

[Erik Jensen—Danish wire mill worker]

[Mass.?] [1938-9?]

[SBM?] Dec 6, 1939

Erik Jensen - Danish wire mill worker

Danish Tin Plate Worker

“ All the time they makes improvements at the wire mill, but they can't do no better tin plate then Jensen can do.”

Rearrangement (page numbers refer to penciled numbers in right hand corner of page 1 paragraphs numbered in left hand margin) - Par. Page

1 1 - birth of grandchild

2 1 - childhood [anecdote?]

3 2 - “ “ continued

4 3 - another [anecdote?], transition to superstitions

6 8 - insert for clarity [?] 5 3 and 4 - superstitions and belief in [nesser?]

7 7 - old country customs

8 9-10 - transition

9 8 confirmation and engagement

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10 [?] 9 marriage

11 9 women - cooking 12 [??] [12?]

12 5 bicycle [anecdotes?]

13 4 and 5 - products of mill

14 12, 13, 14 - wire and tin plate process

15 6 - layoff at seventy

Note: wooden shoes and some generalities about Denmark omitted. [Royle Comments]? on [? Irish?] Steel [per blue penciling?] p.3 (insert 5 from p.8) should read: "here, the people have roosters on top of the barns, in Denmark they put up storks." p.3/par. 6 - 1st sentence - cut out [?]" [?] like that [wheat]? you call - - - -" par 6/ [and - well, -] cut out/ [after?] [11a/?] [Send phony ? there?] about [? ? (my ?)]? he might or should have [defed?] naturally [? these types? [P11/?] Seems to have been missed? should [it?] be deleted?

STATE MASSACHUSETTS [?]

NAME OF WORKER MRS. EMILY B. MOORE

ADDRESS 84 ELM STREET, WORCESTER,

MASSACHUSETTS

DATE OF INTERVIEW JUNE 20, 1939

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

NAME OF INFORMANT ERIC JENSEN

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ADDRESS WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

1

[1?]

Name: Emily B. Moore

Title: Living Lore

Assignment: Erik Jensen

Topic: Danish Steel Worker - Paper 4 [Mr. Jensen was sitting on a box in the sun before his little shop. Never before had I seen him idle, his delt [debt?] , square hands, folded on his crossed knees. As soon as he caught sight of me he called out - "Jah! Jah! Today I'm glad to see you?" # [did you not read in the papers, 'bout my Rosa? - Yap,] Sunday I am grandpappy, [and what a nice baby she has!] All the time I'm thinkin' what she shud call him, (pulls his ears) I think mebbe my name Erick Erik , but then, she thinks 'Roger', - well, mebbe that's good, Roger Neilsen, that's pretty name. Now, my family will go on for 'nother generation. Wall, no, I have no son, but in that little fellow is my blood and Rosa's and he's part Jensen, anyhow. Jah! we have Christening, but I don't know when, but I tell you, and you shud come! Mebbe we have old-fashion Christening, if my missus keeps good. That It baby weigh 8 or 9 pounds and it come fine. [/Makes?] me think , - in Denmark , people jest have the kids, and that's all, but here, oh, my Rosa have so much good care for months before, she is fine and good now. This is a good country - everything 's is good here. [1?] "It's hard for me to think back when I was a leetle boy, and what I do. I guess always in the mind of Danish boy is to come to this good country. Once when I was about 10 years old, another boy and me take care of a drove of cows. There is no 'crick' for water, so all day long we have to fill up the water box. Well, that's a big box mebbe four feet wide and six feet long, and it's tight so no water can come through. Well, we get mad at the cows, for as quick as we carry the water, the 2 cows drink it up, and we have to carry the water

