**Kate:** Good afternoon. This is the 24th of June 1994, and I'm in the Ballard section of Seattle, Washington with Elov Bodin who was born in the US, returned to Finland in 1916 and came back to the US from Finland in 1922 when he was nine years old. Could you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Elov:** My name is Elov Erik Bodin, born March 7th 1913 in Seattle, Washington.

**Kate:**  In Seattle, Washington. You say your situation is you went back to Finland, could you tell us a little bit about what led up to that? Were you living here?

**Elov:** I was living here with my mother and I don't remember my dad too much because after all I was only three years old, but from what mother said they finally split up. They couldn't get along. His habits and methods didn't agree with her so she decided well... I'm surmising this. She decided, "Well, I'm going to go home to mother [laughter]," and she took me with her at three years old.

**Kate:**  First of all, what was your father's name?

**Elov:** John Erik Eriksson Bodin.

**Kate:** John Eriksson?

**Elov:** Yeah, John Erik Eriksson Bodin, I think he used to use Eriksson too. That's a family name.

**Kate:**  And how do you spell Eriksson?

**Elov:** E-R-I-K-S-S-O-N.

**Kate:** What was his occupation?

**Elov:** He was a carpenter more or less.

**Kate:** Do you remember what he looked like?

**Elov:** Well I saw him in 1926, I remember then, but that's the only time I've seen him and I went down to San Francisco and met him then. He had dark hair. In fact, some of the Swedes called him the Swedish gypsy because he was dark complexioned. His roots are actually in Varmland but they lived in Halsingland when he was born.

**Kate:**  What about his personality and temperament? Did you know him well enough?

**Elov:** Not well. The summer I spend with him he seemed to be a quiet sort of person, didn't smoke and didn't drink. Took a drink once in a while but didn't smoke and didn't drink so he seemed like a fairly level headed person.

**Kate:**  Is there a story about your father that your mother told you in your childhood or anything?

**Elov:** Well the only thing I remember, one of the reasons leading up to why she left him was the fact that he was a... Well let's put in general that most of those young people that came over from Sweden and Finland, especially the single men, they gambled a lot and they drank a lot, spent a lot of time in the pool hall or saloon, whatever they called it.

Well my dad evidently liked to gamble. He evidently was in a poker game that lost all the money he made and then he pawned his watch. That watch, my mother had bought for him for a birthday present, I guess. This is a story she told me. He pawned his watch and she went and bailed out the watch and took it home. Lo and behold a couple of days later he lost it again and pawned it again. I think that's the straw that broke the camel's back.

**Kate:** Did you live in this section of Seattle?

**Elov:** I've lived all over Seattle, North End mostly.

**Kate:** That time when your mother and father were together when you were a child, did they lived in a Finnish neighborhood?

**Elov:** I have no idea. The address I have is 2417 1/2, 5th Avenue. That would be right down in the middle of town where the monorail goes right now. That's where they lived for a while. Then when I was born, we lived out on Latona. I'd say about 64th and Latona. I've got a picture of it somewhere here in front of the house.

**Kate:**  What was your mother's name?

**Elov:** Iner Holmlund, Iner Sofia Holmlund. She dropped the lund and she went for Iner Holm when she get to this country.

**Kate:** Could you spell Holmlund please?

**Elov:** H-O-L-M-L-U-N-D.

**Kate:** That was her maiden name?

**Elov:** That was her maiden name.

**Kate:** What was her occupation?

**Elov:** Well here in this country she did everything and one of the reason she told me too, she ironed shirts and supplied laundry for 10 cents a shirt. She was ironing too damn fast that superintendent wanted to cut her wages. She was making too much money because she was too fast. But that's one of the things that kept them going over my dad. She earned the money and then he gambled it, I guess, away and then that's the probably the second straw that broke the camel's back.

**Kate:**  And what was she in Finland?

**Elov:** In Finland, she just was a... Well we moved in with grandpa and grandma in Finland and they had a little farm and they spent time on the farm. Then she went and took lessons as a seamstress and she learned how to sew and do things like that. But mostly she did domestic work when she got back to this country.

**Kate:**  On your passport that you just showed me, your mother's occupation was listed as a seamstress.

**Elov:** Seamstress, right. Yeah.

**Kate:** Could you describe what your mother looked like?

**Elov:** Well everybody is partial to their mother. She was a beautiful lady. She was blonde. She was about 5'5" I would say and just well-built and a nice lady. She was a beautiful lady I think.

**Kate:**  What color of eyes did she have?

**Elov:** I think they were blue if I remember right. Blue, I think they were blue and blonde hair.

**Kate:**  What about her personality and temperament? How would you describe her?

**Elov:** Personality, she was a self-made woman. She got hardened by the tragedies and things that happened in this country and she wasn't about to let anyone tramp on her. She was an individual that stood her ground. She made her mistakes but she also rolled with the punch and she came back fighting.

**Kate:**  What about a story? Do you have a favorite story about your mother?

**Elov:** No real story. The only thing I can think of, years ago, we had those cast iron stoves, kitchen stoves. She'd get under it and lift that stove just like any man would. She was strong. I remember that. We'd move those iron stoves around and boy they were heavy. She could lift anything. She was strong.

**Kate:**  What about your brothers or sisters?

**Elov:** I have a half- sister. She's 18 years younger than I and that's mother's second marriage. She married a Finlander by the name of Bill Lax from Petalax, if you know where that is.

**Kate:** How do you spell Lax?

**Elov:** Just L-A-X. Just plain L-A-X.

**Kate:** And how do you spell Petalax?

**Elov:** P-E-T-A-L-A-X, I think.

**Kate:** So your sister's name is?

**Elov:** Her married name is Bernice Sleister, but Lax was her name. Bernice Lax Sleister.

**Kate:** How do you spell Sleister?

**Elov:** S-L-E-I-S-T-E-R, of German descent.

**Kate:** So you lived here in Seattle. What was the house that you lived in? Was it a department or house? Was it rented or owned?

