

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: I see. And where were you born, Mrs. Tanner?

TANNER: In Bishop's Waltham, Hampshire, England.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me, is that a large town?

TANNER: No. Just a small little country village.

SIGRIST: What did it look like as a little girl? What did your village look like?

TANNER: Well, I don't know as I really can describe it, only as a little country village. You know, the houses are all together, you know, like in a row, like that. (she gestures)
We lived on, we moved a couple of times, so I can't remember just where we were. But the boys school was one, the boys and the girls school were separated. You couldn't to one, and, you know, the boys had to go one place, the girls another. And I loved school.

SIGRIST: Talk about school. What was it that you liked about it?

TANNER: Geography. I always, that's why I always wanted to travel.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

We were poor people, and I got the urge to travel because of geography in school. I loved geography, and once in a great while when my mother, when my brother, he worked on a farm, and I don't know whether you realize when a cow freshens. That means she has her calf, that she can't always take all the milk that the cow gives. So the farmer gives my brother the extra milk, which is a great, wonderful thing for us because we never have milk. But my mother takes the milk and makes a rice pudding. And she had, one thing was a box of shredded wheat, which was quite a big treat to us. And I had a half of a shredded wheat biscuit, and was reading, as I love to read, on the box about Niagara Falls. And I had a dream that one day, some day, I would visit Niagara Falls. I didn't know how, when or where, anything about it, but I never lost that dream that I would visit Niagara Falls some day.

SIGRIST: So that's really your first knowledge of America.

TANNER: Right.

SIGRIST: That's a wonderful story. Tell me a little bit about what your mother and father did in this town. First of all, what was your father's name?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Job.

SIGRIST: And what did he do for a living?

TANNER: Farm. Worked, worked as a farm, not, he didn't own it, he had, as a laborer until the war. And then he enlisted in the Red Cross with my brother, and he worked in the hospital about, oh, ten, twelve miles from where we lived. My, of course, the women then, they none of them worked, you know.

But my mother had ten children, and all of us lived but one. And this year, I think, I, in July or August, anyway my youngest brother, he was the one, none of the kids could get educated, because my mother was very provoked at me that I didn't go for a, teaching. But there was so much class distinction in kids, you know, if you were a little bit better than they, they didn't like you. And instead of going in for the examination to be a teacher, I went in for an examination to go to work, which my mother was very, very upset about.

SIGRIST: She really wanted you to become more educated.

TANNER: She wanted me to become, I was the only girl for a while,

EI-120/VERA TANNER

and she wanted me to become a little different.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

TANNER: Mary.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

TANNER: Lawes.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

TANNER: L-A-W-E-S.

SIGRIST: Was she from this town also?

TANNER: She lived right there in Bishop's Waltham.

SIGRIST: And she grew up in this town like you?

TANNER: Yes. Right.

SIGRIST: What was your mother like as a person? What was her temperament?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Well, she was very kind, very patient. She had to be with all us kids. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What were her jobs at home? What were some of the things she was responsible for doing?

TANNER: Well, to keep the house clean, see that we had enough to eat on such a small salary, or you would call it. You know, for so many, we were allowed two pieces of bread and butter for what they call tea. They don't have that over here. And that was it. If the slices were a little bigger than the other one, we would (she laughs) fight over who was going to get the big slices.

SIGRIST: What time did you eat tea? When was it served?

TANNER: About 4:30, I think.

SIGRIST: Would you have had tea when you got home from school?

TANNER: No. Not 'til about 4:30, then usually when you got bigger, like, not little kids, but bigger kids like twelve, fourteen, then you were allowed to have a piece of bread and

EI-120/VERA TANNER

cheese for supper around eight o'clock with a cup of cocoa,
or whatever.

SIGRIST: Did your mother make a special dish that was your particular
favorite?

TANNER: No, no, no. We had to have what we had. My father always
had a big, big garden, and we really lived on, we didn't
know what meat was, only on Sunday. And usually that was a
leg of lamb or a piece of beef, and a, a pudding, what do
they call that?

SIGRIST: A steamed pudding?

TANNER: No, it goes with the meat. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Oh, a Yorkshire pudding.

TANNER: Yorkshire pudding. That was our Sunday dinner. But we had
to get up in the morning, we had to go to Sunday school at
ten o'clock, church at eleven.

