

ELSIE NELSON

<u>Minute</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
2.7	Childhood memories - farm and school; family life; brother.
10	View on self-sufficient farmers
13	Family
15	Food preparation and storage; housekeeping and duties
20	Grandmother
21	Parental decisions; discipline
23	Clothes - summertime; compared with boys
27	Highschool and further education
28	Women and college
30	Searching for homesteads in Washington
32	Women in college
35	Where mother and father were born
37	Option to have children
38	Women and college
	Side Two
01	Working as teacher; working in the hotel
02	Why she never married
8.9	Sister; helping her
09	Differences in child raising, and the way children grew up between then and now.
15	Raising a family on a farm
16	Taking care of her mother
19	View on Women's Movement
21	Money - saving, stocks and bonds etc.
22	Working women and families
23	Women as president

ELSIE NELSON CONT.

Minute

TOPIC

25	Learning Swedish
28	Meeting people
30	Her book
30	Working at Hotel - Director of foods
35	Serving athletes

The following interview is of Elsie Nelson early in the year of 1975 in Moscow, Idaho. The interviewer is Isabell Miller.

EN: It's kind of nice to grow old and have as many friends as I have.

You know once in awhile when I sit here at night, I get an inspiration and I think of something that I want to put down because I; when you get to be 84 years old, you don't know how many more years you're gonna be here and when I see some of the pitiful things. Several people have been here that were real bright in their mind just a year or two ago.

IM: That's an important thing for you to be doing now, isn't it; to record things?

EN: Now one thing I'd like to do; (tape is shut off)

My nephew and his sister and brother and my brother Carl from California who has a beautiful home and everything in California. There all scattered throughout the different states and he says, "you know what I used to do when I was a kid? I used to be honory and I used to do all kinds of things and perked up their ears and that was fun." And we went into the bathroom and they had to take the bathtub out because the floor had rotted. So they took the tub and the old fashioned bathtub and that's a story by itself when we got the bathtub. He said, "see this part here, it looks like it's been patched, he said. It used to be the roller for the ^{towel} towel, we used to have roller ~~side~~ ^{towel} made out of linen crasp that mother made. A whole bolt of linen crasp(?) and make these roller towels because they were easy to wash, they were linen. He said one time they didn't let me go with them to town, they had the horse and buggy and I helped them hitch up the horse and buggy and my goodness they didn't let me go to town, I had to stay home and I was mad. And so when I got in here to wash my hands in the bathtub I just thought, "well I'm just gonna knock that wall out," and I took my fist and made a hole in it and cracked it just below the towel rack so they had to patch that. The little grand nephew, Stevie said, "Uncle Carl, did you really do that?" He says, "I sure did" We were in the old dining room reminded us how mother always had a Xmas

cactus there and in the winter we'd walk home from school; we walked most of the time but sometimes in the winter, dad would take the sleigh and go and get us. We didn't have a telephone not until 1916. He'd just hook up the bob sled and a team of horses and go up to a certain place where he used to stop and if it was a real bad day, we knew he would be there to take us home. So one or two of the kids would go up there first and watch for him and signal to the others so we all had to go at the same time, you know.

IM: Did you come into Moscow?

EN: Sure we went to Moscow all the time. I'm the only one that went to a country school and I went there for three weeks and only three weeks because they found that we had to walk over to that country school over by Tomen's Butte.

IM: It was east of your house?

EN: Yes and we walked there but we didn't belong to this; our farm and our house was in the Moscow School District so we had to go there so from then on why we were real happy. Mother always had her cactus and it always bloomed before Xmas, great big; it was 50 years old and I went to Europe and I just didn't take care of it and I was supposed to take care of it at the hotel, well I asked somebody else to take care of it and they did. It just flowered and bloomed and mother, she just loved flowers and she knew how to take care of it; we always had nice flowers and plants in our house. This was another time that he had to stay home and he did that accidentally, he knocked something in the window on the outside, the dining room window and broke the window so father always repaired the window that he broke. He'd take putty, do you know what that is?

IM: Yes I do

EN: They'd take that putty and stuff it around the edge and he took that pane in town and put it in the wagon and it got broken so he couldn't put it in.

So then he went a second time and he had bad luck with it this time and it broke again. The pane was broken when he got home, he though he was careful, I'm not sure if he took it home or the hired man; we used to always have a hired man when they boys were small. He was paid by the year, he lived there. So dad says, "I know what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna walk to town." It was a little over two miles. And he walked to town and he brought the pane home and put it in. Well when we look back and think of the effort they had to go through, there was nobody to call and you just had to take care of your problems.

IM: You had to be self sufficient.

EN: You had to be self sufficient. Luckily my father was aggressive and he didn't believe in painting the house or papering the walls and things like that like some farmers tried to do everything. He said, "my job is to farm and get good crops and I hired somebody to; like maybe when we papered maybe the dining room for xmas and always had everything ready for a big xmas and you're gonna have a history and I'm gonna give you a description of Xmas at home.

IM: Yes I'd like to hear that but be sure you tell us now what your mother did all the time. We're specially interested in what the women were doing in those days.

EN: I'll be sure and tell you that. I'll finish telling you about my brother. And dad fixed that; I won't tell the Xmas story yet. We were going to school and walking to school and one thing when we got to the ~~classroom~~^{CROSSING} we walked on the railroad tracks, because it wasn't muddy and it was closer, and we just skipped along the ~~tide~~ and we had to walk 3/4 of a mile til we got to that corner and then we went on the tide clear down in the town then we took off and there were supposed to be sidewalks but there wasn't. In the summertime our shoes got pretty dusty. Like on Sunday School we'd stop at my grandmother's house, that's my maternal

grandmother and grandfather, they always had a nice place, they lived in this part, in fact they didn't live very far from here. So we'd always cut across and go by there to their house and say hi to grandma and grandpa and grandpa would always go and get a rag and wipe off our shoes before we'd go to school and that was Sunday and Monday and we'd always stop just for a couple of minutes because we wouldn't have much time. Then we had to take our lunch to school, we brought our lunches, no hot lunches and we always had good clothes, not jeans.

IM: That was important for your family wasn't it?

