**Janet:** This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I’m here today with Mr. Eric Arthur Price at his home in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. It’s December 6th 1994. Mr. Price is one week away from being 86.

Mr. Price came from England in 1915 when he was six years of age. I’m very happy to be here and I’m looking forward. You have all these records, it’s just wonderful. The research you’ve done on your immigration. Let’s start at the beginning, if you would say your birth date.

**Eric:** My birthday is December 15th 1908.

**Janet:** Where in England were you born?

**Eric:** I was born in the county of Kent, a small town called Gillingham, which is about 30 miles south of London.

**Janet:** And Gillingham is with a G, right?

**Eric:** Yes, with a G-I-L-L-I-N-G-H-A-M.

**Janet:** Did you live in Gillingham up until the time you left England?

**Eric:** My early life was being in Gillingham for a spell, my dad being in the British Navy and travelling as he did in those days and so I was taken by mother’s folks who lived in a distance away from Gillingham in Berkshire County by the name of Farringdon, F-A-R-R-I-N-G-D-O-N.

I lived therefore with my grandparents for a period of time until I was collected with my brother, who was in Gillingham, to come to the United States.

**Janet:** Do you remember Farringdon at all?

**Eric:** Yes. I can remember the baker that used to come over and drive through on the cabro stones and call out his wares and you could smell the bread. I can remember also at that early age of five and six years of age where I had a hoop, that was my grandfather insisted if I wanted to use the hoop over the cabro stones streets and which I enjoyed so much, I would have to hang it up every night on. He had a couple of nails in the side of a wall where he made me hang my hoop every night.

I can remember going to the grade schools in that particular time which we would call in the United States, kindergarten, and then I graduated from that into the first grades. That was the story as far as my early life remembrance in England.

**Janet:** This is your mother’s folks?

**Eric:** This is my mother’s folks.

**Janet:** Their last name was what?

**Eric:** Her last name was Sheppard, S-H-E-P-P-A-R-D. Her first name was Nelly.

**Janet:** Well, before we leave that part, tell me what your grandmother, Nelly, was like.

**Eric:** Say it again.

**Janet:** Can you tell me what your grandmother was like?

**Eric:** My grandmother and grandfather were typical grandparents. They just adored having me visit with them. They were strict as all English parents are and so I had to tow the line and I give them all the credit in the world in my early stages that they were so much of disciplinarians, which I’m sure bore fruit for me in my present day of activity and values.

**Janet:** What would they be strict about?

**Eric:** They were strict about going to church, going to my Sunday school, having my shoes and all of my clothes put away at all the time, not to leave anything in my rooms untidily and that was an English tradition.

They believed in it because I can remember grandpa used to say, “When you see your dad, he wants to see you with good and manners because he’s very strict about this.” I can remember my grandfather saying these things to me.

I didn’t have time much in those early days to see my dad because he was away in the navy so much. Actually, I didn’t even remember what my dad looked like in those days. I can’t remember my dad in those days and that’s why I anticipated when we did plan to leave England.

What did my dad look like? I heard about him being so strict and I looked upon him as being “Am I going to fear him?” or “How am I going to approach him?” Here I am, six years of age, and thinking about this. It dwelled on me as a purpose.

It was just great to listen to some other things but the little orders and disciplinary things that I went under I just accepted them as a thing to do. It wasn’t anything that I felt [unclear 00:06:02] by or feeling that I was being molested or ill-treated. I just accepted it as a way my dad wanted me to be brought up. My grandfather and grandmother certainly carried it on and I have some great memories about them.

**Janet:** Do you remember anything that you ever did with your grandfather? Any place you went with him?

**Eric:** Yes, I do remember that because grandpa had a large lot of land and every year the circus would come around and they would… it was a small circus, not like Ringling Brothers and the Barnum & Bailey like we have today and have had for so many years.

But I can remember it was a small circus and they had always an annual rental from my granddad’s pasture and I can remember it was a big day for me because I got in free because my dad was allowing me to get in and I enjoyed all the animals and the acts.

I can remember riding on the horses, being put up on a saddle and riding around. That was a big time for me on the circus grounds. It was only there for a day or so and then it went away but I missed them when they went.

**Janet:** What was your grandfather doing for work?

**Eric:** He was a carpenter. He was a carpenter all of his life and he did some work in working for the British government and being a carpenter. It happened that he was assigned to a big project by the British Navy in Gibraltar, which was one of their ports.

That, oddly enough, is where my dad, coming into port, met my mother in Gibraltar and this is where they romanced. I have old stories about it. He had written a biography of himself, of his different escapades and worldly travels in his late years.

**Janet:** What do you remember about their meeting?

**Eric:** I don’t remember that of course because I wasn’t born but it’s what I have learnt from my experience and research. I happen to have had an acquaintance with my own mother’s brother who died at 89 years of age in this country, in Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

It’s just 30 miles north of here. He and his wife was my own mother’s kin understand. They preceded us coming here by a year or two and getting set up in the United States. I learned all of these things from my uncle in his final years and that was after my dad passed away.

With that in mind, I have quite a record of what happened there and I understand that their first born was going to be Hugh Terry Price, which would be my older brother Hugh. The second one, his name was Eric.

Actually I asked my dad one day, “How did you choose the name of Eric for me?” and he told me the story. He said, “When mother and I were on our honeymoon in Gibraltar, we met a young Swedish boy who we just took to him, we enjoyed his company so much. He was about four or five years of age and he was a darling and so we decided we liked the boy so much so that our second born son was going to be named Eric”. That’s how I won the name of Eric.