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about quarter of a mile. We have yoke across our shoulders, and pail of water on each end of the yoke. The old man we work for puts a piece of stick on the end of the yoke and he wants we should carry two pails on each end of the yoke. [The old man we work for puts a piece of stick on the end of the yoke and he wants we should carry two pails on each end. Well, that means four pails of water for each trip. That's too much for leetle boy, so we gets mad[,?] and thinks what we should do. Well, we make up our minds that we sail away to America, where boys don't have to work. How we should do that, we don't know. Then we remember the water box would hold water, and we could float it. Wall, we get four shovels, and a wheelbarrow, and take the box to the ocean, and we get in, and with the shovels, we paddle out to sea. It was fun; but we didn't know the tide was going out; we rowed and paddled; and then it got to be rough, oh, I suppose we's we go about a mile or two out; it started to get dark, and the water was rough and kept throwing us around, and we get scart. Wall, we thought we'd better paddle back, but with the tide against us, we couldn't get back. What to do, we didn't know, but hours after dark we hit the shore, but it was bout four miles away from where we started. We was afraid to go home, so we slept out that night, and everybody was looking for us. Nobody though we'd try to go to sea. Well, when we got to the old farmer's house the next morning, he took a cow-hide and laid it on our backs plenty. We never wanted to run away again. [2?] [3?] 3 ["How I happened to be workin' for the old farmer - I was hired out to help him. Your family would hire you out to a farmer or any place for work, and if you was bad, they'd whip you. Yennerly the boys was good for they's afraid of the man they works for, and if you got beat, you must need it.?)

"Another time somebody told me I was afraid to stand on my head on the top of the barn. The barns are covered on top with thick straw, and like and I got up and got close by the 'stork', and with one hand holding the stork and the other grabbin' the straw roof, I tried to balance myself, but I fell off. Now, what you think? I break my arm, and I get a lickin', too; not because I go on barn or break my arm, but because I pull down the stork, and that means bad luck to the house where the stork is. [4?] [? insert [?] from p.8.?)

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“Oh, yes, some people are [like that, what you call - - -] superstitious. Not so much now, but when I'se I was little kid, they scare us 'bout lots of things. Did I tell you 'bout 'nesser' or 'trolls' - well, everybody in Denmark believes in them nesser or trolls, but mostly 'nesser' . Well, when they tell you about him, he's just little and fat and wears a red stocking cap, and has a beard, [and - well, -] just like the Santa Claus here. He's a good fairy, and everybody's kids believe in him. They used to tell us when we's we [was?] kids that he watches over you. Something they never forget, every Christmas Eve, the mothers put outside the door a bowl of rice gruel, with cinnamon and sugar in it and a lump of 4 butter on top of it. If you forget to put it out for 'nesser' , you have bad luck. Old people believe bad luck will follow them, too, - mebbe death in the family. [?] [?] “The stories our mudder tells us is always good stories and they all end good. The Danish people good people, and like good home life and lots of fun. Never in Denmark where I live did I see many wealthy people, and there wasn't many poor people either. All they wanted was to have enough money to get along with, and as that goes, they wouldn't need any banks. Like here, you see beggars on the street, but you never see that in Denmark. If somebody don't have enough to live on, his neighbors help him and it is no sin to be poor. When they have festivities, the people all come together, if they have money or not, for the Danish people like fun and amusement. They have good morals and never is there a crime against a woman, for they respect their woman. “Families go on from yeneration to yeneration doing the same thing, like a shoemaker, - well, all his family is shoemakers, and they expect their children to be shoemakers. My people was all farmers and they make a business of that, but with my back hurt, they make easy job for me, and I am high school teacher. # Never do I do hard work till I come to America, and even at the wire mill when my work was too hard, they make me tin plater. At the shop now the business is slow and it seems like everybody is waiting to see what is going to be - mebbe war, but I don't think so. We got all the store space filled up with wire, but if there is war, 5 we make different things. Like when we have the World War, we make wire for guns and different war materials, and wire for all kinds of things; we make lots of wire [?] (with points on) for keeping the enemy away (barb-wire) and I don't like that kind of work, for I know for what they use it. [If this

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Europe trouble clears up, then we will get normal again.] 13 13 “I guess I'm glad, mebbe, I have no son, for the Danish people make plans for their sons when they is born, and today we can't make plans for ourself. We like peace and quiet. I hear my father say once there was a revolution in Denmark, but quick they squelch it, for we are contented people and like to be let along. x

