

A-99-3844

DATE Sept. 4, : 1999
SUBJECT : Interview with Lloyd K. Johnson, Duluth, Minnesota
INTERVIEWER : Dr. Joann Hanson-Stone
PROGRAM : Swedish Immigrant Oral History Project
City of Duluth Sister Cities Commission

Where did your mother come from?

Varmland, Sweden.

and your father?

The same.

Had they met in Sweden?

Yes.

Do you know how?

They were family related— the families already knew each other. My dad came over at 4 years old and my mother came over later. Obviously, they weren't married.

But it means that your grandparents on your father's and mother's side, knew each other. What is your father's full name?

Charles J. Johnson- that was the name he got when he came into the US. His real name was Carl Yonais in Sweden. It was anglicized when he came into the US.

Your mother?

Anna Carolina Yonais. And she came over from Sweden at substantially later than my father.

Was she a child?

She was maybe 3 or 4 years old.

Your father, how old was he?

4 years old.

Tell me the names of your grandparents?

My grandfather's name was Carl Swante Jonais? and my grandmother's name was -- I can't remember. My grandfather's name was August J. Yonais?. Grandmother's name -- I can't remember.

When your family emigrated from Varmland to the US where did they go first?

I do not know, I do know that they came in through Ellis Island.

Did they go to Michigan?

My father's family settled in either Manistee or Luddington and they lived there until they came up to Grand Marais. My mother's family all settled in Chicago, Illinois.

What brought your mother's family to Grand Marais?

My mother visited my father up in Grand Marais and got married and my father's family followed my dad to Grand Marais and my mother's family followed their daughter to Grand Marais.

What did August do in Michigan for a living?

August was a very able man who was an interpreter who traveled over the world as an interpreter for the steamship lines but he had the -- he was an actual drunkard and although he was sober for 6 months and drunk for 6 months, he established a paper in the interval period and started a painting business in Manistee and --

Your father Charles?

My father went to the fourth grade but he had to work in order to help support the family in that period on. He became in the course of his working a friend of a man by the name of Charles Ruggles? who was a timberman, and because he liked my father he gave my dad a job to accompany some trained timber estimators up to Cass County where they were cruising timber. At the end of the cruising period my dad sent all but three dollars of his earnings to his mother in Manistee and was three dollars in his pockets and walking up the shore without a job and ended up in a took a homestead and when he became came old enough, just north of Lutsen....

How old was he when he began cruising timber in Cass County?

17 years old.

That's when he basically left home?

That's correct.

What motivated your grandparents to leave Sweden?

Well, I think -- I am not at all certain but it was either hard times or to get out of the draft.

Do you have any idea what language he knew when he was an interpreter?

He had no -- no I do not. But he was a very very capable man who was a drunkard.

But when he wasn't drunk?

He did a great deal more than most people when they were sober year round.

Did your parents and grandparents become citizens?

Yes.

Did it take long?

I am sure they did it as quickly as they could. They were very much American once they came to this country.

What is your birthday?

April 16, 1908. At Grand Marais; there was no hospital and so there was no birth certificates or recording of births or no church records so they sent -- I got an affidavit from my uncle that I was born in order to get my passports.

Do you know the circumstances of your birth?

Well, I imagine that I was an only child because of the birth certificate. The birth certificate said I was born at twelve pounds.

So you were an only child?

That's correct.

Any other relatives?

All of their brothers and sisters and I was associated with families like the Prink? family in Cook that came in; they -- at that time, and this is rather interesting -- there was a man from the Varmland area that had become employed by the railroad company to entice people to come to the US so in the area of northern Minnesota there are a great many of people from Varmland because of his propaganda.

Do you remember his name or the railroad?

No, I do not. It must have – it must have been the Great Northern. Or the Northern Pacific..

There was a man in Minnesota whose name was Hans Mattson who did a lot of recruiting but I don't know where he was from. He was in the Civil War and then came to Minnesota and really was instrumental in getting a lot of Swedes to come.

