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Clemenson, Mary Interview

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Stockton Immigrant Women Oral History Collection

Interviewer: Mary Wedegaertner

Interviewee: Mrs. Mary Clemenson

Transcriber: Hannah Tvergyak /Lillian Hom

Interview Date: July 17th, 1980

[Tape 1]

Interviewer: Wanna tell me a little bit about what part of Holland you were born in and a little bit about your family? How many people were in your family?

Clemenson: Very few. I was born in the center of Holland, Utrecht, I lived in the Hague and Rotterdam. I studied at the University of Rotterdam. My family consisted of Father, Mother, and myself, but mother died when she gave birth to me and I was raised by my father, assisted by the nurse who was in the house for the delivery and she stayed with us for many, many years.

Interviewer: What was your father's occupation?

Clemenson: He had a factory of electrical equipment and he was also a member of Diplomatic Core. He made the business transactions between the Dutch government and other countries, sales and buying.

Interviewer: Had your mother ever worked outside the home?

Clemenson: No. That didn't happen in those days.

Interviewer: Ya, I was wondering what their views on that was.

Clemenson: Next month I will be seventy, sixty- four years old, and then women didn't work.

Interviewer: Right. Ah, how far did you go in schooling? [There]

Clemenson: University. I graduated from university.

Interviewer: Oh you did? What did you major in?

Clemenson: Psychology.

Interviewer: [Oh] So you had a lot of opportunities then?

Clemenson: Yes, yes, I did. I have been counselling practically all of my life and I enjoyed it very, very much.

Interviewer: Did you live in the same town all the time you were growing up?

Clemenson: Yes, I was born in Utrecht and I actually lived there, however when I was eight years old my father bought a home in what we call the [] of the city where I was born. It was about eleven miles outside, and it had a different name but it was still community Utrecht.

Interviewer: Can you remember growing up any particular customs or anythings that your father tried to carry out?

Clemenson: Oh yes. Many of them!

Interviewer: Can you give me a few examples?

Clemenson: Uhm, just the other day it finally came out in the open. In Holland we always let old people, an older person walk on our right side. If it is a man, then the man of course lets the lady walk on the right side whether she be younger or older. It is the most, the highly esteemed person who walks on the right side, not on the outside of the sidewalk, on the right side of the person. And the other day in my church, the minister and I had to cross a big hallway and I happened to be on the wrong side and I skirted around him and said, "You lost me", and he said, "What are you doing" and I said, "Coming on your right side." He had never heard of that custom. There are many, many differences in table manners, setting the table, ways of eating, combining food. I was very surprised getting pancakes for breakfast, I had always had crepes suzette for dessert and sweets with meat was only known to me chicken with applesauce and turkey with applesauce. But, here it's all mixed...

Interviewer: Like pineapple with things?

Clemenson: Yes, [that] was all new to me. Not new when I came to live here, because I had been here before, but I mean new entering America. Other customs, here the first time I was invited to a party I thought of it in the European way or the African way, I lived thirteen and a half years in Africa. A party in Europe was not just a get together with cake and punch, it is really with a band and dancing and gowns and tuxedos, and so I in the beginning I didn't dress right.

Interviewer: Overdressed probably, huh?

Clemenson: Yes! There are many, many differences. A younger woman will not call an older woman on the phone just for a chat. She will either write a note or go pay a visit. She may call the older lady to ask if it is convenient to come over [here] that does not exist. I get calls from children of twelve or fourteen years of age. Also [being] called by your first name by young children and practical strangers. The grocery clerk in the store when he sees my cheque says, "Hi, Mary, have a nice day" and after almost twenty two years it still strikes me as funny. I appreciate it, I think

it's very nice, it's very easy going but if you haven't had that all your life [long] then it is strange. I am glad I became a Mrs. in Europe because I was very, very proud of the first time the butcher called me Mrs. I would have missed out on that here, they would have said, "Hi, Mary" before and after marriage. [Excuse me there going down with my table cloth if I don't stop it]

Interviewer: [Right right] Those are some interesting observations.

Clemenson: Also, my first shopping sprees in the United States were rather difficult because everything is wrapped differently, packaged differently, displayed in different areas. For example, toilet paper and paper napkins in Europe are placed in the paper department [along] with the stationary, you don't get that here. You have to read each item before you know what's in it. And the names here, I was laughed at when I talked about the San Joaquin county or valley. Having lived in Spain I pronounced it the Spanish way [and people went ha].

Interviewer: Is that right. Now did your father remarry when you were growing up?

Clemenson: Never. When I was sixteen he asked me if I would have preferred that he had remarried, and my immediate answer was, "What would we have done with a strange woman in the house?" because I didn't have the faintest idea of what a mother really was. As a matter of fact I was afraid of mothers because as I grew up from the age of six on [till] about twelve or fourteen I use to come home from school with girlfriends to their homes and these strange ladies who put those kids on their laps and pat their legs and ask all kinds of confidential questions and I didn't like that and I was afraid they would do it to me. And so when he suggested or asked if I would have preferred he would remarry I was afraid a woman in the house would just hug and kiss me and ask me all kinds of things that were none of her concern. And when my first baby was born or not right after she was born but when she was probably two years old we had a little game. When I had dressed her on the dresser and she was ready, I would step back, stick out my arms, and she would jump in my arms, and I would let her down. And one day I did that and she put her arms quickly around my neck, kissed me and said, "I love you," and I let her down and thought, isn't she lucky she got a mother she liked. And then I realized, no this is normal, I am abnormal.

Interviewer: Did you have any kind of a close relationship; did you say with the nurse that [was who] was in your house?

Clemenson: No Uhm, I liked her but she was only in charge of washing my clothes and keeping my room clean, making my formula and later on my food, my vitamins. It was my father who fully educated me. I had, there was a communication door between his room and mine, and when I woke up in the morning I would say, "Papa" and he would come and from there on I would be his. And he brought me to bed at night. He was father, mother, brother, sister and playmate.

Interviewer: So you never really felt neglected at all?

Clemenson: No. Oh, no not at all. I had a wonderful childhood. I missed a lot of things but since I had never known them I did not miss them until I was much older. I never missed a mother until after the nap I took when my baby was born. Then I missed a mother who would share with me this baby, because even a husband does not share it the way a mother [would share]. That's the first time I missed her and I would [almost] say the only time. There have been moments and there still are moments that I wished I had had a mother. I had never learned to do my nails. When other kids learned to do their nails, I had nobody to go female shopping with, but at that time I didn't know it. As my children grow up I filled in gaps in their lives, and then noticed it was a gap in my life, and there will always be a gap. And now that my daughter is seriously ill, now I think of her, it's a, I mean of my mother. [Who] At that time I didn't know.

Interviewer: [Back] back to the question about customs a little bit, were there things that your father tried to do at the holidays [say] that you have continued to do with your family?

Clemenson: Oh yes. [Yes] We had to give up a lot of things. For example Christmas, is altogether different in Europe than it is here. In Holland, we believe in Santa Claus who's birthday is the fifth of December, and he then during the night puts the gifts through the chimney or if the family can afford it, visits the family personally and [throws] out the gifts. Christmas in Europe is all the children, children in law, grandchildren flock to the parents Grandparents home in the afternoon on Christmas eve, and the children are bedded early and picked up again at eleven o'clock at night, and the whole family walks to church, protestant or catholic, usually through the snow. And church bells are ringing and everybody is at the midnight service, then comes home and has a breakfast and goes to bed again. And then Christmas day visits are made to the other side of the family. The only gifts that are exchanged at Christmas are homemade, handmade things for the grandparents they are visiting and the other members of the family. There is a lot of [needle] craft and hobby craft going on in those days.

Interviewer: Some people are getting back to that quite a bit now too.

Clemenson: Yes, I'm still at it.

Interviewer: I didn't mean to interrupt you, if you have more to say about the Christmas celebrations.

Clemenson: Then I'll [long] back to it. The atmosphere. Even my children now, [nowadays] now they come home. See we have combined it, on the fifth of December we still give the grandchildren little gifts, and then at Christmas we have accepted the habit here of all the gifts under the tree. But, they still come here for Christmas eve afternoon and the tree is up and the gifts are under it and the big people first have a drink, and the little people are playing games. And then we have the Christmas dinner, the turkey and the whole trimmings, and then we open the gifts. Now my daughter's asking to have the Christmas dinner either earlier in the afternoon or much later at night and go to candle light service. It still is in them that they want that [back]. It is very hard to do because of the age of the grandchildren, they will be too tired if they have to be active from two o'clock in the afternoon to two o'clock in the morning.

Interviewer: Of what faith are you?

Clemenson: My father was Lutheran, my mother was catholic, and so he had to promise to raise the child [in the] catholic religion, which he didn't do until I was eight. Then he began to have a priest and minister instruct me at the same time.

Interviewer: At the same time?

Clemenson: Yes, and I played one [out] against the other! I became protestant, and living in Africa and Spain being protestant was out and so for many, many years we could not go to church. In the meantime the children were born and they were brought up according to the principle that my father had, god is [law], and that's the way we brought the children up, without going to church because there were no protestant churches. And then when we came here into America almost twenty- two years ago we began to look around for a church. My husband was Baptist and I was Lutheran and we ended up all of us in [First] Presbyterian church. And I've been a member eighteen years, my husband five years and then he died, and my one child, my sick daughter, is still a member and my healthy daughter married a Presbyterian and neither one is a member anymore. They strayed.

Interviewer: [Right] That happens.

Clemenson: Yes! They do go to the Presbyterian Church [from] time to time but they are not active members.

Interviewer: Are you, have you and your husband been active members ever since you've been here in Stockton [or]?

Clemenson: My husband passed away sixteen years ago and my husband was sick when we came here and it took five years. Doctors in Europe had said that maybe he would not make the trip alive, but we kept him alive for five years and he was active going to church for the first three years, not active in [convocation], meetings and all that but, [then] last two years he couldn't even go to church but the children kept on going and I kept on going one more year. And then the last year of my husband's illness I couldn't go, [but immediately there after I went again].

Interviewer: Yeah, I think I need to back up a little bit here and ask you a little bit more about your years in university. Now your father still stayed in the same town all through the time you were going to school?

Clemenson: Yes, our home was there and we came there for birthdays, Christmas vacations, in between, but we were all over.

Interviewer: That's the time you traveled all through Europe?

Clemenson: Yes, with him also too. The Netherlands [India which] is now Indonesia and every country of Europe, Berlin, Paris, London, Madrid, Rome wherever, and as I said Indonesia. And then I

met my husband, [] met [my husband] in Africa and we married in Spain and went to Africa traveled all over Africa and lived there for thirteen years, and then went to Spain and lived there for five years and that's when he got sick and then we came to [California].

Interviewer: What was his job that [you] [] ...?

Clemenson: Electrical Engineer, building power plants.

Interviewer: And where were most of your children born?

