**Kate:** Good morning, this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is July 9th, 1994 and I'm in Bountiful Utah at the home of Lorene Menace with Sovena Bradshaw who came to the united states from Sabina which is now Yugoslavia, then apart of Austria, Hungary and [unclear 00:00:18] to the United States when she was 2 years old. Why don't you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Sovena:** My name right now is Sovena, S-O-V-E-N-A and that’s the takeoff of Szabina which is the Hungarian or the German version and so I don't know how you want to identify me. Whether you want [unclear 00:00:54] Szabina?

**Kate:** Szabina is your former name, is it and how do you spell that?

**Sovena:** S-Z-A-B-I-N-A.

**Kate:** And what was your maiden name?

**Sovena:** Keller, wait a minute you know I haven't used that for so long [chuckle]. What was my maiden-? My father's name was Hof, H-0-F.

**Kate:** H-O-F, alright so what day were you born?

**Sovena:** April 10th, 1907.

**Kate:** April 10th, 1907. Now what was the town where you were born? The name of the town.

**Sovena:** Yosefaova.

**Kate:** Could you spell that?

**Sovena:** Y-O-S-E-F-A-O-V-A, yeah I think. Yosefaova.

**Kate:** Okay and the county that you were born in, do you know that?

**Sovena:** I don't know whether they divided the areas to counties.

**Kate:** Alright region, what was the nearest largest town to where you lived?

**Sovena:** I'm not sure.

**Kate:** That’s alright. Do you know what size town that was? You came over when you were two years old so you were pretty young but-

**Sovena:** Well, I don't remember anything back there. I mean just what people have told me.

**Kate:** And what did your family tell you the town was like- the industry? Anything about the town?

**Sovena:** Yes, my mother used to operate a salon [laughter], my father was a builder and he built quite a few cathedrals in the area down there but my mother used to operate the salon.

**Kate:** What was your father's name?

**Sovena:** Jacob.

**Kate:** J-A-C-O-B. And his occupation was a builder. Could you describe what your father looked like? How would you describe him to someone who hasn't seen him?

**Sovena:** Well I have seen him you know.

**Kate:** But us, for the tape reasons and the recording.

**Sovena:** Well, he was a small man and very feisty you know and he was very proud.

**Kate:** And you say small, how small is small?

**Sovena:** Well short.

**Kate:** 5 foot.

**Sovena:** 5 feet probably and well I don't know how to describe him except that he was a small man.

**Kate:** And how about his eyes and hair?

**Sovena:** His eyes were blue and I was his favorite child [laughter] but even I learned to dislike him because he was so mean to my mother you know the men had no consideration for their wives over there and so he was mean to my mother.

**Kate:** Is there a story that you associate with your father from your childhood that sticks out in your mind about your father?

**Sovena:** Well, of course he was always special to me because I was his favorite and he always sort of favored me you know because I was number two child and there were only two of us when we came to united states and one of the things that I remember mother used to tell me was everybody on the boat was sick you know sea sick except me. I was little [unclear 00:05:21] and I would just run all over the boat and the sailors would play with me.

**Kate:** Hold on for a second I'm going to change the microphone.

**Sovena:** What was I telling you about?

**Kate:** The sailors would play with you on the boat and--

**Sovena:** Yes and it seemed from what I can gather I was the only one that wasn't sea sick you know the others were all sea sick and most of them down in the hold and the rest of my family was sea sick but I was running around and playing with the sailors [laughter].

**Kate:** What was your mother's name?

**Sovena:** Rosa.

**Kate:** And what was her maiden name, do you remember?

**Sovena:** Keller.

**Kate:** Keller, K-E-

**Sovena:** L-L-E-R.

**Kate:** You said she kept the salon, was she owner of the salon or did she work in the salon?

**Sovena:** Well, I think that my folks probably owned the salon. There were a lot of these small salons in the different areas [laughter].

**Kate:** What did your mom look like? How would you describe her?

**Sovena:** Well, I think I look a great deal like her.

**Kate:** How would you describe her then for the tape?

**Sovena:** Well now she was heavy set, I mean she wasn't slight and of course the women in those days had to be pretty husky in order to do all the work that was required of them and my mother had to work out in the fields and then she'd have to work in the salon you know. So they were driven pretty hard as far as work was concerned.

**Kate:** And what about her hair and eyes, do you remember the color?

**Sovena:** Well she had brown hair and of course it went gray like mine quite early and if I'd know I could have had a picture of her [laughter].

