

KECK-108

THYRA PEARSON

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INTERVIEWER: NANCY DALLETT

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SWEDEN, 1916

AGE 7

PASSAGE ON "THE STOCKHOLM"

DALLETT: My name is Nancy Dallett, and I'm speaking with Mrs. Thyra Pearson on Tuesday, December 17, 1985. We are about to begin this interview at 11:50 AM and we're going to interview Mrs. Pearson about her immigration experience from Sweden in 1916. This is Interview Number 108, the beginning of side one. Let's start back at the beginning, and could you tell me where and when you were born.

PEARSON: I was born March 11, 1909 in, uh, Krisytianstab, Sweden.

DALLETT: Can you spell that for me?

PEARSON: K-R-I-S-T-I-A-N-S-T-A-B.

DALLETT: Okay. Could you tell me a bit about, uh, Kristianstab?  
What was life there like?

PEARSON: Well, we didn't live right, right in the town, We lived, uh, a few miles south. It, uh, my dad came to this country, uh, five years before my mother and, uh, my brother and sister and I did. So she got an apartment in, uh, a building that my grandfather and grandmother lived. It, it was an old, old brick building that, uh, I mean, old, uh, building that looks a lot like the farms that they have nowadays, great big red barn. That's what the building looks like. I have a picture of it and, uh, my mother lived in, uh one end of the building, and my grandfather and grandmother lived in the other end of the building. And it was a, uh, united hallway between the two that just had the dirt, dirt floor. That I remember very well. And, uh, so when my dad went to this country my mother, uh, worked, uh, worked at the school taking, doing cleaning and so on over there. So then my grandmother helped take care of us. And, uh, my grandfather worked for a big farmer and they had a huge , huge estate just across the road from us. And, uh, so, uh, my mother helped over there occasionally.

DALLETT: What did your father do, uh, before he came to this country? What did he do in Sweden?

PEARSON: Well, he done some, uh, some carpenter work. Uh, he was great for that.

DALLETT: And what year was it that he came to this country, do you know?

PEARSON: He came in 1911.

DALLETT: So you were three years old then.

PEARSON: Just prior to, uh, my sister was born in 1911 and he left. And of course his intentions at that time were to, uh, to send for his family within half a year or so. But he came to this country with, with two brothers and, of course, they just roamed all over the United States and Canada. They worked at the State Farm in Minnesota and then the next time my mother would hear from them they were up in Canada and my dad bought a lot up un Alberta, Canada. And, uh, then all of a sudden, they were living up in North Dakota, working for, for a farmer. And that's where my father was at the time when we came to this country. He was working for a farmer in North Dakota and, uh, he was, uh, going to meet us in Minneapolis where

he had a brother that had, uh, got married and was living there.

DALLETT: Why was that, that your father came to this country to begin with? Do you know why?

PEARSON: Well, at that time it was, uh, a lot of this (?). You know, it's a promising land, you're going to make it so much better over there and everything. And he had two brothers that were single and they wanted to go. And so he had the boat like, uh, like a lot of the others did, and he was going to send for his family in a few months or a year, you know. Then it turned out to be five years before he finally, finally sent for us.

DALLETT: Did he know people himself? I'm not sure if you would know this, but did he know people who had already come to this country? Did he get letters from people?

PEARSON: Oh, yes. There were other, there were other relatives that had come over years before. On my mother's side there were a number of people living here in Chicago. She had several aunts and uncles living here. And, uh, she had two sisters that were living here in Chicago. They had, uh, their aunts had sent for them when they were about seventeen, eighteen years old and they came, came over here. So they, they were

married and lived here in Chicago at the time that we came here.

DALLETT: So your, your father moved around with his two brothers and then--

PEARSON: Yes. They came all over. We'd get, we'd get a card, my mother would get a card from him saying that, uh, we're now on our way to Montana on an old railroad, you know. So he was just having a gay time with his two brothers. But, uh, I mean, I have, I have many doubts about, that that was the right thing to do, you know. But, like I said, he was young, they got married when they were young and his intentions were good and he finally did send for the family. But my mother's father was very much in favor of my mother coming here with her children. But there was a lot of other people that thought that that, uh, well, he practically deserted you for five years. I don't think you should, you should go. But she always felt that her children belonged with their father and mother. And my mother and dad had a wonderful life after we came to this country. They got a, uh, a small farm up in North Dakota the same year that we came here. They farmed with an uncle. We lived in a small house, two room house. My uncle and my brother slept in the kitchen. They had a big fold, fold-away bed that they slept in. And my dad, uh built a little, uh, bed for my sister and I. It was a straw, straw mattress and that was, uh, set up at the foot of the bed that my mother and father slept in. And, uh--

DALLETT: Take me back--

PEARSON: We lived like that for several years until, and then my dad took off on his own.