**Elov:** When?

**Kate:**  When you were a child here with your mother and father?

**Elov:** That I don't remember. The only address I had is the one I gave you on 5th Avenue and that was where my aunt lived and that was where my dad lived for a while. I don't know where we lived when I was a child except on Latona. I have a picture, and the house is still standing, but I haven't been out there to verify the address but around 6400 on Latona.

**Kate:** What do you remember about going back to Finland and your life in Finland and from early years?

**Elov:** The only thing I remember, like I mentioned before, is when we got on the boat in New York. There were other friends. There was other Swedes and Fins going back to Finland. Someone gave me an Easter candy so it must have been in the spring because I remember that Easter egg they gave me. I was three years old. I've got pictures on the boat too that we went back, but that particular candy, I remember being given that candy.

Aside from that, I don't remember anything till we got to Sweden and we visited my in-laws or my dad's folks in Sweden in Halsingland. I remember getting off the train just by the whistle sound. It was just one little station there and they came and met us with a horse and buggy. That's about all I remember. From then on, we traveled up north to Haparanda. That I don't remember but I was told. That's why we went to Haparanda and went to Finland.

**Kate:** How do you spell Haparanda?

**Elov:** H-A-P-A-R-A-N-D-A.

**Kate:** So your father was Swedish and your mother was Finnish Swede?

**Elov:** Finnish Swede.

**Kate:** Swedish-speaking Finn. Your sister then, she was born here?

**Elov:** Yes, she was born here. Never been to Finland or Sweden.

**Kate:** Where did you live- go back to? What town did you go back to when you went back to Finland?

**Elov:** We went back to Vasa, a little village called Voitby.

**Kate:** Could you spell that?

**Elov:** V-O-I-T-B-Y.

**Kate:** And Vasa, could you spell that too.

**Elov:** V-A-S-A. There's a couple of spellings on that. Finnish has two a's in there. A-A-S-A [laughter].

**Kate:**  You went to that town, where did you live in that town?

**Elov:** We moved into my grandfather's farm there. It was a big farm, he owned a big farm and I guess he was in the process of selling it because we didn't stay long there. We moved to a house close by. When he sold his farm, he kept us and grandma and we moved over there with him just close by.

**Kate:** When you say it was a big farm, what do you mean by big?

**Elov:** Well in today's measurements, it's a little farm, but it was enough to feed a family of five or six or something like that. They lived off the land in those days in 1917, 16, whatever it was. It was big enough to live off of that and say five or six cows and a couple of horses.

**Kate:** Oh, did you keep other animals as well?

**Elov:** That's all I remember, the horses and the cows, that's all I remember. Oh, sheep. They kept sheep. That's right. I did go out with them to the Archipelago in the summertime, they sent the sheep out to islands and put them on islands out there and I remember that. I went with them in the boat. They tied their legs and clipped their ears so they could tell whose is whose. I remember that.

**Kate:** So they mark the sheep and carry them out to the island?

**Elov:** Yeah, they tied them up and put them down in the boat and as soon as we got to the island, they let them loose. All the different farmers in a bunch there and in the fall they went down there and picked them out, whose was whose. Because the young ones that were born they followed the female sheep so they got them back. I remember that.

**Kate:** Describe your farmhouse. What did it look like?

**Elov:** In Finland?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Elov:** Well the original one was a big two story one and it was quite large. I would say in measurements, meters they'd call it over there. I'd say about 75 feet long, it was a big one and about 25 feet wide. Two stories.

**Kate:** How many rooms, would you say?

**Elov:** I have no idea. It was a great big front room and then there was a small bedroom downstairs and then there's the other end. There was a bedroom or a guest room they have and upstairs storage areas and two or three of them upstairs and storage areas.

**Kate:** What was the house made of?

**Elov:** It was made out of boards put on the outside, clapboards on the outside.

**Kate:**  Was it painted?

**Elov:** Painted red, yeah.

**Kate:** Painted red?

**Elov:** Red and white, yeah.

**Kate:** Red and white. How was the house heated?

**Elov:** By fireplace, open fireplace. And in the separate bedrooms, they had those... What would you call them? [Inaudible 00:13:05] they call them there. What do you call them in Finnish?

**Kate:**  [? Camina 00:13:07]

**Elov:** [? Camina 00:13:08], yeah. There were crockery built right in a corner and they would fire them up, heat them up with a Birchwood and the brick would get hot and then stay hot all night long.

**Kate:** Do you mean a tile fireplace?

**Elov:** Tile fireplace, yes. A tile fireplace.

**Kate:** A tile fireplace, right.

**Elov:** Only it was built solid to the ceiling.

**Kate:** Do you remember if you had a garden?

**Elov:** Gardens, yeah. Mostly the gardens were big plots of potato patches [laughter].

**Kate:** And what about the furniture in the house?

**Elov:** Furniture in the house was simple-made four-legged chairs and four-legged tables [laughter], nothing fancy. The benches around the outside of the perimeter of the house. I remember those benches and usually in those benches were stored all kinds of stuff.

**Kate:** You mean you lift the lid?

**Elov:** Lift the lid and there inside could be tools for shoe-making or taking care of the tack for the horses and stuff like that was stored into those places.

**Kate:** How far from town was this house?

**Elov:** Oh, let's see. We were 20 km from Vasa, where we lived in. I think it's about 20 km.

**Kate:** Who did the cooking in the family then there?

**Elov:** My grandmother did most of the cooking.

**Kate:** What was your favorite food?

**Elov:** Well let me tell you, I'll just show you some potatoes or potatoes [laughter]. Once in a while you'd get some fish and then you'd get some meat, maybe meat once a week or fish maybe once or twice and the potatoes and then mash made out of barley flour or rye flour. In a great occasion, you might get pancakes, Swedish pancakes.

