

ELVERA KANERVA INTERVIEW

FINNISH SOCIALIST HISTORY

This is Dione Miles, on July 19, 1976. An interview of Mrs. Elvera Berquist Kanerva who is going to explain something about her own background and history and her part in the history of Finnish people in the state. And we'll start right away, Mrs. Kanerva, with your childhood. You were just telling me about how your father was a miner, shall we go back to that?

EK Well, I was born in 1918 in the copper country of Michigan, in the Upper Peninsula and my mother was a farm girl, had been born in Wisconsin and my grandfather and grandmother had a farm in Wisconsin.

DI They were Swedish people as I understand it.

EK No. They were Finnish.

DI They were Finnish.

EK Yes. There's a story to that too. My grandfather's name was Matson but in the old country his name was Onyes. I mean this is the way they change names when some of these early

DI Sure

EK immigrants came. My grandfather came here in 1893 and he came alone. So then he took in, there was a, he came just before that depression hit in 1893. So he couldn't send for my grandmother, usually they'd work a year or so and then they'd send for their wives and children and a

DI Yes.

EK So then he couldn't because the times were so hard and there were no jobs. So they, my aunt tells the story of how him and his brothers that were here. There were three of his brothers altogether.

DI What was his name?

EK His name was Charles Matson, my grandfather.

DI I see.

EK Then he had a brother, Maddy Matson and another brother Jack and they came here, of course, trying to earn the money to... The other two were single but grandpa was married, of course. And she, grandma, had two daughters already by then. And then he left his wife and two children in the old country and came here. So the times were so bad, and they tried to pick up any kind of work they could. Lumberjacking and working on railroads. But there was nothing because of the 1893 depression. They practically starved to death. So in Finnish they called those days the _____, which would be "Porcupine Days." _____ is porcupine. They clubbed, they didn't need a gun to kill a porcupine.

DI Yes.

EK So they would take and club those porcupines for meat and, of course, they ate different vegetables, I imagine. Now in the woods, the Finnish people are very good at that. And it was seven years before he saved enough money for my grandmother to come to this country.

DI Did they stay mostly in Wisconsin then and Minnesota?

EK Wisconsin and upper Michigan, yes. They didn't move out of that area. There wasn't enough money or work or anything. In the winters they spent in lumber camps and I suppose then in the spring when they came out they spent quite a bit of their money as the men did, you know.

DI Yes.

EK When they came out of the woods. But anyway, then they, when grandma came here in 1900 my mother was the first child born here and then her family, there were a total of 7 girls and 2 boys, 2 girls had been born in Finland, then my mother was the third child and she was, there was 7 years dividing her, of course, from when, for almost eight, from my aunt, the other aunt, the older two. So they came, they lived up in upper Wisconsin and inked out a living on these marginal farms that they were sold by, the Cloverland Company which was, is a very large company.

DI Were they dairy farms?

EK Well, they sold them this dairy farm. I don't know how anybody could make a living on 40 acres of sand, de-lume or pine, the only thing that grew was jackpine. But they tried and they did get along, you know, they were able to raise their own food and then grandpa worked in the woods. And then grandpa got tuberculosis. And he died in 1918 and that was the year that I was born, 1918.

DI He had never worked in the mines?

EK No. Grandpa never worked in the mines. He worked on the railroad and by the way, I live in Menominee, Michigan right now, in 1976, so he helped build the railroads through there, during that seven years. And he lived in Menominee, Michigan. I work with the Menominee Historical Society now and they act as though I'm a newcomer, but, of course, I've been going down, I've been going into Menominee, Michigan and Racine, Wisconsin since I was a little girl. So if anybody gets real funny with me, I'll just tell them, "I'm sorry sir. My grandfather lived here before you did." Because there are that kind of people, you know. So then, anyway, lumbering was the thing in the, even in the late 1800's and the early 1900's. And also building railroads and building roads so they had to work quite hard, of course. So then

DI He had to leave home when he went to lumbering camp, then. Would he leave your mother

EK Oh, yes. They could work by the day if the lumber camps weren't too far away from them. Sometimes they'd have to leave for, oh, they'd come home every weekend

DI Yes.

EK But, so there were 7 more children born in this country, of course there were 2 born in the old country. So that anyway, they, he died and then my mother was already married by then. Now he was still living when my mother got married to my dad.

DI What was your dad doing?

EK My father came from the old country in 1909. He was just working at odd jobs. He could pick up, he wanted to go into the mines but then he was so young they wouldn't allow him to go into the mines and, so he had to wait until he was 21. This is what he'd told me several times but then he'd work in the woods, and he'd work on farms, and he worked on the railroad, picking up a little odds in that job and then travelled all over the upper part of Michigan and all over Wisconsin as far south as Milwaukee.

DI Was he affected by World War I?

EK My dad? No. He already had me. Well, no he didn't either. I don't know. Did they draft foreigners then? in World War I?

DI Yes, they did. But a

EK No. They didn't take him, I don't know why

DI How, was he affected by it economically, did, was jobs easier then for him I should think? Did he change his occupation?

EK No, he didn't. He was so young. He didn't have a regular occupation. I mean

DI Glad to have a job.

EK Even today they study for an occupation but they don't get an occupation, these youngsters right away. They have to work at different things until there is an opening or they get into the right place.

DI That's true.

EK So he was quite young. He was 24 I think, 25 when I was born. But then, you see, now between 1918 and around 1923, dad had all these odds and ends jobs and he'd get layed off generally in the winter. And then we would go back, scuttle back to the farm and I can remember as a little girl, these huge, high snowbanks, and us traveling on a train and being very cold when we got off. Then we'd go back to the farm, and my father, because grandpa was dead, would cut all the firewood, and he would pay, get little odd jobs to have them pay the taxes for grandmother.

DI Was this the same Cloverleaf farm you mentioned before?

EK Yes. Now this was the same farm. I think, I think that it was very small acreage. It was only about may be 60 acres. It was either 40 or 60 because I was amazed. I went to see it a few years and I thought, how could anybody make a living on such a small farm.

DI Yes.

EK But I suppose it was home. Anyway he would, my father would cut the wood and do things in the winter and this went on until about 1923 and he moved to Racine, Wisconsin. One of the first jobs he had was working for John Deere on his farm, driving the teams of horses to plow and all this stuff, you know. And I guess, I think that he got fired because he was just young and probably horsed around with the horses or did something wrong, you know. So anyway, he went, this is where he found his automobile trade. This is where the trade started, all right.

DI What did he do in the

EK He must have been about 25 years old.

He was a sheet metal man. Metalaneous. My father was a hand-former. This became a very skilled trade especially during World War II. They were in great demand. In fact, today they do experimental

DI I would think so

EK He was an experimental then when he got older and hand-forming of metal especially. See the, the artist draws the picture

DI Related to the tool and die making?

EK No. Tool and Die Making is in a different thing. The artist makes the picture of the new car for 1980

DI Yes.

EK The engineers have to get in there and they draw these parts so they'll fit together. But they don't know whether this is going to work. So then they have, they make a model out of wood and then, after that they make a model out of metal and each of those parts must fit and if they don't fit, they've got to go back to the engineers so they can change the specifications. So this experimental metal work must be, a lot of it is hand-formed. They can't stamp it on the machine, they don't have a tool and die, you see it?

DI Yes.

EK So after them come the tool and die makers once they get the part perfected

DI Oh I see.

EK My own husband does that now also. He's an experimental metal man. But this is a highly skilled trade, but they didn't realize it was a highly skilled trade in 1925 or something but he learned how to work metal and he used to fix rinks, you know, those old great big touring cars and everything that came in with a banged up fender, well he'd straighten them out. He also worked part of the time on what was called the "big hammer". And this hammer had two dollies. One on top and one on the other. It was run by a big machine and then they could straighten metal with that of form pieces. Now this is really a little different type of thing my father did. He worked with, my father worked with a hammer instead of with a dolly

DI What company did he work for? in Racine?

EK Heavens I don't remember. He'd probably tell that when he comes in

DI Okay.

EK So I wouldn't remember where he started but this is, this was sheet metal work. It started him in the automobile business. Then they, from, this is when he became sociable. Well, he was socially conscious in the old country, too, because of, even when he left in 1909, Lennen was running back across the border into Finland to hide, you know. And a, did they call them _____ then? I can't remember. I don't think so.

DI I don't think so. No. He was the first successful Communist.

EK Yes. Anyway he was, lived part of the time in Finland and my father's family came to know him

DI To know Lennon

EK Yes. So they, he couldn't understand Russian though. My father said he never could understand Russian but he did

DI Then he must have spoken Finnish, if he kept coming in there

EK No. The other people would translate but they were, anyway, they were back and forth, these ways, so he had an understanding about it, but he, of course, he didn't understand how. But in Finland, at that time, of course, they had their reds and their whites you know, like we have our left and rights.

DI There will always be politics, no matter where you go.

EK So he had an understanding of this. So then in the 1920's when he was in Racine, they became followers of this Left-Socialist Movement.

DI Well weren't nearly all the Finnish people, even most of the Swedish people in the same circumstances?

EK Well, you have to understand that they do have, sort of a nobility of a kind, even in Finland, you see.

DI I didn't know that.

EK Well this was before the Finnish people became a Republic of their own, you know. This had been owned by Sweden for 800 years, and I, about 300 years by Russia, the Russian Czar. So they placed their nobility of dukes and duchesses in Finland at, both sides did. And there is in Finland even today, what's known as a _____, which is "Blue Blood."

DI I see.

EK And they don't pay too much attention to it as a general rule but they do, it's something like our white supremacy in this country. You don't say it out loud but it's there, you know. I mean the feeling is there. So then these people, of course, are what are called the whites in Finland, or whether it is today, that's what I'm going to Finland to find out this year, I hope. I'm hoping that I can find out and I imagine I can only find out from the young. I couldn't, I've had guests from there but I can't get the feeling of this thing until I go over there and find out, I'll find out. I know

what I'm looking for, in other words.

DI Certainly.

EK Father became very involved in all these socialist doings and one of my earliest recollections of anything of social consciousness, really, was in the 1920's at a Finnish Hall, someplace, and I don't know where. He acted in a play and

DI It must have been in Racine

EK Could have been

DI Now wait, you were fairly young, but let's see

EK I was so young and I don't remember what age

DI You'd been five in 1923.

EK Well, one of my early recollections was this play they put on. It wasn't really a play. It was sort of like skits and they played the "Vogue of Oatmen" song. They had all these men stripped down to the waist and they were pulling a boat along a canal and it was so realistic to childish eyes

DI Oh, sure. This was supposed to be Russia, that they were portraying

EK Yes. They were depicting Russia and they were pulling this heavy boat and a man was standing in the prow of this ship or whatever this was, and they were like pulling it along a canal. So these men were on land, pulling this and they were stripped to the waist and this man had a whip and he was whipping their bare backs and they had all these red welts painted on their backs, you know, and I screamed that my daddy was being whipped, you know. And, of course, it was very impressive, you know. It sounded so loud when they had one of these loud-cracking whips.

DI Well, you probably added to the dramatic effects.

EK Oh, my mother, of course, cuddled over, little children always sit in the front, you know, and I was scuddled back to my mother and my mother was telling me that's not, daddy is just acting, you know. He's not really being hurt. But it was such a, you know, a trauma for me because I thought daddy was really being whipped. Well this

DI Well maybe that was your very first protest.

EK Yes. Well this was the type of things they put on. I don't know these early

DI Then what, how did the play go on, that just to, just go on about it

EK I can't remember the rest of it, isn't that silly.

DI Does it show a better life under socialism or communism, do you suppose?

EK I suppose, I suppose.