Clemenson: [Holland], during the five years of the war in Holland, we were stationary then.

Interviewer: For five whole years.

Clemenson: Yes, and it was no fun.

Interviewer: And you have the two girls?

Clemenson: Two girls, yes. [That's it]

Interviewer: Okay. What uh, did you have any, what major problems can you remember during the war years? [That you were]...

Clemenson: That's a loaded question: starvation, bombings, death, concentration camps. We hadn't been in it, but we lost twice everything we had to the [bombardments]. Fear, grief, persecution, murder you name it.

Interviewer: Did you have other people coming in your home or did you hide people out or anything like that?

Clemenson: Oh yes, oh yes. I particularly was very active in the underground. My husband couldn't do anything because of his age, he [had] what we call "had gone on," disappeared, because if he had been out in the open they would have recruited him for the army, the German Army. So in Holland you have these pointed roofs and yet on the top floor of the house the rooms are straight so there is a triangle space between the wall of the room and the roof and that's where he was. And we had warning systems set up if a German came into the street there was always somebody at the window watching. That person whistled and immediately each [one] in the house knew what to do [to] get him hidden. And when the Germans asked me where he was, I said "Well I'll be glad if you find him, he left me with two kids!"

Interviewer: I see, that was good way of doing it yeah!

Clemenson: "Go After him!" He heard me say that several times.

Interviewer: So uh, your kids were just born and were in preschool years while you were there...

Clemenson: Oh yes. They, the oldest daughter, well there is only one year difference in their ages but the oldest daughter went to school to kindergarten two years and the little one, one year. They were three and four when we [left] when we were free. The war was over in May 1945 and we left in June '46 [1946] as soon as we had passports again and because to be hidden from the Germans we all had destroyed our identities and the city record hall and all that. I had eight different names and professions during the war.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Clemenson: If I had done, I was working in the underground and they were behind me I just changed from [clerk] to nurse and I put powder in my hair and stayed with underground friends for a while to change my address. And so after the war we were all ask to come and please tell who we were and when we were born. That was all destroyed.

Interviewer: Did you have help in your home with your two girls while you were involved in these activities?

Clemenson: Yes, I had a maid and I got a second maid because I was involved in a bombardment that [hid] a home for unwed mothers and I went to see if I could help and I brought home a young girl and two babies, hers and another one, we didn't know who's that one was. But since I had [a] basinet and the crib and a [] and only one kid myself that still needed the crib I had space for two more so I brought those two home and the young girl remained my maid, and I took care of the two babies. It was a mess.

Interviewer: I just thought of something, I want to back up just a minute, hope I don't forget where we were but uh, did your, uh [did your] was your father bilingual, or where did [how did] you learn your English?

Clemenson: Uhm, since we were traveling so much when I was young I could not go to school regularly and so my father took a tutor with him and uhm on our tips and I had an English nanny and I had a French [] and I had a French [bun maid]. [and] I don't remember how I learned German but I learned it. Those languages- French, English and German- are mandatory in Holland. So somehow my tutors must have taught me them, but I have spoken all those languages from practically from birth.

Interviewer: [But you and your] father spoke Dutch to each other?

Clemenson: Yes, he and I always spoke Dutch and then with whoever took care of me in which country I was that is the language I spoke. But the same thing for our children, they learned the languages [of] of the countries we went to and when they were dreaming out loud at night it was always one sentence in three languages.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Clemenson: They could be reading a book when they were fourteen, fifteen, sixteen and I would walk by and close it quickly and say, “what language is this in” and they would think, I think it was Spanish [wasn’t it]. Immaterial to them what they were reading or speaking.

Interviewer: Do any of them still speak Dutch? Any of them, I speak as if you had more than two. Do either of your girls speak Dutch?

Clemenson: All three of us only speak Dutch when we want to talk about the grandchildren and we don’t want them to hear. But we have lately had to switch to French because the oldest boy begins to understand what it’s all about.

Interviewer: Do your daughters want your [children or your] grandchildren to, to learn Dutch? To be able to carry that language on.

Clemenson: Not particularly no, and I’m not for it either. We have taught them a few endearments in Dutch and a few standard sayings. For example they will say, [], that means go to the table, dinner is ready, things like that. But, Dutch is not a useful language in the world. As soon as you step over the border of Holland, we cannot do anything. They are all more or less trained in Spanish, we speak quite a lot of Spanish with my daughter, and they pick it up, and they pick it up from TV and the oldest one gets it [now in] school.

Interviewer: yeah, okay. That pretty well answers my question about language then. Uh where did you go directly after the war that year?

Clemenson; To Tangier, north Africa. That was what you call an open port. We wanted to know that we were [is everything all right?]

Interviewer: right, I just wanted to make sure I caught it when it got to the end.

Clemenson: We wanted to make sure that the children would be able to stand the climate before we would really settle down. And so we went to Tangier, north Africa and uh, they stood the climate better than we did, so we decided to stay. And we went all over [Africa], where ever power plants were needed.

Interviewer: How about their schooling? Did they usually go to private schools or were they tutored or?

Clemenson: Our children? They went to the school of the country that was [nearest by] so that they would have to learn the language, the people, the food, the customs, everything.

Interviewer: were you always in these places at least a year so that they finished...

Clemenson: Oh definitely. Usually two years, minimum two and a half. And when we were in Leopoldville in Africa, we had been there six months the two little girls, and they then were about seven and eight and came home from school and said, “mommy and daddy, we have seen

the country, speak the language, and we can do the cooking. Where are we going now?" They were gypsies.

Interviewer: So they, they enjoyed the trips [when they were out]?

Clemenson: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Did they ever reach the point where they didn't want to leave a particular country or..?

Clemenson: Did, or did not.

Interviewer: They did not. They did not want to leave because of friends?

Clemenson: Yes, not because of the country but because of having made friends when they were older and they had to leave those friends behind and that also began to bother me. The friends always had [bothered me] but began to bother me when I became older was that when I made friends and I came in their homes and became familiar with their lives, they would tell me, "that's my grandmother's chair, that is the church where I married were the children were baptized, that's the school I went to and now my kids are going to" I didn't have [those roots]. I had always [rent] apartments that were furnished and I begun to feel that I would [say] since I was thirty, [thirty or] thirty-five. And I was very, very happy to go to America and have things of my own and I enjoyed buying all the furniture and I enjoyed installing it and when I had lived there six weeks I woke up in the morning and walked into the living room and thought, "am I going to have this here till my dying days? I want out!" Then it all of a sudden, pushed me down I needed change. I had change all my life and all of a sudden I thought, "I'll never get out of this prison again! I'm caught" So, but that wore off.

Interviewer: but that feeling wore off two. When you basically came to the states when your husband got sick then.

Clemenson: Yes.

Interviewer: [And he] had to quit working?

Clemenson: Yes, he didn't know it. According to what he knew, we were going to the states and were having a [year of vacation], going to recuperate. The children didn't know any better either but we knew, I knew. The doctor said [he told me he would], never [get to] going to work again. And that is why we settled in Stockton because a daughter's first marriage was here and in the first two weeks that we were here we made a [trip] with us through all of California with the intention that I would choose where I wanted to live and I wanted to live in [San Francisco] but I said Stockton, because I knew that's what [he] wanted [or needed].

Interviewer: But you had been here to the states previous to that [you said].

Clemenson: Yes, yes with my father and I don't remember any details

Interviewer: have you and your husband ever considered going anywhere besides here? Say, he hadn't gotten sick and had retired would you have settled anywhere else?

Clemenson: No. We never thought of that because he, the idea of retiring was far, far away from him. He was fifty-six when he got sick and we never, I had taken it for granted we would end up in America. But, we had never actually made plans it was too far away, until he got his heart [ailment] sixty-one percent enlargement, which they could only bring back to thirty-one percent. A slamming door could have killed him.

Interviewer: Is that right.

Clemenson: [Is there anything of value that they have there?] Do you like cats?

Interviewer: I have not been around [that much I am], more comfortable with dogs but, you know, they don't bother me.

Clemenson: You know you're not supposed to be on [the] lap, get down! [Took advantage]

Interviewer: when you and your husband were raising your girls, who would you say was the disciplinarian in the family?

Clemenson: I was, because my husband saw very much the difference between American education and European education. He wanted them to be raised the European way, strict, loving, patiently, understanding but strict. There were very few rules that they had to adhere to. The rules were explained, why they had to be, and then they were expected to strict to it. If a new rule was established they had three chances to violate it, fourth time would be a penalty.

Interviewer: And who decided on the penalties?

Clemenson: I did. I did. The few spankings that have been doled out came from my husband, only one daughter needed that, the other one was the easy going type. Her principal was [why did you go against the stream] you'll end up swimming alone anyway. The other one tried to get around it quite often.

Interviewer: What type of penalties did you use? Like grounding them or taking away privileges or?

Clemenson: Yes, a form of grounding. In Europe we don't know that name but, for example we moved into a huge apartment in Madrid and the kitchen was in the back and there was a long hallway and a short hallway to go from the door. And the children were at that time nine and ten, old enough to be out alone and they went out, four, five, six times each per afternoon . That made the maid [flip flop] all the way to the front door to open the door for them and we told them that the maid worked hard and should be sheltered and not be misused. And therefore two keys were hung by the front door and when they went out to show out the dog or to get an ice cream or to say hi to a friend, to take the key, so that the maid could stay where she was. And three times we would forgive it if it [had been] forgotten, that fourth time was penalty. Well the oldest one of

course forgot it the fourth time, and she was scheduled to go with her girlfriend from Africa who came over to Madrid for forty-eight hours, she was scheduled with her to go with her to the movies. And then she forgot the key for the fourth time and was suspended. The reason was, you don't consider the maid, we don't consider you. A [bargain] session was set up, "mum I'll never do it again, forgive it this time," no, those are the rules. The girlfriend came to pick her up and of course there was a conference in the girl's room [at this point] and then the girlfriend came and said, "Mrs. Clemenson, she will not go to five movies, if you let her go now."

Interviewer: They can always come up with things like that.

Clemenson: And we said no.[And] It hurt us.

Interviewer: Oh yeah.

