

Carla Melander Neylon Reminisces, July 1992

The following is a transcription of a conversation that Kathleen Ann Markouc Neylon had with Carla when she visited in Euclid, Ohio in July of 1992. The recording was extemporaneous and made on a borrowed portable cassette player. Since there was no particular script or plan for the conversation it necessarily bounces around chronologically. I have transcribed the tape, preserving with high accuracy, its content. A number of outside interruptions occurred which can be heard on the original cassette or CD version of the conversation, but are not included in this transcription.

Carla Reminisces in Euclid Ohio

Tell me about your parents.

They were from Denmark but of Swedish parents.

It was just a jump across, but they were Swedish.

But he could also speak Finnish.

Because where we lived there were still some that he had some friends, he made friends with some Finnish but they were more Swedish than Finnish, but that's where he was born.



Carla's Swedish Mother
Esther

And your mom?

She was born in Denmark, Copenhagen Denmark.

And the reason, being Swedish, they escaped from Sweden to avoid conscription and they went over to Denmark.

Kind of an iffy situation with the people at that time.

So my mother was eight when she came from Sweden.

Well I'll say it's Sweden, but it's really Denmark.

She was eight and then there was a sister, but she wasn't well.

But I can't tell you when the sister died and her name was Carla.

That's why I got named that.

And your parents, where did they meet and how did they meet?

Oh, I don't know where they met.

When did they come to this country?

I think Jean has that all written up.

Were there any children born before they came here?

No.

No. I don't think there was because one of the girls, two girls, came with their parents but one of them wasn't well and I don't really know where she died. I can't work out that straight from anybody.

So they came to America.

My grandfather was a shoemaker.

When I say that, he was one that made shoes to fit you.

So I don't what he was, custom foot ...

And I can't remember, and his wife my grandmother, I guess she died in the 1918 flu epidemic after they were here. But my father had built a house or had it built.

He was a super carpenter, any way, and machinist both, and he would have been a great guy but did drink at the last years.

But his wife, my grandmother, died in the flu epidemic, here in Springfield Massachusetts, so my father had a house built and in the beginning we used the whole thing, two floors and the third. The children all had the third floor for themselves but after a while We had been on the second floor, any way we girls wound up having the third floor.

How nice.

And my grandfather was still working as a shoemaker.
He was?
Yeah, daily, yeah

And your father?



Carla's Finnish Father
Mauritz

Oh, and he spoiled us.
Did he?
Yea.
How?
My father was a, I guess he was an A-1 machinist and inventor.
But then he drank too much.
So he wasn't very good in the last years at all.
I don't know what year he started like that but ...
So he really was home.
But what we were doing was my grandparents were living on the first floor
and we lived on the second, but the children took over the third floor.
And the children being ... and a sister.
And her name was?
Helen.

And Dick was on the second floor?
Yeah, he was younger.
So tell me, I want to know how you and Jim met, I want to hear about the romance of Jim and Carla.
Well I was working and the hospital, Springfield Hospital, and we had a dance.

Don't ask me exactly where it was.
OK I won't.
And I met him going up to the bar for a drink and that's where I met him, at a bar.
You did?
And he had just graduated a year before from Harvard.
So you struck up a conversation with him or he with you?
Well, he slightly knew one of the girls and anyway that's how that happened.
Was he a good dancer?
He was all right until, it was when we were living on the north shore of Boston when we were living there, and I
think he had polio that year.
There was a polio epidemic,
But we didn't get it really recognized at that time.
But he started with his foot here.
Really?
Limping. He never got over that and they finally decided that.
And the epidemic just started, so they were slow on diagnosing.
Here I am in Boston where all the doctors were but that's what happened.
Now, that was before you were married?
Oh no.
That was after?
Yea.
Well, tell me more about before you got married ... how long was this courtship? Was it love at first sight?
What did you think when you met him?
Well I don't know, we just got along fine, but I did have some other doctor friends.
You did?
At the hospital.
So, how long did you date Jim before you got married?
Oh god, I don't know.

Don't ask me what year it was.

