

KECK-174
AILI HOWARD
BIRTH DATE: APRIL 19, 1900
INTERVIEW DATE: MAY 28, 1986
RUNNING TIME: 50:00
INTERVIEWER: DEBRA ALLEE
RECORDING ENGINEER: NANCY DALLETT
INTERVIEW LOCATION: WOODSIDE, NY
TRANSCRIPT ORIGINALLY PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 1986
TRANSCRIPT RECONCEIVED BY: CHICK LEMONICK, 5/1995
TRANSCRIPT NOT REVIEWED

FINLAND, 1916
AGE 16
SHIP NAME NOT RECALLED

ALLEE: This is Debra Allee. I'm speaking with Mrs. Aili Howard, it's Thursday, the 29th of May, 1986. We're beginning the interview at 10:27, and we're about to interview Mrs. Howard about her immigration from Finland in the year 1916. This is Interview Number 174. Mrs. Howard I think we could just begin at the beginning. Why don't you tell me where you were born, when?

HOWARD: I'm born in Finland, 1900 and 19th of April.

ALLEE: I was born in april also.

HOWARD: Oh, yes? They're good people.

ALLEE: And you came from a small town in the north of Finland?

HOWARD: No, it's not too small, but not too big, but it's on the map.

ALLEE: You want to tell me the name of it?

HOWARD: Well, there's a lot of factories there, and it's sort of industrial, see because there's a big river that separates like a city into two, there's that river, and by the early part of summer, they float logs there which goes to the lumber yard. There's an enormous lumber yard there, and during the summer it's going 24 hours a day because they have foreign boats from England, Germany and France coming in, and they bring in merchandise and they get loaded with lumber. And then we had a big factory where they make supplies, what they need for horses, you know, harnesses and different things, and outside of that I don't know what else they make but it is an enormous place. And then we have a shoe factory and there are a whole lot of people working there, but they're not even inside the city exactly, they're a little bit outside.

ALLEE: What's the name of the city?

HOWARD: It's, I'll show you, I think I have it here--O-U-L-U.

ALLEE: O-U-L-U-? How do you pronounce it?

HOWARD: Oulu.

ALLEE: Oulu? I can pronounce that.

HOWARD: You're doing very well. And then I went to school for awhile, which I hated. I didn't like it one bit. It was alright in the beginning, we had a nice teacher, but then later on I happened to get that horrible woman teacher which everybody hated, and one day I got into an argument with another kid in our school, right in the classroom, and that teacher came over to me, and she says to put my hands on the desk, I did, and she came over with a stick, and when I see her hand go up so I pulled my hands out because she wasn't going to hit my hands. And the stick broke into three pieces. One hit a girl on the head, and one flew onto the floor and the third piece she had in her hand. I skipped over the

chair, picked up my clothes and I ran home, and I didn't go back after that. (She laughs)

ALLEE: You never went back to school after that?

HOWARD: I hated it.

ALLEE: How old were you then?

HOWARD: I guess about 13 or 14. That was enough for me.

ALLEE: Did your family work in any of the factories or--

HOWARD: No, no. In the younger days they had, they were in the butcher business, yes, because by the time I was born they were too old and they were mostly, well, they were retired, yes because we were ten kids in the family, and they had eight ahead of me. So it was pretty difficult for them. And my father was the type of man, typical Scandinavian, he liked the liquor and the work comes second. So everything was leaning more on my mother's shoulder than on my father's shoulder so, just the way it went on. And then as my older sisters got older and independent, they didn't want to stay home, and they met somebody who had been in this country, and she was visiting right in our hometown. They ran into her, and she was coming back in a couple of weeks so my sisters got busy, they wanted to, one of them wanted to come back, but the other one didn't. And of course they had a big row over that, and mother couldn't see why they should leave home, and she thought they were still growing kids and they were in their 20s by that time and, well, in the olden days 20 didn't mean anything. So then, finally mother says, "Well, if Annie goes with you, you can go, but if she don't go, you stay home." So somehow or other, the two of them made up their mind, they're going, and mother gave them the money, 700 marks, and they got busy because they had to be ready, by that time it was less than two weeks. I don't think they needed a passport in those days, I don't think so, I don't know much about that. So they got here and