Clemenson: It definitely hurt us, maybe deeper than it did her. And finally the youngest daughter went with the girlfriend to the movies, and my oldest one was sitting in her room crying. I was sitting in the living room crying and then I went to her and said, "let's make the best of this afternoon." And she never carried a grudge, and we had a nice English tea together. And I explained to her that we had to teach her this way, because someday she would have a job and if her boss told her to cover her typewriter and she forgot it five times, she would be fired, and go to another job, a lesser one because of a poor recommendation. Whatever she understood and accepted of it at that time I don't know, but once she accepted a job as a, well she called it a paper shuffler, at an official finance [here] in Stockton for two-hundred and twenty-five dollars a month she did cover her machine every night. And she worked until her marriage and ended up being manager of an official finance in San Francisco. And at one time when she was promoted to San Francisco, she said, "it's because I cover my typewriter, you taught me!" So she has eventually accepted it. Also the children had the rule, eight o'clock clean up your toys, books, games, whatever, take your bath and be ready for bed at nine. And we always had to shuffle them around from eight-thirty to nine to get it all done. So one day we asked them, I bought a play clock, and I said, "can you girls tell time?" And of course they were very [indigent] because they could know how to tell time. And I tested them and they told time beautifully and I said, "well you know what you have to do between eight-thirty and nine, and in the morning from seven to eight-thirty. Show out the dog, clean the cats sand bowl, feed the bird, take a bath, get your hair braided, have your breakfast, and be ready [at] eight-thirty for school." Yeah they knew it all by heart, from now on you're on your own. If you don't stick to it there will be a penalty. And for a week maybe ten days they stuck to it, but it slacked down, slacked down and finally one morning they were not in time for school. Well, they would have been in time for school if we had let them get away with murder. That meant, no braided hair, just loose, no teeth brushed, no breakfast, no dog shown out, not cat sand bowl cleaned, no bird fed, and [run out]. And mommy said, "hold it," "yeah but its eight-thirty," "I don't care." We woke you at seven, what you do in between is up to you, your duties are still waiting." So they had to do it all and of course it was nine-forty when they were through and they asked if they could take a cab. And we said, "if you

can afford it” and they couldn’t afford it. So they ran out of the house and [we called] the principal and said, that and that happened, and we want them not to be forgiven because it was the first time, we want them to get the full [load]. And they got the full load, they had to come back three afternoons from two till four and so, from, they had a lot of extra homework and when they came to the dinner table they both had sour faces so my husband said, “I don’t like those faces, go to your room.” And they went without dinner. But from then on everything [went automatic] no more trouble. It’s tough to punish hard.

Interviewer: It is, it takes a real knack and a real desire to

Clemenson: And it hurts tremendously, but you only have to do it once and then [they figure it out].

Interviewer: I think that’s very admirable.

Clemenson: Well I have always said it is much easier to scorn a child than to raise it. Much easier. When my youngest daughter, she was the first one to get married and the first one to have a baby, when she was pregnant, I was worried about her child because her husband was a spoiled brat. Coming from a family with two other brothers and a younger sister, spoiled, spoiled rotten. And I thought, that’s going to be my grandchild too. [And] So while Sunday I had [them] and after dinner we sat together and my daughter said, my son in law was there, she said, “one thing we don’t like about your [world] mom, is that we’ll never know in advance whether you can be free to [serve the baby]” and I said, [what do you mean] and [of course] she said to babysit the baby. I said, “oh yeah, well” so, we can never make a date with friends for sure. I said, “[Well] in an emergency you can always ask John’s parents” and she said, “oh no, we’ll go visit them with the baby, but we won’t let them take care of it. We don’t want a spoiled brat.” and I felt sorry for my son in law, so I said, “John, she doesn’t mean it that way” and he said, “oh yeah, we want another Dutchie.” And they got two Dutchies. [Very firm]

Interviewer: So this certainly carried over to your daughters [marriages], to the raising of their children.

Clemenson: Oh yes [oh yes], and another thing that carried over was that our hatred for, or rather against [instalment dates]. We have told [Carla] and John, well they met when she was eighteen and he was nineteen and we [knew right away] this is going to be it and he went to or they went through pinning, and going steady, whatever, I don’t even remember the order.

Interviewer: That’s...

Clemenson: And we gave a yes for everything. He asked, he asked “can I pin her or can I date her, or can I go steady,” whatever. And we always said yes and he became more and more at ease, and finally he said after about a year, year and a half , “can we [be] engaged.” And he was pretty sure he was gonna get a yes, [and] he got a no. He fell off the [room] he was practically a member of the family by then. And we said you can be engaged when you enter your last year of college, and we will give you a European engagement party with rings and flowers and [guests] and

everything. And you can get married when you have a job, [when you of course graduated, when you have a job] when you have a thousand dollars in the bank, when you have everything in the house that you need paid for. If you only have two chairs when we come to visit and I have to sit on the floor, if there is one item that isn't paid for [you'll never see use again]]. And he, uh,...

Interviewer: That's quite a bit, quite heavy

Clemenson: Yes. They had about three years ahead of them [then] and the two of them went after that of course, first [conference] and then [went to] his parents. And while he was bringing her back home, his mother called me and said, "you'll never make it." But we made it. She said, "they will elope, or she will get pregnant." And we said, "she knows the price," and we made it.

Interviewer: Did your daughter indicate how she felt about those ultimatums or did she know you were gonna say those things to him or?

Clemenson: Yeah, at the time I don't think she liked it, I know she didn't. But, and we got a lot of digs, "so and so married, and so and so eloped, and so and so has a baby, and so and so this," but it took a few years until she began to say, "and so and so divorced, and so and so did not get married and the baby [is there]." And also when they were married and they went on the honeymoon and they did have everything paid for in part, of course we had helped, I bought a new refrigerator and they got my old one, his parents bought a new washing machine and they got the old one. But uh, there was [one thing] that wasn't paid for and they had more then they needed. And when I picked them up from the honeymoon I said, "when am I going to have my first grandchild?" And John said, my son in law, "when we have the layette paid for, the nursery installed and paid for, the money for the doctor and the hospital in the bank, plus a thousand dollars extra if something happens, she'll go off the pill." And I waited four years for that grandchild.

Interviewer: Would you say there was a sort of joking matter at that time?

Clemenson: Oh yea, oh yes. The relationship between my son in law and me is almost better than with my daughter. She always says, "people always think he's your son and I'm only the daughter in law!" [laughing]

Interviewer: Well I think that's certainly good a principles [though that you] set.

Clemenson: But it isn't easy marrying. It is not easy. I would never do it again, I am so glad I have grandchildren instead of children it's so much easier to love grandchildren than to really love your children.

[End of Tape 1]

[Start of Tape 2]

Interviewer: [But] You were involved in a lot of counselling. Ah, were you employed all through their growing up years?

Clemenson: Yeah. I began to counsel when I was twenty and my first counselling was a group of mothers, which you would call [here] welfare mothers. And that was uhm, about [the] toys that were good for the child and educational. And I felt crazy because I didn't have a child and they all had two, three, four, five or six and I had no financial worries and they did. And here I was telling them about the [paint sets] and [the thing] the shape that and that and they were all much older than I was and when I was at the end of my [tirade] one of the mothers said, "well, the lids of two pens and a [bundle] of keys is easier." And I thought, "you're so right!" Theory and practice were far apart, it was my first group counselling, but I have always counselled criminals. And when we [were moving and]...

Interviewer: [Oh]

Clemenson: Here in America, I can't because I am not an American. And that the state would [] I have counselled volunteer. [] and therefore I had my pick of who I [took] and who I didn't and I have had very interesting cases, very rewarding cases.

Interviewer: So you've had all sorts of [criminal] cases then.

Clemenson: Yes, yes. Double murder, and forgery. I had one kid [that] began to steal when he was five, and I got him when he was eighteen and in the eighteen years that he had lived he had done twenty years of prison on paper because of parole he had come out again soon, so he could squeeze twenty years of prison into eighteen years of prison into eighteen years of living.

Interviewer: So most of this was individual counselling [and then]?

Clemenson: Yes, individual.

Interviewer: And , did you do any group counselling for criminals, or is that not feasible?

Clemenson: No. I do not believe in group counselling to criminals and that's why I've always turned it down. As a matter of fact, we don't believe in counselling. I've done it with pleasure and as I say it has been very rewarding, but, I have also learned that you cannot reform a person. What he is, at the age of twelve is what he will be the rest of his life. The only result you can get from counselling is that you can almost prove to them with pencil and a pen that it is more advantageous to follow the straight and narrow. But, that doesn't make him an honest person. No matter how long a thief has been honest, I am convinced that if you give him a written guarantee that he can rob so and so bank at that and that time without getting caught, he'll do it. Counselling has to be to cut down on active criminals but not to make them good people, they won't ever be. An egotistical person will be an egotistical person no matter how you preach to them and let them experience that if they give they get more in return. Because I know they will then give, but to get more in return not out of their hearts. I mean you turn your back and they'll

take. It's a rough thing to say, that being in counselling and you don't believe [in] it. I feel it is a necessity because you, you're result [is that you] keep them straight for a year to twelve, fourteen, twenty years maybe the rest of their lives but you have not made an honest person, you have not made a good person. You have made a person who understands that he gets better off if he does as you do.

Interviewer: I see what you mean. Did you ever do the other type of work in between your jobs as counselling?

Clemenson: Yes, in the foreign countries on the bases where my husband worked I was interpreter and personal director, which was very interesting. Working with natives, I wrote articles about, well the title was, "Babylon [Red] Earth" and that was about a certain [] that in north and middle Africa, two air bases, and a, we always came in the first group, five or ten Americans were sent ahead and we lived in Quonset huts until everything was built up. And then we began to hire and my personal office was a Quonset hut and I was in the middle and on one side was the staff that dealt with the natives and on the other side was the staff that dealt with the Americans. And it was fantastic to see all these different nationalities come through the same gate and for the eight or ten hours of work, shed their native background. [stop] And become what we wanted them to become, whether it was dish washer, or tar pourer, or ditch digger or electrician. The Mohammedans, the only thing they kept was at noon, pray to the east, but they ate the food with the Frenchmen and they build up their own languages, it was fantastic! And then the Americans of the other side who were the bosses, and who couldn't talk with them -practically no one could speak [another] language- and then I was called as the interpreter. And how could I explain to an American that this guy really had to lay on his knees, bend to the east and that he had to leave him alone?

Interviewer: That would be a little hard!

Clemenson: And then the Americans wanted to be nice to them and let them drink the beer and the wine and then they became giddy and... it was very, very, nice.

Interviewer: You seemed to have lived [such an] interesting life with all that travelling.

Clemenson: Yes.

Interviewer: That's such an advantage for yourself and for your girls as they were growing up.

Clemenson: People now sometimes ask me since I have been a widow for so long, "Aren't you lonesome?" No. I'm alone but not lonesome. I have so many memories, I can sit here knitting and just go through periods of my life that were [fantastic]. I was glad when it was over because as I said, I wanted [roots] I wanted something that was my own. But, it was a beautiful life.

Interviewer: Uh, when you first got back here to Stockton, course, I'm sure it was difficult because your husband was ill. Where there others big adjustments that you had to make or anything when you, there were a lot, huh?

Clemenson: I'm still trying.

Interviewer: Language at least that wasn't one of your problems.

Clemenson: No, no. Although, this was funny. I had always made crossword puzzles in French and Dutch and when I came to America and got the Stockton Record, I made Stockton Record crossword puzzles. Six across and six down, it was all I could find. Now I just rattle them off. A crossword puzzle is language on its own. And I had to learn that when I came here...