Well, I'm not asking you what year, I'm saying how long was it?

Was it a long courtship?



Early Years On The Ocean 1941

Well, I was still in training and he had just gotten a job.
And so he did come up to Springfield from the Boston area.
And after we were married we decided to ... we even lived across
the river in West Springfield and we had a flood.

Oh no ...

Was this when you were first married?

Yea.

And what happened?

Well there was so much water from a terrible storm and everything,
not in the house we were renting,

so when we left there we went to the North Shore.

Jim found a house, the first house up from the ocean.

Well it was more of a bay-ocean, beautiful place, loved it there, it was great for the girls.

Oh I bet.

What a lovely spot.

Of course at that time I only had the three girls.

You had the three girls ...

What were the early years with Jim like?

What did you do?

What were the things you liked doing together?

What was ...

I don't know, he was just interesting to be with.

Why was that?

Well he could talk about everything and you know I got more interested in books and stuff by knowing him ...

And your first child Jean was born then?

How long after your were married?

Was it fairly soon?

Oh, it was fairly soon.

But he put himself through Harvard.

Smart guy.

But then he drank too much.

Did he always drink a lot? ...

Do you think?

Yea, more than was good.

And as we say ... we're not sure, but I am sure that was during the polio epidemic and that because he didn't have
any trouble with his foot and leg before, but it clopped when he walked.

Yes, I know that. I remember he always had that didn't he?

Yea.

But that was, but then they weren't diagnosing polio then either.

So Jean was born. Now, he had already finished his education at that point?

Oh, yes.

Before you were married?

Yes.

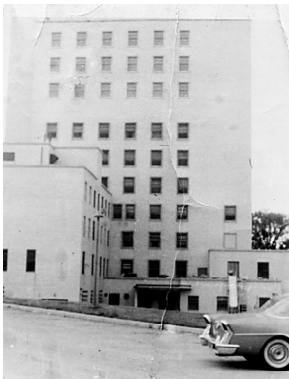
He had been out a year or so.

And you had finished your training by then?

I was already through, working and it was at a hospital dance that I met him.

That's what you were saying.

From my hospital dance.
He was a handsome man.
Yea. Very, too intelligent for me.
And too intelligent? Why?
Well, just he knew everything. But he didn't flaunt it or anything.
That's about all I can tell you.
So OK, you were living on the beach when Jean was born?
No. We were still in Springfield. We were living up on the third floor, which was really the children's floor, so we decided it was about time that we moved over across the river to West Springfield.
So you were actually living in your parents house after you were married.
Not very long.
But for a little while, after Jean was born.
So we moved over to across the river to West Springfield.
That was nice, you know, first there we were there with a tornado and all kind of lousy weather.
You know, at different times.
How many children did you have there? Who came next, Annie?
Jean, Ann, and then Lynn.
She was there also?
Yea.
In that house?
Yea.
I guess so.
Now when the girls were young, you didn't work after the children came, did you continue to work?
I didn't go back to work until we moved into Euclid on the lake.



Euclid Glenville Hospital

And here I was with a house on the lake. I didn't have to go out on the street.
You walked right through the back?
Yea.
Oh, wonderful.
How nice.
And Euclid. We had moved there before the hospital.
We watched it being built. As a matter of fact, I think it was Eric ... or was it Chris ...
He wandered over to the dirt pile that was piled up, and they had a fence there.
He was very adventuresome, we thought he was lost.
Oh dear ...
Don't ask me how old he was. He just toddled over there. Not only that, they were doing, moving, some stones in the house on the, next to us, great big huge rocks with a derrick and everything, and they swung over a couple times and I don't know, they went to lunch or what they did, it was hanging. Next thing I knew, that's were he is.

Oh no ...
Yea.
Up in the air?
Up in the air, hanging.
Did that take your breath away?
No, why?

I don't remember whether I yelled at him, because we had a picnic table there and I'm sitting at the picnic table reading the paper, not paying any attention, there he is, up in the air.
My goodness. Do you think it might have been Eric? or Chris?
No, it was Chris.
It was Chris?
Yea.