SIGRIST: What was your denomination?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Well, I couldn't really say, because sometimes we were Methodists. It didn't mean much to me then, but we went, the church was down in the end of the road where we lived. And then in the afternoon we had Sunday school, and we came home, and we had tea. But my mother insisted on Sunday that we were all together. That was the only day everybody could be together. And it's, if we were very good kids, we were given a special treat. They would take us to hear the Salvation Army Band, what we called "the Square." That was at six o'clock. At six-thirty my mother and father would take us kids to church. Then after church, in the summertime, of course, they would, they, many, many people walked then, and there were lanes and places to walk. They would take us home one of the ways home, and that was our Sunday. But we had to be together on Sunday.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the house that you lived in? You said you moved a couple of times.

TANNER: Well, they were more or less all the same, you know. Of course, we had to have four bedrooms. And then there was a kitchen, and a what they called a drawing room, which was special, for special company. We didn't use it. Only for special company.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: What was the house made out of, do you remember?

TANNER: Brick.

SIGRIST: And what kind of a roof did it have on it?

TANNER: I couldn't tell you. I suppose the, I, I don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how the house was heated? How did you keep warm?

TANNER: Oh, just fireplaces. There were...

SIGRIST: There were fireplaces.

TANNER: Little, little ones, they, we used to roast in front of us and get up and be frozen in the back, (she laughs) and more than once when I've gone to bed, my father has, of course, I was the only girl, so I had to have a sp-, the only, my bedroom. He'd come in with his big overcoat, and throw it over me, so I wouldn't get cold in the night. I can feel that coat yet. (she laughs)

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Did you have electricity in the house?

TANNER: No, no.

SIGRIST: Perhaps a telephone?

TANNER: No.

SIGRIST: Nothing like that.

TANNER: No.

SIGRIST: You said you kept a garden. Who, was it your father who tended the garden, or did all of you have to?

TANNER: Well, we all had our things to do. But we did have a great garden, and we all liked vegetables.

SIGRIST: What did you grow?

TANNER: Everything and anything. According to the seasons, you know. We had parsnips that he put in in the fall, so we would have them in the spring. Peas, always had to be planted on Good Friday, so we had them for Easter. We had

EI-120/VERA TANNER

to have new potatoes and green peas on Easter Sunday.

SIGRIST: That was tradition.

TANNER: Tradition.

SIGRIST: What was it like being the only girl in a family full of boys?

TANNER: I was more a boy than I was a girl, I guess. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What kinds of things did you like to do growing up?

TANNER: Well, there really wasn't that much to do. You know what I mean. I liked to skip rope, which made my mother kind of disgusted, because it took the soles of my shoes, and we couldn't to buy them. We'd go barefoot. And then, when I grew a little older, eleven, twelve, thirteen, the people in the country had strawberries. We would get up at four-thirty in the morning, walk two miles to pick strawberries, so we had money enough, if possible, to buy shoes to go back to school in August. But our people, cousins in the city always had their vacation in August, which we didn't like very well, because we had to have it in June or July to pick

EI-120/VERA TANNER

strawberries, and they didn't.

SIGRIST: Did you have other families living in this town? Did your mother, were her parents living, and your father's parents...

TANNER: Yes. Yes, yes.

SIGRIST: Talk to me a little bit about your grandparents, and what they were like as people.

TANNER: Well, I don't know as there's anything, my grandmother would get up early in the morning, and, and in order to supplement a little money. They, she had, they had offices where lawyers and all that, you know. And she would get up early, I think seven o'clock, because they opened at nine, and she would go down and dust and clean certain offices, so she had a little extra money. And it was what we called "round the pond." So she would stop on her way home. We lived on what they called School Hill. And the hill we lived on was a, we thought was huge, and she lived on the foot of that hill. I can't remember what my grandfather did, but he was very, had a lot of asthma, so he was unable to work, so my grandmother had to kind of, more or less, work to keep things going, you

EI-120/VERA TANNER

know.

SIGRIST: What do you remember as a child, what do remember visiting them? What sticks out in your mind when you would go visit your grandparents?

TANNER: Well, most always she would have us down for Sunday, if we went at all, it was for Sunday tea. And that was a piece bread and butter, and a special piece of cake.

SIGRIST: Did their house look like your house?

TANNER: Well, yes and no. I mean, I really couldn't remember. It was, they were more or less all alike, you know. Little, little, dinky little homes. Now, when I came to America and went back, I couldn't believe it.

