

Today is Thursday, July 19, 2012. (*Recording incorrectly states July 18.*) This is Priscilla Goss from Historic Saranac Lake, and I'm interviewing Helen Larsen for our Oral History project. We're going to start by asking Helen a few of the basic questions.

PG: The first one is going to be, when were you born?

HL: December 5, 1924

PG: Oh, that's my cousin's birthday, December 5, so I'll remember that.

PG: What were your parents' names?

HL: My father's name was Jesse Ray Bell, Sr.

PG: And your mom?

HL: Was Elizabeth Homburger Bell

PG: Homburger Bell

HL: That's German.

PG: I was going to say, it sounds very German.

PG: Where were you born?

HL: I was born in Saranac Lake.

PG: Right in Saranac Lake; at the hospital?

HL: Yeah.

PG: Oh, okay. So you are definitely a native, aren't you?

HL: That's right.

PG: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

HL: I had four sisters and one brother?

PG: Are they still living?

HL: Two of them are.

PG: I think I met one of your sisters at the church one time.

HL: Probably.

PG: We used to go quite a bit.

PG: Where did you go to school?

HL: Saranac Lake High

PG: And where was that located at that time?

HL: Petrova Avenue.

PG: Oh. That's where the Middle School is now?

HL: Yes.

PG: So that's changed then.

HL: Yeah.

PG: Okay. Did you do any other schooling after that?

HL: No.

PG: Where was it that you grew up? What neighborhood did in Saranac Lake?

HL: What was what?

PG: When you grew up, what street did you live on?

HL: Jenkins Street

PG: Oh, over on Jenkins.

HL: Do you know where that is?

PG: I know exactly where it is. I have a friend/lady who helps me clean my house who lives on Jenkins.

HL: Oh, yeah?

PG: Yup. She's right on there. I think she's the third house up maybe.

HL: What's her name?

PG: Debbie Donaldson. And her mother is Clarice Shore.

HL: Her mother is what?

PG: Clarice Shore

HL: Oh. She wasn't there when I was there.

PG: Probably not. They bought it, I'm guessing, maybe 15 years ago. But they lived elsewhere in the Village before they went there. Okay. Did you live anywhere else in Saranac Lake?

HL: No.

PG: Just, that was where you grew up?

PG: When you were at school, did you have any particular interests, like were you in any kind of sports?

HL: Swimming. We used to go up then to Lake Street. You know, where you turn to go to Tupper Lake there, off Lake, right down straight. You know where there's a lake down there?

PG: No.

HL: Lower Lake, Lower Saranac Lake.

PG: Oh, Lower Saranac Lake.

HL: We used to walk from Jenkins Street up there. Boy, it was a hot walk.

PG: I bet it was far.

HL: Yeah. And then we'd walk it back again after swimming.

PG: And you had to go up the hill too. Right?

HL: No. It was all straight.

PG: Oh, it was straight down there.

HL: I can't ... I don't know who lives on that street, you might know. Oh, I know, that's the street, you know where ... what's his name? Pedersen lives?

PG: Andy Pedersen? Lake Street.

HL: Yeah, you go past his house.

PG: So it's way down there you went.

HL: Yeah.

PG: Around Ampersand?

HL: Yeah, Ampersand Bay.

PG: That's pretty down there.

HL: Yeah, but they closed it up after a while. We couldn't go any more.

PG: Why is that?

HL: People were making a mess up there, so we didn't go; we quit going.

PG: Even then. What a shame. People are so disrespectful, aren't they?

HL: They would take picnics up there, and leave the junk there. I think Harry Duso owned it.

PG: What other things do you remember from when you were in high school? Did you belong to any clubs?

HL: The Rouge and Robe.

PG: What was that?

HL: Rouge and Robe.

PG: What is Rouge and Robe?

HL: It's like acting and stuff like that. I can't remember who had it. Maybe Miss Ford has it. Somebody had it. I can't remember.

PG: Were you in any plays then?

HL: Yeah.

PG: So you like to act. Huh?

HL: Well. *Laughs.*

PG: You could have become an actress.

HL: Yeah. I feel like it right now.