DALLETT; Take me back, just a bit in time. Uh, when you were still back in Sweden, do you remember, uh, when the time came that your mother decided it was, uh, she had all her papers, or whatever, and she could come to this country? Do you remember how that happened that you made the trip?

PEARSON: Well, my dad had, uh, had made arrangements for us to come, and he had sent the money for her to get the boat. But he was expecting us on a later boat. And, uh, they had, what, the, uh, the best way I can explain it was they had an entrance fee. There was supposed to have been some money waiting for my mother when we arrived in, uh, at Ellis Island. But it wasn't there. So that's why we had to be, stayed there for four days. In the meantime they sent, uh, telegrams back to, uh, back to Sweden to find out if the money was there. In the meantime they also sent word to my father in North Dakota that we were at Ellis Island and waiting for the money. And, uh, that's why we had to stay in Ellis Island until everything was cleared up.

DALLETT: Right. Do you remember the time, uh, do you remember actually leaving Sweden when I guess you had to say goodbye to your grandparents and you packed up your things?

PEARSON: Oh, yes. I can recall that, saying goodbye and everything. And then, and then when we got to, uh, Gothenberg, every place we went it seemed as if we had to be examined by somebody else. And, we got there and, uh, they found something wrong with my sister's eye. So my mother had to leave us children, my brother and I, with another lady that she had just met while she had to take my sister to some doctor, to have him check out the eye. And, uh, there was not a thing wrong with it.

DALLETT: Oh. It was too late for you to go back to your--

PEARSON: But in the meantime she was worried about having left us with strangers.

DALLETT: Right.

PEARSON: But, uh, that was one of the things that I remember very well, that she was very concerned, that we were very concerned about being left with someone else.

DALLETT: Right, right. Uh, do you remember actually leaving? Do you have any recollections of what that felt like for a little girl to pack up and say goodbye to ar grandparents? Did you think you would see them again?

PEARSON: Well, at the time we certainly didn't expect to see them again. However, I never did get to see them, but I did make a trip back there after I grew up over here.

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

PEARSON: One of the highlights of my life was that when I got out of the service I came home and took care of my mother and dad, and I was able to take my mother over there on a trip. That was fifty-one years after we left there. And, uh, that, that was one thing that I always wished, during all the years I was in the service, that some day I would be able to take her over there. While I was oar in Germany, I, uh, I wrote home and wanted my mother and dads to make a trip to Sweden, and then I would meet them there. But my, for some reason, my father never had any desire to go back to the old country. He, he would receive, uh, pictures of his family. He came from a large family, five brothers and five sisters. And, uh, but he never had any desire. He said, "They're all strangers to me." And he

never cared to go back. However, my mother was very much, uh, very anxious to go back because she had several sisters still living. And so after my dad passed away, well, then I got her to go on a trip with me.

DALLETT: Do you remember those examinations in Gothenberg? You said you had to go through a series--

PEARSON: Well, it, we had had physicals prior to getting our papers and everything like that. But just as a final check, so I mean it wasn't, it wasn't really that much. And, the only thing I can, it was outstanding in my mind, is the fact that my sister had something wrong with her eye and, uh, but other than that it was--

DALLETT: So once things were cleared up with your sister's eye, then, then you were free to get on the ship and--

PEARSON: That's right.

DALLETT: Okay. Can you tell me about, uh, getting on the ship? Do you remember the name of it?

PEARSON: Yes. Gothenberg.

DALLETT: It was the Gothenberg.

PEARSON: No, the Stockholm. Stockholm was the name of the ship.  
But we left from Gothenberg.

DALLETT: Okay. Do you remember the voyage? Do you remember the  
ship, the Stockholm?