**Kate:**  What about the kitchen? Could you describe the kitchen?

**Elov:** Well the kitchen was that open fireplace and in that fireplace everything was cooked. Later they got insert stoves that they put in there but when I was there, those things weren't common. Only the ones that had a little extra money could buy those inserts fireplaces.

But most of our stuff was cooked on, what do you call it, a spit? What do you call those? It was swinging deal. It was on a post like this and it had an arm on it. You hang your kettle on that or coffee pot and you swing it over the fire and when it's cooking, you swing it away from the fire. Everything was usually cooked on that except stuff-

**Kate:**  And hinges, you mean hinges.

**Elov:** Well it wasn't hinges. It was built right on the piece of iron. It was hand-forged too. And then fried stuff you fried on a frying pan usually on the coals of the fire or right in the coals themselves. The fish you'd throw right in the coals themselves, the potatoes too, cook them right in the coals.

**Kate:**  Coals meaning of the wood fire?

**Elov:** Yeah, wood fire when the fire died down.

**Kate:** What was meal time like? How many meals a day did you eat?

**Elov:** I think we had three meals a day or two meals anyway. Good breakfast usually was warmed up. It's the fried mush left over from the night before and milk and that was it. Sometimes we had [? fille 00:16:27]. You know that is. That is a form of yogurt. Culture was put in raw milk, well unpacked [unclear 00:16:40] milk, call it that. And then the cream would rise to the top and then it'd form a gel or sour deal like a yogurt and put sugar on top, if you had sugar. It was good. I liked it.

**Kate:**  American students in Finland used to call it plastic milk [laughter], sort of [inaudible 00:17:02] like that.

**Elov:** Anyway we had that quite often because it was a natural product that was raised on a farm, the milk. And of course we had butter and bread, big round breads. You remember those?

**Kate:**  With the hole in it.

**Elov:** Yeah, hanging in the ceiling.

**Kate:** You hang your bread in the ceiling?

**Elov:** Yeah.

**Kate:** With a [inaudible 0:17:21] in between?

**Elov:** Yup. You hang up the supply there for maybe as much as two months, maybe more, and you just get up on a chair and break one off and bring it down put it on the table and eat it. Some were pretty tough. Holy cow, you'd wear out your teeth on some of those [laughter]. They weren't thick like hard tack. They were a good half inch, maybe even more and they were hard. The older folks used to soak them in water or milk to get them soft.

**Kate:**  How did you eat your meals?

**Elov:** What do you mean?

**Kate:** In terms of the family?

**Elov:** Oh we just sat down together and ate.

**Kate:** Everybody ate together?

**Elov:** Yeah. I remember one thing my grandpa did. He had a wooden spoon that they'd even buy in those days and after he got through eating his mash, he'd leave it there for next time [laughter].

**Kate:**  Who were you especially close to in the family would you say?

**Elov:** My mother was about the real... She was the closest. My grandmother too. My grandmother and mother were the closest.

**Kate:**  Do you have any anecdotes about your grandmother for example?

**Elov:** She was a village psychic, you might say. She could foretell things happening and she had ways of curing things and stuff like that. She was even interviewed by some professor from Helsinki. He came up and interviewed her about her ability to foretell tragedies and stuff like that.

**Kate:**  What was her name?

**Elov:** Her name was Maria Helena Holmlund. Klemets was her maiden name.

**Kate:**  How do you spell that?

**Elov:** K-L-E-M-E-T-S, Klemets. It's named after the site of the city of Vasa because she's an ancestor of that city of Vasa.

**Kate:**  You said she had all cures like what type of cures did she have?

**Elov:** I'll tell you the story she told me and my cousin in Sweden told me, a couple of others too. But the one that hit me was when their oldest daughter Ida got married. She was 10 years older than my mother. Well the farmers usually set their daughters up pretty good. The way I understand it, they gave them a small farm, gave them livestock including a horse or two horses and they moved away from home, moved out close by.

Well this one horse kept coming home all the time. He wouldn't stay in the new place. Grandma says, "I'll take fix that" She took a little quicksilver and put it underneath the [inaudible 00:20:24] of the stable. The horse never [inaudible 00:20:29] She mumbled some sort of magic words I guess or whatever it was.

Another thing I remember was you'd get a sore wrist or an ache in your elbow or something like that, she'll fix that. She says, "Come over here. Put it on a stump here." She got the ax out and she got some chickweed and she'd put the chickweed on each side and she got the ax busy and chopped from one side to the other. "Chickweed take away the soreness of the arm," and she cured the soreness of the arm that way.

**Kate:** Was she superstitious?

**Elov:** She must have been because she had all these things that she could do. Another thing, my cousin [?Sende 00:21:19], she had acne quite bad when she was 16, 17 years old and she was supposed to go to a dance that coming weekend. She says, "I can't be seen in public, no way." So grandma says to her, "Well I don't know. I think I can fix it." She says, "We're kind of closely related. I don't know if it will work." She says, "I need a little tiny sliver of a gold ring." Let's see, what else was it?

Anyway this little sliver of gold had to go in a little vial. The vial had to be filled with some sort of special water from somewhere and my cousin was supposed to go down to the river, turn around and face the river backwards, throw this vial with the little fleece of gold in it over her left shoulder and then her acne would be gone. Sure enough it did. It disappeared [laughter]. She lose the acne, she could go to the dance next weekend. That's about the gist of the story.

**Kate:**  What about religious life there?

**Elov:** Everyone was Lutheran and quite religious more or less. Even if they couldn't go to church, they practiced religion fairly well I'd say.

**Kate:**  What does that mean, practiced?

**Elov:** Well they all worshiped the lord and were thankful for what they got and stuff like that.

**Kate:**  Did you say prayers at home?

**Elov:** Not generally. Once in a while they might take on and read a passage out of the Book but not too often. I don't remember saying prayers too often.