PG: You're doing great.

PG: Did you ever hold any offices, like school President or Secretary or anything like that?

HL: No.

PG: In high school, what other things did you do? Like after school, well, you said swimming. Anything else?

HL: Went walking, I guess.

PG: Any favorite hangouts? Like, were there ice cream parlors, anything like that?

HL: Yeah. You had to go downtown for that. That's about ... homework.

PG: Well, we all had to do that, didn't we?

PG: Did you work at all while you were in school?

HL: No. After I got out, I did. No, I didn't work while I was in school.

PG: Just homework.

HL: Yeah.

PG: Where did you work then, after you left school?

HL: Woolworths.

PG: Oh, yeah. Everybody knew Woolworth's.

HL: When they closed ... I ... Did you know Ethel Sintoff?

PG: I've heard the name; but I didn't know her.

HL: They owned; they bought the Saranac Lake News Company. She came ... she was a good friend of mine, so I worked for her at the Saranac Lake News Company until they closed ... until she sold it. She sold it during the Olympics when it was in Saranac Lake.

PG: Now, did that News Company become the Enterprise?

HL: No. They distributed papers and magazines, and I did the magazines – 125 dealers. Had this great big ... these papers and dealers, like Hoffman's, we had on so many magazines, and we had to put the magazine down.

HL: It was interesting.

PG: Oh, really? So did you actually deliver them too?

HL: No. They had trucks because they went down to ... they picked them up in North Hudson and brought them up. They went to Malone and Chateaugay and stuff like (*interruption to close window because of noise from a truck pulling up outside*) that with the newspapers and delivered the magazines too.

PG: Did you go with them?

HL: No. I just worked in the office.

PG: So, did you help ... I'm not sure I understand what you did with the magazines. Did you help design them?

HL: No. They just picked them up in different places; trucks would bring them; and we'd be the distribution. We distributed.

PG: So, you sorted them as to who got what. I see. Did you like put a label on?

HL: Maybe somebody ... one of the dealers would want Readers' Digest, so we'd put ... the magazines were right there; we would put on the names. It was interesting.

PG: It sounds like it was. I had never heard of that; it's something new for me.

HL: That's how they got the TV Guides and stuff like that. But she sold it; she had a chance to sell it. She sold it to an outfit in Potsdam.

PG: Ok, then. Did anybody take over the same business?

HL: I don't know. I don't think they do it anymore. I know they don't do it anymore.

PG: I wonder how they got their magazines after that.

HL: Probably from Potsdam cause that's where she sold it to. I don't know if they still have it down there or not.

PG: Oh, maybe.

PG: Did you have any other hobbies while/as you were growing up?

HL: Working crossword puzzles and search a words.

PG: What's search a word? I don't know that.

HL: Oh, no? It's in my bedroom. I emptied out my walker.

PG: Oh, is that where you have letters, and you then have to find the words within there?

HL: Yes, and circle them.

PG: I know what you mean. I used to do those too; they were fun.

HL: I guess I'm not smart enough to do crosswords.

PG: I'm sure you are.

PG: After you got out of school then and you were working, did you have any boyfriends or romantic interests?

HL: No. I didn't get my husband until 1964.

PG: Oh, my goodness.

HL: It was before that. That's the day we got married. He lived in Norway.

PG: Tell me about how you met him.

HL: Well, I worked at Mrs. Sageman's cottage when she had the Norwegian patients there.

PG: Okay. Is that the one up on Park Avenue?

HL: Yeah. She lived in the back, and she had the patients down there. I worked there delivering trays and doing a little bit of work for her.

PG: So you were a tray girl then back in the TB days.

HL: Yeah. And Dr. Bruinfield was his doctor, and he cured him. Some of them didn't make it. And he got interested in me, so he went back to Norway. He got cured, so he could go back to Norway. So we started writing to each other. I said to him ... I wrote to him "Why don't you come here?" He says, "Why don't you come over here?" So the doorbell rang one night. My mother and I were sitting there in the house. He rings the door bell. I go out, and there he was. *(Laughter)*

PG: My goodness. He must have been in love with you.

HL: Twenty years it took.

