

EI-918

ELSA MAGNUSON HAPEMAN

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AGE 3

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SIGRIST: Good afternoon. This is Paul Sigrist for the National Park Service. Today is Thursday, July 31, 1997. I am in Gloversville, New York and that's spelled G-L-O-V-E-R-S-V-I-L-L-E and I am here with Mrs. Elsa Hapeman. Mrs. Hapeman came from Sweden in 1917. She was three years old at that time. Present also in the room is Mrs. Hapeman's granddaughter, Mindy Hapeman. Also, is, we are at the home of Evelyn Palmateer, who is Mindy's other grandmother. And, Palmateer is spelled P-A-L-M-A-T-E-E-R. And, (he clears his throat), I should say for the sake of the tape that we may hear traffic noise occasionally in the neighborhood. Mrs. Hapeman, may we begin by you giving me your birth date please.

HAPEMAN: June 12, 1914.

SIGRIST: And where were you born?

HAPEMAN: In Fr-, in a little town called Frandefors.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

HAPEMAN: (she laughs) F-R-A-N-D-E-F-O-R-S and there's a little

squiggle over the A.

SIGRIST: Can you tell me what you know about that town?

HAPEMAN: Virtually nothing. It was just, I was just left it too young.
I know it was on a farm...

SIGRIST: Do you know of any industry in the town?

HAPEMAN: Well, I don't think there was much industry. Mygrandparents were farmers there. And, they were on a farm and that's about all I can say.

SIGRIST: Do you know anything about your birth? Did anyone ever tell you anything about the day you were born?

HAPEMAN: No, never.

SIGRIST: Were there any other brothers and sisters in Sweden?

HAPEMAN: No, not in Sweden. The fact of the matter is, my mother and father left me with my grandparents to come to America and they settled there and got jobs and a, and a brother. (she laughs) And when, as I say, when I was three years old, my mother and brother came over and picked me up and brought me to America.

SIGRIST: What was the name of the American-born brother?

HAPEMAN: Harry Magnuson.

SIGRIST: Can you spell Magnuson please?

HAPEMAN: M-A-G-N-U-S-O-N.

SIGRIST: Was he named after somebody or...

HAPEMAN: Well, his name was actually Harry Axel and he was named after my father. That was his name, Axel.

SIGRIST: How did it get changed to...

HAPEMAN: Well, I don't know. Possibly it was confusing. It would have been Axel Harry but he wanted it Harry Axel. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Can, may I ask you if you were named after anybody?

HAPEMAN: After an aunt. Elsa Magnuson. My father had three brothers and two sisters and they kind of came here all in a, "en masse" you might say. Even their mother. And, they were from the city more than my mother because they worked at tool and die making, they were all into tool and die making and that, that's about all I can really say.

SIGRIST: Could you say your full name for me when you were born?
You were born as...

HAPEMAN: Elsa Maria Magnuson.

SIGRIST: Magnuson would be your maiden name.

HAPEMAN: Yes, um-hum.

SIGRIST: Magnuson. Great. What was your mother's name?

HAPEMAN: Emma Louisia Nyman. N-Y-M-A-N.

SIGRIST: What do you know about her background and her growing up, if anything?

HAPEMAN: Just that she, she was brought up on a farm and I think they were progressive because my grandfather built a school house on the property so the children in the area could come to school. In fact, the school teacher lived with them and that's about all I know about that.

SIGRIST: Did, were there stories that your mother would tell about maybe something that happened when she was a child?

HAPEMAN: No, I don't recall any. I just don't recall.

SIGRIST: Tell me about your mother's personality.

HAPEMAN: Oh, my mother's personality. She was very easy-going. (she laughs) That's about all I can say and she was a hard worker. When she came over here she worked in housework. I think the Swedish gals were pretty much in demand for housework and cooks and so on. So that's what she did.

SIGRIST: In, in your growing up in America, what were some of the things that your mother enjoyed doing for here own pleasure?

HAPEMAN: Mmm. That's hard to say. Mainly, we were kind of family-group oriented and when we got together there was dancing and everything. I had a cousin that played a zither and a harm-, an accordion. (she laughs) And so, and there was always coffee klatches and that's about it. We truly didn't do too much outside. We were more like in the family. One week we'd go to one uncle's house and then they'd all come to our house and then we'd go to another uncle and that's the way it was.