EN: Yes, that picture of the brothers, there were seven brothers, three of them were older, one sister and four of them were younger, my younger sister and I was the oldest and so we brought our lunches. I got up early in the morning about the time that we were all going to school, not all of us maybe there were a few at home that were small, too small to go to school. There were ten of us all together; at least five brothers and myself and my sisters that had lunch. Mother always baked bread, she made 40 loaves of bread a week, three times a week, she made all the bread, she baked, she made rolls, buns, they were good too, we put butter on them and stuff and we had milk, coffee, we got a little bit of coffee in our milk sometimes just beg for it and mother let us have it it didn't hurt us either and we always had good meals and I'd fix the lunches in the morning. First I got the breakfast started, I got up at 5 o'clock, I've done this most of my life and then I'd start the breakfast, you'd have to build a fire in the kitchen stove, see and put the coffee and maybe the water for the mush and then mother would help to see that the children were getting dressed, the younger children. By this time several of them were able to dress themselves and then when I got the breakfast started, mother would get down and I'd put up all these lunches and I made sandwiches and we always had home cured meat. She'd

have it cooked or dried beef and cured.

IM: Did you make the dried beef there?

EN: Yes, my mother would; they butchered before Xmas and they butchered several times. When they butchered two or three weeks before Xmas they would eat as much of the meat fresh as possible because it was cold, we didn't have any cold storage or even refrigeration, but we had a cellar but it wouldn't keep very long so we had to cure it and then we'd have chickens, roast goose, roast duck and all those things and even some wild meat sometimes. We used that for our sandwiches and we always had cupcakes or cookies or something sweet and always apples, good apples, we had a whole big orchard of wonderful apples^{trees} and so we always had apples. The boys didn't want to have a lunchbox so I wrapped the sandwiches in passing paper and mother bought this passing paper nearest I can remember, in rolls it was some kind of waxed paper, it wasn't like what we have now, not anything like that, it was heavier waxed paper and I was very stingy with that because we were stingy with what we used, we didn't waste anything. Then we'd wrap the sandwiches in that and wrap newspaper around it, we have enough newspaper, some farmers didn't have very many newspapers, maybe they'd have one a week but we always had enough newspaper. Then we always saved our sacks and wrapping paper that we got with groceries, we wouldn't put them in a big sack you know for our lunch, and we'd put string around it, save our string from our groceries and packages and mother would wind it and make a ball out of it and I'd have plenty of string for them and the kids just could put them in their coat pocket or just carry it like that on their finger and then they could throw it away and I didn't have to wash any lunchboxes so I was glad of that, but I just hated that. We always had dinner when we got home, mother planned it so that when all of us were home and when we all got home at the same time because even when we walked they younger ones could walk home alone

and when I was in High School, maybe I'd walk home alone, too when it was nice and when it was bad I had to arrange to get their on that transportation whatever my father had, the old or else the sleigh. They younger children had to wait someplace, wait in school, they let them do that, they had to let them do that. Mother had a dinner, she always had a good dinner. We used to have fresh meat lots of times because we'd buy fresh meat, when we didn't have any other meat, we'd have fresh meat part of the time but we also had roast pork and beef. The neighbors would get together and they'd kill one young beef or a veal roast. We'd take a half of the beef and the neighbors would take half or something like that. Even two or three farmers and they divided it up that way so they could have fresh meat. Pork chops and chicken, turkey and we had geese so we always had a good dinner and always had dessert. My mother made wonderful pie, she made pie out of lard mostly but she made real good crusts.

IM: That would've come from the hogs that you butchered?

EN: Yes that's right; we had butter and the shortening and for cookies and cakes, we always had plenty of butter and we used that for our shortening. We even fried chicken in butter lots of times because we had plenty of butter and mother didn't sell the butter, some farmers sold all of it and they didn't have much and I think on the average our family was as well taken care of as any family.

IM: You got good food and good clothes.

EN: My mother was very conservative and she had been raised an only child, you might say, she was 14 years old when her one brother was born, she was almost out of the way and married before he was there. She had been raised in town, she'd never been on a farm before, it was a ^{new} ~~real~~ experience for her.

IM: Do you think it was hard for her to get adjusted?

EN: I wouldn't say that but maybe; I don't remember the first years but I

I just don't believe so because she was really in Home Ec then and I wasn't especially interested in Home Ec, in cooking. Mother did most of the cooking, I took care of the kid's clothes and the house, I loved to keep house and I cleaned the house. The boys were supposed to help me like taking care of the rugs and the upstairs turned down and by the time I got started and had my bed all fixed up, we had to fix beds. I'm talking about a certain place when most of us were growing up. Then their was still little babies, my sister was born 20 years after I was, the youngest.

IM: So the boys were supposed to help you in the house?

EN: They were supposed to and they did a lot too. When I was going to clean I'd pick them up and shake them and hang them on the line. My grandmother wove rugs and mother would get the yarn, or the carpet rags, we called them and roll them into balls and lots of times the best ones were clothes from the harvest, the men that were working there. We always had men there because the brothers weren't old enough yet. They were starting, like brother Carl, he wasn't 8 or 9 years old and he could milk cows like a man.

IM: They started early in those days.

EN: Yeah, there would be two brothers that were given that chore to do. When they grew up so they could do other things why then the next two would do it and then the next two and they would work in relays like that. In other words my mother was a very good organizer and my father followed too because my father was a very kind man and mother was unequalled when it came to organizing her family.

IM: How did they make decisions, do you remember, did they talk things over?

EN: Yeah they did; if my mother disciplined the boys or any of us why my father did and my mother would never go over and contradict his; she'd go along with him. It wasn't even discussed because it was just a natural thing

in our family and she did most of the disciplining because my father just didn't like to do that. I don't remember most of the brothers of ever getting spanked by dad.

IM: He didn't question anything she did either?

EN: That's right, it was just taken for granted that it was the way it's supposed to be. Of course mother had the food and the work and always just did an awful lot of work, you know. Like in the summertime she canned 350 half gallon jars of fruit and vegetables that was raised on the farm. The boys were supposed to help me pick cherries but I think I did more than my share and I could climb those cherrie trees just as good as the boys and I stayed with it and they didn't. Because they always had to go out and help dad or something like that, they always found a good excuse.