PG: So you didn't see him all those 20 years. You just wrote.

HL: Nope.

PG: How often did you write to each other?

HL: Maybe once a month.

PG: That's an amazing story. His name is? ... What was his name?

HL: Alfred R. Larsen "L-a-r-s-e-n." Most of them want to put "s-o-n." So anyway, I went back to Norway and stayed there for six months.

PG: After he came over, you went back with him?

HL: He stayed here maybe 6 months or so; then we went back together.

PG: Well, you went back to Norway.

HL: For six months until he got his green card. Then we came back again. He died in his sleep one night.

PG: How long had you been married?

HL: Pretty near twenty-five years.

PG: That's about how long I had with my husband too, so I understand. What a wonderful love story though. How beautiful. Boy, there was something between you too, wasn't there?

HL: Norway is beautiful place.

PG: So, did you go more often? Or just that one time?

HL: Just that once.

PG: How long did you stay there?

HL: Until he got his green card. Six to nine months.

PG: What did he do during those twenty years? What was he doing? Was he in the service or did he work?

HL: He was a seaman, always a seaman. The boat went down. Some of them died. He was one of them; one of the He's buried in Pine Ridge Cemetery. You know where the Norwegians are buried down there? There are 14-15 graves there. The captain's daughter is buried there; she's the one.

PG: The only woman.

HL: Yeah.

PG: That's just a wonderful story. I just love to hear about romantic things like that. I think it's great.

PG: When you were married, you lived here in Saranac Lake?

HL: Yeah. After we came back from Norway.

PG: What kind of life did you have then? Did he work?

HL: No. He didn't work. I did.

PG: You had role reversal.

HL: I was working at the News Company at the time. He went visiting some of the patients that he knew while I was working. And he loved to paint. He even painted the furnace downstairs.

PG: I could use a guy like that right now.

HL: We had this white one with black trim, so he painted the white part and the black. Then upstairs ... we had an eight-room house. We had one, two, three bedrooms upstairs. He painted them a different color; painted them all green, I think it was.

PG: What address was that; what house was that?

HL: 4 Jenkins Street. We lived there until he died.

PG: Did you have any children? No, you didn't have any?

HL: No. I married at 64.

PG: 64?

HL: 1964

PG: 1964. Let's see. How old would you have been then?

HL: I was 64 when I got married.

PG: Oh, you were 64 when you got married. Really?

HL: Yeah. I think it was.

PG: Maybe 44. It had to be 44. What year did you get married?

HL: 1964

PG: Yeah. You got married in 1964.

HL: Yeah. December 26.

PG: You would have been in your 40's then.

HL: Yeah. 44

PG: So that was late to have children. Were you sorry you didn't have children?

HL: Well, we tried, but it didn't work.

PG: That's too bad.

To clarify the above discussion and put it into perspective, Helen was born on December 5, 1924, and she and Alfred were married on December 26, 1964. Therefore, she was 40 years old when they were married.

PG: In your family, then who's still living? You have two sisters that are still living?

HL: Yeah. One lives in Virginia. The other lives in ... I think she moved towards Plattsburgh, she and her daughter. She did live in De Chantal, but she moved out of De Chantal and went somewhere.

PG: After your husband died, did you stay in your house?

HL: Yes, because I sold it after. It was too much for me – eight rooms.

PG: That's a lot. Is that when you moved to the De Chantal?

HL: Yeah. And an empty lot besides it. I had a garden there and a dog.

PG: So you like to garden?

HL: Yeah.

PG: Was it vegetables or flowers?

HL: Vegetables. It was a small one. I fenced it all in for the dog. I had a back porch that he could get off. He liked that lawn, or she liked it. I had two of them. One died, and I got another one. Peggy 1 and Peggy 2.

PG: That's cute. What kind of dogs were they?

HL: They were German shepherds.

PG: They're beautiful.

HL: One of them jumped the fence. I had a six foot fence up there, and one of them jumped it. Went up the street, and the kids brought it down.

PG: No way.

HL: They liked them.

PG: That's amazing.

PG: What kind of vegetables did you grow?

