

**EI-1458**

**MARY KRONE JENSEN JOA**

**BIRTHDATE: AUGUST 16, 1920**

**INTERVIEW DATE: JUNE 25, 2007**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 86**

**RUNNING TIME: 1:03:07**

**INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.**

**RECORDING ENGINEER: SAME**

**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: HALLIE BORSTEL**

**TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY:**

**NORWAY, 1938**

**AGE 18**

**SHIP: OSLOFJORD**

**PORT: OLSO**

**RESIDENCES**

**NORWAY: OSLO**

**US: BROOKLYN, NY; PITTSBURGH, PA**

LEVINE: Today is June the twenty-fifth, the year 2007. I'm here with Mary Krone—

JOA: Jensen.

LEVINE: Jensen Joa, (both laugh) who came here in 1939 when she was nineteen years of age.

JOA: In December, thirty-eight.

LEVINE: Oh, December thirty-eight.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh, OK. December thirty-eight, 1938—

JOA: The twentieth, we landed.

LEVINE: Oh, great. December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1938, and you were nineteen.

JOA: I was twenty.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: I was born in 1920.

LEVINE: In nineteen – no wait. You were born in 1920, so – and if you came in 1938, you would've been eighteen. Does that sound right?

JOA: [superposed] I was eighteen. Oh, my goodness.

LEVINE: Eighteen. Yeah, eighteen.

JOA: [superposed] Yeah, I was eighteen.

LEVINE: Eighteen, OK.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you were eighteen years. And you traveled by yourself.

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: And that was on the maiden voyage of the Oslofjord—

JOA: [superposed] Yeah – yeah.

LEVINE: The ship, leaving from Oslo.

JOA: On the tenth of December.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. OK.

JOA: That I know. And we landed in Brooklyn, New York on the twentieth of December.

LEVINE: OK. OK. All right.

JOA: What was interesting that when we landed we had to stay out in the harbor because we landed – we came to Brooklyn on the – on the s – Sunday night, I mean they – they—

LEVINE: They wouldn't let you off the ship.

JOA: So we – when we – when we got to the Brooklyn, past Ellis Island – I mean, before Ellis Island, we saw all of New York lit up with – we all ran up to the deck and watched the city and the – it was only hundred people on that voyage over to – people in at that time. So we're very close, almost like friends (both laugh). And – and then the next morning we went to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: OK. Well let's start back in Norway—

JOA: [superposed] OK.

LEVINE: If you would say for the tape, please, your birth date and where in Norway you were born.

JOA: In Oslo.

LEVINE: OK. And what was your birth date?

JOA: August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1920.

LEVINE: OK. And your father's name?

JOA: Haakon—it should be on my birth – in my [papers rustling]– yeah, Haakon.

LEVINE: You'll have to spell that for me.

JOA: Yeah. Well, you can sp – spell it either wa – but – better sp – spell it [scraping noise] so you – Haakon. No, it's – yeah. Haakon can be spelled with double A or – or an A with an umlaut. H-A – we take this spelling. A – H-A-A-K-O-N.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: His middle name was Dagfin—D-A-G-F-I-N.

LEVINE: OK.

JOA: Jensen.

LEVINE: Jensen.

JOA: [superposed] Yeah.

LEVINE: And—

JOA: And my mother's name?

LEVINE: Yes.

JOA: Bertha—B-E-R-T-H-A—Fredrikke—F—oh, I'm too fast here.

LEVINE: No, that's OK.

JOA: F-R-E-D-R-I-K-K-E. Fredrikke.

LEVINE: Mhm.

JOA: And she was spelled with Krone – she has Krone – she has Bertha Fredrikke Krone Olsen.

LEVINE: Krone was her maiden name?

JOA: Yeah. And then Olsen.

LEVINE: Olsen or Jen – Jensen?

JOA: Yes, they – yeah, she had the long name (both laugh). Put Jensen, because that's what she had.

LEVINE: OK. OK, so, now did you live in Oslo up until the time you left?

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: OK. And let's talk first about life in Oslo, OK?

JOA: Well—

LEVINE: When you think about it, what are the things you remember most?

JOA: Well, I don't know how to explain it. It was a small town – you know, Norway's not very big and Oslo was the biggest city, but (laughs)—

LEVINE: It still wasn't too big.

JOA: No. And we – we lived near the water, so I always saw water and – it – wh – I – don't know really to say. Of course we were into sport all the times, th – in the wintertime, and if it's cold, we – we just – snow, we just skied and skated and – and in the summer, swimming. I lived near l – lake, where I swam a lot. And – and then visiting my grandmother, I loved my grandmother and grandfather.

LEVINE: Ah. Why don't you talk about them? What do you remember about them?

JOA: Oh, all the things she used to cut out things for paper dolls, and she died when I was about eight or nine.

LEVINE: Aw. Was this your mother's mother?

JOA: Yeah, mother and father.

LEVINE: [superposed] Uh-huh.

JOA: My – my grandfather was a very religious man, he worked in the church, and their – I wish I had – [tapping noise] could show you the write-up on him, how he was missed when he passed away. He was wonderful. And—

LEVINE: Now, what church was that?

JOA: The – the Wa – Watalannskirken [ph]. The Lutheran church. Yeah.

LEVINE: OK.

JOA: That's where I was christened, too.

LEVINE: Were you religious when you were growing up?