He would go out in the lake, I don't know where he got the tube, and he'd submerge himself, with this tube in his mouth, and he just sit there.

He sat under the water?

With a tube? What kind of tube?

Breathing tube. A rubber tube.

How deep would he go?

I don't know because it really gradually went down.

So would he sit there for a long time?

I don't remember that.

Oh, your boys ...

OK, so that's what Chris did. What did Eric do?

Did he do something unusual? So I know what to expect from my boys.

No, not really. I can't think of any.

I'm trying to think who was the rubbish collector.

Oh, wasn't that Chris?

I think it was Chris because ...

Didn't he collect florescent lights or something from the hospital?

Oh yea, yea.

What did he do with them?

Strung um up.

Where?

He had one room there, and then we had another room the we used for anything.

Then the big bedroom and another smaller bedroom, it was a large summer home.

He had just ... by a, one of those stoves, it was down on the first floor ...

Must have been cold ...

I don't know, I can't remember that it was that cold to complain.

So Chris strung these lights up in that house ...

Oh yea ...

He was inventive from, oh god, I don't remember how old when he started.

He was really a rubbish collector. On rubbish day, he'd go, of course on the lake, he methodically went down and looked in everybody's rubbish barrels for anything that might be useful, useable.

Good for him.

Well, yea. Yea.

And what about, and what did Eric do that was outstanding.

Not outstanding, but ...

No, nothing.

Nothing?

Nothing spectacular.

But Bruce?

No he ... you know how Bruce's disposition is now.

What about with the girls?

How did they get along with the girls?

OK.

OK.

Well, the only time was when Jean decided they should be get dressed up.

You know on Sundays, she started dragging them to church and they'd go hide.

They being? Chris, Eric and Bruce?

Or was it just Eric and Bruce?

I don't remember. All I know they sure didn't want...

They didn't want to do it.



Jean Takes The Boys To Church

What about the girls?
Did they go with her?
Oh, yea.
I used to do a lot of sewing for them.
You did?
Oh, yea.
I made most of their clothes.
I had just a little Singer portable sewing machine. It was a great little sewing machine.

You did a lot of sewing?
I used to do some knitting, but I wasn't that crazy about it.
Crocheting, I loathed.
Why?
I don't know. Don't ask me.
What's one of the happiest memories from living on the lake?
What do your remember?



Shores of Lake Erie

Being right on the water.
We had a canoe, and we had a rowboat, and, so it was really ideal.
I bet it was lovely.
Any memorable time, particularly Christmas?
Like usual, over done, over spent...
Really?
Yea, always.
Did you always celebrate Christmas Eve?
Oh, yes. Even when the children were little?
Uh, huh.
Did Jim? Was that his tradition also?
No, but he liked it.
Did he enjoy Christmas? Did he participate in it?
Yea.

He was as bad, you know.
Did he actually go out and buy gifts for the children?
Oh, god. Mostly things for boys.
Did he?
Yea.
I would say it was an ideal place to live, really liked it. Asking them, it was nice.

And we came down the street, then you had come in a driveway, and then walk all the way up.
But we had a perennial garden from the next door neighbor, along the side of that walk.
I know they have fond feelings for that spot.
The boys do and the girls as well.
Well they had a lot of freedom there, between swimming and the rowboat, I don't know if the boys ever used the canoe. And I don't remember even when we got it or why we got it or anything. Seems to me I was the only one that would go along the shore.
I want to hear about this trip to California, that's what I want to hear about.
I'm going to get your book.
Oh, you mean that little black one?
Now, why did your go there?
Well, because Jim had a, we had been in Connecticut, and he had a job offer for California, so that's why we went, but I don't even remember how much money it was. Of course they sent money for the trip, and we went.
And, but then business or chemically wise, or whatever, it wasn't anything that Jim was interested in or anything he had on his resume, and so they decided, they gave him, they weren't producing what kind of a job, they gave us