HL: Cucumbers and Brussel sprouts. Did you ever see them grow?

PG: They're on big stalks, aren't they?

HL: Yeah. I'd never seen them; that's why I bought them. And carrots and lettuce and tomatoes, cucumbers.

PG: So you had nice fresh vegetables.

HL: Yeah. All I had to do was go out ... we had a front door and a back door; I used the front door most. Because I fenced in some of the back yard. I had a cure chair out on the back porch, and I'd go out there and read. The dog would be out there.

PG: When you were a tray girl, were you not concerned about getting TB yourself?

HL: When I what?

PG: When you were a tray girl, carrying trays at the Sageman house, weren't you afraid of getting tuberculosis?

HL: No. I didn't think of it. Most of them were supposed to have been getting the cure. I used to walk from Jenkins Street to Park Avenue to work.

PG: That's quite a hike, and then you had to walk home again too.

HL: Yeah. Mrs. Sageman was a nice woman. Her son was Dr. Sageman.

PG: I've heard of them. They're well known.

HL: He died. I never saw him. I can't remember how many patients we had up there that we had to carry trays for.

PG: So, they prepared the meals in the kitchen, and then you would take them to the rooms?

HL: Yeah.

PG: Did you help with the preparation also?

HL: No. I cleaned. I was cleaning; I carried trays; and whatever else she wanted, I did.

PG: A little bit of everything.

HL: Jack of all trades and the master of none.

PG: That's the expression, but I'm sure you were very good at it.

HL: I guess so. She kept me. I worked there 'til she died. I don't know what year she died. She was right up there in her 80's or 90's when she died.

PG: You were there quite a while then. That's interesting. I don't think I knew anybody. I didn't even know what that was until recently. I never heard that. My dad cured up here too; he was in 1929 to 1936.

HL: Where did he cure?

PG: Well, he was in four different cure cottages: one on Elm Street; he was in one on Margaret Street; he was in one on Bloomingdale Avenue, and one up near you on Lake Street, called Eagles Nest that was a cure cottage for a while.

HL: It used to be football players.

PG: Yes. He was up there as well. My parents met here. My mom came to meet ... see a girlfriend of her's, and she was in the cure cottage where my dad was on Elm Street, and that's how they met. Then my dad recovered too, fortunately, like your husband did. How long did your husband have the tuberculosis? Was he sick for a long time?

HL: He got it when his ship sunk. Probably, maybe 20 years or so.

PG: So tell me what else you remember from Saranac Lake. What are the highlights of your memories? Winter Carnival? Anything else?

HL: We used to go to a circus there.

PG: Where was the circus?

HL: Down where the ball field is now. Years and years ago.

PG: How often did the circus come here?

HL: Once a year. Recently ... years ago we had a carnival down where ... used to be the park, not Prescott Park, that's the one they want to come back again.

PG: Down on Lake Flower, you mean.

HL: Somebody complained because it was too noisy; I think it was the Damps, our church members. They don't come back; they don't live here anymore.

PG: I read that you were married in the Methodist Church?

HL: Yeah. Because at that time, our minister we had retired, and the one we had (I can't remember his name), but he said, "I'd rather have you go somewhere else." So I walked down that aisle of the Methodist Church. Boy, it was a long aisle.

PG: That's a big church.

HL: Daniel Partridge was the minister; so that's where I got married, in the Methodist Church.

PG: Do you know why they didn't want you to get married in the Presbyterian Church?

HL: He didn't know too much about me. He had just gotten there, maybe a week. He'd been there a week. So he didn't want ... he'd rather not done (sic) it.

PG: That's too bad.

HL: Yeah, well. I didn't mind.

PG: You just wanted to get married? So then you started going back to the Presbyterian Church to worship?

HL: Yeah. Sixty-some years, I think, I went to the Presbyterian Church.

PG: I'm wondering who the minister was back then who had just come. Do you remember who it was?

HL: It's had so many of them. Mr. Gurley left. He was there for God knows how long.

PG: Many years.

HL: He'd come at supper time to visit you.

PG: At supper time, he'd come to your house?

HL: Yeah.

PG: Was he expecting a meal?

