

Helen Andrew

3/02, T1, S1

W: ...working. [laughs]  
JT: I'm gonna let you maybe hold this. Just hold...  
PT: Okay. You're name is Helen.  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: Helen?  
HA: Helen Andrew.  
PT: Helen Andrew. What were you before you were married?  
HA: Pelto.  
PT: Pelto.  
HA: P-e-l-t-o. In Finnish it means a plain or land.  
PT: Oh, and it's a Finnish name?  
HA: Uh-huh. And like if you have a garden or something they call that a pelto.  
PT: Oh, pelto.  
HA: Pelto. They don't have a 'p' in their...  
PT: Oh, that'd be interesting.  
HA: ...in their alphabet.  
PT: Were your parents Finnish?  
HA: They were.  
PT: Were. Did you ever live in Finland?  
HA: No. No. I'm just \_\_.  
PT: Yeah. But you know the language it sounds like.  
HA: I...  
PT: Do you know the language?  
HA: Oh yes.  
PT: Oh, I'll bet...  
HA: That's all they could talk.  
PT: Is that right?  
HA: And so we had to talk with them.  
PT: Did it make it hard in school?  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: Was it is hard then in school?  
HA: Oh, school wasn't hard...at all hard.  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: And when you're young you're...and she still learned the other language too. In there we had a...I think they were twenty-six foreign languages in that little area and they were all people that came from Europe during the...when Hitler was the...  
PT: Oh yeah.  
HA: And so they kind of ran away and they had, oh, one would call the other and pretty soon here they come.  
PT: Oh.

HA: Not that my people were that way. They had... They were Finnish and they had Finnish...well, they followed prosperity here. Most of them would \_\_ there.

PT: Where was... Where was this place?

HA: Huh?

PT: Where was this place where you lived where all these... What state or...

HA: In Michigan.

PT: Oh, in Michigan.

HA: Dodge \_\_, Michigan. It would be not too far from Holton and Hancock.

PT: Did you live there all the time you were growing up?

HA: All the time until I was old enough to get away. [laughs]

PT: And then where did you go?

HA: Pardon?

PT: Where did you go then?

HA: I went to Detroit.

PT: Yes, because that where you met...

HA: We had... This was like during the hard Depression, nobody had work. And then in Detroit they had the car\_\_ factories so if you wanted to work, why, you went to work for Henry Ford.

PT: Right. Right. [laughs]

HA: But you had to have money to eat.

PT: Uh-huh. Yeah.

HA: So that was the biggest part of the Depression, right. Not that I knew what it was.

PT: Did you... Were you married by then?

HA: Pardon?

PT: Were you married by then? Was that...

HA: Oh no. No.

PT: No, you were...

HA: No, but I did meet my husband there.

PT: Did you? In Detroit?

HA: In Detroit.

PT: What was he... What did he do? What was he doing?

HA: He was a cook in a restaurant. [laugh]

PT: Is he...

HA: And I was working in a restaurant, too.

PT: And so you got together.

HA: We had a Finnish restaurant there and they served family-style dinners where we could put the vegetable, potatoes and gravy just like you would do on a home table. And so I used to be at the \_\_ and dish things... It all depended on how many people were there. So we had so much for one and I think the most was three or four. And they'd meas...put that on the tables family-style.

PT: So you sort of fell in love over a mashed potato? Is that what happened?

HA: What?

PT: Did you fall in love over a mashed potato?

HA: No, 'cause we'd had that all our lives anyway.

PT: So...[laugh]

HA: So it wasn't anything new or different. It was home-style.

PT: That's wonderful. That's... That's a great story. Was he... Was your husband Finnish, too?

HA: No.

PT: No.

HA: I met him there and he was an Irishman.

PT: Oh no. [laughs]

HA: Scotch and Irish.

PT: Did you have children?

HA: We had three...I mean four.

PT: Four. So you...

HA: Three pregnancies and I had a set of twins.

PT: Oh!

HA: A girl and a boy.

PT: Oh boy!

HA: And the eldest was the boy and youngest was ten years later and she lives here in Cove.

PT: Oh! Oh! That's how come you're here then.

HA: Yeah.

PT: Yeah.

HA: Kim... Her name's Kim \_\_.

PT: Your... This is your daughter?

HA: She lives in Cove.

PT: Uh-huh. Have you... Has she been here a long time? Kim? Your daughter?

HA: Oh yeah. She had to be with my husband and I.

PT: Oh, I see.

HA: And she met this guy in school in Cove and...

PT: Oh!

HA: And from there on, why, there was a romance there that we weren't aware of.

PT: You're only the mother. Mothers are the last to know.

HA: And then my husband passed away.

PT: And so you lived at Cove too, then?

HA: Pardon?

PT: You lived at Cove?

HA: We lived in Cove.

PT: Uh-huh. Yeah.

HA: Oh, my husband used to have a restaurant in La Grande.

PT: Oh! What restaurant?

HA: Oh...it was across the street from the big hotel. Oh...