Childhood recollections in Grand Marais? What did you father and mother do for a living?

Well, my father started logging shortly after he hit Grand Marais and by the time he was in his early thirties he had some 600 men working in the woods and had built a sawmill and then he had three catastrophic business things occurring in successive years; the first year the first tornado came in and the logs were all in the harbor and the booms broke and the year's logging went away so the mill was down and he lost everything he had. And the next year he borrowed some money and got going again and that was the year that the big fire came in and it burned all his – he had three camps operating and it burned all his timber and destroyed everything he had and he was bankrupt so there after he had to start from scratch again and he started the bank and he bought the dock so and he started an insurance company and he started a grocery store and as they – some of his business began to become less profitable than logging and he started buying fur and we had – he was very proficient in the Chippewa language and was very good friends of the Indians. He also had an insurance business but he always – because at that time Grand Marais was so small- maybe only 5 or 600 people- completely isolated- we had to be sure he had something to make a living at and he was always very capable of doing that.

Did the fire occur the same time of Cloquet and Moose Lake in 1918?

It must have been before 1906 for the tornado and the fires came through the next year.

When was your dad buying furs?

It would be -as long as I can remember from a standpoint; he must have quit buying furs about 1935 or 1940.

Where did he go to work with the Chippewa people?

He had a store called the Trading Post and he would sell the Indians fur coats and everybody else as far as that goes. And he made arrangements with ? brothers in St. Paul whereby he bought fur for them under a very satisfactory arrangement. He was given a blank check and would buy the fur at their price list and then – it required a great deal of skill to buy a fur because every fur is a different grade and he was quite skilled at that and he would – some years he maybe bought in a month January or February maybe \$50,000 worth of fur and since he made a ten percent commission with no expense that was a \$5,000 income and by the time the dollar was worth maybe a tenth of what it is now -there was no income tax- so even the fur buying was a good living in our home.

Describe your house?

Sure. I was born in my father's bachelor's home and moved a couple of years old over to what was now known as the Birch Terrace. The main part of the house was built with large logs maybe 20 or 25 inches in diameter and a big living room which was 30 feet by 32 feet in dimension with a high ceiling and a arched ceiling and a fire- place at one end that was capable of handling a pine stump – then we had our – the bedrooms upstairs and downstairs was the kitchen and dining room and a library which was later changed because my father and mother didn't want to go downtown to play at the pool hall so they put in a pool table hall so we had a pool table in our home.

How did your parents feel about education?

Well, my – the Swedish community up in Grand Marais were quite education- minded. I always say that I am one of the few people who had my profession foisted on me rather than picking it because they took me with everything to the state fair and there was a man there who examined the bumps on your head and he said these bumps were that of a great lawyer so from a very early period I was suggested to be a lawyer but I think part of that was due to the fact that the doctors and lawyers were important and so my college was decided at an early age.

What year or what fair?

I don't remember; I was young.

You said that Grand Marais was quite isolated; how did you get around? Supplies?

Well, the Grand Marais was on the lake and had a dock and was on the lake and there was a boat called the Winya? And later another called the America that would go up the shore delivering groceries to the different small communities and taking passengers and then they would buy fish on the way back and so the provisions came by boat during the open season ;and the winter was different. There was a railroad some 40 miles from Grand Marais that was a logging train. They would only travel one that had logs and sometimes you could go and get some things at Cramer which was about 40 miles from Grand Marais; there was no road from Grand Marais until I was maybe 15 or 16 years old. The first road came in to Port Arthur and Fort William and then later one was built to go to Two Harbors and Duluth. The winter time the mail was brought in by dog team and my dad sometimes took his – we always had a dog team in our yard and my father used the dog team to buy fur and sometimes my dad would take the mail down but not too often.. Otherwise there was no real way of bringing anything in during the winter season so we would buy a bushel of cranberries and a bushel of this and keep it in the basement. And we – but it – we never knew a period of time during my lifetime that my mother or father said that we needed to go without a meal or anything like that.

Was your father -the Johnson Trading Post- the main store in Grand Marais?