Interviewer: I see.

Clemenson: [And] Even the big one on Sunday morning, no trouble. Even in a set time I can do it. Now I'm working on the Chronicle. I don't know if you make crossword puzzles?

Interviewer: Not too much.

Clemenson: Ooh the Chronicle is tough.

Interviewer: Not very often anyways.

Clemenson: Again I began with six either way. Now I almost get them done, but not in set time. But, over the years you learn that language by its self. And then when I went into insurance, that's a language in its self.

Interviewer: Yeah, what prompted you to go into insurance?

Clemenson: Life, health, tax exemption, state planning, partnership, business, whatever! Everything, but casualty. And I had to learn another language again. There is no trouble for me now anymore, but the funny part of it is, I couldn't sell insurance in any other language.

Interviewer: Right. How did you happen to choose to go into insurance?

Clemenson: I didn't choose it. When my husband had passed away I had to go to work and as I said, I couldn't work for the state because, [not being] an American...

Interviewer: That's right.

Clemenson: And I had two friends, one [owned] employment agency and the other worked in that employment agency. And they knew that I wanted to go to work, but they knew I was a difficult case. I'm just not made to sit behind a desk and answer the phone, or work a type writer all day. I did that though, for four months. I died. I died. So they hadn't actually done anything, and then the manager of the agency here in Stockton, happened to come into that agency and ask if they

knew of anybody, female, who could be trained to become an agent, because they had fifty men agents and no females. And they said, no they didn't. And then the friends, the two friends got together and said, "Mary would be beautiful for it, but I'm sure she doesn't want too." Because, both my friends knew that I hate money. My counselling has taught me that that each case comes down to money. The cause of each crime, even the cause of each nervous breakdown is money. Adultery, too much money or maybe not enough, stealing- too much, drinking- too much. I despise money, and both knew that and they said, "well insurance is money and she won't do it!" So they called this manager and they said, "well, we have somebody, but you'll have a hard time getting her and don't say we told you. Go see what you can do, she hates money." So one Saturday afternoon I was taking a nap after house cleaning- at that time I was living in a Victorian home and I worked myself to a frazzle to keep it clean- and at two o'clock I took a bath and lay down on the couch and the doorbell rang. I wasn't in a very good mood. And a very nice looking gentleman, a very young man was there and said he wanted to talk to me and he was from Cal [Investment]. I said, "oh gosh, insurance." But he was too nice to just slam the door and he told me what he wanted, and I said, "I hate money." And he said, "yeah I can see your point, but why don't you come to the office and I'll show you a couple of cases, where the right amount of money and the right time, well handled, can do a lot of [good]." Well Monday was far off, and he was nice so I said, "okay," so I came in and indeed he showed me what money can do. I said, "okay, you won that point but I can't sell!" That another thing I didn't like- business. Because in business, if I buy that glass for fifteen cents and I sell it to you for twenty five I'm in business but, I'm dishonest, because, [in my ideal] it cost fifteen cents. So business was the other side of my mind, and he said that, "yes you can sell", I said, "no I cannot sell!" So we made a bet, he would give me six leads, and if I sold four I would admit that I could sell, and if I sold two he would admit I could not sell. If I would sell three, we would start over. I sold five. And I said, "yeah that was just coincidence, these people needed it. And he said, "okay, well we will do a couple more." And then the main office wrote, who is that? Because I wasn't licensed, I wasn't trained, he had oriented me for these few cases. So then I went in training and I, for years he would say, "Now Mary, I think you should do business" just wait and see if I make it. 'Cause I was convinced this was just coincidental. Now that I have been in it for fourteen years [yeah its a beautiful thing].

Interviewer: And you've stayed with the same company?

Clemenson: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: and what did you say the company was?

Clemenson: California Western States Life Insurance. I work it all together different though. The many people that I will not sell to, because I know they can't afford it, they have enough or they are not reliable, they will write it today and throw it overboard six months from now and then they are set against it because they have wasted the money, not knowing that they are to blame. I have a totally different relationship with my clients, I do some business insurance when it happens to

come my way, I will take care of it, I'm licensed for it and I'll do it, and I'll do a good job. But, I don't care for it, I'd much rather, as my manager calls it, "she does the mom and pop business." I love to have a young married couple and insure them and they buy their home and set that secure for them and then come the first baby, that's what I like! When they're sick, I have the health insurance too, then I go to the hospital when the baby is born, I go to the hospital when [consequently] they call me in the middle of the night and I go. My manager says, "You'll never make more money that way because you just" he calls it, "[wines and dines]." I do have businesses insurances that I send Christmas cards to and birthday cards to, and then I visit twice a year, we meet and we changes [when we want] that is what I want , it is the...

Interviewer: You want to give them that personal touch.

Clemenson: That is from my third generation that I insure, the baby's [babies]. I had the parents, the kids, now the daughter is married and now she gets a baby.

Interviewer: Is that right.

Clemenson: And I have the baby blanket already there, that's what I like. I could go out after group insurances and make ten times as much money but...

Interviewer: You're happy doing what you are.

Clemenson: I have some [restaurants] insured, and I like that because I have a personal relationship with the busboy and the waiters and managers and everything. If you go into a factory, that's altogether different. When they [happen] to call me, which happens through a recommendation, I will take care of it. But, it's just one of those things you take in strides. This afternoon I was with [the] third generation [baby], three month old, it was the fourth visit that I made. I haven't even mentioned insurance on their child, the older brother he is five [has it], and just this afternoon she says " as soon as we can afford him, will you write some [thing up]?" Sure!

Interviewer: You are a unique insurance salesman, saleswoman, I'm sure. Salesperson right. How old were your girls when you arrived here in the states?

Clemenson: Fourteen and fifteen.

Interviewer: So they still had to experience school life here also.

Clemenson: They went to Stagg and he was a strange thing. The last five years we had lived in Spain, and Spain has no crime. The Spanish personality is not the striving one. Here in America if you have a house with one bathroom, you want a house with two bathrooms. If you have one car, you want two cars, and if you have two cars you need three cars. Same thing with the tvs, and whatever. That doesn't exist in Spain. I moved into an apartment and I wanted a carpenter to come and hang up some paintings and move few things in the house, so I went to the nearest carpenter shop, and a nice man, forty-five, was sitting there as says, "hello" and I said, "well I

need this, that and the other done, when will you come?" And he said, "next week?" I had already learned, you never ask for a day or a time because that doesn't mean anything in Spain. So the next week, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday he didn't come. So Monday morning I went back to him and he greeted me like an old friend. I said, "why didn't you come?" And he says, "I made enough money last week." What father had, is what the son gets and that's what he goes home with, not up with. So there's no [crime] and there are no asylums and state hospitals. If there is a [mongrel] child born then, mongoloid, then the family will keep it. There is no tension, there are no nervous breakdowns. It is a pleasure to sit on the sidewalk and see people walk by singing and whistling and happy as a lark. Our children were [used] we had a dog there, were used to walk the dog in the park at midnight, talk to anybody and be talked. So when we came to America, we didn't want to set them down and tell them that, "don't talk to strangers, watch out for this watch out for that," that would have given them the wrong impression of America. So we didn't send them to school for a whole year. It became the eleventh of November and we sent them to school the sixth of September a year later.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Clemenson: Fifty-eight. Eleventh of November 1958. And we let them go out with church groups and let them associate with church member children, but we didn't let them just go to school, and of course we, I, was tutoring them in the morning and then they had to make homework and then the rest of the day was theirs. And when we came home they said, "somebody from the schoolboard had been here, and that he was coming back the next day" or he was coming back no date was set. So we lived happily for a couple of days and then he had been there again when we went out. And now he was coming back the next morning, so he came back and said, "you can't do that!" I said, "I will do it." And soon, that was typical for how everything has gone down in America. Our children don't know the word rape, they did not know that in any language. I said, "I do not want them to think that all Americans are rapists. As soon as there is a rape case in the paper they'll ask questions and we will explain and from there on. And when they are ready to face the crime possibility here without having gotten hard feelings to it, you Americans are such [] hope. Yeah but in the meantime, I was tutoring them, and it was coincidental when he came the third time. They were listening on records to Beethoven music. The first time, the first time he had found them doing homework, the second I don't remember, and the third they were listening to Beethoven. Well, he said, "you know we can put you in jail for this?" I said, "that still won't make the kids go to school." so we got a letter from the board, and said, ok, and if we still let them know when we send them to school, so let me grab, and at that time when we left Spain, they had been in the British Institute. They had been in French schools and Arabic schools and Dutch schools, and so we thought arithmetic is the same all over, its different languages but the same arithmetic, geography and history will be their downfall. So I went to Stagg, I can't remember who I talked to- it was a female. I said, " we have two different ages, and they don't know anything about geography or history." Well, they knew as much about

American history and geography as you know about French history and geography, and that's nothing.

Interviewer: Right.

Clemenson: Not that I want to insult you, but those are the facts.

Interviewer: True

Clemenson: And she said "oh don't worry," they will be able to keep up with it, of course they were ahead in French which was taught [here], they were equal in English, this was my joke and they will adjust to English language and arithmetic. So my husband and I were fully prepared to sit every night with children and help make them make homework by bringing the background up to date with the homework. They were far ahead. We were just dumbfounded when we saw that, and the very funny thing happened, they were registered of course as foreigners, and so they came to tell us that one afternoon a week they had to go to special classes to learn English and as well we know it again European principle your teachers are right, you go to next class. And they came back and said we have to learn I have, you have, he has, we have, they have. I said okay, that's just the beginning of it. A week from now it will be go fast and up. And it will stay that way. And it was with Mexican kids and whatever and so after three or four weeks I said okay you can stay in your own class because by going to the special class they miss their proper English and we said okay you can go back to your English class. So here come teacher and see those two blond little things and says "you belong in the other class." "No, mom and dad says we can stay here" and now the dare devil daughter was always the speaker and he said "that's not true" and she said come on [curler] he says were lying, and they both marched out and came home. That was one thing that was banned in our house, lying. You could tell anything, [not lying]. So [they] came marching in, we walk out class because he said wasn't true he said. [And] call the teacher and I called the teacher and I said you made a bad mistake, it was true. "[But you] ya, but those kids always say it" I said "it was no reason because other kids say that, that mine use it", well okay okay then they can stay. So I said okay []. He has to [apologize first]. He did. I couldn't I couldn't budge him. And I wasn't going to because they were right and they stayed out of the next English class and he called and he said Mrs. [] they don't want to come back until [you apologize]. I'll be darn, I said now look at it, if they had lied to you, you wouldn't bulge, I said now you have insulted them. He apologized and I said that's okay, no grudge and they went back to school. Yep, and they went to Delta college and they went into [their jobs]. The oldest one a []. The youngest one at Bank of America. Mr. Eberheart was there [bank] and she became a paper shuffle and she ended up assistant manager of [the old] bank downtown today. [Neither one] have ever worked on [], and also both applied only once []. That was because knew how to cover the typewriter.

