

EI-267

KNUD KRETZMER LARSEN

BIRTH DATE: AUGUST 27, 1899

INTERVIEW DATE: 3/28, 29/1993

RUNNING TIME: 2:02:33

INTERVIEWER: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR.

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TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 8/1994

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: PAUL E. SIGRIST, JR., 10/1994

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ORAL HISTORIAN'S NOTE: Mr. Larsen is the husband of Celina Larsen, Interview EI-270. She was present during this interview and Mr. Larsen occasionally addresses her. Paul E. Sigrist, Jr., Director of Oral History, /1994.

SIGRIST: Good morning. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Sunday, March 28, 1993. I'm in Newington, Connecticut with Knud Larsen, who came from Denmark in 1923 when he was twenty-four years old. Mr. Larsen, good morning.

LARSEN: Good morning, Paul.

SIGRIST: May we begin by you telling me your birth date, please.

LARSEN: My birth date is August 27. And, of course, whatever

years that I have left, it comes every year.

And . . .

SIGRIST: Do you know what date, what year specifically?

LARSEN: That I came?

SIGRIST: That you were born?

LARSEN: In, uh, I'm a year older than the year. So I was born in '99.

SIGRIST: 1899.

LARSEN: 1899.

SIGRIST: So that's August 27, 1899.

LARSEN: August, yeah.

SIGRIST: And where were you born, sir?

LARSEN: In Copenhagen.

SIGRIST: Were you born at home or in a hospital?

LARSEN: No, at home.

SIGRIST: Are there any stories that you were told later about your birth?

LARSEN: No, no. No, we never went, we never went into detail on those things.

SIGRIST: Did you live in Copenhagen until you came to America?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe a little bit for me what Copenhagen was like in those years?

LARSEN: Well, it was, and it still is, I believe is a pretty good-sized city. See, the Copenhagen, or you may say Denmark. At that time, there was only about four million people in the, that belonged to the Danes. And even at that time there was over a million living in Copenhagen. So that's a fourth, twenty-five percent of the people in the country living in one city. So you can deduct for yourself how congested it was at that time with transportation, with buying things. And with anything that was going on it was always congested, because people moved into the city, and there wasn't room for them. But they had to live with whatever that was left for them.

SIGRIST: As a little boy in Copenhagen, what do you remember of the city?

LARSEN: (he laughs) There wasn't much to remember. We were, we were very poor because we had a bad, bad things happening to us. I was not quite four and my father died. And, so my mother, she told me she had to go to work, and there was no work, there wasn't too much work for lonely ladies. And there was no help like they have today. They have, they can get help from, from the government, or from the city, or from the town where you live, you have. But at that time there was no, if you want to get help with your children, we were two, my sister and I. She was about seven years older than I was. And the only thing that you could get as far as help was concerned was that they would take your children away from you, and my mother didn't want that. So it was, it was tough.

SIGRIST: What work, did your mother get work?

LARSEN: Oh, she got, she was sewing on a sewing machine. And she was sewing ladies' underwear. And, like everything else, things were pretty expensive. And, as I say, there was no help, and so it was pretty tough.

SIGRIST: What was your dad's name?

LARSEN: My . . .

SIGRIST: Your father's name?

LARSEN: My father's name? Well, his name was William, William, but what else his name is, I don't remember.

SIGRIST: What did your father die of?

LARSEN: He died of, uh, he was, let me tell you what he was first. He was working for one of the big places in Copenhagen, which was furriers. And his job was to go to either Sweden, Norway or Finland and buy up fur from the different places. And he had to do that because in the wintertime was the time that they were buying fur. And, you know, produce the fur. And he had to, he was a big man, and supposedly a rough man, because he was very husky and supposedly quite a man. And he was taken to trips quite often, and for some reason or other he caught pneumonia. And before he realized it, he had double pneumonia, and that was enough to, he couldn't take it no matter how husky he was, he still got it. And that was the ending of the Larsens. I was four, my sister was seven, she must have been eleven, so.

SIGRIST: Do you have any recollections of your father's death

at all, yourself?

LARSEN: No. Only one time I remember we, my mother and myself, we were up. He lived, at that time he worked on the top floor for some reason, that they have to have either furs there or whatever there was to work and to skin. And that's what we, my mother and I, that was the only thing that I remember, that we went up and see what he was doing up there. Well, of course, I was not quite four, so it didn't mean anything to me. But my mother told me about it, and that was the only time that I remember that we went up on the stairway, up on the top floor, and no more.

SIGRIST: What was your mother's name?

LARSEN: Uh, Christina.

SIGRIST: And what was her maiden name?

LARSEN: Gee, I don't remember. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me a little bit about what your mother's personality was like?

LARSEN: Well, very quiet, and she was easy to, easy to get along with as long as you would do what she wanted you to do. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: What was your sister's name?

LARSEN: Uh, Katie.

SIGRIST: And she . . .

LARSEN: And her middle name was Lurecky. You didn't hear that before, did you?

SIGRIST: Can you spell that, please?

LARSEN: As far as I know it starts with L, Lu. L-U-R-E-C-K-Y, Lurecky, and . . .

SIGRIST: Do you have a middle name?

LARSEN: Yeah. My middle name is Kretzmer.

SIGRIST: Could you spell that, please?

LARSEN: Yeah. My, see, that's why I have, why I have K-K. And K is the, Kretzmer is the middle name. And I, I really have to see how to spell it.

SIGRIST: Mr. Larsen is looking at his wallet right now.
(there is a long pause) Oh, we can always go back to that later. We'll do it after we're finished.

LARSEN: Oh, it's here.

SIGRIST: Did you find it? Okay. Can you just spell that for me, please?

LARSEN: Yeah. K-R-E-T-Z-M-E-R. Kretzmer. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you say your full name for us on tape?

LARSEN: Knud Kretzmer Larsen. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Thank you, great. Mr. Larsen, let me ask you about the house that you lived in. Can you describe where you lived with your mother and your sister in Copenhagen?

LARSEN: Like in Copenhagen?

SIGRIST: Yes, when you were a child.

LARSEN: Well, I know that we must have been living, yeah, we were up on the top floor, which means about seven or eight (?). And it happened so that I went there one time and there was, there was a theater right across the street from where the house was, where I was supposed to have been born in. And that was in a section of what they called Naarebrog. I think my wife and I, we went and saw that street, but . . .

SIGRIST: Can you spell the name of the street that you just

mentioned?

LARSEN: Well, it was N-A-A-R-E-B-R-O-G, Naarebrog. That was, yeah, that was just about, (to his wife) you don't remember that Mamas. Yeah.