Oddly enough, when I think of the name of Eric, when I came to this country it was hardly known, the name of Eric. Kids would say to me in the school yard, “Where did you get that name? I never heard of anything like that.” I said, “I don’t know, the name was given to me”. But isn’t it odd that here we are in 1994 and it’s quite a prominent name? Eric is. You can notice so many people named Eric but in those days and I must tell you this, when we came to America, I’ll never forget.

I was out in the school yard and I was way ahead of my time at six years of age and they put me right into the third grade because I was that far advanced. The boys in the yard they couldn’t get over my accent being British because I spoke the King’s English, there’s no question about it because that’s the way my folks taught me.

I’ll never forget, I went home one day and I said to my dad, “One of the boys in the school yard today said to me he didn’t like my accent and he said to me, “You get my goat.” I looked around for the goat. I knew nothing about it so my dad explained it to me.

Another expression, I’ll never forget listening to this youngster and he said to me as though he didn’t care. He said, “I should worry.” I said, “Yes you should, but you don’t.” I can remember those little expressions way back at six years of age. I’m told we used to tell my dad about it. It was so funny but we had nothing when we came to this country.

**Janet:** Let’s finish talking about England and then we’ll move to all that. Back in Farringdon with your grandparents, how about your grandmother? What was she like?

**Eric:** I don’t remember much about her except I can see her face and she was a [unclear 00:12:59] lady and very English. I can remember her saying to me, “Come on Eric, let’s hurry up. We’ve got to get to church.” That was Episcopal Church service, like English.

She was just a nice grandmother. But my grandfather really was the key spokesman in being in the disciplinary faction and I don’t remember doing anything wrong but those things don’t collect in your memory. I know that I was under strict orders to obey the rules of the house.

**Janet:** When you say your grandmother was strictly English, what is strictly English? What was it that made her?

**Eric:** When I say that I guess she was a typical grandmother as far as a housewife to her hubby. He was probably retired. I’m guessing he was retired in those days. I only learned about his occupation later on in many years after from my uncle Steve, because I learnt an awful lot from him about my dad and mother’s early days. I knew nothing, nobody told me.

I often wonder about what prompted dad to come over here and so many things that are mysterious in a child’s mind. For that matter I have a cousin in Herne bay which is north-east on the channel. The upper north east channel and I’m writing to her all the time. I’m trying to wean out from her what her mother told her about our particular history. I’m just curious about it.

**Janet:** That’s wonderful. Tell me what else you remember about Farringdon.

**Eric:** I do remember that I used to go to a nearby town with my grandfather on a Friday night to get fish and chips. The fish and chips in England was a big Friday feed and I can remember we used to go and they would take just plain newspaper and they would cook the fish and the fries and wrap it in newspaper and this is the way that was delivered, we brought it home.

I can remember many times the regular thing that we went to a place called Cogswell, C-O-G-S-W-E-L-L, which was just a town next door to Farringdon. That was [inaudible 00:16:16]. Most of the things that mostly I remember I do remember going to school and playing in the yard but very hazily. Then I remember being picked up, collected as it were by mother and brother and transportation was a race that we went from there to Liverpool.

**Janet:** Do you remember any stories that you were told as a child?

**Eric:** No, not other than what I’ve already mentioned.

**Janet:** Not [unclear 00:16:51] real stories, like fairy tales.

**Eric:** No, I don’t remember anything. It’s pertinent like that.

**Janet:** How about religion? Do you remember any religious observances in England that stand out?

**Eric:** No, it’s just that the children at that age probably don’t pay any attention. They’re thinking about going out and playing, or getting their little boat and rolling it out in the garden. All I know is that we paid our dues in going to church in Sunday school which was a must for us.

**Janet:** What was the denomination?

**Eric:** Episcopal-Evangelical, that’s the Church of England. I’ve even got a copy of my dad’s marriage certificate here and I’ve got a copy of my baptismal certificate. I got all of those things in my records. You can imagine what I’ve done with these here. That was my mother, my brother Huey, and myself. He was fourteen months older than I.

**Janet:** Did you see much of Huey?

**Eric:** No, I don’t remember hardly anything. All I know is that I had a brother but I never saw him up to that particular time. I don’t know who cared at that age. I hardly know my mother either because she was in Gillingham with my older brother, so I don’t remember much about my early childhood there, up to four or five; I don’t remember that at all. That was sort of a blank to me. When I was introduced to my own brother, the one fourteen months older than me, we charmed great together.

**Janet:** Do you remember the incident when you actually met your brother?

**Eric:** No, I don’t. All I know is that it’s hazy that I just was collected and picked up and forewarned no doubt by my grandparents that you’re going to go to United States on a big ship and your daddy is going to be meeting you there and your new life is going to be in the United States.

**Janet:** Do you remember saying goodbye to your grandparents?

**Eric:** Vaguely. I can just say that it must have been a sorrowful parting but I don’t remember actually the parting. I really don’t remember much about the travelling from Farringdon to Liverpool.

I do remember arriving in Liverpool and mother saying to me, “There is our ship”. I can remember being in the harbor and I was getting [inaudible 00:20:04] we will be getting on it shortly. We didn’t stay overnight at Liverpool, we went right on the ship.

**Janet:** The name of the ship?

**Eric:** The ship was White Star Liner Adriatic and that is in my write-up here, and we left Liverpool, England.

**Janet:** What do you remember about the Adriatic?

**Eric:** The Adriatic I remember we were right down in the bottom because it was the lowest possible fare and we were booked as far as steerage. My mother or my dad, one of them told me since, that it cost my dad $93 for the three of us to come over, steerage in those days. Being steerage, it was a place where we had freedom of the decks.

At the time it was 1915 and the war was still on. I compare our antics, my brother and I at ages seven and six, to what the present day might compare like days when Hopalong Cassidy was around and their guns and their cowboys.