IM: He deserved that a lot with boys.

EN: Another thing in the summertime I'm just really not very consistent, I suppose but in the summertime it was easier to raise boys on the farm than the girls, you know. They had the overalls, I guess you called them and they had to wear shoes and stockings because my dad would not let them go barefooted, he said, "I'd rather pay for shoes and stockings than doctor bills."

IM: What did you wear in the summertime when you were climbing trees?

EN: I never had any special shoes.

IM: Did you ever wear overalls too?

EN: Oh no, I wore dresses, I had maybe one or two good dresses and that was it. I usually got one for Xmas that mother would get a dressmaker to make and she would get a dressmaker come out to the house and sew for her and sew for me. There wasn't any hardly any ready made clothes, you couldn't buy ready made clothes for the children like you can now except that they bought shoes for the boys and mother insisted on having; she knew good material. She insisted on having good material and if the clerk

didn't have it she'd go to the department store and the only one that was here was "David's" It used to be "Williams" maybe you heard of it. But if she couldn't get clothes for the children and ready made clothes for the boys and even the smaller children, she'd buy for the boys; Buster Brown they called it, it had kind of a long coat and short pants but that was the very latest and they bought that for him but that was when he was little; maybe all the children were born at that time but he got that. Then the older boy maybe two of them were wearing long pants, they called them and mother would buy a suit for each one every year. It would be real good material a lot of it was blue surge.

IM: If they bought a new one every year then there wasn't any hand me downs in your family.

EN: Well, yes some; they bought a new suit for the boys every year with two pairs of pants but see they wore them them to school. The first year they wore them to church and Sunday School. They had to have a good suit and they were going to take them someplace besides church. They took the kids to circus and different entertainments. The older ones got to go to the shows they had to walk. My brother Whitey that stayed with me he told about going to the first silent picture and it was right down there where Dorothy's is and I couldn't even remember that and he said that we paid 5 cents apiece to go in there and he was maybe 13 or 14 and Carl was older. Maybe he was 10 or 11 when he got to go the first time and Carl and my older brother were older.

IM: Did you get a new dress every Xmas?

EN: I got a real nice dress for Xmas always. Mother would buy the prettiest material, nearly almost wool, a woolen silk they always had.

IM: Did she pick it out?

EN: Oh yes, I'd say so. She'd pick it out and she'd pick out the pattern, she had pretty good taste but I wouldn't say the dressmaker did, she was a

little bit old fashioned and there was another dressmaker and she couldn't get it done and I was always happy when she couldn't do it. She'd come out to the farm so mother had this other lady and she wasn't really a dressmaker but she had good taste and she dressed well and she'd make my dress and I remember I had I a dusty wool that had silk in it and it looked like a real fine wool and they had some kind of braid on it or something like that. It was as nice as anybody would wear. I always got a coat whenever I needed it and I'd always wear my coat for two or three winters and my summer dresses, I had to have at least two or three good ones that I could wear but mother usually made my dresses.

IM: Except for the very special ones.

EN: Well that was when; before, like later, Mother made my high school dress for my graduation and I can remember that it was the prettiest one of all. We ^{didn't have} ~~had~~ a big high school class because most of the girls and most of the boys, my brother included, the oldest brother, they went up to the prep at the Univ. ; you had to have a prep up at the high school I think It was 1913 or 1915 I don't remember but that did away with that but they didn't have that because the high schools in the state had become accredited and they didn't need that prep and then the high school here became a bigger high school. When I graduated from high school there were only six girls and one boy.

IM: So the boys had mostly gone to work someplace at that time?

EN: No I think most of the boys went to the prep like my brother did. You know how girls are they like to have their friends and most of the girls went to high school. When I went to college which was later I graduated from high school in 1909 and when I graduated from high school I had already gone up to the Univ. because I had to have a certain number of credits to enter the Univ. and I got my high school work finished mostly in the first semester of the last year. I went to college and took 12 credits

and the principal of the high school talked me into that. I was a bashful country girl.

IM: Was the principal a man or a woman?

EN: A man

IM: Did he think you had special abilities?

EN: Well he said that I didn't have very much to do the rest of the year. If I wanted to take some work up at the Univ. I could. I had lots of determination and I got that from both my mother and father. There were lot of farmers that didn't do near as well but we just stuck through it and just like I'm stuck to my legs here, I've got bruises on my legs and I just sat here, that's what I'm supposed to do. I don't sit though because I have people in here for dinner and I have one or two and I do a lot and I keep busy all the time. God gave me two hands and I used them. I used to tell the waitresses, "now get to work, we've got a lot of work to do." and I say, "God gave you two hand, now use them." They remembered that, one thing that they remembered and that's the way I grew up.

IM: Not very many women went to college in those days.

EN: No, that's right. I liked people and the teachers liked me, I never crossed them, I never had any trouble with the teachers and they liked me and they thought I was ambitious and I think that high school teachers or anybody for that matter, can be a good influence if they like the children and put in good words. You can't be selfish in this world. You've got to do something for others. When I catch myself thinking sometimes, I think, "well afterall, I believe I think of others most of the time," And my brothers say, "well think about yourself," And that's what they told me ^{about} the hotel, think about yourself once in awhile, you always think about what you should do for this one and that one. I'd be so tired sometimes but I guess I got cranky sometimes but then I have it coming sometimes because I just worked terrible hard.

IM: Did most of the women get married at the time you were going to school?

EN: I don't think they did, I think that went farther back. Now like my mother, my father was born in the old country it's an island in the Baltic sea. Then he came over here and then he came to Philadelphia and then to Chicago and to Colorado and he worked in the mines in Colorado and I told in the book how he said goodbye to his mother. Then he came, he and his brother and two other men left the mines together; his brother was older than he was and he had come later, my father came first and they had heard about the homestead in Washington. When they got there it was out of Pasco and it wasn't anything but a desert and they took up this homestead, got this land, they thought there was a river, the Columbia River was right there and they'd surely have water there and they did have to. So my father and his brother and the other two men and they said they'd never make it here and they had bought some farm equipment and they heard about the railroad that was coming up near Spokane Falls, they called it, before it was the city of Spokane. Of course, Spokane Falls is really Spokane. So they went there and my father, I will always remember they had come acquainted with an Indian woman, they used to take them across the river once in awhile. I know she used to cart people across the river.