PEARSON: Well, of course, I've seen pictures of it, pictures of it  
since and, uh, I know we came third class and I can  
remember the, I can remember the cabin because my brother  
and I had to sleep in the upper, upper bunk and my mother  
and sister down at the bottom. But, of course, we, there  
wasn't too much time spent in there. You know, my mother  
made a few very good friends on the ship that she had  
contact with over here after she came over here. One  
lady lived down in, uh, let's see, uh, I can't think of  
the name of the town right here in Illinois, but she came  
to Peoria, that was the place. And she came here and  
visited my mother on several occasions. And she kept  
contact with her. But, one thing, uh, my father, my  
mother had a brooch that she wore all the time that had  
my dad's picture in it. And, uh, so it, there was one

lady there that was on the boat that had made several trips to this country, and she was going, also going to Minneapolis. And my mother had hopes of making the entire trip with her. But, when we came to, uh, when we got off the boat on Ellis Island we were ushered into different aisles. We, we showed what papers we had and then we were ushered into different aisles. And here we were walking along with this, with this woman, and we were just separated. And it was like a screen between us, and so my mother and this lady were talking back and forth. And, uh, so she told her that uh, I will try to contact your, uh, your husband, because he was going to meet us in Minneapolis. She says, "I'll try to contact him." Because they had already exchanged addresses and so on. When this lady got to Minneapolis, she got off the train and here she spotted my father, from the picture, from the brooch that my mother was wearing. So she told him what had happened, and that we were being delayed at, uh, Ellis Island. And he said, "Well, I sent the money to Sweden." And she says, "Well, I think it will all be cleared up, but it will probably be a few days before, before they get here."

DALLETT: Anything else you can remember about the trip itself?  
How long did it take, the ship?

PEARSON: Uh, I think it was nine or ten days that we were out on the ship. But there are several things that happened on the ship that I recall. We were, uh, the different places where, where we had to go and eat and so on. You know, we were assigned to certain tables and so on. So, I mean, uh, I have a vivid picture of what took place there. and of course we played with other children on the ship and so on. But I have more recollections of the few days we spent at Ellis Island, mores so than the boat trip.

DALLETT: Okay. Okay. Let's go to Ellis Island then. Do you remember when you came into the harbor at all, when the ship landed?

PEARSON: No. I can just, just picture the land and everything like that, but I mean other, other, there was nothing else that was really outstanding as far as I recall. But when we got, uh, we got to Ellis Island, well, then we were ushered into a large room that reminded me very much of a. a railroad station because there were a lot benches, benches for people to sit around waiting to be called when there, when the papers had been cleared, so

that they could continue on their trip. And so we would sit around there all day and, uh, just go to the, to the dining hall when we were called to go there. And, of course, uh, everybody was talking different language and everything, so that was, that was very strange, strange to us.

DALLETT: What language were you speaking at that time?

PEARSON: We were speaking Swedish.

DALLETT: And how did, how did you, uh, understand what was being said?

PEARSON: Well, we didn't. We couldn't understand anything. You, you had to use your hands and, of course, there were different ones that walked around that, that knew a few different languages. And when they seen, from your papers, what country you came from, well, then they would see that there was someone that could speak your language that would come over and talk to my mother. But, I mean, as far as trying to buy something at the station, or anything like that, that didn't work at all. And, uh, one thing I can remember about there, uh, was that we seen some other children that were eating, uh, eating bananas and we thought that that was

very interesting. So we, uh, asked our mother if we could have some. So she managed to get us a couple of bananas. And we took them and peeled them, but we couldn't stand them at all. We had never seen anything like that, and we didn't care for the bananas at all. And, uh, then, uh--

DALLETT: And your mother did have someone to help interpret what the problem was, why you were being detained there, right?

PEARSON: Yes. There, there was always someone that you could contact to, that would help you out. But, uh, one thing that was very outstanding at, uh, at Ellis Island, too, was our sleeping quarters. We would be, uh, they would, we would have to line up and we would be issued a blanket and a pillow. And they were real hot at the time because we learned that they were put in ovens during the day so that they could kill any lice or anything like that, that people may have. So we'd line up and get them, and then we'd have to march into a sleeping area. And it was, uh, the compartments were screened in, and each, each family were assigned to a little compartment, and then you would just have to go in there and sleep there. But it was a screened area so that you could listen to everybody else. And it was a terrible racket. I'm sure that my mother slept very little during the, during the nights. Because it was, uh, it was such a racket going on there all the time.