JOA: Well, like, you know, I don't think we went to church, you know – it was hard to get to someplaces when you didn't live close to a road. And people didn't have cars like we have here. So when – when – with – we – we did – we g – we went to this church, that you know, where I was christened—

LEVINE: [superposed] Christened.

JOA: Watalanns—[scraping noise] and—

LEVINE: But you didn't go all the time?

JOA: No, not like they do here.

LEVINE: Mhm.

JOA: Where you listen to – you know. We didn't have television, we had, you know, that wasn't there then. Later on, when I was a little older, they – we got television and they only had [not understood] music on and weather reports (both laugh).

LEVINE: Well, you must've listened to the radio. Did you?

JOA: Oh, yes – yes. The radio. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. And did you have brothers and sister?

JOA: One brother.

LEVINE: Older or younger?

JOA: Two years younger.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: And he passed away about three years ago.

LEVINE: Oh. So did he come to this country?

JOA: No, he didn't want to come. You see, I should tell the beginning of—

LEVINE: OK, go ahead.

JOA: My – my mother and father, they were divorced, and he was around six, I might've been around eight, and then in order to get a divorce in those days you have to be separated for three years.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: Not to get in touch with a – one – one another. In a way it was a good idea, because they could think things over and maybe come – get together again. But it didn't happen. She went – she came to America.

LEVINE: When she separated from your father she came here?

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And then my brother and I was in the Lutheran home for three years while she was over here. And it was run by what we call *molichy* [ph], almost like—what you call, you know, its—

LEVINE: Like a nun?

JOA: Yeah, I was going to say that. Yeah. And there – and we had two young women, one took care of the food and things like that, and one was with the laundry and things like that. And it was a wonderful home, and there – we were there three years.

LEVINE: Now were there many other children there?

JOA: Only twenty, we – they were only allowed to have twenty children there, and most of them were related. It was, like, there was one man that his wife died, and he had two children. So he put him in this home, just to get organized, you know how—

LEVINE: Mhm.

JOA: And that's all they – it – and you could not be t – o – over fifteen years old. And so most of us was maybe three, or two, or maybe even one, and because of the circumstances they had to be there because the – the – the parents had to o – get organize – you know.

LEVINE: Mhm.

JOA: And they—

LEVINE: So, in other words, you weren't put up for adoption—

JOA: [superposed] Oh, no, it was not an orphanage—

LEVINE: [superposed] You were just being cared for—

JOA: Oh, yeah. We had religion, we had – every day, the mother would read from the Bible and – yeah. And we – yeah, it was a very good home.

LEVINE: Now did you see your father when you were in the home?

JOA: Yes, I did. We visited him, yeah. They had to pay for us living there.

LEVINE: Ah.

JOA: Yeah, he paid for us. It's like a—

LEVINE: Like boarding, almost.

JOA: Yeah, yeah. It was only twenty children, sometimes less. And it was like a big family.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you have fond memories of that Lutheran home?

JOA: Oh, yeah – oh, yes. Oh yes. It was – I visited my relatives all the time.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah, it's just a – that's where we stayed.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And your brother too.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see. So how old were you when that happened?

JOA: I – I think I was about, let's see, nov – when my mother come back after three years. That was in th – I – I came over here—

LEVINE: [superposed] You came—

JOA: When I was eighteen.

LEVINE: Right.

JOA: But then, we lived with my aunt also. After she came home, sh – she had went back, she had married again, and w – after that, when we came out of the home we stayed with my aunt. And then after the while – then – my brother didn't want to go over here after that, and because he – he was already in school. He went on to college and he then – my father had a big business, really a nice business, so he stayed with my father.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: But I went over here to my mother.

LEVINE: I see. Now, your mother remarried in this country?

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So, how—

JOA: She married another Norwegian (both laugh).

LEVINE: I see. Now, did she – about how many years would you say you were boarding in that Lutheran home?

JOA: Three years.

LEVINE: Three years. And then you went and stayed with your aunt. Was your mother (clears throat) still over here?

JOA: Yeah, she went back after – aft – she came home one year, she got a visa, and she came – she took us out of the home and – and then we stayed with my mother and – and we – I mean, with my aunt.

LEVINE: [superposed] Yeah.

JOA: And – now, I forget how many years we stayed in – she – my mother came back – back after three years, and – well, I left Norway then. In thirty-eight.

LEVINE: [superposed] Thirty-eight.

JOA: It was thirty-eight. So I stayed with her until then.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: We stayed with her.

LEVINE: I see. So—

JOA: H – pardon me, I didn't stay with her to the end. I stayed with my father. I get so confused with all these things (both laugh).

LEVINE: Yeah, go ahead.

JOA: I think the last two years I stayed with him. Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

JOA: And he had remarried too.

LEVINE: And so your brother was there too?

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

JOA: And – but my brother never came to America.

LEVINE: Right.

JOA: He came to visit, but never to stay.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And while he'd been in the business with my father.

LEVINE: What business was it?

JOA: Well he – my father had all kinds of – he ended up with huge storehouses where he would store for electric company and different people that wanted to – to have things stored. And then he was making good – he was making out good. And my brother stayed over there and went off to school and when he d – my father died, he took over. And then—

LEVINE: So he had a nice life there.

JOA: Yeah – oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So, in all, your mother came here about what year, roughly? When she first came here?

JOA: She came over here about – let me see, she came home (mumbles) – so we were – my brother was, she back in forty – hm, let's see. I should've had all these things figured out.