SIGRIST: Can you describe the inside of the apartment or wherever it was that you lived when you were a child.

LARSEN: No. I don't remember. I don't remember what it looked like.

SIGRIST: Did you move several times?

LARSEN: Yeah, we moved quite a few times, because we had the, after my father died it was I guess fairly low on the income. And, so I remember we had to move in with my mother's mother, my grandmother. And, like people do when they're short on cash, so they can get something to eat every day. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: What do you remember about your grandmother? What was your grandmother like?

LARSEN: Oh, I don't remember too much. But it seemed to me what I do remember, that she was always complaining about either one thing or another. I remember one particular thing, and for a long time I couldn't

forget that she was telling my mother that it happened so at this particular day somebody broke one of the dishes, and my grandmother, she told my mother that I was the one that dropped it, and I wasn't.

(he laughs) Because I had to, I remember my mother saying, "Oh, that's all right. Just forget about it."

You know. But I couldn't understand why my grandmother would tell me, tell my mother that I was the one because I didn't do it. So I felt kind of bad. But otherwise that's just about the only thing that I remember about my grandmother.

SIGRIST: Was there a grandfather too, or just your grandmother?

LARSEN: No, just my grandmother, yeah.

SIGRIST: How long did you live with your grandmother?

LARSEN: (he pauses) We lived, we must have been living together for about maybe a year or maybe two years, but, as you know, in Denmark they have a, they have an old age, what you, uh, what we're trying to get over here now.

SIGRIST: Like a health care plan of some sort?

LARSEN: A health care plan, and also convalescent home and

that's all, when you get to be old enough that you're entitled to go to those places. It's paid by the government, And it was paid by the government at that time. And my grandmother, she got to be old enough, and later on in my days I understood that she must have had something wrong that she forgot things or she couldn't just take care of herself. So after a couple of years she went into this convalescent home and that's where she died.

SIGRIST: Did you stay in her house when she was put into the home?

LARSEN: No. She was living with my mother and I, so there was, she just went into the home, and that was the ending of, then there was no more about that.

SIGRIST: Things are obviously very hard for your mother at this time.

LARSEN: It was hard, yeah.

SIGRIST: What did you do for fun when you were a kid, then? How did you all entertain yourselves?

LARSEN: (he pauses) Not too much. We were, as kids we were playing on the streets, or we were playing, there was

a park not too far from our place that was next to the cemetery. The part of the cemetery they took it and they made a park for the neighborhood's youngsters there, and we played there. They had a nice park, and once in a great while you would, (he laughs) you would get a dime, for instance, over the weekend, you would get a dime, and you could go and see a movie picture. That was, they started, that was the beginning of the movies. And that's just about all you could do. You played with the kids, and we played, we called it long ball, but it was baseball. And that's just about all that the kids were doing was go to school and then play ball after.

SIGRIST: How old were you when you started school?

LARSEN: I think I was about six.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about what school was like.

LARSEN: No, maybe I was, maybe seven, yeah. Well, we were there. We had two sessions. There was one in the morning, because there were so many kids in the neighborhood, so they had to put in two sessions. One in the morning from seven o'clock up to noon, and then one in the afternoon, because there wasn't, there

wasn't room enough to have it all at one time. So we had to have twice a day. And you don't know any different, so that's what you do.

SIGRIST: What was your favorite subject as a kid in school?

LARSEN: Well, what I liked the best, and that was, they had a, if you wanted, you could choose your pickings. And I liked to go and use my hands. I made a lot of things out of wood with the, they furnished that from the school. I would make boxes and lamps and all little things, you know. And that's what I, that was my favorite subject.

SIGRIST: Could your mother read and write?

LARSEN: Oh, yes, yeah. Yeah. I even have some letters, I have them downstairs, from her times. And, but it got to be, in later years, you know, she got a little shaky on her hands. But I could read it all the time.

SIGRIST: Did she encourage her children to get an education?

LARSEN: Well, not too much, not too much as far as education was concerned. But there was always, there was always one thing that you had to choose, and that was to take, take something, like either you could be a mason

or you could be a cabinet maker. You could be a carpenter, electrician, and so on. And that's, that's all what she, she did that to my sister. My sister became a nurse, and the thing was with me, and I didn't take any of the, of the things that there was really what I should have been. I should have been a mason or an electrician or something in that line, but she got a job for me as a gardener and, which was all right. But when I came to this country, you know, a nursery, they don't believe much in that, and especially at that time. So, uh . . .

LARSEN: How old were you when you got a job as a gardener?

SIGRIST: Fourteen.

LARSEN: Now, were you expected to contribute your earnings to the household?

SIGRIST: I had to, yeah. That was, that was one of the reasons that I became a gardener, because gardener was the only ones that would pay you the first year. Any of the other, as I say, they wouldn't get paid for the first year of a tradesman but the gardener would. So I made two crowns a week, so it wasn't such a big deal. But it was a help to the household. So that's

where I was.

SIGRIST: And, of course, your sister's just that much older, and I assume she's contributing also as a nurse?

LARSEN: No. See, at that time, when the, when you, when you took up nursing, you had to live in the hospital. And living in the hospital there was no earning, because room and board took up the earning. Later years she became a nurse and she could work as a nurse. Then she made money, and then she would help with the, with the household. Oh, everybody has to help themselves, or help in with the family, otherwise it's not. See, we were always short on money.

SIGRIST: Well, and your mother is still working, I assume, even after you have gone off to work.

LARSEN: Oh, yes, yeah. Well, she worked, but she came over here one time about five years after, that I came to the United States. She came over for a trip, and she stayed with, that was before we were married. And she stayed with me for almost a year, then she went back again. And when she did go back, then she was old enough to go on the convalescent home for the, for the elderly. So that's where she ended up.

SIGRIST: When you were a young man in Denmark, what did you know about America?

LARSEN: Not so very much. We knew about the, what got me interested in it was the motorcycles and cars, and that's what really got me going on coming to United States. And I guess there was enough to do that, because to have a, either a motorcycle or a car, at least at that time it was almost impossible. You had to be very well, well-off in Denmark, and I think it was the same in most of Europe. You didn't have very many private cars or private, well, motorcycles there was. So that was one of the reasons.

SIGRIST: Did you have friends that were in America, or family?

LARSEN: No. Well, I had a friend and his cousin had, he went to the United States. And he was home on a trip, or he was back to Denmark on a trip, and he was going to, within a couple of months or so, he was going to go back to United States. And that's how I signed up with him, and we both went.

SIGRIST: How did your mother feel about you leaving?