We enjoyed just the idea of keeping our eyes open for German new boats. We thought it was fun, not realizing as I have said in my write-up here, the severity of the war being on. We didn’t realize, not being adults, how serious it was.

I can remember we used to play with a string or a rope and we’d think we were fishing. We’d put the strings over the side of the ship and I can remember we were just boys having a lot of fun. I’d never seen a rocking chair because they didn’t have them in England.

They had one on board. We both had to try it and we were rocking back and forth because I had to show my brother up so I went backwards and went too far and got my bump on the head about as big as a quarter. Mother said, “Boys, you be careful. I can’t watch you all the time”.

I can remember her saying it but we were just boys and raising a dick isn’t getting away with a lot of things. She never knew anything about getting our antics and fun on board ship. We had to, we had lots of energy. I can remember not much more than that on the way over.

**Janet:** What was it like being around your mother for the first time in a long time?

**Eric:** It’s hard for me to recognize it. I must have had some memory of her because I just accepted her as well. She’s been away for a while and that was it. I probably remember her at that time from an earlier age but being separated from her I just accepted her and my brother and we continued life. There was more important things for me to think about, I guess in those days. I can remember when we arrived here it was…

**Janet:** Can you remember the arrival? The ship coming into the harbor?

**Eric:** Yes, I can remember coming by the Statue of Liberty and through the Narrows because they pointed it all out to us because now it’s span by the Verrazano Bridge, where the Narrows is, but in those days it was all open.

We saw, as all people from Europe and everywhere saw the Statue of Liberty. I didn’t know Ellis Island was just [unclear 00:24:39]. I know that we saw a lot of ships going through the Narrows and we saw the skyscrapers, lower Manhattan which was not as much as it is today with the big trade centers there but the Woolworth building was up, and the Chrysler building was up. I guess its changed hand since.

I don’t remember too much about going through the channels of entering the country through immigration. I do know that we boys were hung on to by mother to keep us together and she had no doubt the directions to follow. We had no one to meet us there and so we went the way of all the passengers there that were coming in to the country.

They examined me and I was detained because of this lump on my head. I felt sorry because I was put into one of these rooms with four bunks high and fed. I had to stay there because they had to watch this bump on my head. It was five days that I stayed there.

**Janet:** Were you actually in the hospital?

**Eric:** I think they put me in [inaudible 00:26:01] then they put me back into the rooms where there were these tiers at Ellis Island where I think they are three high or four high with a wash basin. I can remember that vaguely and I was so sorry because I was wondering all the time “I wonder where my mother and brother are staying waiting for me”.

Finally they discharged me, they found out it was just a normal bump and off I went. You can imagine all the communication that had to be done in checking with my dad up in Fitchburg, Massachusetts as far as being as being detained. All because of this bump on the head I was detained for five days. My folks were… anyway we were discharged from Ellis Island finally.

**Janet:** Do you remember leaving?

**Eric:** I remember it so clearly that when I went back five years ago to visit, it all came back to me as a kid. It all came back to me because I remember that wash basin, I remember the bunks, I remember sitting on that little chair there wondering as a boy of six years of age, wondering where my mother was because nobody told me, that was in my mind.

Where was my mother and my brother? Here I was in a new land. I was satisfied the fact that I was detained for a reason but I worried about my mother and where she was. Finally when all came together, it seem so far distant today my thoughts of it.

**Janet:** Did your mother or brother ever tell you what it was like for them during those five days?

**Eric:** No, they never did and I never asked my brother. I didn’t bother. I assumed they were taken care of as hospitable as they could be in a case like this because there must have been a lot of cases like that where one in the group was detained.

I remember we took a train up. I guess we went over to Manhattan and went up to either Grand Central or Penn Station, one or the other, and we journeyed then, the three of us because all was arranged by my dad and we got off in Worcester because the Union Station was then run and we got in Worcester and my dad met us there with a horsing team.

**Janet:** What was it like meeting your dad?

**Eric:** I hadn’t seen my dad. I didn’t know what he looked like. The impression that I got after he greeted us at Union Station with a big smooch for mother and a hug, I don’t remember him fawning much over we two boys.

He no doubt said, “Good to see you boys” and as he walked off with my mother, all I could think about was looking at the size of his hand. It was embedded in my mind, “I wonder if he would hit me if I did something wrong”. It was embedded in my mind what a disciplinarian he was. All I could think about is looking at the size of his hand.

Isn’t that odd? I think that’s terribly odd and that’s been with me all my life and I’ve told other people that and I told my dad that because he was going back and forth and I was looking at the size as he had his left arm around mother. We came up in the back because that was the way it was taught. That we boys, whoever we went walking with, with any adults, we always follow them, we never got ahead of them.

So we journey from there, we got in the horsing team and Fitchburg was probably 25 miles north. He worked on a farm for $8 a week and in a year he saved enough money, $93, to get us out. That was a rough time. It was an apple farm called Raymonds on Pearl Hill in Fitchburg.

We stayed there at the farm for a few weeks and finally we got a basement apartment on Cedar Street in Fitchburg and that was a thrill. It seems as though my dad, being English, joined a lodge called the Sons of St. George which was a complete English lodge. Through that, as all the clans do, they help one another. He got another job at Manning, Maxwell & Moore in Fitchburg as just a utility man that’s different to the farm that he worked on but a step ahead.

That got him off the farm and on to an inside job at Manning, Maxwell & Moore which since is a big General Electric company in Fitchburg, they’ve sold out, converted. With this is mind, we had our own home, a basement apartment on Cedar Street.