LEVINE: Well, that's OK. But you – when you went into the Lutheran home you said you were about eight?

JOA: I – let's see – I was in third grade, and we started – in school, seven, eight, nine – I – I probably were about nine.

LEVINE: About nine.

JOA: Yeah, because we start school at seven over there. But we go to school on Saturdays, too, we don't just go to school five – you know. And the – and so – yeah. First, second – I must've been nine and my brother seven.

LEVINE: OK. So if you were nine it was around 1929, roughly—

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: That your mother came here. And she was – and then you stayed in the home—

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: Until maybe 1932, or something like that. And then you stayed with your aunt—

JOA: [superposed] I think – I think she came over, yes, thirty-three.

LEVINE: Thirty-three, OK.

JOA: Three. And then – because she – I was confirmed in – in thirty-four, and she – she had to leave, she had a visa for a year. She came over in the spring and had to leave because the year was up, and so she didn't stay for my confirmation.

LEVINE: [superposed] Confirmation. Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So – but you were staying with your aunt then.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you stayed with here probably till nineteen – till about 1936, a couple years with your aunt, and then you stayed with your father.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then you came here.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. OK. Good. Well, now, did you go to school—the same school—when you were in the Lutheran home as when you went—

JOA: [superposed] Yes, that was—

LEVINE: Were with your aunt?

JOA: [superposed] Yes, because—

LEVINE: Your father?

JOA: Because I didn't want to change, and we took—my brother and I, two little kids— took trains – my aunt lived two train stations above where I had been going to school when I was in a home, so every morning we got up, took the train—we had sisunkt [ph] billet, they called – that we have – we b – bought, my father bought us a tick – a thing we only had to show, they were twenty krone for – for one note, so we can go on the train all day long if we wanted. So every morning my brother and I would take – go down from my aunt's to the station, and be on for about two stations, walk down to the school—every day, we did. We didn't want to change schools.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And – so – I mean – we – we br – I think we were a li – little more – I – I can't explain it. Those kids today—

LEVINE: [superposed] More s – more worldly, or more—

JOA: Yeah, but we – we—

LEVINE: [superposed] Or you were able to—

JOA: Yes, we did.

LEVINE: You were self-sufficient, in a way.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: You could do things. Yeah.

JOA: But going back on all the danger there is today, you know—

LEVINE: That's true.

JOA: So you have to be careful.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. And what do you remember about school in Norway?

JOA: Well, I can – I remember that I was kind of shy, and I – I was always worried if she asked me question, I wasn't going to know (laughs). And—

LEVINE: Was the school strict?

JOA: Well, I can't say it was t – that I can say it was too strict, I mean, I can never remember anything being – oh, managed.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: My brother, I think was smarter than me.

LEVINE: (laughs) What was your brother's name?

JOA: A-R-I-L-D. Arild.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Arild.

JOA: Arild Johnny [ph] Jensen.

LEVINE: So you must've been pretty close, you and your brother.

JOA: Yes, well, he was – he was nice. I – I – I guess I was little mean sometimes (laughs).

LEVINE: You were mean to your little brother?

JOA: Not really mean, just – he was so good-hearted. Say, for instance, we got a bar candy—

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: I would eat my candy up, and after I was fini – he comes and gives me half of his. That's the kind of boy he was.

LEVINE: Uh-huh (JOA laughs). That's nice.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: I guess he looked at me – you know, because his mother wasn't there, and then—

LEVINE: Right, so you were like a little mother in a way—

JOA: I guess so.

LEVINE: Even though you were so young.

JOA: [superposed] Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: So—

LEVINE: And what did you do for fun? What can you remember, as a little girl, what did you – did you have games, and—?

JOA: [superposed] Oh, yes. We had all kinds of games. We would – I could stand like this and bounce a ball for – they couldn't believe it when I came over, (both laugh) they're holding things like—but we used to skip, you know, what do you call those here, you know, when you skip the, you know, the things you do.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: And play ball and – and kapalan [ph] – well, see, these things may be hard for you to understand. But you – you have – they have squares and you have a pole and you – you jump around with this and you put it – your territory, you know.

LEVINE: Oh (both laugh).

JOA: I mean, it's hard for me to explain these things [background noise]. And then jump, you know, what do you call them—

LEVINE: Hopscotch?

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And then baseball, you know, batting the ball. And, of course, ski, skate, and climb trees (laughs).

LEVINE: Well, it sounds like you were a little tomboy, or very athletic anyway.

JOA: Yeah. Yes, I was.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: I have – I have grandchilds – grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, they are very athletic (laughs). They have a wall full of medals. But—

LEVINE: Well, what was your favorite sport?

JOA: Hm. I think I would say skiing.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: It – it's nothing like going through the woods in the snow, maybe the sun is shining, on skis—no, it's nothing like it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So (clears throat) when your mother came back, then did you go back with her?  
No, you didn't go back with her—

JOA: [superposed] No, I waited.

LEVINE: You waited.

JOA: I waited to – thirty-eight. Christmas thirty-eight.

LEVINE: Why did you go to America when you did?

JOA: She wanted me to come over. Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was your feeling about coming?

JOA: Well, I was excited just to come over here. And the funny thing – they did the  
World's Fair on Long Island was in thirty-nine.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: And so when I came over, only a couple of months, I was at the World's Fair, you  
know.

LEVINE: And I guess Norway was represented, do you remember that pavilion?

