the miners.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: So would it be a family that took in miners or a woman who—

NELSON: No, no. It was the fellows—they started their own place. Yeah, they hired—there was three girls. I was one and there was two other girls working there, three of us working.

LEVINE: And what was the boarding house like? Was it a regular house in the neighborhood?

NELSON: Yeah, it was a regular house. Two—it was two apartments put together. And—

LEVINE: And how many boarders would there be?

NELSON: I don't remember.

LEVINE: About?

NELSON: Yeah, yeah—

LEVINE: Ten, twelve?

NELSON: Oh, yes. There were more than 10, yes.

LEVINE: More than 10? Twenty?

NELSON: Well, up to 30, there were. I don't remember.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. So there were three girls working there.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And the boarders, would—would they work shifts or would they—

NELSON: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Well, that's how they work. Mines work like now, even. Just [unclear] they were. They have a night shift and a day shift.

LEVINE: So would each boarder have their own bed or would they—

NELSON: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: —shift?

NELSON: No, they had their own beds.

LEVINE: And they would eat there?

NELSON: Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: So—so did you help prepare the food?

NELSON: There—yeah, yeah. We got the food for them, cooked by—two other girls were cooking and I was—I washed the dishes. Well, we all did everything together with—so—

LEVINE: Wow. And would you live there or would you live at home?

NELSON: Yeah, we were living there.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: We had one room. The three girls had one room.

LEVINE: And were—and were the boarders all from Finland?

NELSON: Oh, they were all Finns, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Is there anything else about the boarding house that you remember? Anything you could describe about what it was like?

NELSON: Well—well, it was a nice—everybody was very nice and they were very clean. The fellows were very clean. They took care of things and they were very clean.

LEVINE: Did you have to wash their clothes?

NELSON: Yes, we did that but some of them took their—to their—they had relatives somewhere else. So they took some of them. But we did some.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, would these be men who maybe had families in Finland?

NELSON: Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did they ever plan to go back or was—

NELSON: Yeah, some of them went back. In fact, I had a relative that went back.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: He—

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: He said he had felt that he had a little money so he's going to go back and live with his family, which was nice, I think, that he did that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. And then others of them would eventually bring their family over.

NELSON: Yeah, some of them would bring their families over. Others went back. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Well, did you enjoy that job?

NELSON: Oh, yeah. I—I enjoyed everything I was doing. I didn't—I didn't mind.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Everything turned out okay.

LEVINE: Yeah? Okay. So then how long did you work in the boarding house?

NELSON: Well, I didn't work very long because then the funny thing happened. Somebody came from Marquette, Michigan. Three fellows came from Marquette, Michigan. They had heard that there was a girl in [laughs]—

LEVINE: They heard about you?

NELSON: They heard about me, that I was a good worker. So they come and hired me. [chuckles]

LEVINE: What did they hire you to do?

NELSON: I would work in—I did waitress and, you know, what they were—they had—they had a—these fellows, they had a boarding house too [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, another boarding house?

NELSON: Another boarding house, a big—it was a old hotel. But they had fixed it nice. It was very nice place [several words unclear]. So that's where I went to work then because they hired me. [chuckles] They gave me more money than I got where I was. [laughs]

LEVINE: Do you remember how much you were earning in those days?

NELSON: Fifteen dollars a month. [laughs]

LEVINE: And so then you moved to Marquette?

NELSON: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And was that very far away?

NELSON: Marquette is 15 miles from Ishpeming, I guess.

LEVINE: Fifteen?

NELSON: Fifteen or fourteen.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Something like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: If there's an Ishpeming [unclear] Marquette there, like [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Marquette is a college town.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: Oh, yes. Marquette is on Lake Superior.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Very nice city. Very nice city, very clean.

LEVINE: How did—so you were happy in Marquette?

NELSON: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: That you had moved?

NELSON: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: And how did the new boarding house that you worked in—how—

NELSON: Very—

LEVINE: —did that compare with the other one?

NELSON: Oh, it was so much bigger and so much different and nice, was like a—well, it had been a hotel.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

NELSON: So it was nice.

LEVINE: And how many men stayed in that one, about?