**Kate:**  Before meals or anything?

**Elov:** No, not really. Once in a while.

**Kate:** Was there a church nearby?

**Elov:** No, the church was about 15, 17 km away.

**Kate:** Did your family go to church on Sunday?

**Elov:** No, only in special days like Easter or burial or something like that or Pentecost or Ascension Day, Christmas if it was possible.

**Kate:**  What were the main holidays?

**Elov:** Well Christmas was the main holiday and Easter was the next one. Those two were the main ones. And then midsummer was the third one, I would say.

**Kate:**  Do you remember any of those celebrations when you were a child?

**Elov:** I remember Christmas in a way. I think it was Christmas. Yeah, we lived next door in a new place. We moved from the main farm to that new place and my neighbors had two boys who were older than I am. Of course Christmas time, you had to have a Christmas tree and you hang candles in it with fire on them. There wasn't no electricity in those days over there.

I remember these neighbor boys, a tradition they did over there was throwing presents through the door and run. You were supposed to catch them and see who threw the present in there. I remember these boys one at a time came in and threw a candy through the door and of course I couldn't catch them. They were older than I am. I figured out who they were so I got one candy each from them and that was a treat.

**Kate:** Now the houses that you lived in, what kind of plumbing did they have?

**Elov:** Outside.

**Kate:** Outside plumbing? Outhouse?

**Elov:** Yeah, it had two holes, three holes.

**Kate:** What about lighting?

**Elov:** Lighting was by kerosene lantern. They didn't get electricity there until 1921, I think it was the [inaudible 00:25:04] electricity sort of. They had a cataract close by and they harnessed the power in that cataract and started a little generator. I think it was just five hose the first one they had, and it spread a little electricity around the immediate areas.

Later on I think they improved and got a 25 horse generator and distributed it around a little further away but [inaudible 00:25:26]. Still later they came out with a bigger generator and they got electricity all over there. Now it belongs to Vasa electric [? bulag 00:25:34]. I think all that belongs to Vasa now. It's running in conjunction with the Vasa-

**Kate:**  Now back to Christmas, I'm sorry I interrupted about your Christmas thing. You said you remember throwing gifts in the door, but what about food and celebration there?

**Elov:** Well the big thing in Christmas, we had rice pudding. That was the big thing. You don't get that every day. It's just cooked on rice, milk, butter and you put sugar on top. And then we tried to get dried fruit and cook it into a sort of a... what would you call it?

**Kate:**  Fruit soup?

**Elov:** Fruit soup, yeah. And put that over the top with of the rice pudding. Or they used blueberries and did the same thing with it. Just add cornstarch, cook blueberry soup.

**Kate:**  You mean like a topping?

**Elov:** Yeah, a topping on the rice pudding. That was a treat.

**Kate:** What did you eat in terms of your main course?

**Elov:** Probably broke down and had some sort of a meat. I don't remember exactly. Pork was better available than beef and sheep mutton was better available than beef too. The only time you got beef was when somebody's cow died and they went around the neighborhood and sold it piece by piece. They wanted to buy it.

**Kate:**  What about midsummer? Today is midsummer. Do you remember that at all?

**Elov:** I don't remember too much about midsummer. Not when I was little. It was more for the teenagers and older, I think and didn't have anything to do with me. I was only a little tot then.

**Kate:**  Do you remember school life in Finland?

**Elov:** I started school early because all my neighbor kids went to school and I was left home alone. I didn't want to go to school. I think I was six years old when I was starting school. They start at seven I think over there. I started school and it's not mandatory to go to school then yet in 1918, 1920, whenever it was. Not until 1922 the school system came into being in Finland. It was all voluntary sponsored by the farmers in the area, people that lived in the area. They sponsored [inaudible 00:27:57]

I started in what we'd call kindergarten, I guess I would say. It had two grades and then lower grades there and I started in that. More or less got associated with other kids and learned to do handcraft stuff. In fact, I've got a handbag here that I made, a little handbag I made there. They had the boys sewing things and doing crochet and stuff like that. Yuck [laughter].

All the boys, there was a lady teacher. She couldn't teach anything else so she had us sewing things. We made a knitted container for corks. We put corks in it and made balls on them, knitted around these corks that we had saved up and that made a ball. That was one of the things we made and then these handy things, pen wipers and stuff like that [laughter].

**Kate:** Where was this school that you went to?

**Elov:** It was in Voitby.

**Kate:** How big was the school? How many kids?

**Elov:** Oh, we're talking about a one room house. That's what this was. It was used in conjunction with the missionary groups too. The Mavericks Religious groups. They were separate, apart from Lutheran.

**Kate:**  Do you remember any specific teachers besides the ones that taught you how to crochet?

**Elov:** I don't remember their names. I was told who they were. One of them was [inaudible 00:29:24] but I can't remember her name right now.

**Kate:**  Did you learn any English before you came here?

**Elov:** Nope. Only when I was three years old and then I forgot all of that.

**Kate:** You forgot it all. So when you went back there, you didn't speak any Swedish at all?

**Elov:** Nope.

**Kate:** Do you remember that, learning Swedish again?

**Elov:** Don't remember it, no.

**Kate:** What did you do for playing games at that time? What type of entertainment did you have at home?

**Elov:** Well let's see now. Let me think now. In the wintertime there's not much to do. You usually stay inside except you'd go out in the snow and play in the snow fool around in the snow when you're five, six years old. But these places there are some hills where you can use a sled and go down. I got a pair of skis given to me and it was a fellow by the name of Leland and he was a carpenter by trade. He actually worked for my grandpa at one time. He had these excess skis. They were long, big ones.

I was five, six years old and I remember those long skis. My, they were big and long, I thought. Probably they were only about six, seven feet long but they sure felt big. I had those so skied on those. That's all I remember. Oh they did ice skate too. They had ice skates with metal runners mounted with wood top on the metal runners and tied on with leather straps if I remember right. I wanted to have a pair of those but I never did get a pair [laughter].