IM: Where was this?

EN: It was up in Pasco. It wasn't right at Pasco but it's near there. They called it Horse Heaven.

IM: So this woman run kind of a ferry?

EN: Well she didn't have a real ferry, she'd just take them over on horseback and they had horses, Indian cayouses, they called them. They left their boots, buried their boots and machinery. I don't suppose they ever went back there for it, I never did learn that. And then my father got the best
and I think I told you about that, I've

got that in the book, do you have the book?

IM: Yes

EN: Well you read that about the railroad days because that's the beginning of the Northern Pacific. So you can read some of those things. Now like the high school kids, I have quite a few of them come here because on account of my legs I can't go up there and Stan Smith has been real nice I'm all for these young people, I think they are gonna save this country as sure as their is. We hear about all the bad ones but we hear about the bad people and the whole trouble is the cities and it's just over-crowded and all the blacks and everybody had gone to the city. Well if done like they did in the olden days, got their land and farmed it. Now it's too expensive but there's a way of doing that. They could have some equipment that the county would buy or some arrangement like that to help these smaller farms, and look all the land here. If you'd of been in Europe you'd realize how much more land we have then they have there. And what they've done with their land there in Scandanavia; in Holland if they've got a patch of land they are raising bulbs.

IM: They make use of their land.

EN: They don't wast even a square foot. And their streets are narrow, they can't do much about their narrow streets, they have to use them, they have small cars, not very many, some of them have big cars. Some of the highways are wide and better like in Paris we went to Paris down to
it was 25 miles, they were so packed and traffic was
so bad that we didn't get to see the things that we were supposed to
s e that day.

IM: Tell me about most women when you went to College.

EN: When I went to College there were quite a few girls in College. In fact,
I think it was as much, I don't suppose it was ever 50%.

IM: It's more nearly 50% than it is today.

IM: What do you think made the difference?

EN: Well I'll tell you I think that maybe the average girl; I had one little high school girl that married, I have a student here and he has graduated from the Idaho and he was president of the _____ and I had him here from September until Xmas then he got married. When he got through here, he's 28 years old going on 29 now, he taught in Worley, Worley is up there by Coeur d'Alene and this girl went to school there and she was 17, well they got married and she wasn't going to college, no, she didn't want to go to college. I said, "Listen here, Paul, you just talk her into it or else let me talk her into it." We're just gonna see that that girl goes to College or at least try it. Here you're taking your MD and you graduated once and he took his Masters Degree and getting a Masters in PE and when you get to where you want to be a coach and you're gonna get a job and here now is _____ and she think she's happy now, she's in love and your worse and you just haven't even givn it a thought have you? I said, "you young people have to learn to save, you're just throwing time and money away, if you get ten times as much money, you use it all."

IM: You think it's just as important for a woman to get an education as it is for a man?

EN: Yeah but I don't think it's absolutely necessary to go to college, all of them. I don't think either boys are girls need to go to college. If they don't want to go to college it's because *it's* they don't know what college can do for them. But they've got to have some kind of a goal. And if they can't see their way to go to college because now a days its so expensive that's alright. Because what college dif for me maybe it won't do for everybody, but I was a bashful country girl if there ever was one. My mother didn't get farther than through the sixth or seventh grade and my father didn't have all his education in the old country.

EN: Both of them were smart and my goodness my mother could read and read and was up and coming all the time. They travelled some later when they could and she was alert and she learned all she could. I can remember my mother sitting there on the farm turning that big old churn, making butter and she had a baby in her arm and then she was gonna read that magazines, she had material from the magazine that she wanted to read. In this arm where the baby was, she had a magazine because with the other arm she was churning and I can remember that she got all of it done, She got the butter made and she took care of the baby and she got her churning done.

IM: What were the names of the magazines that she took?

EN: Oh Ladies Home Journal and Reader's Digest was at home, my dad used to read that. And my mother would read books.

IM: Did they have library then?

EN: Oh yeah, church library, they had a little church library. My mother came from Minnesota and she was 13 years old when she came here and she told me that; she was only 4 or 5 years old when she came here, she was born in Sweden and my father was born on this island but my mother was born on the west side near I've learned Swedish so I can say it.

IM: How old were you when you started learning Swedish?

EN: Well I learned it at home because my mother and father scarcely talkkd at home but my grandmother and grandfather didn't understand English very well so they could talk to them. Mother said she had the Bible and the Catechism they called it and a Bible History, that was all she ever read before she came to America. When they came to Minnesota they didn't have a Swedish Church where they lived, my grandfather got a job with the railroad and my grandmother, she'd cook sometimes in a boarding house. She just had this little girl, she had nice clothes because she had an aunt that gave her clothes and Grandma and grandpa had just one and they were

making money and they had a nice home, but they had nice furniture here and they had four or five homes and grand ather was a landscaper and a gardener, he'd learned it by himself and Mother went to the Presbyterian Church and they had a library there.

IM: Did the women establish the library?

EN: Just a congregation. She loved her Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Preston,

TE: she went back about 35 years afterwards, she had to have surgery, she went back there and she found her, she was there, that Sunday School teacher and she remembered. She said, "you keep things so nice and clean and you look so nice and clean all the time, I'm gonna let you take a book home to read whenever you want to and you be sure to bring it back." And mother said yes and she said she read everything they had in that library. Then other kids had books at home and she found out they liked them so my mother read books a lot until her dying day, she was 78 when she died, in '51 right here in Moscow.

IM: She had ten children, do you think she really wanted ten children?