JOA: No, I – I can't recall that, but I remember there was the first machine that milked

the cows (laughs).

LEVINE: They showed that at the World Fair?

JOA: Oh, yeah they had it all in – end – you know. And—

LEVINE: What else do you remember about that World Fair?

JOA: Well, I'm not so sure if this – during that time wa – no, it couldn't have been. Oh, it was so many things; it's so hard to remember everything.

LEVINE: Yeah. It was exciting to you.

JOA: Oh, yes. All I know, my feet hurt—I took my shoes off, I couldn't stand walking in them (laughs).

LEVINE: Now did you know any English when you came here?

JOA: No.

LEVINE: No. So how did you learn it?

JOA: Just learn it. Pick it up.

LEVINE: [superposed] Just by—

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Going around and—

JOA: I had – oh, as soon as I came to my mother I got in with young people, my age.

Sense of Norway, there was a club. Sense of Norway. And there – being winter, I – they were going everywhere, skating and skiing and – and the young boys would be jumping. They were in the ski club – I mean – yeah, jumping. And – oh yes, we – and always when we got together we sang and some people would play the accordion or guitar. We always had fun get together – ours – maybe more or less, the same, my age.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So—

JOA: [superposed] So I – I had friends almost from the beginning.

LEVINE: And this was in Brooklyn?

JOA: Yeah. Brooklyn, New York.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: Bay Ridge.

LEVINE: Oh, Bay Ridge?

JOA: Yeah. That's where all the Scandinavians settled.

LEVINE: [superposed] Yup. Yup.

JOA: Yeah. You know that?

LEVINE: Yeah (both laugh). So – so you didn't feel isolated, or – you felt like you had a community there.

JOA: Oh, yeah, because they were – you know, they were, like me, they came over [tapping noise] with their parents, you know, when they were in their late teens. So.

LEVINE: So your mother then had a new husband when you came here.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And how was that? Getting used to a step-father.

JOA: [superposed] Oh, it was all right with me. Yeah. And I – the same when my father got married again. And I – I got to know her too, when I lived with him she was there. She – she was very nice. Yeah. And – and – and then – being that I couldn't speak very well English, my f – my best friend that I met in – in the group of my, you know, the young people I met here, she and I we went over to New York to the emp – employment office and then, of course I couldn't speak very good English. And so anyway, I got this paper that I should go to this store—it was like a little tobacco store, they had a little counter that some of the people from across the street used to come over and have soup or a sandwich, and there were about two tables there, and the chairs—and they needed someone to help this woman for six weeks, her husband had to go – gall bladder operation. And I wasn't the one that got that slip to go there, my friend, but she said, "Mary," she said, "You meet people, you talk, you learn English." So I says, "Well, I'll try." And so I got the job for six weeks. And then – only – only from the morning, like eight o'clock or so to early afternoon, it was only like for the lunch counter—the store was open all the time, it was – they had all kinds of tobacco and, you know, like a little tobacco store. Still – I used to go home early in the afternoon. Well, one day these two guys came in. And the one—tall, dark, and handsome

(both laugh)—he said, (JOA whistles). Isn't that something? He said – I stood – I stood between the – here's the counter, and I – as I was standing, I didn't pay any attention to them, because I – and he came over and said, "I would like—" c – well, yeah, they had this cup of soup, they had these things. I said – he said, "I'd like a cup of s – of soup." And so I gave – I went – no, I'm telling you the wrong thing. I went over, they were sitting at—these two guys—and I said, you know, so he sat there – the first thing he said, "I love you." This is honest truth.

LEVINE: Yeah, I believe you.

JOA: (laughs) I s – I walked away, I was red in the face, I walked away. But I had to go back, so I went back and that's when he ordered a cup of soup. I g – wrote an order, and every afternoon when I went home, he was sure to be outside where he worked, across the street, to wave (laughs). So anyway, one Friday night he came over, running across the street, and he said, "We going to movie tonight." I said, "I don't know you," (laughs). So Mrs. – he said to Mrs. Mandel, the owner of the store, she says – he said, "Tell her I'm a good boy, Mrs. Mandel. Tell her I – she can go to the movies with me." And so she said, "He's a good boy." I said, "Well, I still don't know you." So anyway, I gave in, I was – we going to the movie. But I didn't give him my address (laughs). He was halfway across the street when he came back, "Where do you live?"

LEVINE: Oh, he was going to pick you up before—

JOA: [superposed] Oh—

LEVINE: He didn't know where you were.

JOA: Yeah – yeah. He w – he would come to pick me up where I lived. And so anyway we went to the movie, and he – never forget the movie, was called Boom Town, or something, with [not understood]. But anyway, four months later we

were married (laughs).

LEVINE: Oh, my goodness. Now he was also from Norway?

JOA: No, he was from Brooklyn.

LEVINE: He was born here.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Was—

JOA: His grandmother was from Germany, but he – but, no, he was born here.

LEVINE: Well, you must've had trouble speaking.

JOA: Well, this was forty-one, so I had—

LEVINE: Oh, you'd been here a while.

JOA: Yeah. Must've been forty, because – no, wait a minute this happened – yeah, in October 1940.