“Since I come to this country I work all the time, and when I don't work, I ride my bicycle. Why, we had a club of bicycle riders, and each Sunday we had to ride 100 a hundred miles, if we wanted to keep a member. Whether it rained or not, we had to ride. Sometimes when I got home from my riding, you couldn't tell what I was riding and I would ride right into the pond back of the wire mill and wash off my bicycle. [One time I went for a ride and took a cut through Moreland Street, and when I started to coast, I couldn't put my feet back on the pedals, and I struck a tree and was knocked out for a long time. I think it was three hours, but I couldn't tell, for it was dark when I was riding, and daylight when I woke up.?] Once when I was living on Nyannis Place I used to ride up and down the hill and Mr. Quail, a neighbor, said he never saw anyone that could ride like me, and he bet me I couldn't ride on the top rail of a picket fence. Well, I bet him, and I won the bet. 12 The [? ? down.?)

6

“ Even if I am seventy 70 seventy , I feel like a young fellow, and I can't think why they will make me quit the wire mill next year. They tell me I work faster and better than the other men, but still I have to go. That is a very bad law, for if other men feel like I do at 70 seventy , they must feel like working. They have too many laws; one kind of law for one class and another class of laws for the other people. They never make a man quit work in a bank or lots of places. They told me last week they would see if I could have the law changed, for I don't look more than 50 fifty , do I? [You gotta to go? I guess I'm not so good today. I'm excited over baby. Now, don't you forget to come to that Christening, and I shall tell my Rosa, - Jah, - I'm happy man.”?]

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[Erik Christian Jensen Paper 2

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

NAME OF WORKER EMILY B. MOORE

ADDRESS WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

DATE OF INTERVIEW JUNE 5, 1939

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

NAME OF INFORMANT ERIK CHRISTIAN JENSEN

ADDRESS WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS?]

1

It was a pleasant early summer afternoon when I want to call on Mr. Jensen at his little bicycle shop. Busy with wires, bolts and sundry other "indescrībables" of his business, he beamed at me as I entered, jumped to his feet and pushed a little stool against the wall for my comfort. "Oh! You're busy. I shouldn't have come - " I began in apology. "No! no! I mean Yass, I like you should come, for I like to talk while I works. Down at the mill I can talks as much as I like, but not always does somebody come by to talk. [# Over in my country in Denmark, the people are all very sociable, and every night, and on Sundays, too, the people all come to one anothers' houses and talk in the evening, and have something to eat and drink. Mostly we drink 'snaps' . [md;] Oh, that's something everybody makes, maybe like you call here 'brandy', made out of corn, mostly. No, we never don't get drunk on that [Snaps?] , - everybody gets used to drinking that it . The Danish women always has plenty of things to eat , in the house[,?] and the daughters and mothers always make a feast in the evenings. The big feast we have is in May, and that lasts lots of times for weeks.?] Lots of things is different here than in Denmark. The houses here are so nice;

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in Denmark, the houses are not very high, and the barns is nearly always bigger than the house, and you can see for miles and miles. They says the best ways for living is in the country, in Denmark. All the farms are nice and kept well. The houses in the country are all about the same inside, not like here. The wood is all black and most of the walls are white-wash, 2 not paper and paint like you have here. Jah! [[/Here?], the people have chickens up high on their barns , (weather vanes) and in Denmark , the sacred bird is the ' stork ', and all the barns have storks on top.?] Then we have lots of bee-hives, and nice farm yards. [7?] [5?]

“Everybody in a Danish family works on the farm, and nobody works too hard. If you lives in the city and works in the factory, you sometimes work from 6 in the morning until 6 at night, and that don't seem too long. Yass, they have Unions now to tell you how you should do, but where I was raised, it was all farms, and we didn't bother much for Unions and things they have in the city. With my back not being so good, I didn't have too much work. [11a?] “Jah! [I thinks the biggest time for Danish boys and girls is when they get Confirmation by the church. That times they is about 16 sixteen , and they have it at after the church, then they go home and everybody comes and bring him presents, and they have a big feast. [Any time after that, a boy or girl can get engaged.] The girls get their dress longer and comb up their braids, and not long after that they get engaged [and the ? ?*]. No, I didn't get engaged very soon after my Confirmation, [for my back was wasn't not good, and [- cause?] I didn't know if I was to have a good back. After it gets better, my people make a engagement for me but I don't get married right away. I teach High School, and that's not so good. Then I get letter from my friend in America, and I make my mind to come over.

