

**EI-857**

**JULIA PALO**

**BIRTHDATE: APRIL 8, 1909**

**INTERVIEW DATE: FEBRUARY 22, 1997**

**AGE AT TIME OF INTERVIEW: 87**

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

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**TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: TAPESCRIBE**

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**FINLAND, 1929**

**AGE: 20**

**SHIP: THE GRIPSHOLM**

**PORT: GÖTEBORG, SWEDEN**

**RESIDENCES:**

- **FINLAND: SALTVIK, ALAND ISLANDS**
- **US: NEW YORK, NY; FLORIDA**

PALO: See, I don't speak Finnish.

LEVINE: Oh, okay.

PALO: I speak Swedish.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Well, we'll let ---

PALO: [interposed] Because all of my relatives were Swedish.

LEVINE: talk about that [not understood] .

PALO: [not understood] Swedish.

LEVINE: Okay. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service and I'm here today with Julia Palo, who came from the Oland Islands, Finland.

PALO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: In 1929, when she was twenty years of age.

PALO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: At the time of this interview, Mrs. Palo is eighty-seven years of age, and maybe we could start, if you would say your birth date and where in the Oland Islands you were born?

PALO: Uh-hmm. I was born in Saltvik, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1909.

LEVINE: Okay, and where in the Oland Islands?

PALO: Saltvik?

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: That's a community in the west, north part of Oland Islands.

LEVINE: And how do you spell that?

PALO: A-L-A-N-D.

LEVINE: And Solswick—

PALO: Saltvik, S-A-L-T-V-I-K.

LEVINE: Saltvik, okay.

PALO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And did you live in Saltvik up until the time you were twenty and left for this country?

PALO: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Okay. Now, your mother's name?

PALO: Anna.

LEVINE: Anna, and her maiden name?

PALO: Karlson.

LEVINE: Karlson, with an O? Karlson?

PALO: K-A.

LEVINE: Oh, K-A-R-L-S-O-N.

PALO: S-O-N.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And your father's name?

PALO: Kalle.

LEVINE: Kalle, with a K?

PALO: K-A-L-L-E.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Okay—

PALO: But they said probably Karl, Julius.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Now, were both your mother and father of Swedish decent?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Do you have any idea when their families arrived in the Aland Islands?

PALO: I have no idea about that.

LEVINE: Well, you--did you have grandparents who were there?

PALO: Yes. Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Both sides?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: And you remember them?

PALO: I don't remember my grandmother from my mother's side because she died very young.

LEVINE: How about your grandfather from your mother's side?

PALO: Yeah, him I remember.

LEVINE: What do you remember about him?

PALO: He used to come with apples for us, and visit once in a while because he remarried again and had six more children. So he actually had twelve children.

LEVINE: Wow. Uh-huh. Now, was—what did he do for work, do you remember?

PALO: He was a sea captain, which most of the people were in those days. So I remember he was coming home once and he had dolls for us from Finland.  
[not understood]

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Had dolls.

LEVINE: Do you remember what they looked like?

PALO: Yes, they were little porcelain dolls with blue dresses on. I remember that.

LEVINE: Wow. Now, when you were born, did you have sisters and brothers?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: And what were their names, like from the oldest going down?

PALO: Anis, Uno and then I was the third one and then it was Gerda, Anni and Kalle.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, so you were right in the middle.

PALO: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And how about your father's mother and father?

PALO: My father's mother lived together with my mother, after my father died. My father died when I was only five years old.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: So my mother brought us up all alone, and then my grandmother from my father's side died, I would say when I was about seven.

LEVINE: Your grandmother or your grandfather?

PALO: My grandmother.

LEVINE: Your grandmother died.

PALO: The grandfather, I don't remember, from his—from my father's side.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: So for two years after your father died and before your grandmother died, she lived with you, in the house?

PALO: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Do you remember—what do you remember about her?

PALO: Well, she used to read to us and, you know, in those days we had open fireplaces, so we used to sit around her, you know, all the children, and she used to read to us, and prayers and so. And that night when she had a stroke right in front of the fire, I remember I ran to the barn to get my mother and an uncle that was there to help her with all the animals and things.

LEVINE: I see. So you lived on a farm?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And what was the farm? What kind of farming?

PALO: Well, in those days they did everything. We had wheat, oats, cows, horses, sheep, pigs.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and did your mother help on the farm?

PALO: As much as she could, but I guess she was mostly in the house. She did have outside help.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and so—

PALO: After my father died, yeah.

LEVINE: Right, so your father was a sea captain.

PALO: No, not my father, my grandfather.

LEVINE: Your grandfather.

PALO: My father was a farmer.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and your uncle, who—whose—whose brother was your uncle? The one that was on the farm?

PALO: That helped on the farm? He was married to my father's sister.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: So he was a—an uncle from that—Uncle Oscar. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oscar. [Laughs] Do you remember any experiences—

PALO: [Laughing] Oh, yes.

LEVINE: With Uncle Oscar?

PALO: Lot of experiences.

LEVINE: Yeah?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What kind of a person was he?

PALO: He was very helpful. Very helpful. He own—he came every day to help my mother with whatever he could.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah, he was very helpful.

LEVINE: Great. Now, did you help out on the farm at any time?