LARSEN: Well, she didn't like it too much, because it was, you

know, another helper that had to leave. But she accepted it. And I told her that just as soon as I could get a job, and earn some money, and I would send her some helping. So I did that. I sent her ten dollars a month, and that was a help. So . . .

SIGRIST: So it worked out all right for her even though you were leaving.

LARSEN: It worked out for her, yeah. It worked.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: Before we get you out of Denmark, I also want to ask you about what you remember about World War One. What was going on in Denmark?

LARSEN: I worked in a little factory. They were, it was a factory that was resilvering, like cups and saucers and all sorts of things. And I worked there in the afternoon as an errand boy. And one day there was such a commotion in this little shop outside and inside and so on, and they were telling me that the war had just started, and that was World War One. And, of course, that's, I didn't know anything about it, you know the, a kid, they don't even know what a

war meant except that there was some, after maybe a week or two there were some soldiers that were, because we were living at that time close to one of the places where the, where they were introducing the soldiers. And I never, I never knew about it, and that's how I found out about it, that there was a war going on. But otherwise I didn't know too much about that, the First World War.

SIGRIST: Was your family affected at all directly, perhaps food rationing or something along those lines?

LARSEN: No. No, it was, there was only my sister and myself and my mother. And there wasn't, they didn't have to, if we had any boys or men, then they would have probably been attacked, but this way they were, we didn't feel that there was a war going on except after maybe a few months, maybe a year, I don't remember what month we started in, and it was hard to get the different things, and you had to have, you had to have cards, food stamps. Otherwise you, and we were always short. Because my sister was grown, I was grown, and my mother was grown, and we got each one a card. So we were always short because they were always short. Whether it was a baby in the family or there was a

full-grown person, that was one card for each, and that was, made you short.

SIGRIST: So the war just added to your hardship.

LARSEN: Yeah, it added, yeah.

SIGRIST: In a way, it made things even worse.

LARSEN: It added to, more so, yeah.

SIGRIST: Well, let's get you to America.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: This friend of your cousin's convinces you to come with him.

LARSEN: Yeah. He convinced me.

SIGRIST: What was he doing in America?

LARSEN: Well, he was just home on a trip, and what he had done, I don't really know. But he had been, he had been in California, and he met a girl who, yeah. That girl really came from Hartford. She was on a trip to the different lodges, the Danish lodges in United States, and she had gone to this place in California where my friend was. And they were talking, and this

lady, she said, "If you ever get out East, to come to Hartford and see them." And that's where we were heading for. Because she gave him permission to use their address, and they lived in Hartford, Broadview Terrace. And that's where we, because at that time you had to have, and I think it's the same now, you have to have an address to go to. You can't just say you'd like to go to United States. You have to have a particular one. Isn't that the way it is? Yeah. And, so that's how, how he came to Hartford and I came with him.

SIGRIST: I see. So when you left Copenhagen, that was your ultimate destination, was to go to Hartford . . .

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: To this girl's address.

LARSEN: Oh, yeah, yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember what you took with you when you left Copenhagen?

LARSEN: No. I didn't take too much because I just took charge of underwear and maybe, maybe, I had two suits. I took them with me, and that's just about all.

SIGRIST: Did your mother and your sister maybe have a little celebration before you left, or something like that?

LARSEN: Well, yeah. The night before we had a few friends up for coffee and so on. And, but otherwise there wasn't, because when I was leaving, it was really with the understanding that I was going to come back within three years, just see what it looked like to be in United States. And so it was a fairly short trip that I was supposed to make it. Of course, it changed, you know, after you get here. But just to celebrate that I was leaving Denmark, that was just a nice little goodbye. But otherwise there was nothing.

SIGRIST: What were you hoping to find in America?

LARSEN: I had no idea. I had been, you know, before, before this trip to United States, I had been in Norway, and I had been in Sweden. I had been in England, and I had been in Finland. I never went to Russia. That was my next step. But then I met this friend of my friend, and we came to United States. Otherwise I would have probably gone to Russia.

SIGRIST: Why did you travel around like that? What occasions did you have to go to England?

LARSEN: I only traveled because I met some of the fellows. They came to Copenhagen one time from Finland, and another from Norway. And they invited me to come to see their home. We had them come into our home in Copenhagen because my mother was very, very well friendly, and I suppose she figured that it was nice if I ever got to some of the other countries, I would have somebody to go to.

SIGRIST: Would you say that as a young man you were a bit of an adventurer?

LARSEN: Did I what?

SIGRIST: Would you say that as a young man you were a bit of an adventurer, you liked to . . .

LARSEN: Yeah, I liked that, yeah. Whenever I had a chance to go to the different places, I would. Yeah. I went all over, all over Denmark. But you didn't count that for anything adventure, because it was all the same whether you were in Copenhagen or you were in all sort of different cities in Copenhagen or, I mean, in Denmark. It was more or less the same. But I would like to find out how they were living in the different countries. And, there again, there wasn't an awful

lot of difference.

SIGRIST: Norway is like Denmark is like Finland.

LARSEN: Sure, the same, about the same, yeah.

SIGRIST: And America's got to be different.

LARSEN: Yeah, oh, yeah. And it was different.

SIGRIST: Did you leave from Copenhagen?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the boat?

LARSEN: We had to go to England because at that time the Danish boat wasn't running. I don't know why, but they had, they had a Danish boat that went to the United States. But I think if I'm not mistaken that that was later years. But at that time when we went we had to go to England and take off from there. So I was with, but now I don't, I don't remember the name of the, of the boat. But it was British, a British boat.

SIGRIST: How did you get from Copenhagen to England?

LARSEN: With the ferry. They had a ferry going from, well,

that was on the other side of Denmark. They called it Esbjerg. And that goes, that goes to, what's the, the southern part of England, not London or so. We were in London because we, we were with the trip. That was included, and we could stay three days in England. So we, with the understanding, they took us to London. So we were three days in London, and we had to go back to Liverpool. That's what it is, I couldn't remember. Liverpool, and that's where we took off from, for United States.

SIGRIST: Can you describe on the boat what your accommodations were like, where you slept?

LARSEN: In London I remember we had to walk up on the top floor, and I don't know if it was a hotel or what it was, but they gave us something to eat and a place to sleep. And that's, that's all. Because for the three days we were in England we were out to see England and see London, and so I didn't care where we were sleeping. (he laughs) They fed us, and they took us to different places. They were, that was included in the price.

SIGRIST: Now, when you got to Liverpool, did you have to stay overnight in Liverpool?