NELSON: Oh, there was lots of it. And then there was lots of—on the side, used to come out, have lunch there.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: Yeah, they come like—like now. Like now, somebody goes to a restaurant and have to [unclear].

LEVINE: And how many girls were working there?

NELSON: There was three of us working there too.

LEVINE: But it must have been a lot more work.

NELSON: Well, there was quite a bit of work but then there was some fellows who'd help too, you know. There were some of those fellows that owned—sort of owned that, you know.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: So they would—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: —help [unclear].

LEVINE: And again, was the—were the boarders from Finland? They were Finns?

NELSON: Well, there was all kinds of boarders there because Marquette was already a town where there was—Marquette didn't have mines but there was—Marquette is not a mining town, you know. It's a college town.

LEVINE: Even then, was it a college town?

NELSON: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: I see. So, what other kinds of groups were there besides Finns? What other ethnic groups?

NELSON: I don't know. I couldn't tell you that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. But were they speaking different languages?

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: No.

NELSON: English and Finland, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So it was mostly Finns but there were others too.

NELSON: Yeah, yeah. But I did—like when I went to Duluth and there was Swedish people, I—there was—but in Marquette there wasn't no Swedes. [chuckles] Well, I guess there must have been a few but I don't remember that.

LEVINE: So how long did you stay in Marquette?

NELSON: I was with Marquette for three years.

LEVINE: And then what?

NELSON: Then I went to Duluth.

LEVINE: Duluth, Montana?

NELSON: Minnesota.

LEVINE: Minnesota.

NELSON: Duluth, Minnesota.

LEVINE: Duluth, Minnesota. How did it happen that you went there?

NELSON: Well, I just wanted to go and see the world. [laughs]

LEVINE: How did you get the idea to go there?

NELSON: Well, there was—I had met some people from there and—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: —it sounded [unclear].

LEVINE: Oh, so you met people from different places—

NELSON: Yes, oh—

LEVINE: —when you were working in Marquette.

NELSON: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So then you went to Duluth and—and did you stay—what—
what did you do for work there?

NELSON: I was—I worked at a bakery for seven years.

LEVINE: Oh. Was it a Finnish bakery?

NELSON: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

NELSON: No. Duluth is not a Finn town.

LEVINE: No, not a Finn town.

NELSON: No, no.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Duluth is a big city.

LEVINE: So you—you then were sort of moving away from strictly Finnish—

NELSON: Yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: —community.

NELSON: Yeah, uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So did you like it then in Duluth?

NELSON: Oh, yeah. I did.

LEVINE: Yeah? Uh-huh.

NELSON: But the funny part is, I can't remember why—oh, I left Duluth when I was working [unclear]. Then I went to Minneapolis and I went to—I had a chance to go work for Pillsbury Flour Company. But I didn't take that. I went to school and learned beauty work.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: So that's what I did the rest of my life after I got out of there.

LEVINE: And what—what kind—what was your—what was your schooling like when you were learning about beauty work?

NELSON: Well, I was in beauty school for—it took a year.

LEVINE: A year? Full time, did you go?

NELSON: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I was there full time.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then what did you do when you graduated from there?

NELSON: Then I worked in Minneapolis for about a year but I didn't like Minneapolis. So then I went to Chicago.

LEVINE: Wow.

NELSON: And went to work in a beauty shop and worked there for about 30 years.
[chuckles]

LEVINE: Oh, so you were in Chicago for a long time.

NELSON: Oh, yes. Long time. Chicago is my town, most beautiful city to me.

LEVINE: What—what is it about Chicago that you really like?

NELSON: Everything seems to be so that you have to like it. It's so [unclear]. I like Chicago.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Now, when did you meet your husband?

NELSON: Oh, I met him in Chicago and, well, yeah. And then I don't remember now when we got married, 1952. I didn't get married before—I was 48 years old before I got married.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Now, do you remember how you met him?

NELSON: I think at the Finn Hall, although he was a Swede. But he had a—he was in the tavern business, so he had a tavern in the building where the Finns had their program—hall. What the Finns [unclear].

LEVINE: So even when you were in Chicago you were connected with the Finn—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —group.