PALO: When I was old enough, yes.

LEVINE: What kinds of tasks did you have to do?

PALO: Oh, I did all kinds of farming. [Laughs] I had—I was the horse girl.

LEVINE: [Laughs} The horse girl.

PALO: I took care of the horses when I got old enough.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

PALO: Because my older brother went to this country, also.

LEVINE: He went—

PALO: And my older sisters went.

LEVINE: I see. Did you enjoy that, taking care of the horses or—

PALO: Yeah, I enjoyed to ride the horses' back—all bareback.

LEVINE: Oh, I—

PALO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Did you have a particular horse that you rode mostly?

PALO: Well, we—we had—we—then after my mother had the farm, so the grounds rented out, then we had only one horse and I didn't—eh, she was okay, but as I got older, I wasn't so interested in that. That was when I was little because I even remember with my father. I was only four years old and my father went and got the horses from some different property, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And I wanted to ride the horse and I was only four years old, and when it was a hill, I fell off and the horse stopped. I'll never forget it. The horse stopped.

So my father looked back and there I was, laying on the ground. I wasn't hurt.

LEVINE: Huh.

PALO: No, but the horse stopped. He wouldn't take a step.

LEVINE: And was that the horse that you—that you —continued to ride?

PALO: [interposed] No, he was too—he was too—too strong and too wild, so we couldn't keep him.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: So we had to change and have a—get another horse.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and then you had other livestock too, besides—

PALO: Yeah, we had cows and sheeps and pigs.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What do you remember about Saltvik? I mean, what kind of a—was it big? Was it a—it was a farming village or—

PALO: Yeah. Yeah, it—they were all mostly farmers, except when you went to the city, you know. It was a small city, Mariehan.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

PALO: And we went there to shop and things like that for clothes. Otherwise, go to the stores we had nearby.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, and how about the produce from the farm? Did that—did you take that to market or anything?

PALO: In the fall my mother was able to sell something, but what our farm was, actually, brought a lot of money was for woods. We had a lot of woods, timber and things like that. So I know she used to sell for when it came to pay taxes and things, she used to sell from the woods.

LEVINE: So would people—who would cut down the trees, do you know?

PALO: Well, if she didn't have anybody, you know, there were different companies that came and cut it down.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: That wanted it, like the sawmills and things like that.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Was it a beautiful place?

PALO: Yes. [whistling sound]

LEVINE: Could you describe what it looked like?

PALO: I can even show it to you. I have a picture.

LEVINE: Oh, okay. Well, you're hooked up with the microphone, but—

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Just tell me.

PALO: It was an old farm house and we could overlook the lake in front of us and that lake had a little island and we used to have a little house built of branches and things where we used to go and play, you know. And we had a boat we had to row over, you know. It was quite deep waters. I'm surprised many times that none of us drowned, because we really were not swimmers when we were little. But we were always in the summertime by the lake playing.

LEVINE: Wow.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: How about in the wintertime?

PALO: Washed our clothes there and everything.

LEVINE: Oh. Do you remember that, wash day?

PALO: [Laughing] Oh, yes. Very good.

LEVINE: And how—would—would you—would your mother like rub the clothing on the rocks?

PALO: No, not—

LEVINE: Or did she?.

PALO: No. The [not understood] maybe they did, lay it on the rocks and scrub it, yeah. Like home [unclear].

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: But, no, we rinsed it in the lake in the summertime. But in the wintertime, it was tough. They didn't do too much washing then. Only what you needed. [Laughs] That was it. That was the style in those days.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And then, um, let's see. Was that a social occasion? Like would the women go down to the lake at the same time and do wash.

PALO: Yeah, most of them. Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Yeah.

PALO: And then we were young girls. We had a good time and after we were through washing, we went into the lake and swim and got cleaned up ourselves. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Huh. How about winter? What—what—

PALO: Ah, then it was a little hard, but then we had a lot of good times, too, you know. Did a lot of handwork and got together like doing that, embroidery and knitting and things. And weaving.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: So you had to learn everything.

LEVINE: So you knew how to make clothes, did you?

PALO: Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Wow.

PALO: You try everything.

LEVINE: And how about cooking? Do you remember the kinds of food that you ate mostly?

PALO: Ah, salty meat, you know, in the wintertime. Fish. They had a lot of fish, fresh fish and then, of course, when I got a little older they had places where you could go and buy fresh meat in the winter, too, you know.

LEVINE: Did you have refrigeration?

PALO: No. They had the --- dug out in the ground like.

LEVINE: Oh, like a root cellar?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: You mean a—

PALO: Yeah, where they put the potatoes and beets and whatever they want to keep for the winter, you know. And then in the summertime we put the milk there. It was a little colder because they had—we could take the milk to the dairy, when I was a little older. I used to do that, too.

LEVINE: How did you take it to the dairy?

PALO: With a horse and a wagon.

LEVINE: Oh, and did you actually drive it?

PALO: I was the one. [Laughs] I was the one. My sister did it once and the horse got scared or something and turned around and all the milk on the ground and she said, "I'll never do this again," she said. [Laughs] So then it was always me.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah, until I went to this country. So that's why.

LEVINE: Did you go to school at all?

PALO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: And what was school like with—

PALO: Very good. Very good. We learned a lot and it was tough teacher.