**Kate:** That’s alright, what about her personality? How would you characterize your mother in terms of temperament?

**Sovena:** She was very kind and understanding. She was good to everybody, she wasn't temperamental at all and she of course was willing to do almost anything to get over to America.

**Kate:** So she was eager to come?

**Sovena:** She was--

**Kate:** Was eager to come here.

**Sovena:** Yes, oh yes and she took in any kind of abuse that my father threw at her you know just so he would bring her over here and of course she didn't want to stay here. She thought that she would just come here and enjoy what she could and then go back and assume his place at the head of the household.

You know the men in those days were very domineering and the women had practically no say as to what happened in the households. The men would beat their wives- that was a common. I don't think my father beat my mother very often if at all but he used profanity a great deal.

**Kate:** So he was very forceful in his language to you?

**Sovena:** Yeah and I don't know too much of him, I've seen pictures of him and they're nice looking people but I don't know much about their history and I don't know professionally and so I don't know whether I can tell you very much of along that line.

**Kate:** Okay, what about your brothers and sisters? Now you have one older- you have brothers and sisters?

**Sovena:** Well, my sister Emma was the oldest and I was next.

**Kate:** How much older than you was she?

**Sovena:** Probably a couple of years.

**Kate:** And then you have a younger sister?

**Sovena:** Yes, the one that’s here.

**Kate:** And her name is?

**Sovena:** Lorene, L-O-R-E-N-E.

**Kate:** How much younger is she?

**Sovena:** Well, she's quite a bit younger.

**Kate:** You said 13 years a moment ago, is that correct?

**Sovena:** That’s about right.

**Kate:** Do you know anything about your house back home? You came early when you were two years old, what did your family tell you about your house where you lived in?

**Sovena:** Over in Europe?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Sovena:** They didn't tell very much so I don't think we had very pretentious house [laughter].

**Kate:** Do you have anything surviving from that house here? Any religious artifacts, any keepsakes?

**Sovena:** No, about the only thing that I have and of course I don't have it here is my baptismal certificate and I was a catholic. Baptismal certificate and I still have that of course in my home down in California.

**Kate:** Now you mentioned that your mother worked in fields, whose fields were those?

**Sovena:** I don't know the arrangement that they had but they would hire the peasants you know to come in and reap the fields and professional man. Of course he was supposed to be a professional man so he didn't reap in the fields very much but my grandfather. My mother's father, he and his family were reapers in the fields.

**Kate:** You mentioned earlier that your mother and father were different classes.

**Sovena:** Yes, my mother was of a peasant class and my father was the hierarchy you know he was professional, he had professional training, he was a carpenter and a builder and so he always lauded it over my mother you know that was what those people- that’s how they won their recognition I guess. They were of a different class.

**Kate:** Who did the cooking in your family?

**Sovena:** Who did the cooking? My mother.

**Kate:** And what was your favorite food as a child?

**Sovena:** They made out of flour and water and then salt. They ate most anything you know they didn't have anything that was available while they can fix in the food.

**Kate:** Do you have any anecdotes from about your mother from your childhood at all?

**Sovena:** Well, my mother was a sweet lady, she was kind and she was good to us children and we didn't suffer at the hands of my parents very much. The worst that we suffered was my father he always used profanity in his language.

**Kate:** Is there a funny story about your mother, anything you remember that she did?

**Sovena:** Well, the adults took their children and sort of farmed them out to do work in hierarchies homes you know and I don't know what to tell you about that.

**Kate:** Did she farm your sister out at all or you were too young when you left? You were two years [unclear 00:14:50] sent to other families to work.

**Sovena:** No, my sister was only about a year or two older than I and we were the only ones in the family.

**Kate:** Alright, now tell me about religious life in the old country, what religion were you?

**Sovena:** Catholic.

**Kate:** And did your parents both practice?

**Sovena:** Well, if there was any practicing of religion yes [chuckle].

**Kate:** Did they go to church on Sundays?

**Sovena:** Not always.

**Kate:** Not always, okay and were you taught prayers before you went to bed?

**Sovena:** Yes.

**Kate:** How about grace before a meal, did you say grace?

**Sovena:** Before a meal yeah.

**Kate:** You said a prayer.

**Sovena:** Yes.

**Kate:** What about holiday celebrations? Do you remember any ones that were your favorites?

**Sovena:** No, but you know my parents operated a salon and my mother tended the salon while my father was building homes, so I mean that was the way the family was.