LEVINE: Mhm. So it was close to two years that you'd been here, so you could—

JOA: [superposed] Yeah. Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: You knew—

JOA: Oh, yeah. I – I – I guess I could understand and – sort of managed to understand one another. And – yeah – it was. He says, "I'm going to marry you

in four months,” or something like that. I says, “You’re crazy,” you know (laughs). But we got married in – February 16<sup>th</sup>, on my – I was twenty and a half, to the day. Because August 16<sup>th</sup>, February 16<sup>th</sup>.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. [tapping noise]

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

JOA: And—

LEVINE: Well, let’s back up a minute. When you were leaving Norway, do you remember leaving home?

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: And what was that like.

JOA: That was kind of hard. Everyone came down to the – you know, to the pier, the dock. Standing down there, now I’m up there on the boat, and I’m looking at all of them, and I just – I – I – two hours later I was writing a letter back home. And I w – also got seasick.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: I got seasick very fast (laughs). I was already writing—

LEVINE: Who were you writing to?

JOA: To my aunt, and she would, you know, sh – it was really to everybody. They

could sh—

LEVINE: And what were your feelings, what were you saying to them? Do you remember?

JOA: Well, I – I was going to miss them, you know, and I was never s – remember everything, that I – probably I hoped to see them soon again (laughs).

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

JOA: And I have been home eight times since then, you know—

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: Over the years.

LEVINE: So did you stay seasick on the whole voyage?

JOA: No, I didn't, I got over it. Yeah.

LEVINE: And you mentioned the Oslofjord, and it was the maiden voyage—

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: It must've been a small ship.

JOA: No.

LEVINE: No, it was a big ship?

JOA: All of it – did I forget to bring my book – oh, my. I was going—

LEVINE: Well, look, we'll ask your son about getting copies—

JOA: [superposed] Oh, I was going to show—

LEVINE: Of these things and maybe we can get a picture of it.

JOA: I was going to show you my book.

LEVINE: Oh, don't worry. We'll – I'll get to see it. We'll get it.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: I'm sure your son can—

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Can do that. OK. Well, describe it then, just for now.

JOA: Well, it was – we – they had all k – all the things we wanted and more there. See that – they were first class and they were—

LEVINE: Second and third?

JOA: Yeah – yeah. And I came over on the third one, 'cause I was just a kid. I didn't need any—

LEVINE: Right.

JOA: I – a brand new boat, and – I mean, I didn't know the difference. All I know is that I through the – the ship had no region, you know, workers, you know, they

would be walking around and I over – all – always walking around and they – they, you know, I was all over the ship. ‘Cause I was only – oh, I wish I had brought my book. They all wrote such nice things when we parted, you know, when we said good-bye. They all said – they wished me luck, and they called me *lille stumpen* [ph]—that means “little one,” you know. And I wish I could’ve—I had laid it out to bring it to you, there was a place there, a picture of the boat—luxury liner.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: You know, it was a nice boat.

LEVINE: So there were mostly Norwegian boys who were working on the ship?

JOA: Oh, yes—the crew.

LEVINE: The crew.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And—

LEVINE: So you must’ve made a big hit with them.

JOA: Well, no, they said, “There’s that kid again” (laughs). I was always in [not understood]. On the deck, you know. They were worried about going overboard, I guess (laughs).

LEVINE: So, then, did anything happen on the voyage? Anything noteworthy?

JOA: Well, only that when we had the captain's dinner we were standing on the landing up here—all in our long gown, and g [not understood]—and all the sudden a wave come. Everybody was standing here, we were all washed over, you know, pushed over there. But – and it wasn't anything exciting, like – like one time it really was – the ship was between two waves and we [not understood], you know. But most things aren't any – really exciting (laughs).

LEVINE: Well, you were used to the water. Had you been around boats and—

JOA: [superposed] Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Around—

JOA: My aunt lived by a lake—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And I used to swim there – the length of the lake. In fact, we played relay, swimming across the lake. Yeah, we were always doing sport.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh.

JOA: But what else there were there? Movies, maybe.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, yeah. So do you remember when the ship came into the New York harbor?

JOA: Oh, yes, it was in the evening on the Sunday; and being that it was a Sunday they anchored out in the Narrows and that's when we all went up to the deck—everybody was in their robes watching New York, the lights on, it was this

beautiful sight.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And then, morn – next morning when we woke up, then we started and came to Ellis Island. And we all went off onto it and – and the big room where they had desks – desks – desks with people sitting behind, and we went to show our papers. And everything – I had everything in order, and so I went back and the ship and then we landed in I think it w – was fifty – fifty something that – where we landed, fiftieth—

LEVINE: In Manhattan or Brooklyn?

JOA: Brooklyn.

LEVINE: In Brooklyn.

JOA: And then I got all my things, on here, waiting for my mother—now I have to tell you about that. I was standing here waiting for my mother to come and get me— with my skis, ice skates, and my suitcase—and up comes this yellow cab with checkers on it, and I said, “Oh my gosh, where did she find that cab?” I said – then I found out later that that was what they had—the yellow cabs.

LEVINE: Checker cabs.

JOA: [superposed] Checker cabs (LEVINE laughs). I thought it was hideous, because in Norway our cabs were either navy or dark blue seven-seaters.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Remember the – you wouldn’t remember that – that the front seats – on the back

of the front seats they had this – that it could open up like this.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: You—

LEVINE: And they faced the back seat then. Uh-huh.

JOA: So, when I saw the cab I thought, “Oh, Mom. Where did you get that cab?” (both laugh) Then I realized they had them all over. Yeah.

LEVINE: [superposed] Uh-huh.