LARSEN: Yeah. We had to stay overnight in Liverpool before, the next day they took us to London, but you had to stay overnight, because that was already getting dark and different language. I don't know what they were, they were talking about at that time.

SIGRIST: Can you describe on the ship where you slept?

LARSEN: Oh, well, we had the, at that time you had three, you had three different prices on the steamer. There was first class and there was second class, and then there was third class. And the third class, that was the cheapest. You couldn't get up on the upper decks and so on. Second class, that's the one that I came over with. You were allowed to, but just certain places. And then, of course, first class, my wife, she come over the first class. They could go all over, but we couldn't. But otherwise we, we got good food and we had a nice, a nice place to sleep, so . . .

SIGRIST: Can you describe that for me, where you slept? Can you describe what your room was like?

LARSEN: Oh, yeah. We had, one of them two or three decker. Yeah, we had it, it wasn't exactly like a living room or so. It was, I think there was two. I had the

upper deck in my sleeping quarters and, but I know the third class, that was, they couldn't even get up on the deck. And they had to be in the, in the lowest, whatever they called it. I don't know. And that was the cheapest of any of them. They were very limited with the third class. But it was always, it was always taken up because people didn't have the money. And . . .

SIGRIST: How long did the trip last?

LARSEN: How long?

SIGRIST: How long.

LARSEN: A little over six days, yeah.

SIGRIST: And do you remember coming into New York Harbor?

LARSEN: Yeah, oh, yes, yeah. We come in, we were, we had to get up. They called us up early that morning because we want to see the Statue of Liberty. And, so they told us to get up early in the morning so we could be ready to see the Statue. And, so we got in and then they docked. They docked the steamer, and it took quite a while. We had, we had breakfast, and I think we had lunch because for some reason or other we

couldn't go to Ellis Island. There were probably somebody else there, I don't know, because there was a lot of people when we got over there. And there was also, there were also a lot of people that came to the boat, and they must have taken the first class and second class of the, no, we were on the second class.

They didn't take us because we had to go to Ellis Island. But the, there was, for some reason or another they weren't ready for us on Ellis Island because I don't know how many there were, but there was quite a few that had to go there. And, then you had to go to Ellis Island. Then you had to come back again to New York, and from there they took us, like we were going to the railroad, to go to Hartford.

SIGRIST: Tell me what happened at Ellis Island. What did they do to you or with you at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: They inspected. We got over to Ellis Island and I stuck to the fellow because he, the one that I was coming with, he spoke quite a bit of English, so he knew what was going on. But, so I was just sticking to him and whatever he was doing, I would do the same thing. And it must have been hard because I know there was quite a few there that couldn't understand

anything, which I couldn't either, but by having him I got along all right. And, so there was, quite often there was a mixup. They were doing things that they shouldn't do and, but I know that at last him and I, we came and, with the rest of that bunch that I was in. Oh, we must have been fifty, sixty people. We were all stripped and we had to go to the different, different places where the doctors were, and later on we went with, where the, where they have our paper. And they give us the entrance paper, and as long as you can talk and you can understand it's pretty, but it must be pretty hard when you can't understand at all because there was no time to waste on explaining things, so some of them did. They were a little rough at times, you know, but they couldn't help it. They had to. Because, like I say, there were so many people that went through there in a day as, it's unbelievable.

SIGRIST: Let me ask you, how long were you at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: At Ellis Island? I want to say that we must have been there about four or five hours, yeah, something in that line. Because, yeah, just about four to five hours.

SIGRIST: So when you were done at Ellis Island you went back to New York City.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then from New York you came up to Hartford?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: In our last five minutes, we have five minutes left, kind of tell me what happened. Tell me about those first, that first year in America, or what it was like getting adjusted to the country.

LARSEN: Well, it was, it was really, it's hard to explain because there was so much, there was so much new things going on that you, you wondered if you were doing the right thing or not.

SIGRIST: What were some of these new things, specifically? What were you seeing that you had never seen before?

LARSEN: There was nothing as far as seeing things or so on, because we had that in Denmark and Copenhagen. There was everything. But it was only with the language, what they were talking about, what they were saying. You were deaf and dumb. And that's just about all.

We got to, we got to, there was somebody in, when we got from Ellis Island to, we got to New York, there was somebody there to accept us, so they could get us on the right train to Hartford. That was already arranged. But when we got to Hartford there was nobody to accept us there because we were in Hartford and you were on your own. So I suppose by us having this address for the Danish family that we went to, that this you'd probably went there and they accepted us. But they didn't even know we were coming, because this fellow that I went with, he didn't say anything to the people to, that we were coming. He had permission to go and use their address, and that's all there was to it. So we were, so what he was heading for was the church, the Danish church in Hartford. And there, from there on, when we got to Hartford we just found the church, and from there on they were helping us to find a place to stay because it had already, it was getting dark so, and this here was in, I came in September, the ninth. And it was getting dark so, you know, September is already, must have been nine o'clock or so. And come to people, you don't come to people at that time unless they know you're coming, and they didn't. So we found, we asked

the church what they knew any place that we could stay overnight, otherwise I don't know what we were, but there was a lady that had a boarding house, so she took us in. And from there on I've been going all over. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Mr. Larsen, let me just ask you very quickly, was coming to America the right thing for you to do? Are you glad that you decided to come to this country?

LARSEN: Well, yes, I, you know, to come to a country, you can't speak the language, you don't know the ways of doing things, and accept, you feel, I know it went through my mind, but what would you do. It could be that you weren't made for a change. And, so there's so many things that goes through your mind and goes through your head. Are you doing the right things? And, so you find out that you, you really can't answer that question. You can only hope that you find out.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist. We are now beginning Tape Two with Knud Larsen. Mr. Larsen, I want to backtrack a little bit and ask you a few questions about things

that we sort of skipped over the first time through.

LARSEN: Yeah, okay.

SIGRIST: What is, when your father died and your mother took in, began to sew, and things got hard for your family.

When you and your sister were small, when you were children, how did you help out so that things wouldn't be so hard?

LARSEN: Well, I got a job. I was six years old. And that's when I, I must have been just about six. I was delivering bread every morning to certain sections. There was a fellow that had a, well, a bakery, you may call it. He bought his bread in the bakery, and then he took it in. He had a little, a little store, and he made that over to, well, just a sale place for bread. And then he promised the customers that he would get fresh bread to them every morning at around five o'clock no matter where they were, and that's where I come in. (he laughs) Because I was the one that had to run to all the different places that the different one was living. And you have never been there but, you know, in the old Copenhagen the building's about eight or nine stories high. (a bell rings)

SIGRIST: We're going to pause this interview just for a moment.