LEVINE: It was the same teacher all the way through?

PALO: Yup, they had four classes in one room. Four different classes. Of course, I went to like kindergarten. We always had that, like it was moving from farm. Different farm to different farms, but we had it in our home and I was only small and I used to be able to sit in with it. So I could read and write before I went to school.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: This was—this was Swedish, though?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Why don't you talk about how it is that it's in Finland, but it—everyone was speaking Swedish and was of Swedish—

PALO: Well, on Aland Island everybody was speaking Swedish, but the ones that went to higher schooling, you know, to want to be teachers and things, at that time had to learn Finnish, too.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And if you went to higher school, you had to leave. Did you have to leave?

PALO: Yes, then you would have had to leave.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: There was no what we call high school in—in Aland Island?

PALO: Yes, yes, but I mean I would have to live there because it was a little too far from my home.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So did—

PALO: In Mariehan they had lyceum, they called it.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: So you went as far as what, eighth grade or sixth grade or how—how—

PALO: Public school, when you're fourteen.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah. That's all.

LEVINE: And how about religion? Was the family a religious family?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: What religion?

PALO: Lutheran.

LEVINE: Oh, Lutheran, uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah, we had a nice old church there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and do you remember any ceremonies, either religious ceremonies or any other kind?

PALO: Oh, yes, because in the winter time, the minister would come to somebody's home and then even the older people and the young people had to come and he used to see how much they knew about the bible and the catechism we had to know by heart.

LEVINE: Like what would—let's just say the minister came, what would happen when he visited?

PALO: Every—everybody came and then you had refreshments after and it was almost like a party. [Laughs]

LEVINE: But would he—would he give you actual lessons?

PALO: Not then.

LEVINE: No.

PALO: No, but you had to go to confirmation class and then you got your lessons, see, and we also had religion in public school on Saturdays.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: From nine to twelve.

LEVINE: Lutheran?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Was mostly everyone Lutheran that was around where you were?

PALO: Yes. Yes, yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, uh-hmm.

PALO: Was really—on Aland Island it was nothing else at that time, but then in Mariehan, they started, you know, with missionaries and I think Seventh Day Adventists came in and different—but that's more in later years.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Yeah, not when I was growing up.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: At least I don't remember anything about it at that time.

LEVINE: Okay. How about your confirmation? Do you remember your confirmation day?

PALO: Oh, yes. Yes.

LEVINE: What—what happened?

PALO: Well, then you were nervous, of course, if you didn't know what the pastor was asking you because the confirmation was in church in front of the altar, and he didn't ask too many questions on that Sunday. You know, they sort of prepare you before. So then we were—everyone that did pretty good got a bible. So I have my bible.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and did you wear white?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: White dresses and the boys had dark suits and white shirts. Every—we dressed up more for school then than they do nowadays.

LEVINE: Oh, well, yeah.

PALO: Even if you didn't have too much.

LEVINE: What—what would you wear to school, let's just say?

PALO: Woolen dress in the winter and we had—and woolen socks.

LEVINE: Like stockings?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: We knitted them ourselves, too.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh. Uh-huh.

PALO: When we were little older, anyway. And then, of course, you had to go through the woods. It was about I would say two kilometer.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And that's quite far. And—and it was a lot of snow sometimes, so then the teacher—we had two --- like open fireplaces there in the school room. So he had the fire going when we came in. We could stay in front of the fire to get a little drier on our skirts. [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs] Now, would you make or your mother, would you—how did you—were your clothes homemade?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Oh, they had a seamstress that either came over to our house and would stay there for a week or so and sew.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And then the same thing with shoes, the man that made shoes. So you had to have leather. When you killed a calf, I think, you made that skin into leather.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And then we had leather for shoes.

LEVINE: So you would have the leather, so that when the man—

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Came to make the shoes, he would use the leather you had.

PALO: Yeah. Yes.

LEVINE: And—and these people, the seamstress and—and the shoemaker, they would travel from village to village, or house to house?

PALO: No, I think they were mostly in our own village town. Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Every village had probably their own, you know, because I don't remember that they want anywheres. Because when I was a little older, you know, the

one that used to sew my dresses, I was sort of friends with her and she showed me how to sew, so I started to sew myself, you know. [Laughs]

LEVINE: I see. Did you have much choice about what—what kind of a dress you got?

PALO: We tried, but it wasn't much choices. Not really, when you're that young, no.

LEVINE: How about the—the wool, say, for your—for your—

PALO: Oh, we had sheep.

LEVINE: That's where you got the wool from?

PALO: Yeah. You had to make the wool, the yarn.

LEVINE: Would you, your family make yarn from your sheep?

PALO: Yeah, uh-hmm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, wow.

PALO: When I was little, but not when I was a little older because things changed. Yes. So by the time I was ready to come to this country, we bought the material and we had dresses made and you could buy ready dresses and things like that, you know, in Mariehan.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, did you have in mind what you wanted to do or did you expect to get married and not—not work?

PALO: No, I was never going to get married. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh? You didn't want to?

PALO: No.

LEVINE: [Laughs] Why was that?

PALO: I don't know. I thought I was just going to be by myself.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And when I came here—no, I thought I was just going to come here and make a little money and then go home.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And build my own home.