DALLETT: Uh, how many days were you there?

PEARSON: Four days.

DALLETT: Four days.

PEARSON: Four days. Uh-huh.

DALLETT: And did your mother, had she actually lost the company of the woman that she had come over with, or--

PEARSON: Oh, yes, yes, because they, they went on their way. There was only one woman that you still had contact with and, uh, that lady came over with, uh, with two small boys. And, uh, the one boy was a beautiful child, but the other one was retarded and also a little bit deformed. Uh, to, to my brother and sister and I, he just looked like a little monkey, I mean, he was so deformed. And, so she was detained there. But they decided that she could not enter this country, and she was sent back on the next, uh, next ship, where she had to go back. Her husband was also over in this country waiting, waiting for them. But, uh, she had to go back. And I know, during the, during the time when we would go to the, uh, to the dining area, she had to sit with here two children at a separate

table. They wouldn't let them sit with the rest of them. And then also in the, in the dining hall, you, when you marched in, you were assigned to a certain table. You would, uh, there would be a chunk of bread and some fruit that would be by each plate. And different, uh, ladies had a little bag with them and everything. And as they walked by tables they would just, they would just grab somebody else's apple and a hunk of bread and everything and put them into their bag and then continue on to their own, to their own area. So, I mean, it was things like that that were, uh, different than what I was used to seeing. And I think that that's why they stand out so in my mind.

DALLETT; Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Did you have to go through a physical examination at Ellis Island?

PEARSON: I don't recall that we did. But we must, we must have gone through something because that's why that lady was detained with her boy.

DALLETT: Right. But you're not sure whether it was on the boat or in Ellis Island?

PEARSON: No. No.

DALLETT: So what did you do during the day? You were there for four days just--

PEARSON: You sat around, you were just in the railroad station, ran around with the few other children, you'd get to play with, had a little ball, my mother had a couple of small toys with us. And, uh, that, uh, we could just play and kill time, just sit and wait.

DALLETT: Just waiting, you were just waiting for your father--

PEARSON: Waiting for your name to be called out that you were cleared to continue.

DALLETT: Right. And what your name, uh, when you came through Ellis Island? What was your mother's name?

PEARSON: My name was Pearson. I never, I never married. But I have two married sisters and two married brothers.

DALLETT: And so there was no name change or anything at Ellis Island.

PEARSON: No, no.

DALLETT; No difficulty with the name Pearson.

PEARSON: No.

DALLETT: So after the four days, how were you notified that, uh--

PEARSON: Well, word came in and we were, my mother was called in and they said that, "You have now been cleared, and here's your ticket, and you can continue on your trip." So then we went to, uh, Minneapolis and there's where my father met us there.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. How did you get down from Minneapolis? Do you remember the trip out there?

PEARSON: No. Not except that we took, took the train out there. That's all. I don't recall how long, how long it took, but--

DALLETT; Okay. Uh, so once you were in Minneapolis--

PEARSON: We spent about, uh, about two weeks there because my father, uh, my father's brother and his wife, and they had two small children. They were living there, so we stayed with them and visited before

we went on up to North Dakota. But then, when we came up there, we had to live with the farmer that my father was working for. They had a pretty large house so, uh, we had quarters there. And my mother helped the best she could with, uh, with the lady of the house, to take care of the kitchen, do some cooking and cleaning and so on, for the summer months. And then, in the fall, my, uh, my dad and uncle got a small farm about a half a mile away. And that's where, the small house that we lived in, then, for several years.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. Uh, what kind of farm was it?

PEARSON: Well, you mean what, what we raised?

DALLETT; Yeah. Uh-huh.

PEARSON: We raised all kinds of grain. Wheat, rye, oats, barley, and we always, we always raised a lot of potatoes and we always had our own garden and done our own canning. And, uh, we always had, uh, cows, cows, so, it was my brother's and my job to milk the cows in the mornings and evenings and churn, churn the milk. And, uh, before we would take off for school. But we had a two, two mile walk to school.