some money to come back ... to Cleveland.
So we had enough money to do it, so we said the heck with it, so we decided to go see Canada.
That sounds like a smart thing to do.
Now, so you left, and you, how many children with you?
Three or four children, I guess.
The girls and Chris.
Three girls and Chris, when we first went out to California.
What kind of car did you drive?
I don't know if it was written up in my book or not.
I'm going to take a peek then, and see.
I remember running out of ... it was coming home that we ran out of gas, or we thought we would, but we got a fill up in Cleveland.
Real smart people, well we've got this far, we got this car filled with gas, let's go to Canada.
So you weren't tired of travelling yet?
What was it like going out there?
What was it like, the trip going out, What was it like?
Carla, it says here, it was 3217 miles to Burbank.
You should keep some kind of a log.
I did.
Did, ya?
Um, hum.
I sure did, I got to update it a little bit, lets see...
Says where you stayed.
It appears that you arrived in Winslow Arizona June 28th. You left on the 19th of June, it seems.
Let's see, June 19th, Springfield, Mass, 1:00pm.
Cloudy, rain, gas.
And you had to have gas coupons.
Um hum.
Last stop in New Britain, Connecticut. Went on through Danbury into New York State.
Is there such a thing as Over The Beautiful Bear mountain?
Bear Mountain Bridge.
Um, hum.
Raining, stopped at tourist house upon hill.
Two large rooms across hall from each other.
That was your first stop.
I think one of them was a, had a cabin.
Oh really?
You were in New York on the 20th. Looks like you got 10 gallons of gas.
Raining again. Garage and new gas pump installed.
Turned clear, lunch in Leighton, PA?
Flat tire. Remember that?
You had a flat tire.
This was still during the war.
Ah, saw several coal mines and real dirty miners,
with lamps on caps. Continuous mountain road, up and down through
small mining town.
Had nice dinner in Harrisburg and slept at Texan Hall.
Do you remember that?
Um hum.
PA turnpike, through the Blue Mountain Tunnel.
You see nothing was crowded, because you're going on gas coupons ...
Um hum.
For this is the most beautiful farm country with kept, good looking barns.

Here we are in Pennsylvania.
You went through several tunnels, you seemed to be impressed with them.
Tuscarora Mountain Tunnel, more farm land then through Siblingville Tunnel.
Do you remember going through those tunnels?
No traffic. You were right, you said there was nothing. Alone on road.
Well there wasn't much traffic anywhere.
Another tunnel.
Miles more.
That's still in Pennsylvania, huh?
Um hum.
Allegheny Tunnel.
Icy curve.
Longest one so far.
Lunch at Howard Johnston.
Off the PA turnpike.
Never saw such a mountainous city.
We drove up and down and over it.
Residential section, beautiful, all houses are brick.
Then you go through the West Virginia hills.
Saw steel mill, toll bridge, Fort Steuban Bridge, and to Ohio.
Saw several pottery works and open clay pits in West Virginia.
Ohio hill and country pretty, winding roads, dinner and slept in cabin in Cambridge Ohio.
We were just there. That's just where we were.
It's lovely down there.
Well, of course, there's no traffic.
There's nothing there.
I'm sure.
That's right. Cambridge Ohio, cloudy.
You did 300 hundred some miles yesterday.
Weather clearing, have been through Ohio farm lands, straight road, clear through, drove through capitol city,
Columbus. Stopped in Springfield Ohio for lunch, possibly.
And we had to do this all on gas coupons.
Ah, ha.
Now how did that work with the gas coupons? Did you leave with all that you needed , or did you have to get
them along the way?
I don't remember exactly.
All I remember is I ran out in ... Ohio, of course we were going back to Massachusetts. So any way, I don't remember
what town it was, I'd have to read it, so they were very generous with gas coupons, so instead of being conservative
we said "oh the heck with it, let's go up to Canada."
But how did it work? Did you have to collect the coupons along the way, or did you set out with ...
I don't remember whether we had .. I just remember at that point ...
You had a little extra ...
Ya,ya.
That we really ran out.
I can't remember, it seems to me that we had to get some in Salt Lake City.
That was an experience, going in there. You can't swim in that water.
Where, in Salt Lake?
Ya.
Oh, we stopped there. I know, but did you? Did the family go in?
Did you go in and sit in the water?
Ya.
It's a strange feeling, isn't it? You can't sink if you wanted to.
It's funny.