HL: I don't think so. He came one day, and we had this ... what looked like a jelly/jam jar and a cover on it and a snake fell out. So I said, "I can't' undo this. Can you?"

PG: That'll teach him to come at supper time. Why do you think he did that?

HL: Just to visit, I guess. He'd go visiting other places.

PG: He knew you'd be home, I suppose.

HL: Yeah.

PG: So he went to all the different parishioners and visited?

HL: Yeah. So, anyway. I can't remember the minister. I know Partridge married me.

PG: I can always look that up at the church because we have a record from every year of who came and who went.

PG: Now, did you go down into Lake Placid often?

HL: Hockey games. That must have been, maybe 4 years ago. We'd go on, I think it was on Saturday nights. That's about what was in Lake Placid anyway. Not much.

PG: That must have been the popular sport back then.

PG: Now, did you go to the Winter Carnival?

HL: Oh, yes. I've been to all of them but 2, I think it was.

PG: Is that right?

HL: I mean in Saranac.

PG: Did you ever walk in any of them?

HL: Oh, yes. I was in one for the Adult Center. Then I was in one years ago with the Republican Party. We had ... What else? There was another. I think the Odd Fellows had one too. I'm not sure.

PG: I haven't heard that in a long time. Are they still around?

HL: I don't know. I don't think so. The women had the organization, the Rebeccas; I belonged to that.

PG: And were you active in the community then with those groups?

HL: That and Eastern Star. I was ... My husband and I were head ones at one year.

PG: What kind of activities did they get involved with?

HL: Food sales and rummage sales, just like the church (*First Presbyterian*). The rummage sales - couldn't get enough to work on them. Anna was in charge of it.

PG: Anna Ferree?

HL: And the things that came in that she wanted she put away. She couldn't get anybody to work. The same ones worked every year, and it got down to maybe 2 people, so they quit them. The Methodist Church makes \$3,000 or \$4,000 on theirs. Maybe we made \$500 or so.

PG: Oh, my goodness; that's not much.

HL: She priced too high.

PG: I knew that they had done them because I had found some supplies in the closet, like pads where they had kept track of how much they charged, and then there were little containers because, I guess, they sold food while they had the sale going on.

HL: Yeah. They had sandwiches and stuff.

PG: I wondered why it wasn't successful/continued.

HL: Couldn't get the help.

PG: Well, that's true of everything these days.

HL: They were all getting too old.

PG: And today, the younger people really don't want to do that.

HL: The Methodist Church got new members, and they do a lot.

PG: I'm just looking back at my notes, and seeing when you said you went over to Norway. Are your husband's family all still in Norway?

HL: Yes. He's got 2 brothers and a sister over there yet.

PG: Are they still alive?

HL: Yes.

PG: Oh, really. So you never went back after that one trip?

HL: No.

PG: That's too bad. Did his family come here?

HL: No.

PG: That's amazing that he would just leave them all.

HL: Yeah, yeah.

PG: I'll tell you, Helen, that was just meant to be. You two were quite a team.

HL: At least I met them. I don't know what they saw in me.

PG: Well, you didn't care, as long as he did.

HL: Yeah.

PG: Did you ever go camping?

HL: Yeah. My aunt had a ... not a camp; it was a regular building ... house up near the locks. My father tented there one year.

PG: On Lower Saranac?

HL: My aunt had an inboard motorboat, and he'd take my sister and I down to Baker's Boat Landing to work, then pick us up at 5:00pm. And we'd have supper up there. Then we'd go trolling for pike.

PG: I heard there were some big ones back then.

HL: Yeah. Of course, my mother had to clean them, just like rabbits.

PG: So were there hunters in your family? Was your husband a hunter?

HL: My father. He and 2 or 3 men used to go and bring rabbits home, and my mother would have to skin them and gut them. But they were good.

PG: Wild rabbits are good.

HL: She made hasenpfeffer with them

PG: Well, she was German. Was she German? You said that. Your grandparents

HL: Her mother was German.

PG: That's interesting. Did she ever make sauerbraten?