Interviewer. The Early training. Did they continue to work after they had children?

Clemenson: [Carla] did, the youngest one did, until she was pregnant because her husband was after he graduated from college. He sold nails, he says, he went to work for [Blair], lumber company and while he was there he studied to get his real estate license. And when he had that, six weeks, he went to, he became a salesman at [] and Sear and he stayed there two years and saved up every penny and [Carla] complaints prior to me we make enough money and he doesn't let me spend any. And of course she was working because he wanted to open his own real estate office. At two years he got his broker's license and open his own office and he had that two and a half years and first group came and offer him [] and now he vice president. He has worked hard and Carla doesn't growl now anymore.

Interviewer: And they have what two children or?

Clemenson: Both kids have two children, each one has boy and a girl.

Interviewer: That's nice.

Clemenson: And my girls were one year apart and now my two granddaughters are 5 month apart so my life [starts] all over again.

Interviewer: Right, well that nice to have cousins in the same age. Back to what we started out talking about about your feelings on citizenship and a, could you repeat that again.

Clemenson: I have not become a citizen. I love the American people. I love the country. I live by the laws. I'll do anything I can to help any American, neighbor, friend, or stranger, but I do not feel that a citizenship is anything you pass off, nor can you accept another citizenship. If I would say I am American that would be almost a joke, because I'm not. I will not be caught dead with [rollers] in my hair. I will follow certain routines that are embedded in me from birth on where as American housewives don't do that. If I tell myself tomorrow morning I'm going to clean that hutch, I am going to clean that hutch no matter what. Where as American women say for three weeks, I am going to clean that hutch tomorrow, but they didn't get to it. There are enormous difference between American women and European women as far as a husband relationship is concern. I am European, that doesn't make me better or worse, it makes me different or makes you people different. I have Americanized an awful lot, but not in typical characteristics. Now if there is a [ball] game going between American and European team, I'll root for America. If it is between America and Holland team, I root for Holland. Also, I forgot what I was going to say, about citizenship...

Interviewer: [Well] You just say you couldn't cast off [Holland] ...

Clemenson: I can't cast off, I, no it just an impossibility. And at this particular moment in the last few years. I am glad I can't vote. Let me put it that way.

Interviewer: Can you repeat that.

Clemenson: That I cannot vote.

Interviewer: Oh that you cannot vote.

Clemenson: That only pay for it, you guys make the mess. Sorry to say, but I am only partly guilty. If I were faced with a problem now to vote...

Interviewer: It's difficult.

Clemenson: Yes, but if you people have the same difficulty and many of you do, I hear you people say well [which one] neither one of them is good. That and if you don't vote your non vote is counted at least mine isn't counted. I'm free.

Interviewer: I am sure this is a minor point, but what did you mean just a minute ago when you said you wouldn't be caught dead, what did you say roses in your hair

Clemenson: Rollers

Interviewer: Oh rollers

Clemenson: Rollers

Interviewer: Oh I see what you mean, okay

Clemenson: Roses is Spanish

Interviewer: I was wondering if you didn't like about roses

Clemenson: No. I'm surprised ...

Interviewer: I see what you mean

Clemenson: in grocery store I couldn't do it. I could not do it. But there is another [thing], can you shut that off for a second....

Interviewer: I sure

Clemenson: Another thing is, that I am representing my company in foreign companies. If you get drunk publicly and I mean you, then the people who see it, will say I didn't expect that from Mary []. Right. If I am drunk publicly, they will say "Look at the Dutch Woman" my whole country goes down with me or up with me here. Not in my own country. If I steal ten dollars, you can't trust a Dutchman. If I lie, Dutch people words don't count. I feel and this is not bragging, I'm not meant that way, I have the respect of anymore who know me and deals with me and I feel that belongs to my country. If you know what I mean. It uhm, I have obligations to my country. If I felt like getting drunk in public I rather do that in Holland because then they only look down at me,

Mary. Here they look down oh there's another Dutchman. That's the way that they behave. You get that strongly once you get out of your country.

Interviewer: I see. Do you feel or experience that lots of people in Stockton [maybe] stereotypes about Dutch people.

Clemenson: Oh yes. People will say when they hear my accent, are you Dutch? Yes. You stubborn, or you honest, or you're clean.

Interviewer: I guess that I way going to say that the way stereotype [about the clean] house

Clemenson: Right often I get that.... Yes. Of course. Many people me and my accent and say where you come from and I say Pacific Ave.

Interviewer: I don't think you have that much of an accent.

Clemenson: Oh yes I do.

Interviewer: I guess I compare to the other two Dutch girls I talk recently, but ah...

Clemenson: The other agents, men agents in the office they speak my accent better than I do. When I call Jerry he "[phant do you fant]" and they tell me I should [drive a voltsvagon and drink vwiskey]. No, I have an accent and quite often mistaken for German, which I always correct it immediately and also for Scandinavian, but the people the Americans who have been overseas usually come up with oh she stubborn, she's honest, and she's clean, and I'm all three. Not very clean almost.

Interviewer: Has ah, did your children or did you or your husband feel any of these ah well more derogatory remarks against [you or] your family at any [particular] time.

Clemenson: My husband was very proud of me being Dutch. He was very much against my becoming American. Very much so in foreign countries. Here I don't think he wouldn't mind it if I have become American, but ah he certainly did not encourage it. His joke was when we were together in America with other people from foreign counties and they would say about it painting I brought or carpet I brought he was [look what] I brought, but any opportunity he had to accentuate the fact that I was Dutch, he would do it. And also he didn't want me to become like American woman. American women can give a hard time to their husbands and European women don't do that, except German women. We acknowledge the husband as the boss. He is absolutely the head of the house. We respect him as such. In America, you [quite often] the woman is the boss.

Interviewer: Well, I wonder how these views could end with your feelings about women's liberation here in our country.

Clemenson: Oh my foot. Women's liberation. I still have a [bond]. I am haven't earned it yet. I do agree with women's liberation in one respect and that is, if a man bookkeeper makes \$900 dollars a month, then the women who replaces him in that job should also make \$900 a month, not \$750. Yes, I agree there, but to begin to go wild....

Interviewer: What about the sharing of household duties and things like this so the woman could work outside the home...

Clemenson: That I would say to be completely kept out of women's liberation. The economical situation has made it a necessity that the women works. In principle I am against a women working, but it is a necessity these days.

Interviewer: Did you feel it was a necessity for you to work all, all through your life or did you work because you [enjoyed it].

Clemenson: I worked because, before I came to America, I work because I liked it, my children were always with me and they needed me and not too many people who spoke six languages.

Interviewer: Right.

Clemenson: I was with my husband, with my kids on the base all day. When the kids were in school, if I had been home I wouldn't have seen them, and I was free to take off whenever I wanted to. In America, I have to after the death of my husband it was very necessity I went to work. If man and wife, American couple have to work, I think that completely away from women's lib, a couple should make a reasonable agreement for guess what, to help the community, including kids. And you don't have to join a women's liberation for that.

Interviewer: No?

Clemenson: I when I was a young girl, I had a choice becoming a career woman or becoming a wife and mother and I have chosen to become a wife and mother and have been that all the way through. My children have never come home from school to an empty house. My husband has never found me gone. I did a lot of things.

Interviewer: But you were always home [when they arrived].

Clemenson: I was there. I was always there.

Interviewer: So basically...

Clemenson: But fortunately, yea I had jobs that I could do them with, they would have let me go for 6 weeks to get me back, [if I wanted that]. If I would have had a job from 9-5, I wouldn't have accepted it, that would take me away from the children, would have left the house undone when my husband comes home. I am very much set against women liberation. I think when I see a woman climb into a telephone phone to repair the lines I thinks it's outrageous. We are created

differently, we are built differently, we think differently, we feel differently, there are definitely a lot of man jobs that we can do. Why do we want to be equal?

Interviewer: I think you probably agree with the importance principle though the women should be paid as much as a man if she does [an equal job].

Clemenson: If she is there full time.

Interviewer: Right

Clemenson: You never hear a man having to leave the job because he had to take his kid to the dentist or his baby threw up. If a women has those things still and firstly she shouldn't be working, but if she has to, then she can be paid lower to have the permission to say, well the kid has to the dentist at 3:00 and I have to take off. But if the women is free to make the work day, she should be paid equally to the man that's the only thing of women's lib I will accept. And steaming in a pulpit on the stage and blurting out how good you are. It's not my cup of tea.

Interviewer: You mention you lived in an Victorian house. Is that, ah did you move directly into a large house when you first came to Stockton.

Clemenson: Well, yes, we have husband and two kids, and the kids had a lot of friends and then fiancées, then the grandkids, and now I had my one daughter who lives in the mountain here and I had guest rooms but it was crowded.

Interviewer: Where was this home she lived in?

Clemenson: [Upvine]

Interviewer: All the time you were working, did you do your own housework?

Clemenson: You mean here.

Interviewer: or well, when you were working at the other countries too....did you do your own.....

Clemenson: No, we had maids. In Africa you have Fatima's and in Spain you had maids. A woman does not, a lady does not do housework either. Even the wife of a street car conductor has maid, it may be just a few hours a day, but she has maid.

Interviewer: Is it difficult to get ah your help to work up to your standards of, I am sure it must have been.

Clemenson: American women think [that]..... **(TAPE ENDED)**

END OF TAPE 2

START OF TAPE 3

Interviewer: Sometimes...

Clemenson: Maids ah, never do what you want them to do, the way that you want them to do it, at the time you want them to do it. If you have company coming for dinner and you go out in the afternoon, you know that she can do it, but you don't know that she will do it. So you have to interrupt whatever you doing and to show or visit to call [the maid did you] turn the roast on and hour later turn the potato on. Um. Its never, its much easier to do them yourselves then give the orders to make sure they will be fulfil. If you tell them to wash the windows, they will skip the corners or they skip the whole window. They don't make the beds the way you want them. They don't put the things back the way you have them when they have dusted them. They always get sick when you need them or they have to go to sick mother and but it is handy for floors and that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: Did you have any help when you moved to Stockton? Any outside help?

Clemenson: When we moved or when we.....

Interviewer:here to Stockton.

Clemenson: Oh no. From here on, I had done my own housework. And I wrote in a letter to friends of mine in Europe, everything is over dramatic and my house, whole house is buzzing and I'm running myself ragged. Washing machine and the vacuum cleaner and the drier and the air conditioner and the tvs and the radios and I was working like slave. Bring groceries home and putting them away and then cooking and cleaning and it was very funny. The first Friday that I was in my own home, I house cleaned and Saturday morning I had flu. I ate [jello] and I said well, get ever thing going and take a nap. But as I went it was better and then the next week, Saturday I had the flu again

Interviewer: Oh no.....