**Kate:** When she was in the salon, where was your sister? Who was taking care of your sister?

**Sovena:** We were in the salon too [laughter]. That was the only place that we had, I mean most of our operation- whatever we did was in one building and it would be the salon and it would be the home and everything.

**Kate:** I see. How did your family get here? Whose idea was it?

**Sovena:** Oh it was my mother's. My mother's father was the first of the clan to come to America and any one of his children that wanted to come to America, he would pay the fare for them and they settled in Lefor, North Dakota.

**Kate:** How do you spell Lefor, do you know?

**Sovena:** L-E-F-O-R.

**Kate:** Lefor, North Dakota and what was there that brought them there? What was in Lefor? Why Lefor, North Dakota?

**Sovena:** Because it was open to immigration and the United States was encouraging the people to come over you know and they would settle in homesteads.

**Kate:** And what did he do your grandfather then?

**Sovena:** My grandfather was quite clever because he learned how to make shoes for his children and he wasn't a shoemaker and he just made everything that he could with the clothing that they could, I don't know what to tell you.

**Kate:** So he came first and he paid for, did he pay for your mother and your father to come?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** He paid for them both?

**Sovena:** Well I think so. I'm not sure about that.

**Kate:** But certainly he encouraged your mother to come?

**Sovena:** No, my mother encouraged my father to come [laughter]. He didn't want to come.

**Kate:** Your father didn't want to come.

**Sovena:** No, he didn't want to come to America.

**Kate:** Why not?

**Sovena:** Because everybody knew, everybody in the world at that time knew that in America the men couldn't beat their wives like they could in the other countries [laughter].

**Kate:** You think that’s true, I mean is that your opinion?

**Sovena:** Yes, mother said it was true. Now, my father didn't beat my mother very much, I think he did a few times but not very often. His bad part was he used swear words a great deal.

**Kate:** Did your parents ever tell you about getting ready to come? Your mother persuaded your father and what happened to the salon and to your father's business?

**Sovena:** I don't know that I don't know.

**Kate:** Did your mom say anything about the voyage over? You were just a small kid but--

**Sovena:** Yeah, they were in the hold of the ship that they came over in.

**Kate:** Do you remember the name of the ship that you came on?

**Sovena:** I used to know it but I don't remember any longer.

**Kate:** What port did they come from?

**Sovena:** Fiume.

**Kate:** Fiume, Italy.

**Sovena:** F-I-U-M-E.

**Kate:** Italy and they had to get from the town to the boat, would you know how they did that?

**Sovena:** No, I don't.

**Kate:** Okay and so they came and you said they were in the hold meaning what class were they travelling?

**Sovena:** I don't [chuckle]. They had nothing but potatoes to eat.

**Kate:** So it had to be third class.

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** So, [00:20:07] the food, what about the food? The food was--

**Sovena:** I had an older sister, it was just the two of us and my parents or maybe she went up herself on the table and when they were bringing the potatoes you know they just add them in a great big bowl and this sister of mine would grab the bowl and just dump it in her lap and then take over to my mother and father [chuckle]. That’s all they had to eat, it was potatoes.

**Kate:** Did they say how long the voyage was?

**Sovena:** No, I think they probably did but I don't recall.

**Kate:** Do you remember the date that the ship left the port? You were so small, these are all things.

**Sovena:** I was the only one that didn't seem to be sea sick [laughter]. I was running all over the deck you know and in the [unclear 00:21:14] where the sailors were swerving the decks and I was the only that seemed to be able to even get around.

**Kate:** Now, did your parents mention anything about Ellis Island? Did you have an examination at all, a medical examination?

**Sovena:** I don't know about that.

**Kate:** But you mentioned to me earlier you knew you came through Ellis Island.

**Sovena:** I what?

**Kate:** You mentioned earlier that you knew you came through Ellis Island, the family did.

**Sovena:** This is what was told to us.

**Kate:** Did your parents ever think that they would be possibly sent back for any reasons when they came here?

**Sovena:** My father wanted to go back [laughter]. Yeah, he wanted to go back because he'd [unclear 00:22:12], you know German at all?

**Kate:** No.

**Sovena:** When they say [unclear 00:22:17] that means, "I'm the boss of my house," and all the men wanted to be boss in the house and they knew that if they came over here that it would be frowned on for them to beat their wives.

