

EI-841

ANN SCHOBER FOOKS

BIRTHDATE: JANUARY 8, 1922

INTERVIEW DATE: JANUARY 1, 1997

AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 75

RUNNING TIME: 1:01:01

INTERVIEWER: JANET LEVINE, PH.D.

RECORDING ENGINEER: JANET LEVINE

INTERVIEW LOCATION: SOUTH MILWAUKEE, WI

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: CHARLES MITCHELL, 10/2007

SWITZERLAND, 1924

AGE: 2

SHIP: THE MAJESTIC

PORT:

RESIDENCES:

LEVINE: --day of 1997 and I am here at the home of Ann Fooks in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mrs. Fooks came from Switzerland on the Majestic in 1924 when she was three years of age. Today, at the time of the interview, Mrs. Fooks is seventy-five years of age and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. If you would start at the beginning with your birth date and where in Switzerland you were born.

FOOKS: I was born in Arbund, [PH] Switzerland. My father was a farmer and shortly after I was born, things began to slide downhill in the economy in Switzerland and he felt that he should sell the farm and had three thousand dollars cash and said to my mother he thought we should come to America. She wasn't thrilled because she had two children, a two year old and a one year old and one on the way. So she was very occupied, but he insisted and she went along, reluctantly like the "Reluctant Dragon," but we sailed out of Cherbourg, France and were underway a week. We were on the ocean a week and of course came to Ellis Island.

JL: Did your father—did you have a—an extended family in Switzerland when you left?

- AF: No, our family was relatively small. My mother had been—her mother had died at a very young age and it was her father and a brother and a sister. And my father had one brother at the time.
- JL: Uh-hmm.
- AF: In Switzerland and a brother in America.
- JL: Was there a reason that you know of that your father thought about America?
- AF: I think he was an adventuresome man and he felt that he wanted the adventure, plus he could see that there wasn't much of a future in Switzerland because Switzerland is so land poor that you're held to a very minimum of what—of the things that you can do.
- JL: Uh-huh, and he was a farmer.
- AF: He was a farmer, uh-hmm.
- JL: What kind of farm did he have? [unclear]
- AF: It was predominantly fruit and vegetable. Big cherry trees. Go to market with him. He did have a few cows, but not enough to make a decent living on.
- JL: Do you think the fact that he had the brother in America was a—was a pull, a particular pull?
- AF: I—I sense that that was probably part of the pull, uh-hmm.
- JL: And—and you don't remember grandparents?
- AF: My grandmother—both of my grandparents with the exception of a grandfather were deceased and I don't remember the grandfather, but he did—he was a—a blacksmith in this town of Arbund and I was privileged to go to the blacksmith shop ten years ago with my mother and as we walked into that blacksmith shop and saw the bellows there with the—with the heat, you know, the big fire, she said, "Many were the times that I blew that bellows to get the fire going," and the people that owned it at the time, they—they had a repair shop and—and a lawn mower shop and they were so gracious. They invited us upstairs so we got see where my mother lived as a child, until she was married, which was a real blessing.

- JL: Uh-hmm. Wow. Now, do you personally have any memories of Switzerland?
- AF: None. Not too many, other than just tiny things. My mother would send me to the store and I can remember tying my shoe, sitting on the-on the porch. Sitting me on the window because they had deep sills and sitting me there and tying my—you know, tying my shoes and then—then walking to the store. And that was the about the extent of it. Nothing other than that. And actually, in spite of the fact that we lived in that beautiful country, we—they had never done much traveling because they didn't have the finances, for one things. In fact, when we went back, that was more traveling that they'd ever done in their life. Isn't that interesting?
- JL: Uh-hmm. So—do you remember the things your mother packed up to leave, to take with her to America?
- AF: I think the biggest thing that I remember and it's only from her saying were these wedding gifts that she had, which were feather down quilts and then she lost—they were taken or they were lost in route. So that—that was the biggest thing. And, oh, I do know another thing. She brought the washboard that I have hanging in the den that was my father's mother's. He was ninety-seven when he died and his mother was in her seventies, so you know it's very old and it's shaped, and that was what she used to scrub the clothes on for many years.
- JL: In this country?
- AF: In this country. So that was a very important thing to bring. That and, of course, that hot water bottle that I—
- JL: Oh, talk about that on the tape.
- AF: It was called a basina [PH] and it was a metal hot water bottle that you filled with hot water and put at your feet or wherever it was needed, but that was a very—that was one of the important things that I remember.
- JL: And—and how about the—tell about the cap and—and—and—
- AF: Oh, well, it had a little metal cap that fit inside the raw cover to keep it air tight and also to keep the water from leaking out, and I can still remember it had just like a—if you've ever sewed, your bobbin has that little metal part that sticks out. Well, this had that little metal part

that you whaled it down in there with and then screwed the cap down tight.

- JL: Now, [clears throat] let's see. Your mother's name and maiden name?
- AF: My mother's name was Lena Laesser, L-A-E-S-S-E-R.
- JL: L-A-E?
- AF: Uh-hmm.
- JL: Okay, and your father's name?
- AF: Was Alfred.
- JL: Alfred and—
- AF: Showham [PH], uh-hmm.
- JL: Uh-huh, and let's see. So you had—let's see, you had a brother and sister?
- AF: I had a brother Ernest, who was also born in Switzerland. He was a year and a half, almost two when we came over, and then my sister was just in the makings. My mother was three months pregnant when we traveled.
- JL: Now, your father traveled with you?
- AF: Yes, we all traveled together and when—I don't—other than arrival at Ellis Island where we were detained for several days because my mother was so sick with morning sickness and they had her in the infirmary there. And of course, we had to wait in one of those stalls up above, you know, the girls and the men. But I can still remember last year when I went to visit Ellis Island, I walked into that massive hall and I could—I could still remember running around there and sitting there with my father at those benches and it just—it just made me weep. It just brought back all the memories.
- JL: Hmm.
- AF: Even though it wasn't a tremendous memory, but I just remembered that.
- JL: Yeah.