Clemenson: and I realize I had so much left, from crawling to stooping to lifting and shaking, you no, those muscles were never used. The third week I had it down pat that's not the flu that just from shaking rugs and pushing vacuum cleaners and still I don't know certain things in house cleaning. Um, the first house we moved in, had linoleum in the kitchen and no matter how I mop and waxed, it looked dirty and it was light color linoleum and yet it was dark. I ask a friend what was the matter and she said well the people who lived here before have waxed over the dirt. I had to ask what to do. [and] You take paint thinner and you take steel wool and you scratch [away].....

Interviewer: Very tedious job....

Clemenson: Yes, and my husband heard that and said she will never be able to do that. He didn't have much faith on me as house cleaner. Um, when he was with his daughter for whole day to San Francisco, I tackle that job and it was very very hot and I had on shorts and a top without sleeves

and that was all I had on laying in the mud just scrubbing. And he came home early then I expected me and found me in the middle [] and he say Wow, and I said, yea, it good to say ugly things in three or four different languages because it hurts nobody but I don't like this. And still I don't know exactly how to wash windows, some people do it with ammonia, other ones with Windex and another with newspaper and another one, mine never turn out right, I have try all these methods but at least I get the nicotine out.

Interviewer: Right

Clemenson: Yea. I am a good cook. I am not a baker. You don't bake in Europe. There are bakeries where you buy pies and cakes and cookies and all that kind of stuff. I buys those rolls of dough and I have home bake cookies and um yep for seven, five years as long as when my husband was sick, I made everything from scratch because he had to have salt free and didn't have that then in the stores. I baked bread, I made the mayonnaise. I never open the can because there was always salt in. I never salt out anything. I made it all from scratch.

Interviewer: That was very time consuming.

Clemenson: Yes. Yes. Any it was a hard school. And I didn't learn to bake that way because he couldn't have sweets, so the pies and the cakes never came on the program. I bought those. And I enjoyed that and I like to do housework, not now, because I don't have enough time. The spare time I have I hate to run after a mop, but if I didn't work I would enjoy doing house work. Not all of it, but most.

Interviewer: Did most or any of your friends tend to be Dutch also?

Clemenson: No. Um, I do not seek them out because I am a guest in this county and I want the American people who come to me, to feel welcome, free and at home in my home and I have always had the idea that if, if you had come here tonight for example and you find two or three Dutch people here that you will find a little kingdom within a kingdom and I don't want that. I have not avoided them, but I have not encouraged association. I befriended with one Dutch woman here in Stockton for many many years but that's the only friend Dutch I have. My friends are Canadian, French, English, American, most of them are American. It's not good when you live in a country for good, to seek your own compatriots. Its not fair to the Americans. I have Dutch [dinners] but the guests are Americans

Interviewer: ...but they enjoy [it I'm sure]...

Clemenson:yes, yea, and um they are interested how we celebrate birthdays and Christmas and Easter. They are welcome to partake, but I am the only Dutch. I will not invite other Dutch people.

Interviewer: Do you celebrate birthdays differently then what we do here?

Clemenson: Yea, not much, um the person who has the birthday, the family celebrate in the morning before breakfast and then rest of the day for outsiders. That's the only difference.

Interviewer: Are you much of an organization type of person. Do you belong to any committee?

Clemenson: A [joiner].

Interviewer: Pardon

Clemenson: You mean a [joiner]. Oh. Um....The reason for that is, I have been and still am a member of many many organizations and it is always women, American business women, American association of university women, Christian business women, and they talk and don't move thing and that's a waste of time. It is a get together where a problem is put on the table and its still there when you leave, but the cake and the punch is the main thing plus the dish on which they served. Now I'll shock you, I have been for four and a half years every Saturday afternoon in an AA meeting. I am as dry as could be...

Interviewer: Uh huh, sure.

Clemenson: But I had a lady friend, American who was an alcoholic and in my non-professional way, I tried my darndest to get her off the bottle and it got worst and worst. Even my son in law took her, hired her as his secretary after she had lost every other job she had and she had good jobs because she was a very clever person. And he struggle with her for 4 years and I struggle with her for 12 years and we never got anywhere and he help me and I help him calling up for her, sobering her up, bring her home, making sure she wouldn't get into car accident, so be brought home to the wrong home or the wrong person and all this kind of stuff, and it got worst and worst and finally, he had to send her, send cab to her to get her in the office so they could find her because she hasn't been there for so long. And that put me in an odd position because it was my son in law who had fired her and I was her friend and I thought that's why she shunned me. I called her at 10:00 in the morning, a couple of times and she was already double tongued. I went to her door and her car was in the driveway. She didn't open the door and I thought she was mad at me because of my son firing her. But eventually that wasn't so. She called me in May, now five and a half years ago, um one morning and she said Mary will you please come by, I am on the wagon, and then she told me ever since she gotten fired she just had been on the couch and in the bed and been drinking and it got to the point where she couldn't get liquor anymore because she was completely broke and in deeply in debt. And so then she had to call one relative, the only relative she had, and he had loaded her up and brought her to women's detox and they kept her there long enough and then to talk her into going to AA and she was then in AA, and now she was home and if I wanted to come and help here to straighten out here affairs. She was on the verge of being bankrupt. And so I spent every moment I could, she had a dining room table as big as mine and it was that high full of [dunning] letters and whatever have you. And so I began to work with her when she went through the withdrawal phase and I brought her to AA and I picked her up from AA because she had no tires on her car, no gas in her tank and she

couldn't drive because she was too shaky. And of course, we had some quite some conversation and gradually she got out of it. One morning I came and she was groomed and the house smell of coffee and on the table was the page of want ads. And we sat on the couch, and she was talking and I don't remember what she was talking about, and I was thinking, while she was talking, I was thinking my god what a difference from what I had seen in the last 6 years then was bad. So all of a sudden she saw me being absent minded and she said, what you thinking and I said, I was thinking between you and AA a miracle has happen because you not the same throw up you were all those years. And she said funny you should say that because AA has asked me to bring you there and I said why. She said while AA is telling what you did what happened since your last meeting and she had the time and two times a day, [and] three times over the weekends and I brought her and came back to pick her up and I didn't go in see. I just park in front. I said why, why, why do they want me there and she said because when I say my speech, it is Mary said, Mary did, Mary and I. And they said well if Mary is so close to you and helping you, she should come here and get a broad of you of the whole problem, but she said I didn't ask you because you don't want to go do you. How can you tell an AA, no!

Interviewer: Right.

Clemenson: So, I said oh sure! But I don't have the time. She said well, you could on Saturday, just for once and I said, yea, sure. So we made an appointment, by that time she was driving herself again on my gas, and somebody else's tires. And so this was funny, the meeting begin at one o'clock and by the time for two months I had driven up, let her out, driven off, parked in front, let her in and driven off and now I had to go in, that was different. It was funny. I drove up and as a coward, I parked on the side street. When I came out of the car, I looked around if anybody saw me. I sneak along the houses and I thought once I am inside it will be okay. She had told me she would be there 15 minutes early and I came through that door like I came out of a cannon ball. And there I stood in a room with about 8-10 people and oh my god thinking I am an alcoholic. It wasn't any better being inside then it was being outside. She got up and said this was friend Mary, you only go by first name only. Uh huh Uh huh [so they think I'm an alcoholic oh my] ... and then the meeting began and she had instructed me that each get a turn, turn and says I am Mary and I am a alcoholic but I had to say, I am Mary and I am a visitor and I will pass. So I thought, once they give me a turn I will be better, then they all know I am not an alcoholic. But when the meeting began and these people began to talk, I was just dumb founded and fascinated. There must have been spells that I didn't take breath. For the first time, I was in a group where people talked and dealt with life and death and crime and grief and fear. I meant two or three had, had a turn, I began to feel bad again because I was, as soon as I say I am Mary and I am a visitor, there pick me up and throw me out the windows, because I was intruding into the deepest of their lives, so I was scared again. There was one woman that I will never forget, her name was Mary and I learned later she was 28 and she was an RN. She looked 40 and she was just sitting and it was her turn and she said, I am Mary and I am an alcoholic and all I do is not drink. Every hour of every day and every night I don't drink and I wait to go by and drink. I

will never forget that woman. And everyone was that way and so when my turn came and I said, I'm Mary and I said I'm a visitor, and now I thought now it comes, oh and they said, hi Mary and I was accepted and that means something. If you were telling your deepest emotions to somebody else and I would just come in and sit and listen you wouldn't like that and these people let me. That's has never happened in my life.

Interviewer: It's usually you expect that other person to share something in their life too.

Clemenson: Yea.

Interviewer: In return.

Clemenson: So after that meeting, we drove up here and well you think about it, I said it was unbelievable. What these people, this place, what these people have gone through, it much worse then what any criminal ever goes through and she said would you come next week and I said yea, [if they let me], and to make long story short [Ann] graduated out of AA and I stayed in. I have made the most valuable friends there and I became um.. um.. connection between them and the other side of the world. For example when they go to hospital, their AA friends can't visit them because they don't know what room and they can't ask.

Interviewer: They can't ask because they don't know their last name?

Clemenson: They all gave me their names and addresses, the phone numbers, the places of work, and then they go in the hospital. I went to go visit them. I go to the desk, Joe Peterson, room 312. I visited, I came to AA. Joe was in 312, and I brought cards and flowers and messages from the ones that couldn't, you know, it it was fantastic.

Interviewer: [What a unique] positon you [are in]....

Clemenson: yea...they came to my home and something I will never understand. A guy wanted to talk to me, Hal, and he wanted to talk to me personally. And he had said he would come at 4 o'clock. Well I said it will last till 5 and I can eat dinner home, so I came home at 4:30 and I put something on the stove there. And so he was sitting there and talking and he said ah, smells good in here and I said yea, my dinner is going. And he said ah, well if you want a drink go right ahead, it doesn't bother me. That's great, [Hal] I don't drink every day. I do drink and they call me all kinds of name. The girl who has her head on straight, sober Mary because there were several other Mary's. There was red Mary, wet Mary and sober Mary. And other funny thing was, if I didn't come on Saturday. I went the first Saturday in July. It was my first time and I didn't go the last Saturday of August because that happened to be my birthday and the telephone was red hot because if I don't come I'm sick or have an accident. If they don't come, they fell off the wagon, that's alright. One call me and hey you old drunkard where were you yesterday. But when you said had you joined organizations, I almost had it tip of my tongue, only AA. Because that is where there is talk and something is done. The most beautiful friendship you see, I am

sure if I would now call an AA'er and say listen, I had got bitten by the bug, he will be here in 10 minutes and stay with me until I would say, well I can hold it on my own whether that is till tomorrow morning or till next month and when I say he and say, no shenanigans. None. Just being with me and if I would say I'm going to bed he would inspect my room first. And if he would find a bottle there he would say, well, now listen kid, you better not go to a bottle if there, stay here. That's where do you find that.