DI Alot of people are interested in the old plays on labor and social situations. So many of those have been lost but people are interested in them if they ever can be recollected or found

EK If we worked a little harder at this we could, but this one was, it was, I will always remember that.

DI Of course you would. But then your father joined the Communist party some time during all this?

EK Well this is what I found out in the last year. The Daily World wrote him up, it was on the front page I think. I'm going to bring that paper tomorrow probably, but it said that he joined, he was a charter member of a Communist party. Now which Communist party I don't know. But anyway in 1924 and just think he's 83 now. And so how long ago, 1924 to 1976? So we didn't realize, of course, my brother and I but, now they didn't belong for many years then. I think they let it lapse and then in the '30's, of course, everybody became active in social things if they were disturbed at all about, our country

DI The depression

EK The depression especially. So then another one of my earliest, we lived all over. I went to 25 schools and dad, did I tell you about my dad changing from job to job?

DI Well, you said he was in sheet-metal work, did he stay in general in that and then go

EK Yes. He never

DI from place to place

EK Yes. He'd go wherever they paid the most money and especially where they paid another and like my mother always said, another quarter an hour you know, he'd go. But we always had a home base in Detroit it seemed like

DI Why Detroit?

EK I suppose because it was an automobile town and then the automobiles were here and then, of course, it was more active. Alot of the towns we lived in had no Finnish Halls or any kind of Finnish Socialist doings. They always had a church, of course. But never any Finnish Socialist. My mother just loved going to all the dances and plays and all the social life.

DI That's reasonable. Sure. So she would enjoy coming to Detroit because there would be more of that I suppose.

EK Yes. Well actually, our first UAW work was not done in Detroit. I'm talking about the family because dad always

DI Sure.

EK had us with him, mostly. He did drink. He was a heavy drinker if he was alone but as a family we did alot of this work together but then I think this was fostered by the Finnish Hall idea. You had your children with you. You didn't organize in some secret place. You had your children and your wife with you and everybody was involved.

DI Yes. I've heard that before.

EK In the thing. So then we moved to Cincinnati, Ohio when I was eleven years old. Now what year was that?

DI He did sheet-metal work down there?

EK There was, yes, he did sheet-metal work and organizing

DI Did your mother ever work? In any of these Years?

EK My mother didn't work until, just prior to World War II. Mother was busy at home, raised us

DI Busy enough with the children

EK Two. That's all she had, two, but she

DI She can be busy with two.

EK That's right. And keeping a house clean

DI Right.

EK Because in those days housework was, of course, really a chore

DI That's right.

EK So, let's see. Mother did, I mean when I was eleven, that's when we moved to Cincinnati. But in the meantime we scuttled back to Detroit. I think there were some layoffs. And what year would that have been when I was eleven? 1929. '29. Yes. I was. So we came back, oh, a year later, say about 1930 or so

DI Well, first, now let's go to the Finnish Workman's Camp where Finnish people, What is the title of that?

EK The Detroit Finnish Summer Camp Association out here?

DI There we go.

EK Okay, that

DI When did you first go there?

EK In 1926. It was started in 1924 and then in 1926 was the first I remember of it. Mother has some pictures of where we were sitting on the lawns out there

DI That must have something to do with the, your feeling that Detroit was always home, you must have enjoyed that part of it especially.

EK. Well, yes. I talked to a woman last Saturday night, and she is from Cleveland originally, and she said that she remembers when, well we call it "Loon Lake" because when the Detroit Finnish Summer Camp was called the "Workers Paradise" because you could go there, and this was a place to go in the summer,

out of your hot apartments, out into the fresh out-of-doors and then you could have a camp there and you could just go for the day if you wanted because a lot of people did not have camps. They were, didn't, couldn't afford them or they didn't even buy a share in it. But they were allowed to go there and spend the day and swim and everything.

DI That's nice. They talked the language and so, at least the older people were familiar.

EK Yes. They could send their children to these camps, colleges, I mean they aren't colleges. Now we didn't call them that. Summer Schools we called them. And they had athletics. Let me see my little book, I think that I'll put some of that in there

Also not only did they have Summer School but they had a school, not only for their children, but they had for adults, they had classes in these Finnish Halls.

DI Were these classes in English or Finnish language?

EK They were in Finnish, now I went mostly to learn to speak Finnish and read and write Finnish. So when you go to a, they had them on Sundays for us, because there wasn't any school on Sundays, Of course, and we called them Sunday School and my earliest, I mean the whole thing, when I really went to learn to read and write Finnish was at the Detroit's 14th Street Hall. Now that was at 1569 14th Street right by McGraw and so they would teach us not only how to read and write English. Strange letters that we, you know, with those dots on top and everything. Actually the letters in Finnish are the same as in English only they're pronounced differently. And so we hadn't learned to read it yet, but we learned slowly

DI In other words, you learned both English and Finnish. What about the adults. They would be learning English, I suppose?

EK Well, yes. Most of the adults were into night school also. The immigrants were given night school classes in the public schools but they also not only learned how to speak English, they learned how to agitate and speak about socialism, out. Now this, of course, started the I.W.W. people who were on the streets all the time but this idea of organizing workers of the world and all this stuff. They must get together, this was all part of this thing, even with these halls that we had, why, available, why, they gave lessons on how to speak and what to speak to the public and how to recruit new members and things like that. And even we children were taught about socialism. Now our classes in socialism were not the real deep things like Marx. We knew about Marx. We learned about Marx. They were taught as they would teach in Sunday School about Jesus, you know. They were taught to a child.

DI Yes. We taught you to question things the way they were.

EK Yes. And so, of course, we learned this was a workers hall, and it was founded by Socialist, and, you know, how long ago they planned it, like the one on 14th street had been planned already in 1906 but this building was not built until 1924. And then we learned that every nationality, because we exchanged, it was like, today the churches have this ecumenical thing why,

DI Oh, yes.

EK Every nationality exchanged programs. I remember that we exchanged programs with Polish Socialists and Hungarian Socialists. We'd go to their hall and they'd come to ours, and we'd have special programs in English for them and so but, of course, being Finnish was very important, you know, that

DI Yes. But while we are here, let me ask you this. When you were to the hall or out at the Summer Camp, when plays were being put on, were the plays in English or in Finnish?

EK Almost all the plays were in Finnish until about the '30's and when my age group would be quite big and we started arguing about wanting everything in English, or wanting our plays in English, and then in the late '30's we were putting on a lot of English plays. But most of the early plays, when we were little, were in Finnish.

DI Do you remember that younger generation, your younger generation, wanting to be more American, more melted in with the general public, or had you been taught to prize your background and cling to the Finnish people?

EK Well, we clung, but we had so many English friends we brought to the hall and we didn't want everything in Finnish. We wanted plays in English and by the '30's, we were recruiting every nationality into our hall and we wanted our friends, our peers, to come, the ones we made in school and everything. So we had every nationality already coming by the '30's. But in the '20's it was a fairly closed association.

DI And your group never had a feeling of wanting to get away from all that, forgetting your background and, so to speak, melting into the population. You must not have had those feelings as some minority, ethnic groups had.

EK No, not in the '20's.

DI Because the second generation sometimes had those

EK We also couldn't afford to go very far from mother and dad's skirts because we didn't have

DI That's right, in the '30's.

EK money

DI Didn't have a choice

EK But we had a good, now you take the good programs they offered

DI Yes. It sounds so happy and so much fun, that the kids would not be so liable to want to jump away.

EK Well, you see, now we had, let's take the Saturday nights and Sunday afternoon plays and programs in Finnish and an auditorium with a stage and velvet curtains, well, or course, this was in the '20's and I was what, 10, up to 11, 12 or 13. When were you going to go out and meet people, I mean boys, you know, we played baseball in the streets, but in the evening besides going to a movie show. We went to a lot of movie shows, mother and dad were quite modern, they didn't stay at home. My mother and dad were real swingers in the '20's, you know. I even learned the Charleston when I was 8 years old. So here we are, but these were somethings, I mean the parents made us realize, I mean, that this was something special, you are going to go down to the Finnish Hall and see a play or a program and then afterwards they would dance

DI That was where the fun was

EK Yes. And so we played and slid on the floors and then the dance band, after, when the dance band played, the kids had a fun time sliding, or playing hide and seek in the hallways and we were happy with this type of thing, you know.

DI Right.

EK And then, of course, Thursday night was called " " which is "Maid's Day" because the Finnish maid's were sought after, you know, they worked in the

DI Yes. I seem to remember.

EK The girls all came into the big city

DI The girls who worked hard.

EK Well, we weren't awful good but they were

DI That's the right question

EK They worked hard.

DI ...experiences there and what you learned. How much radicalism were you taught in the hall? You said that they taught you how to agitate and how to object. They told you how to give soapbox speeches, even though you were still children. What else did they teach, along the line of agitation or social protest?

EK Oh, well, of course, we were taught about the capitalist, that the Americans were a capitalistic system and that there were the rich, money-bag people, you know, always, and they were pictures in cartoons and things like that, but we weren't too much out on the streets at that time, although there were demonstrations downtown and Detroit, especially. I can remember one and we went down there and they had so many mounted police and the sidewalks were just packed with people

DI How old were you, do you remember?

EK Oh, I must have been only about 10 or 11 years old

DI Then this is in the late '20's then

EK Yes. Because I was born in 1918 so that would have been about 1929 and it had to be the beginning

DI That's when it started for alot of people then.

EK That's right. I must have been right around, it was funny. Dad wasn't layed off too often. I can only remember once that mother applied for welfare in Detroit and we were cut off almost immediately because dad went back to work, but it was kind of, you know, it was a pretty hairy time, I guess for the parents. I guess for the parents. I remember some anxiety about it, but we're still speaking about the hall and what they had taught us. We weren't taught to hate rich people as such. We were taught only that there was such

a great division of money that some of it should have filtered down. I imagine that's a feeling like the blacks have today. It was a resentment in a way, and yet there wasn't this stifling of this that you couldn't go out and earn it, you see. This working power of the Finlander was always, he was always depicted as a great work man, you know.

DI That's true

EK And his muscles were worth as much as the rich man's brain, you know, what I mean?

DI Right.

EK This equality.

DI Are you describing what Douglas O'Lella described as Hall Socialism?

EK The Hall Socialism, yes. I, the Hall Socialism, I laughed about a little bit because it is true that the people like the IWW, that were more out on the streets than, more agitating on the street corners, and I felt, today I feel that our halls were built sort of as a shelter from this broad agitation on the streets and the police brutality. It was our shelter to run to. We owned this piece of property and they couldn't come in there until the McCarthy days. That's when they started coming into our halls.

DI You mean you could say what you wanted to inside those walls?

EK That's right. And then also we could, we did go out. Now as I was telling you, I can remember that time down on this wet, and I was so young, but I don't remember what the demonstration was about, but the streets were packed with people and they actually ran those horses into the crowd, into those people, and, of course, my mother bundled us away and took us home in the street-car, of course. We had no automobiles in those days or anything to jump onto or go away with.

DI Right.

EK But I remember that, and I can't remember what the demonstration was about, but it was something pretty violent and this had to be in '28 or '29. So we, we were involved in things like that. We would go down, when there was a great big mass meeting, these were called "Mass Meetings" out on the street and we would go down and listen to speakers in Cadillac Square and things like that. Now these have been periodically and there were, of course, have to have a permit from the city to do these things, so they knew when there were going to have a meeting, but then whoever sent the mounted police or

DI Excuse me, do you have any memories of Leo Loviky?

EK I know that name

DI He was an IWW member, a Finnish person who was quite influential in the Detroit and Michigan area.