the others followed them. Then came the third sister, because the two oldest ones, they were actually dead when they were babies, I never seen them, so this was actually a fourth sister who came here. And they like it here. And then came another one. (She laughs) And then after that, there's a one brother died, and then my brother came here, and then, well he was kind of too young to come here because, you know, I think brother came here in 1914, and you know, a job was very hard to get when you don't speak English, and besides they wanted skilled labor. So he used to work in a restaurant as a busboy or washing, dishwasher because they had no machines in those days. And finally he got on his feet, and he learned English, and besides he left New York and he went out of town to Worcester, Massachusetts to sister. And he stayed there quite a while, and he started to practice in carpentry work, which he did pretty well and then he came back to New York. And there was somebody my brother-in-law knew and he asked if he would take him to Connecticut with him because they were building small houses there. And he said, "Sure, I'll take him." and he got started in building as-- I don't know what he was doing, but he had a hammer nails alright. Then he was there, I don't know how long he was there, and then he came back to New York, and he was working for some motion picture company there in New Jersey for awhile, I don't know how long because he was married by that time and his wife didn't like New Jersey. She wanted to come to Brooklyn. And he liked it in Jersey, but he had a dangerous job, what he did. Those days, you know, they built those houses, very fragile, and something happened, either they burned them down or took them down somehow, because it was dangerous work but he made good money and he liked it, but he got out of there, he did, and his wife, then she didn't like Brooklyn either, she wants to go to Vermont because at that time one of my sisters, she lived in Vermont, they had the farm there. Brother wasn't no farmer, and there was no carpenter work over there, and he used to help the farmers there, and make a few dollars here and a few dollars there. And one Sunday he went to help one of the farmers when his roof was leaking and brother fell down from the roof, and there was no insurance then or anything, nobody had it, and he fell down and broke his leg in 12 different places and he was crippled after that, yeah, he was crippled for life. And well, he's dead by now so it was a blessing.

ALLEE: And what about you?

HOWARD: Me?

ALLEE: What made you decide to come?

HOWARD: Because my sister were here.

ALLEE: Were they here in New York?

HOWARD: Yes, well, I had two, no, one was in Brooklyn and the other one was in New York, but the others were all out of town and I had one kid sister in Finland at that time. And well, then my sister lived in 113th Street, between Madison and First. I still remember that place, and I used to look out the window there, my sister was on the third floor, and I never saw such a dirty people in my living days. And my sister brought me a dress, white with pink stripes on it, we were going out with here and her husband, she told me to put that dress on, I said, "No." She wanted to know why not, I says, "I'll get dirty looking at those people." (She laughs) Oh, it was awful there, and of course, she didn't stay long and I didn't like it there one bit, so I went to Brooklyn, and I liked it there much better because it was a clean, Scandinavian neighborhood and it was nice.

ALLEE: Why don't we go back to Finland for a minute. Had you planned, once your sisters had come over, had you always planned to follow them when you were old enough?

HOWARD: I didn't hear.

ALLEE: Once your sisters had come here, did you always have it in your mind that you'd come too, then?

HOWARD: Come here?

ALLEE: Yes.

HOWARD: Yes.

ALLEE: And you just waited until you were old enough?

HOWARD: Yes, because mother wouldn't let me out of the house until I was 16.

ALLEE: I see, and did you, from the time you left school when you were about 13 'til the time you came here, did you work?

HOWARD: Well, I was 16 when I landed in New York, and because the work was hard to get, because you don't speak any English--

ALLEE: No, I'm thinking of back in Finland.

HOWARD: Oh, in Finland?

ALLEE: Yes, you told me you left school when you were about 13.

HOWARD: Well, I used to run errands for people. I was everybody's errand girl, and then uh, I enjoyed it. And then I used to, this one woman, she was a dressmaker, and I used to go there to help her, to

baste things, and deliver and go to stores in town to pick-up trimmings and whatnot and I enjoyed that.

ALLEE: Sounds like fun.

HOWARD: It kept me on my feet, and besides it was a chance to meet people. Because I don't like to see the same faces all the time. (She laughs) Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to see new faces, and I enjoyed that, and so that was that.

ALLEE: So then you were 16, you decided to come here, and your mother let you.

HOWARD: Yeah.

ALLEE: Do you want to tell me about the trip, how you prepared for it?