SIGRIST: So, so the socializing was always taking place within the family...

HAPEMAN: In the, pretty much. In the family, yes. There were, as I say, three brothers and two sisters and so there were a lot of Magnuson's there in Brooklyn. And..

SIGRIST: What kind of education did your mother have prior to leaving Sweden?

HAPEMAN: Prior to, she went through the regular school. She didn't go to college and I don't know about higher than the grades. That I couldn't say.

SIGRIST: What about when she came to America? (audible traffic noise) Did she, did she partake in any kind of organized classes for learning English or anything like that?

HAPEMAN: No, no. She picked it up by herself and she was really pretty quick

at it because in no time she seemed to be reading the American newspapers and my father the same way. He worked in a factory. And I sup-...

SIGRIST: You mean in the United States?

HAPEMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Uh-huh. What kind of factory?

HAPEMAN: Anything that required tools and dies. He worked with all kinds of factories and the last one that I recall was down there in Brooklyn. It was a match factory and he made parts for their machinery and such.

SIGRIST: What was your father's name?

HAPEMAN: Axel Fritiof Magnuson.

SIGRIST: Can you spell the middle name?

HAPEMAN: F-R-I-T-I-O-F.

SIGRIST: Thank you. Do you know where he got that name from? That's so unusual...

HAPEMAN: No, I haven't the faintest. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: What do you know about your father's background and his life in

Sweden?

HAPEMAN: That I know even less than my mother because, as I say, he lived in a town, a city. I don't know if it was Gotenberg or where but they met somehow along the line and...

SIGRIST: Do you know when they were married?

HAPEMAN: Mmm. No, possibly, give or take. I don't know. I really don't know. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: So, they, they actually came first and left you with...

HAPEMAN: Yeah, with my grandparents.

SIGRIST: Which side of the family?

HAPEMAN: My mother's.

SIGRIST: The maternal grandparents.

HAPEMAN: Yeah, on the farm.

SIGRIST: How long, how long after you were born did they come?

HAPEMAN: How did they come?

SIGRIST: How long after you, how were you when...

HAPEMAN: I was three years old.

SIGRIST: When you came.

HAPEMAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: But how old were you when they left?

HAPEMAN: Oh, when they left. I was an infant. I think possibly a year and a half or...

SIGRIST: Did your mother ever express to you how she felt about leaving her infant child and going to the United States?

HAPEMAN: Oh, that I remember. She said she was so upset when she had to, in fact she had my clothes packed and she said she had to unpack them because it just wasn't the right time so, but the right time came later.

SIGRIST: Does, then am I to believe that the intention was that you were going to go with them...

HAPEMAN: Yes, um-hum. They were try it but then I guess it just didn't work out.

SIGRIST: Interesting.

HAPEMAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: Did your, did your mother or father have relatives that they went to when they first came to the United States? Before you joined them.

HAPEMAN: Before. Well, I think there were several, as I say, his bro-, my father's brothers and there were cousins and other people so I imagine, they must have had someone sponsor them.

SIGRIST: Were they all in Brooklyn? The relatives?

HAPEMAN: Yeah. Pretty much.

SIGRIST: All in Brooklyn. Do you know some of the other occupations of some of the other family members?

HAPEMAN: Well, all the men were tool and die makers. All four of them.

SIGRIST: Do you know where your father learned that trade?

HAPEMAN: In Sweden. That's the only thing I can say because that's from whence he came.

SIGRIST: Did, did your, what was your father's personality like?

HAPEMAN: Oh, he was a very quiet, reserved man. We knew when he said something it was (she grits her teeth) to be listened to. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: As a child in America, was there something that you particularly

enjoyed doing with your father? (audible traffic noise)

HAPEMAN: Oh, well, we used to have a great time going on the Staten Island Ferry, which I'm sure you know about (she laughs), and we picnicked. There's a lake there, Silver Lake I think it is, if I'm not mistaken, in Staten Island. And we used to picnic there.

SIGRIST: When you went on these picnics, was it just your immediate nuclear family or...

HAPEMAN: Yeah. Not the whole group, no.

SIGRIST: Not the whole group.

HAPEMAN: Just the immediate family.

SIGRIST: And what, what, I'll ask you, I asked you the same question about your mom. What did your father enjoy doing for his pleasure?

HAPEMAN: Hmm. He liked to tinker (she laughs), if that's anything...