I remember the first Christmas that we were here. The snow came down, dad went out and he picked up a second-hand girl sledge because they’re all different today. I’ll never forget it. All the other boys had great, flexible fliers and different things and brother and I we envied what they had because we had nothing.

There was no welfare. There was no hand outs, there was nothing at all. You either went hungry or you didn’t. That’s the way it was in those days. There was no welfare. We worked my brother and I even as youngsters we’d go out and we’d pick up wood for burning in the stove. It was a part of our life. We had a unified family there. Mother would be doing housework around for some lodges and still we took care of it.

Three years later, the tremendous influenza epidemic hit us, 1918, and we lost our mother. It was two days after the armistice was signed. It was November the 13th. The armistice was signed on November the 11th and two days later we were all stricken with the influenza. My dad did not get it but brother and I got it and mother got it.

I’ll never forget when three years later we had moved to a place on North Street with another English family that had been kind to my dad and mother. I can remember that in those days it was a terrible thing.

We were there in bed, brother Huey and I. Dad came home and I’ll never forget him saying it, “Boys, I’ve got some bad news for you, you’ve lost your mother.” I’ll never forget it, we laid there in our bed with influenza, we didn’t have it badly but we got over it. We just looked at each other.

Since then in those three years that we had been here, mother gave birth to another son, Gordon. He was two years of age when mother died. My uncle Will and his wife up on Pearl Hill in Fitchburg, they took Gordon for a spell and brother Huey and I were respectively 9 and 10 years of age.

We kept house, 9 and 10 years of age, with dad, dad working. Dad taught us everything. He taught us how to sew, how to cook, how to be independent and honest to God I’ll never forget him. He was strict but by gosh he knew his stuff. He could make roses out of dough. He was so clever about everything even with his naval experience.

Four years later after mother died, he met a lovely lady. Her name was Blanche. She had never been married but she was an English lady who was a maid at some of the [unclear 00:36:24] and the Burbanks in Fitchburg. They happened to meet each other after one of the St. George’s, Marriot… that’s another English affiliate women’s association and through it they meet each other and a year later they got married.

Why a woman, and she was a saint, wanted to come into a home with three boys? Can you imagine that? We were probably 14, 15 and 7, three boys. He lectured us, he said, “I want you to treat your new mother as mother”. He lectured us, “I want you to call her ‘mother’ just like you did with your own mother” and he lectured us and we did as we were told.

Through my new stepmother, and she was a lovely person, she gave my father four more sons. We had seven sons in our family and no girls. We lost one boy. His name was Everett and he lived to be three or four years of age. I forget what he died of but anyway that was it, that left six of us.

My kid brother Gordon is a retired Episcopal priest and has had a tremendous career. He writes to me all the time. He’s in Dayton, Ohio. I lost my older brother 10 years ago from cancer. He was very successful. He was plant manager of a big company. We all made out pretty good from nothing; I’ve done alright myself.

My other four brothers, one of whom was lost, they’re all graduates from the General Electric Company with good jobs, retired today and financially comfortable with what they have earned with their benefits. We wanted for nothing. Why? Because we have given of ourselves the doctrine our dad taught us, to be self-sufficient, independent, and a good Christian doctrine.

I think often about how hard dad was, what a disciplinary person he was, but I thank him today because he sow the seeds in all of our minds which spell the success that we boys have had today. Every one of us are comfortable. We’re not rich and we haven’t been stars in athletics or movie stars or rose to the very top of everything but we’re very comfortable in that middle plateau and we’re very respectful and loving.

My two boys, I have two sons, David and Terry, they’re both vice presidents. One’s in Boca Raton, Florida who I visit. He’s got a beautiful wife, and my older son David who was a twin whom we lost at five weeks. I’m very proud that we can say that we had our rough times but they were good times.

Look at me today. Look at what I’ve got to be thankful for. I just feel as though I love my work, the little I do in my staff of administration work, reporting for my superior boss, and I like people. I enjoy all the girls and guys at work.

I know the feeling is mutual. It’s the same with my associates, with my church, or my lodges, or my associations, or people in this building. They’re always in touch with me about different things. It’s a great feeling of friendship and being wanted.

There’s nothing any better than knock at my door and say, “How are you doing Eric?” That’s what I like about this place because I’ve got all ages in the condominium setup and we have lovely people in this building so that there’s no problem whatsoever. They all know me and where I live, so if anything happens to me I’ve got a lot of people surrounding me, which is great.

I lost my wife 24 years ago, lovely lady and great. She left me the heritage of two fine sons.

**Janet:** What was your wife’s name?

**Eric:** My wife’s name was Marion.

**Janet:** And her maiden name?

**Eric:** Her maiden name was Bloom. She was of Swedish heritage. There were a lot of Swedish people in these areas.

**Janet:** How did you meet her?

**Eric:** It was funny. It was during Depression that was in 1929. I wasn’t able… I might preface what I’m going to say by telling you that my brother Huey went through junior of high school and then he had to come home because of need of working for the family.

I got started in my junior year and I had to drop out because of need to work with my family. We both went into Manning, Maxwell & Moore machine tool shop where my dad had risen from sweeping the floors to a superintendent. He got us in there and we learned our apprenticeship both of us. At the end of my apprenticeship, which was four years, from 16 to 21 I guess…

**Janet:** Would this be an apprenticeship for [unclear 00:43:18]?

**Eric:** Apprenticeship as far as a machinist is concerned through an ICS course. Then the Depression hit and everyone is out of work. Dad said, “I’m sorry son, I’m not going to be able to support you. You have to ship for yourself”. Things were bad. There was no hand outs at all.