DALLETT: How old were you when you first went to school, then?

PEARSON: I was seven, uh, seven years old. Because we came here, uh, I was seven in March, and we came here in May, and then we started school in September.

DALLETT: I see. Do you remember those, those (?)?

PEARSON: Oh, yes. They were (?), because there was one Swedish family that lived not too far away from us, and, uh--

DALLETT; Uh-huh. This is in North Dakota, then?

PEARSON: In North Dakota. And the two children, a boy and a girl, they could speak a little bit Swedish so they helped us a little bit when we went to school. But it really didn't take very long before you pick up a language. It didn't take long and my, my mother, because my dad could speak a little bit by that time and so that helped some. But, uh, my mother was very interested in learning the language. So when we came home with our books and we were going to do some study. What little time she had, she was interested in learning, too. And, uh, when we left North Dakota she had made a number of

friends there, so she was able to write to them. Her spelling probably wasn't the best at times but, uh, but she was able to have correspondence with them very good.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. So you picked up the language fairly quickly just by going to school. And, do you remember, in that period, were there things about life in North Dakota that were very strange to you, very different than they had been in Sweden?

PEARSON: Well, no. It was, uh, it was my growing years and, uh, it wasn't anything like that because, uh, we started school and we had contact with other children and so I mean everything would--

DALLETT: Nothing really--

PEARSON: --fell right in line with everything else.

DALLETT: Uh-huh.

PEARSON: Uh-huh. Yeah.

DALLETT: And then, uh, tell me about, uh did your father get citizenship papers?

PEARSON: Yes. My father took out, uh, applied for his papers and, uh, got his citizen papers in 1920. And, uh, that, my mother and brother and sister and I were all naturalized through him, because the law was changed in 1922. And so, uh, so we didn't have to take papers out at that time. However, after I had got, after I went into the army, I showed my dad's papers when I went into the army. Before I was in the army, I was stationed in Texas one time and so I made a trip to Mexico with a couple of others, and then when I was going to come back into this country they gave me quite a, quite a hard time. And, uh, I couldn't understand why, because I was in uniform, and I was traveling with other military, you know, and so, after I had that experience, then I applied for derivative citizen papers so I got my own papers. And then I clued my sister and brother in to that, so then they applied and got theirs, too.

DALLETT: I see. And how many years did live, then, in North Dakota?

PEARSON: I lived there for eight years. I finished grammar school

there, and then I came to Chicago and lived with my aunt until, uh, for about a year and a half. And then my folks came to Chicago.

DALLETT: And why was it that you came to Chicago?

PEARSON: Uh, they were hailed out for two years in North Dakota., and so my dad thought it was a good idea to make a move, since I had, uh, two aunts with, uh, with husbands that lived here in Chicago that were in, uh, the bricklaying and cement business. They told, told my father that if he came here they would see that he got a job. So that's how he came to Chicago.

DALLETT: So they sent you first?

PEARSON: Well, my aunt had always said, told me that when I finished grammar school I could come to her and then she would send me to business college or something so I could get to work.

DALLETT: Is that what happened?

PEARSON: That's what happened. I went to business college and

then I started to work. But I lied about my age when I started to work. I told them I was seventeen, but I was only sixteen, because otherwise I would have had to go to school for a whole year.

DALLETT: Right. What kind of work did you start to do then, in Chicago?

PEARSON: I took a, uh, took up a stenographic course so that I, uh, answered an ad in the Tribune and they said they were asking for temporary help at a real estate office. So I applied for that and got that and worked there for five weeks. And then I got a very nice, uh, recommendation from there. And then I worked for Butler Brother's wholesale outfit for a number of years. And then I worked for a heating contractor for ten, ten and a half years.

DALLETT: And when you were in Chicago, living with your aunt, was, was there a Swedish community that you were part of, or--

PEARSON: Not--

DALLETT: Did she live in a Swedish community?

PEARSON: No. She lived up on, on the Northwest side. Uh, that's where, where mu folks landed when they came to Chicago, that was more of a Swedish community at that time. It isn't any more, but at that time there was quite a few Swedes living around there.