SIGRIST: You had a whole different perspective on everything.

TANNER: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: Talk to me a little bit about your brothers. What kinds of things did they do in this town? Did they have jobs, or...

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Well, my father was a carpenter, and my brothers followed, you know, along with him.

SIGRIST: So your father was a carpenter as well as doing field work for this farmer.

TANNER: No. No. No. He did the field work with the farmer, and then, he, I don't know whether he did it after or not, but he went carpenter...

SIGRIST: I see. Okay.

TANNER: And my one brother, the one that was married, he lost his wife and left two little children, he was a brick layer, what they called a brick layer, and I can't remember what the others were at all. I can't, they're kind of hazy in my mind.

SIGRIST: Do you remember a crowded house?

TANNER: Not...

SIGRIST: Was it a crowded house?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Not really. I mean, didn't thing anything about it. Think of being crowded at all. No. We and, in the wintertime we also had a game called, oh dear, "Stakes and Ladders." It was well worn, but that was one game that we could put on the kitchen table, and all of us could play it. But otherwise we didn't have any particular things to play with, or, we didn't have anything. In fact, at Christmas time my mother, my grandmother, my mother couldn't, my grandmother gave me a whole shilling. That was twelve pence, that, to go down to the little store in the village, and get each one of our kids the, what they did in that little store was they would have like, well, I'll say an automobile. Very small with a little piece of candy on it, a chocolate candy. And she wanted me to get a piece, a, one for each of our children. I can remember that today. (she laughs) I don't how I did it, but I did.

SIGRIST: What other things did you do at Christmas time? Did you put a Christmas tree up in the house?

TANNER: No. No. We had no Christmas tree, no Christmas ornaments. We just had a nice Christmas, well, where my father worked on the farm, the man butchered, and we had a nice piece of beef. That was one time in the year that we had meat. We

EI-120/VERA TANNER

had meat on Sunday, but Christmastime we had meat two or three days, because he gave us generous portion of beef from the cow that he, that he butchered, and gave his help, you know.

SIGRIST: Did you ever go with your father when he went to work for the farmer, to spend time with him?

TANNER: Well, not actually. We, in the summertime we used to take what we called his tea. That was his bread and butter, and, well, I suppose you'd call it a thermos, I don't know what, so that he could work late at night, and get a little extra money. But otherwise, no.

SIGRIST: I see.

TANNER: But I always was my father's, on my father's tail. (she chuckles)

SIGRIST: Talk to me a little bit about World War One, and how that effected your town.

TANNER: Well, I wasn't home. I was working out where I, the first job that I had, that I, what they called "slept out," you

EI-120/VERA TANNER

know, not home. And...

SIGRIST: What was this job? What did you do?

TANNER: Housework and such like. And I was awakened about three o'clock in the morning, and I was upstairs, of course. And down below was an alleyway, belonged to the family next door. It was a, not a, kind of a store, where they sold all kinds of shoes and things, and I thought, "Well, what in the world is going on down there." And there, they had called the army up, and they were gathering down there by that place. And that was, I didn't know what it was 'til later in the morning, of course, what was going on. And that was the starting of the World War One. I can't remember whether my father and my brother went then or not, but they were people that were on patrol, because the planes, or zeppelins they were then, they didn't have the planes like they did now, the zeppelins would come over and drop, you know. So that we had to go down underground. They had to build places underground where women and children could go, while the men went out on the streets to try to take care of them. They didn't know whether they were going to get killed or not, and my father and my brother were very fortunate. Then my bigger, older brother went in the service, and he was on

EI-120/VERA TANNER

a hospital ship with the Red Cross. One, they were bringing a load of wounded soldiers from Gibraltar, I think it was, to Southampton to get to the hospital. And for some reason or other, well, the Lord knew what he was doing, the dining room was supposed to be ready at twelve o'clock sharp, and that day, it was about two minutes late. And because of that two minutes a bomb hit that hospital ship right in the dining where all those would have been, and they would have been. We didn't know it. Of course, no telegraph, no telephone, no nothing. But somebody on a bicycle came to our front door, and, with a message of, "I'm all right, Mom." We didn't know anything about what was going on at all. (she laughs) It was a, kind of a strange thing, but...

SIGRIST: What were you, at this particular time in history, World War One, and you're now, you know, you're what fifteen years old, roughly fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old at this time. Is this a scary time to be living, or was it too removed from you? Did you just not...