SIGRIST: Meaning what exactly?

HAPEMAN: Well, if he had an old car to work on he was happy as a lark just doing that and he, we're kind of a dull family, I guess. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Did your parents ever relay any information to you about their crossing to America the first time? Did your mother ever tell you something about...

HAPEMAN: No, no, no. Well, she did say they had dances on shipboard that they enjoyed and, of course, they didn't go first class. They went "tourist" which was a lot of fun, they said. They had music and what have you.

SIGRIST: What is the first memory you have? The earliest memory you have in your whole life? What's, what's the very first memory or little glimpse of a memory?

HAPEMAN: (she pauses) I really don't know.

SIGRIST: Do you, do you have anything in Sweden?

HAPEMAN: When, when I started school I remember being sent home because I had German measles but aside from that (she laughs) I don't truly remember anything but I do remember that.

SIGRIST: Do, do you have any first-hand recollections of the crossing at all?

HAPEMAN: Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

SIGRIST: Just a little glimpse? When you, when you got to America, you were traveling with your mother and your brother. Now, your brother is younger than are, correct?

HAPEMAN: Um-hum. Yes, um-hum.

SIGRIST: Where did you go to live in Brooklyn when the family was

all reunited?

HAPEMAN: All reunited. Let's see. It was in Bay Ridge someplace.

We sort of moved around. We needed a larger apartment because I got two more brothers and that was about it. We just moved around. If my father and mother saw a place they liked, they rented it. We always rented. There was no home ownership down in Brooklyn.

SIGRIST: Can you describe for me the first house or apartment that you remember living in? (audible traffic noise)

HAPEMAN: The first house. (she pauses) I remember one apartment that we lived in that was on, I even remember the address, 5212 6th Avenue in Brooklyn and I remember that I guess because we had a big Christmas party there.

SIGRIST: Can, can, can, are there details of the memory that you can pick out?

HAPEMAN: No.

SIGRIST: Or details about the house itself or the apartment?

HAPEMAN: Well, it was just an ordinary apartment with a living room, dining room, and a kitchen, and a bath, and bedrooms. But, like I say, I know we had that big Christmas party there and one of my uncles was dressed as Santa Claus and he came in and asked us all "Have you been good? Have you been good?" (she laughs) and it was a lot of fun.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about the Swedish community in

Bay Ridge?

HAPEMAN: No, it was a big one, though. There were a lot of them. Not necessarily all Swedish. They were Norwegians and Danes and kind of a spattering of Germans too I think. But there was a Swedish bakery and a German deli, delicatessen. They didn't call them delis then. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Were there organizations, Swedish organizations that your parents belonged to? A Swedish club of some sort or...

HAPEMAN: Gee, I think there was a place called Vasa, Vasa Hall. V-A-S-A Hall. It was kind of a social club where they had dances and dinners and such.

SIGRIST: What about religious life? What religion were you?

HAPEMAN: Lutheran.

SIGRIST: Lutherans.

HAPEMAN: Um-hum.

SIGRIST: And was there a Swedish Lutheran church somewhere?

HAPEMAN: In the area, right. On 46th Street there was the Swedish Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: And, and what are your memories of, of religious life and religious practices in that church?

HAPEMAN: I remember going to Sunday School every Sunday and then I had the confirmation class and I was confirmed there...

SIGRIST: What language?

HAPEMAN: Swed-. I, I, I was confirmed in Swedish. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Is there a prayer in Swedish that you can still say?

HAPEMAN: (she pauses) Mmm. I could say perhaps a smattering of the Lord's Prayer but that's about it.

SIGRIST: Would you please do that?

HAPEMAN: Oh, I don't know if I can do it. (she pauses) No,, no, I'm sorry.

SIGRIST: Okay. What, how did you practice your religion at home?

HAPEMAN: Well, there was no formal practice of religion at home. Like, we didn't say grace or anything like that but we went to church on Sunday. (she laughs) We had to get all dolled up and go to church.

SIGRIST: Who was the most religious in your family?

HAPEMAN: Probably my mother.

SIGRIST: And were there, were there certain religious ideas that your mother

taught you as small children? Did she read the bible to you or anything like that?

HAPEMAN: No, no. That she didn't do. She didn't read the bible much. I think she might have read it to herself more than she read it out loud to us. But, it wasn't truly, there, I know there are some families that have real big religion. They live it in everything that they do but we weren't like that.