(break in tape) Okay. We're now resuming with Knud Larsen. Mr. Larsen, you were telling us about being six years old and delivering bread.

SIGRIST: Yeah, I was delivering bread. This here was, they had a closed-in little wagon on two wheels, and he was pulling that from place to place with all the bread in it. And I was the one that was running up and down the steps, you know. So I had, I had to be there at five o'clock in the morning till about seven. And then, for two hours, and then I had to go to school, because we started, as I said, I think I told you yesterday, we had two sessions, one in the morning, one in the afternoon, because there were so many kids, and there wasn't a school enough. So that's how it happened. That's why I, and over there, especially in the wintertime, at five o'clock in the morning everything is pitch dark. And for, I had wooden shoes. (he laughs) Wooden shoes on, and there was no carpet on the steps, you know. (he laughs) So the people, they were complaining that I made too much noise, (he laughs) running up and down. But I have a, well, they told me to take this, the wooden shoes

off, but where would I be with stocking, you know.

So . . .

SIGRIST: Were the loaves of bread big loaves of bread?

LARSEN: Different types of bread, yeah. Big loaf and small loaf and rolls. Most of them, they had what we used here a (?) box, because they were all warm when we got them, and they were practically warm before I could bring them to the different places. But it took me a couple of hours to go around. And from there I had to go to school.

SIGRIST: Did you sister get some kind of a job too, when she was young?

LARSEN: Yeah. She got a job when, there was a soap factory not too far from where we were living, and she wasn't supposed to, at that time I was six, so she must have been, she was seven years, seven years older than me. So she must have been about thirteen, twelve, thirteen, and she got a job. But the, they were not supposed to work in a factory, but she was a big girl, so she could sneak by. So she worked there into, and then she got the training for nurses as she did in later years. But the first few years she would, in a

factory, in the soap factory.

SIGRIST: Did she not go to school?

LARSEN: Yes, she went to school, yeah. But that was the same.

She went in the afternoon because she could work in a factory either in the morning or in the afternoon.

Well, she choose to work in the afternoon so she could go to school in the morning. At least at that time, as far as I remember. But I don't, I don't recall exactly the, what the time was or the limit of the years and so on. Because I had my trouble getting up in the morning, (he laughs) and getting around. And you had to. There was no two ways about it.

SIGRIST: Did your mother, you said your mother was sewing ladies underwear. Was she doing that in a factory somewhere, or was she doing piecework at home?

LARSEN: No. She was doing it first in one of the big stores in Copenhagen that was made for brides, different things, you know. Either dresses or underwear or whatever there was, that's the whole, the store was just made for that. And then she worked, because I remember her coming back with big packages where she had to sew it at home because they either had to be

finished or she probably wanted to make some more money. Because there was no help, as I told you, from the government, and my sister was a big girl, I was a big boy, and we had to eat and we had to have clothes and so on. So the money was pretty well tied up.

SIGRIST: How do you think your mother felt about having to send such young children to work?

LARSEN: That was just part of the game. Because if it was just us, but it was the same for everybody. There was no two ways about it, except if you were, got into the people that had good jobs and had good, was well-off, as you may call it. Otherwise, in our section they all went to work in the morning, and they all come back in the afternoon or, like I did, at noon, and then went to school. But there was no different. It was more like unusual if you didn't go to work. Either one, with one thing or another. So . . .

SIGRIST: So lots of young children had jobs.

LARSEN: They had jobs, they all had jobs. Either, they were doing one thing or another. It was, you couldn't get away with it. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: You mentioned that you wore wooden shoes.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Do you remember any of your other clothing, what kinds of clothing you wore as a child in Denmark?

LARSEN: No, just a pair of pants and a shirt, and stockings, if you were lucky. It wasn't always that you could afford the stockings. So myself and a lot of others, they would just use the wooden shoes and that's it.

SIGRIST: Where did you get the wooden shoes?

LARSEN: Like anybody buys a pair of shoes here. They were wooden shoes there. And if you, if you were lucky and could afford it they had, on the wooden shoes they had the top of it was all leather, so they were a little nicer and a little easier to use. You wouldn't get so many bunions out of them, because otherwise you would when you had to buy the ones that was completely made of wood, you got sore feet or so. But you get used to that. (to his wife) Didn't you, too, Mamas?
(he laughs)

SIGRIST: Did you have to wear them all year around, or did you have different shoes for the summer?

LARSEN: No, we had a pair of regular shoes, but after a few

years they got to be too small for you. So you were better off by using the wooden, because they were more or less fitteel to your foot. Where the good pair, they got to be so old that you, you grew out of them.

And, well, you used them anyway, but then you got corns and different things worn on your feet, so you've give it up.

SIGRIST: Did adults wear wooden shoes, or just the children?

LARSEN: No, it was mostly, mostly, the workmen that worked in the ground, they would use wooden shoes. But otherwise, like the women, they used mainly leather shoes.

SIGRIST: When you worked as a gardener a little later on, did you wear wooden shoes?

LARSEN: Oh, it was all wooden shoes, yeah. When I got to be fourteen, I started in the nursery. That was all, that was, I had to have a bicycle and a little trip about five miles, and that was Danish miles. They were a little bigger than the American mile. So it took me, it took me about three quarters of an hour to get there on a bicycle.

SIGRIST: How did you get the bicycle?

LARSEN: I, I got, my mother, she paid for it. She saved up for it and, because whatever money I made, either with the bakery or later I delivered a lot of other things. But she saved up the money, so I could get a bicycle and go to this particular nursery, which was about five miles outside of Copenhagen.

SIGRIST: Was that exciting for you, to get a bicycle? Was that an exciting thing, to get a bicycle? Did a lot of people have bicycles?

LARSEN: Well, there was a lot of people that had bicycles, but in my condition it was, it was a very big thing because I never had any, I could, I borrowed bicycles from my friends or whoever lived close to me. They let me use it. I used to, there was a tall man, he had a, he had a nice bicycle, and he told me I could use it whenever he came with us. So I was watch it, I would watch his bicycle, and I would use it. But I had to stick my foot or leg in between the footing, so I got two pedals that way, because I couldn't reach it from the seat, and he didn't want me to change the seat. So I had to stick my foot in, if you can imagine so. The bicycle was sort of kind of at an angle, when I was going up the street. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever ride your bicycle?