HOWARD: Well, first of all I had to get my passport, because I'm a Russian ally, you see Finland belonged to Russia at that time, and war was going on, 1916. It was Russia and Germany allied, I don't think America was in yet. Then I had to get the passport, it took me three weeks to get the passport, because they had to sen for permission from Moscow. And I got my passport, and then I have to wait for the boat, another two weeks, and they have those horrible looking boats going across, and I got that, and I got away from home, and I felt kind of funny leaving because at the station when I was waiting for the train, I had my old friends, they were all over there. Only a week before, we went to a dance, the whole group it was and we had a grand

time, and I felt very bad, and finally the train, and I got in, and there was nobody on the train, then I say, "Boy this is something," and when I got to the last stop, where the train stops, well, that's the end of the Finnish line. Then I had to go to a Customs House there, then there was a Russian there at the Customs House but he spoke Finnish because there's a lot of those Finnish places, you know, got taken by Russia from Finland and they speak Finnish as good as I do. So anyhow, I had to go to a Custom House, and I was the only one there, there was nobody else. And he takes my suitcase and he goes through my suitcase, and I had the picture album there with different pictures of this country, what my sisters used to send, and I loved them all because when I had nothing to do, I used to go through and look at them. And then he tore them all apart and he threw them on the floor.

Then I start crying because I told him, I says, and the picture album and all because that was given to me, I didn't buy that, and it had writing on it, something about "To Remember" or something like that, he says, "It's gone."

ALLEE: Did he say why he did it, did he say why?

HOWARD: Well, I suppose they were looking if you carry some message to Germany or-- Well, they did that to everybody, it wasn't only me, they went through everybody's things, even you trunks, if you had trunks, they went through everything, oh, they were awful. And then, it was evening then, getting late, and I says to him, "Where do I sleep tonight?", because I couldn't go across because there was river there separating or inlet or whatever it is to get to the Swedish side. So he says, "If you wait awhile, I'll take care of you." So I didn't know what he meant, so I waited, I'm patient, and then he took me to this

enormous farmhouse there, not far, this beautiful house there, facing the river, and then the Russian asked that woman over there, "Can you accommodate this young girl for a night?" So she says, "I don't know," she says, "Everything is taken outside the dining room, it and the dining room." So then he asked me, "Do you want to sleep in a dining room?" I says, "I don't care if it is a picket fence, I'll sleep in the dining room." So they fixed a bed for me but she says, "You have to be up at eight o'clock," I said, "I'll be up with the chickens." And I felt comfortable, I slept good but the, of course, that time of the year, the May, the sun is very bright early in the morning, so I was up early in the morning. I put on my clothes and I went into the yard and sat down. But I didn't want to go near the Customs House. (She laughs) I said I was scared to go up there. So then finally I went there and I sat there, hung around for a while, I didn't go inside, I stayed outside, figured it would be safer. Because you see, the Russians had a very bad name in them days, what they did to young girls. So everybody was scared of them. So anyhow, finally the train came where I was supposed to be, but that was my fault, why I went up in the evening train to go there. I should have been on the morning train, then I would have got there and crossed the river in the same day. So anyhow there was a group of people who got out of there and they all headed for, with their suitcases to the Custom House. So I didn't go there, I just waited, and then there was a boat there ready and they got on and I got on, and I made friends with these people coming over. And there was one woman with four children. She had two children born in this country and two children born in, two born in this country and two in Finland. The oldest one and the youngest one were born in Finland, but the two middle ones was born in this country. But she thought she wanted her people once more, and the baby was born

in Finland, that's how that happened. And then, well, there was girl, and she was only 15, and she was by herself traveling, and then she came to this country, she had her parents in Virginia. And then that woman with those four kids went to the middle west someplace, and then what else was there? There was a good many people, some of them went to Canada but we were separated in Oslo because they had to take a different boat than we took to go to Canada. Then we spent two days in Oslo.

ALLEE: You went from Finland to Norway then, to Oslo?