HL: No. He brought a deer home one day, and she ... I guess they gutted it before they brought it home. So we got some of the meat. But she fixed hasenpfeffer so it was good. So she had to go down to my sister's. They lived in Prescott Park ... er ... Riverside Park – to show my sister how to do it. She'd make it at home and take it down. I'm going to show you how to do it. That's what she did.

PG: Did you like to cook?

HL: Once in a while. I was glad I got in where I am now (*referring to Neighborhood House*). My husband could cook too if he wanted to.

PG: Did you make ethnic foods, like any kind of Norwegian foods?

HL: No, mostly chicken and stuff like that.

PG: I guess whatever was available.

HL: Yeah.

PG: What else do you remember from the early days of Saranac Lake? I was thinking ... we have one of our topics as bootlegging. Did you ever know/hear anything about that?

HL: No.

PG: Did you meet lots of patients or had friends who had been patients, from other places, like other countries?

HL: No, that was all.

PG: Did your husband stay in touch with some of the other Norwegian sailors?

HL: What?

PG: Were they friends?

HL: Yes. He would go visit them because there were 3 or 4 cottages right on Franklin Avenue.

PG: You know that Pastor Joann has one of those.

HL: Yeah, Loretta Leonard's.

PG: What was her first name?

HL: Loretta. She was a piano teacher. She taught kids piano.

PG: I'm thinking that maybe Joann did mention that to me.

PG: Did your husband only stay at the Sageman house? Or did he stay at any of the other cure cottages? Or at the hospital?

HL: No. Just Sageman.

PG: Did he have any of the different treatments that they were giving in those days? Like pneumothorax? They were doing different kinds of experimental kinds of drugs and things.

HL: No.

PG: Just the rest

HL: Yeah.

PG: Sitting out on the porches. I remember my dad saying that it was so cold.

HL: At home, after we got married, we had 2 porches, a back porch. We had 3; we had a front porch, a back porch, and a sleeping porch. So he and I slept on the bed ... had a bedroom in one of the rooms, and we had these comforters with duck feathers. They were warm. We each had one; we slept out there all the time we slept.

PG: Really. I've heard ... my dad, after his curing, he always slept in a very cold room too with the windows open. I guess they got used to that.

HL: But you go from a cold bedroom to the bathroom to get a little bit of warmth. The day, the night he died, he was coming from the bathroom, and I was going to the bathroom. That was the last I saw him.

PG: Did he have a heart attack?

HL: I guess so. He was shoveling snow. He was shoveling down at the corner of Jenkins Street. Some woman paid for that. And I was doing the shoveling at my house. Most of it was the driveway and a little. My aunt and uncle lived here, and we lived here. There was a little space, so I did that. Then the plow would come and plow it all back up again. But I enjoyed it.

PG: It's nice to be out in the fresh air. I think people live longer up here because they do that.

HL: A lot of the people in here just have their breakfast and go back to bed. I don't know how they do it.

PG: That's not good.

HL: We got an activities director that they hired, and she tries to get them out walking and stuff. They won't. Dottie (*Dorothy Shene*) and I went and helped her in E town (*Elizabeth*), no, it was up the street

here at the market place. We went and helped her sell tickets to that Golf Ball Drop. Did you ever hear of that?

PG: No.

HL: I don't know about it, but we went and sold tickets. The first prize is \$2,000, and the drawing is going to be this Sunday. I've never seen one, so I hope I can get there to see it. It's going to be in Keene.

PG: That's not too far.

HL: Marcy Field. I guess there's something else going on that day too there. Some people in here, I guess, won \$2,000, and I think it is \$1,000, and there's \$500 - 3 prizes.

PG: Wow. Those are nice prizes.

HL: I hope they made enough money. There's so many things going on in Keene Valley, in Keene.

Somebody's trying to earn money for a firehouse or a fire truck. We've got that against us. Rummage, house ... yard sales. In Saranac, when we wanted to put on something, we would go to the Chamber of Commerce and ask them if there was anything on that day. If there wasn't, we'd have ours.

PG: Right, so there was no conflict. That doesn't make sense.

HL: But that Golf Ball Drop is for the building here. It helps the building.