It was for a while; then other stores came in and my father had a smaller and smaller store. At one time he had a fairly large store for where they had the trolleys bringing the money in to the cashier and so forth but that was not built for a town the size of Grand Marais.

What did your mother do to keep herself occupied?

Well, my mother's work was very remarkable. She had inherited an ability to paint. She used to paint and do quite a bit of painting. She did china work and painted china; she had a kiln. She gave the first painting lessons ever given by anyone along the Lake Superior and she – later years had a gift shop – we had the first cottages for tourists and I had some invoices that my father had, saying that they given them lodging in the cabins – they didn't think \$15 a week was too much – I remember that part very very clearly because I used to have to carry water to the cabins and because I was the son of the owners' cabin I never got a tip. So that was a thankless job as far as I was concerned.

Date when he opened up the cottages?

I must have been – 1918 somewhere around – I was about 10 years old carrying those pails.

Did your father pay you?

No.

Did your mother – it sounded like she was very community -oriented as far as teaching. Did she help in any civic or social organizations?

Well, I think they had the ladies' aid and I am sure she went to church – but no, I would say she was not too civic -minded in that kind of thing. It sounded like paint was her important part and entertaining my – this is a little off but my father felt that anybody that came to Grand Marais was a guest and if he were to see somebody that were a stranger he would automatically invite him up to dinner and my mother was – she would get a call at 4:00 saying that 4 or 8 people are coming out for dinner tonight and she would always have something for them. She was very much the lady of the town I would say.

Was he involved in any organizations?

I love the story of my dad – he was a Republican where he felt that the Republicans were important as Christianity almost and he was for at least 40 years or more, he was Cook County chairman and there never was an officer or governor of Democrat or Republican that didn't stay at our home during the time I was growing up and he would – I can remember many cases of his desire of having people feel comfortable in Grand Marais. One time a couple were staying down on the lake shore in front of our home and my dad saw them and they were on their honeymoon so they had to have a honeymoon party so they had one up at our house and then two years later a plane come flying over and it was these people coming to greet us and then they would – they happened to be ? at that time where they had the fastest cruising boat and they came up and took us down where we could watch the cars along

the road and we would be going faster than they would; I remember that quite plainly—talked to people around town and found that my dad wasn't a rapist? or something so they took the road and the train and about five miles before they came to a place where my dad was helping and they said how is Anna going to feel about a strange woman coming and my dad says, "oh, she will have her ship and she will get over it." And when she came in, my mother greeted her with open arms. They became such good friends and they had their place out in La Jolla , California, and they offered my dad an acre of land in La Jolla if he would come out and live in CA and that was typical of my father because he was very open with people and in the morning he got up before my mother did and he would look out and see the smoke coming out of the chimney and he would go over there and have breakfast with whoever was over there.

How did the women or your mother bought their clothes?

Well my – a lot of them made their clothes. In the pictures we have, generally speaking, the women are very nicely dressed – my dad bought clothes for my mother when – because he couldn't get up to Duluth because he couldn't. I think that was typical of the people; we had two Indian girls working for us as housekeepers and my dad had bought two nice dresses for my mother that she was terribly anxious to show off and she hadn't yet had a chance to put them on so she went down the street and found these two girls had taken one of the dresses and went parading. The girls still stayed to work for us.

So the women would make their own clothes?

I think they made most of their own clothes. It was a small town.

What languages did you speak at home?

My father and mother always spoke English. My dad – both of them- took the position that they had without compulsion came to the US to have their home and they had one loyalty and that was to the US and my – Grand Marais had a Catholic church and it had a Norwegian Baptist church and a Swedish Baptist church and a Norwegian and Swedish Lutheran church and all spoke their own languages in the churches, not English, so my father and grandfather and a few people got together and started the Congregational church so there would be an English -speaking church in town. They only time they spoke Swedish was when they wanted to say something they didn't want us to understand.

Did you ever learn Swedish?

Not more than a few words.

Your father also knew Ojibwe. Did he learn any other language?