- AF: And so after being detained, then we were—we got on a train to come to the Midwest.
- JL: Well, first do you remember the—the trip from—anything about the trip from your—your place of origin to—to Cherbourg?
- AF: No, that—other than, yes, I do remember being Paris where we had to change trains and we visited the Eiffel Tower and I can still remember going up on the Eiffel Tower and looking down and seeing my mother sitting down there because she was terrified. She didn't want any high place. It was enough that she was going to America, and I can still remember being up there with my father and looking down, but that was the extent.
- JL: Uh-huh. And then the voyage, do you remember anything about the Majestic or the voyage?
- AF: No. Other than the fact that my father would take me walking from one deck to the other, and I can remember being not on the top deck, but perhaps on the—on the second story and looking down because they had these big smoke stacks coming out out of the ship and looking down into this big hole, way down into the hold of the ship, and I was just terrified.
- JL: Oh, and so it was a rough trip, as you remember it?
- AF: No, not necessarily. It wasn't rough, but I think people weren't accustomed to being on the rocky ocean, you know.
- JL: Uh-hmm.
- AF: I should say the wavy ocean.
- JL: Uh-huh.
- AF: And so most of the people were seasick.
- JL: And, and your mother being pregnant, it was—
- AF: Oh, she was sick all the time. Uh-hmm.
- JL: Oh, and so do you remember the boat coming into the New York Harbor?
- AF: No, I don't remember that at all. Hmm-hmm.

- JL: And Ellis Island, just any more detail about—
- AF: That was about the extent of it, this massive hall. You can imagine how that hall must have felt to a small child, you know.
- JL: Hmm.
- AF: And all the people. But that was as much. Hmm.
- JL: And you—you were detained for several days, you think?
- AF: Uh-hmm, about three—I think it was three days.
- JL: And do—do you remember—so were you in a dormitory kind of situation?
- AF: I don't remember much about that.
- JL: Uh-hmm. Do you remember food there?
- AF: Nothing. Hmm—hmm, certainly wasn't impressed by those things.
- JL: Right. Okay, so then did anyone meet you?
- AF: No, uh-uh.
- JL: So you were—did you get tags, do you remember?
- AF: I don't remember that.
- JL: But you remember leaving Ellis Island or—
- AF: All I can remember from there is that we went to a train—we got into a train.
- JL: Uh-hmm.
- AF: And I do remember just little things. My father would—I can remember him purchasing grapes and having grapes to eat on the train because apparently we brought our own lunch on the train because that took a few days, you know. But we were very dirty on this train. It was a coal engine, you know, and the smoke was very heavy from that and I can still remember my father saying, "We got so dirty riding from New York to the Middle West."

JL: Can you—what was your father like? Can you describe what he was like when you came over?

AF: My father was a very short man, probably four-ten. Wiry, energetic, ambitious, excited about life. Everything was a challenge to him and he never saw things in a negative light. So he did everything with—without complaining. He had a marvelous attitude.

JL: And how about your mother?

AF: She was heavy because she had gone through much difficulty. Her mother died when she was young and it wasn't a good family situation. So she was really never set free until at the age of eighty-nine when she accepted Jesus as her savior and then her life—and actually before that. It was in 1954 when she was diagnosed with leukemia and she decided she didn't have it, and she began to live. For the first time really live, and it was exciting.

JL: Now was there—were your—was your family religious in Switzerland?

AF: No, not even here. They brought us to church, but that was the extent of it, but there was—apparently my father's mother was a very—was a Godly woman because in Switzerland they had what they called the shtundila [PH] and if I were translate that, it would mean the—the studiers and these people would get together and study the word of God, and she was ridiculed for her stand.

JL: Was she—what—what particular religion was she, do you know?

AF: I don't—I don't think it—it wasn't a religion. I think it was just a group of Christians that would gather together and read the word of God. And so she was a Godly woman and she was probably the influence and I just sensed that it carried. The Lord was faithful.

JL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AF: And so—

JL: Now, the church that you went to, what was that? Or did—

AF: We didn't.

JL: You didn't.

AF: But we did have the—my mother’s neighbors as she was growing up in—we lived right next to—the blacksmith shop was right, well, I would say perhaps a quarter of a block from the church there. The church at Arbund, and it was a Catholic monastery at one time, but then with the reformation it became a Protestant church. And it was so interesting going into that church when I visited there because it still had the wooden floor, but it had a labyrinth of different areas that—because it was completely walled, and it had a courtyard made of brick, but the doorknobs were gold. Gold fish, and they had tunnels under this—you know, it was just uncanny and as you walked in there was, a—like a plate made of cement. I don’t know if it was cement, but it had “reformiert,” [PH] which means reformed and it gave the names of all the pastors since the reformation. Isn’t that interesting. So that was an—that was exciting to see, and of course, it was the church that my mother and father were married in and my brother and I were baptized in. So it had—had some real—and it’s one of the older churches in Switzerland. Of course, there are many old ones there.