EN: I think she did. She said that she was alone so much and she said, "when I get married I 'm gonna have nine children, I don't know why she said nine but she said that when she grew up. They all lived to maturity. My oldest brother died in '54 and my brother died 3 years ago here, he s yed here with me, he was a widower, he had married twice and both of them had died of cancer. But you asked me about girls going to college and I think that; I gave you an example of this one girl that was just crazy to get married. They come up to see me quite often. I had them over for dinner one night this week and I'm trying to be nice to them, but I told her, "You're gonna get a job and she isn't gonna know a thing about college or even be interested and your'e gonna have nothing but problems, you just can't expect to be happy or have much in common if you are that far apart." If your training is that far apart, you'd just better talk

her into going. Even if she only goes one year. Do like I told my little sister and she's Mr.s George now in Boise and her husband has charge of Senator Church's office. Senator could even be a president some day, you never can tell and he's doing a real good job. George came from Calif. and came up here to Idaho to take forestry. He ended up taking agriculture and he had never even seen a cow hardly and didn't know; they just kidded him on the farm because he said he was going to make a table for the calf, he made a little stable for the calf and he called it the Stable for the calf and the boys out of the farm they got the biggest kick out of that. George hadn't hardly seen a cow, he was from Oakland, Calif. His father was German he came from Ger any and he became a construction man and a very wealthy man and the mother was raised where Chinatown is now but she was a German descant too but she came up there and they said after I came up to Idaho I didn't want to go back to Calif. And his folks couldn't understand it, why he wanted to go to Idaho to that Univ. instead of going to Berkely, well George wanted to go to Idaho. He loved it in Idaho, I gotta tell you about George coming to college and meeting my sister there. She wasn't going to take home ec unless Elsie took "Home Ec. I really got my degree in Botany because I took all this work in high school before I started college. I Professor Aldridge, he was my main instructor in Botany and he was really a nice man, real smart, he got a real nice job in Washington D.C. there. I took Botany, I took 21 credits a semester every year and I got done in 3½ years and then I went back one year and I finished because I didn't go to school that year. So I went back one year and decided I get my home ec but my mother got sick and that's when she went back to where the place I told you she lived in Minnesota(end of tape 13 side 1) (side 2)

And where the clinic is and I just lacked about three weeks of finishing and I was gonna go back and take them but I got a school that year and I taught school for three years and Winchester was a nice little town but I just really didn't like teaching that well. I liked the subject matter real well and discipline was hard for me because I liked the kids too well. When I came home here in the summer, well I decided then, Mr. Raft wanted me to come there at the hotel and I'd taken more Home Ec than all the graduates except I did lack some chemistry but then they required a lot more chemistry than they do now. I just said I'd take that job at the hotel and I told him I'd be there one year, instead of one year I stayed 37 years so that's the way that worked out.

IM: Why did you never marry, Elsie?

EN: My brothers I guess had the best solution, they said if anybody treats Elsie any different than her seven brothers, she doesn't want to have anything to do with them. I said, "I can love a man just as much as anybody,"

IM: You just never found the right man or you just didn't want to?

EN: No, I just got too involved, I think that's the only reason. I just got so involved with my work and knew so many people. There were so many people that wanted to take me for a ride and take me on a date and one would do this and one would do that and I always said when I was by myself, "If I give up being with these people, or just being a wife for one man, I don't know whether I'd like it or not."

IM: You just had to give up too much to marry one man.

EN: That's true. They just treated me so nice and that's what my brothers said, they all just treated me like brothers and she loved it. He had the name "Oscar and he hated it, he said "Why was I named after the King of Sweden?" I said now listen, "I found out when I went to Sweden that the first king of Sweden was and he was French, he wasn't a Swede

at all. I want to finish telling you about George and how he came to Idaho and never went back. He went out to the farm and the farm, of course the farm was just home to us and I knew home and we loved it. We were a close family and we loved it. I don't mean to say we didn't have

I don't know how many children you have.

IM: I have three

EN: Anyhow that's a nice family and I used to say, "Mother I'm not gonna get married until I'm 39 because I don't want to have as many children as you have."

IM: You said that at home, you saw how hard she worked. What would she answer to that?

EN: She said, "You'll be like me, when you find somebody you like, you'll marry them, you won't care whether you're 39, 29 or 15." They wouldn't let her get married at 15 but she was 13 when she came to this town and she got married when she was a little better than 17.

IM: That's pretty young and she pitched right in and started working.

EN: That's right and my father was 12 years older, that was common in those days. That's why I say there were very few girls. All these men took up homesteads and some of them was married, there were a lot of young men here, a lot of them worked when the Univ. was built, a lot of work and there wasn't very many girls around here to pick from. When my mother, she had dozens of suitors.

IM: She had her choice.

EN: She sure did; but I guess it was meant to be that way; but she did a good job and they were congenial. I can remember when they used to have county fairs in Spokane every year. I didn't get to go but mother and dad went to one when the Davenport was new; the Davenport Restaurant was so filled and my mother had not had her honeymoon yet and there were five children,

I think, maybe six. I took care of the kids for a couple of days and they went up to the fair in Spokane and they lived pretty good on the farm. My father did some extra, he helped with roadwork and did things all the time. He'd have cattle and he'd sell the team, and the cattle he'd sell for money, so that's why we got along better. We had 240 acres from that home farm and we never were hungry or never were cold either. We had woven blankets and we slept in an unheated upstairs, there was one stove upstairs and mother would let us come in there and dress when its real cold but I got up at 5 o'clock and walked to school whenever it was dark and we walked to that railroad crossing and walked on that railroad and it was dark and when I came, I had Home Ec classes until 5 and I had late classes in chemistry.

IM: When your sisters were growing up, you helped them, didn't you have a tea room in Lewiston?

EN: Yeah, I had a tea room, my little sister stayed there. The reason she stayed with me was because she walked from the farm and that was hard and the other boys were all grown up and they didn't want to be bothered with their little sister, so she stayed there and I loved to have her.

IM: What are some of the differences you see with the children when you were growing up opposed to the way your grand nieces and nephews are?