No, I don't think so.

What was it like for you growing up in your home?

About as pleasant a home a person could have. My father and mother were utterly congenial with each other; I never heard my father speak one cross word to my mother when I was growing up and my – our home was completely open. I would have the freedom of inviting anyone over to the house or any – or boy scouts to the house for the troop. My mother always acted lovely and pleased to have it. We had adequate area to play in – because Grand Marais was so isolated it received telephone much later than in Duluth or anywhere else; it received power much later and so that we had no phonographs except a wind- up one until Edison – we had – there was no television or radio there. There was nothing electricity would bring. There was outside plumbing and even though our house was beautiful inside we had to heat it by birch logs and so just as a corollary on this my mother hated the idea of going to the outside toilet- just hated it- and after much grinding with my father who didn't give a darn we put in a septic tank and indoor plumbing but you want to remember there is no power so that meant that every time there were four or five flushes Elwood or I would have to go down to the basement and pump the water with the air so we liked the outdoor plumbing much better than we did the indoor plumbing. Because you had to go pump the water with two –

We had our lovely social life. There were 32 cousins and uncles and aunts. 32 birthdays we celebrated. Christmas came and during the holidays every day we would go over to one house or the other house during that whole holiday period. I can still remember vividly before the Christmas Eve we would have all the presents in a great big clothes basket on a sled and Elwood , - he was my uncle who was two years older than I was, would go with that and deliver all the presents to the different places because we all lived within walking distance with each other and then we would collect and we always hoped we got more than we gave when we got home but and on some Christmases when we were real young one of the grandfathers would dress up as Santa Claus and holiday seasons were a wonderful and growing up with your cousins that way made a very close relationship. I believe that and the sister-in-laws were very, very congenial– the children came and I was the oldest and my uncle Ben who came a year later and then a whole – Warren came a year later so the babies were young and every single day my Aunt Ela would get the sister-in-laws together for coffee you know and talk over the problems and so forth but it was a different - and then of course this being the case we were all participating in things; for example when we – after dinner every family had a piano and in our house we had a concert grand piano and the – we would sit around and sing and it was a lovely thing to do after eating and I think it was more pleasant before all of the sanitary things where you were just a spectator and not a participant. I have had nothing but pleasant memories of my growing up.

What kind of songs?

English songs and my – you would sing- I can't remember what would go first, but we would be singing the songs 1914 war you know; "the Yanks are coming" and it will all be over pretty soon all the rest of that song and hymns and it was a – whatever they were.

Who played the piano?

Everybody except in our family we didn't have anybody who played the piano. I had a little bit..... –

What organizations or school did you belong?

We went to school about 10 blocks and we used to take home to lunch and I had a friend who was a Indian boy and he would drop by and we would run the ten blocks to school so we would have time to play and he was a marvelous athlete and a very fine person and the school was – they had one large assembly room for the high school and the 9, 10, 11, and 12 grades to study and generally speaking each school had a teacher and one class.

So one school from grade 1 to 12?

Yes, and the teachers – because to the immigrants the teachers were somebody to look up to. For example if I got reprimanded at school never in my life would I let my family hear a word about it at home. I would have gotten a second reprimand, definitely worse, at home. The teacher was always right. And the discipline in the schools was good but the teachers - they wouldn't employ a teacher who smoked and that was not ladylike and the ... they had to stay on the straight and narrow when they were teaching. Morals was important in that day and they had to stay on the straight and narrow when they were teaching or they would run into difficulty and I can remember up at Maple Hills a very good friend of mine -Mr. Hedstrom- a wonderful family – he was on the –chairman of the school board for Maple Hill and every year he would go down and interview the women who were going to be the teachers and then he would board the women in his home and marry them off to his sons so when his sons were all married – the wives were all picked by the father when he picked the schoolteachers. They're a very very fine family. For example I will give you one in the 8th grade – that was a special grade. Mrs. Blackwell was a teacher and her husband was a printer and so we had a yearbook and that was about 14 or 15 in the class; we had a yearbook and he printed it out and showing about our activities of the year and then we had a party – another thing she organized; the different families that we had a trip around the world and each family would have one country that they would dress to and serve dishes on and our family had Swedish of course and the neighbor had Indias and but she was a very devoted, fabulous teacher. They all were very – teachers who thought a great deal – I can't remember any bad teachers.