LARSEN: No, no. She never rode. My sister, she got a, because there was a lot of different kinds of bicycles over there. For the men, they had the straight bar, you know, up by the seat, over to the steering bars. But the, the ladies, they have, they use dresses. They can sit there and the frame goes so there's plenty of room for their dresses. You've probably seen them, yeah. And she got one of them. In fact, she rode one time. She was getting too old for the bicycle, and she wanted to send it over to me. (to his wife) Remember the time? She had a new one, a fairly new one. But there was so much, so I said, "Forget about it." And, you know, for twenty dollars I could buy an old one here and it would cost you so much, but she tore the (?) off it. That was why she wanted, she was wondering if I would want it.

SIGRIST: I'd like to ask you a couple of more questions about your father.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He died when you were almost four. Where was he

buried?

LARSEN: Well, he was buried in what we called over there the old cemetery. That was the first cemetery that was created in Copenhagen. And that was, in the olden days they had, they had a place where there was some kind of, to protect Copenhagen from raiders. They had a big, well, it's pretty hard to explain it. But it was a place, and there was, it was all around Copenhagen at that time, and Copenhagen was inside the so-called protecting places because, like the old Vikings, they were raiding each other, so they made up those places, but they left them, and they were there for protection from the inside. So to use up the space, they made a cemetery out of it. And that cemetery is, they made it, you remember they had a, oh, it was like a, well, it was all . . .

SIGRIST: Is this like a moat that had been filled in, or a . . .

LARSEN: No, it was flat. It was flat at that time. But they, they put a, well, I don't, because this here goes into, goes into a big, a big place, oh, maybe fifty, sixty acres of land, and it was all taken in for this, and it was later laid out in rows. And you could buy

a place there for twenty years. And then the grave that you bought after twenty years you could either renew the grave, or it would be sold out for another selling, because there wasn't enough space for everybody to be on that cemetery. Why, my mother, she later, she got the same place as my father was supposed to be buried.

SIGRIST: So the two were buried on top of each other?

LARSEN: They could have a family grave, yes. They could have a family grave in the first one. They could go up as far as three, three settings. But after twenty years everything got started over again. You could buy another, if you wanted, in five years or ten years, or you could buy even up to twenty years, but no more than twenty years. After that everything would be dug up again, and you have a new setting. So after twenty years you wouldn't know where you were, your parents or your wife or husband and so on, you wouldn't know where, they would know it in the office where they used to be, but after twenty years they were taken over again, because there wasn't enough space. Like, there was only so much space in, within the boundary of the cemetery, and they had to use it over again.

SIGRIST: What an interesting system that is. What did they do with what was dug up?

LARSEN: They dug everything up, and if you had seen it you would see there was nothing but bone left. That's all that was left in the grave. And what they did to the bones, I don't know whether they burned them or so. I wouldn't know. Because in later years I worked on a cemetery. I worked on the same cemetery as I, when I came over here, I left that job. But it was the same. After twenty years they would dig up everything and the bones would be destroyed.

SIGRIST: Huh. That's very interesting. I've never heard of that mentioned before.

LARSEN: You never, no.

SIGRIST: Do you remember going to your father's grave, as a child?

LARSEN: No, no. I really don't. Because I know that my mother, she was very sad when he came. He died Christmas, either the first Christmas day or the second Christmas day. And he was buried just at Christmas, and that was another thing, that, us two

kids, we never had no Christmas, because it made her so sad, and when it came to Christmas, see, my wife's, here, she won't, like I never had a Christmas, the feeling of Christmas, but that was the reason, that my father died at Christmas time. And the hard times started.

SIGRIST: Your mother just wanted to sort of forget.

LARSEN: Yeah, yeah. Want to go through it again.

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever re-marry or ever . . .

LARSEN: No.

SIGRIST: Had any interest in . . .

LARSEN: No. No, she never did. I wonder sometimes, because she was a busy woman and kept things beautiful, and so, but I guess she didn't have time for it. She would just have time to make a living. I tell you, the conditions were a little different.

SIGRIST: Very different.

LARSEN: Yeah, they were a little different.

SIGRIST: Well, we have about a half an hour left, so I really want to talk about what happened when you got to

America to, because that was what we really didn't get to talk to yesterday. So let's, I wanted to ask you, did somebody, when you and your friend were at Ellis Island, did somebody meet you at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: No, no. Only, only the understanding, when you buy a ticket, like in Denmark, you buy a ticket to the boat even if the boat is in England. But they give you full guarantee that they, they'll take care of you from the day you enter the boat to the day that you leave and they leave you, like I was going to go to Hartford. They make sure that I get to the place in Hartford. There, the only thing was that there wasn't anybody in Hartford to meet us, but there was in New York somebody from the boat that made sure that we got on the right train to Hartford, and the understanding, because that's what my friend was saying, that they were told there was this conductor in, at the, at the train. He was supposed to see that we got off in Hartford. But after that we completely on your own.

SIGRIST: Did that, did that representative meet you at Ellis Island, or meet you in New York?

LARSEN: They had different ones. There was one that met us at Ellis Island and got us over to the train in New York,

and in New York there was another one that took over that would see if we got on the right train to Hartford. And then they must have had the conductor at the train. I really don't know. But the, they made sure that you got to the right place where you were supposed to land and get into.

SIGRIST: I see. Did you have to, when you left England on the boat, did you have to undergo examinations before you got on the boat?

LARSEN: No.

SIGRIST: Only when you got to Ellis Island.

LARSEN: Yeah. The only thing was, the only thing was when I applied in Copenhagen, when I applied for a ticket with the boat in England, I was told to go and see a doctor, a doctor that give me, because you were supposed to have a shot for different things. And I remember there was three different shots that you were supposed to have, and you were supposed to have some kind of paper that you had them, because we had to show them this paper each time that we changed to, when we got to England, and from England to New York, we had that. Well, of course, that just went with our

passports, so it was nothing out of the ordinary.

They all had it. That's . . .

SIGRIST: Can you tell me, I just have one more question about Ellis Island for you. Can you just sort of describe what the inside looked like?

LARSEN: Well, the inside was very simple, and it was nice and clean, but it was all cemented and . . .

SIGRIST: Were you in a closed room, or were there windows?

LARSEN: The windows, they were way up that you couldn't even look out through the windows. And in between the different, it was like stalls. I don't know if you've seen it from the time, when did it change over the Ellis Island?

SIGRIST: When did it change over?

LARSEN: Yeah. When did it change over that they didn't use the Ellis Island any more.

SIGRIST: Not until the 1950's.

LARSEN: 1950?

SIGRIST: 1954, yeah.

LARSEN: I see. Well, that was twenty-five years then, so they must have used it for immigrants. (he pauses)
(the recording is momentarily disturbed) So they got into the right places. (the recording is momentarily disturbed)

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

SIGRIST: But you remember there being sort of stalls on the inside.