PT: From the Foley Hotel?

HA: Pardon?

PT: From the Foley Hotel or the...

HA: No.

PT: ...the Sacagawea Hotel?

HA: Sacagawea. Across the street. And they had their Sacagawea at a...oh, they had quite a restaurant \_\_ there and somebody had a restaurant control there. So they closed the restaurant and all the employees came and wanted my husband to...

PT: Oh.  
HA: They wanted to get...get away from there. I don't know if you might have been one.  
PT: No, no! [laughs] I wasn't. Was it on the...on the side street across from the hotel or across the main street?  
HA: Oh, the street in between...  
PT: Was it the Top Notch?  
HA: Top Notch.  
PT: Top Notch. He remembers it. I didn't remember. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, for goodness sakes!  
HA: And he was a chef. He used to be... He lived in Detroit and so then he moved to the...over here. His mother and dad...mother always wanted to go over to California where all the rest of 'em are, that is of their family, so that's where we wound up.  
PT: You did go to California then too? Where you in California for a while?  
HA: No.  
PT: No. You just were always here.  
HA: No.  
PT: Uh-huh.  
HA: And then our children were born here one by...no, I shouldn't say one by one, I had two.  
PT: One by two.  
HA: I had twins.  
PT: Were the twins... Where did the twins fit into the family? Were they the oldest or the youngest?  
HA: Uh...shoot...  
PT: Were they your babies? Your little babies?  
HA: In Cove.  
PT: Uh-huh. And were they...are they... How old are they all now?  
HA: Oh, they're married. I've forgotten how old.  
PT: They're all grown up.  
HA: Yes.  
PT: Are you a grandma?  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: Are you a grandmother?  
HA: No.  
PT: No, no \_\_\_.  
HA: My dad was a engineer at the copper mines, electrical. And he was electrical engineer in Finland and so anyway, Russia came and they said they wanted him to come to Russia and teach Russians to be electricians and he couldn't teach them anything. I hope you're not one of 'em. [laughs]  
PT: No, we're not.  
HA: They couldn't understand the language and they didn't know what it was all about.  
PT: Oh dear.

HA: And so anyway he had another \_\_\_ he said, "Myo, I'm gonna give you the money and you get out of here right now." So that's how come he came to the Americas. 'Cause they would've taken him into Russia, you know, they ruled this and...

PT: Yeah. Yeah.

HA: So anyway, that was where it started.

PT: Yeah. Yeah. That's very interesting. Yeah. How many years did you live in Cove?

HA: We lived there about nine years.

PT: Uh-huh. Quite a while.

HA: And he used to have the Top Notch in La Grande.

PT: In La Grande, uh-huh. Did you work at the Top Notch at all?

HA: No. I had a daughter to raise and she was only in her young teens...not even a teen so I stayed home.

PT: Stayed home. That's...yeah, that's...that's good. And do you get your...these other nationalities that lived up in all these other...what were some of the other people up in Michigan? What other countries were they from?

HA: Oh, they were from Finland...there was twenty-six different people...nationalities that had come from Europe and they had run on...gotten away on account of Hitler was ruling everything over there. So they got the money. Somebody \_\_\_ the papers or something and could come.

PT: Could come, yeah. So this was in the...probably 1930s?

HA: In the '30s.

PT: In the '30s, uh-huh. Yeah.

HA: I'm not sure about the '30s, but I know it's '30s of what the \_\_\_

PT: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. 'Cause... yeah. But they... Even if we were in a depression they still thought it was better here than it was over there?

HA: Mm-hmm. And the reason my husband got all his work he knew how to cook.

PT: Did he always know how to cook?

HA: Yeah.

PT: Did he learn when he was little to be a cook?

HA: Anyway, he knew how to cook so he practically worked for nothing. And then \_\_\_ he \_\_\_.

PT: But people always need to eat.

HA: They need food.

PT: They need food, uh-huh. That's right.

HA: And the place in Detroit...I'm not sure it's Detroit...no...well anyway, they had colored people there, too, and they were bad off. So then in the evening they'd come to do chores if they could have the garbage.

PT: Oh gosh! That's sad, isn't it?

HA: So my husband usually put something good in there.

PT: Sure. Oh golly!

HA: Those were the days they did anything to eat.

PT: Yeah.

HA: Do you remember those times or heard about them?

JT: Little bit.

HA: But they were desperate. The little boys would come to the door and want the scraps out of the garbage.

PT: Oh!

HA: So my husband always leave something better.

PT: Something good out. But you never were hungry, then? Your family was never hungry?

HA: We didn't have any luxuries, but we had food.

PT: Yeah.

HA: And then I was...I used be a cook, too, you know. I worked at a restaurant and I helped cook, too.

PT: But you never did cook or work at this one? You never worked here in La Grande?

HA: No. No, we had a daughter and we lived in Cove and the restaurant was in La Grande. So he didn't need me there.

PT: Yeah.

HA: I couldn't leave a little kid home.

PT: No.

HA: So I was going \_\_\_.