All women?

Almost all women and the principal was a man. ...

So they allowed married teachers?

Yes. They couldn't get people to come up –

What year did you start school?

Well, I must have started about 1914.

So in 8th grade you would have been 13 or 1922?

I would say so. But the games we played were all – we couldn't have enough people in high school to get a football team together to play anybody but we did play basketball and when we were younger we played king of the hill and when there was a snowfall, we played angels in the snow and clap our hands in the snow and we played marbles and we played all the games that the children play – rolling a hoop and my – it's kind of a congregation of the children to a slight degree. My father came and went to Duluth and came back on the boat and brought about a nice pair of horses for my mother in the carriage and the sleigh and had bought a mule and a pair of Shetland ponies for myself and I can still remember the mule as stubborn as mules are but it was gentle as any dog, we would put three or four on top of him and it was too many he would just stand and then four or five the kids would have ahold of him in the front and the same number from behind and he still stood until somebody could get off, and when he was ready to go he would go and never ever ever made the slightest mean motion ... – the Shetland ponies were cute as a dickens. I must have been about 6 or 7 when we got them and they were – they had their own mind and you get up on top of them of course; we never had a saddle and try to ride and if they didn't like it or feel like giving a ride they would just stand up and one day we had a music playing on the porch and we looked out and here were the two Shetland ponies walking on their hind feet; they had been circus ponies and they had been trained to march on their hind feet so we could understand then how easily to get us off them quickly; to march to music. But I mean how could a young boy have a better life? He couldn't.

You told me about a pet that your father had?

A pet moose. That was before me. My dad had a – before he was married he had supporters and he had it pretty nice too because he had a Japanese coat and it had a great deal of entertainment; one day 60 people came to visit him for dinner before election and they served 60 meals at the house and his cook must have gone crazy and he did have this pet moose and my dad would tell me that the moose would love to play with the horses and that they would race you know – the moose would walk away from the horses – it was that much faster – and the moose developed a taste for tobacco and every time the whistle would blow for the America coming in – the moose would go and sit down at the dock and there then if – and beg for tobacco and if they weren't paying any attention to him he would give them a nudge and take that great big head and give you a nudge and scare the daylights out of you if you weren't used to it, you know. He had free rein around town.

Any other stories about the moose?

No, not too much. He would go and beg at the store at the different door and some stranger who didn't know him saw him come in the door and shot him when he came to the door, but be that as it may, I have a picture of my mother with the pair of moose that they had up in Canada and never talked about those at all.

I would like to talk about my relationship with the Indians.

I grew – we had an Indian reservation in town right next to Grand Marais and of course I went to school with the Indians and the Indians are smart but – and they were very good friends but my dad on New Year' Day we – the tradition to the Indians was to go from house to house to visit and they would always get a cookie or something but it became traditional at our house because the size and my father too that their final celebration on New Year's would be in our house and my dad would always have a bushel of apples and my mother would have a lot of cookies and coffee and they would – contrary to what white people look down on- New Year's they were always sober – they were never drunk when they came into our home and I can never remember single case of it – but my dad would greet them and read and talk to them in the Chippewa language and was a genuine friend. So I know a few Chippewa words but not many. My father told me that the original Chippewa Indian that before they had entered marriage were absolutely responsible and he said that if they promised to do something they lived up to their promise. A lot of times we enter marriage with marriage of the Indian girls to a white man would be those who were boozers and so the half-breeds were nowhere near the quality of all the original Indians, before they got mixed breeds.

They didn't have the same kind of up -bringing?