**Kate:** Is there a favorite story told about your childhood, about you back in Finland at all?

**Elov:**  I don't know of any.

**Kate:** How did you get back to the United States? What happened that made your mom want to come back?

**Elov:** I have no idea. I just have a feeling that mother just wasn't satisfied with the economic conditions over there and she just wanted to get back to the good USA.

**Kate:**  So you were saying you felt that your mother wasn't contented with the economic conditions of Finland.

**Elov:** No, there was no reason for her to stay there I guess as there's no future in making any money or anything like that. At the time when we left, she was watch person at a toll bridge over the Kyro [inaudible 00:31:52]

**Kate:**  Could you spell that?

**Elov:** K-Y-R-O in Swedish [inaudible 00:31:58]. In Finnish it's-

**Kate:** Kyra.

**Elov:** Kyra.

**Kate:** You'll give it to me afterwards.

**Elov:** Yeah. It's sort of [unknown 00:32:08]. What's [unknown 00:32:11] in Finnish?

**Kate:**  [unknown 00:32:12]

**Elov:** [unknown 00:32:13] is the name of a town.

**Kate:** So she was actually a-

**Elov:** She was the watch. They had a boom across the bridge and it was a toll bridge. It was put up by the community, and they had to get their money back for spending money on it. She was a guard there and day and night, she had to be on... Any time of the day or night she had to be there to charge the toll and open the boom and let them through.

**Kate:**  Hmm. Do you remember any discussion of her about her talking about coming back?

**Elov:** No, I don't remember a thing about that.

**Kate:** Do you remember packing to come back, anything?

**Elov:** I don't remember anything of the packing or anything like that. It's funny. I don't remember a thing about it.

**Kate:**  What's the first thing you remember about coming back?

**Elov:** The first thing I remember is when we were in New York Harbor and anchored for the immigration inspection, let's put it that way. Immigration inspection or the custom inspectors came aboard.

**Kate:**  And you were in Ellis Island?

**Elov:** No, before Ellis Island. This was aboard the ship in which I saw them coming with the boats and this other tender that took us over to Ellis Island. I remember that one a little bit. It came and picked up a whole bunch of us. I don't think everyone from the ship went to the Ellis Island. A lot of them I guess stayed aboard. Only the ones that were questionable, I guess, went to Ellis Island.

**Kate:** Do you remember anything about that boat trip? Do you remember seeing the ocean?

**Elov:** No. The harbor. The New York Harbor.

**Kate:** Do you remember the Statue of Liberty?

**Elov:** I don't really remember that exactly. Seems like I remember the pier we came in with the boat and docked alongside of it. That's it. That's about all.

**Kate:** What do you remember of Ellis Island then?

**Elov:** Well the only thing I remember was there was this big, open hall that we came into. Seemed to me it had white tile or someplace, either on the floor or the ceiling, wherever it was. White tile it was. Anyway it was white tile somewhere. We were shown our beds, I think they were bunk beds, if I remember right. That's where we slept. I think we were there two nights. Records would show how many nights we were there. I don't remember the meals. I think I remember being checked by the doctor. You came in and they checked you over to see if you were still breathing, I guess.

**Kate:** Do you remember anything about that checkup, what they did?

**Elov:** No, I don't remember. It was quite rapid. It didn't take long at all for my mother and I to be checked. We had no problems I guess so there was nothing to check on.

**Kate:**  What about how many people were there when you came in?

**Elov:** Oh, there was a lot of people. There were all kinds of people. Seemed like they were everywhere. There were just people all over the place in there.

**Kate:**  Were there other Swedish-speaking people? Other Finns?

**Elov:** I don't recall but no doubt they came on the same boat I was in.

**Kate:** Now did your mother speak English then?

**Elov:** She still remembered her English I think so she used her English language.

**Kate:**  Do you remember the confusion of not knowing English then?

**Elov:** I didn't pay any attention to it. It didn't bother me at all. I spoke my language and that was it.

**Kate:**  Why were you detained?

**Elov:** My passport was not clear because I was born in this country and my picture was on my mother’s... We were both together on the same picture on our Finnish passport, which was not quite right because I was an American citizen. I think that's one of the main reasons why we were detained.

Second reason I think, my mother had no place to go to, no job for herself or anything. She just decided on her own she was going to go back to the United States and she was going to take a chance and do it. That's the kind of person she was and she just set out. Had enough money to pay the fare and got over here.

**Kate:** How did she get the money for the fare?

**Elov:** Well she earned some in Finland from her seamstress work and then maybe borrowed from my grandpa too. That's probably where she got it.

**Kate:** Where were you going when you got there?

**Elov:** I don't know what her ideas were but we went to New York, and I'll tell you just to get to the United States, that's the first thing in her thoughts I guess and that's where we landed.

**Kate:** Since your passport was unusual and since your mother didn't have a place to really go, how did you get out?

**Elov:** Well fortunately we had friends in New York, sort of distant relatives too. I remember [? Dalmunds 00:36:55] is the name of one couple that came and signed the bond for us and [Niecemants 00:37:01] is the other one. My mother was second cousin to Mrs. Nacemund who is also my wife's aunt. We didn't know that then when we got married but now I know it now. But she was second cousin to my mother and they went and got what they called a bond for us and took us in charge, signed an agreement, I guess, to take us in charge.

**Kate:** Had your mother contacted them before she came to the United States?

**Elov:** I don't think so. That's one of the reasons I think we spent two nights in Ellis Island. She was in the process of contacting them, I guess. I remember they came out there and bailed us out, you might say.

**Kate:**  Where did you go then? Do you remember where you went?

**Elov:** We went to [? Dalmunds 00:37:43], their apartment in Bronx. I think it was someplace. I'm not quite sure. I started school there somewhere.