EK I wonder what years those were. You see, we were gone. Dad would go and work away someplace for a year and he'd send for mother and the kids, you know, his wife and kids and then we would go and then we would come back. We always scuttled back to Detroit when, because there were alot of, and was alot of automobile work, always in Detroit and he could always get a job here if he couldn't someplace else.

DI you would thing a sheet-metal expert would be in good shape, more so than most of them in those days.

EK Yes. He was very seldom out of work during the depression but there were some times and after all, you couldn't save much off a workman's wages to carry you through for months or

DI Certainly

EK years or even many weeks, you know, so he always had to work and he was a strong man and healthy and so anyway when we would come back we always enjoyed, we are still talking about the Finnish Hall and I would like to tell you about, in my teens

DI Yes.

EK Because this is where my association, of course, it was because we had a peer group and then we clung to the hall, but we made it a little bit better, you know, so that, our peer group had their own group and we started having our own plays, and one thing that they carried on for many years was this athletic program and really, I think it was one of the best things, and I laughed when Kennedy brought this out about physical fitness and people becoming fat.

DI You have been doing it all your life.

EK And we would have calisthenics, we had complete gym equipment and all the parallel bars and the rings and everything you could think of. Imagine the money those people put into this hall.

DI Did the girls participate equally?

EK Oh, yes. We were mixed classes until we got, well, when they started, our bodies started to develop, then we started having girls gym and boys

DI But they did have a full program for girls as well as boys.

EK Oh, yes. They didn't separate the sexes. Even adults until the late '30's, they didn't separate the sexes at all. I remember the women were exercising, see when you were little, you could just watch mostly.

DI Sure.

EK We had some little kids in it but we didn't, but the, oh, they were just, everything was precision, you know, like a calisthenic class, like the army has today, when they get up in the morning at 8:00

DI Yes, sure.

EK But this was good healthy exercise for these people.

DI Yes.

EK They had tumbling.

DI Actually they were ahead of their time in this respect

EK Well, don't all foreign countries have, offer, organizations, have I had just went through the history of the Bohemian Hall in Menominee and they had all these gyms and everything and then when they did, and I can't remember what year. I think it was during World War II, they gave up their gym classes and they donated all this, all their horses, you know these horses, leather horses and stuff you do, all this.

DI Yes.

EK Tumbling and everything on. They donated all to the public school system and they still are using it in the public school system. Of course mats have to be replaced and things like that but we did all of that. And then we'd have on the stage, we would have our tumbling, beautiful pyramids they'd build and everything. They would have a program of just athletics, sometimes, you know. In the Finn Hall, and all these nationalists, you see, they've followed the same kind of format. So it just, physical fitness was important and, of course, they were strong people. They had to work hard. So it became easy for the, but you didn't see fat people, as a general rule. Until women got older, you know, then things like that. But today we have so many fat, young ones, you know.

DI That's true

EK Seemed people didn't work

DI There isn't anything

EK I mean they worked off their fat

DI like that, athletic exercises or, unless it's at school, for anybody today.

EK No. And then they have a choice at school. It isn't. Now when I was in the sixth grade, of course I was in Cincinnati, well even here, we always had gym class and they always had calisthenics. But today they don't like to, I don't know.

DI No. They don't do that now at all.

EK You have a choice of whether you want to go in or not

DI What about the church. You haven't mentioned the church at all. Wasn't the church important within your group?

EK No. A great many people had already become atheistic. I mean they, everybody in Finland was baptized into the Lutheran church and the church today has all the genealogy records and when I go now to Finland I'm going to look up our family

DI Yes.

EK And they say these records go back 700 years. Can you imagine

DI Wow.

EK But everybody, and then the, there was a church, and every community that kept track of you and then you were confirmed and then you were a member of the Lutheran Church, whether you wanted to be or not. But evidently, during the time of social turmoil there, they didn't break away. They actually, there was no hate actually for the, for the church, other than they took the money from the people, you see. They were, they had to give so much and the people were hungry and the famines in the old country and they resented this you see.

DI Yes.

EK and, of course, today the state of Finland supports their church. So they don't have to give a tie there or any such thing. But you had to in the old days. Well, today, in this country, they tie too.

DI Well I'm surprised. Is that true, today the Finland, even though it's a so closely dominated by nearby Russia still supports the church?

EK Oh, yes. It's a state

DI I didn't know that

EK church and the people don't have to give money as such. Only for these hunger programs and things

DI Well they must give it through their taxes

EK Yes. It's tax. It's supported by the state.

DI No I should think they would resent that.

EK It's the national church. No. they don't. And they don't really, you see. You have to understand that in Finland, education started in the church. The church taught the people. There was no public schools, you see. And the church had their schools where, that's how education started really.

DI Maybe that's why in the, when the Finnish people came to this country, and their children were placed in public schools, they didn't have that same attachment or obligation

EK To the church

DI Yes.

EK That's true. I feel so too. I feel that's very important. Maybe that's one of the reasons. Now my grandmother, of course, now going back to the first tape there, was a very religious woman and so we all went to church. And we honored our grandparents in their religion and periodically, of course we didn't go to church all the time. And today people don't either. But I mean

if there was something important that she wanted us to go for, we went. And my parents went, and regardless of what

DI Then when it came to marriages and funerals and so forth

EK Everything is done through the church. It still is, I think

DI It's still important

EK So we've got a little away from it. Now when we had the Finnish Halls we didn't need church. We would have our funerals and our weddings through the Finnish Hall. It was a beautiful place. A nice, clean building. and I myself was never married in the Finnish Hall or never had anybody buried from there but I knew, I mean, I had attended. I had an uncle who was buried from this 14th Street Hall.

DI Well it was their first chance for an alternative.

EK That's right. They didn't need the church and if they really felt, see and then the, see what happened with the churches. Now the reason my mother and father for sure left the church as such was they got up in the pulpits in the time of all this depression, and when people were organizing, and they preached against unions and they preached against the people who were demonstrating and I mean right out of the pulpit.

DI The _____ of the masses.

EK Yes. And my father told me this, you know, because I've been to a, now on 12th street, way out towards Davison, now this, don't forget I was raised in Lower Detroit here and

DI Yes.

EK out at that time Davison was country. This was, today, it's part of the inner city but it was country. I remember going out there and the streetcar line ended, you know. And then you were out in the fields, you know

DI Sure.

EK So on 12th street they built their Finnish Church way out there, way out there. So then I told my dad, you know, I'm going out. It was something special. I was going to church quite a bit at that time. I must have been about 17 or 18. Dad says, "They're going to preach against" now this was already when the UAW was really on their sit down strikes, and things.

DI Yes.

EK He said, "They're going to preach against the UAW." I said, "They're not" you know. And he said, "You watch, they are. They're preaching against it" So I went to church and by golly, if they didn't preach against

DI They really did?

EK the UAW and against the strikers.

DI What would they say, what, for instance, would they say about the UAW?

EK Well that it was the wrong thing to do. I was a wrong thing to do that, you, well, I suppose they came right out and said that you'd go to hell if you joined in them, you know. But it was very impressive to me because my father had warned me, and you know, a teenager never believes their parents. So I went to church. I don't know. I was with a girlfriend, I guess, and we went to church. And one thing I did resent about my parents not, now we went periodically, this Sunday School, whenever we had friends we'd go with them and things.

DI Sure.

EK But I didn't stick to Sunday school enough and when I got to high school, I was a little resentful to my parents because they hadn't taught me, because history, a lot of it is through the Bible and I was very poor in some of my history because I didn't know a lot of the biblical things that would have gone with early history, you see. And about, right after the Romans and all that, you know, and when Christianity came in, and I resented that a little bit because I felt that my parents could have done a better job of letting me go to church and I might have learned, and they didn't keep me from church, you understand. Because we'd go and I remember in Cincinnati, especially, we'd go to Sunday School and it was into a Baptist Church which was a, baptism churches were very strange to us because Lutherans have an entirely different format.

DI Oh yes.

EK So here we were. We'd go to these Baptists, either to church or to Sunday school and I was taught quite differently. But I picked up something here and there

DI Well I suppose they would have taught you something about the Reformation and that they might not have gone into early church history very much.

EK No. I don't know. It just didn't. It wasn't the same thing, I mean But we did learn and then you get a feel of a church or something

DI Yes.

EK But anyway I know for a fact that the Finnish Church preached right against the UAW and against

DI That's surprising considering how many workmen there were

EK Ahh, this was at the beginning of the organizing stint and when we were really getting clobbered, you know.

DI Yes.

EK And so, well you could expect it from a Baptist, southern Baptist church, like from, an instance, in Cincinnati when we really became involved in

DI Absolutely

But I'm surprised thinking of the congregation of Finnish people there and there history, that any person giving a sermon would have the nerve to be so outspoken. He must have known that many of us, were there a number of conservative Finnish people?

EK Sure there were.

DI Maybe there were more than I had in mind.

EK Oh, sure there were. There weren't a lot of Finnish people that ran to the unions. No, no, no. We know alot, I mean, we know alot of people that weren't, were non-union. We got a big printer today out there on the northwest side and he still has, runs his printing plant without the union labor

DI Really?

EK Yes. That's right. And there's alot of resentment at the Lake because they have alot of things printed there. They don't have. The fact is, this book, there's no union label right there. Greater Detroit Finnish American Bicentennial Record. There's no union label on that. And there's, in fact, last night when I showed this book to one of the men out there - Ah, is there a union label, you know. These are the old socialists, of course.

DI That's very interesting. I thought that a proponent, amount or percentage was, say at least if not socialist, at least mildly left one way or the other. But evidently there were a great many who were more conservative.

EK Oh, yes. Lots and lots and lots. Look at this book.

DI Yes.

EK It's all full of

DI ... active ones were the ones

EK The only article in there is my little 500 words of socialist writing. That's the only thing there it mentions. They don't even mention Finnish people in the labor movement, in this book. This is the book that is printed in Detroit, mind you.

DI And yet at the Finnish Hall they must

EK Which Finnish Hall?

DI The Finnish Hall that you attended as a child, not the

EK Yes. And it was full of people all the time. They went there for the dances and for fun and for play

DI And they paid no attention to the talks on capitalism and socialism

EK No, they. We didn't have politics there every minute, you see. They have a reading room, of course, and there was always somebody on duty there, selling them a trim, yes. And the "ette band" Now the trim yes, why you have to remember that was a Western paper and the "ette band" which means forward, The Finnish forward, that was printed in New York City. And this is what we got in Detroit. This was our

newspaper for the Finnish

DI I see.

EK Hall. But, of course, you see, when newsprint and everything became so expensive, I think it's been gone. They merged with the Trim, yes, which is the oldest Finnish paper. "Trim" yes, means "working man" and that started in the copper country. And then it was printed awhile in Eshpeming, which is in the iron country

DI Yes.

EK And then it moved to Superior, Wisconsin, or around the copper country again and then back to Superior. Now that was called the Western Paper and the "_____ " which is the Finnish Forward - that was printed in New Y rk. And that was our newspaper. This is where I start, I started writing for them when I was about 16, 17 years old.

DI Let's tell about how that got started.

EK Well that was after I was a teenager. Now all this history I've given you up to now tells about just young people. But our own, when I started and then my peer group got to be 17, 18, 19 years old, they wanted more things in English and then by that time we had calisthenics, tumbling and things like that. Then we had basketball teams because basketball has always been a big thing anyway, even in our schools

DI Sure.