It could be. It would be – my mother would who was a very dainty person, really, would go with my father on his trips and would go in to the Indian cabins and stay and be perfectly fine with the Indians and perfectly at home with any group of people – my mother wasn't as completely outgoing as my father; she would never suggest to come on up to the house without knowing or anything but my dad – but the relationship with the Indians – now to go back a little bit, my father was in politics and he could have shown Tamany many tricks, I think – for example he would tell me he never used to worry about the voters like these – the store-keepers and doctors and like that – they were Democrats and he would never pay any attention to them but come election time he would line up the 30 Indians and go right to the booth and take over the election. And the tricks that he used to play to win elections were – Tamany would have had problems. The one year he wanted to win an election pretty bad for no particular reason except he wanted to win, so anyway, he went up to a religious camp that were there for six months and he figured that the election was going to be pretty close- he had to get some more votes- so he went up there and he said, "you know, this is a wonderful thing, but you don't have any chapel," and they said, "well, it'd be kinda nice if we had a chapel allright" – well, my dad said, "I'll see you get a chapel if you'll all come down and vote." So he won the election.

Now these were people who lived in the county?

They lived in the county but they were not real residents but they were there long enough to qualify. The elections were very personal and I can remember as a youngster putting up posters for Republican candidates and I even represented Cook County when I was in my 23 or 24 years old at the Republican convention. You know – I forget who it was but it's pretty terrible because Charles has the Cook County conventions and he and his secretary were all the people who were there. The Democrats weren't any better – Steve Murphy was the

democratic chairman and he was the only one because he didn't have a secretary so they were pretty autocratic as far as the organizations were concerned.

What political positions did your dad hold?

He was a county commissioner, chairman on the county board. That was when they built the courthouse and then he was also the county treasurer but not for long.

To give you some idea of my Dad, Governor Price was the governor of the state and he was a very good friend of my dad's and he had the decision to make as to whether to take a position of a senator who would die and have to appoint another lieutenant governor and have himself appointed senator or whether to run out of term as governor and appoint somebody else to be senator. It was quite important decision for him. The night before he had to make the decision he drove all the way from St. Paul up to Grand Marais to visit with my father and my father and he spent the night trying to discuss political situation, which shows the feel the governor had towards my dad and so he was in politics but not – not actively concerned about the – county boards and stuff like that.

It was more at a party level.

Yeah.

Did your father participate – photographs of Commission of Public Safety-

Yes, that was before I was born.– I was too young to know.

You mentioned a Congregational church- is that the church you attended, growing up?

Yes, it was.

Is it still in Grand Marais?

Yes – were you confirmed in that church? Either there or in the house. There are no records of my birth or anything else. Nobody's were. When I had to get a passport I had to get my uncle to swear that he was present at my birth when I was born.

Were you aware of any Swedish organizations?

They had a Masonic over there in Grand Marais but nothing that was ethnic. Everybody just went.

Do you remember other church -related holidays?

May Day. My grandfather, during a period of soberness, decided that we should have a Protestant church – the first one – he formed a group and started the Maple Hill Church up at Maple Hill and to this day they have a Maple celebration.

That church is not the Congregational church?

No, an earlier church, non-denominational.

Do you have knowledge about the Maple Hill -the founding of that community?

I never heard anything at all about it. I know most of the people that founded it but you see my knowledge of the Grand Marais people go back before I left Duluth. I know most of the people who were the very early people who came in better than I know any of the people there now.

Was Maple Hill – a lot of Swedish families were the first settlers other than the American Indian people?

Yes. When you could almost draw a line; the fisherman were Norwegian. The woodsmen or farmers were Swedes and the rest of the people were there.

So Midsummer celebration was a holiday?