Interviewer: Not very often.

Clemenson: It isn't. I have never found it. I have now lived almost 64 years. I never found that anywhere but in AA. And I would still be in it, if it hadn't been for my daughter getting sick in May. She has cancer and from then on I hadn't gone, but two or three times when they just call, gosh Mary you must be able to come now and then. So maybe I come three times in the last year, but for four and a half years I was a steady visitor. And still they call me, they come, I call them. There's one living close by here I always walk by with my dog. Come on in. They come on over here.

Interviewer: Are you involved in anything else like that, on a voluntary basis that you....

Clemenson: No, no. I volunteer work in my church four hours a week. Mainly the confidential files of the pastor and I done that a little longer than AA. I had joined, I had started to do that, well, I know exactly, he has been here seven and half years and so I done that six and a half years.

Interviewer: But you don't get the interaction with individuals in that type of volunteer work you do that full fill from the other jobs.

Clemenson: I can be a member, and have been a member of Westminster women and they still call me a member, but I never go. Women. I don't like women. See I was raised by a man and that makes a lot of difference [Mary.] A very lot difference. When I was sixteen, I was laying on the floor on my stomach reading a book and my father was looking at me, and he said, "I made a mistake with you, [I said what do you mean]. I raised you as if you a boy." At that time, I never seen a raw potato. I've eaten in hotels and restaurants and at home there was personnel in the kitchen. He said, "you don't know thing about female things." I rode horseback, I play hockey, I play tennis, I climb mountains, I swim, I hike, I drove car, I bicycle, but I had seen dust cloth go by. [But] That is how far as it went. So then he sent me to finishing touch boarding school for girls. I died. Everything that was a problem to them, had ever meant a thing to me. The height of the heels, the low cut or the high neck or long or short. I needed a dress, it was bought. The hairdo's and the nail polishes and the what. They embroidered, they tatted, they knitted, they sewed, they cooked. I didn't know how to turn on a stove. As a matter of fact, I got thrown out of the first cooking class because they thought I was making fun. The things I was interested in, classical music, art, people, politics. They didn't know.

Interviewer: How long did you stay at the finishing school?

Clemenson: Three months. I got diabetes from grief. I became tired and thirty and listless and they had me examined by the doctor, diabetes. And I was haul back home and my own doctor said just because she was upset that go away. Two weeks later, I was fine and I never had type 1 again...

Interviewer: Great.

Clemenson: ...but I was a total alien and I still am a alien among women.

Interviewer: Have you ever worked for a woman []?

Clemenson: Oh what, no!

Interviewer: Doesn't sound like it would be a good relationship.

Clemenson: No. In my office, insurance office, 15 men and me and it fantastic. When I came, that agency had been in existence for I think 32 years without a woman. And now it was announced a woman would come and they didn't like that. I didn't know all this and I learned that later, but they were very much set against this. When I came they were all very courteous, kind, liked, but distant. Whoa, fine with me. I did my work and whatever but they began to find that I had a good sense of humor, that I could tease, I could stand being teased, that I wasn't shy of [a joke] and they began to accept me and I just thought they just got to know me or what. I didn't give it a thought. One morning I was sitting at my desk and at the end of that big room there was a closet, in which was folders and I see one of the agents and has a door open and he stands, what's the matter with him. I did my work. Few minutes later, there was another one. What is that. So when the third one came there, I got curious and what in the heck are you guys going there. And they said Mary, last week we hung up a mirror for you and you hasn't noticed it yet.

Interviewer: They were using it.

Clemenson: They were calling my attention to it. And so now, I had a really good relationship with them. Of course, they never told me dirty joke. They have told me spicy jokes, but never out of line, and they had little gatherings what they could tell me and what they couldn't. They, I didn't put out door release, I didn't stink up the place with perfume, I didn't even notice it when one said Jesus Christ. They had one who said that every morning when the mail came, but he said in such an elegant way, that I enjoyed it, I waited for it you know. Also a point was [a luncheon] meetings and cocktails, dinners, each of them pays for himself. Now they had a problem about what to do with her. She had the same opportunity to earn the money that we do. Why should we pay for her, yet if we don't we feel bad. I didn't know the problem they had in the mind. But the first time we went to the luncheon I thought it not fair to make them pay, so the agent who happen to walk with me to the parking lot, I gave him \$10 and I said would do me the honors and he said sure. So he paid for me and sat next to me, paid for me, put the change on my desk and they all said what happened. Oh she had a beautiful solution. Now they take me out, but as the agents, they are all married, [Cal Western] does not want divorcees and there idea is, how can I,

if I'm divorce, how can I, being a man, convince another man that he should bare the responsibilities for his wife. So divorcees are out. You can be single or married. All of them are married, but me. Widow of course, widow or widowers okay too. So now the agents came home and told their wives, she so nice, we had so much fun, we did this and we did that and now the wives got upset. First the agent said the female in there and that was fine and all and now the female was accepted and now the wives didn't like it. I didn't know that. We had a good manager at the time and they told the manager, you know Cathy is not too happy about Mary being here and going out with us and doing everything with us. So the manager will okay solve that problem. So the manager organize a party at his home with the wives and of course I had no wife. And I was once invited with my wife to the main office because we had 2000 agents and 3 women, so when the letters go out it is [dear Sir.] and you are welcome with your wives. So I wrote the president back, I didn't think I would accept his invitation but I didn't think I would find a wife so fast. Manager says you can't do that. I say he did it first. Well the party was set and according to what I learned, 7:30, but it was 7:00 o'clock say everybody would be there, see, and I walk in at 7:40 and there she was. Well, I didn't know I was being examined. So I [said] hi Jerry, oh that you [], oh hi Cathy, how are you, hi Naomi. I was accepted by the women after that. And it has gone to the point now that if the wife goes to Ohio because of the daughter, they call me, will you take care of Valerie.

Interviewer: Okay.

Clemenson: Yes, and then Valerie take me out to dinner and I have him here for dinner. I sew on a button and he does my work and everything is fine.

Interviewer: I can see why you don't have time to be lonesome.

Clemenson: Oh no. Oh no. And then they began to call me honey and the manager said that wasn't very business-like. So they stop that and they called me duchess and perky and [the kid]. Now the manager calls me hun.

Interviewer: Calls you what. Oh hun.

Clemenson: He wants [the privilege] for himself. That's way he [stopped them]. No, I awfully glad that I'm, of course there's a secretary but thars a different situation woman, eh, secretary because she isn't in with them, see. I am completely in with them. And they expected me to lean on them you know. How do you do this and help me there, and could you that for me, I never did. They said the other day, she is like our sister. And its very funny if the ages go from oh I say the youngest one is 28 or 29 and the oldest one is 77 and anything in between there and I play with all of them and they all play with me and I am one of them and yet they don't forget that I am a female. They very courteous except when they get mad. Now shut up Mary, you not always right! Oh my car I have the Dutch emblem, red, white, blue with N.L. in it for Netherlands and you should ask them what it stands for, nice lady, no license. When we go out of town to meetings, then we join

cars and its funny to hear them say, did you take the kids, no I heard the kids go with so and so. The kid 64.

Interviewer: [Oh wow I think] there's one place I like to go back to, ah, we got sidetracked somehow I think, ah, mentioned when you first came here, ah, you talked about what problems there were. We fore say language was not a problem, but you say ol my, yes, there were lots of other problems and I don't think really think we got into that, as to what they were, sort of. Not that you don't have to name them all, but just anything that really stands out.

Clemenson: Well, running the house, for one thing. Doing the housework. Feeling a foreign, very much so in the beginning because of my completely Dutch ways. Being asked where do you come from. Now I can laugh about it, but when just you come in, it's rough. The driving, I drove when I was sixteen. I had a license when I was sixteen, but I never drove because in Europe a woman doesn't drive and I was convinced that Pershing was too narrow for my car. A huge American car and do you know there are places on Pershing between Alpine and country club, that's narrow.

Interviewer: That is.

Clemenson: And when you come on there with American car coming out of an [opal] I said to [] it wont fit here. Discourteous driving, then...

Interviewer: Was your husband more anxious for you to learn to drive then what you were in the beginning or did you have a desire to ...

Clemenson: It was a necessity because of his health.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. Yea.

Clemenson: No, he wasn't anxious for me to drive because he cared more for car then for me. When I drove he always say be careful with the car. And then his excuse was I will go back together with the car. No, then the blacks and oh the discourteous driving, which today still irritates me.

Interviewer: Yea.

Clemenson: Honking and the blacks. Having lived in Africa for 13 years, having been guess of the Negros and then coming here that was enormous and I am still not adjusted. Of course, the Negro in Africa isn't altogether different individual from what the Negro here is. And I had to make that switch. Our children grew up with Negros. They had slumber party with Negro neighbors. They went to school with Negros. Two Negro boys there age taught our girls to horseback ride and Carla was already married so it was about 13, 12 years ago. At Christmas time the children went through old old picture albums and there were pictures in of these two negro boys who taught them how to ride and they show that to their fiancée and husband and all of a sudden Carla say, hey mom, did you know that [] and Mohamed were black. See that's the

way we live with them. We didn't have them at our dinner table, but we were in their homes as the guest. We shopped in the same places without noticing the guy next to you as a black.

Interviewer: You went to their home for dinner.

Clemenson: Yea. They invited us, the upper Negros, invited us.

Interviewer: Was it a custom they never went back to the homes of the whites.

Clemenson: No, you took them out.

Interviewer: Oh I see.

Clemenson: There must have been something in us then you don't invite a Negro in your home. But we weren't aware of it. You treat them and they treated you by handling you according to their customs. Cush Cush is one of the most beautiful dishes. Low tables, big bowl in the middle. Everybody eats out of it with this hands. The host will give the best piece of lamb to you, handed to you, it is kind of starch and comparable to rice, but it is different. And there is grapes and oranges in it and lamb, and when you have eaten that, then the second wife come in with the silver bottle and hands you that and you don't know what to do with it. You have to sprinkle under your arms, it is cologne. Of course it is awfully hot in Africa. Is a wonderful custom for there. So they treat you by handling you as one of theirs and you then you treat them by taking them out to European restaurant. Coming here and having to be afraid of them and this distrusting them and experiencing bad things of them, it's a shock, but it's a much bigger shock if you don't distrust them. And there is a transition to be made and it takes a long time.

Interviewer: I was wondering if your views have changed any since the time you arrived, on that particular issue...