JOA: It was something.

LEVINE: So was the reunion – how long was it since you had seen your mother when you arrived here?

JOA: When I came over it was three years.

LEVINE: Oh, yeah.

JOA: N – no I saw her when she came back after three years, and then she went over and then I came over when I was eighteen.

LEVINE: Right.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Eighteen. And so were you happy to be here when you got here?

JOA: Oh, yes. I would've been kind of homesick, but I find friends right away.

LEVINE: I see.

JOA: My own age. And—

LEVINE: In Bay Ridge.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And do you remember any first impressions of this country—things that struck you as different and – I mean, everything was different, but—

JOA: Yeah. Well, I – I don't know how to explain any of it. It – everything was bigger, you know—Norway's kind of small—everything was – the food was different, you know, a lot of the food—Chinese restaurants. And I never forget my mother took me to – to the automat in – and I saw this person with this huge thing and I said – I said to my mother, "How can anybody eat something so big?" It was a watermelon (laughs). I never seen a watermelon.

LEVINE: And that was in the automat you saw it?

JOA: Yeah – yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: They had one down in New York (clears throat).

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: And – you know, there was a lot of new things that I—

LEVINE: And, I guess putting the nickel, or whatever in—

JOA: [superposed] Yes.

LEVINE: And getting your piece of pie—

JOA: [superposed] Yeah.

LEVINE: Must've been different. Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah. Oh, yes, it was lot of new – and also the movie ran all the time, instead of just five, seven, and nine, like in Norway. Five is for children, seven, and then nine for old – adults. There you can sit in a movie all day long (laughs).

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: There were a lot of things like that. When – I'm forgetting a lot of things.

LEVINE: Well, that's OK, whatever you remember is great. Now – so, in other words, (clears throat) you had finished with school?

JOA: [superposed] Yeah.

LEVINE: Did you ever go to school here.

JOA: No.

LEVINE: [superposed] No.

JOA: I just went through what we had to do for – but, like I said, we went to school

every Saturday through the years, too—we didn't – we didn't only go to five days.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: So – but my brother went on to school. Yeah – 'cause he went in with my father's business.

LEVINE: Now, did you – I mean, I suppose in those days women didn't expect to have a career—

JOA: [superposed] No, I – I don't think – some of them did, though, some of them did.

LEVINE: Some. But did you – did you – when you first got here, what did you do then?

JOA: Well, I would take in – the first thing I did was to help a new mother – she just had a baby—that was my first job, just from nine in the morning to twelve—to help her. And I got ten dollars a week. And then – that didn't last long, because after she had – after the birth and all – getting used to the baby, she said – took over. All I know is that when she had company, and she was slicing tomatoes, she said, "Please, Mary, slice my tomatoes before you leave," because she sliced 'em so (laughs).

LEVINE: She sliced them how?

JOA: [beeping] She said I sliced them just the right (clears throat) just – it's just (coughs) some silly thing that happens. But anyway, I – I only stayed with her for a few weeks (clears throat). And then – then I did the same for another f – family—they had two little girls, and the one was only five months when I started there, and the funny thing – I hadn't been there very long when sh – she – for Christmas they were going to Washington, and she – after just a couple of weeks, she asked me if I would have – keep her baby while they g – they had a

girl named Cressie [ph], she was three years old. They wanted to go to see her – the wife’s family in Washington, and so it – b – but that little baby took to me, so I used to sing – her name was Ronnie – Ronnie, and that song, “Oh, Ronnie, oh, Ronnie, [not understood].” So I used to sing to her, she took to me so much that she wanted me sometimes. So she said to me, “Mary, do you think you could look after Ronnie for the weekend when we go to FI – to—

LEVINE: Washington.

JOA: Washington. I said, “Sure.” My mother lived near by, you know, so I kept her and that made me feel good, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: That she trusted me with her. And I stayed with them for quite a while, and—

LEVINE: Now, meanwhile, you were just learning English as you went.

JOA: [superposed] Yeah, that’s what I was doing, is what.

LEVINE: [superposed] Uh-huh.

JOA: I took them to the park and things, you know. I stayed with them until – I think until I met my husband. I’m trying to think what else I did. I don’t – I – oh, I wanted to tell you. The first ten dollars I made, I went and bought a bouquet of flowers. ‘Cause I love flowers. Yeah. I couldn’t – when I walked home the last day, I – I went in and bought a bouquet of flowers (both laugh).

LEVINE: Aw. Did your mother appreciate that?

JOA: Oh, yeah – yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And when I learned how to – to drive a car—

LEVINE: Now, when was that? Were you married by then, or you weren't married yet?

JOA: [superposed] No, I wasn't married then. I wanted to learn how to drive a car, and – for ten dollars I got five lessons, I t – two dollars a lesson. I took five lessons and we didn't take them like they do here, they – the – they had them made up for, you know, where to drive. Right underneath the elevators, traffic on Eighteenth Avenue in Brooklyn, and then when the c – after I was done with the five lessons, I said, "I would like to take my license," and I could – I could b – bor – have the car for five dollars to try in this – for my license in the same one I had. And I passed after five li – lessons, and hardly speaking English, (laughs) I passed driving the car.

LEVINE: Well, I think that's unusual for a young woman—why did you want to drive?