PT: Is that the daughter...the one that lives in Cove now?

HA: That's Kim. That's Kim.

PT: Okay. And what's Kim's last name?

HA: Oh shoot...

PT: Her husband? That's okay.

HA: Golly!

PT: That's alright. That's alright. I just wondered if I'd know who she is. If I'd ever...

HA: Kim... She works at Boise Cascade...

PT: Oh!

HA: And she's a...makes the payroll.

PT: Oh, in the office.

HA: Takes care of the payroll. But she has to be there at four-thirty in the morning.

PT: Oh my! Oh gracious!

HA: But she says, "I don't care."

PT: Yeah. And does she just work eight hours, though, and then she'd done?

HA: She works there all the time.

PT: Oh yeah. My goodness! What does her husband do?

HA: Rick is a surveyor.

PT: Oh. For...

HA: I don't know who he works for.

PT: Works for.

HA: Yeah. Somebody here on \_\_\_. He was a surveyor, too?

PT: No, no. He just... He just knows...knows a lot of people. I thought maybe he might know who... Now where are your other children then, Helen?

HA: My other children?

PT: Mm-hmm.

HA: Oh, when we moved here there's two of 'em were married so they didn't come with us. And then the younger was still in school...and, uh, there's four.

PT: Yeah, there's four.

HA: Four of 'em. [laughs] Yeah.

PT: Your twins...you had twins.

HA: Oh twins, yeah, a girl and a boy.

PT: And a boy.

HA: And, oh, they stayed in California.

PT: I see.

HA: They must have, that's where they've been. [laughs] \_\_\_\_

PT: Did... Did you... Did you like... Do you like it in Cove? Did you like living in Cove?

HA: Yeah. This is the only time I'm \_\_ in there. I have a apartment \_\_.

PT: Uh-huh. Do you...

HA: Just a bedroom and then another sitting room and I eat at the...

PT: That's nice, though. Do you like living here? Is it a good place to live?

HA: Pardon?

PT: Is this a good place to live, this retirement center?

HA: Yeah.

PT: It seems nice. And how...how is your health?

HA: Pardon?

PT: How is your health? How do you feel? Are you in pretty good health?

HA: Oh...

PT: You look good.

HA: I don't do that now.

PT: How old are you, Helen?

HA: I'm eighty-eight.

PT: Gettin' near ninety.

HA: Pardon?

PT: You're getting near ninety, aren't you?

HA: I am.

PT: How long ago did you husband die?

HA: Oh, he died in Cove. Maybe about twenty-six or so.

PT: Oh yeah. Uh-huh. Quite a while.

HA: And then I had a daughter \_\_\_\_.

PT: Oh, to...

HA: She went to school in...

PT: Uh-huh.

HA: But everything was fine, you know, just had to lose him.

PT: Oh sure, sure. Was he still working or did...had he quit...was he retired before he died?

HA: He was tryin' to sell real estate and it was...I forget the real estate man. He worked with Lyle. And Lyle was...he used to be a surveyor so he knowed...

PT: Oh, yeah.

HA: Oh, what's his name? \_\_\_\_ anyway, he went into work with Lyle. He knew Lyle for ten years.

PT: Yeah. Yeah.  
HA: \_\_\_  
PT: Oh, \_\_\_.  
HA: Remember him?  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: \_\_\_  
PT: Did... Do you... Do your other kids now do they still live in...the older one...other live in California?  
HA: Oh, they're in California.  
PT: In California. Do you know where? What towns in California?  
HA: Rochita.  
PT: Oh.  
HA: Rochita and...oh, where else...oh, I don't know, in the area.  
PT: Yeah. Do they come up here? Are they up... Do they ever come...  
HA: Oh, they come to visit.  
PT: Do they?  
HA: That's home to them.  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: They were raised there and that's where they wanta be.  
PT: Uh-huh. Sure. Sure.  
HA: But my youngest daughter came with me. She had to be, she was only young.  
PT: I see.  
HA: And so she's here.  
PT: Uh-huh. Did... Your...your family, though, your mother and dad came...they were already in the United States before the Depression?  
HA: Oh yes.  
PT: Yeah. They'd been here quite a while.  
HA: Yeah. 'Cause I remember the Depression, too. Yes.  
PT: Uh-huh. Michigan...there are a lot of people of that...kind of that nationality in Michigan, aren't there?  
HA: No. I have an article, there's twenty-six different nationalities that are there, you know, after the...Hitler was in Europe, you know. They came as they could, if they could get the voyage here they'd come. And so they're...they're twenty-six nationalities there. So when we...and nobody knew each other, like my folks couldn't talk to other nationality and they couldn't talk back, but they made things to go. They didn't want to go back to Hitler.  
PT: They were gonna make it work. Yeah.  
HA: Uh-huh. Try to make it work.  
PT: Right, right. And...so there were twenty-six different languages spoken?  
HA: Yes. Everything that was in Europe and otherwise.  
PT: Oh my.  
HA: They were there. But they were destitute. They had to...  
PT: Sure. They were glad to be...  
HA: Or Hitler got rid of 'em. I don't know, maybe I'm saying something that's not true, you know. That's the way we heard it.