Clemenson: Yes and no. I walk my dog at night. If I see a negro coming on the same sidewalk, I cross the street. I feel bad about doing it, but I feel more secure about doing it. I have never done that in Africa. I still apply the same principle to the blacks as all my life have applied to the whites. I will meet each new person regardless of color [ha Benji, don't do that] with an open mind each one has a chance to gain my friendship or not and that goes for white and black. I have to say though, that the blacks quite don't often gain it. Whether I meet them in stores and offices, as customers, as clients, regardless. I do have a negro family that I was befriended with before I went into insurance and I had them all insured. So I am in regular contact with them, I would say at least once a month. Darling people, if I would call at this time of the night and say, Lee I am lonesome or Lee I'm sad, honey I will be right there, honey child I'll be right there. But I don't because if I am sad and lonesome, it not her I want. This morning, I was there and since I had forgotten to order my checks in time I have falsy you know, bouncy falsy and I needed gas, and I said Sam I have false check, you cash one. Sure how much you want. I said what can I make it for. I said \$200, he say yea. A white may ask what do you mean by falsy or bla.. .or bouncy. He

didn't. Of course I made it for \$25. I would miss that family if they weren't living here anymore. I enjoy going to them, but we have nothing in common. And about 2 to 3 years ago I was giving a phone call, I had to make a [doctors]..... (TAPE ENDED)

END OF TAPE 3

TAPE 4

Clemenson: there was another kid or whatever so it was very noisy and I was leaning like this on the table trying to make contact between the doctors, nurse and daughter, what it could be and the mother of the family walks by and hugs me on this side. She came from the back so it came totally unexpected and I did this, because it's the black skin. And I felt awfully bad about this, but it was done. And we finish the telephone call and there was no change in her attitude and I went home and I thought about this and she didn't deserve that, very clean, but to me the black skin is repulsive. And [it] bothered me to no end, so two day later I went to her and I said, Lee I like to see you alone. So she took me to another room. I said the other day when you hug me I shrug you off, before I could say anymore, she said, honey child, after all these years, you don't need to explain. And I'll be darned if I know, whether she know that I didn't want to be touched or whether she thought she was in the business conversation and there for sure I don't know. I don't know. It still bothers me and I am sure she hasn't forgotten. I have come into homes or apartments and a an apartment where I had to go upstairs and climb over kids and tricycles and trash to get that and came to a door without a bell, and negro women open door and she wanted insurance. I wasn't... little bug crawling over the kitchen table. I suggest so much that I thought she couldn't be able to afford it. To get her off, not that I didn't want to insure negro, but I didn't want to insure an weak case. She was smarter than I thought she was. She said um, well can we start with half. Sure, if you want to. So we started with half. I was sure it will lapse because she didn't even have a checking account. Checking account you can use bank file. It had to be monthly. You know that will have to be the end of that and it's a bad note against me, see, plus for her. Everything went fine for 6 months and she called me and she said I am in Dameron can you come, I want to talk to you. Sure. I went over. She handed me her paycheck and she said uh will you please put it in the bank and get out what you need for the insurance. I still have her. Eshay was just beginning to crawl and Eshay is now going to 6th grade or and I think this year he go to junior high. Never failed. She did take the other half left. So you make your mistakes. I have come to homes of whites with Mercedes benz in the driveway and a boat in the garage, and whiskey and fat cigar, I can't afford it. I can't draw a straight line, [might okay wax know] good, but I have my reservation. I can understand that blacks are bitter. But the situation doesn't get any better by the way you work it out. However if I have been a slave for generations would I way be able to work it out in gentle peaceful way, that I don't know. I was once in Sacramento with the DA. It was a black. I was very surprised because I had him on the phone and he didn't have the black draw. I went to his office and he was black and he said surprise, huh. I said yes. Well maybe I will surprise you some more and he did. Wonderful sense of humor, beautiful insight and a great recognition of separation. Other problems here, I don't know. I'm home sick

the day after Thanksgiving till after New Year, but I have no home to go to. I am homesick for Holland before the war. I have been back at Holland, I make my husband mad about being home sick, that he said, in 1958 okay he said, you can go to Europe and visit all the places you so crying about and so unhappy about, do what you want and maximum I let you go is 3 months and I was back after 15 days. Because I am more of a foreigner there than I am here. I am, I got a traffic ticket, didn't get it, but I was going to around the corner from the house I was born. I had arrived at midnight at train station. I left my luggage except for my overnight case and then cross to hotel, cross the square to hotel and that was around the corner from the house where I was born. And the next morning I wanted to do after breakfast was go over crossing release my luggage and so I did. Now I stand at the sidewalk and look at the beautiful square I know all these years, all my life and they had flicking round bulbs all over the place, all around [it and I though gee] that's pretty. On and off and on off, gorgeous. I began to cross and while I was doing that and I thought the traffic was poorly organized here. I got in trouble all the way through, bicycles, pedestrians and cars. When I came on the other side there was a policeman ready with his book and he said you just earn 4 traffic tickets lady. I said what for. Of course when I speak Dutch I have no accent, and he said don't pull my leg. I said what did I do officer. He said you went against all these lights and I said what light. He said, don't you see those lights, I said yea, they're pretty. He said when those lights flicker you can't cross. I said I don't know that. He said yea. I said I don't know that. I haven't been here for 11 years. I say 11 years ago they weren't here. Can you prove that, I said here's my passport with a stamp of last night midnight. It makes you feel bad. That makes you feel so bad! Much worst then here when you say something wrong in the English language because you are a foreign here, you are not a foreigner there. Oh instead of releasing my luggage, I went to the restaurant, sat down with a cup of coffee, where do I belong. Not here. Then I release my luggage and cross according to the lights. Got it into the hotel, went around the corner and the home I was born was made into three homes. One in the middle and two upstairs. Ahh, the bottom part was store. I didn't belong there either. Then I went to the school where I went now and then, couldn't even find the place, big apartment buildings. A friend whom I have known all through the five years of the war treated me like a visitor. Whereas before I walk in and out like a sister. She pulled off her little apron when she it was saw me. That spoiled the whole visit. Um, then I was sitting in this bus, trolley, I heard people talk Dutch. It was strange. At night, when I went to bed I heard the elevator of the hotel. I wasn't in a home. Out to Switzerland, where I was always was with my father. All the hotel was the same. The lake was the same and the alps were the same, but my father wasn't there and I knew nobody. When we came back there regularly every year, the waiters they knew us, the maître D' knew us, certain guests came in certain time knew us. You know me, I don't know nobody. So I went to the boarding school where I was for three months. I knew nobody. They didn't know me. Nice building. Sure you want to walk around, go ahead. They had to look up my name in the register. I have no place I can call home. This one yes. Yet I'm a foreigner here. They won't let me vote. And the first of January my dog and I both had to be registered. But the dog gets a rabies shot, I don't.

Interviewer: [Thank goodness huh?]. Well, I think we done a good job covering most everything.

Clemenson: How much do you pay for your house. How much do you make. Ohhhhh....

Interviewer: Everyone is much nosier.

Clemenson: Ohhhh and another thing. I have go to the bathroom. Okay, that is not said in Holland. Ah, if you have to go to the bathroom, You just go. You wait until they occupy with something else, go and you walk in silently. After dinner would you like to have, no I'm full. [] Now I'm used to it even in the office. I say it with all the men around. Excuse me, I'm going potty. In joke I can say it, but I could not visit you and say I go to bathroom. Just not possible. There isn't, it's all harder, harsher of course I am talking about Europe, 30 years ago, Holland, 30 years ago. I have heard from friends who have gone that it's much rougher and harder now too and it's not a reason I don't want to go back. I have no family to go back to. Friends, superficial friends because I never been long enough to make deep going friendships. They moved away or died or divorce and remarried and I don't know the last name.

Interviewer: So this is truly your home then.

Clemenson: Oh yea. Every now and again I get [revolted]. You should heard my first words in American. The very first words when I came off the plane. A couple of my friends know that story. When we came here there were no jets, and it was November, and it was fog and we had a 14 hour flight, and we arrive at 7:00 in the morning at Idlewild, now Kennedy airport I think. And [well], the very first thing that happen to me was I had to go through a special alley way because I was a foreigner. I had a bag of good behavior, I called it all my papers. My lungs all okay, my blood okay and I never been in prison and I had paid all my taxes and [] and so I had to deliver my bag of good behavior through this special alley. And then I met my husband and at in the hallway, whatever you call that there. And I was used to porters carrying your luggage, so I stood by him and I said, where is the luggage, he said catch it. [Okay] Whoohoo, and so I caught it, and I lugged it and some guy threw it in the bottom of the bus and the kids wanted to sit on the top floor so we sat on the top floor and we took off. By that time it was 7:30, 8:00 and I look this side have you ever made that trip from Idlewild to terminal.

Interviewer: No.

Clemenson: That freeway is pulled through a military cemetery and those are depressing to look at. So here I am, clouds, rain, [wind], tired, cold, hungry, upset. I would left a long field of nothing of those stone sticks up. [] of same thing. I look ahead, [commuting hour] you know, one that []. I raise [], not in America. But I don't want to be buried here. Then we came into the Taff hotel, oh [Ray] got into argument with cab driver which is [] and I didn't know that and I was scared. I never heard arguments, he blah blah blah blah but they didn't fight they just argue and I was just huhh. So then we came to Taff tower, went upstairs, we had two bedrooms, little living room and bathroom and toilet and the kids turn on tv and as I said it was the 11th of November. And it said

[] and I will never forget that, bring in your old jalopy, unseen and we will had you \$400 cash. You drive out brand new Chevrolet and no payment until February. I said turn that off, turn that off, but mom, and I said, I had pumps on and I pull them off, turn it off or it goes off. And I said, girls better turn that off. I said that's thief. The government should step in. I said the poorest person in the world there make use of that take the \$400 to give the kids Christmas and then they lose everything. That's thief. No more tv on until mommy gets used to this situation. Okay. Then we took a bath and we went to where you go for breakfast. Here I come outside. This is what's the square name after [], the big square in New York...

Interviewer: Oh ah...

Clemenson: Not Piccadilly...

Interviewer: And I can't think of it either...um

Clemenson: Times Square.

Interviewer: Times right.

Clemenson: And the minute I stepped out of that hotel I mean ah, whole crowd of people. You had to go whether you want to or not. And we come to side street and it said, stop/go. Who has the nerve to tell me what to do. Stop and go. In Europe it say safe and unsafe. At least it's up to you.

Interviewer: I have never been to Europe.

Clemenson: So that didn't set well. Then we came to a typical breakfast place. Fast food place whatever you want to call it and I was engulfed with orders of ham and sausage. We had to stand in line. Not long, but that was new to me. See in Europe, where the women don't work, you don't have this, they make the husband breakfast at home. Of finally I came, shovel along and came to a table a mop came over to a table and [] then wham 4 glasses of ice cold water []. I didn't say anything after all its Ray's [country]. You not taking this I hope. Are you?

Interviewer: Oh it still is, but I can erase or not use this side.

Clemenson: okay. **[TAPE ENDED]**

END OF TAPE 4