**Kate:** Now you mentioned German now, what was the language you spoke at home?

**Sovena:** German.

**Kate:** What did your parents speak with each other?

**Sovena:** German.

**Kate:** Did you know any English before you came over here? Your family, your mother or father?

**Sovena:** I didn't learn English until I went to school about the age of seven and then I started learning and I had this wonderful little teacher and she was great on phonetics and so she got rid of the accents from most of us you know I don't have too much of an accent if at all. I don't think I have any accent but this little teacher and they were only about 18 years old these school teachers at that time.

**Kate:** Well we get back to the schooling, when you came here was your family detained at Ellis Island for any reason, for any length of time?

**Sovena:** Not that I know of, I never heard of.

**Kate:** Right, okay. Where did you go once you came through Ellis Island, where did you go? Where was your family headed for when they came here?

**Sovena:** To North Dakota.

**Kate:** To the same town where your grandfather was?

**Sovena:** Hmmm.

**Kate:** What work did your parents find when they went there if they did find work?

**Sovena:** My mother walked three miles every morning to do house cleaning for people in the small communities. Manning, North Dakota was the town where we sort of resided.

**Kate:** Manning and do you remember the address at Manning?

**Sovena:** They didn't have addresses [laughter], they just lived there.

**Kate:** So that was back in 1910 that you went to Manning, South Dakota.

**Sovena:** North Dakota.

**Kate:** Sorry North Dakota. So your mother worked for families as a house keeper?

**Sovena:** Cleaning the house and washing clothes and all that.

**Kate:** What did your father do?

**Sovena:** He didn't do anything as a matter of fact I think he was a heel [laughter]. I didn't like my father very well because he was mean to my mother.

**Kate:** Did he find work ever here?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, I mean they were just colonizing North Dakota at that time and so they had a lot of building to do and my father of course was a builder. Now he built as little as he could, he told my mother that because she wouldn't return to Europe well she was going to have to suffer as a result and he made her work. She'd have to walk three miles to the community and work there all day and then walk back home.

**Kate:** Now you said your mother's father was there, did he stay nearby?

**Sovena:** He was the first one of the clan to come over.

**Kate:** Did you know him?

**Sovena:** Oh yes.

**Kate:** And how would describe your grandfather?

**Sovena:** He had a big moustache, one of the big moustaches I remember that because he insisted on kissing all of his grandchildren [laughter]. His moustache getting on but my grandfather was real good to us.

**Kate:** What language did your grandfather speak before he came?

**Sovena:** German.

**Kate:** And what language did he speak to you as a child then?

**Sovena:** German.

**Kate:** So you basically kept German as a language at home?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** And you used English at school?

**Sovena:** Yes, at school they would teach us English and insist that we speak English as much as possible.

**Kate:** Do you remember what your grandfather did for work there?

**Sovena:** He learned to be a shoe maker.

**Kate:** In the United States?

**Sovena:** No, over at Europe because he made the shoes for all of his family.

**Kate:** So that’s one possible profession.

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did your mother learn English?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, she was real anxious to learn English. She encouraged us to speak English as much as we could.

**Kate:** Did your father learn English?

**Sovena:** Yes, my father was a pretty sharp man, I mean mentally but he was also a tyrant.

**Kate:** And what house did you live in North Dakota?

**Sovena:** We lived in a [unclear 00:27:38] you know made with mad and bricks.

**Kate:** A [unclear 00:27:44] house it was called a [unclear 00:27:44] house?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How big was it?

**Sovena:** I don't think it was very big as I remember and the way you'd wash the floors, you put water on it and just smoothed it out.

**Kate:** So was it a dirt floor?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** You had a dirt floor and what was the lighting that you had?

**Sovena:** The lighting, lamps.

**Kate:** Lamps, what kind of lamps? Do you remember?

**Sovena:** Kerosene lamps.

**Kate:** Kerosene lamps and what about plumbing, where would you get your water from?

**Sovena:** Well we got it from a well.

**Kate:** And how far was the well from the house?

**Sovena:** Not very far.

**Kate:** What about toilet facilities?

**Sovena:** Toilet facilities- well they had this out houses.

**Kate:** And what about furniture, what furniture did you have in your house?

**Sovena:** Of course they made whatever furniture they had and we made beds out of corn husks you know I mean that was the way that the mattresses that they had.