PT: No, no. That's right. That's right. Did you learn to speak any of those other languages?

HA: No.

PT: You just...

HA: We learned to swear in Croatian. [laughs]

PT: That's a good thing to know.

HA: They learned swearing in Finnish. And we got spanked for it. [laughs]

PT: That's funny.

HA: They wanted to learn the Finnish language so we did the same thing to them. You know kids about ten years old and so...

PT: Sure. That's funny. Yeah. Then eventually could everybody... Did eventually everybody speak English? Did they all get to where they could speak English?

HA: \_\_\_ learned to talk English. It don't take very long.

PT: That's good.

HA: For the children. They go to the same school and they had...if they played with one another they had to get it.

PT: Sure.

HA: \_\_\_ [lots of mic static]

PT: That's wonderful.

JT: \_\_\_

HA: But, you know, you don't hear that big migration anymore where the people had to \_\_\_. And my dad used to like it we were \_\_\_ with national...Polish and the Croatians there. If they used to...had him come over there and do something \_\_\_ always come back with a big bottle of wine. And Mother always fixed it, she put camphorated oil in it. [laughs]

PT: Oh! That's a great story!

HA: So he didn't leave it in the house. He had it hidden in the garage. [laughs] What else he'd got.

PT: That's funny.

HA: You'd think they didn't drink, but they did. [laughs]

PT: Helen, did they have...

HA: Pardon?

PT: Your Finnish people did they have a...was there a particular religion that they had? Like were they Catholic or Episcopalian?

HA: Yeah.

PT: What were they?

HA: They were...

PT: Lutheran?

HA: Lutheran.

PT: Lutheran.

HA: Yeah.

PT: Yeah, Lutheran.

HA: 'Cause I remember my mother had books...

PT: Uh-huh.

HA: But I couldn't \_\_\_.

PT: Lutheran. Lutheran, right, yeah. That's right because I remember hearin' about the Lutheran people. Did they... Did all these other people have different churches, these other...?

HA: Did what?

PT: Did they go to different churches or were...was everybody Lutheran?

HA: To begin with we all went to Lutheran with the parents. And then as the kids were teenagers they paired up with the Croatians...I'm sayin' Croatians, there were others. So...I don't know. The kids they picked their own faith.

PT: They're own churches.

HA: Regardless of their...

PT: That's good. That's good.

HA: We had Germans there, too, you know. They had this conflict in Germany and they fled the...fled here. And they had a schoolteacher that was German right there in our neighborhood and she used to bring...have them brought to her house and she taught them English, whatever...

PT: Yeah.

HA: And so in the meantime we got to know them. They were \_\_\_ and \_\_\_. I don't know if you're familiar with German?

PT: No, not really.

HA: Those were the two people and they...they brought these Europeans there to their place and they made sure they could talk somewhat before they were released. And she was a schoolteacher. Yeah, we had her as a schoolteacher.

PT: Oh, yeah.

HA: But nothing wrong with it.

PT: No.

HA: But we just didn't know what they were doing.

PT: Did they... And they were leaving Germany because of Hitler, too.

HA: Pardon?

PT: They left Germany because of Hitler.

HA: Mm-hmm.

PT: They wanted to get away from him, too.

HA: Yeah. She... She spoke to them in their native language and then, well, she learned what she could from them and then she put them in different places, schools...

PT: Yeah.

HA: And they didn't go to school with the kids.

PT: Did they... Did it bother them to be German? Did they... Were they afraid because they were German?

HA: I don't know. We were just kids. I wouldn't know, but I imagine they were safe.

PT: Yeah.

HA: 'Cause their parents were with them.

PT: That's good, good stories.

HA: But then there's Croatians. They made moonshine. [laughs] They were real characters. Sometimes the kids would get into it. They would take...go out in

the woods, you know, and they'd make a...have a still or something out there and the kids would find it. [laughs]

PT: Oh dear!

HA: Not all of 'em.

PT: Just like down South.

HA: Pardon?

PT: Just like the Southern people in America do with their moonshine. Yeah, that's interesting.

HA: Oh, those were the days!

PT: Uh-huh.

HA: Yeah, yeah.

PT: It was a good...it was good, though. It sounds to me like...

HA: Pardon?

PT: It sounds like you had a good life.

HA: I think we did.

PT: Yeah. Yeah.

HA: My parents were Finnish, you know, so we didn't have nothing but Finnish there. And we went to Sunday School and church and everything was in Finnish.

PT: Oh, yeah. Can you go right back to speaking Finnish now?

HA: Oh sure I can. And they called \_\_\_\_.

PT: Oh, hard words.

HA: [Finnish phrase]

PT: Oh my!

HA: And \_\_\_\_ comes from...that's Finnish...Finland for Finnish. And they don't like ...the Swedes they named their country and they didn't \_\_ at all so they named their own \_\_. And they...they didn't like it, but they always called it something else.