SIGRIST: I, I should have asked you earlier. Do you know the name of the ship that you came over on?

HAPEMAN: No. It might have been the Drottningholm or the Gripsholm, I don't know which.

SIGRIST: One of the "Holms."

HAPEMAN: One of the "Holms."

SIGRIST: One of the "Holms." (they laugh) What are the holidays, when you were a child growing, what was your favorite holiday?

HAPEMAN: Probably Christmas.

SIGRIST: And can you describe how family celebrated Christmas?

HAPEMAN: Well, for one thing, we, we went to church at the crack of dawn. There's a service they call Jul Otten (Swedish). It's kind of before daybreak almost.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

HAPEMAN: We crunched, the snow crunched under our feet when we walked. (she laughs) And, It was a church service and they sang the usual Christmas songs, some in Swedish, some in English, and...

SIGRIST: What, now, what was the name of the service again? You mentioned it in Swedish.

HAPEMAN: Jul Otten.

SIGRIST: Can you spell that please?

HAPEMAN: Ew. Jul is J-U-L. Otten, Otten. O-T-T-E-N. Similar to that. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: So, so your celebration would begin by going to church.

HAPEMAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: And then what would happen?

HAPEMAN: Well, then we'd come home and we'd have, not turkey, I know that (she laughs), but a traditional Christmas dinner. It was more like, well, for Christmas Eve the tradition was rice, boiled rice, like, we used to put cinnamon on it and sugar and milk and eat it and that was it. (she laughs) And not very romantic but it was fun. We enjoyed it.

SIGRIST: How was the house decorated?

HAPEMAN: Well, we had a Christmas tree. We had garlands and so on, usually, for dinner on, on Christmas we had what's called Smorgasbord. I'm sure you've heard of that.

SIGRIST: And what types of food would be served?

HAPEMAN: Well, now let's see. My aunt made head cheese. They'd bought a pig and had it butchered so they had all the little stuffs for that. And we had brown beans and all, a variety of cuts, cold cuts and so on. Pork.

SIGRIST: And who would partake of this meal? (the telephone rings)

HAPEMAN: Anyone that was around. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: But, but I mean, was that the extended family or just the nuclear family?

HAPEMAN: Oh, no. That was the whole family, as a rule. We got together in either one or the other houses. We all had a great good time.

SIGRIST: Were gifts exchanged?

HAPEMAN: Yes.

SIGRIST: Is there Christmas that you received as a child that sticks out in your mind?

HAPEMAN: Oh, golly. I remember when I got a big doll about yea-big that could walk. (she gestures).

SIGRIST: You're pointing to about two, two and a half feet?

HAPEMAN: Yeah, I would say so. With hair yet. So that was a big deal.

SIGRIST: What about other relatives who had been left in Sweden. Were your, were your, were your parents in contact with anybody left over there?

HAPEMAN: Yes. My mother, of course, had her, her mother and father over there and she had a sister there and they were in pretty close contact.

SIGRIST: Did you ever meet any of these people later on?

HAPEMAN: No, no. After I left Sweden, I, I sort of cut all strings. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, tell me a little about, you mentioned going to school, you told a story about that. What other memories do you have of attending school perhaps with other children or children of immigrants or, what, what sticks out in your mind about that experience, being in school?

HAPEMAN: Ah, not much, not too much. It, it, school was fairly easy. I mean, it didn't, once I learned English, it went along very well. And...

SIGRIST: Can you talk about learning English? Do you remember anything about...

HAPEMAN: No. There was nothing special that I know. I know I went to school when I was about six, as I say, and how much English I actually knew between three and six, I really don't know because I know we spoke Swedish at home. (audible traffic noise)

SIGRIST: Did your parents make an attempt to learn English?

HAPEMAN: Oh, yeah. I guess they too.

SIGRIST: Oh, you mentioned that earlier.

HAPEMAN: Yeah. They had to because they had to work and they felt they had to be able at least to make themselves plain. Plain talk.

SIGRIST: And you mentioned you had two other brothers too, right? You have Harry, who went back to Sweden and came back over with you.

HAPEMAN: yeah, uh huh.

SIGRIST: Who are the other two brothers?

HAPEMAN: I have, my bro-, I have a brother who lives in Florida and Harry is, was dead. He died. And my other, I still have one brother in Sweden.