LEVINE: Really?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: That was my dream then.

LEVINE: I see, uh-huh.

PALO: So my girlfriend and I, we came over to this country together.

LEVINE: Now, how—how did you decide to come?

PALO: Because my sister was here.

LEVINE: Oh, so you were the third in line, right?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And your older sister—

PALO: My older—my older sister was here, you know, and I wanted to, so I came to her.

LEVINE: And how did—how did it happen that she came to this country?

PALO: Well, at that time everybody was going.

LEVINE: Oh, really?

PALO: Yeah, all the young people.

LEVINE: Do you remember what you thought about this country before you actually came here?

PALO: Well, at that time I had big dreams, I guess, but I was very disappointed when I came first because I thought, “Oh, I thought it was going to look so beautiful when you came into 57<sup>th</sup> Street to dock.” It was so dark. It was

raining. [Laughs] And everything looked so dirty to me. And then we had to go to Ellis Island. You know, then it was another experience.

LEVINE: Well, talk about leaving. You—you thought you'd be coming back, so—when you left.

PALO: Oh, yes. Yeah.

LEVINE: But did you—do you remember anything you took with you?

PALO: Not much except my clothes what I was going to use. That's all.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: That's all.

LEVINE: And do you remember leaving?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: What did you do? When you left your home—

PALO: Well, it was sad to say good-bye to mother, yeah, but then we were so many young peoples. We had fun. You never—you don't think when you're twenty years old. [Laughs]

LEVINE: So you were traveling and your friend.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And other people you knew—

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Were they also coming—going to America?

PALO: Yeah. Yeah. There were ten of us, you know.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: But some of them came second class, and they didn't have to go to Ellis Island.

LEVINE: That's right.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So when you left, you left your home and then where—what port did you go to, to leave?

PALO: Mariehan.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And then we went to—to Sweden. So we went from Göteborg.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: It was a long travel at that time, you know, because you had to take a train.

LEVINE: Right, you take the train—

PALO: From Stockholm to Göteborg.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And when you got to the port, did you have any examinations or anything like that before you actually left?

PALO: I think—I can't remember if we had anything special in those days.

LEVINE: Did you stay in—in Göteborg before—for any length of time before you left?

PALO: I don't think so. It might be that we had there — I can't remember if we stayed there overnight or anything.

LEVINE: Was there much—was there any problem in getting the papers, getting the ship ticket?

PALO: Well, no. No, it was pretty easy that time because I know my younger sister was trying to—she was trying a week or two later and then they stopped it. See, you could come like to work on a farm here, as just—what did they call it? [Laughs] Practice on a farm.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: But when you came in, no one asked you to go to a farm. My sister—my sister sent her husband to meet me and I had my sister's name in the paper, so they were a little bit worried about sending me with a man, you know, but then they could see we are so many and we knew each other and so they let me go from Ellis Island.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, how about the trip over on the Grips—Gripsholm?

PALO: Oh, that was fun. [Laughs]

LEVINE: What was—what did you do?

PALO: We were dancing every night, you know, and enjoying our friendship because, as I say, we were young and we had a lot of fun.

LEVINE: Did—was—was-did you have music?

PALO: Oh, yeah.

LEVINE: Was it—were—was it Finnish or Swedish or—

PALO: Well, either Finnish or Swedish, the dance music doesn't matter.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: And so some of your friends were in Second Class?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Did you go up —

PALO: We went up sometimes and they came down sometimes, you know.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Anything else happen aboard the ship that you—that you can think of?

PALO: No, nothing special otherwise.

LEVINE: How about—how about the food or the accommodations?

PALO: Well, I guess that was all good to me, you know. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Coming from the farm.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. And then you say when it came—the boat came into the New York Harbor, it was raining and it was dark.

PALO: Yeah, it was in the—you know, before Christmas it's dark, around Christmas.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: It was very dark and I thought it was—it looked dirty. I thought it would be—everything would look so nice and clean and white, you know. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And—and so when you got off the ship, how—tell me about going to Ellis Island.

PALO: Well, we went on a ferry and as we came there, you know, they put us into a -- sort of like a stall, and it was me and my friend and it was colored people there, and we have never seen colored people and maybe they haven't seen white ones like us, either. [Laughs] And that sort of made the impression a little different, too, you know. So there I guess they were in the same boat as we were. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Now, were these people coming in, also coming into this country?

PALO: I guess so, but probably they come from a different country naturally. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: So, yeah, they were on Ellis Island.

LEVINE: Do you remember the physical examinations that you got?

PALO: Yes. That-

LEVINE: You said in the questionnaire that you were examined onboard ship.

PALO: Yes, we were examined, but I don't remember anything special about it.

LEVINE: But then were you re-examined at Ellis Island?

PALO: No.

LEVINE: No?

PALO: No. No.

LEVINE: So what happened at Ellis Island for you?

PALO: Well, really nothing. After a while they took us out to the front where they had the desks, you know, and all the fellows were there to meet us, you know, because my friend had two brothers and—and—and my sister's husband. So then they just signed us out and they let us go.

LEVINE: Hmm.

PALO: And—but I didn't worry about anything. Isn't that something?