I know.

You can't say that we were conservative people, Jim and I.

No, I don't think so.

Away we go.

OK.

Illinois, kind of so-so.

Let's see, Eppingham Illinois, was beautiful.

Two hours to get out of city.

Springfield Missouri, shale and granite rock and winding road again.

Ozark Mountains, driving all afternoon over a very winding road.

Through the Ozark Mountains, they're beautiful.

Scenery at times, scattered communities between, no real farms.

Flat tire, thirty miles before Springfield. Slept at Cordova Motel.

Stone cottage, two bedroom suite, \$7.50, separate breakfast and ...

It's kind of interesting now when you see what it cost to eat.

yea.

You've gone 1404 miles.

Is there anything about how much gas costs?

Oh yes, you've got quite a run down on the gas in the back.

Twelve gallons of gas, \$2.75.

Going across Missouri.

Seeing the Missouri miles into Joplin.

Gravel excavations, lead and zinc mines, Oklahoma, large mines, rock formations look colorful, country flat now.

Saw first small oil piping.

Had first barbecue.

Through town of some type of Indians I don't know.

Do you remember your first barbecue?

No.

Girls wanted to see feathered headgear.

Flat, flat, country, very few trees but fields of small yellow daisies.

Farms far apart.

You can see the telegraph poles stretching for miles. Through Tulsa.

Very hot on streets, but still cool in car. Saw first of oil wells and roads are beautiful.

Through Oklahoma City, oil derricks and Capitol Lawn and back yards.

Trouble with car. Car lights. Garage man, New Britain ...

Stayed at cottage on lake, not too nice.

Tried to get something from ration board, only second hand.

Did get five packages of cigarettes?

Oh yes, those were rationed.

Also?

Um, hum.

Oh my goodness, that must have been difficult.

Well I don't remember, could have been.

Through ranch lands, mostly horses, no houses since Indiana.

Locals drive in center road.

No signaling except to point skyward.

Do you remember that?

No.

I must have thought it was amusing or I wouldn't have written it.

Still don't know what for.

They crawl through towns.

Incredibly hot.

Loath to hear people talk.

Looks just like movie cowboy town.
Fields of wheat as far as I can see.
In West Oklahoma, then just stretches of scrub.
No buildings in sight.
Burnt sienna. Color of earth.
Crossing Texas Panhandle, stopped in somewhere to have tire vulcanized.
Boy, you had to do that a couple of times.
Oh god, tires were rationed too.
Were they?
Uh, huh.
So vulcanized is to get a repair, right?
That sounds like that happened a lot.
Twenty four times.
I know.
Had picnic birthday.
Now, whose birthday was that?
Oh, had picnic birthday supper for Lynn in park.
How nice.
OK.
Then you were in McClellan Texas.
So her birthday is what, the 25th?
Um, hum.
June 25, OK.
Cool driving, roads through rolling plains.
By ... something .. no houses, steer ranging, fields of wheat.
Windy, sand blowing, 114 miles to next town, population 515.
Sandstorm.
Do you remember that?
Ya, I remember the sandstorms.
Difficult to walk.
Had lunch, very hot now.
Entered New Mexico.
Land of enchantment.
So you remember the sandstorm.
Um hum.
What do you remember about it?
Well I just remember a windstorm.
I've never experienced that.
Well, when its that dry.
Winslow, Arizona.
Had dinner, girls spent rest of money.
Very time consuming selecting pottery, etceteras.
Do you remember that?
They were choosing some things, I guess, from the trip they wanted, souvenirs.
They got some bracelets.
So ok, here's when you're in Arizona.
The girls did some shopping. It was Lynn's birthday.
Seven.
You're in Cottonwood, very unexpected mountainous ride around edges, 140 curves to mile, one hour 10 minutes to do 18 miles.
Through Jerome, unbelievably steep hills.
A city with houses sliding.
City built on new streets around mountain.