So I went to Boston and I got a job in the Boston YMCA on Huntington Avenue. I cleaned toilets, I did everything too. Here I just finished my apprenticeship but if I didn’t work and do whatever work there was to earn a few dimes, I went hungry.

I had to run up a bill. I can remember they would charge me $3.75 a week for an upper bunk of four in a room in the YMCA. It was $3.75 each. I had to run up a bill for three or four weeks because I had no money. I did what I could. I know what it is to have a pot of jam and a loaf of bread.

Finally I found some work over on the Fenway. You’re probably not acquainted with Boston, are you?

**Janet:** Just a little bit.

**Eric:** In the Fenway there was a street on the Ottoburn Road which circles the Fenway. In those days that’s where all the Red Sox players stayed in those days. They didn’t stay in hotels like they do today. They stayed, especially the hometown boys, they had their own apartments in the Ottoburn which is around the Fenway.

There was need of a lot of papering and painting to be done in these apartments, so I got to know some of the ball players and I was only 21. I got to know some of the ball players. I remember there was a fellow by the name of Charlie Berry.

He was a catcher for them. He took a fancy to me. He was probably a few years older than me at that time. He took me down to one of the games when the Yankees were in town. I was able to get… I gave it to my brothers but I’ve got copies of it. I have a list of all the Yankees of those days on all the autographs and all of the Red Sox in those days. That was 1931.

I’ve got Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Tony Lazzeri, and Bill Dickey… I can name them all off all the time. I’ve been offered a lot of money for those but no I’ll keep them in my family. It was only few months ago that I gave them to my son David, my older son. I’ve got copies that I run through the machine.

Anyway, I left there and my brother Huey wasn’t affected too much by the Depression. He left Manning, Maxwell & Moore and was hired for a machine tool shop who made paper-making machinery in Worcester.

He wrote to me. I was single, he had just gotten married. He wrote to me and said, “Eric, let me give you some advice. I’ve got a job for you. It’s right up your line as far as your apprenticeship. If you want to come up and run a [unclear 00:47:10] whatever you’ve been schooled in, I’ve got a job for you”.

I had built myself a nice living in Boston. We had our own little fraternity in the YMCA and I was making out pretty good. I was in the kitchen and I was making both ends meet. I was living the life of Riley. We used to go to dances down on Stuart Street with YWCA every Saturday night. We walked all the time, we had no cars, any of our gang did. We had more fun and we used to go to dances.

I came to Worcester. I had to give up. I knew brother Huey was right by saying, “You can’t live that life all your life. Get back to where you should be because we know that you’ve got the talent for machine tools”. So I did and I came up and I made out very well in the department I was in but with it, I had to go out and start a new life, my social life.

I lived with brother for a couple of weeks and I said, “This is not for me. I’m going down to YMCA”. So I went down to YMCA and got a room over down there after I got my feet on the ground. Then I found out a fellow was working with me at the plant. I asked him, “What do people do around here? Is there any place to dance?” This fellow’s name was [unclear 00:48:44] and he still communicates with me for Christmas.

He said, “Would you like to get down Saturday night?” I said, “Sure”. So I went down with him Saturday night. Of course me from the big city I felt I was a big shot. There was this lady that was on… you don’t know anything about Worcester but there’s a place called The Bancroft and they have a roof garden up there and they used to have dances up there.

This is in 1934 or 1933. I went down with this fellow and there were other guys, stag guys all around looking at all the girls over to see which one they want to dance with. Back in the day all the big bands had similar kind of music.

I saw this lady from a distance and I’d seen her dance. She’d just come off the floor and everybody circled around her. I said to Ray, “Who’s the girl? Who’s the attraction? Who’s she?” He says, “That’s Marion Bloom, she just won the title of Miss Worcester.” I said, “Very pretty girl”. He said, “Yes, she’s quite popular”. I’ll never forget, I went over to talk to her and I said, “May I have a dance with you?” She says, “I’m all booked up for the evening, I’m sorry”

Couple of dances later she’s dancing with someone and I went up and whispered to the guy. I said, “I’m just passing through the city and I know this lady and she’s booked for the night. Would you mind allowing me to finish this dance with her?” She looked surprised and he looked kindly about what I had said and so he turned her over to me.

I had a nice dance with her and believe it or not, I took her home that night that is on the trolley car. We didn’t have any car. So we joined her on a trolley car and I made a date with her. The first was to meet her inside of the dance because we had no money. That’s when we started to go together and we got married in 1937.

I had an opportunity to leave this company in Worcester to go to Philadelphia. Actually, my brother was there first because he had been promoted so he wanted me to follow him. He said, “Single life.” I hadn’t been married yet. I had to talk my wife into doing that. She gave up and got a job at Norton Company. She was quite a bright lady. We travelled around, we had our ups and downs then we lived in Philadelphia area for 12 years then we came back here. It was her home and she always missed her home, to me I can go anywhere.

We had two fine sons and had a wonderful, memorable life with her. I had the greatest lady in my life. It’s a wonderful thing when you stop and think of it. My boys, they call me at least once a week, mostly twice, just to touch base. I go two or three times a year down to Florida to visit my son. He’s got a beautiful home, swimming pool… That is my older son. He’s on top of Talcott Mountain in Simsbury, Connecticut. Beautiful, I could show you pictures. They’ve both done well and I’m very proud.

Speaking about being proud, when my dad died at 89, I can remember I was up in Fitchburg and Brother Gordon, my Episcopal brother priest he came east for it. What a personality he has, he was taller than I. People would come in mourning, “I’m so sorry Gordon…” He said, “Sorrow? This is a day of triumph. Look at the patriarch laying there in his quietness realizing that he is a patriarch and he left a lot of sons who were very successful”.