JL: And how about—well, I mean you brought me the cookies, but do you—do you remember any—well, you probably don’t remember but maybe even in this country, foods that your mother made—

AF: Oh, yes.

JL: That came from Switzerland.

AF: She—every year—every year, many times a year it’s the chipva [PH], the bread that I was going to serve. Chipva and then barramutza [PH] which are little spice cookies that in Switzerland they make—Switzerland’s mascot is the bear.

JL: Oh.

AF: [unclear] bear, you know.

JL: Talk about that, I don’t know.

AF: Well, apparently at one time there were a lot of bears in Switzerland and so they have brown bears in a zoo right in the middle of town. It’s not a zoo. It’s just—it’s called the barragrabba, which is the—a grabba is like a hole and they have these brown bears in there and it’s right—right next to the Arra [PH] River and many people come to see these brown bears and the brown bear is Switzerland’s mascot. And so barramutza, they would have cookie cutters in the forms of these bears and they’re a spicy brown cookies.

JL: Oh.

AF: And so that's another thing that we make every Christmas and then the bratzali [PH] and chipva, those are the big—the three big things.

JL: Hmm. Oh.

AF: On the sweet end, and want the other end? I guess [unclear] and [unclear] would be the other things. [unclear] was apples that were diced—peeled and diced and cooked and then dry bread cubes put in among them and you serve that and I thought that was superb. And then [unclear], I'm sure they had to live on potatoes many times, you know, when things were hard and they were just potatoes that were whipped very, very light with milk and butter, if you had it or—and then you served that with apple slices.

JL: They would be baked?

AF: No.

JL: No.

AF: Just cooked and whipped real—flutta [PH] means fluffy and I suppose we would call them mashed potatoes, but they were of a—of a lighter consistency than mashed potatoes. And that was one of our special things.

JL: Uh-hmm. Do you remember—did you—did your family maintain any of the Swiss customs, either for ceremonial or—or festive occasions in this country?

AF: I think there was so little festivity in their families at home and—and you know, normally a mother promotes tradition, isn't that right? And her mother died when she was—well, at the age of twelve she was taking care of her. So there wasn't a great deal of joy and I sense that traditions are often the result of a joyous family.

JL: Uh-hmm.

AF: You know, they're tied together that way, and what was the biggest thing? I can't remember any—I do remember Christmas was—of course, when we lived in the cheese factories, it was away from the electricity, you know, in the early '20s, and all we had were candle light and lanterns at the time, but at Christmas time we'd always have a Christmas tree with real candles. And I can still remember Pa

putting the candles way out on the branches where there wasn't another branch above them, you know. And then Christmas Eve we'd light these candles and this is the one tradition that we had, we would each be given a piece or some portion to memorize, each of the children, and we'd have to stand around the Christmas tree and say these pieces. And then Pa—Pa would light the candles, stand—with a bucket of water standing there and then the gifts would be passed out.

- JL: Do you by any chance remember any of the pieces that you—that you—did you say them in English or—
- AF: No, no, Swiss.
- JL: They were in Swiss, uh-huh.
- AF: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. No, I do remember a portion of the prayer that she thought—you know, we were not a religious family, but they did teach us a goodnight prayer and we had to say that every night.
- JL: Would—would—can you recite that?
- AF: I can recite a portion of it.
- JL: Okay.
- AF: [speaks in Swiss] That's as much as I can remember of it.
- JL: Can you translate it?
- AF: I hear a bell. It's ringing so sweetly. The [unclear] lord in heaven will keep us through the night.
- JL: Hmm. Good.
- AF: So that was mandatory. They'd stand at the bottom of the stairs and say [unclear]. "Did you pray?" Then if we didn't, then we'd have to call it out.
- JL: Let's see. So you took the train then to the Midwest and where did you—where did you come to?
- AF: I would—I would imagine the terminal was Chicago, but being—and then apparently—I really don't even know how we got to our destination in Southern Wisconsin.

- JL: What are your—when you first got here, do you have any impressions or I suppose everything was new to you.
- AF: I'm sure everything was new and being a child as young as I was—what was—all I can remember is how hard my father worked and how cold—I can remember my mother having to wash. You can imagine washing diapers every day or boiling them. Had to wash them in this pack room and one time on the old cheese factories you had the cheese factory down below. Then they had what they called the pack room. You walked up the stairs and this was a massive room where you made the boxes because you made your own boxes to send the cheese away. And so in addition to making the cheese, you'd have to make the boxes and in this pack room is where my mother did her washing, and boiled—pumped the water in the pump outside. Brought it in, put it on a boiler, had to chop the wood. Bring it to a boil, bring it outside and to this pack room into two galvanized tubs, you know. One—well, just one because you kept water to boil your clothes. After you washed them, you boiled them. My goodness. You'd scrub them, rinse them once, bring them to boil, all by hand. Can you imagine that?
- JL: And she was using that washboard?
- AF: That washboard, uh-hmm.
- JL: Wow. Maybe if you could say a few words of how—what—why it was you were living in this cheese factory.
- AF: Because the farmer who owned the farm that my father was a hired man—because we had to have a job when we came over here and he was hired as a hired man for this Mr. Sheepdog and it was called the Shrepfor Factory and they had this cheese factory that was now empty because they'd built a new one. So that was our housing. That was the reason we lived there.
- JL: And it was cold?
- AF: Very cold. Just heated with a wood burning stove. Very cold. The—where the stove was is where it was warm, but many times the water would freeze in that hot water bottle overnight, and my father would get home like at nine at night and he'd have to go out and gather wood. I can remember he and my mother going into the marshes and breaking out stumps so that we had wood to burn, and they'd leave the two children at home in the—
- JL: Hmm. Do you remember your first days at school?