DALLETT: Uh-huh. So was there some sense, at that point, of carrying on the traditions from Sweden, or--

PEARSON: Well, no. There were a few things that were, that had been carried over, like celebrating Christmas on Christmas Eve.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

DALLETT: This is the beginning of side two of Interview Number 108 with Thyra Pearson. You were saying about some of the customs that you had brought from Sweden, how they were carried on in this country?

PEARSON: Well, there were a lot of Swedish people in this country that, that carry on different customs. But, uh, my mother and father, they felt like they were in America and they wanted to do things the way

Americans did. Now, about the only thing is Christmas Eve, we celebrate Christmas Eve, uh, more so than Christmas Day. I mean, Christmas Day you usually go to church. But Christmas Eve the family would always get together and, uh, you would get, uh, this regular Swedish food, like lutfisk, which I just don't care for at all. But my mother and dad loved it, and I have a sister-in-law that was German and she loved it. And my sister loves it. But I didn't care for that. And then we had the, uh, rice pudding and it's a custom to put a, put an almond in the rice pudding and who ever happens to get that, uh, almond, will have good luck and will be, supposed to get married the next year and, you know. Best wishes, I suppose. And the church that I belong, go to over here, just a block away, they had their regular, uh, Christmas smorgasbord a week ago Saturday, so I made a huge rice pudding for that occasion. My mother was very famous for that where we, the church we belonged to before I moved here, uh, whenever they had any kind of doing it was my mother that was always asked to bring, to bring the rice pudding. I don't know what it is. I don't know. I guess it was because she stood and stirred it so much that it just made it taste different, or something.

DALLETT: So you did carry on some of the baking traditions?

PEARSON: Oh, yeah. That's right.

DALLETT: Any, any other kinds of, uh, Swedish customs?

PEARSON: Well, the, uh, there's a cookie that's, kind of goes along with the, with the Swedish Christmas and that's pepper calka. That's just like (?).

DALLETT: But your parents, it sounds like your parents wanted to leave behind most of the Swedish way of life.

PEARSON: That's right. That's right. My father didn't care to go back for a visit. My mother loved to go back for a visit. But, uh, whenever she talked to anybody she said that, "This is my country here." She would never, she would never, she never had any desire to go back there to stay. She said, she wanted to go for a visit and that's what, I got my wish to take her back there while she was still able to get around. And she was a very jolly person, and while she was over there they just had her singing all the time, because she remembered a lot of the the old songs from there and she sang them, uh, songs from this country, you know. So--

DALLETT: Did any of the people from the village where you were

from come to this country, that you know of? Did you meet up with them in this country?

PEARSON: No, I can't recall right at the moment.

DALLETT; But when you went back, did you have memories of some of the people there that you met?

PEARSON: Oh, yes. I met different ones, in fact, uh, when I was back there I, uh, visited with, uh, the daughter of the woman that my mother used to, she gave the job to this lady at the school when she came to this country and I had, uh, I had coffee with that lady, lady's daughter. And we sat out in the, uh, in the little patio where my, uh, garden, where my grandmother used to live. She gave me a coup,e of plates and stuff that, uh, that they, the two old ladies used to have when they, when they had coffee in the garden.

DALLETT; Did you get, did you have any feelings, when you were there, how your life might have been different had you stayed in that country?

PEARSON: Well, I thought about it several times but, uh, I didn't have any desire. As much as I loved it over there, and would love to make

another trip back there, uh, I feel like my mother did. This is my country, and here's where I want to be.

DALLETT: So could you imagine how your life would have been different if you had stayed there rather than come here? The women--

PEARSON: Well, I imagine I would have done just about like, uh, a lot of my cousins. I have a lot of cousins that are over there.

DALLETT; Uh-huh. And how is, how is their life different?

PEARSON" Well, I don't know. It seems to me that all of them live a whole lot better than we do over here, than any of my brothers and sisters, or any of my relatives over here. They all have beautiful, they all got to be beautiful, have beautiful homes and gardens. And most of them have a summer besides. But I think that that isn't, that isn't the rule with most. But, it seemed as if the family were very much interested in their children having more than they did and seeing to it that they, they got good education and they have very good jobs. And even now they're, uh, I have one cousin that came here this summer. He was sent over here by the government and, uh,

he just toured all over this country and everything.

DALLETT: But there's something about America, it sounds like you're saying, there's something about life here that you prefer.