HOWARD: Yeah, but we had to change trains I don't know how many times, we had to change the train, I was very happy to have a people there who spoke Swedish otherwise God knows where I would have landed, no-man's land perhaps. Then we were in Oslo, we were in a hotel. They used to bring us the food in the morning so we can eat and a pitcher of milk, but there was so many young children, and there wasn't enough milk, you know, and they poured the coffee, and I drank coffee yes, I loved it. But there was no milk, and I can't drink black coffee. So somebody had me to go and get milk. I said, "Why don't you go, you speak Swedish." So she said, "You go." So I took the pitcher and I went out in the hall and I didn't know what to say but I happened to remember milk is called (?) in Sweden, so I had that pitcher, there's a man inside, I said, "(?," and he took it and he came back with it full of milk. So they asked me, "How did you get it?" I said, "I don't know," but I got it. And then finally, we roamed around Oslo, 'cause we had two days there, so we roamed around Oslo, and we met two Finnish fellows there in Oslo. We were (?) an archway, you know, they have those doorways like that and go in the back, and it was a sort of mild rain, and we were talking Finnish, and these two guys going by and they happened to hear us talking Finnish, so they stop and they say, "Where are you going, are you going or coming?" So one said, "We're going," so he said, "Where?" "To America." So we said, "Where are you going?" They said, "To Finland." So then one of them says that they're not. So then, anyhow, they want to know

why and what's going on there because they didn't know. So then I said to him, I says, "Well, if Russia runs short of men, you'll be right in it, they'll draft you." So they asked us several things about what it is over there, so we got on the boat, they were on a boat coming back, they didn't go. (She laughs) And then in the boat, there was a lot of young fellows there who didn't speak Finnish but they spoke English and I met a charming young fellow there, tall, good looking, blonde, and the funniest thing, his name was Jim Jensen. (She laughs) And then he wanted to know where I was going because I couldn't talk. So I-- One of the girls who had been in there, the one with the four, she says, she told me, she said, "He wants your address where you're going." And I had a sister's address in Brooklyn, so he wanted the address so, so, he wrote it down himself, and he used to write me a postcard. I think he went to Wisconsin, somewhere there in the middle west, and he used to write me a few times but then finally he stopped when he didn't get the answer. So I couldn't write him anything because I didn't know, "yes" or "no", so I couldn't say anything, but he was a heck of a nice man. He stayed with us whenever he had time on the boat, and when we finally landed here, it was something, something for the book. Well, I never seen a Negro. Of course we don't have them in our country, even on those boats, those foreign boats used to come in, I never seen a Negro. My father used to take us to a pier on Sunday to see those big boats, and my kid sister and myself we used to pick up those shells there and those pretty little stones and bring them home with us, we loved them. But we never seen a Negro there. So, I happened to see this enormous Negro, so tall, nicely dressed. So I says, "If he has a suit of clothes on he must be all right." And I looked at him but I says to myself, "I don't run into him in a dark--." He told me, he pointed his hand twice to follow him so I did and then I was told to go, he put me into another room and he disappeared. I was there alone, so--

ALLEE: I was going to ask you about the boat ride itself, over, across
the Atlantic, during the War and everything.

HOWARD: Yes, well, when we left Oslo, and the evening come and everybody was

going to bed, they were on the bed already. And then all of a sudden the foghorn was blowing, all night for that matter, nobody could sleep because it was blowing all night. And the boat stood still, it was Norway. So then everybody was with their clothes on because they didn't even know what happened. So, by the time it was morning everybody was peaceful then, and the boat started moving when they heard the engine going, they knew the boat was going. So that was all, and we had a nice boat trip outside the two storms. The one storm, it was due in the afternoon I think because it was lunchtime sometime and I was sitting in the bench this way, the bench was this way, and my legs was this way and the boat tipped over that way, I go right over down on the floor, and I banged my head. Of course, I had plenty on me so it didn't hurt me one bit, I was quite chubby because I used to eat, I had the one meal a day and I finished it at night, in the morning and I finished it at night, that was my way of eating. So I didn't eat anything after that, I went to bed and I stayed there, I says, "I'm safer here in the bed." And one night this girl, the 15 year old who was going to Virginia, so she was, I used to go to bed earlier because I was used to doing that when I was home. So this girl was, she used to come in later and she was in the upper and I was in the lower. So I was sound asleep and she must have been sleeping too because all of a sudden I hear this commotion and it woke me up and I didn't know what was going on and I tried to see and I couldn't see what was in the dark but I knew there was something there, right there alongside the bed on the floor. So I got my foot out and I gave him a good kick, and he ran out of the room and he didn't come back. Well, the girl said, "Well, that was a lifesaver!" She was scared. So after that we put the suitcase against the door, so we, 'cause there was no locks on them, so we could hear one coming. But that's the only trouble really, on the way over, just going over that, over the bench, and whatever and that guy coming into the room.