LEVINE: Do you—what kind—how—could you describe yourself as a twenty year old? What were you like when you came to this country? What kind of a young woman were you?

PALO: Oh, I don't remember. [Laughs]

LEVINE: I mean, were you—were you—would you say that you were seeing this as an adventure?

PALO: Sort of, yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yes. I wanted to—of course, then I stayed with my sister and her husband in Brooklyn and then I got a job.

LEVINE: Do you remember any first impressions of this country, once you got here in the first few days or weeks?

PALO: Well, after a while you—you get used to it, you know, but I really can't say that the impression was too good in the beginning.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: How about your sister and brother-in-law's apartment? How did that—

PALO: That was what they called railroad—

LEVINE: Railroad flats.

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: It had the coal stove in the kitchen. I remember the heat and Depression was, yeah, so my brother-in-law didn't work at that time, but my sister worked.

LEVINE: Oh, what did she do?

PALO: Housework.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: She went into New York every day, and then I got a job as a nursemaid.

LEVINE: How long were you here before—when you got your first job?

PALO: About three weeks because it was just at Christmas time so it was—they didn't want me to start right away. I think it was three weeks before I started working.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and what did you do?

PALO: I was a nursemaid with a nice Jewish young couple. Very nice and they had a little baby boy, six months old, and I took care of the baby.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and did they both work, is that what it was?

PALO: Yes. Yes, they both worked but they had only three-room apartment and I had to sleep in the kitchen. So then I thought in the summertime, I figure I'd get a different job, and she wanted me so badly to stay at that time, you know. I remember it well. She said they were going to try to get four-room apartment because the boy liked me so much, the baby. So naturally, when you take care of a little baby, they like you. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Well, I guess you were good to him, so—

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And—but I left anyway. So then I work for a family in Flatbush some place.

[END OF SIDE A]

[BEGIN SIDE B]

LEVINE: so you were saying that when you went to work for the family with the daughter—

PALO: Yeah, Alberto I think their name was, and they lost a lot of money in the stock market. That I remember, so they had to sell their house and go into an apartment. So then they—

LEVINE: And that's where they were?

PALO: That's where they were after I left them because then they couldn't afford to have a maid and they didn't need it either because the girl was going away to college.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: So then you had your evenings free.

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: And what did you do in your evenings?

PALO: Well, probably I was reading, going for a walk. I didn't—I didn't know how to be scared in those days.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: And met some friends and—

LEVINE: Did you keep contact with the friends—the friends that you came over with?

PALO: Oh, yes. We still keep in contact.

LEVINE: Oh, that's wonderful.

PALO: We still are good friends, yes. We are the closest friends really. Yeah. We were the first ones to move down to Florida and then as they retire, they all move down here.

LEVINE: Oh, that's wonderful.

PALO: So I have a lot of friends around here. The only thing is so many that have died already.

LEVINE: Any left that came over on the same ship?

PALO: Yes. Yes.

LEVINE: Oh, wonderful.

PALO: Yeah, I have two friends here that came over and we were in the same cabin.

LEVINE: Wow.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now—so when you get together with your friends, what—what kinds of things—

PALO: Oh, sometimes we talk about the old days, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: But when you were in Brooklyn and you were—and you were working for that family, did—

PALO: Well, then we were not in contact as much because somehow or another we were all a little different spread around then. But we had a Society Aland in [not understood] Temple in New York.

LEVINE: Where was that?

PALO: On 149<sup>th</sup> Street in Bronx.

LEVINE: And the Society Aland, what—what kinds of things did the society do?

PALO: Well, it was like a sick benefit because in those days, you know, there was a lot of people that you paid so much a year and then if you became sick, you know, you got so much a week and it sort of would help you a little bit.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: Which helped all the people in those days.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: Quite a lot if they were sick because you didn't have anything in those days.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: And—and we—my husband and I were very active in that. I think he was president when I joined and he—he was finance secretary for twenty-five years, almost until we came to Florida.

LEVINE: Wow.

PALO: Yeah. So he was very active in all kinds of things like that.

LEVINE: Did—did the society have other benefits?

PALO: No, that's all.

LEVINE: They didn't have like, for example, burial—

PALO: Yes, they had. They give you a little bit. I think at that time they give was it hundred dollars. Now I think they give two-fifty when you die. I'm a charter member now so I don't even have to pay dues anymore.

LEVINE: Oh. Uh-huh.

PALO: After fifty years, and I've got a—oh, well, I'm not supposed to get up. I was going to show that to you.

LEVINE: You can show me later. So—so you would pay in your dues.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And that would—

PALO: Once a year.

LEVINE: And then if you were sick, you would receive a certain amount.

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: And if—so—if you died, your family would—or you'd have a burial plot? Is that how they did it?

PALO: No, no, no, they just gave you a little money to help out with the burial.

LEVINE: I see. Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

PALO: You got a little money.

LEVINE: And was there a social aspect?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Like dances and—

PALO: Yes, we had meetings every month and dance and they served coffee. I worked a lot of times on the coffee. [Laughs] And—and then once a year we had a masquerade party. We had Christmas parties, and we also had a summer fest dance and day up in Throggs Neck. Yeah, that's the place is still—

LEVINE: Throggs Neck, uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah, by the lake. By the water there.