EK And so we entered city leagues. We would be on the city leagues, you know, in Detroit. We played, I remember one time playing Hamtramack and those girls were at least 6 foot tall. We lost 93 to 3. But they were so tall, but that was with the girls team. But we played men's rules still in there. And we had a youth chorus and we had our own you plays and vaudevilles and this was all still through the 14th street hall. Now what were you going to ask me, tell about, Oh. So then we had to report all our activities, especially to the, you know, to the older people and then they'd wanted to know throughout the eastern part of the country so we had to have a reporter. So I was the reporter for many years. And my pen name was Elvi, which was just a shortening of my regular name, Elvera, you know. So we, I used to write columns and columns of our doings, you know. What we were doing, especially with the, and we've always had an English page since the '30's. And now this was in the "_____ " I don't know if the Trim had an English page, but they do today and they're treating us like as though we were just 16 years old instead of. We would like to change, like the Triminists to have the English front page and have the inside Finnish if they want that. But the older people are the ones who really support this paper and they have parties and stuff where they raise money to still support their Triminist paper

DI And it still has the front page in Finnish

EK Yes. It is still. And the back page is English.

DI Well

EK It's only 1 page.

DI Its, the person who pays the piper, I guess, calls the tunes

EK That's right. But we could, really, have a good newspaper. It isn't a Communistic paper although we have alot of people writing, writes with more of a Communistic

DI How do you account for that? Do you think then that this Communist or I know it's not the same, or even Socialist or Radical was the result of bad times in the '30's or teachings in the halls when they were youngsters or personal experiencs? Now it doesn't sound as though your childhood was awfully difficult. It sounds as though you had a lot of fun as you remember it. But maybe there are things

EK Well times

DI that you haven't told about that were really difficult

EK Times were pretty good until about 1927, I imagine or so. I can't remember any too much, well, dad got layed off, we'd scuttle back to the farm as I said, but still

DI Well what made them radicals? Was it their feelings or what they have learned do you think? Because Douglas O'Lella has delt with this, you know, sometime. He thinks that it was more learned than taught or wonders whether or not it was so?

EK Well, it was always hard times, regardless of what, we were clean, we were fed and we always had a roof over our heads

DI Now how do you make a radical out of that?

EK But we couldn't, most of us are, most of us lived in little teeny one-room apartments that children slept on the couch and mom and dad slept in a alcove. We couldn't afford homes, most people. Some of the old, older finnish people did. They'd buy a little cubby hole or build a little teeny-little one-room shack on a lot way out in the country, some of them did. Well then the better paid people bought their own homes and things like that. But mostly we lived in apartments and they weren't big apartments. After we got a little bit bigger and maybe dad was working better then we'd have a bigger apartment. The minute he was laid off or something we'd have to move back into a one-room, one-bedroom, maybe there would be one bedroom and a living room and a kitchen on the side, or something. But we didn't have big, I mean, everybody wanted a nice living space. We didn't want to live all cramped up. And the work my mother would do, that's a different story all together. I've written that already. Just to get some of these, which are today called ghetto-tenant houses. We would clean and clean for two or three days before mother would even think of moving in or unpacking her suitcase. So this just living cooped up like this, now this is one of the reasons for having this Finnish Summer Camp Association as I said before

DI It would make it all more important

EK Yes. For about 50 cents worth of gasoline if. And then you could chip in with somebody else to drive out there if you didn't have your own car. Because our automobile was always full when dad had one. Naturally, dad being in the automobile work, he could usually pick up a car cheaper or

DI You were the better-off people during the depression then

EK No. We still have, we still lived in these little places. But we'd have a car because pa could pick up a wreck and then repair it. Just as long as the motor ran and we, I remember, Model T's and Model A's going. And we always

had a pack full of people that had owned their own car

DI It certainly sounds like an enterprising person.

EK Everybody would chip in for gasoline and we'd get there and then you'd pay for your meals out there. But then you'd have to eat at home if you stayed at home. But they had these great big, what they called " " That's a great big soup kettle and they'd be huge, you know. Like a big drum. And they'd dump all their, well first they'd start with the meat

DI Was it a beef soup?

EK Beef. Yes, Beef Stew.

DI Beef stew with barley and what all, you didn't use

EK We didn't use barley. The Finnish Beef Stew is more, no, more pastas. A little bit of rice sometimes

DI Rice?

EK Rice, yes. But it's mostly just potatoes and carrots and different vegetable, yes, and then the meat. You know, they always had good beef in it. This is the same thing I wrote about in my article about the Finnish Hall, about the depression time. We remembered depression time. A time when during the week, ladies gathered to make large pots of " " which is our beef stew.

DI Yes.

EK To serve the unemployed. And the children were made to understand that if we did not help someone would go hungry and there were big, long lines of people eating down there. Of course, we advertised what day we would cook and the different halls would cook at different times and churches had their soup lines, too. But this way the people didn't have to go hungry. Now this is in the inner city of Detroit, you know. From the Boulevard on down. These different organizations had this but. Now what were we talking about.

Oh we have to, were you going to ask me something?

DI I was going to ask you about where the money came for help for feeding the unemployed because the beef and so forth, the potatoes, carrots had to come from some where. Let's talk about that.

EK Well this is one of the reasons for having all these plays, and programs. People had to pay admission to get in to see all our plays on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons and the dances on Thursday nights and all this. Part of this money, of course, was used to pay for the hall, but the social programs. You see, there was no welfare, really as such in the '20's even. The government could have cared less

DI Somebody that was hungry just had to go looking.

EK That's right. The government didn't care, none of these social programs were on then, that we got in the Roosevelt era. I, they'd put the old people into these old folks homes if they didn't have any place to go but most people kept their old people at home with them or took care of grandma like we did by scuddling back to the farm when dad was layed off. And then he

cut the wood and he earned enough money to pay that small amount of tax that was due on the farm. But now this, the social work, I mean this was really social work. People fed each other. They helped each other. They didn't just let somebody starve. Now we had all these young men that were layed off in huge droves, too, you know.

DI Yes.

EK And then we, when we prepared this big beef stew we would eat there too, which would save on mother's grocery bill

DI Certainly

EK And then, of course then, in turn, we'd pay our admission into these plays and dances and everything, programming they had but that was one of the reasons mother enjoyed. Of course we all helped peel potatoes and things like that. Even the little kids could do something so this was social work really, as I see it. I mean, Jane Adams wasn't the only one who fed the poor you know.

DI That's right.

EK These things, there were more just those sections in Chicago

DI As you remember, then would the Detroit Welfare, whatever it consisted of in those days, was that the last resort?

EK Oh, yes. And people didn't want to go on welfare. That was a shame, you know.

DI Of course, I remember that.

EK Of course the one time we were on was just before Christmas and all they did was bring you a basket of groceries or something, I don't ever remember they paid our rent or anything. We were kicked out of a couple places because we couldn't pay our rent and I remember the landlord pounding on the door and my mother wouldn't open the door. She was scared to death he'd throw us out in the middle of the night, so you know.

DI Yes.

EK But these were, after, we suffered together, you see, in a group. We didn't have to be alone

DI You were certainly a help to each other

EK That's right. This helping in a group. And I think this feeling of helping each other came through this Finnish Hall Business.

DI When you father worked in Detroit, what, was their a particular car company that he worked for? Did he work for Ford, Chrysler, GM?

EK No. My father never worked for Ford. I think my father was black-listed way before

DI Because he had joined the Communist party or because he was an agitator?

EK Because he was an agitator, I imagine, in the shops. But he did work for Fisher Bodies and in a, the old Pontiacs and the old Overland plants

DI I see

EK And all those. Yes, he worked periodically. Then he also when he was out of work, he'd go working in these little automobile repair places and some of the best paying jobs he had were where they sold new cars and, I mean, you know then, Somebody would dent a fender and they'd come in

DI Was he at Briggs by any chance.

EK Yes. He was at Briggs. My brother also was an engineer

DI Was it in the early '30's when he was at Briggs?

EK I don't know what year.

DI The reason I ask is because the strike at the Briggs Company in 1933 was a strike in which the I.W.W. participated, strongly and while I know that your father was not a member of the I.W.W.

EK I don't think we were here in 1933

DI I was wondering whether any group of people, perhaps, were ready shall we say, protest their

EK We weren't here in 1933. We were in Cincinnati, Ohio. So, but now that goes into my teenage. After I got to be a teenager now, we have to finish up this Finnish Hall thing so we can get onto the UAW. Of course, then, my peer group, of course, had this English thing going and then we had a lot of things in English but were they still carried on in Finnish. The Finnish people would do this. But we did have our own independent programs and we collected our own money at the door, and everything for our group and then we, but we always made an accounting to the Hall and things like that and they. By that time they weren't having so many Finnish classes in the late '30's. The depression, you see, had affixed us so that we all had to go to work, you know. the teens, when we were in our teens. And so I came back to Detroit from Cincinnati, Ohio in 1936. And by that time we were having all our, then we started having all our own programs and World War II then when that came along, of course, and the boys went away, and we, it kind of broke us up really. There weren't such, I wish it would have been better, I mean, lasted longer, maybe my children would have been involved, you see. But they didn't. Then the Hall was sold and things like that. But we always did have the Lake, but it wasn't ever the same. You know, World War II seemed to break it up.

DI Did your kids go to the Finnish camp?

EK They did a little. But we didn't, I myself didn't live here

DI That's right.

EK Because my former husband was a farmer. Actually, I've been married three times. I don't tell it around too much. But my first husband was from

the Finnish Socialists groups' family but we didn't get along. I was only married a little over a year and I had this one child and then I came back to Detroit to mother and daddy. And I got a divorce and then I met my second husband, who was a very wonderful man. But he wanted to go back on the farm right after World War II. We still had, during World War II, we still had alot of programs at this Finnish Hall. But by this time the Finnish Hall was sold to local 154, was it? Let's see. Local 155, purchased it, purchased the Finnish Hall. But we rented it. They allowed us to rent it.

DI Did they still have the athletic equipment that you mentioned and all of that?

EK Yes. We were doing, they still had it in the basement. You see before they sold, when beer came in, you know, when Prohibition went out, then they started having a bar in our gym at one end of our gym because they had to earn money, because prices rose and rose and rose. So then we would get, when we did rent from Local 155, of course, we'd have to get that little Saturday night license or whatever they had.

DI Certainly.

EK They'd sell some beer and liquor there. But I couldn't remember what year it was sold and I remember sitting in on those meetings, downtown in the UAW Hall, when we were selling it. But I didn't realize that we had rented it afterwards. I didn't think we sold it 'til in the '50's. Because in the '50's, and I was gone from here, we moved to a farm with my former husband

DI Is that near Menominee?

EK No. This is in the lower Michigan where I moved to a little teeny town called Quomish. It was near, between Manistee and Traverse City

DI I know where Quomish is

EK Yes. And eleven years he farmed up there.

DI That's a nice town.

EK Yes. There's nothing there hardly

DI But they have a flea market that's quite famous.

EK Oh, yes, That's really nice. And we organized, I organized really because my husband was too busy, a chapter or a group of the Farmer's Union which is out West.

DI Oh, how interesting

EK See all they had was the Farm Bureau in Michigan

DI Was this up in Quomish?

EK Yes. And we had a little cooperative. We ordered food from the Western Co-ops, you know, and they'd ship then to us and I'd have to deliver most of it because the farmers were pretty busy but

DI There ~~were~~^{are} a number of Finnish people living around there, are there not?

EK Oh, yes. They have one

DI Finnish names

EK That's in Kalava. That's Kalava, Michigan and it's, was settled by Finnish immigrants and is still there and is mostly Finnish.

DI Yes. I've been there. It's a very delightful little town

EK Now there was another thing, They're also, ^{of course,} the employers there were all wealthy, landowners and they didn't want any unions around there. But they had good co-ops there at one time. They had a co-op creamery in Kalava, too. We were thinking, when we had the farmers union,

DI Was that affiliated with any other unions? Or was it just a little

EK The Farmers Union is a national

DI The National Farmers Union?