I’ll never forget him saying that to this guy. He wrote my dad’s eulogy and conducted the sermon. The sermon was titled “The man I knew”. It’s beautifully written.

My boys have done well. After my dad died, I lost my dear wife through post-operative conditions six weeks after my dad died. That was rough but following that I spent quite a bit of time with friends thereafter my wife died, travelling back and forth to Fitchburg to visit with my brothers. They were very kind to me.

With it all, my uncle Steve was a little younger than my dad. I spent about three years of constant visiting him. I used to take him out for rides and he lived to be 89 himself and his final years… I’ll never forget when he died. I took him finally to different nursing home in his final days because he had no one.

He did have a daughter but she paid no attention to him. He had another sick daughter who was in one of these retarded situations which I promised him after he did pass away, that I would visit her as long as I could and I have done that. She’s passed away now.

From all the visits I had with my uncle Steve, he knowing the story around my dad and mother, his sister getting married, he was able to tell me a lot of things that I never knew before. I can remember so many things and to preface that I can remember in my dad’s final days I used to go up every two weeks to Fitchburg on late Sunday. My wife wasn’t feeling good at that time but I steal her away and go up and I’d sit, go up there late afternoon on a Sunday and I can remember dad used to like to smoke a pipe.

I went in there and I said, “Anybody home?” I rapped on the front doors. He was up there in the outskirts of Fitchburg in [unclear 00:56:51] a place called [unclear 00:56:52], a little cottage it was. There was no lights on and I said, “Anybody home?” because he never locked the door. “Yes, I’m here” and he’s sitting there in the quiet and twilight of the evening. I said to him, “What’s you thinking about daddy?” Sitting in his Lawrence chair like I am now. 9

I walked over the other side of the dining room table and I looked out. “What have you been thinking about dad?” I would say. He’d been smoking his pipe. He used a word that is real English. He says, “Son, I’m just soliloquising.” Meaning he was thinking about a lot of things. Following that and this was two or three years before he passed away at 89, he started to pencil some of his stories of his trips.

My step-brother and his wife after on they gathered all his pencilled notes up and she typed it up for him as best as she could and he titled it, “*Just Soliloquising*”. I have copies over here beautifully written. There’s a lot of things between the lines that were not printed which Uncle Steve told me about.

Of which I could write a book by myself between what uncle Steve told me and what dad’s expression was because he went all over the world with the British Navy. I’ll never forget *Just Soliloquising* and I followed it up after he passed away and my wife passed away with these visitations with Uncle Steve. That’s how I learned so much about the background.

He passed away and then last year his retarded daughter passed away, so I have no ties here at all except my own sons. About four years after my wife died I ran into a Swedish fellow and he said to me, “Why don’t you come down to [unclear 00:59:12]?” It’s a Swedish club not too far from here. He said, “We’ll get down the whole place over. I’m the manager down there now.”

I said, “Some time I will.” My wife and I used to love to go out and dance in different places. This is about three or four years later after my wife left because I busied with myself, I never bothered with anybody.

You’ll be surprised at people that I knew. They were always trying to fix me up with ladies. They’d invite me to dinner and invite some other lady. This happened three or four times. They’d call me up or see me the next couple of days they said, “How did you like Ellen? How did you like Beatrice? How did you like Bree? Nice lady, you’ve got to call her up.” “No”.

I didn’t ask anybody to set me up. I went along. I went to ball games, I like sports, and I had a lot interest in different things. I was The Oaks and different places. I just didn’t bother about anyone, about any female at all for a while until this fellow said, “Why don’t you come down and have a drink with me down here?” So I went down.

**Janet:** We’re at the end of this tape but we can put in another one. I just want to say that I’m here talking with Eric Price and this is the end of tape one. This is Janet Levine and we’ll begin tape two.

We’re about to begin tape two. I’m speaking with Eric Price on December 6th 1994. Would you continue telling us about…?

**Eric:** I was speaking about being invited down at the Scandinavian Athletic Club and upon an invitation by a friend of mine who was a manager there. So we went down there and I heard music upstairs and he said that they run dances every other week here for a group known as ‘Parents Without Partners’.

I went up there listening to the music. I hadn’t danced for four, five years. First thing you know being exposed to all of these people and I guess the women outnumbered the men, at least 5:1 so it was easy for me to be asked for a dance.

I went out and I danced the first time as I say for many years and it was just fun. I learnt that I could come back in a couple of weeks or whenever they are having music. I followed that up and that got me back into the thrills of going out and meeting people.

I remember it probably was about couple years or a year later that I happened to be at a dance at the same place. I happened to spot a lady that I had liked the way she danced. She seemed very personable from the distance. I said to the manager who I knew quite well, I said, “Who’s that lady over there?” He said, “She’s widowed and her name is Dorothy Thyden”, T-H-Y-D-E-N. “She comes out quite regularly to some of our dances and sits with the girls. You can see there are six or eight girls there.”

I said, “Joe, I’d like to meet her.” So a dance passed by and nothing happened so I went over to speak with her. I said, “May I have a dance please?” She says, “I understand you want to meet me.” I’ve got to crown Joe because he… anyway she was such a lovely person.

That was 19 years ago, December 13th, next Tuesday, that I met her and we have kept company ever since. She had a son and daughter, 10 and 13, widowed. Her husband died at 42 years of age and left her with two, Jane and John. She did a great job in bringing them. She’s a dual. She’s of Lithuanian background but a worker.

She’s politically inclined as far as civic activities not to aspire for any particular plateau but to work in civic and social life. She’s had her rough times up and down. Her hubby died, he went blind the last two years of diabetes. She’s had her adversities. She brought up those two kids.