SIGRIST: What were the names of the two brothers who were born after you?

HAPEMAN: Let's see. You have Harry. And then there was Milton and Roland.

SIGRIST: And it Roland who lives in Sweden?

HAPEMAN: Yeah.

SIGRIST: He went back to Sweden?

HAPEMAN: Yes, he did. He was about four years old when he went with my mother. My mother took Roland and Milton and went back to Sweden. She and my father had a sort of falling out, a parting of the ways so she went back home, as she called it...

SIGRIST: And stayed there.

HAPEMAN: And stayed there, yeah. She was over once for a visit but she went back again and that was it.

SIGRIST: What kind of communication did you have with her after she went back?

HAPEMAN: Letter writing. That's it.

SIGRIST: How old were you?

HAPEMAN: When my mother went back?

SIGRIST: When she went back?

HAPEMAN: For the, I was possibly twenty-two, maybe. Around twenty-one, twenty-two.

SIGRIST: So, Roland is a lot younger than you?

HAPEMAN: Oh, yes, yes. He's sixteen years younger than I am but he still retired and has, that tells you how old I am.

SIGRIST: What do you know of your mother's life when she went back to Sweden?

HAPEMAN: Well, my grandfather supplied a house for her which was a cabin in, on an island in a lake. Now if you get thing. (she laughs) He, he took that apart in the summer. It was a big log cabin and when the lake froze over, he hooked up a team of his horses and one of those big sleigh things behind it and dragged that whole piece by piece house all the way over and put it up on a piece of ground that he had there for her so she had a house.

SIGRIST: And how did your mother support herself when she went back to Sweden?

HAPEMAN: Well, I guess she worked at little odds and ends jobs and I think she probably helped my grandparents a lot because they were still farming then and needed help.

But aside from that I truly don't know what she did.

SIGRIST: When, when she went back, of course, you were a young lady, by the time she went back did you, did you, did she understand that this would be a permanent move, that she was going back to Sweden? Was that the intention, that she was not coming back?

HAPEMAN: Yes. Yeah, I think so. Yeah, um-hum.

SIGRIST: Can you talk a little bit about prior to your mother's leaving when you were growing up how your mother felt about America?

HAPEMAN: Oh, I think she liked it but she also missed her mother and father and all the other relatives. She had several brothers and uncles and everything there. In fact, I guess the whole village around where she lived had some relative in it.

SIGRIST: Did your mother, you said she was doing domestic work when you were a little girl. How long did she do that?

HAPEMAN: Yes. Um-hum, um-hum. She did that for quite a while even after, after my second brother was born she was working but then she left, she stopped after that.

SIGRIST: Did she ever tell any stories about, about learning to do the various jobs she had to do as a domestic worker?

HAPEMAN: Well, yeah, she said that this, this woman that she worked for was very sympathetic and very nice and she tried to explain a lot of things to her about the way things should be done because she

also waited on the table at their dinners and stuff so she had to have a little knowledge of what would be proper and, like I said, she was a quick learner and she got a long.

SIGRIST: What about, what about your mother's experiences out in public, for instance going shopping or something like that. Did she ever tell you stories about her experiences as she was learning to shop in America and doing that kind of thing...

HAPEMAN: Um, no. She, sh-, it was easy in Bay Ridge because everyone understood everyone else and you didn't necessarily have to speak such good English but, so they got along that way but as I got a little older my mother and I used to go on the trolley or the subway into New York and shop at Macy's and Bloomingdale's and Gimbel's and all those places that are closed. And Macy's is still there, of course, I know that but the rest of them have pretty well folded up.

SIGRIST: What about for, for entertainment. What, what you do, say circa 1925? What, what would the family do or you yourself do for entertainment?

HAPEMAN: Well, we went to the movies and, as I say, my father was a great one for that ferry ride over to (she laughs) Staten Island and that, that was always a lot of fun. And, and there were places where we could go to Coney Island and swim so we did that. Walked on the boardwalk.

SIGRIST: Do you know of any occasions where you or one of your family members ever experienced any kind of prejudice because you were, you were an immigrant?

HAPEMAN: No, no.

SIGRIST: Or maybe your mother or father?

HAPEMAN: Yeah, of course, I, I guess a lot of people weren't above calling them "squareheads" and such (she laughs) but they were never offended by it.

SIGRIST: Is that, well, is "squarehead", I've not heard that term before.