JOA: Well, what happened is – my best friend of the group that I met when I came over, we wanted to go up to New England, so she knew somebody that sold the car for thirty-five dollars—an old Ford—and we bought it. And my mother and Marit, her name was, and we – my mother came along, we started out at eleven o'clock at night from Brooklyn, because we want to avoid the traffic in New York, over Brooklyn Bridge, up to I – I don't know if it wa-s Poughkeepsie, I know we came quite far in the first day—had a flat tire. Now, we spent thirty-five dollars for the car, we paid ten dollars for a tire (both laugh). And then we – finally we – oh, I have pictures of – of us, and I could've show you a lot of pictures. When we finally ended up in Brattleboro, and we got a cab, b – before then, the – Marit—my friend—was – we took – alternating driving, she drove up a hill, and the car wouldn't go. And I thought it needed water, so I ran down to a creek, filled it up

with water, come back, I caught up with them, that's how slow this car—

LEVINE: [superposed] That's how slow it was going.

JOA: And we got to – to then, driving through Hartf – Hartford—

LEVINE: Mhm.

JOA: It was raining like crazy – no, it was beautiful, and – and this is what I want to tell, was that the thing went—

LEVINE: [superposed] The windshield wiper?

JOA: The windshield wiper. I – I said to Marit – I hung out the – I'm going to stop them, you know. Well, they finally stopped, but that car was something else. We found out when we got to Br – Brattleboro that there was a—it was an old car—a thing that had shut – were feeding gas into it. So that's why the car was—

LEVINE: [superposed] Wasn't getting gas, uh-huh.

JOA: Acting all crazy. But it – I mean, it was a hilarious thing. But – and then we got to Brattleboro and we took a cabin, and my mother was with us, so she did the cooking and we did all the fun (laughs).

LEVINE: Did you go skiing and everything?

JOA: No, this was in the summer.

LEVINE: Oh, in the summer.

JOA: Yeah, this was in the summer.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: So—

LEVINE: So – just spell the name of your friend Marty.

JOA: M-A-R-I-T.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: Marit.

LEVINE: Marit. Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So – so it sounded like you – you – you weren't that shy, I mean, you certainly had a lot of—

JOA: [superposed] Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Guts, to do some of the things you did.

JOA: Yes – yes. Like, one time we went to a lake—Telemark, and the bunch of us, you know, the friends—skated, we all went through the ice (both laugh). Luckily we could swim. Yeah, I had a lot – had fun.

LEVINE: Yeah. So you stayed with this group, then—

JOA: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: And had—

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: It sounds like that made a big difference in your feeling at home here.

JOA: Oh, yes, that – I would've been very lonely and maybe want to go back, like, you know, all the other – and not speak English, but some of them – we all started learning.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

JOA: So. We – we were a group, you know, we all got together, and whenever we were in somebody's house, right away, they would play the accordion and play the guitar, and the – we would sing, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Had fun.

LEVINE: Now, did your mother learn English?

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: [superposed] What—

JOA: Broken, like me, broken English (laughs). Yeah, she did, yeah. She was here longer.

LEVINE: [superposed] Well, you certainly don't have broken English now.

JOA: Well—

LEVINE: [superposed] You mean then.

JOA: Well, everybody says I have an accent.

LEVINE: Well, they – you know, the rule of thumb is if you get here before you're eleven years old then you don't have one (both laugh). After that, you get one. All right, so, (clears throat) now, your mother's husband, was he also Norwegian?

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—

JOA: He – he came from Norway, more out in the country.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Hordaland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Well, when you look back on everything, do you think coming here had an impact on you, as far as your personality, the way you look at things?

JOA: I think, maybe it didn't, I don't know.

LEVINE: Did you change much after you got here, do you think? As far as your

temperament and your—

JOA: No, I – I think I was always – I always think of me as being backwards.

LEVINE: You think of you as being backwards?

JOA: [superposed] I'm afr – I'm afraid to – to – I think that sometimes I should defend myself more, like – like – I can't explain it. Like, if somebody does something and I think they are wrong, or – or they did wrong, I don't—

LEVINE: You don't speak out.

JOA: No.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: I think a lot of things – if I had – my life would've been different in a way, you know what I mean.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Like – try to hurt somebody's feelings. That's – that's – that's what it is.

LEVINE: You're afraid to hurt somebody's feelings.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, uh-huh. Uh-huh – uh-huh. Well, what makes you feel very satisfied, that you've done?

JOA: Well, I don't know. Produced three boys (laughs).

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And – and what are your son's names?

JOA: Hm?

LEVINE: What are your son's names?

JOA: Alex is a junior. He's Alexander Joseph Joa Junior. Then I have Tom – Thomas Arild, after my brother, and my youngest one is just plain Nils (both laugh). He's – see, my brother, he never gave his children second name. He – they all dogged on the Per or Carrid [ph]. So when I had Nils, he was the last one, I – I think that's kind of neat, so I didn't give him a – but I think he resented it (LEVINE laughs). A little bit, yeah.

LEVINE: Wow – wow. OK, so what gives you pleasure now, what gives you joy in a given day at this time?

JOA: Well, recently I have had a – my one granddaughter got married last June, and last Saturday a week – yeah, it was – yeah, a week Saturday, she was – had gradu – graduation.

LEVINE: [superposed] Woops. Wait a minute. I'm going to—

JOA: [superposed] Oh, this [not understood] fell off.

LEVINE: Yeah, it's OK. We'll just clip it back on.