EK The National Farmers Union, yes. That is the one that was organized to combat the Farm Bureau, you see.

DI Yes.

EK The Farm Bureau was so strong and it did not serve the farmer - it serves the big farmer but not the little, family farmer.

DI Of course. That's not true today.

EK We, yes. My boys were educated into that type of socialism. I mean, not, we didn't live in the cities so this meant nothing to them. They used to love to come to Detroit Finnish Summer Camp with me. By that time the halls were gone when my two older boys, I'm talking about

DI Yes.

EK Now my youngest boy is 13 and he, of course, being members, and I keep my membership at the Detroit Finnish Summer Camp, because my parents live here and I have all these grandchildren and this 13 year old son, and I want them to have a place to go with me and enjoy down here.

DI I bet he loves it

EK Of course, grandma and grandpa are too old to keep, they have a tiny little two bedroom house and when they get alot of company they get very, very nervous. So now I had the children two days at the Finnish Summer Camp right now so now I'll take them the next weekend, I hope

DI That's wonderful.

EK But so they love it and my 13 year old says, "Save it for me, mama. Save it for me" because my number one and number two boys don't really care to have a share there and they don't care to be there so much but they are 36 and 33 but

DI They may ^{though} when they get a little older.

EK That's what I thought but the number two boy lives in Owosso and he's not too far away and he could go there anytime he wants. But he just doesn't enjoy that thing. He's a stock car racer.

DI When he has children maybe

EK He has three children. They're the only ones I had there.

DI And they don't want to go?

EK No. His wife won't even take them over. So I have to bring them but they just beg to go with me

DI I bet

EK They love it. "Can we go to the camp with you, grandma" So anyway then we come into this socialism becoming an ideology

DI Yes.

EK This is the way I speak of it and this was, of course, the McCarthy Era and that really wrecked it. Because our people was so afraid. Now I still meet my friends who were very militant with us and all this socialist thing and they would never organize, join a group. They're even afraid to come down here to the Walter Reuther Library

DI Oh, I know. I've heard about this.

EK So here were all these people and they're spread all over. But still you talk to them, I laugh. Because my present husband. I did it one time belong to the Young Communists League but not always, you understand. I wasn't a _____ or anything with me. I think the Finnish Hall business was more important. Oh, I think we should talk about that. Why did the Communist Party, feel, they started renting the Finnish Hall then to make money, to earn money to keep their hall. They started renting offices out and their co-op store moved out and they had all these empty spaces. So on the second floor they rented to the Communist Party the USA. Now Finnish people are pretty conservative. Even the Socialists. And they just were not just the real, red, red, red. In the private lives anyway. But they were Socialistic so they rented to the Communist Party and I don't know the exact year it was but the Temple Baptist Church organized one evening. I wasn't living here and I wish I would have been here but they came out of gym class - this is what my friends tell me and maybe one of them that were in it will come this week and tell us about it - and when they came out of the building, the Temple Baptist Church was marching in front of the hall. And they had a terrible fight, I guess to get out the door to go home.

DI Do you remember what year this might have been?

EK It has to be in the '50's, in the McCarthy era.

DI For good ness sake, I've never heard of that.

EK And they came out and they had the street fight, right in front of the hall. And they were, the Temple Baptist People were trying to beat our people up and calling them Communists and everything was really a rotten time for them. And this really broke our group up. I mean, they were afraid to go back because they were marching almost everynight I guess. You understand these gym classes were on the weekday nights and the basketball games were on the weekday nights. and the police evidently in this McCarthy era did not chase away people like this, no matter how much trouble, they had. So we'll have to get a little

more information on that because I don't have it. As I was that eleven years and I left in 194-, the fall of 1945 and I was gone eleven years, so I came back in 1956. By that time

DI This was in the '50's, this happened?

EK It could have been in the late '40's. When did McCarthy start getting so hairy? I don't remember.

DI The Anti-Communist Movements started in the late '40's, right after the war and the, the Rosenbergs, were executed. I guess in 1952 and that was really the height of it, was it not? It didn't really die down.

EK Yes. You see my association with that is all up there on the farm. And we had one, extreme Socialist who, he was called Clyde Smith. Now I'm going back on the farm up towards Traverse City and Manistee area, this man was the only real leftist that I knew up there and he was a great writer and he, his name was Clyde Smith. And he had a farm up there and he was a very intelligent, well educated man and he died of a heart attack. And, see my mother kept me posted, most of the time

DI This is when you had the farm, you were

EK This is when we had the farm

DI Up near Kupninish?

EK That's right. And, of course, with me, I organized the Farmers Union. Of course, I was considered a Red, you know, but by the, some of the farmers but the other people liked it. They thought it was all right. I mean, we had quite a group. So, but my mother would keep me posted of what was happening in Detroit and it was at the time the teachers were being arrested

DI Yes

EK for teaching Communism in the schools and all this stuff, which wasn't true but then my mother would keep sending me clippings out of the newspapers. And

DI What was your mother's attitude toward all this? Your mother was a radical, was she not?

EK Oh, yes. Extreme radical. She's more radical today than my father. So, anyway, she has joined all these peace movements and the Women's Right for Peace all those things she belonged to

DI Well, good for her.

EK Yes. So, anyway, now what was I saying

DI You were talking about the farmers union and Clyde Smith

EK No. I wanted to, oh, yes. What was happening. Clyde Smith, okay. Clyde Smith. There came the time of the day of his funeral. So I went to the

funeral and darn it if, on that road, of course it was a gravel road leading to his farm, there was a great big, some type of Rolls Royce or Cadillac, black one, and it was full of plainclothes men, I could tell, you know. You can always tell them. There were four of them I think, sitting in there. Well I went into, and they had the service at the house, and he had an Episcopal minister who was his

This Episcopal Minister had evidently gone to school with Clyde Smith and he prayed, his wife sent word to him and he came and preached his sermon. Now you see, this man was Communist, evidently because, I'm sure he was, but it isn't true that they are not religious. I mean, this Episcopal minister was his good friend and then he came and preached this sermon at his funeral and buried him at the gravesite. But I stayed at the house when I saw these plainclothes men out in this car because the old grandmother stayed at the house to fix the meal and there's always refreshments after a funeral, generally in most country funerals.

DI Yes

EK And I was afraid to leave her alone. I was afraid these men would come in the house and I didn't want them disturbing his papers or books or anything. So I stayed there and they didn't come in. And I made sure because I used the dustmop on the floor after the people left and it was an hour or so before they got back from the cemetery. So, and then I shook rugs like on the farm, that we always had ragrugs. I still use them, ragrugs, I like them

DI Yes.

EK And I shook the rugs and I was on the porch and they did sit there awhile. But by the time the people returned from the cemetery that car was gone. And I didn't see them actually pull out but I know they did, they were gone by the time they returned and I told them that the reason I stayed because. This had to be, in about '52 or '54

DI They were probably government agencies checking on who was coming to the funeral.

EK It had to be in about '50 or '52. Yes. It might have been. I don't know who it was. But and, the fancy car and the well-dressed men in there, that this isn't country, you know. So I didn't want to let them in the house. But anyway Clyde Smith was a good writer and he wrote many articles into the papers and I always the one article in particular that he wrote was about reaction and action. And he wrote right out about the Communist and Socialist beings harassed. That some day this pendulum would swing the other way. And maybe, maybe in my old books and records I have that article, I hope.

DI I hope you can bring it down sometime. We could copy it.

EK If I do, I'll send it right here to the Archives because this man was very, very intelligent. And people liked him. Oh, his personality was wonderful. So and he was rather a gentle man, that's what was odd about it. Why he lived on a farm like that I don't understand. He was an Englishman. I was, he, sort of red head complexion and a little bit bald in the front and what he died of today I can't remember, you know. But he seemed healthy to me but I didn't know him that personally, of course. Never visited. I did know the family. Now his wife, I still see her brother, once in awhile. They were a Bohemian family. And he married this woman. And she was very nice, too. But they didn't live right next door to their mother or anything. She was an old Bohemian lady, you know. Had her ways about her, you know and very ethnic.

DI There were quite a few individualists living around that area, weren't there? Wasn't there a prophet that lived near there and

EK Yes.

DI A number of people of heard of broke literary and various other fields, working in that area.

EK Yes. I had a friend who was a schoolteacher up there, over there I should say. His name, you know, I kind of hate to throw names around but he was very, became very active in the Farmers Union. And the odd part of it was they were fruit farmers. And made huge amounts of money compared to us cattle farmers, you know. We had to get up there and milk the cows. They could go to Florida in the winter and things like this, which we can do, you know, or travel. But his father had been a farmer in Traverse City and then his father built little cabins on Grand Traverse Bay. And made quite a bit of money and he owned quite a bit of land along Grand Traverse Bay. Right on the edge of Traverse City.

DI That would be profitable.

EK So his father died and left this property to him and his sister. And they tore down all these old cabins and they built a modern motel, I'll never forget that. So, well the name was Hopkins, John Hopkins, I'll tell you this. And when he, him, and he built one set of modern hotels on one side of the drive way and his sister on the other. And then they each ran these. But the land evidently was in joint names still and they paid, they borrowed \$75,000 which in 1950's or something was such a huge amount of money that we couldn't even imagine this, \$75,000. And you know they paid that off in one year! That's just when this motel business was really coming along.

DI Isn't that amazing.

EK And beautiful things and, of course, I was invited up there, quite often. And they stillwrite and they've retired, well in the winter they go to Florida and they've invited me many times.

DI And this man was active in the Farmer's Union?

EK Oh yes. These were, these people and he was a schoolteacher and Lillian was a very dear friend of mine too. We were much closer to them than we would have been to like Mr. Clyde Smith, you know. But we visited often. They came to our house and we went to their's. Their boys were, oh I would say, six years older than our boys so they grew up faster. Their children went to college and they had the money to send them. Well, we did too but, I mean, when our boys got there. But it's just the idea that they seemed the Eptime of success as far as farming was concerned to us, you know. And yet they could see the iniquity and they had, to, of course, make a loss on some of their fruit products at times. But then they went into the motel business. They sold out their orchards, you know. and then they went into the motel business, when they got older. And their children were already grown then. So they were really a success story but still

DI Tell more about the Farmers Union. That's very interesting.

EK Well, the Farmers Union. That, we, of course, see Finns always believed in cooperatives and things, too. They always did. How it was brought to me, now I don't remember. It could have been Mister Clyde Smith. No, I wrote, oh I

remember it was that old Swede. He was another fruit farmer. He was living out of Calva, in Manistee County. He had this farm and he was the one. He was Swedish and he was, I don't remember where we met one day. Probably at a Gladdy-O Co-operatives or something. He says, I know, because we had had some loss on our crops that year and he says, you know, "We should get that farmer's union over here. And I said, you bet. Unless it was at the fair. But you know these people. Even ^{though} they live 16 miles from you, you know these people because you see them year after year. Now we went there 1945 and I'm a very _____ person and I'm friendly and outgoing so I met alot of people. And it may have been when we were showing cattle because we always had one or so to bring to the fair for our children for 4-H and his children were young too. And this, of course, he was quite a bit older than me. He must have been a good twenty years but he was a very healthy man, you know. He wanted the Farmers Union. They talked about it at the fair and all those, so we brought the farm, we wrote and had the Farmers Union brought in. So then we started it and gee, you'd be surprised how many people we were able to recruit. The only thing we couldn't get going was our own cooperative store. We had the cooperative and their stuff was delivered by rail. No, I think the truck, one of those big trucks. Railway Express, I think was real cheap at that time. We used to have them delivered somehow. I can't remember picking them up at the railway station. They must have delivered them by truck to our house. Then we had another man in Honor who had them delivered, part of the stuff delivered to his house. So it wasn't all delivered to our house. I remember my former husband, "why do you do this for, it's just extra work" It was fun in a way. I mean, we, then they'd tell us at the meeting what they wanted and we'd all order cases of whatever we needed and then we'd divide them up. Then that way you could visit. You can't stay home all the time, even though you work long hours on the farm. You visit people. And we didn't have televisions yet, in the '50's, the early '50's, or late '40's. We didn't have TV's. So we had this, and then it was quite militant in those days. I don't know what they are doing today. I kind of wish I did, although I have traveled in the West a little but when I did go out West in 1956, I saw all these great big grain elevators. National Farmworkers Union, ^{Yes} And I was so proud. I used to belong, I used to belong to that.