AF: Yes, uh-hmm, because I was sent to school to learn the English language, so they made sure that I got there. I had the opportunity to learn. So my first year at school was just there to learn, to listen and I wasn't included in the class as such.

JL: Oh.

AF: Because I had to learn the language.

JL: Now, were there other children from other countries in the school?

AF: No.

JL: That you were aware of?

AF: No, I was the only one.

JL: Oh. So that was good in a way. You weren't asked to perform in any way.

AF: None.

JL: You were just to listen.

AF: Just to listen, uh-hmm.

JL: Did you have any teachers that were particularly helpful to you in—in learning the language?

AF: Well, you see, in that one to eight school room, one school room grades one through eight, they were very kind to me. She was very kind. One woman. I can—and I was just impressed by the size of some of these young boys and the girls, and so my biggest thing was learning the language and I was—I'm sure I must have been a show off because here I was learning—learning the language and I could go home and impress anybody, whether I knew it or not. Isn't that right? And consequently, I began to be the mouthpiece for our family.

JL: Oh.

AF: Because I was the only one that knew the language, and so when we—wherever we'd move, then I would be the one sent on errands to do all the—the groundwork, you know.

- JL: Uh-huh. What was that like for you as a little girl?
- AF: Adventuresome, heady. I didn't need that. Very—you got to be a very controlling person, as a result of it.
- JL: Oh. So you would—can you think of any situations where you would kind of find out what was required and—and—and—and kind of lead of the family? I mean, maybe with doctors or—
- AF: No. Well, not so much at the cheese factory because it was remote and the farmers were very helpful and some were Swiss and so they had a Swiss community, you know, to deal with. But when we came to South Milwaukee, and I was in—in this area, when we moved here, I was in first grade and so here moving into the city was a big change because my father worked in industry and my mother was home. And so then I became the mouthpiece for the neighbors—with neighbors that any shopping that had to be done, I was the one that always had to go and do that kind of thing. Pay the pills, electric bills and things.
- JL: Oh, hmm.
- AF: And so I was given a lot of responsibility at a very young age.
- JL: Yeah. Where was the farm, where you went first?
- AF: That was down in—near Monroe. It was near Monroe, Wisconsin.
- JL: Uh-hmm, and you were there for about a year?
- AF: About a year—I think about a year and then my father, they took him on as an apprentice cheese maker and he learned. He learned the cheese making trade and then we moved to another cheese factory, and then after that we moved to a third cheese factory. Could you shut that off a minute? I have to use the bathroom. [tape off/on]
- JL: Okay, we're resuming here. So you were saying.
- AF: I have—my leg.
- JL: Oh. [tape off/on] Okay, we're resuming here. You were saying it was the third cheese factory and your father had been an apprentice.
- AF: Uh-hmm.
- JL: Cheese maker.

AF: And—and then he was limburger and brick cheese maker. Each one has their own unique qualities that they need to learn for their cheese making trade.

JL: Do you—can—do you know what—anything more about that? I mean—

AF: About the cheese making?

JL: Yeah.

AF: Well, at that time it was very—yes, very much. They had big vats that they heated the milk in. The farmers would bring the milk in the morning. It's so unique. And they—they had a place where they'd pour—they'd pour the milk into this big can that was sitting on a scale and from there it would run into this big vat. But every drop of milk that came in had to be weighed and registered for that particular farmer because they were paid according to the pounds of milk they brought. And then it was put in this big vat and again the wood had to be chopped to heat the wood—to heat this vat. So this was all part of the cheese maker's duty. Can you imagine that? And then it was like—like a conveyor that they put the—that had to be hand turned and it would bring the wood under the—under the vat and it would heat it to a certain degree of temperature, but before the heating started, you put rennet into the milk and you had a massive paddle that you stirred this. My father being so small, many times I thought he'd lay right in that vat, but they had big forks that they worked with and big paddles, and you'd stir that up well. And then you'd begin to stir that and it was all hand done in those days. Now it's all electrically—mechanically operated, you know. And then when it got to a certain degree, then you took a—a massive fork with many tines and you'd cut the curd—cut the cheese into curds, crosswise and lengthwise, and then you'd heat it even longer and stir it and when it got to a particular temperature, then you'd have like fish nets that you would have to bring under all of these curds and put them into this massive net and let it hang and let the whey drip out of it. And then they had pulleys and they'd bring them over to the tables where they had the molds and then you guided each mold. Poured these curds into the molds and put a wood cover on them with a brick on top of it, and let it sit there for—what was it? A day and a—yes, until the next day when the next load came out or just before. Then you'd drop this cheese into salt water, big salt water vats and it would be cured there. [clears throat] And I don't remember how many days it was cured in the vats and then from there you put it on shelves and you had to keep a stove going in the cellar because the temperature had

to be moist, but—and not excessively warm, but at just a certain degree to have that cheese turn out right. And then every other day you had to wash this cheese with salt water. Every brick had to be turned and washed.

JL: [unclear].

AF: How different.

JL: Yes.

AF: Isn't it?

JL: Now, how did you know—how did you know? Did your father take you to the cheese factory? Did you go?