3

I go and see my lady and she tells me I should come, and when I get ready for her, she will come, too. I work here and save some money and then I go back, and we have a wedding, and she likes it here. No, you [asks for?] an engagement, and you don't change your mind in Denmark. All your life you know the girls you marry, and they make good

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wife, so why you should change your mind, I don't know. My woman is good woman. 9
[10?]

“Every Danish woman, she learns how to make a good home. In Denmark, if a girl goes to college and learns to be educated, she not through then till she spend some time in a house, to learn how people do. Well, yass, but it is not bad for a girl to learn housework. Nobody thinks that! If you are you're going to get married, you have to wait till the girls goes to somebody's house to learn. [Sometimes the girl to get married, her people have money, not too much. Well, their girl, she go and live in the house with people that has lots of money, and she learn to do like they do in their house.?] Well, one thing a good Danish girl should know how to make, is ‘ prune soup ‘. Well, I don't know jest how, but it is good! Some meat and other things, mebbe onions and rice, and lots of different things, but lots of prunes. Then she should know how to make pastry, for all men likes that. Then she must cook good chicken, and she has to know about feasts and things. Jah! they have wedding feasts , and when they have Christening feasts, and Christmas feasts, and Lent, - and then funerals , - - - I hear my 4 [mudder?] tell about that, but I don't go myself. In olden days in Denmark, a funeral would last a week, mebbe. My mudder she tell me a story onct, mebbe is ain't true, but she said a man was like to die; couldn't get better. Wall, he eats chicken day after day, and his wife, she kill them off. One day he say to her, - ‘I think I should have some chicken, I feel like.’ - She say to him, - ‘No, you can't have no more chicken, - you eat them all up, and I just got enough for your funeral.’ Mebbe that's not true, but my mudder tells me when I'm a little boy. 8 [?] 8 [?] ? “Sometimes you come and we go upstairs and talk with my missus and she tells you lots of things. Jah, - that's all she got to do, - remember, and she remembers lots of things she tell the kids. Things have changed in Denmark after I come over here, but lots of things is the same. Come again. I like to talk with you.” [?]

Smiling broadly, he waved from the door as I went down the road and out of sight.

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

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NAME OF WORKER MRS. EMILY B. MOORE

ADDRESS 84 ELM STREET, WORCESTER,

MASSACHUSETTS

DATE OF INTERVIEW JULY 5, 1939

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

NAME OF INFORMANT ERIK JENSEN

ADDRESS WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS 1 "You not telephone me, but by golly, I'm glad to see you, but it is a bad, bad day. Yennerally days like this I works better, - not so many peoples come, and I don't have to stop so much. No, don't go, for I got somethin' for you - something I pick up in the mill, and I think mebbe I can show you better, how to make wire. By and by, I give you, when this cement sets, I go get.

"Jah! not today I have my 'vooden' shoes on - it ain't cold enough for them now. Yah, they's comfortable, and more comfortable than leather shoes - they's the best things for your feet; they's insulators against dampness. No, they don't fall off, for they got leather over here, and they stay on tight. All the time in Denmark, people wears 'vooden' shoes for work, but leather shoes for Sundays and when you's dress up. Well, you see, the clay and the loom in the ol' country, she is very wet and sticky, and catch on your shoes, but falls off the 'vooden' shoes when you kicks them. Every body wears them and nobody thinks it funny to see them. Oh, yass, sometimes we have dances and we wears them, just for the noise, and to beat time with them. No, - everybody clogs them at the same time, and it has a nice sound when they do it. Them's what you call 'folk dances', and sometimes we have them at the Friendship Society, and everybody dances in 'vooden'shoes.

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"I don't think so you can buy them in Worcester, but I never tried, for [is?] send to Denmark for them, and I always have many sets of 'vooden' shoes at one time. You like, I should get you some when I 2 next time send for some for my family. You just measure your foot on a paper, and they send you some to fit your feet. No, I don't send very often, for they wear a long time, but I get you some.