**Kate:** Were made out of corn husks and how far was the nearest neighbour?

**Sovena:** Some of them pretty close together.

**Kate:** What’s pretty close like?

**Sovena:** Half a mile but my mother would have to walk three miles.

**Kate:** And was that where town was? Was this Sord house in a town or out of town? Where was it in relation to the town, the sord house that you lived in?

**Sovena:** It was out of town.

**Kate:** It was out of town and did you have a garden at all?

**Sovena:** Yes, we had a garden.

**Kate:** What did you grow in your garden?

**Sovena:** They grew almost anything, potatoes and cabbage and I want to think of a favorite- my own watermelon and mask melon. My grandfather used to raise those and he'd go out into the garden and pick half a dozen melons and bring them and that would be a part of the meal.

**Kate:** What other neighbors? What was the nationalities of the neighbors nearby?

**Sovena:** Germans the mostly.

**Kate:** Germans?

**Sovena:** Hmmm.

**Kate:** Did your family get along with the neighbors?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, they got along fine. As a matter of fact my father got a long fine because he intended to go back when he got ready and then he wanted to go back my mother wouldn't go so that’s why he told her she would have to work all the days of her life because she wouldn't do what he said.

**Kate:** Now hold on for a second, we'll turn the tape over here now, take a break. You mentioned going to school before, now do you remember your first days of going to school?

**Sovena:** It was a rural school outside of Dickinson and Manning, North Dakota were close together.

**Kate:** And how big was the school?

**Sovena:** They had quite a few students.

**Kate:** How did you get to school?

**Sovena:** Mostly walk [laughter].

**Kate:** And how far was that school from home?

**Sovena:** In some instances it was quite away.

**Kate:** And what’s that mean quite away? Like how many--?

**Sovena:** How many blocks, probably six or eight blocks.

**Kate:** You said you spoke German, were other students in the same situation as you were?

**Sovena:** Well no, there were other nationalities there you know, Scandinavians and Italians.

**Kate:** And they also did not know English?

**Sovena:** Hmmm.

**Kate:** Were you treated well in school?

**Sovena:** Oh yes.

**Kate:** They didn't behave or say anything and call you a name at all for being foreign?

**Sovena:** No.

**Kate:** No, did you ever experience any persecution or bigotry for being foreign?

**Sovena:** No.

**Kate:** Now you said you had a marvelous teacher who knew phonetics.

**Sovena:** Yes.

**Kate:** What was your teacher’s name?

**Sovena:** Oh I don't remember, I really don't remember her name but she was only about 18 and she was a real cute teacher. She was good to us as students and she was good in teaching us and she had all these different nationalities that she had to overcome in order to teach us English.

**Kate:** Do you remember of any of your school mates at all? Any special person that was close?

**Sovena:** No, those are out of my mind pretty much.

**Kate:** How do you long did you stay in that [unclear 00:33:12] house? How long did you live there?

**Sovena:** Well, not too long because we moved. My father was a builder of course and so he builds a lumber house. I don't know too much, I don't remember too much about the length of time that we lived in different areas but Manning North Dakota was the largest community that we lived in to begin with.

**Kate:** And then where did you move to?

**Sovena:** Killdeer, North Dakota.

**Kate:** How do you spell that?

**Sovena:** K-I-L-L-D-E-E-R.

**Kate:** Killdeer, North Dakota and is that where your father built the house?

**Sovena:** He never build a house, it was [unclear 00:34:34], it always on the outskirts, it wasn't in the community.

**Kate:** What about religious life in this country, did your parents remain catholic?

**Sovena:** Yes, I was a catholic until I was about 30 years old but I was never happy as a catholic. I don't know why but I think it was the domineering attitude of the sisters that were conducting the education programs and so on.

**Kate:** Okay, your parents were catholic though. Did they go to church here at all?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, everybody went to church.

**Kate:** On Sundays?

**Sovena:** Hmm.

**Kate:** And did you continue saying prayers and grace?

**Sovena:** Yes.

**Kate:** Both of them you continued doing?

**Sovena:** Hmmm.

**Kate:** What about your favorite holiday, when was your favorite holiday?

**Sovena:** Oh dear, I don't know. Maybe the 4th of July [laughter].

**Kate:** And why?

**Sovena:** Because they had all the fire crackers [laughter] and all the excitements you know that went with the 4th.

**Kate:** And that to you was most fun?

**Sovena:** Yeah [laughter].

**Kate:** What did you do for entertainment as a child in North Dakota? What types of the things did you do to entertain yourself?