AF: Oh, we were right there. We were—we lived upstairs and so I—sure, we'd have to—we would have to haul the wood in for the burning, as little kids because they didn't have time to do everything, you know. And then we'd watch because they—they spent much time downstairs so we were part of it.

JL: Oh.

AF: And then after so many [clears throat], what is it? Six or eight weeks? I don't remember how long the cheese would cure because you'd have a first cellar and a second cellar. The first cellar was when it came out of the salt baths and then the second cellar was where it was just a little bit warmer and it would be—it would age and then before you could ship it, in those days they had a man come in who was a buyer and he—I can still remember his little round knife. It reminded me of an apple corer, and he'd twist that little knife into a cheese to see what it was like, and determine if it was good enough to send out. And once it was good enough to send out, then you had a large table with foil in the bottom and two layers of wax paper that you'd have to wrap every cheese individually.

JL: And put them in the box?

AF: And put them in the boxes, and then a truck would come or a farmer would take them to market.

JL: Wow. Now, was—was being a cheese maker a—a real profession—

AF: It was a real profession at that time, yes. Uh-hmm. It was very, very distinctly in this Wisconsin area. There area many, many cheese

factories. I can go anywhere in Wisconsin now and I can spot an abandoned—a former cheese factory because of the way they were always built into a hill. That was the secret. The cellars had to be underground.

JL: Oh.

AF: Deep into the hill, and so you had this house on top and the factory here and then the cellars you knew were down into the—into the ground.

JL: Wow. Now, are those cheese factories—how are they used today, do you know?

AF: Most of there are residences. In fact, one of the last ones, they were friends of ours, Swiss friends of ours.

[END OF SIDE A]

[BEGIN SIDE B]

AF: --because a number of farmers would commit to bring their milk to these cheese factory and then they would make milk—ah, cheese in proportion to that, and then when you sold the cheese, the farmers were paid. And that's—then the farmers—

JL: Oh, they weren't paid before that?

AF: No, uh-uh. The farmers then would get their pay and then they would pay the cheese maker.

JL: Wow.

AF: So he was actually rent free and so this—it was just like a cooperative. In fact, I think that was probably one of the early cooperatives.

JL: Wow. Well, that sounds like it—was it as—as a family member of a cheese maker, was that an exciting thing to be—to be a part of?

AF: It was—

JL: Or how was it?

- AF: Would—would you call it exciting or demanding? I think it was demanding because the milk was brought morning and night, so you made cheese twice a day.
- JL: Oh. So your father's hours were long.
- AF: Long hours. Long hours.
- JL: And your mother, was she part of the cheese making?
- AF: And she always helped. Always, uh-hmm. It was very necessary.
- JL: Yeah.
- AF: Uh-hmm.
- JL: Oh. Now, when you were going to school in grade school, were you still—were you helping? Did you have certain chores that were regular chores for you or—
- AF: Excuse me. I think the biggest thing was just helping with the carrying in of the wood and we were always taught to work very hard because mom had to help out downstairs, you know, in the cheese factory. So there was always a lot to do, uh=hmm.
- JL: And how about the birth of the baby that your mother was carrying when she—when she arrived in this country?
- AF: Well, that baby was born in Monroe at the Monroe Hospital and I really don't remember a great deal about that, but then I had a brother after that and that was more memorable.
- JL: Oh.
- AF: Because I was older, you know. There was so much going on. It was a sister that was born and then a brother after that.
- JL: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. How about your mother and father, were they—were they happy they had made the decision to come here? Did they have any regrets that—
- AF: No, I don't think so. I do think that they missed—and yet, did they? I can never remember them ever being sad about leaving Switzerland, but they did seek out—and I think that's so typical. When you come from a foreign country, you seek out people of your own nationality because you have a common bond.

JL: And did they find them?

AF: And they would—I can remember there was another—several cheese makers who were Swiss because that was the big thing, you know, Swiss cheese, Switzerland. And I can—one thing I especially remember and I was four years old at the—I was four years old at the time because Kathy was a baby. We visited this cheese maker and it was during the Christmas holidays and I don't know what particular holiday, what one it was, but it was snowy out and the men played cards and it might have been New Year's Eve. And the men were playing cards and they weren't even aware of the snow that was going on and it got to be one in the morning and my father had purchased a car and I'm trying to think of where he got that—anyway, he'd purchased a car and we'd driven over to these friends of ours and our entertainment as kids because they had children, would be looking at the catalogue, at the Sears catalogue and what we were going to buy for each other. Can you imagine? Spent all evening on the floor doing that, or we'd play musical chairs. Those were our toys, you know. Everybody was poor. And finally at one in the morning my father decided, well, we'd better head back to our—to home and here I was four and my brother was three. I don't know if I was even four yet, and my baby sister, and we got stuck in a snow drift, quite—about three miles from this place, and my father tried to awaken the farmer to pull us out. Nobody—we went into the house and even knocked. Nobody would waken. So we walked back three miles at one in the morning through deep, deep snow and of course the two babies had to be carried and I trudged along. And it was so exciting. I can still remember how exciting that was. Isn't that something?

JL: What do—what do you think it is about that—that—that—

AF: I don't—

JL: Sticks in your memory as such a—

AF: Well, it was so wonderful and my father wouldn't complain. He'd say, "Isn't this wonderful." Oh, he just thought the snow—he could always see the positive in a situation and I think that was part of it. And he'd encourage me to walk, you know, because he—they were—they each had a child to carry.