Yes. The 4th of July was a big holiday and we – my dad had a little store and he let my uncle and I have the concession of selling the 4th of July things. I have a cute story. I was selling on Saturday Evening Post, some Ladies' Home Journals- an awful heavy magazine, and I was delivering that. I delivered papers and I was selling marbles and I earned enough money so I bought a bicycle and I had the bicycle when – I rented it out because it was the only bicycle in town- for 25 cents an hour- and it was a horrible price but I got the second bicycle and then I got the third bicycle and now I had the three bicycles in town and this is one of the finest financial moves I have ever made in my life. I went to the committees who set up prizes and I said what if you wonderfully – instead of having these running races and so forth to have the thrill of a bicycle race and see how it comes out miles per hour down the road and they thought well that would be pretty good too, so they set up two pretty good prizes and I like to think they were 15, 10 and 5 dollars, which is a lot of money for me and now I have two other kids ride the other two bicycles and of course I have the prize money and so I got the prize money for first, second and third place. Absolutely assured from the beginning; the only thing was I never charged them for riding the bicycles in the race. They didn't have to pay anything. And they didn't get any prize money.

4th of July?

It was a big celebration and on 4th of July we normally would have a speaker from Duluth come and give a patriotic speech and then we come to the races and we would have a normal race between the boys-young boys and older boys - and girls and women and then we would also have a race with gunny sacks over your legs- your two legs would be put together - and after we had some prizes and the streets were all lined up with trees had been cut and put along the street and then we would have the baseball game and the baseball game usually put the men in town versus the fishermen, and that would be a big event, and then after the

baseball, there would be a tug of war and that would be maybe the single men versus the married men and the day was all a big highlight for a child coming in. For a youngster; we not only made some money but there was much activity –it was one that stays very clearly in my mind.

You were able to set up shop in front of your dad's door?

Yes, we sold firecrackers, rockets and flags and everybody was very patriotic and I think immigrants are more patriotic than native-born Americans.

We talk a lot about what you have done. The Swedish heritage or identification in your family. You said that English was spoken in the household and that your parents felt very strongly about being American. Do you remember any specific times when your mom or dad talked to?

No, they never did.

When they were meeting with their relatives and friends what language did they speak?

English. After I became older, too, to notice; they must have spoken Swedish for awhile.

Did they ever share their feelings about their immigration to you?

Never did. They just – my dad was planning ahead more than thinking behind.

Did your family go back to Sweden?

I haven't, but maybe some cousins I have at some time.But I haven't or my mother and father.

Did your parents have sisters and brothers?

No, they were- immigrated – yes, my father had a two sisters and two brothers and my mother had I think six brothers and twelve? sisters and they all came to the US. Except my mother's brother Elwood was – came twenty years after the last of the family as a big surprise and his mother and father died when he was six and he came to live with me as a brother for the rest of his life.

That was good for you as an only child?

Oh, yes.

Do you remember if your mother or father wrote letters to Sweden?

I don't think they thought they had anybody left in Sweden.

When you were growing up do you remember any Swedish traditions?

I can remember one thing with no pleasure and that was a traditional that we have lutefisk for Christmas Eve and I hated lutefisk and during my whole living it came on Christmas Eve. And I married a girl- my first wife, who died -from English descent and she felt that if I had done that that was traditional in our family that it had to also be traditional at home and we took the two children and myself a life- time almost to get her away from that damn lutefisk on Christmas Eve.

Any other Swedish food?

Oh, she – the Swedish cooks were wonderful. The pastries were excellent. My mother would make an angel food cake; that was one of her prides and joys - and then she'd make the Swedish pastries -and my dad would make bouillon, French, but I think that we never did have the smorgasbord type of meal that they have in Sweden.

You said that nobody played the piano? Did any of your immediate family members sing, weaving, wood carving?

My father was very very open with the small group, but he disliked public displays. My grandfather was insistent that the brothers and himself sing during the Christmas season and I can still remember my grandfather who was short with a beard - opening his mouth wide and bellowing out- and the brothers were always very mute- singing and

So he liked to sing? August?

Yeah.

Do you know of anyone in your family that practiced any of the medical traditions from the old country?

None that I know of.

If someone was ill what would happen?

Well, we had a doctor in town but he would not call very often. You just lived through them. I mean - My mother used mustard rolls?—And she was a believer in another thing that gave me no pleasure at all – cod liver oil –if you had a cold –you had to have cod liver oil before and after the cold- basically there was no special Swedish remedies.