PT: They didn't want to be...

HA: The didn't want to be anything that somebody else...

PT: Right. Good. That's good.

HA: Stubborn. Oh, stickin' to their own right.

PT: Sure, that's okay. Did they... Did they... What about food?

HA: Pardon me?

PT: What about food? Did you have...was there...the things they cooked...was their cooking different than, say, ours?

HA: Everybody's was.

PT: Was it?

HA: Yeah. And my mother didn't like sauerkraut and never had any and so she was invited someplace for a...for a dinner and they had sauerkraut. She, "Oh, my gosh! That spoiled stuff!"

PT: Did they have... Were there some dishes that were...?

HA: Pardon?

PT: Were there some things they made that were just better...that you liked...?

HA: That was their food, you know, cabbage...they had cabbage fields all over the place, you know. They had little yards, you know, each house had, but

they...my Mother said...made 'em so mad. They always as soon as the Croats came they dug up every bit of the land the house was on and they had gardens. Well, that's the way they lived in Europe.

PT: In Europe, right. Yeah.

HA: And then we had a couple of acres the mining company gave everybody so many lots, you know, and they wouldn't put anything out there 'cause they wanted to plant their own.

PT: Their own thing.

HA: And all around the house, you know. Finnish people wanted a lawn and thing. They didn't want their garden right there and here it was just across the road and they wouldn't do that.

PT: Yeah.

HA: They did it old country way and so did the Finns. Everybody brought their own...they weren't interested \_\_\_ from other nationalities, none of 'em do. I wouldn't say...

PT: But we all take...we all like the things we have. Sure, sure. That's neat. That's neat.

HA: Maybe I'm talkin' too much.

PT: Oh no!! No. This is real interesting. I've never... I've not really known anybody... Is there a country called Estonia?

HA: Huh?

PT: Was there a country called Estonia?

HA: There was, but they weren't part of...

PT: That wasn't part of that.

HA: My parents came from Finland and they...the Finnish people called \_\_\_\_.

PT: Suamy. That's a hard... That's hard for me to say.

HA: Suamy, that's in Finnish. That means the same thing Finland. It had to do...land with all kinds of lakes, small lakes.

PT: Oh, I see.

HA: You know.

PT: Yeah.

HA: I don't know, something...Finland it means "water place."

PT: I see.

HA: Somewhat.

PT: Did you ever go to Finland, Helen? Did...you never did.

HA: Oh no. I'd like to.

PT: You'd like to, I'll bet.

HA: This was during the Depression when I was... They were glad to be able to work. My dad was an electrical engineer. And he was \_\_\_ and so anyway, oh, the Russians had their eye on him because they didn't...they weren't...didn't know how to do all the things...what am I trying to say... So anyway, so he's cousin he said, "Herman, I'm gonna give you the money and you get the heck out of here and go to...go to America." And that's...that's how come my dad came 'cause they didn't want Russia...they didn't want Russia to take him over there. And they didn't know nothin'! Oh, my dad had a cousin and he was going to teach the Russians, you know, electrical. And everything he touched it,

you know, it fired back ya it could've killed ya. I'm not...not saying the right word, but anyway.

PT: Was your...did you dad...your father meet your mother over here then?

HA: Oh yes.

PT: But she...your mother was Finnish, too.

HA: Uh-huh. But she was...my dad was in the big city of Helsinki and my mother was way over on the...near the...Norway...well, whatever country's next to it. And she was way up there. So they...they had Norwegian Fair in \_\_\_ it all depended on where you could find a place.

PT: So they didn't get... Your mother and dad didn't get together until they were over here?

HA: No. Not until they met in here...in America.

PT: But they were both Finnish?

HA: Pardon?

PT: They were both Finnish...[end tape]

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HA: ...and I went there and it's called the Isle of Royals \_\_\_ school \_\_\_.

PT: Yeah. Uh-huh.

HA: You know, where the younger kids go.

PT: Yeah, grade school.

HA: Yeah.

PT: Uh-huh. And then did you go to high school anywhere?

HA: Went to high school in Holton. Holton, that's a \_\_\_.

PT: Yeah. Is it cold there?

HA: Oh yes.

PT: It's cold.

HA: It's cold, but we were prepared for it.

PT: Uh-huh.

HA: We had Artics, you know, had shoes and you'd put 'em...the Artics on.

PT: What did they mine for there, Helen?

HA: Copper.

PT: Copper.

HA: And sometimes go...they bring in the gold. And then they had a material there that they had five different metals all melded in one. They had no idea what they're gonna do with this metal so they just put it aside, maybe someday. And sure enough they're usin' it now.

PT: For goodness sakes!

HA: Just like it was fate the way it had to be.

PT: I'll be darned.

HA: But they didn't get rid of it, you know, 'cause they couldn't separate all these five different metals, but they saved it and that's just what they're needing in this nuclear stuff \_\_\_. Anyway...

PT: Yeah.