JL: Uh-hmm.

AF: And all those miles through that deep, deep snow and those were days before snow pants, but you had knit stockings that mom made. No boots, just high shoes we used to wear. High tie shoes, you know. We went back to this cheese factory and laid on the floor there and slept and then the next day they pulled us out.

JL: Uh-huh. Now, were the people that you had spent the evening with, were they Swiss?

AF: They were Swiss, uh-hmm.

JL: Uh-huh, and was—can you say any more about the Swiss community that your mother and father were able to connect with?

AF: It was—it was limited. Predominantly the cheese makers. I would say that was probably the biggest in that—in the early days. Then we moved to Milwaukee, we met two other Swiss families and that was an encouragement. And I had an aunt who came here who was here for a short time, but we didn't have much connection with her, but she was instrumental in having my father come to Milwaukee because she got a job for him or said there was a job available in what is now Oak Creek. It was Caravel at the time and there was a glue company there and that was in 1928, or '29 and then all of a sudden the crash came and nothing.

JL: So your father had stopped being a cheese maker by then?

AF: Yes. In fact, when we moved from the—from the cheese factory we moved to a farm in—in Franksville. Some wealthy man had a farm that he needed someone to run the farm for him and I don't know how many head of cattle he had, but quite a few, and so we were able to share the house with some other family. Then I can remember my brother, who was in first—was he in first grade? No, he's five years old. He had to get up and milk five cows in the morning before he went to school. Uh-hmm, and we were there about a year and then we—he got the job here in South Milwaukee.

JL: Was he—was he happy to be leaving the cheese making? Do you—do you—

AF: I think so. I think so because it was a very—that was a heavy job. Very demanding in time. Really had very little freedom.

JL: Wow.

AF: Sort of like a farmer.

JL: Uh-huh.

AF: It's a big job.

JL: So when you moved to South Milwaukee, you—there was a year before the crash?

AF: Yes.

JL: And do you remember that year in particular? Anything about that move or that change or then?

AF: Well, actually we moved from Franksville to Oak—well, it's Oak Creek now. Putes Road, but it was called the South Milwaukee area and we lived—I would—I can remember having to walk to school and I'll bet it was two miles in first grade, and nobody thought anything of it, you know. And I can remember my father picking wild berries, wishing I was as tall as he was so I could reach those berries.

JL: Uh-hmm.

AF: And he was never tall.

JL: Hmm. And then how did the Depression effect you and your family?

AF: That was pretty devastating. My father was without work for ten years, but he always—he was—he had a lot of ingenuity. He would do—we planted a lot. They raised chickens and sold chickens and raised pigs and butchered them. In fact, we were so poor that he went to see the principle of the school to see if he could paint her house and if she would forward—he was willing to paint her house for fifty dollars, if she would forward the fifty dollars to him so he could buy a cow to keep his family in milk. And she became a dear friend, which was a real blessing because he was very trustworthy and eventually we—it was so funny. And the cow would come to get in heat and he wanted to have calves, so my brother and I would have to take this cow to be—to be mated and we'd have to walk it about a mile. Me behind it and my brother, just ridiculous. Of course, there were very few cars in those days. It was nothing like it is now, you know. So all those neat memories.

JL: Uh-hmm.

AF: And eventually we got a point where we had five cows and we used to sell milk and my mother would sell eggs. And she raised ducks

and—and they had massive gardens. We had many raspberry plants and they'd sell raspberries and strawberries and garden produce and that's the way they kept going.

JL: Hmm.

AF: So it was—

JL: And then how was school for you, once you had the language and—

AF: Well, it was exciting for me. Yeah. That was a real break.

JL: Now how about your father and mother, did they become American citizens?

AF: Yes, they did and I can't remember the year, but they both became American citizens.

JL: Uh-hmm, and then I guess you did under their—

AF: Under their, uh-hmm.

JL: Uh-hmm.

AF: Citizenship.

JL: And then after you finished school, did you work at all?

AF: After I finished school? No, I worked—I started working when I was thirteen. Housework, but in those years I was one of the fortunate ones. I got a job as—during housework for people, babysitting and then what was I? Fifteen, when I was hired as—in a drugstore. Eleven cents an hour. He was the wealthiest man in town, but the cheapest. The state got after him and made—made him pay me minimum wage, which was fifteen cents at that time. Can you imagine that?

JL: So—

AF: And when I—actually, I—I became—I went to school and just rejoiced. School was my out because we had—I worked after school. I always had to be at work at four o'clock, you know, and work until nine or ten every night, and weekends and so school was just a joy to me. But I met my husband when I was seventeen—sixteen. Sixteen and married him two weeks before I was eighteen because shortly after we met, he was sent out of the state. He was

sent to Ohio, but I was a very old young person because I had so many responsibilities young, you know.

JL: Hmm. Hmm. How did you meet your husband?

AF: Well, when I was in school at the elementary—in our elementary school, he was a senior in high school and they came around and they always had senior class plays, and he was one of the—they'd come around and show little excerpts of the plays, you know, and I thought, "Oh, is he cute," and didn't even—just thought he was really darling, you know. And then when I worked at the drugstore, that was my fifteen cent an hour job, you know, you can sort of tell when they have an eye on you? There was a pool hall across the street from, and he'd stand out there and then I wondered one day who he was and I found out who he was and he—one night he followed me because this man had two drugstores, one on the west side of town and one on the east side of town, and as I came into check out my time, he—Burt followed me in, but I hid behind the cash register so he wouldn't see me, and when I walked out, he thought that he could take me home, but I wasn't falling for that. So then one day he came into the drugstore on the west side. My first words to him were, "So you finally found me?" as he ordered an ice cream cone, and he thought I was twenty-one and I was sixteen. So then he wasn't going to see me again. So our first date was on Labor Day at two o'clock in the afternoon, because I was so young.