HAPEMAN: Oh, haven't you? No.

SIGRIST: No. Greenhorn, but never squarehead. (he laughs)

HAPEMAN: Greenhorn, squarehead, yeah.

SIGRIST: Was that typical for Scandinavian people to be called "squarehead" or just...

HAPEMAN: Might be. I really don't know.

SIGRIST: Yeah. That's interesting. Tell me a little bit about, your father was working in a, in a tool and die factory.

HAPEMAN: Um-hum.

SIGRIST: Do you know about some specific details about his work, for instance, what his hours were?

HAPEMAN: Well, he, he got up early and came home around five o'clock, six o'clock. That was about it.

SIGRIST: Were they unionized?

HAPEMAN: No, I don't think so. My father never belonged to a union, I don't believe. That I'm pretty definite on.

SIGRIST: What about, you mentioned that various members of the extended family were invited into your home. What about non-relations, friends? How often, how many friends did family, your...

HAPEMAN: Oh, not an awful lot. My mother had a sp-, a couple of special friends that she knew and my father, he was more "in." He preferred the family when he, he was doing anything.

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BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIGRIST: When you were growing up, did you experience any kind of conflict with your ideas as a, as a young person and your parents ideas of what you should be doing and how you should ne behaving?

HAPEMAN: (she laughs) Like I said, when my father said no, that was no and that was it. We, we just took it for what it was. We didn't argue, we didn't fuss. Just that dad said we couldn't do it.

SIGRIST: Do you remember some of the rules of the house that you had to obey?

HAPEMAN: Well, everybody had to be home for supper and, aside from that, that was the big thing. We had to be home for supper or the walls might fall down. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: is there an occasion that you remember where either you or one of your brothers perhaps did something that did not please your father or your mother and what the consequences were of that?

HAPEMAN: Not really. we, we, I guess we were a pretty easy-going bunch. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: (he laughs) Were there certain ways your parents maintained their Swedish culture once they got to America?

HAPEMAN: They didn't belong to any Swedish organizations or anything like that so what, whatever there was was sort of in the family and that, that's...

SIGRIST: Certain ways of doing things perhaps?

HAPEMAN: No.

SIGRIST: How about objects? Did they have anything from Sweden?

HAPEMAN: No. They, they came just with their clothes and that's it. Whatever they had, they bought here in this this country.

SIGRIST: What was the first, you went through high school, in Brooklyn?

HAPEMAN: Um-hum.

SIGRIST: Yup. Graduated?

HAPEMAN: No, I went to high school in Manhattan. Washington Irving High School.

SIGRIST: That's a very good high school.

HAPEMAN: Yeah, it is. And, I didn't graduate but I did take that, uh, oh, (to herself) come on, Elsa, wake up. The, uh, the high school equivalency course so I did get a diploma.

SIGRIST: What, did you go to work when you were a young lady?

HAPEMAN: Uh-huh. Yes, I did.

SIGRIST: What was the first job that you got that you were paid for?

HAPEMAN: The first jo-. I worked in a five-and -dime on the underwear counter. (she laughs) That was it. That was sort of part-time because I was quite young and had to go to continuation school, as they called it, go to school one day and then you weren't allowed to work only a certain number of hours.

SIGRIST: Do you remember how you got that job?

HAPEMAN: How did I get that job? You know, they used to hang signs up in the window, "help wanted", and I think that was how it happened.

SIGRIST: How did your parents feel about you getting a job?

HAPEMAN: Oh, they didn't mind. They probably thought it would keep me out of mischief. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: And what did you with the money that you earned from that job? (audible traffic noise)

HAPEMAN: Most of it went into the house. So, of course, if I wanted to buy something, I could buy and that was it.

SIGRIST: What about your brothers. What were some of their first jobs?

HAPEMAN: Newspaper boy. They delivered newspapers and ran errands and that's about it.

SIGRIST: When your mother went back, you were a young lady. Were you married by the time your mother went back?

HAPEMAN: Um-hum. Yes, I was.

SIGRIST: What year did you get married?

HAPEMAN: 1933.

SIGRIST: And the name of the gentleman that you married?

HAPEMAN: Kenneth Edward Hapeman.

SIGRIST: Okay. And your mom went back in what year?

HAPEMAN: Um, 19... Ah, I really don't remember. Might have been...