HA: And sometimes you used to get the news from there, you know, but I've been movin' around so they just don't bother. So I don't know what...anyway, that's been taken here.

PT: Yeah.

HA: And I assume how nature knew they're gonna need this metal and sure enough they're usin' this metal.

PT: They're using it.

HA: Five different gold and silver and copper and iron.

PT: All together in one.

HA: Uh-huh.

PT: Did your dad work in the mine?

HA: He worked at the mine, but he was a engineer where he took care of the engines and things. And he was an engineer from Europe. That's why he had to leave Europe 'cause he...a Russia's take all the engineers from Finland to...I don't know if you're not one of 'em, but... And so the family...his family got him a visa and he went...came with some friends to northern Michigan. And then they found out...found out America's wondering where is this thing from Finland, you know. And they went and found him. He was working in the woods with his brothers, you know, and they came and got him and said, "We need you as the...more than they do" the wood. So from there on he got going on...

PT: Right. Had he had some kind of particular training?

HA: Huh?

PT: Had he had some kind of particular training to make him...?

HA: He had to have training in Europe.

PT: In Europe, uh-huh.

HA: He had a cousin that was trained that way and he was teaching my dad how to do this. And then...then they got word the Russians...said, "Where's...", my dad's name is Herman, he said, "Where is Herman? We're gonna find Herman." And right away they got...they got busy and got my...him to go with a family like he was part of that family.

PT: Oh, I see.

HA: So I think they did a lot of that.

PT: Sure, yeah.

HA: Just to get rid of 'em. They didn't look for him. And then he came and he signed as an engineer and so he went to work in the woods with his brothers and cousins, you know, in Finland...I mean Michigan. They came out there and found him.

PT: They really wanted him then, didn't they?

HA: Anyway, he didn't want to let anybody know what he knew. So from there on he...that was just as well. But that's what...he was an engineer in Dodgeville, Michigan at the mines. \_\_\_ forced him to come back.

PT: Right. What was... What was your name before you were married?

HA: Pelto.

PT: p-e-l-

HA: Pelto. It means...it means a field.

PT: Oh, yeah. How do you spell it?  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: Spell it. P-e-l...  
HA: P-e-l-t-o.  
PT: Just like it sounds, Pelto. And that's a Finnish name?  
HA: Yeah. And it means field.  
PT: Field. Do you have a middle name? Helen what?  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: Do you have a middle name?  
HA: Yeah, Alexandra.  
PT: Oh, that's a big important name. [laughs]  
HA: It is quite a name. I wouldn't use it.  
PT: Helen Alex...oh boy, that's a big name!  
HA: It was. They called me Alexandra. [laughs] Alexandra S., with an S on it too.  
It meant something too, but I don't know.  
PT: But you did...  
HA: But they never used it.  
PT: You stayed Helen.  
HA: Yeah. Maybe I shouldn't 've, but it didn't mean much to me, though.  
PT: Was there a... Is there anything special, Helen, a special time in your life that would...that you really like better than any other time?  
HA: Huh?  
PT: Any time in your life that you liked better than any other time?  
HA: I like being home.  
PT: Did ya? Good lady.  
HA: But then during the Depression you had to go out and find work. So if somebody was going to Detroit and they took me with them. And so I went to work in a restaurant. No, first I went to do some housework. And then I got away from that and I used to work for a few Jewish people and they didn't want me to go.  
PT: No.  
HA: But I did anyway.  
PT: Did they pay you well?  
HA: Oh yeah.  
PT: The Jewish people?  
HA: Mm-hmm. Their name was Seagull and she had some kind of a daycare like an upholstery...upholstery...and not furniture, businesses.  
PT: Oh yeah. How did they feel about what was happening in Germany?  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: How did those people, those Jewish people, feel about what was happening in Germany with all the bad things that were happening to the Jewish people?  
HA: Oh yes. The Jewish people... I worked in this Jewish home and they used to get letters from someplace in England where...I don't know how they did that, but their addresses were in England. What am I trying to say? Somebody kept track of the...what was going on there.  
PT: Did they just... Did they just really...