NELSON: Yeah, uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: What Finns there were.

LEVINE: Yeah.

NELSON: There's—Chicago is not a big Finn town though.

LEVINE: No. So then did—what was your husband's name?

NELSON: Nels Nelson.

LEVINE: His first name?

NELSON: Nels.

LEVINE: Nels. We're going to [tape off/on]—okay, we're resuming here. So your—your maiden name was Lehtinen.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Lehtinen—L-E-H-T-I-N-E-N.

NELSON: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: And that you married Niels Nelson?

NELSON: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And Niels is N-I-E-L-S?

NELSON: N-E-L-S.

LEVINE: N-E-L-S, okay. And did you have children?

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: No. No children, okay. So then did you stay in Chicago after you were married?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And did you continue to work?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: You worked in a beauty parlor.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And did you have any kind of specialty—

NELSON: No. [chuckles]

LEVINE: —in the beauty parlor—

NELSON: No, no, no.

LEVINE: —or something that you were particularly—

NELSON: No, no.

LEVINE: —good at or fond of or—

NELSON: No, no.

LEVINE: Yeah.

NELSON: Everything.

LEVINE: You did hair?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: You did nails?

NELSON: Yeah. Oh, everything.

LEVINE: How about electrolysis? Was that something—

NELSON: No, I didn't do—

LEVINE: —that was done at that time?

NELSON: No, no.

LEVINE: No.

NELSON: We didn't—I didn't do that. No.

LEVINE: No. Okay. So then when did you leave Chicago?

NELSON: Oh, that's a good question. [laughs]

LEVINE: Well, what were the circumstances under which you left?

NELSON: Well, we just—I guess we came here.

LEVINE: You came to Florida.

NELSON: Yeah, we bought a place. 1965, we bought a place here.

LEVINE: Oh. Right here in this area?

NELSON: Lantana.

LEVINE: Lantana?

NELSON: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And you were both retired?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you came to Florida?

NELSON: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, when you look back on it—when you look back on coming here as a little 10-year-old girl, how do you think you changed, your personality changed after you got to this country?

NELSON: I don't know.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: I couldn't explain it.

LEVINE: Do you think coming here as an immigrant made a difference in the kind of person that you are, or the person you became?

NELSON: No, I don't think so. I don't think so. I don't think it's just my personal—I don't think so.

LEVINE: No?

NELSON: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do—what would you say were the high points and the low points in your life?

NELSON: Well, I suppose I've had some sicknesses. I've been operated on 11 times.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: So I've had those kind of problems.

LEVINE: Well, you certainly look healthy.

NELSON: But they—[chuckles] they must have taken out everything that would have killed me. [laughter]

LEVINE: I see. So those were the low points.

NELSON: Yeah. [chuckles]

LEVINE: How about the high points? The poin—the things that give you satisfaction, that—that you have done over your life?

NELSON: Well, that—I've been getting along with everybody and, like, working and getting along with people on jobs, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: Work in beauty shops where you've got to work with two, three girls or maybe even more sometimes. Bigger shops but I did—I never work at a shop where there was—I worked at a shop where there's three. And I had—I had my old shop, three times.

LEVINE: Oh, you did?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: In Chicago?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: All three?

NELSON: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Oh.

NELSON: Three [unclear].

LEVINE: So then—

NELSON: I started something at a shop and then I sold it and then I went back to work for somebody, and then I bought another one. So I had three different places.

LEVINE: And did you employ other people?

NELSON: Yeah, I had one girl. In all the shops, I had only one girl.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Oh, well, that's quite an accomplishment to have three different shops and—

NELSON: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Well, anyway, it worked out all right.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about the Depression during the '30s? Do you—did that affect you—

NELSON: No, I can't remember it affecting one bit. Not one bit. I can't even hardly remember that. But there were—I know that there's—probably people had problems.

LEVINE: Yeah. How about World War II? Do you remember it—that affecting you?

NELSON: Well, yeah, because, you know that I've been in the war? I've been in the WACs?

LEVINE: No.

NELSON: I'm a [unclear]. [chuckles]

LEVINE: You joined the WACs?

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: Why did you do that?