LEVINE: Oh, City Island? No.

PALO: No, not City Island.

LEVINE: In the Bronx?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: We used to have our picnics there and I know they still have it every summer.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: And I can't remember the name just now.

LEVINE: I can't think of it either. Well this Aland Society, was it in the Bronx or in Brooklyn?

PALO: In Bronx.

LEVINE: In Bronx.

PALO: Yes. Now, they have—that place was sold, so it was broken up, you know, because it was mostly Scandinavians that owned it, all different Swedish societies and Aland, and now they meet in Brooklyn, I think.

LEVINE: Hmm. Now, you—you were working for the family where you had your evenings free.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Is that—were you working for them when you met your husband?

PALO: No, not for that family because, see, I—they couldn't have a steady maid anymore and they didn't need it.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: So we parted that way. Then I got—

LEVINE: And then what?

PALO: Then I worked in Greenwich, Connecticut, together with my cousin. My cousin was a cook waitress and I was a nursemaid.

LEVINE: Oh, and did you like it there?

PALO: Very much.

LEVINE: Now, that was out of the city, I take it.

PALO: Yeah, in Greenwich, Connecticut.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah. So we used to bring—I had a week—weekend off now and then, you know, and then I used to go into New York.

LEVINE: How did you like going back to the country after being in the city for—

PALO: I didn't mind it. I didn't mind it because we had a lot of activities out there, too, you know, and working with my cousin was fun.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: And there I was also like a nursemaid and I was chambermaid, cleaned upstairs.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And this girl was six, six or seven years old, Alicia. Their name was Harland.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And so would you—would you socialize in the evenings or anything like that?

PALO: No.

LEVINE: No.

PALO: Not too much. Not there.

LEVINE: You'd just go into the city every once in awhile.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and then is that where you met your husband? Were you working there?

PALO: Well, while I was working there I met Nils, yeah.

LEVINE: And how did you—

PALO: At the—I went to a party in Brooklyn. Somebody was leaving for Aland and they always had farewell parties and I met him there.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And he had a car, so he could take me home to Greenwich. [Laughs]

LEVINE: [Laughs} I see. Now, these parties that you had, the masquerade, when would you have those?

PALO: Usually in February I thought it was. Yeah.

LEVINE: And was that—did—did people—

PALO: Oh, we used to come in costumes and we got prizes and all kinds of things.

LEVINE: And people really went out for—for the costumes?

PALO: Oh, yes. Like, there were up to six hundred people there sometimes.

LEVINE: Wow.

PALO: Hmm.

LEVINE: But these people weren't all from the Aland Islands?

PALO: No, they could come from any place.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: People that was born in this country because the ones that are new, now taking care of the Society Aland I think mostly are born of Alands people, but they're young people and they know the language, too, because they go visiting to Aland Islands.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, and—and you said there were other parties besides the masquerade.

PALO: Yeah. We had a meeting every month, so then we met and we had a meeting first and then they served coffee and then we danced. So it was very, very nice.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: When did you decide to give up the idea of going back to the Aland Islands?

PALO: After I was married and had the children and the war broke out, you know. We had—we work a lot for Finland at that time. We used to collect money and we used to send packages. I know my husband was on those committees all the time, you know. We had even in Madison Square Garden some kind of affair once. [car noises in background] Because I was looking through papers one day and I find that paper even, the program from Madison Square Garden in 1939 when the war broke out in Finland and then we collected a lot of money and the men went down and made up boxes and all that. And I sent to everybody almost, too, you know, what I—what I could, you know, to Finland.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm.

PALO: To my parents, my mother and sisters. It was so nice when they could make real coffee. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Wow. Uh-huh.

PALO: They couldn't buy anything. No. So it was a lot of things to go through.

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: So, then did you have children right away after you were married?

PALO: Ah, I was married in '34 and—in '35, excuse me. We were married in '35 and my daughter was born in '37.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and you just have one daughter?

PALO: No, I have a son, too?

LEVINE: Oh, what's your daughter's name?

PALO: My daughter's name is June Devariss. I thought—wasn't her name on there?

LEVINE: No.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: June Devariss.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And your son?

PALO: Ronald Johnson.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Because he was Johnson and he is out in Montana.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: He's a professor at Postum University in Montana.

LEVINE: Uh-huh. So when you were raising your children, were you in the Bronx then?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Is that where your husband had settled?

PALO: Well, we both settled there, you know.

LEVINE: I mean, had he been there before that? Or you met him in Brooklyn?

PALO: I met him on a dance—on a party, yes. No, at that time it was Depression. He was a house superintendent for seven years in New York, 400 East 50<sup>th</sup> Street.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And you heard about Beekman Place?

LEVINE: Say it again.

PALO: Beekman.

LEVINE: Beekman, uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah, the woman that owned that, she liked me and she came to the—wanted me to come and help her do things, so I used to go and take care of her birds when she went away, and once a bird died, you know. [Laughs] And I felt so bad, you know. She was rich, but she dressed very poorly and she had an old dog, you know. She used to come in and see me and the babies. So when I was going to have a baby—had the baby and we had only one—room apartment, studio apartment because it was a business, and she made the people move out on the first floor that was two rooms and kitchen and bath, so I could—so we wouldn't move.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And then when the war broke out and my husband was sort of drafted for work, you know, carpenter work and work in the shipyards, we had to leave and she felt so bad, you know. She has done that for us, and I felt bad about it, too.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Uh-huh.