HA: Pardon?  
PT: Did they hate Hitler? Did they just really feel bad about Hitler? Those Jewish people? I bet they did, didn't they.  
HA: Yes, they did. And they'd get letters and then I remember the \_\_\_ was the grandmother and she came over there one day and...one day and she was crying and she came and I was in this Jewish home and she just threw that letter on the table, kitchen table, and she said Annie...her daughter's name was Annie...it was American name, but she had another name in Jewish...and she threw it on the table, "Annie, come here. Read this." And that's when they'd found out that their family'd been murdered."  
PT: Oh. Oh boy. That's hard.  
HA: \_\_\_ they must've meant something.  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: What I mean, not to the Jewish people, but, you know, they just got rid of 'em.  
PT: It was not a good time, was it?  
HA: It wasn't.  
PT: Yeah, it wasn't.  
HA: And I was workin' there and, oh, I don't know, you know, you feel bad, too.  
PT: Oh sure.  
HA: Those people were just so nice to me.  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: And then Mrs. Seagull she used to pay me six dollars a week and then every week I'd get a dollar more. [laughs] And then I had a girlfriend that worked across the street in another home, she's workin' for a doctor...a doctor and they had two little kids and one of 'em a brand new baby she had to take care and she was only given five dollars.  
PT: Uh-oh! [laughs]  
HA: And here I was gettin', oh, about seven or eight or something. And then Mrs. Seagull would get a taxi...taxi and have be go shopping down in Detroit. It'd take me to a store and I'd get what she wanted, you know, she had a list. I earned...oh, Sally was \_\_\_ she goes...goes someplace and gets a taxi. [laughs] Gets a taxi to take her. If she'd go she'd go for her own thing she gotta take the old street car. [laughs]  
PT: So you had a good job.  
HA: I did.  
PT: You did have a really good job.  
HA: You know, you don't realize that, but then again I asked her \_\_\_ I had something better than Sally did. But that Sally was just as cute as she could be. I was interested only in my own way. [laughs] I don't know.  
PT: Can you think of... Is there anything else about... You've had a very interesting life, I think. I don't think I've even known anybody that was Finnish.  
HA: What?  
PT: I've never known anybody that was Finnish, I don't think.  
HA: \_\_\_  
PT: No.



HA: And in Finnish they called 'em \_\_\_\_  
PT: I like...  
HA: And they're mad at Sweden for naming them Finland. And the Finnish always called them \_\_\_\_\_. To them the land was \_\_\_ and Sweden always called it Finland. And Finland means land of lakes.  
PT: Of fakes?  
HA: Lakes.  
PT: Oh, lakes. Of lakes.  
HA: Oh, they had thousands of lakes, you know, of water.  
PT: Uh-huh. Yeah. That's neat. This is a very...very interesting... Let's see if there's anything else I should ask you that I forgot to ask you. What... If you had your life to live over again...if you want...which part...would you do anything different?  
HA: If I had to live it over I should realize what I was \_\_\_, you know, I would've appreciated it.  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: You know, and I didn't realize I was so much better off than some others, you know.  
PT: Yeah, that's true.  
HA: And things were bad \_\_\_ not for me.  
PT: \_\_\_\_  
HA: And then there was...Jewish people had a man from Detroit and so anyway they could afford to pay me. There were some of the...even the doctor couldn't afford to pay some of the girls that were cleaning for them. But I don't know, I didn't have that actually.  
PT: No, you were... That's fine. That's good.  
HA: It's good.  
PT: Can you think of anything else that we oughta talk about, Helen?  
HA: Oh, northern Michigan.  
PT: Sure.  
HA: My dad was a engineer up there and...oh, maybe I said that, did I?  
PT: That he was an engineer.  
HA: He was working out there in the timber and he was supposed to have been an engineer from Finland and they came up there looked for him and found him and took him back...not back but he had to do what he was doing.  
PT: Was this before or after your mother and dad were married?  
HA: Oh, before.  
PT: Before. So as a little girl you didn't...  
HA: I didn't know of any of that. I didn't know what was goin' on.  
PT: Yeah. But you've had fun, fun life.  
HA: Huh?  
PT: I'm glad I got to know you. That's nice. That's really nice.  
HA: I had a \_\_\_\_.  
PT: We kind of tip-toed around that. Yeah. Did...my husband said to ask you about how you felt about World War II, but I...  
HA: \_\_\_\_

PT: How you felt about World War II, but I gathered that you...  
HA: Oh.  
PT: Were you worried? Did you have... Did you still have family back in...?  
HA: I come from a big family and I had eight brothers and one by one they took the boys in. Then when the seventh one went in, oh, where they had to go, you know...  
PT: Where they were drafted.  
HA: \_\_ “already seven of your brother, Benny, I don’t think we need you. You’re mother and dad have grieved...too much grief anyway with their seven boys in.” And he said, “Well, I’m gonna grieve if I can’t be one of them.” Then they came home one by one and we had a big home with four big bedrooms upstairs. And my mother was a Lutheran and she was against drinking, you know, so anyway this one night they were planning...after one by one all got home and they had this celebration upstairs. And Mother said, “Ooh, look,”...my dad’s name is Herman... “Herman, look what they’re carrying! They’re carrying beer up there!” [laughs] “They’re \_\_ liquor!” My dad said, “Never mind, this isn’t gonna happen again never.” And he said, “You let the boys do what they want.” [laughs]  
PT: Oh, yeah. Yeah.  
HA: So that was one time my mom didn’t get her...get her boys...  
PT: So they all went into the Service...  
HA: \_\_ drinks, you know, up there. [laughs]  
PT: But they all...they all were in the military, then, and all of ‘em came home?  
HA: Mm-hmm. They all came home.  
PT: You were lucky. They all came home.  
HA: He told her, “You oughta be grateful. Let ‘em do what they wanta do.”  
PT: Right.  
HA: And they waited one by one till they were all home and then they could’ve went in town at a tavern to celebrate. They decided no so they stayed home. They had their drinks up there. [laughs]  
PT: I imagine your mom was kind of glad they were all there, though.  
HA: You know, there was time when she was against it, drinking, but my dad...one time my dad said, “You’ve gotta let the boys have it. It won’t happen again.”  
PT: No. That’s... That’s a good story, yeah.  
HA: But she was gonna stop that \_\_. [laughs]  
PT: Were they... Were the boys older than you or younger than you?  
HA: I wasn’t home.  
PT: Oh, you were in Detroit then?  
HA: Uh-huh. I’d like to have been there.  
PT: Oh yeah. Are you the only... Are you the only sister? Were you the only girl?  
HA: No, I had two sisters.  
PT: Two sisters. So it was a big family.  
HA: Yeah, a big family.  
PT: Yeah, big family. It’s been fun to interview you.  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: It’s been fun to talk to you.