Unique, after climbing for hours we finally came down at Congress Junction. Desert growth scenes. Mostly white looking desert.

And why no one ever told us you had mountains with you all the time, I don't know.

Must have been a difficult ride.

Stopped on road with flashlight so girls could see first cactus.

First what?

Cactus.

Oh.

Oh, that's neat.

Crossed California line at 6:00 am, stopped for luggage inspection, getting warm, even at this hour.

Really sandy now, with out even the recognized form of cactus.

And you realize, there's hardly any traffic, because people didn't have the gas money.

Right. Nobody was out for vacations.

Girls highly amused by palm trees.

Remember that?

The what?

Says, the girls highly amused with palm trees.

No, I don't remember that.

Ah,huh.

Breakfast at Indo Date Troves.

Cactus.

More pictures of desert.

Came into San Bernardino.

Went though orange groves.

These pictures are interesting, now I don't know.

Let me see, this is in Winslow Arizona.

Do you remember this?

I don't even know what that 's called.

Oh yes.

What is that?

It's the meteor crater.

Is that what it says?

Yea, uh, huh.

Down there.

Do you remember seeing that?

Yeah.

Looks pretty desolate.

Look at droopy draws.

I see.

Is that Chris?

There's a nice photograph.

Do you remember that?

Yea, that was on the way to Brice country, without the traffic.

I'm sure.

Here's one, Painted Desert.

What did you think of that place?

Oh Christ, we thought everything was very impressive.

I'm sure

I'd like to go there.

There's Jean without her shirt.

Painted Desert.

How unlike her.

How unlike her.



A Stop At The Painted Desert 1945

Jean without her shirt.

Oh, here's the meteor crater again.

You were wearing a skirt.

Do you not wear shorts?

No.

I don't think so.

Was it not proper to go out with shorts on?

I don't remember that either.

To be wearing a skirt in the desert.

Of course, maybe it was more comfortable.

How was it travelling with four children?

Was it a bit much?

Was it a bit much?

Was it four or was it three?

Four.

Three girls and Chris.

I guess not.

You're doing something. They were well behaved. We didn't have any problems.

Fortunately, nobody got sick.

That's right.

God only knows where you'd find a doctor.

Really.

This must have been not long before you left.

That was back into Connecticut.

Ya.

Probably before you left.

What's the date on it?

1944.

No. It was afterwards.

44.

No, it was before.

Now was this place actually there when you were in Salt Lake, this pavilion?

Do you remember that?

At the Salt Lake?

Oh yea.

That was there?

Yea.

Well that wasn't there when I was.

Oh, must be knocked down.

My goodness, that's pretty impressive.

Yeh.

It's beautiful.

I had a piece of that crystal, but I don't know what happened to it.

You did?

Maybe one of the kids has it.

Oh, I don't know.

That was, you couldn't swim in this, you know.

Oh, I know.

Isn't that crazy?

Now did you go down in the Grand Canyon at all?

Yup.

You did?



A Stop At The Grand Canyon 1945

No, we didn't go down in it.
Not that time, I at this one time later, we were up at the top looking down ...
Ah,ha ...
With people canoeing by.
Considering, we did a lot on not much money.

I'll say, I'll say.



Pigtails in Stamford 1946

Did I ever have anywhere what gasoline cost?
Yes, you did, and I'm going to find that right now.
Well here you spent two dollars on gas, tire change and a tire repair was 75 cents.
Dinner was \$5.70 ...
OK, here, 15 gallons of gas \$2.90, for 15 gallons.
Lunch was \$1.60 for everybody.
Ice cream cones for everybody was thirty cents.
Probably a nickel a piece.
Breakfast was \$2.75.

Five gallons of gas \$1.22.

Petrified rocks, forty-five cents.
Ya, I don't even know what happened to may piece.
You had some, I remember that.
I had a piece of petrified rock.
I'm sure someone's keeping it for you.
Beer and oranges \$1.75, well the price was right.
You'll have to do this. You'll have to go through this with the girls, looking at these pictures, cause they're very sweet.
They really are, and I'm sure they'll remember lots of things ...
With their pigtails ...