Johnny is a respiratory therapist at St. Vincent’s and Jane is a legal secretary, so she’s done well and she can be proud and have I seen a more loving and close family in my life, and I am a part of it. Those kids think the world of me and now that the grandchildren would come along I got them all over here. That’s my family here.

She’s much younger than me but it doesn’t matter, I’m family. Every time the kids have a birthday you’ve got to have Eric on. Thanksgiving, Christmas, we get things planned for Christmas. Johnny’s wife is an RN at the same hospital. They’ve done well, they have three children. Jane and her hubby, she married a nice fellow who’s a research and development engineer with Digital, they have nice homes, one child, and they’re a lovely family. It’s just great.

But this is a story of my life up to now and I’m still working three mornings a week as a… I just completed last year 30 years at Washington Mills, who are an abrasive producing manufacturing company making all sorts of wheels.

We don’t make the wheels but we make the basic grain. I’ve been there over 30 years and they’ve treated me fine. I was plant manager for many years and about 10 years ago I asked my boss if I could retrench and slow down. I said, “I don’t want to quit but I want to do something a little less on the edge.” He said, “You write your own job description” and I did.

I wrote it out and now he looks upon me as a staff administrator reporting directly for him. I sit in the bleachers and watch the ball games go on but I have certain assignments that I do as far as graphs I make and different production and steel and all loads of things I do. Foreign shipments and imports; I do so many things but no pressure.

I work 20 hours a week which borderlines me for few fringe benefits. It’s nothing for me to be in there 5:30 in the morning if I’ve got some real challenges because they’re all got to be accomplished. I have no problem, it’s just there. I’m recording secretary for our Senior Elks Group and I’m quite active in our Shrewsbury Senior Group and I have been at church for many years but the cup is starting to run over a little bit.

I’m going to start passing them on to others at age 86, so that I can take it a little bit easy because due to my physical conditions which I’ve got to expect decadency to set in at a certain period of time, I can’t do… thank God I’m mentally capable of doing a lot of things.

I thank my good Lord that he has left me with a good mentality to be able to think and speak and resolve things. I still have a body and all of my anatomy is catching up with my age. I guess it’s like an old car, after a while the parts start to wear out and you’ve got to have them replaced or repaired. But the biggest secret to contain yourself is modern day medicine and good doctors and the fact that I’ve got to learn to slow down.

That is my biggest problem because my spirit is so [unclear 01:09:03]. It’s like a race horse as far as my spirit and wanting to do things but my physical ableness is not able to cope.

That brings you up to date with everything. I have a nice little studio apartment here in Shrewsbury, where I’m surrounded by lovely people and all of the maintenance taken care of, lawns, around the corner is my washing and driers and I don’t have too much worry about my home life because everything is my little condor. I call it a condor, which it is and I bought it in 1985 so it’s all mine.

I have a good attorney who’s just about completed it, a living trust where I have set up for an irrevocable trust for the Price family with my two boys and my revocable, which is mine which I’ve got it set up whereby what little estate that I do have is going to be well administered, so I don’t have to worry a thing about it. I even got all my funeral ministry all taken care of. It’s all in a book form. I’ve even written my obituary. I got it all written out, just what I want said.

I’ve talked to people about it and they say it’s a good idea because who knows better than you yourself about what you’ve been able to do and what you wanted. As far as the eulogy is concerned, anybody can say that. The guy they knew. That’s about as much as I can bring you up to date with.

**Janet:** That’s just wonderful, thank you so much. I have about two questions just before we end. First of all, having come here as an immigrant when you were young, do you think that had much to do with the kind of person or the rest of your life? Do you think that influenced you in some way?

**Eric:** Yes. I am sure it did because it was the basic seed that was planted into our minds as far as being independent, not having any help at all, made us extremely conservative and then having gone through as we did, a terrible Depression of 1929, 31, it made us conservative to the point whereby our values are so much different than the kids and people out today in this… and I don’t want to get into politics but we’ve got to get away from our welfare government.

We’ve got to put the government back into the hands of the people because our welfare has ruined our society. It has made us had a lot to do with all of the crime and the disorderliness in here.

I can remember back in my days about how we respected an officer, a policeman. We wouldn’t say, “boo” to him. Today the kids they get away with everything and it’s really a shame and I don’t blame anyone except the fact that we have gotten away from what is my opinion the most important thing in the world, family values.

It’s alright to talk about education but it starts with the family and then the family can promote the education. It’s the basic seeds that are planted in from family interests of bringing up kids, that make the kids what they are going to be in later life, there’s no question about it.

Some have tremendous talents like the basketball players, the football players, but they have much up here. They are gifted with that to make the monies that they do today but those are unusual cases. They are one in tens of thousands. I do believe and this can be confirmed by some of my peers that I talk to, people that came over in the days, that their grandfathers and grandmothers came over, fellows today.

Lot of people around here are offsprings of Europeans and they can tell me… I was talking with a fellow at The Elks Sunday morning. We had a memorial service for the people that passed away during the year, our brothers, Brother Elks.

This fellow, an Armenian, he’s way up in the Elks and he was telling me all about how his folks came over. We’re talking about Ellis Island because I was telling about our interview today and he says, “I’ve got to get down there.”

His mother came over in 1909. That was six years before I came over. He said, “I believe she’s supposed to, she sent in some money to have her name put on a wall. I said, “It’s there.” “I’ve got to get down there.” He says. I said, “Fine.” I told him how we’d been down last summer, Dotty and I, my friend Dotty.

To answer your question, I’m sure as I use the word ‘seeds’ that were planted which were all good, germinating seeds for the good of mankind because they’re not doing that today. [Unclear 01:15:24] always preaches few years ago about family values, how they were almost ignored. But now it’s coming to pass that is what we need, family values and this would take care of a lot of the sex problems that we have. We talk about all these things.