DI Right

EK And so, the dues were so cheap, you know. \$3 a year or some such thing. It was very easy to belong to. But then we weren't producing. We had no cooperative around there to support, although we tried, not only to get another coop started - Calva used to have alot of co-op stores. But I don't know, the old people when they died off, the young ones all have this capitalistic idea that they have to go into, you know, earning money. Well, this is alright. I don't have anything against somebody earning a living but it's, it would be better if people would help each other a little bit more

DI Yes

EK and it will take our grocery prices would be near so high.

DI Definitely

EK And I'm just fascinated with these new little co-ops they're bringing out now with good food

DI There's a Co-op here in this area, in Detroit.

EK Yes, I imagine. And my mother used to go to something here even a few years ago where they sold alot of nuts and all this stuff. Of course, it might have been a health foods store but I think it might have been a co-op.

DI Well there's one in this area where I think everybody puts in \$2.00 and they go down to the markets, down to the dock areas and huge amounts and you got large bag fulls just for city people. Which is different, you know, smaller amounts. But the idea is still evidently going. Let's go back in years to the days when you were a young girl again and talk about the young communist league. Anything about it would be interesting I think because so few people want to discuss it at all. And therefore people who weren't themselves a member of what sounds like an interesting sociable group really, now, but was really feared back then and would be good to hear something about your own feelings, your own experiences, about the sorts of people you met and the sorts of things you did.

EK Well, I don't think this generation can understand the desperation of the people in the '30's. You see the dust storms drove people off these little farms and the mines closing and - this was in the '20's, although we were having fun and dancing the charleston and all this stuff. It really did, it crept up on people, I think. It became so bad that, you know, and yet, you know, you weren't afraid like they are afraid today. They are so afraid, like the hobos and things. The were big gangs of men living together but they weren't dangerous, I don't. I mean I can never remember any fear and you see religion, and amongst the Finns especially, you never turned anyone away from your door. If they came knocking at your door wanting something to eat, you always gave them. My mother never let them in the house. On farms I've heard stories where they just called them into the kitchen and fed them a meal. But my mother wouldn't let them in the house but then we had such tiny little apartments. Mother would make a sandwich in a hurry and hand it out the door, or something.

DI I can remember my mother doing that.

EK Yes. They, city people don't tend to be as, you know, open, well on the farm nothing was ever locked up anyway so. But they walked around, these men, and they were hungry, you know. And hunger, this hunger is carried over from the old country. Now my father begged door-to-door when he was 7 years old, in the old country. Famines, you see, were an accepted thing I guess. I could tell you a little story if it doesn't take too long about my

DI Go ahead

EK Mister Kanerva's mother, that I'm married to now.

DI What was Mister Kanerva's first name?

EK My husband's? ~~Russell~~

DI Yes

EK Russell.

DI Russell Kanerva, okay.

DI But, now Russel was raised up north in a very republican family. His own father was in cooperatives and things like that. They were never Communistic or anything but they had this old Finnish, and they read the Trimist which was considered

a left paper. That was red enough for them. But when people started going to Soviet Union which was in Rock, you know, it's only 20 miles from Gwen, where my husband was born, well he became, his father became quite disenchanted - the old Mr. Kanerva - and also he, there were some disputes in the cooperatives. He belonged to the cooperatives and he claimed that the Communists ran the meetings and did it crookedly and so he quit the cooperative in Rock. And then people started going to the Soviet Union. My father

DI What do you mean by the Soviet Union. You mean they went clear to Russia?

EK They went to Russia

DI Yes, okay.

EK Yes. They went to Russia to help during the '30's.

DI I see.

EK They went over there and sold everything in this country and left. He thought they were foolish. Well to tell the truth, my own father thought the people were foolish to do that, even though he was considered a red or a Communist, you know. But he, we thought it was sort of silly. I mean it's all right. They needed help, you know. The Soviet Union needed our knowledge, you see, because they were an agrarian society. Had never, never had any machinery around them and here was, our country was well developed, you know.

DI These people might have felt bad when the Soviet invaded Finland.

EK Yes. There was alot of dispute but my family wasn't. I don't, yes, and it might have been too. Of course, his father died in 1939, Mr. Kanerva's father so I don't think he knew about the war.

DI He never knew about it.

EK But anyway that had something to do with my husband being against them. But they used to go, now see there's your halls again, you had your halls that were. Now I don't know what the other hall was. The Co-operative Hall that still says on that building today, even though it's sold. And they had the Red Hall which they called the Red Hall

DI And this is up in the Upper Peninsula now

EK The Upper Peninsula

DI Near Rock

EK But this is the way our community here in Detroit was the same. You had, you had your I.W.W. Halls and you had your Calevava which is a sort of a, remember I was tell ing you about this

DI I've seen that on little towns in the UP and around

EK Well Calva is a name of a city

DI Yes.

EK I mean a town in Lower Michigan but

DI Yes. I've been there.

EK Calevava is the epic of Finland.

DI Yes.

EK And then they have an organization which they called the "Knights and Ladies of Calvava" Now this is a, its' not really a religious organization but didn't I say in my earlier tapes about "Blue Blood" Didn't we discuss that yesterday?

DI Yes. That there were some nobility

EK That they still had this feeling about nobility and "blue blood" Okay. There is this organization called the "Knights and Ladies of Calava" which would be similar to some of these organizations we have in the "Knights Templar" and such

DI Sure.

EK But of course we look at them with a jondus eye. WE've, it's ridiculous you know, as far as we are concerned

DI For people who need it.

EK Like P.S. It's just, but we used to go to their dances too. Now that's something I always did. I went from hall to hall everytime they'd have something. At one hall, you see, because our Finnish Hall didn't have something every week, you know. So we would run - sometimes we would go to two dances in one night. But that was after I was a teenager

DI Sounds like fun, sure.

EK Yes. I mean they were always Finnish and you always knew somebody there and then we'd say, Well, let's go over here. And they'd have to drive me - it would be 15 miles to go to the other one but. Anyway we'd go to one program and then we'd go to another dance or something and they were always at Finnish Halls so there were no televisions and the radio, of course, was important in those days. But you ~~listened~~ to the radio in the daytime. But it was, Detroit wasn't so congested as it is today. We didn't have alot of, but now we were talking about Mr. Kanerva and his family, weren't we?

DI Yes. People going

EK I wanted to talk about hunger. Hunger is not understood by our country today. Well, there's no hunger.

DI That's right. Nobody really knows what it is. Well, they say some do.

EK Yes. They don't, nobody can understand the depression as those of us who lived it. And I was just a child but it made an impression and also a teenager. But one of the things that brought hunger back to me and this is why I became very active in the church in this hunger movement last year. Was because I could remember it and this one thing happened to me - now this has only been about 6 six year ago - I moved up to Gwenn with Mr. Kanerva in 1966. I left a good job with the State of Michigan and Mr. Kanerva had a good job here. In Detroit. And we went up there because he had always promised. His mother got married again and they had been married already 25 years. His father died in '38 or '39. And then she married again a couple years later and she had this, you know, nice husband and everything. An old. Of course they were old now. Her husband's name was Elmer Kingus and he was 80 years old already and he, when I married Mr. Kanerva in 1962, he made me understand because I went up and got married in their church because we had no church that we were affiliated with here, and his mother begged me to come up there and be married in their church. So I said I would ask my mother. That was when we went up to tell them. I had never met them.

But we went up to tell them. He'd introduce me to his family and tell them that he was going to marry me. So I said, I'll tell my mother, I said. But what will my mother say. Of course, my mother, I don't think she cared. So I came down here and told my mother and she was apalled. "You mean you're going to go up there and get married in that church!" Well, I said "Well Why Not." "We'll, somebody will drive you up from here" and things like that. Even though I had been married several times, we still make a big thing of marriage.

DI Certainly.

EK We think it's important to be married right, you know. I mean, legally and everything. So we went up there and got married. And in this time, this stepfather made me understand that my husband was the only one he could trust in the family. And that my husband had promised to take care of them in their old age. And I said, "Anytime you're ready." And they were very active people, although mother was almost blind. But they got along very well. Mr. Kingus was a, I started a story about him and he's such an active, bright and bushy-tailed man for 80 years old.

DI Excuse me but how is his last name spelled?

EK Kingus? K-A-N-G-A-S.

DI Okay.

EK So he was, so then his, my husband's brother died who was living right next to them in 1965 suddenly. And so we went up for Christmas year and he says "You've just got to come. I can't manage. Mother was getting worse and she was an extreme diabetic. She was a very heavy woman. She kept gaining weight and couldn't control her weight at all. And he was just shaking, you know. He was 80 already. So I said, okay. So I told my husband. I said, Well, what do you think? We could, I had married Mr. Kanerva in 1962 and I said, Do You Want, do you think, don't you think he had better come back because he's desperate already. Because he had tears in his eyes. I said, "We had better come up here and see what we can do."

DI did you have a son by this time?

EK Oh, yes. My little boy was already 3 years old. So I, I said, "Well I'm willing to come and my husband," yes, yes. So we came back to Detroit and put his house up for sale. Now you understand, I had been married before and I had a house and I had sold it when I married Mr. Kanerva and I got it back. I was sold on land contract. I enjoy selling things on land contract. Although sometimes you lose money. But then I had resold my house. Well, then Mr. Kanerva's house I put up for sale but we didn't want another land contract because we really, it was a very tiny home. He never had any children so. We didn't ever think we'd ever use that. But mine was an old house up in Farmington Township which is today called Farmington Hills. And

DI An elite neighborhood

EK Yes. We didn't know it. We lived in old Clarenceville and we just thought it was just ole Clarenceville. So anyway I had sold that house and then I got it back and sold it again so I was getting money on my land contract. So it didn't matter. I was getting the money little by little back again. So then we, I put my husband's home up for sale and we didn't even put up a sign. It was sold within a month. And I think my husband nearly had a nervous breakdown. And he became very ill, he had ulcers and everything. I nearly lost him. He nearly bled to death. But grandpa was still living and so in June I went up and bought a house from grandpa. Grandpa was a carpenter and he built many houses and he had one that he was renting and so I wrote to him the minute that Russ's house was sold and in the first part of February.

And I said "We sold our house now. We have to have a house when we come up there." Some place to put our furniture. We we had two houses of furniture, really because I was storing some in my mother and dad's garage. And I hated to get rid of mine. Russ's house was so small I couldn't put alot of my big, old-fashioned rocking chairs. I collect antiques to this day, you know. Sometimes I hate it because I'm so cluttered with the stuff but I love them. I'm an adict, you know. So, and I can't get rid of this one big rocking chair because it belonged to the Isaacson family so. And these things, you know. So I store furniture. So we had these, practically two houses, small houses full of furniture. So we bought this big house. I went up and bought it from Mr. Kangas in June. 7 days later he died of a heart attack. Well he was 80 years old and we knew he wasn't well. And so we had to come up and take care of his mother because she was blind.