**Sovena:** Of course they even made us work pretty early you know get out in the fields and glean the grains. Mostly what was left after the corn barns went through and then we'd have to go pick up the individual stocks of grain.

**Kate:** So you worked very young?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Your mother, she had great expectations about coming to United States, how did she adjust when she got here and did she [unclear 00:36:55] what she thought?

**Sovena:** Oh yeah, she found what she was after and that was that she wouldn't be abused by my father.

**Kate:** And did she ever want to go back your mother?

**Sovena:** No.

**Kate:** And you mentioned your father had wanted to go back?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How did he adjust to life here?

**Sovena:** He didn't, he told my mother she'd have to work all her days if she stayed here because [chuckle] his favorite saying was, "Over in Europe I'm a gentleman, over here I'm a nothing [laughter]," you know that was his favorite and that’s why he didn't like being here because the men weren't recognized as being superior to the women.

**Kate:** Did he stay here, your father?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, he didn't go back [laughter] without us and then of course my mother divorced him.

**Kate:** At what age did she divorce him?

**Sovena:** I really don't know but it wasn't long after we got here because he thought he was going to go back and he thought he had my mother schooled in the idea, she was going back. When he got ready to go back she wouldn't go back.

**Kate:** And did he eventually go back?

**Sovena:** No.

**Kate:** No, so when he divorced what did he do?

**Sovena:** He just lived on the streets, he didn't have any place special to live, we didn't have a home and we lived mostly with my grandfather.

**Kate:** And your grandfather had work here?

**Sovena:** He was just a farmer I guess and he didn't have any occupation. He learned how to make shoes for his family so he made shoes for all of his family.

**Kate:** Now would you say your grandfather was satisfied with life here?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, the only trouble is my grandfather would beat my grandmother, that’s the only thing I had against him [laughter]. Somehow it seemed like men had to feel superior to their spouses in the way and the way they accomplished that was to beat them.

**Kate:** Did any family tragedy occur during those years at all?

**Sovena:** No, not that I can think of. Of course when we children grew up and got older, since I worked for a family- some ranchers because the wife had too much work to do so they farmed me out over there.

**Kate:** How old were you then?

**Sovena:** Probably ten.

**Kate:** So you started work at ten?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, they started working just as soon as they were able.

**Kate:** And how far did you go through school then, your schooling?

**Sovena:** I had some high school but I didn't get too much education until there was a family that wanted to sort of adopt me to help the wife raise the children because the wife had a nervous condition.

Her name was Ellsworth and they had three children and the wife wasn't able to cope the nervousness that was created with the children but they were real good to me and the only thing is he was a Shriner and they came - I don't know where they went for one of this conventions and she was killed in an accident.

**Kate:** What accident?

**Sovena:** It was an automobile accident.

**Kate:** And then what happened?

**Sovena:** Then I was kind of farmed out to earn my living and the people that I was farmed too would pay for my education and see that I got a chance to go to school.

**Kate:** Which school was that now?

**Sovena:** The public school.

**Kate:** What happened after that age? Did you marry?

**Sovena:** No, I didn't marry until I was about 30 years old. It was a friend of mine that wanted to go to California, see we were North Dakota. She wanted to go to California and so she talked me into going with her and I don't remember where we got the money to do it but we did. We went to California.

**Kate:** Where in California?

**Sovena:** Los Angeles.

**Kate:** What did you do there?

**Sovena:** We got jobs, by that time I could type and so I got a secretarial job and I remember the man that I worked for his name is Mr. Grayson. I think he had in mind that here was a little foreign girl that didn't know her way around and he was going to show her the way but he didn't get very far with me [laughter].

**Kate:** What that’s mean--?

**Sovena:** Well I didn't go along with his plans.

**Kate:** So you stayed in Los Angeles?

**Sovena:** Yes.

**Kate:** How long?

**Sovena:** I lived there quite a while. That’s when I married.

**Kate:** How did you meet your husband?

**Sovena:** There was a dance hall in Los Angeles and people would go there and then they get acquainted and that’s how I --

**Kate:** Did you go to dances very often?

**Sovena:** Yes, I enjoyed dancing. As a matter of fact I wanted to become a professional dancer but I never had the money or the time to do it.