TANNER: Well, I don't know. I can't say. Everybody wanted a man's job, so the man could, and I did. I was afraid of the horse that I drove. But...

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: What job was this?

TANNER: Taking the man's, I worked for people that run a grocery store, that delivered groceries. And I wanted to do that to relieve the man that was doing it. They let me do it. I don't know why, but they did.

SIGRIST: Let me talk a little bit about, you said your father worked for the Red Cross, and your brother.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit of what kinds of things he was doing at that time. What was he doing for the Red Cross exactly?

TANNER: I couldn't tell you. I don't know.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you correspond with him?

TANNER: He, well, only that we had bicycles that could go and visit him. And he was in the hospital, you know, in the, where the wounded came in. And my father couldn't medically help, but he could clean them up, and help them that way. And my

EI-120/VERA TANNER

brother and I used to, about, we used to be about twelve, fifteen, fourteen, I don't know how far, but it was quite a ways from home. But they used to have a lot of meat and stuff like that had to be thrown out because the men couldn't eat them. So my father told my mother to send us down there, and with special permission they would give us some of the meat and things to take home, to, so that they would not be wasted, and we had something to eat.

SIGRIST: Yeah, that's great for you.

TANNER: Oh, yes, it was. It was wonderful. But then one, one time when we were down, our dad was home. And he said, "At a certain time either tomorrow or the next day, I want you and Frank to be at the docks, and watch that load of soldiers come in." He said, "I want you to realize what those men are going through." Oh, I never, I can't get it out of my mind. Lots of times I'll lay, think about it, and I think, "How terrible." There they were, right from the battlefield, dirt and mud, blood. Everything. But he wanted us to see first hand what those boys were going through for us.

SIGRIST: So you would understand.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: So we would try at least to understand a little, you don't understand it 'til later, though. You know, you're young and you don't realize. You knew it was bad, but you didn't know how bad. So...

SIGRIST: That was a difficult time.

TANNER: Very.

SIGRIST: Let's talk a little bit now about, when did you start deciding that you wanted to come to America?

TANNER: Well, (she pauses) when I saw the ad on that box that time, when I was just a little girl, I thought I'd like to do it. And then my mother and father were going to come over with, because my other uncles were here, my mother wouldn't come. And I says, "Well, I'm going to go some day. I'm going to write and ask my uncle if he'll send me the money, so I can come." And so he did. And then my bro...

SIGRIST: Who, what uncle is this? Whose relation, is this your mother's brother?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: My, my father's brother. There were three boys. My dad and my two uncles. And they were over here in America.

SIGRIST: What were they doing in America? Do you know?

TANNER: Not really. No, I don't.

SIGRIST: Do you know when they came?

TANNER: No.

SIGRIST: Okay, but it was before. They were already here and established.

TANNER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Were they writing back and forth to your father or to you?

TANNER: Well, not very often. Took quite a while to get a letter across at that time. But he sent me the money, and I promised him if he would, I would work 'til I pay him back. And I did. He couldn't believe it. He said, "I believed in you, but I didn't think you," and I don't, and I went without a lot a lot of things. You know, a lot of the girls

EI-120/VERA TANNER

would like. Pretty clothes and like that. I never did. I had, I just gave up everything to, so I could pay that money back when I got here.

SIGRIST: Did you, you had to wait for the war to be over before you could come.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Right. So what did you do when the war finished? What were you doing until you came to America?

TANNER: Well, I was doing this man's job in the grocery store.

SIGRIST: I see. And were you saving your money to come over here, or were you giving your parents some of the money that you made?

TANNER: No, I had to give my, we had to pay our parents. That was the only way they had to live, you know, us bigger kids to pay, earn money and pay them. I can't remember too much about World War One.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you felt about coming to America? Were

EI-120/VERA TANNER

you sad about leaving your friends...

TANNER: Well...

SIGRIST: ...in England, or were you excited because you wanted to come here?

TANNER: I was excited. I, I didn't realize what it meant. You know, you don't stop to think. You're too young to think what it might mean. But I have to, I got going up the gangplank, on the boat, and I thought, "Oh, I haven't kissed my mother good-bye," and I ran back. I wouldn't, I didn't think they'd let me go back, but they did. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Do you remember saying good-bye to your friends in the town?

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did they have a party for you?

TANNER: No! They didn't have parties and things in those days. Nobody did.