HA: Oh. [laughs] I never talked about it too much, you know.  
PT: It was a neat life. It was good.  
HA: But anyway, I kept my mother in bed, of course, one with \_\_\_ she was the \_\_\_. She stopped a lot of things. [laughs] One time by dad had made her \_\_\_ upstairs. [laughs]  
PT: Were they... Were your...  
HA: I wasn't there.  
PT: You didn't get to see that.  
HA: No, I was in Detroit when the boys all came home.  
PT: Yeah. Were they... Were they younger than you are, or were you?  
HA: No. There were two older boys and then the others. And I wasn't home. I was in Detroit.  
PT: And they all were in the Service. They all went into the... All of your brothers went into the military service.  
HA: They were, mm-hmm.  
PT: Oh for goodness...  
HA: Even the military didn't want to take the seventh one. And he said, "I'm going."  
PT: He wanted to, too, sure.  
HA: He said, "I don't want to be the only one that didn't want to go." 'Cause he wanted to go. And then he didn't go anyplace out of States.  
PT: Oh. Yeah.  
HA: He just kinda spent his time, but there wasn't any...the war was over and everything. But anyway, he wanted to go.  
PT: Were any of 'em... Did any of 'em have to go into battle? I mean were they...  
HA: Uh-huh.  
PT: ...any of your brothers...  
HA: Pardon?  
PT: Were any of your brothers in big battle during the war, do you know?  
HA: It seems like they were, the first ones. Oh yeah. That island?  
PT: Okinawa?  
HA: Yeah, one was there.  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: I can't remember the name of the...  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: He was there and he came out of the...  
PT: Good. Good.  
HA: But the others didn't, you know.  
PT: Yeah.  
HA: I wish I had more written on 'em. I never thought I'd have to...  
PT: Yeah. You've done... You've remember a lot of things, though, Helen. You did \_\_\_  
HA: And then so many of 'em are gone too, passed away.  
PT: Yeah. How many are left of all you...of you and your brothers and sisters? How many are left?  
HA: Pardon?

PT: How many of your brothers and sisters are left? That are still living? Do you know?

HA: I don't... I'm the only girl left.

PT: Are ya?

HA: And...I don't know.

PT: Because there were...if you had two sisters there were about eight...no, seven, eight, nine, ten of ya?

HA: Huh?

PT: Ten kids all together? Ten children all together?

HA: Yeah.

PT: Yeah.

HA: No, there were eleven.

PT: Eleven. Good-sized family. Yeah.

HA: Big family.

PT: Were you one of the younger ones?

HA: No, I was one of the older girls.

PT: One of the older ones.

HA: We had three boys older than I and then my sister and I and I was younger than my sister. That was during the Depression when I went away and I went to Detroit. And at that time I was working for Jewish people. And, oh, they were having a miserable...people...their \_\_\_, you know, their grandma, she would come home with a letter she had gotten from there and she'd just throw it on the...[tape interruption]

PT: Now what I'd do wrong? No, I did that... [tape interruption]

HA: ...the Jewish name, but she's rather be called Anne. \_\_\_ threw that on the table, "Annie, come here. Read this crap."

PT: Bad. It was sad.

HA: You know they were hurt.

PT: Sure. Sure they were.

HA: I wish I had written some of it down \_\_\_ but I never imagined \_\_\_

PT: We'll try... We'll try to get all of this...all of this good stuff you've told me we'll try to get it down on paper. It's very interesting. You've had a very interesting life.

HA: Oh, there's more to it, but, you know, but...you know, during the time I never thought about \_\_\_.

PT: I know.

HA: And I don't remember.

PT: And then you don't remember. My mother always said... My mother always said, "It doesn't take very long to live a lifetime."

HA: Yeah.

PT: You know, just all of a sudden...yeah.

HA: You're doing different things, you know, the same thing over, you're having children and \_\_\_ something. I don't know how to put it, but it's not the same.

PT: No, it isn't.

HA: And here I am here.

PT: Yeah. I think we've got \_\_\_. I think...

HA: I've never thought about that old history.

PT: This was very, very interesting. [recording stopped]