LEVINE: So your father—your father. Your husband did carpentry work?

PALO: Uh-hmm. He was a carpenter, but at the time they couldn't find work.

LEVINE: Right.

PALO: So they had to take whatever they could. So most of the friends worked in apartment houses, that time. We had a lot of friends from Aland Islands working there.

LEVINE: Huh.

PALO: And—as doormens and, you know, different things.

LEVINE: When you look back at that—on that time now, how—

PALO: You know, it's—it's the fun. I'm so glad I remember something. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Oh, yeah, you remember a lot. Yeah, that's great. Okay, so you—you raised your family then.

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: In that place, and then did you stay there until your children were grown?

PALO: No.

LEVINE: No.

PALO: No, no. That's when we—we had a summer place up in Hillside Lake. That's near Poughkeepsie.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: At that time, and I was there in the summertime with the children. So then my husband find an apartment in Bronx, and that was also a co-op, you know, so we stayed there for eighteen years. So my children actually grew up in Bronx.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Uh-hmm.

LEVINE: And then at some point you moved to Florida, when your children were grown.

PALO: Well, they had moved out then already.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: My daughter lived in New York and—oh, starting to rain. And my son was in—well, he was away in schools. He went to forest ranger school up in Waunakee one year and then he worked on this bridge in Brooklyn as a surveyor.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And after that he had to go in the service, you see, in those days, so he was going to go to Germany and he got appendicitis, so he landed in the hospital and then they said he couldn't go into the service. He had to wait three months, and that was all the way in the fall. So he said, "Well, then I'll go to school." So he went to college instead.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, and when you look back on the fact of coming here as a twenty year old young woman—

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Do you think that made a difference in—in your life? A difference in the way you are, in the way you see things?

PALO: Of course, I'm sure.

LEVINE: In what ways? What ways do you think—

PALO: Well, you get a different outlook on life and on people.

LEVINE: What do you think the difference is? Compare yourself with someone who was born here, say?

PALO: I don't see any difference with someone that's born here.

LEVINE: No.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: But the fact of coming and changing your—your—your culture and your life.

PALO: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, but the ones that I associate with is just about the same culture.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: I see.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah, and do you—how do you think of yourself? Do you think of yourself as—as a—a Swedish Fin or an American or—

PALO: No, I think of myself as an American now. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh. UH-huh.

PALO: I've been here that long.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Was there a time when you—when you stopped wanting to go back?

PALO: Oh, I've been back for lot of trips, you know.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: Yes, but never that I wanted to stay. I was always glad to come back.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Home. This is home, so—

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: What do you feel proud of or what do you feel satisfied about that you have—

PALO: That I managed without having to have anyone to help me. That I'm proud of, because you come here to this country and you have nothing, and we never had to go on welfare. We never had to have unemployment. Always could work and make a living.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: And now my grand daughter is married to an Ecuadorian and they were here Christmas time, and we were talking about the government in many different ways. So I said they should let me run it, we would not be in debt. So they laughed. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: So I mean it's a lot of things like that I feel happy about.

LEVINE: How about the friends that you came with? How—how did it happen that you got back together and—

PALO: We always stayed together, through that Society Aland, you know. The people really stuck together and when it was bad times, I remember in Bronx, there many times the people they made food in the church, in the basement because we had a kitchen there, and the people that didn't have work could come and eat. And I still do that to our church now here. I bring canned food every month because they have people coming that has nothing to eat. So I make it my business to buy, first Sunday every month.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm, now is this a Lutheran Church here?

PALO: Yes, uh-hmm, St. Andrews Lutheran Church, and we joined that, I think in 1963. So.

LEVINE: So you've been in Florida since—

PALO: '62.

LEVINE: '62, uh-huh.

PALO: Uh-hmm. So I've been here a long time.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, how is this time in your life, now that your children are grown and—

PALO: Well, now they come and see me. [Laughs] I go up in the summertime for a week or two because in this building here, people only come for the winter.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And then they go either up north Canada, or Finland.

LEVINE: Oh, there are a lot of Fins in this building?

PALO: Yes.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: Young ones. The parents. Our friends have died and the young people now have it. It was different when I moved here. Then we were quite a few old ladies, at least. Now it's another old man and me here in the summer.

LEVINE: Hmm.

PALO: And that makes it a little hard. So my children say sometimes that I should sell and move to a different place, but it's hard.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: Hard to move anywhere, this old.

LEVINE: And it feels like home, I imagine.

PALO: It feels like home and it's very hard to find a place that's big as this, an apartment. And open.

LEVINE: Now, how—what—I've read the term Swedish Finn.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Is that—is that—does that fit you?

PALO: Yeah. That's—yeah.

LEVINE: Yeah. Now, how—how are the Swedish Finns compared with the Finns?

PALO: The language. That's just about it.

LEVINE: That's about it.

PALO: Yeah. Yeah. Otherwise, nowadays it's — I remember when we were under Russia. Had Russian money.

LEVINE: Really?

PALO: We had Russians living in our home when I was little. Not living in our home, they lived in barracks, you know, but they used to come to our home and buy food, milk, for instance.