PEARSON: That's, that's what I prefer. And they seem to be satisfied with the way things are for them.

DALLETT; Okay. Can you just give me a nutshell of, uh, you mentioned that you were in the service for a number of years. Can you tell me how that came about?

PEARSON: Yes. I was working for a place out in Evanston, the pharmaceutical concern. And, at that time, the salaries were frozen and, I, uh, I became a little disgusted because they hired another girl that, uh, she got the same pay as I did right off the bat. And I had been there for a couple of years. So one Saturday when I got off work I, I had been reading in the paper about, uh, about the women's Army Auxiliary Corps. So I just decided to take a ride straight downtown and, uh, I got some information. They signed me up and told me to come in for a physical the following Wednesday. And when I came into work on Monday then I told them, I said, well, "I won't be in on Monday, on Wednesday, because I have an examination downtown. I'm planning on joining the army." "Oh, no, you can't do that."

I said, "Well, I have to take Wednesday off." So I took Wednesday and Thursday off. I went downtown. I had my physical, and I was going in on Thursday, and then I went back to work on Friday and I told them, I said, "I can give you two weeks' notice now, because I'm going in." "Oh, that can't be!" You know. Then, they got together with their lawyer from downtown and he told them that they could move me from this desk to that desk and they could give me an increase in pay because they'd give me a different title. Well, they couldn't have thought of anything like that before so, anyhow, I told them that it was too late. They gave me a beautiful watch when I left, but then I went in. So two weeks later I, uh, I was accepted in the service. I mean, I had already been sworn in. We took a train from downtown and, uh, piled in there just like the soldiers were, and down to Georgia. I went for basic training.

DALLETT: And what year was this?

PEARSON: 1943.

DALLETT: '43.

PEARSON: February, 1943, I went in. And after basic training they then sent us to, uh, to a, they tried to grade you for what, what you had done. Since I had been a

secretary, then they put me in administrative work. So they sent me to an administrative school in Conway, Arkansas, for six weeks. And then I got, uh, training with all the different, uh, reports that are made out in the Army, you know, morning reports and duty rosters and various things like that. So then, uh, after I was there, then I was assigned to a job down in, uh, in Texas, Shepard Field, Texas. And I spent three years there. And there was a woman from, uh, from Boston, Massachusetts who was the commanding officer. And I don't know whether she took a liking to me or whether she thought that I had a little experience, because she asked, requested that I be put in the orderly room with her. So I, uh, went up in rank pretty fast because of the position that I got and, uh, so I was into the, at, uh, Shepard Field, for three years. And then a lot of the girls got a chance to go overseas. Because I had made too much rank, my rank wasn't requested. So then I got disgusted and I said, "I think I'm going to get out and forget it." So I got out of the service and came home, and I was home for a couple of weeks and I thought, "This is not for me. I'm going to go back in again." So, I, we enlisted and asked to be sent out to Denver,

Colorado because my sister, who was living out there at the time, and they asked, well, "Do you have any requests?" And I said, "Yes, I'd like to go out there." So I was sent out there, Fitzsimmons General Hospital. So I was out there for several years. But then there again, my, I went in, so that I still had my rank. But when I came out there, then again my rank was always held against me for going overseas. So, Uh, finally in 1953 the war was over and everything, here comes an order in for a Master Sergeant for, uh, for Europe. And I was still working in orderly room work and everything. And I said, "This is the time that I'm going to go." So in 1953 I went to Germany and I spent, spent two years there. And during the time that I was there I made two trips to Sweden. Each year I made, but I went to a lot of other places too for, for shorter trips. But, uh--

DALLETT; Have you ever been back to Ellis Island? Did you ever go back?

PEARSON: I never went back there. But I, if it's going to be restored I'm going to go back there. (They laugh.) I sure would like to go back there and see it. Uh-huh.

DALLETT; Okay. I think that's all I really need to ask, unless there's anything else you want to add.

PEARSON: Well, I don't know of anything in particular that-- Like I said, I don't know what your, what you really were interested in or what--

DALLETT: Just what you told me about, really. Okay. Thank you very much.

PEARSON: All right. You're welcome.

DALLETT: This is the end of side two and the end of Interview Number 108 with Thyra Pearson, and it's 12:40.