SIGRIST: What was it like having to say good-bye to people?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Oh, I don't, just, I don't really, more than, you know, because I was planning to come back.

SIGRIST: That was always the plan, then?

TANNER: Yeah, I promised my mother I would be back in two years. In fact, I said I was going to come back and get married, but I found out the fellow that I was going with wasn't all it was, all that he said he was. So, then I bought my ticket to go home, and, but I made sure I had my ticket to come back before I (she laughs), oh, dear.

SIGRIST: Where did you leave from?

TANNER: Southampton.

SIGRIST: Now, how, what that a long way from where you lived?

TANNER: Oh, about, I don't know, eight, ten, twelve miles, I don't, I don't really, it was the big, big seaport, you know, for the Olympic, you remember. And I came on the Olympic.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you, were you able to buy your steamship ticket

EI-120/VERA TANNER

in the town that you lived in?

TANNER: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: There was a, there was a concession located there?

TANNER: Yes, there was an agency there.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how much the ticket cost?

TANNER: No. But I do remember when Frank and I, we didn't, we were so dumb, we didn't know we had to have visa, and also all, we had to have it signed somewhere, I can't remember where. We rode our bikes down to get it signed not knowing that we had to pay for it, and neither one of us, either had to the penny almost to get that signed. (she laughs) It was very, didn't realize it, you know.

SIGRIST: Now, Frank is your brother.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Why did he want to come to America?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Well, he just got it in his head, because I was coming, I guess. I said to him, "Now, I'm going. You're not backing out the last minute, because if you do, it's too bad, because I AM GOING, and that's it!"

END OF SIDE A

BEGINNING OF SIDE B

TANNER: ...backed out once.

SIGRIST: Was he younger than you?

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was Frank like as a person?

TANNER: Oh, just an ordinary Englishman, I guess. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: How much younger is he than you?

TANNER: Oh, probably three years.

SIGRIST: Three years. Did he have a job also at that time?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: No. He came over and the, the farmers were very glad to get anybody to help them on the farm. And that's what he, my uncle found a place on the farm for him.

SIGRIST: Once he came here.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Now, who went with you to Southampton?

TANNER: Frank.

SIGRIST: Did your mother go, because you...

TANNER: No. No.

SIGRIST: And, did you go to Southampton by train? How did you get to Southampton?

TANNER: They, my mother and father took us by car, I think it was, I'm not sure.

SIGRIST: by automobile.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Yes. Which was very rare.

SIGRIST: How did they get an automobile?

TANNER: I don't know. They borrowed it or what, what, I can't, that I can't tell you. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: So they, so they took you to get to the boat.

TANNER: Right.

SIGRIST: Okay. Do you remember saying good-bye to them.

TANNER: Well, as I said, I got going up the gangplank, and realized I hadn't said good-bye to my mother, and I turned around and ran down the gangplank to say good-bye to her. I didn't know whether they'd let me back on or not, but they did.

SIGRIST: Well, good. (they laugh) I'm glad they let you back on the boat. You went on the Olympic, you said.

TANNER: Right.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Can you describe your accommodations on the boat for me.
Where did you sleep?

TANNER: Well, of course, being an immigrant, I went third class,
which to me was very nice. We had good meals, too. We got
seasick. That wasn't so good.

SIGRIST: The Olympic was a big boat.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: It was a beautiful boat.

TANNER: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did you have a cabin?

TANNER: No! Not on...

SIGRIST: You were in a big room?

TANNER: Not on third class. You just, I was in with four, four
people, I think it was. I can't remember, so long ago.
But...

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Were you with lots of other people who were English, or was there a real mix of immigrants?

TANNER: Oh, there was a, different kinds of people. I think the one woman and her daughter was in with me, (she pauses) I can't remember too much about it.

SIGRIST: You said you got seasick.

TANNER: Oh! But I got out of bed and went up on the deck where they told me to do, but every step you took, you didn't know whether you were going to slide or fall, because everybody was sick, you know, and they didn't care where they vomited. It was terrible.

SIGRIST: So you probably didn't eat much on the boat if you were sick.

TANNER: No, but they made you eat what you could, because that's what made it better for you.

SIGRIST: I see. Was there a dining room for you, a third class dining room?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me how long the trip was? Do you remember how long the boat ride was?

TANNER: I did, but I can't, I think it was six days. I'm not sure.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you? What did you pack when you left?