**Kate:** In the South Bronx?

**Elov:** I could have been. I'm not quite sure.

**Kate:** You mean the cooperative housing, the apartment houses there?

**Elov:** I don't recall. In 1922, I don't know what the heck -

**Kate:** There were two apartment buildings, Bottom or Cooperative housing across from Yankee Stadium.

**Elov:**  We weren't that close to Yankee Stadium I don't think. I forget the school... I think the school had a number. They don't have the names on them, they were like that.

**Kate:**  The PS, that PS.

**Elov:** PS number, yeah. I started school there. I went up to second grade, I was in the second grade, then later, this was in the fall, I guess it was. I only stayed there a little while because the [? Dalmunds 00:38:27] had two boys and we were always fighting. Fighting over the skates and skate board and whatever it was [laughter]. And it was too crowded in that apartment.

So then we went over and lived in Lyndhurst, New Jersey with my wife's aunt or my mother's second cousin, [? Niecemants 00:38:48] and they lived in Lyndhurst. There I stayed all winter long and started school there again and went to school there again in Lyndhurst till the spring and then we came out here to Seattle.

**Kate:**  Now what did your mother do in New York then?

**Elov:** She got a job as a domestic. She was a domestic for a lawyer up at Gramercy Park, a live in. She had to live there so I'd see her only on occasion. But I would take the train from Lyndhurst to Hoboken, take the ferry across from Hoboken, catch a streetcar and go up to Gramercy Park and meet her. I was I guess I was still nine years old then, maybe 10.

**Kate:**  So she worked as a domestic for a family?

**Elov:** Yeah. Right.

**Kate:** So that went on for about a year, you said?

**Elov:** No, I think it was just during the winter. We came back here to Seattle I think in the spring of '23.

**Kate:**  And why did you come to Seattle?

**Elov:** Evidently that's where she wanted to be. I surmised she had some of her valuables stored here because I have reminisce of her wedding gifts that she got when they got married here and it probably was stored with her sister-in-law and she wanted to come back here and she had lots of friends back here. That's where she'd been for five, six years.

**Kate:**  What happened then? Did you come back? Did you see [unknown 00:40:10]? Did you contact your father again? Was he out of the picture?

**Elov:** He was out of the picture. He'd already gone down to San Francisco.

**Kate:**  I see. Okay. What happened in Seattle then? What was your life like here in Seattle?

**Elov:** Well, oops here we go again.

**Kate:** Hold on, that's alright. That's alright.

**Elov:** The mic fell off. I don't remember exactly coming back to Seattle. I don't remember the train trip or anything like that and I know it was a train trip. But I remember my mother told me and I remember, we came to, I think its 908, Pine Street. Mrs. Pierce’s Roomy house. My mother said she had $2.50 left when we got to Seattle. She paid $2 and 25 cents for the housekeeping room. The very next day, she went along down to YWCA and she got a job right away, $2 a day and car fare. She worked for odd people like Carol the jeweler, Fryer the meatpacker. She did domestic work. In those days, there was no washing machine. She did all the home laundry and all that stuff, washing and ironing, $2 dollars a day and car fare is what she got.

**Kate:** And you went to school then here.

**Elov:** I started school in Summit school in 2B.

**Kate:** Do you remember having to learn English again?

**Elov:** Don't remember, just seemed to come natural.

**Kate:** Did your mother have any difficulties with English?

**Elov:** She did quite well. I think she was a learner, she wanted to learn. She only had three years of school in Finland as she said but she was a go-getter.

**Kate:** Did you experience any bigotry or persecution because you were foreign here?

**Elov:** There always was. They'd call me Swede a lot, just derogatory, Swede. I had some accent because they spoke Swedish at home, and I didn't pronounce my words correctly and they made fun of you. It seemed like they took great pleasure in making fun of the Swedes.

**Kate:**  Did you ever correct them and tell them you were Finn?

**Elov:** I never bothered. I never let it bother me. It bothered me but I didn't show it [laughter].

**Kate:** They'd call you Swede. Anything else they call you?

**Elov:** No, that's about all.

**Kate:** They ever call you square head?

**Elov:** No, no, that came out later, I think [laughter].

**Kate:** What about religious life here?

**Elov:** We'd been non-practicing religious people. In other words, we'd go to church just once in a while. We didn't believe in religion, but we believed each and every one should decide how much religion, what beliefs he has himself and live with that.

**Kate:** So your religious habits, were they very changed coming to the States?

**Elov:** No, they were just loose, I'd say just loose. I'd go to church on the big holidays and stuff like that or when somebody had a wedding or some death, something like that. Not any definite pattern going to church.

**Kate:**  Did your mother ever talk about her life here in this country and how she felt about it?

**Elov:** No, she never revealed. I think she would have but she never revealed too much about things.

**Kate:** How would you characterize her adjustment here?

**Elov:** She had her struggles. She was tough. The feeling I got, she felt that her sister got the gravy in the old whole country by getting the farm and stuff like that because there was 10 years difference between her and her sister. She felt she got cheated. She came along, she was 16 years old the first time she left home and decided to seek fortunes in this country and she was bound to do well. That was her driving force behind her. She's going to show them she's going to do well and she did. She did well. No matter what came up, she did well.

**Kate:**  And what happened to her and her life and she worked hard most of her life?

**Elov:** She worked hard. Because I was an anchor dragging behind so she went into rooming house, the rooming business and rented a place at Two Minor and rented out housekeeping rooms there to single men and women, whoever happened to come along. From then on she went up, we finally wound up at 1415 East Olive and she had a 76 room apartment up there she rented and rented out apartments there until the depression came and broke her, broke everything. A lot of people owed lots of thousands of dollars, never paid their rent [laughter].