EN: I don't see there is much difference, if they're kind and taught well. Like my nephew, this nephew he's doing real well, he's got the home. George and Alvera are their parents in Boise and they just have their brothr and son who got this doctorate in chemistry and he got an MSF which is Masters of Science Scholarship, \$2900 a year for 4 years until he got through and he went back to Minnesota and he could go to North-western but he went there because it was the best chemistry school. When he finished, he advisor wanted to work with him for several weeks before he left. So when he finished his paper, I don't think he had to

write a thesis, he done a lot of research for him but he was gonna get his doctor's degree in chemistry. Another boy he's going to school up at Wash. Univ. he stopped here and seen them and he was going to Wash. D.C. to get some advanced information and this Bill had another girl in mind, he met her in minneapolis, she was from Iowa and she went to school but not where he did. There were several students, some classmates and they kind of had two apartments. So he announced his engagement to this girl and her mother was there from Iowa and they were having a party for them. He was a real nice boy, he had a lot of girls but he got this girl and they announced their engagement in the afternoon and that evening he was going down to get some snacks for that little feed they were going to have and the girl didn't want to go because she was tired and he'd given her the ring and she said, "why don't you have this Bill go with you instead," and take my car." So you know they did and you know both of them were killed instantly. A fellow didn't stop and he was drunk and I don't know what else. It's the saddest thing and you just have to forget it. Then they had this girl, she was 20 years younger than Bill, Maryann and she graduated from college in Portland and two years ago and now I talk to my sister and she talks to me real often from Boise. And she said Maryann announced her engagement, she'll be 24 this year so I'm real happy about that, she's done well.

I wouldn't say that our family had any brilliant people although some of them are.

IM: Good solid citizens.

EN: Yeah, good solid citizens. Now this oldest brother, he's 80, was 80 the other day and he lives in California and he built a new home up in Atascadero. He has two sons and one daughter and they built this nice home and this one son has this nice home overlooking the Pacific up at Polo Verde, that's an exclusive district in Los Angeles. He has a very

good job with a Refrigeration System. I think it's eleven states that he looks after. He has some supervision in those eleven states for that company. He's gone for one week and he's home for one week but he's making a real good money and has a beautiful home. They bought one home and fixed it up; I've been to Calif. many times and I was there and they had just moved and traded that old home for a nicer one but it was some doctor and his wife separated and she couldn't keep the home and take care of it, and so he got it and they paid for that and it's just really beautiful.

IM: Well it seems like a farm is a pretty good place to raise a family.

EN: Yes, I just think about that; our farm was ideal. It was only two miles away from town.

IM: So you had some advantages being near the Univ. too.

EN: The Univ. and all of them didn't graduate from the Univ. but at the same time they just really absorbed a lot of it. The older ones and the younger ones would walk to town and watch the basketball games, they didn't miss any of them.

IM: And that was their recreation in those days.

EN: Well it still is, I guess. This one brother he got a job with the Air Force and the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Aeronautics and he retired, from the government, they retire early, he was in his 50's when he retired and he lives in Phoenix and they were up here last summer and I think he gets six or seven hundred dollars. He went to Air West when he got through there and he was a consultant but he's retired now. He gets six or seven hundred dollars a month retirement. Now you ask me some questions.

IM: Well you've already answered a lot of them but I remember you talking about how you had pretty much, after your father died and your mother lived in Moscow, you had quite a bit of responsibility for taking care of her when

she was older, didn't you, or did the whole family do it?

EN: No I didn't have to because for one thing, my mother is like me, she was 78 years old when she died and that's younger than I am. She was really only very sick for seven months and she had the mean to take care of her. What baffled me was I found out, because I worked at the hotel and she had her home up here and she lived up there and she had this kind of a slight stroke, she had hardening of the arteries and she had terrible headaches so she was sick that way but maybe she'd been that way for seven or eight years but it bothered her but she just defied the thought of getting down and not enjoying life. She loved to travel and she felt so bad because she and dad couldn't travel together and they never did get to except for short trips. The last year we just had nurses around the clock and any of us didn't have to do anything about the finances because she had plenty to take care of that. We thought it was so wonderful to think, after dad had died, he died in '32 and she died in '51. She managed to farm with my brothers and she kept the farm until she died. She was able to except for the seven months is all. She worried about me working so hard and never taking any time off to rest or anything but I did go to California several times on a short trip. One time the Kiwanis bought a flight for me to go down, she was down there. I believe I had a hernia operation, I had an old typewriter and I just lifted it up and I just felt this and I had a hernia operation but it didn't affect my health really, it's just my legs and I just wore them out at the hotel. I had bad veins because of the work. Mother had a checking account of \$8000 dollars and that's quite a bit even in '51 that was a big checking account. She had the farm and she had the building, cus my father bought the building, the Moscow Florist, I bought that, see but I sold it because I didn't want to be bothered with remodeling and all this and that but I said I didn't want the

money so I just and I still have fiye or six years on that and my brother left some of his estate, so his wife was gone and he didn't have any children. He had one boy that was his first wife's son and he's a neurosurgeon so he can take care of his family.

IM: This group of women that we're working with, we're interested in getting people to appreciate what women have contributed to Idaho. Not only men but women aren't written up that much.

EN: I'm not up for all this new, you know, what do you call it?

IM: The Women's Movement?

EN: Well I'm for the women's movement, I'm all for that but all these women that are trying to get in and taking men's jobs, I don't approve of that.

IM: What do you think about that?

EN: I don't think so, I think it's alright if they are capable. I know a lot of smart women and there are a lot of women, smart women in this world and a lot of husbands don't give their wives credit for some of it, they could do better than they do, I know that. I've worked with men and women and the best part of my life and I've been told a lot of things that I never tell but both men and women and I've made it a point if she tells me or he tells me, don't tell them. I'm not for this women's liberation.

IM: You don't think some of the women aren't qualified?

EN: I don't think that but I think our social life will be at stake because I think it's gonna mess things up to much. A lot of women that have become; I listen to TV a lot because I've got time now. I get up in the morning, early, I look at that 7-9 program.

IM: The Today Show?

EN: Yes and they have some good talkers on that and I listen to the Washington Week in review and I listen to Wall Street. I don't buy stocks and bonds because I don't know enough about it for one thing. If I did why I would just stick my money in the bank and I would get 7½ for a lot of it and

that's a good place to keep it, with money, you might as just well do that. I just think, now I could get social security but I wouldn't live that well on social security. But I've paid for this home since I've been here. I owe a little bit on it because my brother in law, George he's a real smart man and he says, "Elsie you should be using your head when you pay for that house because you only pay 6% and you get 7½, why that good business not to pay for your house. He says don't worry about this house, it's taken care of, I don't even bother with it, it's taken out of my account., every month out of my escrow I pay for the house and I haven't got much left.