LEVINE: Uh, now when was this? Was this during—

PALO: 1917-18.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. So during the First World War, the Russians were in your town?

PALO: Yes. Yeah.

LEVINE: And do you remember anything about them?

PALO: Oh, yes.

LEVINE: What—what do you remember?

PALO: Oh, I remember quite a few of them used to come. They were very good to us kids. Very good because they weren't—those that came to our home, they were mostly officers and they had their own barracks on the highest point in Aland Island, and we used to go there. Kids, they used to put us down to the breakfast table with them and we had the tea and the [not understood] They were very good to us, and I remember one captain, you know, he used to come and get milk and he started to learn a little Swedish because there were young girls in that community, too, and they liked to be together with them, too. And he used to pick up my sister in his arms and sing to her, you know, in Swedish.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: And she was so shy and bashful for him. But they were very good to us kids. Very good. So we never had any problem but a lot of places did. Lot of places they ruined their homes and things like that, but—

LEVINE: You didn't see any violence.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: From these soldiers.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: Hmm. Wow.

PALO: We saw them when they were chased away. I remember that.

LEVINE: Oh, tell about that.

PALO: They came and they were right on that water in front of our home, they [not understood] them, and they were chased over to—I think to Goode. That was sort of in the middle of the country and there from there on I guess they send them back to Russia.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: The Germans and the Fins and then the Alands people, too, that was in the service, you know, had to.

LEVINE: When they were chased, what—what exactly was—

PALO: Well, it wasn't violence really in our neighborhood. I don't remember everything --- was very calm because I remember I was standing right there by the roadside because it was in the wintertime. So there was ice on the lake, and I saw them going by, you know, with their horses and wagons. Sleds. Now you have the whole history. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah, yeah. I'm trying to think if there's anything else that might come to your mind that I might not even think to ask about.

PALO: Oh. Well, anyway, I—I went back home to visit after four years and that's the time I had saved some money and I was going to put it in the bank in Finland and I did and I thought I was pretty well off, and then many years later, when we came home in 1950 with my family, that money wasn't worth

anything. [Laughs] For a little taxi, that's all. So that's the things that changed a lot in there, on Aland Island, in Finland, when they cut the money down.

LEVINE: Ah, wait.

PALO: Well, if you had four thousand, you had four hundred instead. See.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: So you didn't get much for it. It was supposed to be evened out, but they never really did. It's quite expensive there now.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm. Uh-hmm. So have you been back then since then?

PALO: Many times.

LEVINE: Oh, uh-huh.

PALO: Yeah. The last time was in '94, I was there.

LEVINE: Wow. Uh-huh.

PALO: And then my son and his wife and my daughter traveled with me and they come from Montana. They were there only five days. We were two weeks, my daughter and I, and then we had a gathering, you know. There were about fifty people, relatives.

LEVINE: Oh, nice. Yeah.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Now, did you—you visit Ellis Island since it's been restored?

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: And you—

PALO: I think it was in '92.

LEVINE: Uh-huh, and how did it strike you, seeing it again?

PALO: Oh, certain things looked—you know, when you have that impulse and all that.

LEVINE: The language?

PALO: But there was sort of wire around, you know, in olden times. That sort of remind me a little bit of Ellis Island.

LEVINE: The buildings across the way from the main building.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Have not been restored.

PALO: No.

LEVINE: And they look probably more like it looked.

PALO: Yeah. Yeah.

LEVINE: Uh-huh.

PALO: But they fixed up, is beautiful and then we of course, we looked on the—at that wall, you know, because I think my friend is supposed to have the names there on that wall, too.

LEVINE: Oh.

PALO: And I think that's what my daughter thought she was going to do for me. I said it's not necessary. So I don't know what she did. She must have sent something in, you got this.

LEVINE: Well, this is separate from the Wall of Honor, but—

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: If you'd like, I can check the Wall of Honor for you.

PALO: Oh, I don't think it's there. She would have remembered to tell me, it seemed to me.

LEVINE: Yeah. Yeah.

PALO: I don't know.

LEVINE: Okay. Okay, well, is there anything else you can think of? You've covered a lot.

PALO: Oh, gosh.

LEVINE: [not understood]

PALO: I could sit here for days and talk about Aland Island. [Laughs]

LEVINE: Yeah? When—when you think of it now, and growing up there—

PALO: I would like to go back there now even this summer, but now my both younger sisters had strokes and they both in the nursing home. In the—one is in the hospital and one is in like a [not understood] hospital, you know. She's not good enough to be in a rest home, so she has to be there because she cannot talk good and she can't use her right hand.

LEVINE: Uh-hmm.

PALO: But I keep in touch with the younger ones. So they call me.

LEVINE: Yeah.

PALO: Yeah.

LEVINE: Well, okay. I think maybe this is a good place to stop. I want to thank you so much.

PALO: You're welcome.

LEVINE: It was a very interesting interview, and I've been speaking with Julia Palo, who came from Finland at—well, came from the Aland Islands in 1929 when she was twenty years of age, and at the time of this interview is eighty-seven. And this is Janet Levine for the New York—for the New York. For the Park Service, National Park Service, signing off.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

EI-857/PALO