But in the meantime, she happened to sell it, sell the business, because you don't sell the property because she leased the property and she sold the furniture to somebody and they couldn't make it. In the trade, she got some property out of Lake City and I think that was the start of the good things. Kind of bought an acre of land out there and started building some houses out there. During the depression we lived on raising chickens and the food we raised on our own land out there. We never were on welfare or anything. We lived off of what we had.

**Kate:** So she used... Basically entrepreneurial?

**Elov:** Right. We sold eggs door to door and stuff like that just to make it a go and lived off of what we had. We didn't demand washing machines and TVs and stuff like that. We had outside plumbing and [inaudible 00:45:40]

**Kate:**  And then she start [inaudible 00:45:42] houses?

**Elov:** She built a couple of houses out there and-

**Kate:** Herself?

**Elov:** No, no. She contracted it to a contractor. She had the property so she contracted it. Cost plus, I guess what you'd call it so she sold the property. She even built apartment complex out there. Actually the chicken house was first of all, they converted it to apartments later on when the chickens got old fashioned. So they converted the chicken house to apartments and later on she built the complex of cottages out there too on the same property and even later she built a motel out on [unknown 00:46:25] Highway [laughter].

**Kate:**  What about your life? You went to school, did you finish-

**Elov:** Went through high school, yeah.

**Kate:** Went through high school? And then what did you do?

**Elov:** Well I got a job as a bellboy at The Ranch Hotel. Actually I started as the elevator operator. I was there while I was going to high school. 1930, I think I started as an elevator operator at The Ranch Hotel and the Depression hadn't hit too hard then yet so we did pretty good and I made $200 or $300 during the summer there on tips and whatnot. I'd put it in the bank, Westlake... What the devil is the name of that? Anyway, Westlake Mutual or something like that. Of course the bank went broke and I lost all my money.

In 1931 I was there again in the summertime at high school and I worked as an elevator operator and one summer I was a bellhop. I hurried up and I got out of high school in three and a half years so I could get a job. Job was open for me in January down there at The Ranch Hotel on the elevator again. Let's see, what was it? $50 a month I think we got. Or was it $65 a month? I think it was $65 a month we got because on the elevator you don't have much chance of making any tips but anyway $65 a month. A lot of guys going into college couldn’t get jobs, no jobs at all then in 1932.

So I [inaudible 00:47:57] and ran there for a while and then a bellhop job opened up and that was $25 a month and tips and no tips. We didn't get any tips. I think the best I ever made in on any one day was when the Shriners were in town at the end of 1932. I think I made $9 tips one day. That was the best I ever made. Usually days went by you didn't even make a dime. Well you couldn't get along on $25 a month so I decided well I got a couple of hundred dollars in the bank yet so I'm going to go over to Finland visit my grandmother. So I did. I hopped a freight train, went to Albany, New York on the freight train.

**Kate:** You mean you did the hobo thing?

**Elov:** Right [laughter].

**Kate:** Went across the country?

**Elove:** Yup, I saw the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago. I was going to get a job on one of the boats that were in New York Harbor and then get over in Finland or Sweden. I met friends in New York and I went down to steamship companies trying to get a job, oiler anything on board a ship, swabbing the decks. No jobs.

One day a friend of mine says, "Hey, why bother looking for a job? Everybody's getting on board ships nowadays. They don't even get off." He said, “Why don't you try it?" John [? Batby 00:49:32] was his name, he's dead now. He talked me into it. I said, "Okay, I'll give it a try." So I got on the [unknown 00:49:44].

**Kate:** What do you mean? You got on the [unknown 00:49:47]? Why didn't you get on?

**Elov:** Well it's for visitors. It's to say goodbye to all the friends. That was common in those days.

**Kate:** So you went on-

**Elov:** Oh yeah, you get right on the boat with everybody and then they said, "All ashore that's going ashore." They'd ring a bell or something like that. Then they'd go, "All visitors off the boat" or something like that. I forgot to get off [laughter]. So I stayed on. There was no controller actually on the boat at that time so I went and ate in the dining room like the rest of the passengers of the boat. But when you're 20 years old, you do crazy things.

**Kate:**  So you went back to Finland to see your grandma?

**Elov:** But then I sat in an empty cabin there for a couple of nights and nobody checks. There was no bedding there. One of the fellows talked me into coming in with them in their cabin. Of course right away the steward has to make a report how many people he's got in his cabin so then I got caught.

That was the third day and we were off the coast of Nova Scotia. They put me to work in the kitchen and I worked in the first class kitchen. Boy, I never went to any other mess after that. I just ate the food that was in the first class kitchen [laughter]. Baked Alaska and half a chicken and all kinds of good stuff to eat. I helped the night man. I was on the night shift. Just two of us were on the night shift [laughter].

**Kate:** So that's how you got to Finland?

**Elov:** Yeah, we got to Gothenburg, Sweden and then we were herded in, I don't know what it's called. I know its some decks in the back there, cabins in the back. I call it the poop deck buoy. We were eight of us. We were eight stowaways on the boat that year. Five of them I think were Swedes. They were coming back from the United States bad times, depression, no money, no nothing just trying to get home to their homeland, to mom and dad or on the farm or whatever. Three of us were Americans.

I had my passport all clear. Visa stamped and everything all prepared ahead of time. Two of the other boys who were with me, they were just were joyriders. They were scared to death they were going to get stranded in Sweden. They just wanted to get back.

But the man that represented us, some police commissioner came and met us and took us to the police office or whatever you want to call it. They called us in one at a time. Actually the first thing was, "Have you guys had anything to eat?" "No?" Well [inaudible 00:52:16]. They sent out to the cafe and got us some food and had this real good meal [laughter].

Then they called us in one at a time into the office and talk with us. My turn came and he says, "Well what are you going to do?" I said, "Well I'd like to go home and see my grandmother." "Are you the one with the grandmother and grandfather up in Halsingland or else go to Finland?" "I'd rather go to Finland," I said. "Well how are you going to get there?" "I got a little money." I had money hidden on me. I think I had $150 for emergency use. I had to show them the money.