ALLEE: Do you remember coming into the harbor and seeing the Statue of Liberty?

HOWARD: Yeah, I saw the Statue of Liberty and I had a picture of that

at home too, because my sister, they used to send all these nice pictures and these elevated trains going, and the parks, and different things, you know, interesting things. And I used to write back and I says, "I love them," and that's how they sent them because I didn't say I want but I say I love them. But the Statue of Liberty looks much bigger than it does in the picture, yeah.

ALLEE: Were you excited when you saw it?

HOWARD: Well, no, I just kept looking and, of course, there was everybody on the deck there, not everybody but there was a lot of them looking, and everybody had something to say but I was just waiting to get off the boat, I hated it. It was so small, my Lord. And Ellis Island, I didn't have to stay there too long because my sister came over and picked me up.

ALLEE: Did they process you in anyway? Did you have any doctors look at you?

HOWARD: Yes, there's a doctor there, but they only look at your eyes, that's all. And then there was woman there, of course, we were all in a line, and she tells me in Finnish (?), that means money in English, so I said to her, "Nothing, but my sister will be here and she has money." She didn't understand that what I said, so I repeated and she still didn't understand so there was a woman in back of me, I don't know who she was, and she says, "The sister will be here and she has money." You see, I had money but I don't know if it was stolen or if I lost it, one or the other, but I didn't have one penny when I landed here. (She laughs) And my sister asked me one day, "Have you got money?" So I said, "No." So she says, "What happened?" I says, "I,m not sure what happened to it but I had it when I left home," and I

says, "I had it when we were in the hotel in Oslo but I haven't got it now." So because I wasn't used to handling money, alright a few coins, but I had a paper money and I suppose I left it in my suitcase, wherever I left it, and it just disappeared.

ALLEE: Was the Negro man that you saw for the first time, was he on Ellis Island and he worked there?

HOWARD: He must have been working because he pointed to me to, you know, to follow him, that's what I think, because he put me in another room and then he went away, I didn't see him after.

ALLEE: And what happened in that other room, was that--

HOWARD: Well, I don't, that was a smaller room, I suppose they put you in a bigger room in case you stay there for a while, you know, but he put me in another room and I saw my sister coming so I says, "Thank God, I'm going to get out of here." It was such a dreary looking place them years, that was 1916.

ALLEE: It was dreary looking?

HOWARD: Oh gosh yes.

ALLEE: Can you remember anything in particular that was dreary looking?

HOWARD: I don't know if there was any windows. If there was they were nothing but holes, small holes. But I tell you the truth, it's a scary looking if you don't see

anybody around you, in a strange place, but I got out of there. My sister came over when she got the word I was in, I was coming in that day, so she took the next boat over because they have a time limit when the boat used to go there, I think that was three o'clock in the afternoon, the last boat then you have to go back.

ALLEE: We're going to turn the tape over now, we've finished side one.

END OF SIDE ONE

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

ALLEE: This is Interview Number 174, with Mrs. Aili Howard. This is the beginning of side two. Okay, let's see, I was wondering if you could remember any of the details about Ellis Island itself. You said it was dreary and it didn't feel like it had any windows. Was I dark?

HOWARD: Dark, yes. It's, I don't know, I'd seen one monastery, they said it used to be but when you go in the walls are so dark, they're almost like a dark brown or black or whatever they were, and that's what the Ellis Island was, it was like a--

ALLEE: Were you in any big rooms with lots of people or were you just always in a little room?

HOWARD: No, no, I was by myself.

ALLEE: I see. But when you got off the boat you must have been with

some people.

HOWARD: We were taken in a small boat to Ellis Island, I don't know where the boat went, the New York Harbor or if it was in Hoboken, I don't think because it's Jersey City by then, but I don't know where it stopped but then we were put into a small boat and taken to Ellis Island. And then on Ellis Island, wherever they put these people, I imagine they put them in different trains wherever they were going. Like inland, so I'm sure they were put in trains in them days, 1916, there was no planes flying.

ALLEE: No. Okay, and then your sister came and got you, and she brought you here to New York, and so now tell me what you thought of New York.