LARSEN: It was, yes. And there were, there were sliding stalls with bars that you couldn't go from one to another. They were all, they were very strict. They kept track of the different ones that they got into the right places. And, of course they were all in English. And I didn't know but my friend, he understood it well enough to, that he says, "They're kind of rough," you know.

SIGRIST: Did you eat at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: I what?

SIGRIST: Did you eat at Ellis Island?

LARSEN: Eat? No, no. We didn't get nothing to eat. We ate

on the steamer before we got to, we got up early that morning so we could see the Statue of Liberty. But after we had our breakfast, then there was, you know, from here to there and some other place, and then they landed with some dock. I don't know just where they landed, but they must have a big, and they took us from there, and to the dock, and from the dock there was a ferry that took us to Ellis Island. But at this particular place there were so many that was on a different class, so they didn't have to go. Because I know that morning there was, there was somebody that came in from the dock, and there was a bunch of doctors that was inspecting the ones that wasn't going to go to Ellis Island. And I wasn't one of them.
(he laughs)

SIGRIST: Not one of the lucky ones.

LARSEN: No.

SIGRIST: Did you, when you were at Ellis Island being processed, did you have your luggage with you? Where is your luggage during this?

LARSEN: My luggage, I only had my hand luggage. Otherwise the luggage, that was sent to Hartford.

SIGRIST: Oh, it was sent ahead of you.

LARSEN: Yeah. That was, when we got there to Hartford I could have gotten it, but I have no way of, forget it. I got that, we were going to. They had a car, and they told us that they would get our luggage in a day or two. But otherwise we only had our, what we could carry, so . . .

SIGRIST: So you come up to Hartford. As I recall, you arrive at Hartford, it's nearly dark.

LARSEN: Oh, it was dark, yeah.

SIGRIST: And instead of going to the address that you had, you went to the church.

LARSEN: We went to the church, yeah.

LARSEN: All right. Well, let's pick up your story at that point. What happened when you went to the church?

LARSEN: Well, (he laughs) we met to the minister. And we, he was glad to see us and, you know, just coming from Denmark, and he was. But what we wanted, we wanted to find a place to stay, so we asked him if he knew. And it happened so that right across from the church there was a lady that had, like, a boarding house, and she

took us in for the, for the night. And she gave us something to eat, and she was telling the minister that she would see to it that we got to the place where our, my friend's address was supposed to be to, to the Danish, uh, he was, he was a carpenter, and he was well-known between the Danes at the times. They all know him. And he was supposed to come and meet us the next day. I think they had a phone. You know, at that time the phone wasn't so, like today everybody has phones. But for some reason or another, I think he was a builder, and I think he had a phone and the lady that had the boarding house, she also had a phone, so they could, so . . .

SIGRIST: Was she Danish, the boarding house lady?

LARSEN: Yeah. She was Danish, yeah.

SIGRIST: Was there a large Danish population in Hartford?

LARSEN: There was quite a, yeah. There was, there was enough, enough Danes that could afford to have the church, because it, well, they don't pay tax as far as the church is concerned, but you have a minister and a place for him to live, and so on. So as far as I know I think at that time there was a gathering of about

four thousand Danes. And they paid so much a week, and they could afford to have the church going. Later on, it got to be so much, like everything went up, and you can't afford those things.

SIGRIST: So you stayed overnight at the boarding house.

LARSEN: Yeah. We stayed overnight, and the next day this, the builder, he came and he got our suitcases at the station. And I know he took me out, he took us both out, as far as there, but he took us to Blue Hills Avenue. There was a nursery. And he thought maybe I could get a job there because I was a gardener. And I did get a job, but I couldn't afford to work there for him, because he would only pay me two dollars a day. And with the, with the room and board and transportation to this nursery it cost me more than two dollars a day. So, well, I worked there, I worked there maybe a month or maybe a couple of months. I don't remember.

SIGRIST: Where are you staying? Where are you sleeping?

LARSEN: I stayed with the lady.

SIGRIST: At the boarding house.

LARSEN: At the boarding house, yes.

SIGRIST: Did your friend go to . . .

LARSEN: He went, see, he was an electrician, or had some, something in the electrical. So he went. At that time there was the Hartford Electric Lights down the Meadows. That's where they had the, where they were producing the electricity for Hartford. I don't know if you, are you located with that? No. See, now they have, you know, so much more than they have the nuclear, where we get the electricity from. But at that time they got it from, you know where the bridge is?

SIGRIST: This is where you friend is working?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He's working at the power plant.

LARSEN: He got into the power plant, and he started working the next day. So he was . . .

SIGRIST: Of course America, he knows America. He's been here before.

LARSEN: Sure. He was, he had been here before in California,

so he was all set. But to me it was a little different.

SIGRIST: Tell me about what life in the boarding house was like.

LARSEN: It was, it was a lot of fun because, oh, I think she had, she had some, like, six or eight boarders, and they were all Danes. No, there was a, I think there was a, I think there was an Irish. Very comical.

SIGRIST: Do you remember something that happened once in the boarding house that sticks out in your mind?

LARSEN: No, not too much. Because everything was new to me, and at certain times not too inviting, because, you know, you would say something and they would laugh, you know. (he laughs) There was Danes there, but that was the same thing. Some Danes that came from different, different sections in Denmark, and I had just as much trouble speaking to them as I had to the Americans because different dialects and so on. But we got along.

SIGRIST: Of course, everyone had this problem, probably

LARSEN: They did. They had problems.

SIGRIST: How did you learn English?

LARSEN: How?

SIGRIST: How did you learn English?

LARSEN: Just by being with people. I, I was supposed to go, which I did, I probably went one winter to night school. But, of course, I changed the job, and then I got, I got a job to work in the, in summer, it was a stone setter. And in this place, at that time he was on New Britain Avenue. And he was, he was making grave monuments, and he was, I worked with him, or with his gang, by polishing the face of the stones. And it was a rough job, but I got enough to it I could live on it, and that's all that was necessary.

SIGRIST: Were you still living at the boarding house?

LARSEN: I was still living there, yeah.

SIGRIST: How long did you live there?

LARSEN: Oh, I lived there for a couple of years.

SIGRIST: Do you remember the name of the boarding house, or the woman who was the proprietress?

LARSEN: Yeah. She was, her husband, her husband worked in Cole's, no, in Bushnell Park. He was foreman there. And he was supposed to get me a job in Bushnell. But somehow or other there wasn't any opening. But then there was an opening in Cole's Park. You know, that's the one off Wethersfield Avenue. So then I got a job, and we lived on, off of Park Street, a couple of streets up from Park Street. So I could walk from the boarding house to the park, and I worked in the park. I got a job to help the caretaker, whatever there was of anything to prepare of benches or anything in the wooden line. They had a big carpenter shop in Cole's Park. And we made all the benches and whatever there was. And, so I worked there.