PG: Well, that ought to be fun. Well, it's good that you have Dot too, and the two of you are active and can get around.

HL: Yeah

PG: Did you have a fall at the De Chantal? Is that what happened that brought you down here eventually?

HL: I came back from Virginia; I came back by bus, and I was in my apartment. Rip Allen? Do you know Rip Allen? Well, Shirley picked me up at the Hotel Saranac, so she brought me home, and I forgot to tell her to leave the apartment door open, and I went to get something to eat, and I passed out, and I was on the floor for 3 days.

PG: Three days you were there, Helen! Oh my goodness.

HL: I had one of these things on me, but a hell of a lot of good it did. That was in the bedroom, and I was in the living room.

PG: Oh, no. So you had no lifeline? That must have been so frightening.

HL: It was. The people were ringing the phone, but I couldn't get to the phone. So anyway, one of the tenants at the building was on my lifeline. She finally called the rescue.

PG: Do you know what caused you to pass out?

HL: Probably not eating.

PG: That's not good.

HL: Now I've got sugar.

PG: Oh, so you have diabetes. You have to really be careful.

HL: Yeah. I take pills.

PG: Where had you been? Were you visiting your sister?

HL: Yeah. My sister and all her family live down there. Instead of flying, I should have flown back. They wanted me to fly back, but I said, "No." So they got the bus to bring me.

PG: That's a pretty long trip though.

HL: It's a long trip driving to Virginia too.

PG: For sure.

HL: She's on ... my youngest sister is on oxygen 24 hours a day, and they made a trip up to Rochester a month ago, I think it was, and she ran out of oxygen. She brought 10 cans, and she couldn't find anybody to give her any.

PG: What did she do?

HL: Well, I guess the Vets, Vets Club, called Saranac Lake and gave enough to take her home. They were going to see me, but didn't have enough oxygen. So they were going to come in August. They were going

to go to Lima because they've got friends down there, and then they were going to come and see me. She calls me every night. She said that they'd changed their plans. She went to the doctor yesterday, and the doctor told her not to come. Her lungs are filled up, and he said this hot weather isn't good for you. So they're going to try to make September. It's from that damn smoking.

PG: She smokes besides?

HL: No. This caused it from smoking. One day we were at a bingo game, and she opened up a new pack. I said, "I wish you wouldn't do that." "Oh, I've done it for 47 years." She was the only one ... no, my father smoked. He smoked Camel's, the worst of butts, I guess. But I was the only one in my family who didn't smoke.

PG: Good for you. That's probably why you are still in good health.

HL: Well, I'm not in good health.

PG: Didn't you just have some kind of infection that you went to the hospital for recently? Urinary or something like that?

HL: Yeah. I think I go to the bathroom every night and get up 3 or 4 times.

PG: Still?

HL: Yeah. There's nothing they can do for it, he said. I've got a ... my roommate, but I don't see her too often. She stays downstairs most of the time, and she doesn't talk much.

PG: I guess that's a good thing in one sense.

HL: One of the aides took her off for a walk one day, and she said that she talked the ear off her. She said, "Why don't you do that when you're inside?" She said, "Nobody talks to me." She's 92 years old. Her daughter just came, after I don't know how many years, to see her. I think she's got some kind of palsy.

PG: That's too bad.

PG: So Helen, we're getting near the end of our time. Is there anything else you can think of that might be interesting to talk about?

HL: I like it here.

PG: You like it here?

HL: Yeah. Don't have to do anything. *(Laughs)*

PG: I know. I've often thought I'd like Will Rogers too, you know.

HL: They say the rooms at Will Rogers are about this big *(indicating a small size)*.

PG: The rooms are small.

HL: They say like a soap box.

PG: Especially coming from the nice place you had at the De Chantal.

HL: I was thinking that I was supposed to be going to Virginia to live the rest of my life, but I had this spell. I had my application in down there, but they didn't have any room. Nobody dies down there, I guess.

PG: Well, as long as you're happy here, I think that's great. I think we can wrap it up. I've found it very interesting. We've got a lot of wonderful background, and stories, and very rich information for Saranac Lake. Thank you.

HL: You're welcome.