TANNER: Not much, because I didn't have much to pack. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did you have one suitcase, two suitcases, do you remember?

TANNER: No, I had one little trunk, and one suitcase the people gave me where I worked.

SIGRIST: I see. So you were on the boat about six days.

TANNER: I think so.

SIGRIST: Yeah. That sounds about right. Is that the first you had

EI-120/VERA TANNER

ever been on a big boat?

TANNER: Right.

SIGRIST: What was it like to see a great, big ocean liner like that, when you first saw it?

TANNER: (she laughs) I couldn't tell, I couldn't describe it. I know I was thrilled.

SIGRIST: Do you remember, when you came into New York Harbor, do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty?

TANNER: Not really. The first thing I saw was Lipton's Tea.

SIGRIST: Like a big billboard or something?

TANNER: Big, way up in the sky, I saw Lipton's Tea.

SIGRIST: Welcome to America. (they laugh) Well, let's, let's talk about the Ellis Island experience just a little bit. What happened when you got to Ellis Island?

TANNER: Well, I, we didn't go first, because, I can't remember that

EI-120/VERA TANNER

at all. The most I remember was when I was alone, and I knew I was going to go back.

SIGRIST: That was the second time.

TANNER: That was the second time. And I was, had applied for American citizenship. So, I wasn't worried about getting through all right. But you were supposed to have, this is the first time, supposed to have fifty dollars. Well, I didn't have fifty cents, really. And walking along the corridor, I guess you'd call it, I found a two-dollar bill. And I belonged to the Girl's Friendly Society, which I appealed to for help. Of course, Frank was with me, so she couldn't do anything with me, but there was a very nice man on the boat, a security guard. And he told her, he says, "Because her brother's with me, I can take care of her." Then he turned to me and he said, "I couldn't do because of white slave traffic," which didn't mean anything to me all, because I didn't know what he meant at all. But the long and short of it was he gave me five dollars, gave us our breakfast and put us on our train to Fultonville.

SIGRIST: I see.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: And I sent it back to him. I still got the letter that he wrote and said, "I had faith to believe that you would do this." I sent his five dollar bill back, and thanked him.

SIGRIST: You mentioned Frank, and I have a question. When you were on the boat, did Frank stay with you, or were you separated?

TANNER: No, we were separated?

SIGRIST: And when you got to Ellis Island, do you remember, were you separated from Frank there?

TANNER: Well, Frank, didn't go with me to Ellis. They, I can't remember what there was about it, but something happened. So this man put us on the boat. We didn't have to go, I went to Ellis Island alone.

SIGRIST: I see. Okay. All right, well, let's get, the man put you on the train and you went to Fultonville.

TANNER: Right.

SIGRIST: And what happened then? Who met you in Fultonville?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Well, we didn't know what to do when we got there, because my cousin was supposed to meet us in New York. We didn't know that. We didn't realize how big New York was. And we didn't realize that he lived in New Jersey, and that was quite a ways away. So in the up and down we missed each other. That was why this security guard put us on the train. And I kept saying to the fellow that went through, you know, they called it the "Milk Train", apparently they picked up milk along the way to bring up to the dairy. And so when we finally got there, he told us we were in Fultonville. So we got off the train, and there was a little, I think, now I remember, it was a drug store that had a, we stopped there and asked them if they would tell us where my uncle lived. Well, of course, that started the ball rolling. Everybody was looking for us, and everybody who's, (she laughs) that's how we got there. But, oh, I was so hungry. And then they gave us corn, which I didn't, I did, because where I worked they had corn, the woman was an American. And, oh, I couldn't wait to get something to eat.

SIGRIST: This was at your uncle's house that you went to?

TANNER: Yes. Right.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Did your uncle have a nice house in Fultonville?

TANNER: Just a regular, you know, every, but my brother went with one uncle and I went with my other uncle.

SIGRIST: Not the uncle in Fultonville?

TANNER: Yeah, they both lived in Fultonville.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. Do you remember what your uncle did for a living?

TANNER: Well, my one uncle was, he had, I can't remember too much about, but he had a kind of a farm, and he bought and sold meat, you know, butchered. He'd get so many pigs, and get them in the slaughterhouse, and every so often he would butcher them and then sell the meat to people in Gloversville.

SIGRIST: I see.

TANNER: But my other uncle was a, just a plodder. He was a, loved the work, the garden work, and he was good at it. He worked for quite a well-to-do estate, and so that was that.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: I see. What did you do when you got to Fultonville? The next morning what happened?