NELSON: Well, I don't know why, because I was afraid to do that, so I did.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. When did you join them? Do you remember what year you joined the WACs?

NELSON: No, I can't even remember that now. See, [unclear].

LEVINE: And where were you sent? What did you do?

NELSON: I was sent in—I was in Des Moines.

LEVINE: Des Moines?

NELSON: Yeah. And then I got sick and they didn't want to operate on me. They—I was six months in there.

LEVINE: So did you get discharged when you were sick?

NELSON: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And what—what was the experience like, joining the WACs?

NELSON: Well, it was good experience.

LEVINE: In what way?

NELSON: In everything that you get along with people and that you fit into the—like, you fit into the thing and do what is supposed to be done and take care of things.

LEVINE: Did you—did you meet other WACs from all over the country?

NELSON: No. Well, there was—naturally, there was others. We were a company.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Wow. So did you actually—when you were in Des Moines in the WACs, what—what were your duties? What did you have to do?

NELSON: Well, I didn't really get to do much of anything. Always, I had that—whatever—I can't remember what I was operated on after I got—I guess gall bladder or something. So anyway, it seemed that I had that probably all along.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, wow.

NELSON: So that's why—

LEVINE: So you really—you really got sick before you got to be sent somewhere or—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —do something—

NELSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LEVINE: —specific for the war effort.

NELSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then the Army told me they wouldn't operate on me, that they're give me a—

LEVINE: Discharge.

NELSON: —discharge, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. I see. Well, you—you—it sounds as though you tried a number of unusual things—

NELSON: [laughs]

LEVINE: —for a woman at that time.

NELSON: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: Yeah. Good for you. Okay. Is there anything else that we might not have talked about that has to do with your coming to this country and making a whole new life here?

NELSON: No, I can't think of any. So long—you know, you don't—you forget about all those things after you get into the world, like here, even in—

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Did your family want you to become Americanized or did they want you to keep up with being—with the Finnish way?

NELSON: No, no. The—they wanted us to be Americans.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

NELSON: And my youngest brother that lives in Chicago, he doesn't even speak Finn.

LEVINE: Ah, uh-huh.

NELSON: But of course he was born here.

LEVINE: Yeah.

NELSON: He's retired from the airlines. He was—well, he was in the Army, fought. He was shot down twice and—

LEVINE: And he became a pilot?

NELSON: Yeah, he's a—he was—he worked for United Airlines for I don't know how many years.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

NELSON: Until he was 62 years old. That's how [unclear] get out [unclear] is this one.

LEVINE: Yeah, her retired.

NELSON: There's no—nobody working on the airlines after 62 years of age.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

NELSON: So he's retired from the airlines.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, I see.

NELSON: He's got a nice home—Michigan—in Michigan—in Chicago.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And how is this time of your life now?

NELSON: Very well. I'm satisfied. I feel that this is the place now. I better just stick here and [chuckles]—

LEVINE: Well, you've really kind of come a full circle because now—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —you're with Finns—

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: —and in a Finnish rest home.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you're in Florida.

NELSON: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—uh-huh.

NELSON: Well, of course, I don't think the language here is that you have to know how to speak Finn. There's some—there's a girl a few doors from here that don't speak Finn at all. I don't know.

LEVINE: But most of the people here are Finns, aren't they?

NELSON: Yeah, yeah. Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah.

NELSON: Yeah, just a couple anyway that are not Finns, I know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. So how do you balance out your Finnish side and your American side? How do you think about that?

NELSON: I don't think about it at all. I just live good.

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LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Yeah, okay. Well, unless there's something else you can think of that we—you'd like to say before we close, I just want to say that now your story will be part of our collection at Ellis Island—

NELSON: [laughs]

LEVINE: —of the many people who came through there.

NELSON: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: As you did. And it's a pleasure to talk with you.

NELSON: Thank you. Thank you.

LEVINE: And I've been speaking with Elaine Nelson, who came from Finland in 1915 when she was only 10 years of age. She's 94 at the time of this interview. And this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service.

NELSON: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And I'm signing off.

NELSON: Right, yeah.

[END OF INTERVIEW]