["You see this die, - well, I go walking by in the mill and I see this, and I says to myself, 'Jensen, mebbe you can show Mrs. M. better how you draw wire, with the die', sos I put it in my picket for you. No,?] we don't use them these dies no more, but this is a very old one. Now, you see, this side has holes in it, but on the other side, the holes are the same holes, but they gets littler; you ' point ' your wire , through the big side, then you take the plyers, and catch your wire on the other side, and you jest draw and draw, and when you gets so much through, you wind it up, and draw some more. That was how you used to draw by hand. The bigger the wire is, the harder you have to draw and pull. Sometimes I see big men man draw that wire and it is so heavy and thick, he uses all his muscles till he sweats like hell, and he keeps on pulling the wire. That's how it was when I come here first. Now, when you draw wire, its not so hard, for the men just point the wire through the dies, and the machine she pulls the wire, and another machine winds it on the reel, and nobody has to sweat if he don't want to. 14

"We don't make the heavy wire at the North works, but they make it at the South works. When we get the wire up here, its about as thick as the finger, and then we draw it down to whatever size we want it. They draw wire .003 which is so fine you can hardly see it. Manys Many is the 3 time I draw wire that would reach from here to Boston, all by hand, too. Right here we send carloads of wire, and I remember that not so long ago they sent forty million pounds of BX (electric wire covering) wire to different parts of the world. Funny thing about wire, we make it here in this country, but [the composition we make wire] what we make it from , comes from Sweden; they never could make the base of it here, mebbe its the metal or the ore that goes into it can't be mined in this country.

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All kinds of wire we make at the North works. There's wire for music, pianos, wathces watches , clocks, radios, telephone, picture wire and hundreds of different kinds. Any kind of wire that's fine, we make it. Why, some of the wire, we draw through diamonds, for it's so fine. Then we make ' bending ' wire, and wire for electric light bulbs and for doctors' instruments, and for dentists, too. Never before could make mention of any wire that we can't make. 14 [Cont'd?] ? BAB would he say ['composition"?] ? [S?]

"Jah! mebbe they do ' tin plate ' before I come, but Jensen do better ' tin plate ' , for he knows how. Well, like this it is; we make the wire, and it gets wind on the reel, then we tin plate it. Before, when they tin plate the wire, she sticks in a lump and mebbe you can't wind it back. Well, I have like this: On this side, I have my wire I want to make tin plate; well, in the middle here, I make my ' vat ' of tin plate, mebbe 40,000 forty thousand pounds; in one side, I stick through the wire I want to tin plate, and push it through the vat of hot tin plate; I make this steel arm to hold down the wire in the tinplate vat, then 4 she goes through the vat and out the other side; now, when she comes out the other side, in the water I push it to make hard the tin plate; then when she comes out of the water, all cooled off, I have right here another slab with rubber 'vipers' wipers on to 'vipe' wipe the tin plated wire dry before it is rolled on the reel, then she don't stick together. The wire is all rolled up on the reel and ready to be packed away or shipped out. All the time they make improvements at the wire mill, but they can't do no better tin plate than Jensen can do. 14 "Jah! I have the girl works with me here in the bicycle shop, for girls work better than boys. [Down at the wire mill we have as many girls as we can keep busy, and they make good workers. One time we used to have boys doing the same work, but the boys get smart- alex alec , and throw nipples' all over the place, and sometimes they hit somebody in the eye, and mebbe hurt somebody, and the safety inspectors tells us girls can do work. We get girls in and they works fine, and mind their own business.] This 'striker' of mine here, she's goin' a work at wire mill next fall, for I teach her how she should do, and she generally do good work. ? "Mebbe I don't tell you how you can understand about wire mill, yah? That's allright for me, and I take you, only jest let me know sometime before, and I

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take you when I get done for the day. You come through the mill with me, and everybody knows Jensen, and they tell you anything you wants you should know. You not much bother to me today, and you come back anytime you like, and mebbe next time I can have you some 'vooden' shoes, yah!"