JL: Oh.

AF: Wasn't that cute?

JL: So then you—then he went to Ohio and then came back [unclear]?

AF: And he'd come back. He'd come back and we'd see each other perhaps three times a year, but write.

JL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AF: Very nice, and of course I was such a controller that I said to my mother—and I wasn't old enough. I mean, I had—you had to be eighteen when you're married, you know. I said, "We're getting married at Christmas time and if you don't sign, I'll run away," and they didn't even bat—I mean they didn't even stand up to me. Talk about a controller. And so we were married at Christmas time.

JL: Huh. Well, I guess that comes from—from your having to take control with the language and—

AF: Right, I was just given way too much. But it was all—it worked out. The lord had—when the lord got hold of me, that’s all that mattered, you know. He can simmer anybody down, if you’re obedient.

JL: So what was—is your husband’s name? Is your husband alive?

AF: No.

JL: No.

AF: The lord took him seven years ago.

JL: Oh.

AF: It was a beautiful—Bert or Herbert. Uh-hmm.

JL: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

AF: And they were a family from England.

JL: Oh, had he also come from England, your husband?

AF: Well, they were born—his parents came to Canada and they were all born in Canada and then they went back to England to live for a while, but they came through Canada.

JL: Uh-hmm.

AF: And then they came to South Milwaukee.

JL: Hmm.

AF: In the ‘20s.

JL: Oh, and do you have children?

AF: Yes, uh-hmm, four.

JL: And their names?

AF: Are—they’re all married.

JL: Uh-hmm.

AF: So we have Bill who's the oldest and he's in Rhode Island and Nancy who is in—Nancy Zegert. She's in Chippewa Falls, and we have Linda Trinkle who is in—Linda and Dick in West Bend and then Chris and Ron who are in South Milwaukee.

JL: And grandchildren, do you have?

AF: I have ten grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

JL: Wow.

AF: And I have the privilege of taking care of two of those great grandchildren twice a week.

JL: Oh.

AF: Isn't that wonderful?

JL: Uh-huh.

AF: I feel that's such a privilege.

JL: Wow.

AF: A nine month old and a two and a half year old.

JL: Wow. Well, when you look back on the fact that you came here as such a young person and really lived out your life here, do you think that immigration made a difference in the kind of person you are or—

AF: I'm sure.

JL: Influenced you in some way?

AF: I'm sure in very many ways, and of course I don't know if just the immigration, but I think it has much to do with the family. My father was an extremely positive person. He worked so hard. I can remember all the land from here—this was all open fields at one time. He cut all the—the grass. It must have been ten or fifteen acres, with a scythe and then my brother and I would have to turn it by hand with the forks. It was just all really hard work. He opened ten acres and planted corn by hand. My brother and I would have to hoe it. My mother harvested it by hand.

JL: And that's right here on the land we're on?

AF: All in this area. So we've really seen everything grow. This was just open fields, because we lived down the street. About four blocks down the street. That was our homestead, and it's still there, but just everything. And I can remember one time going in the field where the corn was and standing, it was so—we called it a hill, but it was an elevation. You know, elevation and I can remember standing there seeing the [unclear] zeppelin, seeing a boat on Lake Michigan, seeing a plane and a train at the same time and I thought, "God, I've seen everything." [Laughs] You know, but my father was—I can remember him saying, "Work is pleasure." I mean that—that was a wonderful outlook, wasn't it?

JL: Yes.

AF: He never bemoaned the fact that he had to work. Talk about working hard, that man, as short as he was, he was just a dynamo. And so he would always see the pleasure in things.

JL: Wow. Can you think of any other attitudes or maybe expression that your mother or father used that kind of got instilled in you?

AF: Well, when you—when you didn't—you see, I was the one to learn the English language, so consequently I wasn't so interested in the Swiss, but I marvel that to this day I speak it fluently, even though I'm not in contact with it.

JL: Wow.

AF: But there were certain little things that they'd say and I just recently I remembered one, but now it—it eludes me.

JL: Well, if you think of it, you can say it.

AF: Uh-hmm.

JL: How about, do you—do you feel you have a Swiss side to you?

AF: Oh, yes.

JL: What is that, can you—

AF: I see it as a work ethic for one thing and I don't know that that's necessarily Swiss. That's probably—it's probably part of the whole hardship factor, but even though we were poor, I never felt poor and that was a rich experience because in spite—regardless of—I can remember we didn't have any silverware or anything that went

together. We had an outhouse, I mean even down here. Even until after I was married, there wasn't even water down there, but there was electricity. But she always worked. My mother always worked so hard. She took in laundry when she had to do it by hand, you know, so that she could earn money for a washing machine. So you see, these hard things and I can remember we never had a basement and we didn't have a furnace. It was just a coal burning stove that we had. So you always hung your clothes out, winter and summer, and I can remember bringing pa's long underwear and it looked like pa was hanging on the line in the kitchen until it thawed out, you know. So these are all things, and then before we went to school in the morning, we'd always have to make sure that we had a washing machine that you'd push and pull like this, you know. I don't—maybe you've never seen one, but it had a lever that you pushed and it worked on gears and it worked the agitator.