SIGRIST: Is that after you had the job polishing the stones?

LARSEN: Yeah, after. Because work with the stone, that was only temporary. He didn't have work all year around while they promised me a job all year 'round in Cole's Park. So . . .

SIGRIST: What was the thing you liked about America the most?

LARSEN: Well, what I liked the most, let me tell you what I didn't like the most was, and I couldn't understand

what they were saying. And is, I'll tell you, it's awful hard to, if you've never been in that situation, it's awful hard to understand what it means that you can't understand a word, what anybody says to you. And, of course, that's your fault. It's not the other fault. But you feel this and you, you're out. And, I'll tell you, if anybody would have said, "I'll give you the money, and you can take the boat back to Denmark," I would have done it any day in the week, because you get so disgusted at, and you don't feel good. And it took me I would say just about a year before I conquered that, because it's hard to understand that you can't understand what people are talking about.

SIGRIST: Is there a specific story that you remember, a specific incident that you can tell me about that made you feel really badly at that time?

LARSEN: No. There's nothing particularly. There was, there was more or less right along. Get up in the morning, you can't understand them, you go to work. They laugh at you when you say something because it's, I suppose it sounds crazy to them, and so you just go along.

SIGRIST: Did you miss Denmark?

LARSEN: No. It wasn't that I, because when it came to the weekends, we had very nice, we would go to different places, and we would, slowly there was some of the fellows there that were, that lived in a boarding house, they would have a car or a motorcycle or so. And they were very, very friendly and very accommodating, because they had gone through it. So it's, "Oh, you get used to it, you'll get used to it." But it was hard to get used to it.

SIGRIST: Were you corresponding with your mom?

LARSEN: Oh, yes, yeah. Oh, yeah. That was another thing, you know, they made it a little harder because I promised my mother that I would send her money just as soon as I could afford it. And I did that, and so I tried to send her about ten dollars a month, which at that time would pay for her house rent, and that was a great help for her. And, but, of course, it held me back because I couldn't get the things that I would like to have, and, but promises, I know how hard it would be for her, you know, to sew. In fact, I kept on sending money into, even after we got married. So she was happy about it.

SIGRIST: You said that you brought your mother over for a visit to this country. Did your mother come over here for a visit at one point?

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Could you tell me about that, and how she felt about America when she got here?

LARSEN: Yeah. Oh, she loved it.

SIGRIST: What year was that?

LARSEN: That was in, in '29, '2-, in the '30s. Just about in the turnover at '30. It was, it was just in the Crash where they have that, the, when the banks went completely . . .

SIGRIST: Stock market crash.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: In 1929.

LARSEN: 1929. In the later, after that, that's when, because in, I got a job with a, from the park another friend of mine, he worked for Hoffman Wallpaper in Hartford. And they needed, they needed a warehouse man to take care of the warehouse. So I got a job there, and I

got pretty good pay. And within a few months that I had been there, I could save enough to send her a ticket, so she came over. And then I started up a home for her and I. I was living on Zion Street in Hartford.

SIGRIST: Zion Street?

LARSEN: Zion, yeah.

SIGRIST: Z-I-O-N?

LARSEN: Z-I-O-N. That's off of Park Street. You know where the Trinity College is? Well, that's Zion Street there. And there was a place there halfway up Zion Street, and there was a building there there was quite a few Danes living. And I thought that would be a good place. I only got two rooms and a kitchen there. And that was enough to, I bought some, bought different furniture and I started up there, so she had a bed, and I had a bed, and different cooking and things. And she was here.

SIGRIST: What did she think about this country? What did your mother think about America?

LARSEN: Oh, she thought it was beautiful. And I took her to

the different places, you know, like Elizabeth Park and, I couldn't take her too many places because I worked most of the time, but when she was, I remember her saying that what she enjoyed the most was that she could get everything and she didn't have to work and worry about getting the things, which were a big thing, you know, because when you come from Denmark you have to take care of yourself. And, as I said, you know, it's a little country, but they don't help you with anything. So to her it was a wonderful thing.

SIGRIST: Well, she had been working hard her whole life.

LARSEN: She worked all her life and I felt that she had that, I owe her that enjoyment.

SIGRIST: How long did she stay with you?

LARSEN: Uh, let's see. She came, she came late in the fall, October or so. And then she stayed. It was getting cold in the fall, but I was afraid that it would be too hot for her because she couldn't take the heat. She had too, too heavy blood in her body. And in the spring, when it started to get hot, she used to get flared up, you know, like she was almost on fire, so

she went home. So she must have gone home probably in April, May. So . . .

SIGRIST: A few months she was with you.

LARSEN: Oh, yes. She was, she was supposed to, she had a passage for a year, but it would be too much, it would be too hot. And, so she went home earlier, and she was happy.

SIGRIST: Well, she got to see.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: The world where her son lived.

LARSEN: (he laughs) That's true. She's so . . .

SIGRIST: We're almost out of time again.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You've been wonderful interviewee. How do you think your life would have been different if you had stayed in Copenhagen?

LARSEN: Oh, it would have been different, yeah. (he pauses)
It would have been, well, most of the things would have been easier, but I would be short on a lot of

things. I wouldn't have been able to see the things, or see, or been through the things that I have in the years. I got to tell you this, like I tell most, and I will tell you the same thing, too. When I come back, some day when I come back, no matter what happens, I'm going to stay in that particular place that I was born. I wouldn't move. I found that out in life. I would never move from my birth place because when you do that you're making an awful mistake. You make it awful hard for yourself. Unless that you have energy enough to go through and learn the language that you were born in, because that is missing all your life. You know, you hate to think of every time I opened my mouth, they know I'm a foreigner, and I don't like that.

SIGRIST: Mr. Larsen, we have to, we have to end now.

LARSEN: Yeah?

SIGRIST: I want to thank you very much for giving us two wonderful hours.

LARSEN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: You're a fountain of knowledge. I appreciate your time.

LARSEN: That's all right. I appreciate you coming and hearing some of my things. (he laughs)

SIGRIST: This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service signing off with Knud Larsen in Newington, Connecticut, and today is Monday . . .

MRS. LARSEN: The 30th.

SIGRIST: The 30th, well, it's not important. (he laughs)
But, anyway, this is Paul Sigrist signing off with Knud Larsen. (they laugh)