IM: What you're saying about the women's liberation is that women should stay at home more?

EN: There's no definite answer for that because a lot of women, the ones that want to get out and a lot of women they just love the idea of getting away from their family and that's just some of the sad things that I know and have heard, the families that are really neglected. Of course the women get so involved in their jobs. I've been in public places and I just know that's true, I don't believe in that. Now like my mother, she couldn't do it because she had too many. If my mother would've had time and gone out and gotten a job, my father wouldn't of objected to it. She wouldn't of neglected her home or her family but she would of maybe done her job and taken care of her home. I don't see how there couldn't be an answer to that. That Barbara Walters, that program, she had different people on there that she talks to and different women and some of these women are smart. Their women in this United States that could make a better president than some of the ones we have.

IM: I wanted to tell you before we finished recording, that we're making a presentation and we have a program where one portion of the program is about Elsie Nelson and Anna Goodwin does the reading and I wanted to

know; she came to meet you and I wanted to know if she has any questions to ask now that I haven't; she's read the book.

EN: I don't talk very well and I hated to recite in college and I remember my english teacher said, "Elsie you can recite you just think you can't, you just make up your mind to do it." And you know I tried to think about that. Now I can write, I just love to write, just by the yards and I'm gonna write a lot of things they didn't let me put in my book, see because it would have made it to much complicated and to much family and not sellable.

IM: You certainly should get that written down.

EN: So I'm gonna do that and this nephew, I told you, he has a credit Bureau and he has extra time and he's ambitious like I am, I guess the whole Nelson family was, really and he got a printing press and he does a real good njob. I've already made a little thing of all the birthdays in all our generations, I've got that separte see, because I couldn't put them in the book so I got all the information I could. I didn't go back to the church, that would've taken to long and even if I'd gotten that information, those names and that I wouldn't of gained very much. One of my cousins, 2nd or 3rd cousin is a minister back there and he had to open that chest and get that information but he copied it and took pictures of it., and he can't read those names. They are written in the old script, most of them. I could read it because I learned that German script and that's the old script and I've had a lot of German and French so I thought I could learn Swedish and I've had a lot of fun with my Swedish because those cousins in Stockhom, that one cousin, she's three years older than I am and she had studied English and went to school in Paris then she's been away from it so long and she'd rather read the Swedish so I'll say I'll write it but whether you can read it or not, I don't know. She said "I think you do fantastically well," So I said, "you

write Swedish and I'm gonna answer you in Swedish," but her letters sounded a lot better to me than mine did. They just love ya and I think it was worth an awful lot to get to go there and find that real genuine hospitality but a real admiration of love that they showed me and they are that way. I'd go to Spokane twice a year to have my feet taken care of, my toes and corns and calluses, I used to get a lot of them but I don't have so many of them anymore but I don't even dare trim my toenails, my family said no, you let them do it and I still can go, I'm going pretty soon, maybe my brother will take me up on the car but if he doesn't I'll go up on the bus, that's the way my mother went. About 20 years my mother went to him, she used to go to him every month on the bus and back until her dying day, just about. This doctor said, "didn't you tell me you were writing a book one time?" I hadn't been there for quite a long time. "You said your father was born on an island in the Baltic Sea," I said "that's right" He said, "do you know we went there?" He didn't talk very much, this doctor, but he's a nice man. He said "we went there last summer" I said, "what were you doing in the Baltic Sea?" He said, "well I had more fun than I ever had in my life, and I just want to go again so bad, I think we'll go again." And I said, "We, meaning your wife?" He said, "yes I married one of them." And I said, "well I think you made a good choice," and she was delightful I had to meet her. So the next time I went he had told me this and I called up for an appointment and I said, "this time I'm gonna meet Mrs.

and he had given me his address because I asked for it.

I wrote to her and I told her I was coming up to meet her and I told her that it would be just one more friend I'll have, one more good friend, I know it will be a good friend. We arranged and she told me to come up to her house but they lived too far out and we arranged to meet at the Crescent. My brother lives here, and his wife, and they took me up and

we talked and we sure had a good time and I just loved to meet those people.

IM: You do love to meet new people, don't you?

EN: Well I just love people.

IM: I was wondering, we're giving this presentation in Moscow next Friday night and wouldn't you like to come and see it? Could I come and get you?

EN: I'm not gonna be embarrassed with you reading it, I'm not gonna be embarrassed about that.

IM: Well we're probably not gonna be able to resist saying that Elsie Nelson is in the audience. But if you wanted me to I'd resist but it would be nice to say that we have Elsie Nelson in the audience.

There might be people there who know you, I'm sure there would be.

EN: I don't care about that anymore.

IM: But I would like to come and get you.

EN: Well that's real nice of you and I suppose there's no reason why I couldn't go although I haven't got any new clothes lately.

IM: You have a beautiful dress on right now.

EN: My standby, I've had it two years now and I wash it, see. My sister washed it when I was in Boise, I don't like to wash very well. She does a better job, she's a better housekeeper than I am.

AG: I'm more interested in finding out about you at the Moscow Hotel during the great depression.

EN: I hadn't planned to write my book when I retired but I did have it in the back of my mind that I want to leave a message for my brothers and sisters and I would kind of write my bibliography or the story of our family, a typical family of the pioneer days and it's just written up in the book, you try to find that and read it.