**Kate:** What was the background of your husband? What did he do?

**Sovena:** The first husband that I had was a bad one, he didn't want to work.

**Kate:** What background was he?

**Sovena:** He was a Mormon.

**Kate:** He was a Mormon. Your first husband was a Mormon? So you met him at 30?

**Sovena:** Yes, I think I was about that age and his name was Denning and he liked to play pool and that is where he spent most of his time was in the pool and he used to get real unhappy with me because I didn't give him money for cigarettes.

He was also a smoker and he came from a good LDS family, his mother was relief society president and he had six brothers and one sister and they kind of spoilt him you know and so he didn’t' want to work and he didn't.

**Kate:** Now you mentioned that you were- you became Mormon then is it? You converted?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** How did that happen?

**Sovena:** I met this Leith Denning in the dance hall where we were to dance and he had a roommate and I don't remember exactly how. Well anyway I married Leith Denning and I was married to him for nine years and then I guess I got tired of supporting him and he used to be real unhappy with me because I didn't give him money for his cigarettes.

**Kate:** Now how did you become a Mormon then? When did that happen or how did you make that step?

**Sovena:** Of course I married Leith and he was [unclear 00:47:04] and- what was your question?

**Kate:** Becoming a Mormon yourself, you were a catholic before, so marrying him is how you became?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** And did you stay in the church?

**Sovena:** In the [unclear 00:47:22] church? Oh yes.

**Kate:** So after nine years, what happened? Did you remarry again or ever remarry?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, I've had four husbands [laughter]. I mean I didn't like living alone and this girlfriend of mine, she and I came down here, came to California together and I don't know it seemed to me like money reached a little bit further than it does now you know [laughter] and we lived together.

I lived with this Edna Isakson and she and I were friends, a long time and then she went to Monrovia and I married Leith and lived in Los Angeles.

**Kate:** So you married four times, did you have children?

**Sovena:** No, never had any children because my husband Leith which was the first one that I married, he was sterile and he didn't tell me so I kept going to the doctor you know getting shots and all these sort of things trying to have some children and I finally found out why I couldn't have any children and then I divorced him.

**Kate:** Now when you look back, you've had a long life, you've lived in two countries, when you look over your life and life here, how do you view your mother's decision and enthusiasm to come here?

**Sovena:** Oh I just love her to death for [laughter] you know.

**Kate:** Did your mother become Mormon?

**Sovena:** Oh yes.

**Kate:** Your mother did and did your father?

**Sovena:** No.

**Kate:** Your mother became Mormon, how about your grandfather?

**Sovena:** No.

**Kate:**  But your mother also converted?

**Sovena:** Yes.

**Kate:** When? When you did or later?

**Sovena:** No, after I did.

**Kate:** After I did.

**Sovena:** I sort of led the way for the family and most of them followed.

**Kate:** Your older sister did she become Mormon?

**Sovena:** Yeah.

**Kate:** And your younger sister?

**Sovena:** Yes, this is my younger sister right here.

**Kate:** she's active, is she?

**Sovena:** Oh yes.

**Kate:** How active is your family in LDS?

**Sovena:** I was very active in Los Angeles and I became a dance director in the church [chuckle] and I taught dancing. I've been active in the church ever since I was about 30 years old.

**Kate:** Why is your Mormon faith you think more important than the catholic? You said you weren't happy in the catholic, what’s the difference?

**Sovena:** The difference to me was- how should I state this. In the LDS church, the individual was important and in the catholic church the hierarchy and the church was the most important and so I preferred the LDS and I was the first one in the family to join the church.

**Kate:** And now when you look back as we were saying before on your mother's decision, how do you view that? What do you think of your--?

**Sovena:** I loved my mother and she loved her children, she was real good to her children and I don't know what to say.

**Kate:** Was she happy, satisfied with her life here?

**Sovena:** No, she had to work real hard you know because she had this family and my father refused to work when she refused to go back to Europe.

**Kate:** How did she view her original decision? Did she think it was a good idea?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, she was willing to do almost anything to get my father to come to America.

**Kate:** And now how do you think of your mother's decision, are you happy she came?

**Sovena:** Oh yes, goodness gracious. I wouldn't be anything but an American [laughter].

**Kate:** I'd like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for speaking with us. This is July 9th, 1994. I'm in bountiful Utah for the Ellis Island oral history project.