JL: Oh.

AF: Before, and that was a big step from doing it with a washboard, you know, and so we'd all have to take turns working that machine for a while before we went to school. After she got up at five or four in the morning to heat the water, you know, and do these kinds of things. So it was all—it was all good, though. I saw a positive element to it and I think one of the—the big carryovers is that I can be firm and not placate the flesh. I don't give into. I don't feel that I have to have all these things because it was a joy to be challenged, you know. It arose—it made arise within me a challenge to do things, no matter how hard they were, without grumbling, but seeing the joy, eventually knowing that it would come out. And I thought that was good. So I lament over the kids today because I feel they have none of this challenge. They've been inundated with excess and that's a detriment.

JL: How about the most positive things in your life, the most—that you find most satisfying?

AF: In my life today?

JL: Yeah, or—or over the course of—

AF: As I was growing up? I think one of the positive things was the fact that my mother always insisted that we go to Sunday school and so that was a real—Sunday school and eventually I—I sensed that was the lord's call in my life. Just continually calling and calling and always—we always had a Christmas program to go to even though my father wasn't involved, but my mother would be and there

would—that was a tradition. Always a Christmas Eve program where we had to say a piece and with the church. So that was sort of the one social outlet that my mother had, was the church. I mean for the social, but it was religion rather than Christianity, but eventually she became a Christian and there's a big difference, you know.

JL: Oh, uh-huh.

AF: Uh-hmm.

JL: So, and this became more important to you as—as time went on?

AF: It was—I never realized how important it was because I can remember when I was in fourth grade my mother was very sick and we had to call a doctor. Dr. Flaherty was the doctor in town and he came down and he said, "And young lady, what do you want to be when you're old?" and I said, "A missionary." And I—lord, he knew I guess. The lord knew me better than I knew myself.

JL: It kind of came out of your mouth [unclear].

AF: It just came out and, you know, that was—I thought that was pretty good.

JL: Uh-huh.

AF: So I thought that was wonderful.

JL: And how about this time in your life, now that your children are grown and—

AF: Oh, it's an exciting time, I think. When you're—when you're doing what the lord directs you to do, there is—you know, no matter what the age, you just don't retire. It's—he gives you a ball. You take a pass and run to another—another part of the field, you know.

JL: Uh-huh.

AF: And so I'm very involved.

JL: What—what a—what are you being directed to do?

AF: Well, I'm involved with Christian education, much of the—Time Out. I don't know if you've ever heard of Time Out. It's a Christian education that's permitted by the government. You can take Time Out as kids come out of school and they're given an hour, up to two

hours, depending on what the school gives you for instructing kids in Christian education.

JL: Hmm.

AF: About the lord. So we're involve din that and I've had Good News Clubs in the home, you know, because I'm close to the school and have kids come in once a week and teach them about Jesus.

JL: They come here?

AF: Uh-huh.

JL: To your home?

AF: Uh-hmm. Did that for a number of years. In fact, last year was the first we didn't do it, but we were involved with Time Out and I'm involved with Time Out again this year. I have bible studies and involved in church and it's exciting.

JL: Uh-huh.

AF: I think.

JL: Yes. And—and you—when you visited Ellis Island and—and picked up this form and returned it, can you say anything else about that? About what it was like going back after all those years?

AF: Well, I think that the biggest thing to me was to see the amount of people that came through and the tremendous hardship some of these people suffered, and the courage they had to go on. It was just incredible and you can see with this kind of courage, and I see it today because there's so many people who've come in from foreign countries and they're willing to do anything to get ahead. You know, they're—they're not a complaining lot. They don't want ease. They're willing to sacrifice, to get together and work together and have things out come out because they're willing to deny themselves, so they can get ahead. And I don't see that in young people today and in—in many people today. But it's very typical of when you come to a foreign country with very little. I think it has a lot to do with part of the—part of what made America, what America is today, but is fast losing.

JL: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So you—so you feel that the—do you feel that there's a difference at all between the immigrants coming in today

and—I mean basic difference, or do you see it as more or less the same?

AF: I see it very much the same but unfortunately our government has—you know, when they're going into this multicultural education and wanting to meet everybody's language needs, ridiculous. When you leave a country and go to a new country, you embrace that culture. Not that you can't keep the—the things that are important to you, but you don't—we're dividing—our country's being weakened by this kind of thinking. Everybody, you know, multicultural schools, multicultural languages in schools. Ridiculous. Meet—put forth the effort because the ability is there, but they don't play on that. Isn't that true?

JL: Uh-hmm. Yeah.

AF: It's so sad. [phone rings] Should I take it off? [tape off/on]

JL: Okay, we're just resuming again. Is there anything else that you can think of to say about this country or your place in it [unclear]?

AF: I feel—oh, another thing I just need to share.

JL: Yes.

AF: Is as I was growing up, we always celebrated Memorial Day, the fourth of July and that flag and I learned the National Anthem and My Country 'Tis of Thee, and I can remember being so pleased that I was an American and to this day, I can cry when I see that flag go by because, you know, people don't respect the things that should be respected anymore. But when you come to a country and you embrace that country, there is just something awesome about it and it—it's a great—it's the greatest there is. It really is.

JL: That's a beautiful place to end. I want to thank you so much for a most interesting interview. I've been speaking with Ann Fooks, who came from Switzerland at the age of three in 1924, and this is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]