SIGRIST: Mid-thirties sometime.

HAPEMAN: Thirties. Yeah, in the thirties '35 '37, something like that.

SIGRIST: Did you, after your mother was back in Sweden, did you have any desire to ever go over there?

HAPEMAN: No, I didn't. No. My mother wrote and said I should come and see it and I've been sorry that I never did. (she laughs)
But, who knows, maybe I'll get there yet.

SIGRIST: Tell me a little bit about how you met your husband-to-be?

HAPEMAN: Ah, he ran a service station on a corner in Hudson, a little town just down the road.

SIGRIST: Hudson, New York.

HAPEMAN: Yes. And, there was an ice cream parlor next door to it and everyone used to congregate there and that's where I met him, through a friend.

SIGRIST: And what was his ethnic background and nationality?

HAPEMAN: Ah, he always told me he was an American.

SIGRIST: But of what background?

HAPEMAN: Well, I think his mother was either English or Belgian, I don't know. I just don't know. I'm sorry.

SIGRIST: When, did I, did I ask you, I'm trying to remember, did I ask you about becoming a citizen? I don't think I did yet.

HAPEMAN: No, but I did. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Yes, well, first tell me about your parents first. Did they become American citizens?

HAPEMAN: No, they didn't.

SIGRIST: They did not. Your father either.

HAPEMAN: No, no.

SIGRIST: Was that a conscious decision on their part not to become citizens?

HAPEMAN: No, I think they just didn't think anything about it. But, of course, I was eager to become a citizen when, and I didn't do that early. It was, U was probably, oh, maybe, it was after I was married. I was twenty-seven years old and...

SIGRIST: Can you talk to me about the process you had to go through to become a citizen?

HAPEMAN: Yeah. There was course of study for it on American history, the presidents and the so on, you know and various other things. Of course, I knew the "Pledge of Allegiance" and the "Star Spangled Banner" and all that. Of course,, we had them in school everyday and then I was sworn in. Very, very moving. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: How did it make you feel when, once it was all over?

HAPEMAN: I was tickled pink!

SIGRIST: And what did you do once you left the ceremony?

HAPEMAN: We went home and that was it. (they laugh)

SIGRIST: Did you have children?

HAPEMAN: Yes, I did. I had two. One died at b-, one was dead at birth and the other one is her father. (gesturing towards her granddaughter, Mindy Hapeman)

SIGRIST: Mindy's dad. And his name is?

HAPEMAN: Kenneth Edward Hapeman, Jr.

SIGRIST: What ways, if any, did you try to allow your son to understand your Swedish culture?

HAPEMAN: Oh, well, really there was nothing. He knew his parents both came from Sweden but there was no, really no conscious act or anything to help him understand. He just knew we were Swedish and that's it. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: When you think of yourself in terms of nationality, how do you think of yourself?

HAPEMAN: As an American. And I don't like this Swedish-American deal. I'm an American and that's it. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Is there some aspect of your own personality that you think is uniquely Swedish? Or something that you particularly like to do that, that is, reflects your Swedish background?

HAPEMAN: I don't know. I like to do a lot of handicrafts, knit, crochet and so on. But aside from that, there's really nothing.

SIGRIST: You, yo bring that up, and we're talking about being Swedish and you bring up handiwork. How did you learn to do that?

HAPEMAN: Oh, my taught me. She was very good at all that. Yeah. She used to crochet little fancy dust caps and all kinds of stuff. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: So, you equate that actually with Sweden to some degree?

HAPEMAN: Yes. Yeah, uh-huh.

SIGRIST: That's interesting.

HAPEMAN: I know. It isn't Swedish by any means. Everyone has some kind of handicrafts they do, I guess.

SIGRIST: When you look back on your life, what did you do that, that you're the most proud of?

HAPEMAN: Gee. I really don't know. I had my son. That was about it. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Well, that's a major accomplishment.

HAPEMAN: It is. (they laugh) Oh, dear.

SIGRIST: Well, Mindy. Let me ask you since we're on tape. Is there something you'd like yo ask your grandmother before we sign off?

MINDY HAPEMAN: I was wondering...

SIGRIST: Speak up a little bit though, because it might...

MINDY HAPEMAN: Okay, if you knew, if I have this in my mind correctly that when your mom went back to Sweden, she brought um...

SIGRIST: Roland.

ELSA HAPEMAN: Yes.