DI that was the major reason you were going up there in the first place wasn't it?

EK in 1966. Yes that was it. So ^{we} were going to take care of both. And grandpa had said "I want to go to Finland before I die" and he said, "I'd like to go this summer." So I said, well, Get ready. I'm coming up in the end of June I'll be there already and you can leave in July, to go for the summer. So he was getting ready

DI This is Mister Kanerva's father

EK Stepfather.

DI Stepfather, okay. Mr. Kangas.

EK So he died, yes, and he died. I had to hurry up there and my husband was ill, ~~so~~ so everything but we went up there and took care of that. So we had, let's see, Mrs. Kangas at that time was 78 years old. She lived for 5 years after this. But I took care of her. Of course this threw her into quite a shock and everything. And she hated me the first year because I made her lose 50 pounds. She was such a badly diabetic person and they want her on a diet. And of course the doctor told me when I took her in of July of that year, that this is terminal, you don't have to worry. Just let her do what she wants. But we still had her on a diet. She lost 50 pounds and you can imagine how she hated me. After the first year, she got used to me. She knew and she was, lived. Now that, those doctors didn't expect her to live as old as she was and blind. The diabetis had taken her eyesight. And so here she was, so I then I got my house back the senond time on land contract - because they couldn't pay it, you know. I deal with poor people. I've been poor myself. And when I sold my house I sold it to people with about 5 children and they couldn't hack it. They abadoned it, more or less. So I had to come back to make arrangements for my house. And I couldn't leave her. By that time I found that there was no use leaving her because there was nobody who could have given her the care that she had to have. She had to have a daily bath and everything. She was an invalid.

DI That was alot of work

EK Yes. And she was incontinent, and things, and she had to be changed often. So my ~~mother~~ mother was quite well then, yet. This was about 6 years ago and my mother was quite well. So I didn't expect mother to do anything hardly, as far as her care was concerned, you know.

DI This is your own mother now.

EK This is my own mother. We came down to Detroit. I wrote, I called mother, and I said, "Gee I think I'll bring grandma with me and, of course, I had the little boy and everything. And mother and dad was still poking around pretty good around the house. My aunt was there. So I did. I brought her down and they had a ball because my father and her were born, or lived in the same part of Finland when they were real young

DI Really?

EK Yes. And there reminiscing, those two did, and they remembered this famine, I think it was 1897, the same one my grandfather was caught in, this depression over here and they had this famine in the old country. And that's when my father was 7 years of age and was beggin door-to-door. Now Miss Russell, my husband's mother's family had a fairly good farm evidently because they had wheat and they told this story and I was listening and wish I would have had it on tape right to this day, I die because I didn't get it on tape. They were telling, she said when they first, it first started, they would give a fairly good sized measure of wheat, see. Say, a quart of wheat as people came to the door. You never turned anybody away. This is Jesus' way. You know, this is extreme religious belief. You could not because it might be Jesus come to the door, you see.

DI Yes.

EK You don't ever turn anybody away hungry. So they'd give a fairly good sized measure and then they saw that this famine was going to last and they had to cut down the amount they gave at the door. And I don't know how many came to the door or anything, but they had a good wheat crop. And it wound up that they were toward the end of this famine, they were only able to give a handful. But they never turned anybody away empty. And they'd give the wheat, you see. And my father had told the story about he'd collect this wheat and then he'd have to ski in the winter time about 5 miles to the mill to get a ground and then back again. Now he was only 7 years old. Back again to his mother to bring this wheat to her.

DI How much, what would you do with a handful of wheat?

EK Well they went from door-to-door and each door gave them a handful.

DI I see, okay.

EK So they did get enough to make bread and things like that, you see. They were hungry but nobody starved because they shared and this is something that we don't understand here, you see, in this desperation, of going from door-to-door.

DI This same philsofhy is a philosophy that I knew in India. They never turned anyone away either. Perhaps it's one that is necessary if there isn't any other way to take care of masses of hungry people.

EK That's right

DI Maybe people realized that it's the only way.

EK Well they talk about early immigration and things like that. And granted they did. Now don't forget early immigration was sending boatloads of people. The governments of the foreign countries sent these people here. They were probably in prison or some such thing and they sent these people away instead of putting them in prison, you know. AND alot of our early, early immigrants in

the 16, 1700's were these type of people. But our immigrants in the 1800's, really because there was overpopulation, well this we know from social studies and things like social histories. We know and so I know this is true from my own father's and my husband's mother's experience

DI So your husband's mother and your father both recalled the same area, the same hunger and famine in Finland.

EK The same famine, that's true. And so

DI What year was this famine? It must have been a very

EK 1897.

DI 1897.

EK We had, in this country, there was a depression in 1897. So in the foreign countries there was this famine and depression, of course. When there's a depression I think it's worldwide. Just like now, our prices are high. The prices are high overseas. Everything, you know, is inflated. So evidently and of course, historians and social studiers know this better than we. I mean, why these things happen. Isn't that odd that I heard this story and just happened to be there when they were discussing. And did they discuss and reminiscences they had and when I go to Finland I'm going to visit this area, you see, and see what it's like. So it ~~was~~ certainly was interesting. Now we were, that's the famine story. Let's go on to something else.

DI Okay.

EK But that, we talked about my husband. You wanted to go back to my early history again about the Young Communist League. Now I don't know how I got into it. It's through my father somehow, I suppose, or my mother. But Cincinnati, Ohio, was the first I remember. We went to Sunday afternoon meetings. I remember, now this has nothing to do with Finnish History, this Communist business right now, in Cincinnati. We were away from Finnish culture aside from the fact that we had picnics with our Finnish friends on Sundays and this type. But the depression was, came in full swing here in the '30's. I think we went to Cincinnati in 1930. We were there 7 years that time, or 6 years or 5 years.

DI Were those meetings like in secret or were they open?

EK No, no secret about it. This is when I laugh about this

DI Yes. They talk about that in the various

EK When I read this story I Led Three Lives, I could have killed myself laughing because he

DI About cells

EK talked about Communist Cells. I never in this world heard about a Communist Cell in my whole life.

DI That term was used alot in ~~HUGAC~~. Various

EK What's ~~HUGAC~~?

DI ^{un}House on American Activities Committee. Remember when they used to have witnesses called up and they always used the term cells.

EK I know, who were these people that they called up there. I never. Most of the people we didn't even know. Who were they. Of course, they called up people from New York, I suppose, or some place like that. But it was ridiculous some of these stories that they told.

DI So you don't remember anything called a Cell Meeting?

EK No. And they had their Communist meetings in the Masonic Temple buildings and things like that. They rented a hall and mother Blouer used to come and speak and all these things.

DI Oh did you hear her? Do you remember her?

EK Oh, sure. And they had oster Williams, E. Foster used to come. And my father used to take us down there and we'd go listen, and I'd always

DI I'd be interested in a description of those people. If you can think

EK Mother Blouer was just a little motherly, old-looking woman that I can remember. She was a happy. Oh, good speaker.

DI Oh, was she good?

EK Excellent speaker, yes. AND they carry you off you feet. And I always remember when they raise the money. And they'd get up there and they'd usually have a hat, if I remember right. And they'd say that now we're going to ~~start~~ ^{start} with \$20, you know. Maybe one person would give \$20, you know, because very few people had - well these would be maybe old bachelors or something that would have

DI Sure.

EK And then they'd say "Well who's got \$10? to give, you know." And then they'd get a \$10 bill, maybe a few of them. Then they'd say \$5. Well a few more people would give \$5 and they had this spill. It was really good. And then they'd ask for \$1 and, of course, that's where most of us were.

DI What did she ~~kk~~ talk about. Did she talk about this country, Russia, what sorts of things?

EK No, not Russia

DI She wouldn't be talking about Russia

EK It was always related to our own problems in this country and about the dust storms and about, oh, about the capitalists having so much money and, you know, they put their message across pretty well. And how, they gave a solution. They didn't just criticize. They gave a solution. How would we do this if. How should this country be run instead of like it is. And they gave a solution. They would tell you, now if we put it under socialist - let's take railroads, for instance. You know, that they would run

DI That's under the government now,

EK Yes. Well, why

I mean this is ridiculous paying them all this subsidy and the people are still living on the oil wells, but that's another story.

DI I know it.

EK But if they did run it - the railroad workers, of course, were still quite strong in the '30's. You know they were, this was Debs -oh, I heard Debs heard too, when I was a little girl.

DI Did You?

EK And where I heard him I can't remember. Was it in Illinois

DI How about Cincinnati?

EK No.

DI Not that late

EK Cincinnati. We lived twice in Cincinnati. I can't just remember when the first time was. But the second time we went there, of course I was older, and it was around 1930. And we came back here in 1936 or 1937, or 1936. But we had lived there about a year before that. I think it was, maybe in Rock Island, Illinois where we heard Debs. Very powerful man. Very nice person

DI He must have been a wonderful man.

EK Yes. And

DI He was certainly well-loved by a great many people. Have you ever visited

EK Of course, maybe it was in Detroit for all I know, that I heard him speak. It could have been in Detroit.

DI very likely

EK Yes.

DI Very positively

EK In the '20's, you know. Because that's when he was When did he die?

DI He was in prison until about 1924 and then he was out a few years before he died.

EK Yes.

DI But he wasn't very healthy

EK It had to be in Detroit.

DI Must have been.

EK Well, maybe that's

DI Is there anything else you can remember about Mother Blouer?

EK Oh, Mother Blouer was, she was fantastic. She was a woman, you know, and she'd get up there

DI Yes. That's why, that's one of the reasons why so is so interesting.

EK I suppose. She was such a good... Nothing, Very.. they didn't hide their meetings. If there was going to be a Communist Party meeting they had posters all over town telling you they had.

DI SURE

EK And it was even in the newspapers. You know. I can't understand where all this secrecy bit came out, the spy business, you know.

DI Yes.

EK Why would anybody be a spy, even their, they never met at home. At first they always had rented halls. Now I can remember in Detroit if you rode down on the streetcar on Grand River you'd see the big hammer and sicle in the window on Communist Party headquarters. Or wherever they'd have them on the east side or... You could see them right

DI Sure

EK out of the bus or the streetcar windows. There was no secrecy about it. This was a free country you know. And granted the people were against it. So they're against it. I mean, that was accepted. If everybody believed like they wanted to believe that they more we could recruit the better.

DI Well you had a reason to expect that your freedom of thought was just as good as anyone else's.

EK Before the UAW had all these labor day marches and may day marches. Well they never had may day marches. We always march on May DAY in Detroit. Cincinnati even marched on May DAY. I kind of miss May Day. I had a May Day in my home, two years ago. There were some, you see, May Day in Finland, is still celebrated but you don't, but today the college graduates graduate on May DAY and their free. This is freedom. Now this is freedom day. And I don't think I explain it. I had explained it to our Finnish minister even, you know. I mean that ridiculous thing. It isn't only the workers. This is traditional mayday. In the old days when they had the serfs in Finland, you were or your bonded servants, their year was up on May 1st.

DI I see.

EK They could either stay and sign up for another year with the same farmer, or workman or wherever they were going to do. They got their bolt of cloth and their few pennies or whatever they were getting for their yearly work on the first Of May.

DI Were they really free to leave?

EK Well they could go to another farmer, oh, yes. I don't think, as long as they were going to go to work someplace. You couldn't just walk free, of course. You had to work but still they didn't have to stay. so then, now I don't know, I have a friend, the time I went to Finland on the Fulbright Scholarship and she studied this. But I should ask her if they really were free to leave but this is what I understand. Now they were, this is when they could change employment. During the year you couldn't do anything about it. You had to stay for this year.