HOWARD: I thought New York was so dirty, honest, I never seen such a-- I'll tell you one thing, that struck me so funny because I didn't go out much, I went a very little out by myself, but I did sneak out. And I looked out the window because it was June, close to the middle of June and I was up on the third floor, and them days we didn't have the automobiles, very few. And they used to have horse and wagon or whatever you call it. And across the street there was like a grocery store, you had to go down a few steps, so when that horse and buggy stopped, he had those big milk cans in that wagon, and then he went inside, the man went inside, and he pulled one can out and then he took the one can out of his wagon and he looks into his wagon, how much milk is there, and then he opened the other, it was nothing. Then, he wanted to dump some milk into the empty one but I don't know why he didn't do it. He goes into the street looking for something so he can measure that milk, how much of the milk, and he finds this dirty old

stick, and he wipes it on his pants a couple of times, sticks it in the can of milk and takes it out and looks and then he puts milk in there and then he does the same thing, and the (She laughs) so then the stick back in the street. so, in Finland, we didn't have anything like that, I'd never seen it. So i said to my sister, I said, she was too late to get to the window to see what was going on, so she couldn't believe it.

I said, "You're living here and you don't see things like that?" She said, "No, I don't look out of the window." So, then I mean, so I said to my sister, "Do you mean to tell me that people buy that milk?" She says, "Yes," I says, "Why?" She says, "It's cheap, because that's the--" I don't know there's a name for that. It's not like it used to come in a bottle years ago, it wasn't a container, it was in the bottle. And my sister used to get the bottled milk, but not this loose, that's what they used to call that, "Loose Milk." Yeah, that was the first messy thing I ever seen in this country and I'll never forget that.

ALLEE: And I guess people didn't sweep the streets as they did in Finland?

HOWARD: No, in Finland you not only have to sweep your house there, you have to sweep half a street and your sidewalk, and other side they have to sweep the other half and that sidewalk. See, I don't know how they work it out, if they still do but that's what they did. Because we had a house in the city, right in the city but it was all rented out and small apartments so I know that from home they didn't have that kind of a-- Let me tell you in bathrooms was something. I know people, they, four families like in Brooklyn here, they used to be once upon a time, one-family houses, and then they used to make them

into small apartments, and they only had in the hall one bathroom and whoever there was, maybe three, maybe four families, they all had to use that same bathroom.

ALLEE: Was it that way in 113th Street too?

HOWARD: Oh no, that was in Brooklyn. Oh yes, in the Manhattan was the same thing, no, they didn't have a bathroom, I mean a bathtub. They had to go to these city baths, I don't know what they call them.

ALLEE: The City Baths, that's what it was called.

HOWARD: The City supplied them until who's that Italian, you know, "The Little Flower," and he became mayor?

ALLEE: La Guardia.

HOWARD: Yeah, he made them build the bathrooms right in the apartment, he got after them. He really cleaned up Manhattan better than I seen any mayor do it.

ALLEE: So you were 16 and you were here in New York, and it was a little dirty. What did you do then?

HOWARD: Well, I had to look for work, and I couldn't look so somebody helped me to get a job in the house as a maid. And I guess I did alright there but I did an awful lot of heavy work and I was really tired in that two months so-- My brother-in-law wrote the note to give the woman I was working for, "I.m getting out of there--" because 4:30 in the morning I had to get up, they have the wash there ready for me

at 4:30 in the kitchen, Monday morning, and Tuesday morning there was an ironing board and iron and clothes what I had to iron. I took the whole day to do it, I'd never ironed a handkerchief, so the I started ironing clothes. I guess they were alright, they wore them.

ALLEE: Where was the house that you worked in?

HOWARD: Where? In Flatbush, in Brooklyn. And there was a lot of those, you know, like the two-family houses, you know, and take people because the rents was very low in those days, so was the wages. These people there was five of them living, there was a father, a husband and a wife, and her father lived with them and then they had two kids. But they were kind of odd people, very odd, and I got out of there and then I got a job to take care of a little boy, but it was an agreement, I had to stay there three months because the man had to go away and his father, his wife had an operation and she wasn't allowed to pick up a baby, it was a little bit too heavy for her, so I stayed there three months, but I didn't like it. It was, I had to take care of the furnace downstairs, it was a coal furnace and what they used to call, I think it was the hot air heating or something like that where they used to have the opening in the wall, that used to shoot dust and dirt all come in, I didn't like it. So then I learned a little bit, I had myself (?) trying to pick up a little bit here and a little bit there. And I got very nice jobs after that.

ALLEE: What kind of work did you do?