MINDY HAPEMAN: Than you. Roland and Milton back. Why did Milton come back to America? Do you know? And when, when did he come back?

ELSA HAPEMAN: Yes. He came back when he was about twenty. And what year would that be? Let's see, 1960, maybe. And he wanted to live in America because he was born here.

MINDY HAPEMAN: Okay.

ELSA HAPEMAN: And he always felt he wanted to be here and he did.

MINDY HAPEMAN: Okay. Yes he did. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: How did your father's life change after your mother returned to Sweden?

ELSA HAPEMAN: Well, he was kind of a loner and they had disagreements about several things and they just couldn't, couldn't compromise on anything, so...

SIGRIST: Was it a situation where he might have remarried if he wanted to or...

ELSA HAPEMAN: Oh, he could have, yes. But I don't think he was interested. My mother did remarry in Sweden eventually, to another Magnuson, will you believe. No relation. (she laughs)

SIGRIST: Whom you've never met, right?

ELSA HAPEMAN: No, no.

SIGRIST: Did your father ever want to return to Sweden?

ELSA HAPEMAN: No, I don't believe so. No. He could have gone any time that he wanted to but he just didn't have the urge. He liked it here, I guess.

SIGRIST: Ant other questions, Mindy? (an electronic sound is heard)

MINDY HAPEMAN: I just remember something from my childhood, different... (a banging is heard)

SIGRIST: hang on. We're going to... (the tape is paused) Mindy, you had another question.

MINDY HAPEMAN: Yeah. I just remember when I was a little, dad taking out different clothes that he said were, that he called traditional Swedish clothing. Different things that looked like they were almost costumey. To me, they looked like costumes. I was wondering if you knew anything about that?

ELSA HAPEMAN: Um-hum. Yeah. Yes. Well, I, I happen to have one costume.

MINDY HAPEMAN: Yeah. Why, what were they for?

ELSA HAPEMAN: They have a lot of holidays in Sweden, I guess, that they dress, dress for those occasions. I don't know what they are but...

MINDY HAPEMAN: Would you ever wear these costumes when you were younger?

ELSA HAPEMAN: Yeah, I did.

MINDY HAPEMAN: For holidays?

ELSA HAPEMAN: Halloween, I... (she laughs)

MINDY HAPEMAN: Oh, Halloween. Okay. Right. You were dressing up as a Swedish girl, right. (they laugh)

ELSA HAPEMAN: Yeah. They're colorful. They, it had a blue skirt, a red bodice, a white shirt, and a little funny hat that you wear, which was red. And, a kerchief. A very fancy kerchief.

SIGRIST: Did your mother have one of those costumes too? An adult sized one?

ELSA HAPEMAN: I guess she did but she didn't bring it. She had this one sent to m-, sent over for me because she wanted me to have one. That, that is probably the only answer to that first question. What, what did they do to promote their culture?

SIGRIST: That's right. They made you wear little Swedish costumes.
(they laugh)

ELSA HAPEMAN: Just for, just for special occasions.

MINDY HAPEMAN: Is that blue set of dishes that we have in our dining room now that Dad keeps saying are Swedish?

ELSA HAPEMAN: Ah, but they're, they're not Swedish. No. They're from, that's from Dad's, from Grandpa's mother.

MINDY HAPEMAN: So, they're not Swedish.

ELSA HAPEMAN: No, they're not. He might have some Swedish. We have some copper hanging on the chimney there that's Swedish and several little fancy candle sticks and so on.

SIGRIST: But none of which your family actually brought to America.

ELSA HAPEMAN: No, no.

SIGRIST: Things that were gotten later.

ELSA HAPEMAN: Yeah. My mother used to send a lot of little knock-knacks

every year at Christmas time.

SIGRIST: After she had moved back.

ELSA HAPEMAN: After she had moved back, yeah.

SIGRIST: (to Mindy) Any more questions?

MINDY HAPEMAN: I don't think so.

SIGRIST: Great. Well, Mrs. Hapeman, thank you very much. I appreciate you letting me come out and ask questions. It was fun to sort of have Mindy sort of participate in it all. This is Paul Sigrist signing off with Mrs. Elsa Hapeman on Thursday, July 31, 1997 with Mindy Hapeman and Evelyn Palmateer in attendance. Than you.

ELSA HAPEMAN: You're welcome.

END OF TAPE