TANNER: Well, it was Sunday. And, of course, I, we always went to church, I, I just don't really know what happened. But we, home, of course, we went to Sunday school and church, but I, I was so tired and so hungry, they, I didn't know where to go or what to do or how to get up or how to do anything about it. But then my aunt, bless her soul, she was a dear soul, she, she went to church, and of course, home, that was the day we all got together and had a big dinner. So here was I expecting to have a big dinner (she laughs) on Sunday, and, well, we didn't.

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Did you get a job?

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: What was the first job you got?

TANNER: Well, they taught me how to run a machine to make gloves or stockings. I don't know which it was.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: This is in Fultonville.

TANNER: In Fultonville. Fultonville was quite a place for silk. They had bundles of silk and dyed it, and made, I can't tell you all there was to it, but it was a very prosperous little town. I don't remember too much about it, but I know it was a big building, and I know it was silk, and I know it was very prosperous. And I know that I, they taught me how to run a machine, and the woman that taught me was the, she owned it, and she, "Oh," I said, "it goes so fast." She said, "Before you get through, it won't go fast enough."
(she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did you like this job?

TANNER: Yeah. Yeah. I never had anything to do in, you know, I had no idea of any electricity or know nothing.

SIGRIST: Did, were the hours long?

TANNER: That I can't remember. I think it was from seven 'til five, but I'm not sure.

SIGRIST: I see. What was, what was different about America in

EI-120/VERA TANNER

comparison to England? Did you notice certain that were very different here than from how they had been across the ocean?

TANNER: Well, I really can't say, because I really don't know.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you like being here?

TANNER: Yes. Very much.

SIGRIST: And you stayed here for two years you said.

TANNER: I went back (she pauses), before that I went back.

SIGRIST: You did.

TANNER: I, I can't, that's all very hazy in my mind.

SIGRIST: Well...

TANNER: But I went back, and came back, got married, lived on a farm.

SIGRIST: All right. Let's talk about when you went back. You

EI-120/VERA TANNER

promised your mother that you would come back.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Okay. So, you stayed in America with your uncle for a little while.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: Did you always live with you uncle, or did you move away before...

TANNER: No, I stayed with them 'til I got married.

SIGRIST: Okay. So, you lived with your uncle, you went back to England.

TANNER: Right

SIGRIST: Talk about going back to England, and how was that different for you? Did you like going back to England?

TANNER: Well, I can't really say, because everything was so, to me over in America, everything was so big, and over in England

EI-120/VERA TANNER

everything was so small compared. I got my old job back in the store, and I stayed, so I had enough money to get back in the fall.

SIGRIST: So how long were you in England before you returned?

TANNER: Oh, about three or four months, I guess.

SIGRIST: Did you stay with your mother and father?

TANNER: Yes. Yes.

SIGRIST: Was it, were you happy to see them again?

TANNER: Oh, yes.

SIGRIST: Did they have lots of questions about America, and what you were doing, and...

TANNER: Oh, as much as anybody. (she laughs) My mother wasn't a very talkative person, and, of course, my dad wasn't always there. But my dad was always sorry that he didn't go, although my mother wasn't.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Did any of your other brothers ever go to America?

TANNER: Yes. Well, yes and no. My baby brother, as I called him. And by the way he's celebrating his fiftieth wedding anniversary this year.

SIGRIST: Wow.

TANNER: And Lois and her son and his wife are going over for the celebration.

SIGRIST: In England.

TANNER: In England.

SIGRIST: I see. But he had come to America?

TANNER: No, he was in the army, in the navy.

SIGRIST: Oh, I see.

TANNER: And his, do you remember, probably you don't because you're too young, the battle they had up in the North Sea with the Bismark?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Yeah.

TANNER: Well, my brother was on there. He helped sink the Bismark.

SIGRIST: I see.

TANNER: And then, because of that, they came down to Virginia. And then, well, I don't know just how it all happened, but somehow or other he manipulated so he came to see me on the farm.

SIGRIST: I see. After you had returned.

TANNER: Yeah, right.

SIGRIST: All right. So you're in England for three or four months, you said.

TANNER: Right.

SIGRIST: And then, why did decide to come back?

TANNER: Why did I decide to come back?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Yeah. Why did you decide to come back to America?

TANNER: I decided to come back before I went over, this...