Now this is when their yearly work ended. On Mayday. It evolved into, during the pre-, just prior to the Russian Revolution and prior to the Independence of Finland. They had mayday periods too. This was for freedom for their own country, each country. And I imagine the other foreign countries had this type of thing, too. But Mayday, besides just jumping around a maypole. Now they blame it on, on, that it was a pagan religion thing. And they always celebrate it with fire which is considered a pagan ritual. But I don't think it necessarily would have been that. If people would have had to work, they would have worked. But the thing was that on the 1st of May, your year was up. If you had a bad boss, you could go to another one, you see. And actually, they were slaves during the year but on May 1st. This is why the big jubilee on May 1. And this is how it evolved. Now I don't care what they try to tell me about this pagan ritual and this kind of crap. Now why would they just all of a sudden get up and celebrate May 1st just to be a pagan ritual. That's silly. It has to be connected with some social reason.

DI In my memory, it's always been connected with Communism.

EK You see, this is wrong. This is wrong. Today, in Finland, May 1st, is the day the college graduates and if you've ever seen any pictures in Finland lately. They wear these little white caps in school for graduation and then they throw these up into the air. You know, it's like a shower of white coming down or going up and coming down. And this is their freedom from school. But it's, May 1st is associated with freedom. It isn't just, and now they wrote, like in our day, oh, it was because and the reason that the religious people like the Lutherans didn't want them to celebrate May day was so that they would quit doing the pagan rituals. But it isn't that. It's this freedom thing, you see. It has to do with this from way, biblical days and everything else. So I'm glad I got that in anyway. And this business of Communism in the South is ridiculous nonsense from the beginning. And I wish I would have got up from my hind legs and said it before because we've laughed about all these informers and the rotten, silly things they said, you know. ^{mean} Why couldn't we laugh at it? I wonder why people were so afraid. I was so far away I couldn't laugh because I didn't know what was going on.

DI Evidently a number of people still are, have these same feelings of fear. Less, by far, but there's, the people, for instance, you wanted interviewed that are hesitant to come in. That's why I believe they're hesitant.

EK Well

DI I don't know what they think will happen

EK Now my friend is going to come in ~~and~~ with his wife and he says "I want to see the place first. I want to talk to Dr. Mason and I want to see what they're doing down there before I, he said. "I'm not." See when I tell you things I'm going to tell the exact day it happened. And he will, too. And there is a very, ~~na~~ and he's got a bad heart, too. So we'll try to make him comfortable when he does come.

Flowers all the time and only time when it's bleak is when

DI .. of life is very slow down there, though isn't it. It must have been ~~hard~~ ^{xxxx} hard for you to get used to.

EK Yes. It was. I was ~~surp~~ surprised that the mosquitoes were just as bad there as they are up in the north. Nobody ever told us about ~~mosq~~ mosquitoes and cockroaches so badly. Although I should have known because we touched with my parents, I touched ~~was~~ down into the south at times, you know. But these are

the bad parts of course that insects

DI What did your husband do down there? What sort of work

EK ~~Way back again now to these, this Young Communist League bit, in the ea '30's now. I, we hd~~

THE-END-OF-TAPE-Sides-

THE END OF TAPE SIDES 1 THROUGH 4

EK Way back again, now to this Young Communist League bit in the early '30's. We had, already there were these organizations called against Fascism. And then we had the Youth Congress Against War and Fascism. And then they had adults, but who organized them, I don't know, originally, because everybody sent delegates. And I remember one year I even represented the YWCA in the, Cincinnati. Because I've been to the YWCA constantly from the time I was real young until, you know, I was, I should say, about 23. And then that relationship ended. I didn't need it anymore, evidently. So but this American Congress for Youth. I had not heard against war and fascism, I had not heard it mentioned hardly at all. And this was held at Cass Technical High School at one year. And I came up from Cincinnati now they had one in Cleveland. The year before that it seemed to me, or was it the year after. Now what years would that be? I even have photographs from my albums that were taken. We had a grand time. Bunches of us. And every youth organization that I know of, was represented at these things and it had to be in the '30's sometimes. Let's say about 1934 or 35. Now fascism was raising its head, you know. I mean, we knew this. So but before this time even, Father Coglin and Gerald L.K. Smith were preaching. But we fascism and we'd have leaflets know, I know for a fact that for the Young Communist League, I went and distributed leaflets against Gerald L.K. Smith and Father Coglin and especially Gerald L.K. Smith came to Cincinnati one time and we laughed over this, my brother and I, many times and we took these leaflets. There were three of us young kids and we were only in our young teens and we went down there and we distributed them. We went right inside the auditorium, and distributed them and they couldn't do much about it except the police did come out and tell us, we've got to get out of the auditorium. We were first outside and it started to rain so we went right inside the auditorium and distributed these leaflets and they were against fascism. And I remember Gerald L.K. Smith and the Father Coglin bit and it was quite exciting time and we were so against it and there weren't too many people against it.. I don't know why people don't remember them more but they were they and they were speaking and they had their followers.

DI Did they appear together though? I think that isn't quite fair.

EK They weren't at that auditorium. Gerald L.K. Smith was at that auditorium where the police then because the people were just incensed because we were passing out these leaflets against him and they had the police come and chase us, you know. And you know, I'll never forget that policeman. He chased us and he raised his club and he winked. It was so funny and so then another younger policeman came and he ran after us and we ran down the alleys. And we all split, we were taught to split if we did, you know, get into trouble so that everybody wasn't thrown in the paddywagon at one time. And we had a meeting place and we ran like the devil and then we met. And as one policeman. He had not only winked at me but at all three of us, I mean, and so but then another younger policeman came. I think there were two of them that chased us and the older policeman winked, you know. He did raise his club but he didn't do anything. So then we ran like the dickens and we met and laughed over it. By that time we had distributed almost all of our leaflets. And it was all the people that were going in there. You see, so we got our side of the story in too. And that place was jammed with people. And

DI Well Coglin and L.K. Smith probably wouldn't be speaking on the same platform would they?

EK No, no. This was a Gerald L.K. Smith rally. But Father Coglin leaflets we distributed at the same time. I mean, not at this same time. I think his name might have been on that pamphlet but then we had other pamphlets at other times

DI I see.

EK Or leaflets we called them. Leaflets. That's what we called them. And so we passed them out on street corners and read. Well this is why I have sort of a sympathy with Jehovah Witnesses. They go from door to door. We knocked on doors too.

They go from door to door distributing their things. And I remember how we did, too. You know, we did this distributing of leaflets on the street corner and going from door to door. And I think, Whoo! They should really be doing Social work instead of their religious work. ANYway so this was one thing I wanted to mention and I wanted to mention about those Congresses Against War and FAscism and I don't, you know, it doesn't come to me today who was the one that called these Congresses together. But I went to two of them. One time I represented the YWCA and the following year, or was it, oh, the first time, yes. I went for the YWCA and the second year, already I was so sick of the YCL. I represented the YCL which is Young Communist League. So then when I got married in 1939, I didn't go very much, I didn't go at all to the Communist things. Then that was Mr. Siskowski

DI Why not?

EK I didn't have time. I had a baby and everything and he really didn't want me out of his sight. He was extremely jealous and everything which is all right. I mean, I was willing to stay home. I was in love, you know.

DI Is this Mr. Isaacson?

EK No. This is Mr. Siskowski. So then when I divorced him and before I married Mr. Isaacson that's when I got involved with the restaurant workers. We've already talked about that. And then when I was, I married Mr. Isaacson and then I went to one Communist Party meeting. I was an adult then. I was too old to be in the, wife yelling anymore. So I went. No, I went to two and I was very disenchanted because they didn't let us speak. I believed in expressing my self, you know. It had changed already. Now this was getting about 1940, prior to World War II

DI Were they, were they large meetings? Were they large meetings where they didn't want a lot of discussion?

EK No. These were like groups in diffent parts of town. THEY had their chapter.

DI I see, in homes.

EK No. This was in a little hall. THEY'd rent a little hall. No. People didn't meet in homes and stuff. You had a little hall on every corner or store, shop or something and they'd rent the place for the evening or something and then they'd have a meeting. So I mean, I wanted to question things and stuff and the leaders of the discussions were so abrupt and this was just prior to World War II and I didn't like it very well. AND I went to two. Where was the other one. One was on McGraw. Where was the other one now. THERE was one more I went to. I just thought of it and it's out of my mind. Oh, one was at the Finnish Hall evidently. At that time they were renting the Finnish Hall. NO, they hadn't sold it yet. I went to the Finnish Hall and I happened to mention an article in the Readers Digest and they just about threw me out of the room. We don't read the Readers Digest. I said Well you have to read what's being printed today, you know. This is what it says in there, you know. You don't do it, you don't do it. Now I had been in the Workers MOVement longer than these people that were becoming leaders in the Communist Party and these were as far as I was concerned, newcomers. Who were they to tell me, you know. So I didn't like it one bit. And I just didn't go back anymore. There wasn't any need. I had no need for it.

DI Certainly

EK I was raising children and the struggles were over in the auto workers and everything and it wasn't at all necessary. I couldn't see it. I couldn't see giving my money to them either. They collected dues, of course, everytime.

Plus I knew where it went to and some of them, I estranged some of my very best friends by telling them these things. And I knew they needed money for their Daily Worker and things like this. I still am interested in reading Daily Worker or else called something else, Daily World, you know. I am interested in reading their viewpoint because its, sometimes it's excellent, sometimes it's very poor. But I don't put up with stuff that they tell me, you know. I'm going to discuss things the way - if I want to discuss it and ask a question about it - I'm going to question it and I'm going to say bologna. I don't want it.

DI Certainly

EK And I want, if there was to be American Socialists, I want it to be run in America, you know. This is my country. This is me, you know, doing it. And its just like I imagine what's happened in China - Mal--, whoever it is, - he's got a different kind of communism than Russia has. ANd Hungary has a different kind and so that's all their own type of socialism. Let them have it. I want mine different too, you know, if I have it. Because certainly we could improve what we have in this country. Now. I don't think there's much more. Is there anything else

DI Yes, there's more.

EK Put that down. The problems are economically. Now this is one of the reasons for all these parties, you know, going up like the. Even Gerald L.K. Smith. Everybody was desperate. But everybody believed in something a little bit different. Now I told my hunger story about hunger and then people were losing their homes too. The mortgages were being foreclosed and I mean, Now the theory of communism was born way before the Russian Revolution or anything.

DI Certainly.

EK And they were, Marx was a German and all these things. And these theories were just theories. And they were discussed and as though, just like the Democratic platform now that they've just brought up. Now the Republicans will bring up their platform. But the people sat down in those days and they discussed. ^{Now} How could we make the world better? Or our country better? And why do we have to put up with these things when we can't seem to get ahead? Everybody wants to get ahead. The people in those days were no worse or better than they are today. I mean, there were real poor people like today well, we can only relate to the blacks today. We know we have poor whites. We know that. There just, they can't never get ahead either. And it's what our circumstances. But what are they doing about it, you see. I don't know what they're doing about it. And I hope they're doing something good about it. And maybe it was just only a little U.A.W. that we got built out of all this radical roughnecking that we did. But at least we got something. You never give up. You cannot give up. And then when you get older, of course, then I think back on Mother Bloor and some of those people that worked to the very bitter end. And poor old Eugene Debs and all those and they were older people. Look at William Z. Foster. Where did I see him on television right before he died and everything else and he was just aged. And his theories how, I mean,