HOWARD: I did just the housework for quite a while then I got in machine work, and but it didn't go well with my shoulders. I always got that pain in my shoulder. So I can sit there for maybe a couple of weeks and after that it start to bother me. So I was to the doctor and the doctor said there must be something pressing on a nerve. So I went back, I got a very nice job then. They were very nice people, and I was off and on with them, I left her I don't know how many times and went somewhere's else, and try my luck and I was

doing underwear on the machine work and then I did some dresses and I liked to help out in the house, that is if the people are agreeable. When I left my last place, I had it over 20 years.

ALLEE: You're lucky.

HOWARD: Well, that I had to give up on account of my health.

ALLEE: Oh, that's too bad.

HOWARD: Well, that was 1971 or '72, I think it was '71 when I had to give it up. My health was going, my hands bothered me, every inch of my body bothered me, so I just had to give up and then, I used to have an apartment in Astoria. I had a beautiful apartment there. I took that in 1940, I had my son with me, and then I had my niece, she came here from Vermont, no, she lived in New Hampshire at that time, she came here, and it worked out very nicely, and then she got married, and my son got married, and I was left in that place alone. My landlord's wife died, he married again, and ten years later he dropped dead and his daughter sold the house. And they were kind of itching to-- (The noise of the elevated obliterates what Mrs. Howard is saying.) -- the daughter says, "I'd rather sell it to the niggers than them two."

ALLEE: Really?

HOWARD: Yeah, she snapped, yeah. And well, I was absolutely shocked when she said, because she was home living, and I used to do quite a bit of sewing, because I had to make most of my own clothes and do some work for outside too while I was at home. And she used to come and

borrow things from me, you know, like pinking scissors, and different things what she didn't have. And I used to give her pieces of material because I used to get them for nothing, you know, they were samples, and they were good materials. But if you put two together when they matched, so you cane make a blouse or something like that. But I never got over that, and I was told that's what she said to that real estate man, "I'd rather sell it to niggers."

ALLEE: She must have been mad at her stepmother.

HOWARD: But she didn't have no reason because the second wife was good to her. When she used to come here every summer for two weeks, she had these two young sons and the daughter was running around loose, God knows she came home during the night when she felt like it. And she took charge of the kids and she use to go shopping and buy these cheap clothes, I don't know where she went, maybe a ground, basement, and she pulled them home and she wanted the stepmother to fix them for her. She was very good with the scissors and machine. An she fixed them to fit her, that's a lot of work when you start from the seam like that. And then when she turned around like that! Not only that, but the second wife, she got hardly anything, only what the law provides for her. And the daughter had the rest put in the bank and she got that when the father died and not only that but when the house was sold she got a little bit but not much because she couldn't get more. They asked for \$50,000 for the house, it was a six family house, well kept, and these people were Yugoslavian who bought that house, I don't think they ever had anything and then say, they were talking and hashing it over, and finally they say, "We'll give you \$42,000," because the daughter wanted to get rid of the house because she lived in California, and all these phone calls going back and forth, so that's all she got was \$42,000.

ALLEE: Can we get back to you?

HOWARD: Yes.

ALLEE: Did any of your family stay in Finland?

HOWARD: No.

ALLEE: You all eventually came here?

HOWARD: Yeah, my youngest sister, she was married and she just died about a year and a half ago in Florida. So there's nobody.

ALLEE: Do you ever think about what it would have been like if you'd stayed rather than came here? Did you ever think about differences between the two countries?

HOWARD: Well, I think I would have enjoyed it, but not in my hometown. I feel it was a bit too small, I would have gone to Helsinki. You see, I had a cousin there, she had a tourist home there and I could have gone there anytime I wanted, she would have taken me, even just to see what it's like.

ALLEE: And you haven't been back to visit or anything, you've just been here since you came?

HOWARD: No, just around New York, and Jersey a few times and New Hampshire and Vermont, and Connecticut, and that's the farthest I got. And I don't know what's the use of going any further because you go to New York, you see everything.

ALLEE: It's true. So I guess even though New York was dirty, you like it here, you were glad you came?