SIGRIST: Oh, I see. You had only planned to be in England for a short time.

TANNER: Right.

SIGRIST: I see.

TANNER: I kept my promise to my mother, that I would be back in two years.

SIGRIST: So, you then returned. So, you then came back, came back to America, after being in England for three or four months.

TANNER: Right. Got married.

SIGRIST: And you married, well, did you meet your person that you married in America?

TANNER: Yes.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: I see. So, when you returned, this was the time you came through Ellis by yourself.

TANNER: Right.

SIGRIST: Right.

TANNER: But I had a good ham and cheese sandwich, that I never had such a good one in all my life.

SIGRIST: Did you, you had that at Ellis Island?

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: How did you, did you buy that, or did somebody...

TANNER: No. There was a man went around with a huge, big basket for everybody. See, there was a lot of people waiting to go through customs. Not customs, but, you know, the immigration. So, they were feeding them with the, I don't, I wondered lots of times what we had to drink, but I can never remember.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: So, where did you go, when you left Ellis, where did you go?

Did you go back to Fultonville, or did you go somewhere else?

TANNER: No, I can't remember.

SIGRIST: Did someone come and meet you at Ellis Island?

TANNER: No. No, I was all alone. But I had my ticket, so I knew I was going to land back in Fultonville sometime.

SIGRIST: I see. So, how long where in America before you met the man you were going to marry.

TANNER: I couldn't tell you. I couldn't remember. (she chuckles)
Met him at church.

SIGRIST: And where were you? What...

TANNER: In Fultonville.

SIGRIST: Oh, so you were back in Fultonville.

TANNER: Yeah.

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: Did you get it, when you returned to Fultonville, did you get the same kind of job? Do you remember what job you got...

TANNER: No, I don't remember too much about it.

SIGRIST: I see.

TANNER: It was a long time ago.

SIGRIST: It was indeed a long time ago. Well, tell me a little bit about meeting your husband-to-be in church.

TANNER: Well, just met him in church, and, you know, we fell in love. That's all. (she chuckles)

SIGRIST: And he was an American.

TANNER: Yes.

SIGRIST: I see. And whatever became of your brother? What happened to Frank?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Well, he was on the farm. He went back and married his sweetheart, and brought her over, and they went back on the farm to live.

SIGRIST: This is the farm in England or in America?

TANNER: No, in America.

SIGRIST: This is the farm that you eventually went to.

TANNER: No. No.

SIGRIST: No, this is another farm. (he laughs)

TANNER: This is another farm.

SIGRIST: A lot of farms.

TANNER: Another people altogether.

SIGRIST: I see. Well, I guess my final question for you in the interview is, are you happy that you came? Are you happy that you made that decision?

EI-120/VERA TANNER

TANNER: Oh, very, very, I never want to go back and stay.

SIGRIST: How different do you think your life would have been if you had stayed in England?

TANNER: Well, I really don't know, but I know I've been much happier and contented over here than I ever, when I've been back and seen some of the sad, you know, they're happy, because they don't know any different. But I couldn't go back because I know the difference. That's all. I don't know. My brother Frank died. His wife is still living, and her brother, they lived together up in the town of Glen.

SIGRIST: Did your parents live to be elderly, or did they...

TANNER: Well, about the, you know, the age of ordinary people in England, yes.

SIGRIST: Did they ever get to America to visit you?

TANNER: Yes. My husband and I, we had them come over for one whole summer.

SIGRIST: What did, let me ask you this question. What did your

EI-120/VERA TANNER

parents think of America?

TANNER: They, they loved it, but they wanted to go back home. Home was England, you know. Older people realized that. But they were here I think, I'm not sure, but I think they were here the whole summer. And we took them, a friend of mine took them by car down to New York, but we picked the wrong time. It was when the American Legion were having that big time in New York. My father loved it, but it was pretty noisy for my mother. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: That's interesting that, of course, you know, home was home for them, and that they wanted to go back to England.

TANNER: Yes. Yeah. Right. Right.

SIGRIST: Well, Mrs. Tanner, I want to thank you very much for...

TANNER: I don't know whether I told all the truth or not.

SIGRIST: Oh, well, that's all right. (they laugh) It was a splendid interview, and I'm very pleased. Thank you very much.

TANNER: You're very welcome. I hope I've told the truth. That's...

EI-120/VERA TANNER

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist signing off for the National Park Service with Vera Tanner.