The most interesting part of my life at the hotel was meeting all these people and learning to know them and they became very dear friends. When

Ted died, two of my friends who used to eat there all the time, called me up and one of them came over here to see me and I thought that was real nice because they knew he meant a lot to me. I had complete charge of the food service in the hotel. That meant, not the daily meal planning, entirely alone or with the chef I did, because he knew more about the meat and he bought the meat and he planned the meat. But I always would make suggestions about the meal and the rest of the meal I usually planned and my ideas coincided with my bosses, Mr. Wright. He thought that everybody should be satisfied and he planned that I should figure to serve the food at a cost that was within reach of the average person. So that nobody felt disappointed when they left and that was his theory and that's mine and we agreed perfectly on that. If I don't make any money on the dining room I'll come out on it by having a good dining room and I want you to make it the best you know how. I grew on the job and my Home Ec background was a help but I had a lot to discover and a lot to learn and I had learned, my mother was a good organizer and I tried to be so I feel like that's one reason why I was successful. Our food business grew from a very small amount to a large amount. In fact I shouldn't quote prices, I guess but we had as much as as \$100,000 of business a month for a good month. That's a lot of food to plan and to have somebody serve it. I was allowed to have all the help I needed, have as many waitresses I needed, bus boys or anything or all the help I needed and Mr. Wright said, "I know you won't go overboard on that because you are conservative and that's the way we want it, don't try to do too much yourself, but tell the rest of them to do it." And I said that wasn't very satisfactory I mean to try to leave it all to the help. You don't get that kind of help. For example, the first luncheon I served there, Mrs. David, the mother David, you know the David's Store; how long have you been here?

IM: Three years.

EN: You didn't know them then. They had hotel dishes. One of the first things I wanted to do was change their dish pattern, it was too much like a greasy joint restaurant and I had been at the Blue Bucket and served lunches and a lot of people had been there and that's where the town women knew me, see and knew what I could do and they were thrilled when I got this job and Mr. Wright just begged me. And I was planning on going to Calif. and he says, "well just try it anyway for a year" I said, "I'll stay a year" and he had a terrible room but that's all they had, that was before they enlarged it, an old curly iron bed and an old old dresser and a bare floor with one little rug a closet big enough to put one or two dresses in, some of my everyday dresses. Our business started to grow and we served dinner for 75-85 cents and Pullman people started to come over. The Pullman people just made that hotel. One of the first Sundays out there we had two tables of people from Pullman and families and I went and talked to them because I knew they weren't Moscow people, I knew most of the Moscow people at that time and they said they were from Pullman and they were very glad and they gave me very much encouragement and within three months we had our dining room filled on Sundays and maybe two-thirds of them were Pullman people and then they started to plan luncheons and parties and it grew so that I had from one social function to three or four, including maybe a banquet and a service group in one day, many many days I had that many and I had to plan those menus. I had to plan the special menus and I had an awful time with the kind of help I had, especially during the war to get them to fix three menus. One for girls in the dining room, one for the cooks in the kitchen and one for the women in the other part of the kitchen. Being on the job every day I didn't even rest 15 minutes being on the job from 5 o'clock to maybe 10 and I took particular care of checking on the girls so that they would

serve the right menus to the right people. I'd tell them and tell them and tell them. I say, "where are you taking that steaks?" In that one room." Well I said to take them back right quick. They were all eating dinner, see. I had to get after the cook and he had the menu, too and I said, The girls are not serving that dinner yet." They haven't got that dinner, they're taking those steaks to the wrong party." And the sad part of it was that the steaks almost came off of the *grill* if I had anything to do with it. That's why serving the football team was successful. I want you to read that, that was the most successful thing I did in the hotel was serving the athletes and I just got a real good reputation from that. That's where the football team could come, the basketball and baseball, the swimming teams and everything but the basketball and football was the most important. They came from Calif. Oregon State, Oregon Univ. , Seattle, Univ. of Wash. and we didn't serve the WSU people but we served Stanford and all those different Universities. They just fly in and I'd have the menu and they'd send a menu lots of times. The coaches got used to my service and they said whether they send a menu or not, you know what we feed them. The coaches personally knew what the ordinary menus were and I had to order their meat ahead of time, you know, weeks ahead of time. We ordered them out of Spokane and the football teams we served as many as 50-60 steaks and that took seven or eight loins of beef and I never took a chance on a player being late, they were like wolves and the coaches were just grand, as soon as the coaches come in, they'd say, "Is Elsie around," I was always around I was never missed a time when I wasn't around. I might not of been at the desk where they could see me, but I was there. I had some trouble with an Oregon coach one time and he grew to be one of my best friends. Somebody had given him my book and he wanted to write me a letter. He's retired now; and all those things are just really gratifying. We couldn't put 60 steaks on the stove so

I told the coach to tell them or else I would, but we had plenty of room for sixty people and I'd go in there and I'd say, "now some o' you are gonna wait for the steaks," and they knew that. And I'd have the girls, and I'd have somebody make the toast and somebody dish up the and I had to work like clockwork, and we'd get them all served. The boys they all worked, especially the basketball boys, we'd serve them for dinner, you see. We used to serve them around 3 o'clock somewhere and then at night after the game, I'd have to have a feed for them. The pantry women made sandwiches and most of them had turkey or chicken sandwiches and like on Friday it would be something different. The milkshakes and I'd order them from the fountain and then fruit salad. And I've have the pantry women make them and put them on big trays and then we'd serve them. And L.H. Gregory, he wrote this book and he'd always come up with the team and he'd write up the game after the games in the evening and so he wouldn't come when the boys came. He'd shower and then come down to eat and Gregory and oanother fellow would be late, he and another fellow, Trainer or somebody. I always waited til he came; I've got a whole book about; he gave me a write up about three or four different times, see. I think that was the one he wrote up in the now when he found about my book and that Hopkins he was another coach. The daily service was just like any restaurant I suppose except you had to give a little bit more than food and especially the traveling public and especially the men who are connected with, we called them salesmen. We had food salesmen that I ordered from but they never talked me into getting something I didn't want and after they'd talk to me about it twice, that was it. If Elsie said that's what I'm gonna have then that's it. I wouldn't take pie fillings and try some new stuff and that I wouldn't serve because I didn't serve that kind of food. As long as I'm here, it's gonna be fresh food like they used to get at home, it's not gonna

be jello and pie fillings; it's gonna be a real food and that's what really helped. That's something, salesmen especially and they'd be so tired and most of them would try to come in a little early and there was some of them that tried to make Moscow Hotel a certain time and they'd have their service.....

(interview ends here on tape 13 side 2)