HOWARD: Well, when I moved to Brooklyn I liked it, yes, in the rich people's neighborhood of course was clean. But the, like the downtown New York, you know, Delancey Street, around there, I used to love to go there, and Chinatown, I used to enjoy it. And then, of course, on 113th Street it's a mixed nationality there, there's the Jewish, the Scandinavian, and Irish, I don't know what they all are. And then because the kids didn't have the playgrounds the way they have today, and the kids used to play on the fire escape. They'd be running up and down on that on that fire escape, one falls into the other and they have a grand time there. So when I went on the elevated to work, I used to take it, I forgot, was it Brooklyn Bridge where you used to get the Elevated Third Avenue El and I used to enjoy looking out the window to see what the heck is going on.

ALLEE: I remember that train too.

HOWARD: Many a time I was there, and then one day somebody sent me to 57th Street, that was the first year I was in the country, somebody sent me to 57th Street in Manhattan. I had the address where to go and the call was in but I had to pick up, but I didn't know where I was, but I went over there. I knew there was somebody following me in a car, slowly, and I saw two guys there, and I tried to run from them, and I had my one eye on them and finally, I don't know how many times they were around that part, they comeback again, so all of a sudden the one hops out of the car, and I'm running and running and he comes and he (Inaudible) in broad daylight, early in the afternoon.

ALLEE: On 57th Street?

HOWARD: 57th Street, East side. I don't remember if I got off the Second Avenue El or Third Avenue El because it's only a block apart so to me it only meant a block to walk. This was, I was sent over to pick up something. I never went back there. You don't know what's going on. You have to keep your eyes open, see, watch, your eyes, which way you're looking. You have to learn the hard way.

ALLEE: Nancy, can you think of any more questions? Right. When did you become a citizen?

HOWARD: I'm not a citizen, I'm ashamed to say it.

ALLEE: It's okay. So you didn't become one. Was it just that you didn't do it?

HOWARD: Well, I had many, many times to, my idea that I'm going back. But other times I was short of money. You see, I brought up my son, mostly by myself, you see. I was married, yes, and my son was 12 years old. But I had enough, and I walked out and took my son with me. And then I supported him, I out him, I helped him to go to high school. Then he was in the service, he was in the Navy, 18 months because he went back to school, he went to Casey Jones when he got through with the Navy. Then he got married. He lives out on Long Island. He's got his own house. He had three children. This is one of them (she points to photo), and I helped them to go through college. And my grandson, he's the oldest and he has a Master's Degree, and then the next one is a girl, but she didn't want to go further, she got married when she got four years, that was enough. The youngest one is about ten and a half

years younger than the others and she's finishing, she's got one more year in college. So my money went on educating them.

ALLEE: Do you need to have money to become a citizen? Do you have to pay something?

HOWARD: I don't think they ask any bank roll, no, it's not the money.

But you know, years ago it was different, you know. You have to be something to get your, like, you know to go through it. Like in Washington, they have the records of everybody who enters the country, so I guess they want, you know, to through the records so I think they charge you for that.

ALLEE: Oh, a fee? For looking you up.

HOWARD: Yeah. See, like my sister, the one who lived in Brooklyn, I was very much attached to her, and she had a wonderful husband. He was very good instructing if you needed help. But they moved to Schenectady. She had a very bad asthma. Not only that but he got a job in the General Electric. That's what he was looking for because he was working there for 25 years and he got his pension, and they had two children, and I don't know if the girl went through college but the boy did. He's an electrical engineer, yeah, very smart, he lives in Florida. His parents are dead. They're buried on Long Island. His sister was younger than him, and she died when she was, she wasn't even thirty yet when she died. So, if they had stayed in Brooklyn, you know, I mean-- She was the type of person, you know, "Get out there!", you know, to make you.

ALLEE: Make you go do it.

HOWARD: Yeah, but then my sister from, who lived 113th Street, when she went to Brooklyn, her husband, he wasn't that type. And I didn't like to go there, I hardly ever went there. I did used to go to see my sister once in a while but not too often because I couldn't ever get close to her because when we were small, you know, she's not the type to like children, any more than my sister, the one who's son was the electrical engineer. She can get children. But the, her husband the children and she wants them married, she had to have two, a boy and a girl. And he was crazy about the kids. He would have been different than those in Schenectady, of course, I didn't go there much, I didn't go. I stayed only a couple of times. When his 25 years was up he just retired that's all.

ALLEE: Okay, I don't think I have any more questions. Thank you.

HOWARD: Thank you. I hope I didn't--

ALLEE: It was just fine. Let me finish the tape. This is the end of Interview Number 174 with Mrs. Aili Howard. The time is now 11:25.