They send a man with me down to the Swedish American line, [inaudible 00:53:01] and I caught up with the passengers that I'd been associating with on the [unknown 00:53:08]. They were just ready to catch a train to go to Stockholm. He went into the office of the manager says, "Hey, I've got another passenger for you." He says, "He came over as a stowaway on the [unknown 00:53:22] but he wants to buy a ticket now to go to Finland."

I remember that manager getting kind of burned. He said, "You come all the way on a free ride across the Atlantic and now you want to pay for the rest of it." This police detective or whatever he was, plain clothes man, he talked him into selling me a ticket so I bought the ticket.

I went with the rest of the guys over to [unknown 00:53:44] and from there on I bought a ticket up to my grandpa and grandma's place. I got home to [unknown 00:53:52]. Its a little station outside of Vasa on the train and it was in the middle of the night. I remember walking all the way home 3 km, all the way to grandmas. I knocked on her door about 2 O'clock in the morning and said, "Here I am [chuckle]"

**Kate:** And what was her reaction?

**Elov:** I don't think she expected me but there I was. I stayed there almost two years [laughter].

**Kate:** You stayed there two years?

**Elov:** Yeah, worked odd jobs, enough to live on. The Depression was a lot less in Finland than it was in the United States. They didn't fall so far. It was a long way to fall here than over there. It was, the Depression was bad. I figured that by living out there in the countryside with my grandma, not paying any rent and just living, I could live on $100 a year. It was pretty cheap in those days, back in 1933. I helped the farmers, I worked with the farmers. I worked on the highway. I run the threshing machine one year. I cut oats and barley by hand. I learned how to do that.

**Kate:** Why did you come back then?

**Elov:** Well my passport was running out and I had gotten married over there.

**Kate:** You got married to a Finn?

**Elov:** Yeah, to Diagma, my second cousin in [unknown 00:55:24]. I had to come back and-

**Kate:** Well you got married. You could have stayed there if you wanted.

**Elov:** I could have stayed there by extending my passport, but I had extended it once already. There was not much future there at the time either so I decided to come back here and try it here.

**Kate:** What did you do? Did you pay for a ticket that time coming back?

**Elov:** Yeah, I paid for a ticket coming back here. I went to Germany then and came back on the US United States.

**Kate:**  Did you go through Ellis Island again?

**Elov:** Nope.

**Kate:** Why?

**Elov:** No, I'm an American Citizen [laughter].

**Kate:** Oh, that's right.

**Elov:**  I had a passport. I still got it.

**Kate:** So what did you do for a profession then in the United States when you got here?

**Elov:** I was a mail carrier. During the depression time, like I said, we lived off of what we had here in Seattle and I needed to go. I did odd jobs as little as 25 cents an hour and so on. Then I got a job down at CL Watts at 50 cents an hour working with highway material.

We did [inaudible 00:56:31] highway material. -Job opened up at the [unknown 00:56:33] like that. That's around $16.50 a week. There were six hour shifts. I think we made $16.50 a week. We had money to spare. We couldn't spend it all.

**Kate:** This is after you came back from Finland?

**Elov:** Yeah, this was around 1937, 38 something like that and about that time in 1937 I took the test for the post office, I took the test for the border patrol and a number of other civil service... Everybody was looking for civil service jobs in those days. That was the only steady job available. I think we were over 7,000 that took the test for the post office job here in Seattle at that time. Two different high schools gave it at two different times. I ended up with a 90.2 score I think it was. But it took me two years before I got the job. I was called up for temporary jobs a couple of times but I wasn't called up for a steady job until 1942.

**Kate:** So you were a mail carrier?

**Elov:** Mm-hm. I worked for the post office 30 years. 30 years, I retired. I've been retired for 23 years now.

**Kate:**  And did you have children?

**Elov:** Yeah, we had two sons. I lost one son to hemophilia or HIV because he got infected with bad blood. That's 1990, February the 1st, he died. My other son is a civilian engineer for the navy, I guess you call it and he lives over at Silverdale.

**Kate:** Silverdale, Washington?

**Elov:** Yeah, right. Yeah.

**Kate:** What did you wife work as?

**Elov:** At the post office, we were caught in a bind over the inflation at times so at times she worked as a waitress and I guess that's what you'd call it. There are two different places she worked as a waitress to augment our income when things were kind of bad.

Mr. Truman and stuff but we had to go begging on our knees to congress to get a raise in pay. It was hard to get a raise. We finally got it. Back in the 50s and 60s, nearly all letter carriers either had their wives working or else had other jobs, had moonlighting jobs. They had to have two jobs to make a go.

**Kate:**  And you said that your wife had just recently passed away?

**Elov:** Yeah, she died 17th July, 1993.

**Kate:** When you look back on your life now, how do you feel about your mother's decision to come here?

**Elov:** It was good for me.

**Kate:** Did you ever consider going back to Finland to live?

**Elov:** It's a nice place to be. I'd like it anywhere I think. I think Finland's better than Sweden. Inflation in Sweden it's terrific.

**Kate:**  Well have you ever considered going back now and living there?

**Elov:** I have no reason to go back now. Most of my friends are gone. The only place there if I want to visit them, they're in the graveyard. I only had two, three left. I only have one second cousin left in Finland. I have three cousins left in Sweden. That's all I got left.

**Kate:** Basically you feel pretty happy about your decision to come back to the United States?

**Elov:** Oh yeah.

**Kate:** Well I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for the interview.

**Elov:** It's a long story. I didn't think you were going to interview me that much [laughter].

**Kate:**  No, no. It's alright. We'll send you a copy of this if you want.

**Elov:** Oh, okay.

**Kate:** This is Kate Moore in the Ballard section of Seattle, Washington. On June 24th, 1994 for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.