It all comes back to what I say, family values of education. Sure there’s going to be strays. My youngest son and his wife, they couldn’t have children so he adopted twin boys at two and a half years of age. They are now 19 and so he’s brought those boys up. He’s had his problems with them because I don’t think myself I could ever adopt when I’ve heard so many stories about people and their problems with adopted children. He and his wife have brought these two boys up and they’re going to be alright. They’re 19 now and twin boys. He’s got a good job, he can afford. He spent a lot of money on them but this is it.

Those other kids that didn’t have family values to start and as far as psychologists say, the most important years are those first few years because if those first few years aren’t embedded with true love and affection from parents or whoever they might be against no attention at all, then that is so important to the children in bringing up.

It’s the first base of their training is those first years. I know it, I’ve seen it. Some people make out with being orphans, so there’s always extremes but generally speaking that’s it.

**Janet:** One last question, do you think what you remember and the way you remember your early life has changed over the years? I know talking to your uncle added a lot of information but...

**Eric:** I always remember when I got married and before I got married. I always said my dad was awful strict, he was too strict. I said that at that time. I won’t be that strict. I gave my two a lot more attention than my dad gave me. He loved me, he was distant. I spent more time with my boys. I spent a lot of time with my boys to the extent the love is there, they call me all the time “hola at your dad” and they love to have me come down, put the red carpet out for me.

I’ll never forget when mother died, my two boys they were just through college and they worked their way through with a little help from me. We stood in the reception room following the funeral and I said to the boys, David and Terry, I said, “Thanks boys, you’re of big help to me.”

I remember what David said to me. He says, “Hey dad, there’s only one guy that showed us the way”. I’ll never forget him saying that. There was only one guy that showed us the way, meaning me. I taught the boys to be realists, stoic, take things and strive. They are that way today. They are very strong in their temperaments.

Another thing that David used to kid me around he’d say, “Dad, you and mother gave us a great bringing up. You made a few mistakes. I won’t make those”. I will never forget him say that to me.

**Janet:** In other words there was a time when you thought your father was too strict? Did you practise that?

**Eric:** Yes, right up to the time of my maturity and even leaving home I thought he was too strict and as I got on my own and I got married I always thought that my dad was so strongly too strict and my other brothers feel the same way. That’s why I said to myself I’m going to be closer to my boys than what my dad was to me.

But at this age and a score of years before me, I realized that dad was right. I realize now when I’ve reached maturity and had my family is when I see what’s going on today and I say, “My dad was right as far as his discipline is concerned.” Always he’s right. He taught us how to do what [inaudible 01:21:13]. I said, “You never give me any credit for that?”

He said, “You don’t get credit for what you’re supposed to do right. If you want medals join the army”. That’s what he used to say to me. I used to say, “The least you can do is say thank you” and that’s what he said. He said, “You don’t get any medals for what you’re supposed to do right.” Because you’re supposed to do things right, if you want any medals join the army. He had some great ones.

He had some one-liners that he said to me, “You know son, keep your lips buttoned unless you’ll never get shot for your thoughts.” He had some great sayings. I remember another time when Will Rogers and Wiley Post were lost over the North Pole way back many years. I said to my dad about that time, “How is it dad”, because I thought Will Rodgers was just my ideal, I’d read so much about him and he was so popular.

I said to dad, “Dad, how come an important person like Will Rogers, popular, smart, he goes like that in an accident?” I’ll never forget what dad said. He says, “Let me tell you something son, no one but no one has a contract on this earth.” He had some great expressions. No one has the contract of this earth and he’s right.

We don’t know what tomorrow brings but we hope there’ll be a lot of tomorrows. When I talk to my boys about this, I tell them about my living trust and different things about my funeral ministry and different things that they should know. I just hope it’s not a heaven sign of proxy as far as not giving me any automatic life prevailing things when I’m in bed.

“What’s all this about?” Terry says. I could do this twenty years from now.” Meaning I’m going to live that long. They’re always positive in their thinking.

**Janet:** Is there anything else that you can think of? Anything else about your past that you used to think one way about and now you’ve changed?

**Eric:** As I have gotten older, I tend to be a lot more patient than I used to be. It seems that the aging process teaches one to be that way. It’s not easy because impulsively you’re ready to bite sometimes about some decision you want to make. But after a quick thought, you have a chance to not get upset about things.

I know that in my good companion Dotty, we have a pact between us and I never can remember in all of our 19 years where we’ve ever had an argument. We have been, like my dad used to say, “You could be in disagreement but you don’t have to be disagreeable.” That was another one of his expressions and I brought that to the relationship between Dotty and myself because she’s had her adversity, I’ve had mine in losing our mates.

We have a pact between us that if ever we see something coming up that leads into being provocative, we change the subject and it works out. I’ve seen her sometimes and I know we’re headed to a disagreement. She’ll change the subject and I commend her for it, not audibly but to myself. I know I’ve done the same way and she, to herself, recognizes we went so far, so we change the subject and we forget about it.

Not everybody could do it because it depends on your personality. You must have had a lot of interest in listening to different personalities.

**Janet:** You’re absolutely fascinating and I really want to thank you so much. Is there anything else that you can think of to say about coming to this country or anything else before we go?

**Eric:** Nothing else except that when I get to be a hundred, I will have 14 more years of experiences of which you can come back and put on another tape.

**Janet:** I’d be delighted, thank you. This is Janet Levine for the National Park Service. I’ve been speaking with Eric Price on December 6th of 1994. We’re here in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts at Mr. Price’s home. Mr. Price will be 86 in a week and I want to sign off…