Do you remember anybody having leeches put on them?

No. Not for medical. I know of having them on me but not for medical!

Any wood carving or weaving?

My cousins had trained and they are all wood carvers. My mother did – she made ladies' hats, she did etching, watercolors, oils, she did china and she had a kiln , and when she died a bunch of ? came in and she had bought a whole woodworking set: a lathe, table saw and she wanted to get into woodwork.

How old was your mother when she passed away?

In her 60's.

Did you have any of her painted plates?

Yes.

Did you have any Swedish drink?

My father – kind of an interesting story: when my grandmother on my father's side was dying, she asked her son to come in to see her and she said, "son, you're now the oldest of the family and you know the problems Dad has; would you promise me that you'll never take a drink?" and to my knowledge my dad lived up to that promise; he didn't mind drinking- he would sneak a drink over to Mother and she'd have one drink and he'd finish the glass.... and but I mean he just lived up to the promise, so therefore we never had any alcohol in the house.

Do you remember if there was a Temperance League in Grand Marais?

No at all.

Were there any family heirlooms from Sweden?

No.

I understand that you were married twice? Who was your first wife?

Marianne Bennett. Children? No, we adopted two boys. Tom and Don.

Your first wife passed away; how old was she?

In her 40's.

What is your second wife's name?

Dorothy Jeannette?– Hughes – married?

Did you have any children?

I acquired 7 children. Their names? Harold, ?, Theodore, Rina, Harry? Dorothy, David.

So there were 9 altogether?

Yes.

Were they all at home at the same time?

They are all scattered. They were older children.

You knew you were going to be a lawyer because the bumps on the head said so; what have you done in your adult life?

I practiced law in Minneapolis and was thinking of going into patent law. My father was anxious for me to be in Grand Marais because our relationship was so good -so anyway we - the county attorney died- before he died and without my really knowing about it- there was a very fine attorney - Henry Eliason- an attorney at Grand Marais -very fine attorney- by the name of Henry, but anyway the county board was going to replace the county attorney who had died and my father presented my name and Henry Eliason was the proper choice but there were three Swedes on the county board and there were three Norwegians and one Englishman who my dad had known very well, so I was appointed by virtue of my nationality, not by virtue of my ability and then - but to give you a concept; this was during the Depression and I honestly felt I had reached financial security. My salary was \$800.00 a year. So I practiced law then for another year and I resigned - I just didn't go through the election. I got involved in - there was no legal business in town; except the federal government started buying land and had to get the titles in shape and my uncle handled abstract company situated to work on titles so I had a law office and I ran that law office for many years- about ten years. I didn't try a case or practice law myself.

What was the name of your law office?

Johnson, Chapman, Johnson, Chapman, Ruse, Johnson, Ruse, Johnson, Boyd?, Johnson, Ruse, Boyd and Davis.

It changed with the attorneys working with you?

Yeah.

Do you remember your uncle's?

Olgoma ? Land & Abstract Company.

When you stopped being an attorney then what did you do?

I got into natural resources and I was in real estate for a long time and natural resources in timber. I started a shopping center down here and I was trying to - I was very proud there were two other fellows and we both were manufacturing furniture ? for a while and then we

went to the manufacture of hard-board and we sold the firm because the other partners came into? money - and to Georgia Pacific and at the time we sold it we were producing 34 percent of all the hard -board produced in the US. We had plants in Superior, Wisconsin, plants up in Michigan, Bemidji, Phillips, WI and in Little Rock, AR and

Was that under the name of SuperWood?

Yes, under the name of SuperWood.

What years?

This was a long time after the period you are talking about. 1945 when it started.

Have you ever retired?

.....Now.

What do you do?

Mostly investments.

So you are still very active in the business world?

I wouldn't say that. But I enjoy it very much.

When you think back on your family history and parents coming to MN from , how does that make you feel?

I am a child of America. I certainly respect my Swedish heritage. I've been in Sweden a few times.

End of interview