JOA: We had a graduation, that was fun.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: But, you mean, as—

LEVINE: As—

JOA: I think – no – that I'm eighty, almost eighty-seven years old next m – August, and – and – playing cards. I don't play bingo because I have arthritis in my hands and I can't put [not understood] in. And – get together with friends, you know. I live in Luther Court, which is a place for the elderly.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: And is that pleasant?

JOA: Hm?

LEVINE: Is that pleasant?

JOA: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: And – and then – with my boy – children who come and visit me, I enjoy it.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: And they invite me, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah. How do you think of your Norwegian side and your American side? How do you put them together for yourself?

JOA: Well, [pause] you know I'm beginning to think sometimes, as far as my language, sometimes I have to think, "Is that Norwegian or is that American?" (laughs)

LEVINE: Oh, really? More lately, you mean?

JOA: Yeah, uh-huh.

LEVINE: Oh, that's interesting. When you dream, do you ever dream in Norwegian?

JOA: I don't dream very much. Like, I guess everybody says a prayer at night—you know, like the Lord's Prayer—sometimes I will say one, sometimes I say the English, something Norwegian, and then I wonder, am I st – am I saying Norwegian, am I saying English, do I mix the two together? (laughs) Yeah, that's – I have problem with that. That – I automatically go into one or the other.

LEVINE: I see. So, when you came to Pittsburgh, that must've been a big difference from Hempstead and from Brooklyn.

JOA: Yes. I though the p – people in Pittsburgh was very nice, and – yeah. I think up in New York and like, Long – you know, they're – they're, you know, more—

LEVINE: They're more abrupt, they're going at a faster rate—

JOA: [superposed] Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, was Pittsburgh a sooty, dirty city when you came here?

JOA: No, I heard about it. I heard about the men taking extra white shirts to work because they were so much soot. No, it wasn't like that, no. They told me about it.

LEVINE: Mhm.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: So you – why was it you came to Pittsburgh?

JOA: Because my husband was sent there by his company that he worked for.

LEVINE: Oh, I see.

JOA: Yeah, that's why we came to Pittsburgh.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: And we made friends here, you know.

LEVINE: Did you encounter other people from Norway here in Pittsburgh?

JOA: No – no. There was some that they told me about, I think that I can detect, you know, the names and they told me that they were from Nor – Norway, but I never g – got to meet them. No. But I had relatives in Ch – Chicago.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: My moth – my broth – my father’s oldest sister, they happened to be born on the same day but she was the oldest and he was – both my grandparents had eight children. They had four boys and four girls, and my mother and father were the sixth on each side.

LEVINE: Wow.

JOA: (laughs) So she was the eldest and sh – she lived in Pittsburgh – in Chicago.

LEVINE: [superposed] In Chicago.

JOA: And two – two of his brothers lived in Chicago.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: Before I came here.

LEVINE: And did you keep up contact with your father once you came to this country?

JOA: Yeah, I kept writing to him, and he wrote to me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah. My father had arthritis so bad. He died at fifty-three.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: Yeah. He – he died of pneumonia—it wasn't the arthritis, it could be because he was bedridden, and it, you know – but he – he was a smart man. I mean, not much education, but he ran his business, he – he paid out money here, he took it in here (laughs).

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: Somebody described that to me, that that's what – because he was doing his business from his bed.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: He was very smart.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

JOA: He started all those warehouses and he – from the time he was in his late teens, he had to do with cars. He used to dr – drive the—what do they call it, the stuff for the theatre, pro – what they use—

LEVINE: [superposed] Props?

JOA: Yeah, all the things that they use in the theatre, you know, when they have sh—

LEVINE: Shows, uh-huh.

JOA: Yeah. When he was, like, nineteen he – he was in the [not understood] to drive cars, you know, cars. He was always working, he was – he ended up – yeah – doing well.

LEVINE: Good – good. OK, well, we're – we've been talking for an hour now, is there anything you'd like to say before we close?

JOA: Well, [pause] I – I guess I came through it all. I mean, I had my – we – I had some ups and downs, you know, with the divorce, you know was probably the beginning of all the – it's too bad, you know, I wish they had stayed together. But maybe, you know – because there was always somebody there you were missing. When my mother was over we were – my brother was – he was even more—

LEVINE: Effected?

JOA: Yeah, they – yeah. And – and – and then when I came here I was missing my aunts and my people. S – so that – if you had had us in a solid, you know, life with two parents, it's always somebody missing, you know.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: So, you – yeah. And sometimes the memories comes back, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, I guess it takes a toll on a little girl.

JOA: Yeah. And then my husband passed away—he was eighty-eight.

LEVINE: Oh.

JOA: He – two – two – two and a half years. No, one and a half. Forty-five. October forty-five, yeah. That makes it a year and a half, right?

LEVINE: Uh—

JOA: Two years coming up, yeah. It will be two years in October.

LEVINE: October 2005?

JOA: No, that's when he – that's – that's – yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Uh-huh. Right.

JOA: Yeah, so, 2007.

LEVINE: Yeah.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, well, that's hard, too.

JOA: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, you did come through it all, and—

JOA: Yeah, that's probably the best thing. And I guess I'll put this – I – my – I want to frame this thing here.

LEVINE: Yeah. Well, let me close off here—

JOA: [superposed] Oh.

LEVINE: And this is Janet Levine, I'm been speaking with Mary Krone Jensen Joa. And she came from Norway a—

END OF INTERVIEW