**Kate:** Good afternoon this is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 5th of December 1993. I’m in Coldwater, Michigan at the Maple Lawn Care Facility the home of Irene Van Dyke who came from the Netherlands in 1912 at the age of 17. Why don’t you begin by giving me your full name and date of birth please?

**Irene:** My first name?

**Kate:** Your full name. What is your full name?

**Irene:** Now?

**Kate:** Yes.

**Irene:** Irene Van Dyke.

**Kate:** Your maiden name? What was your maiden name?

**Irene:** Rimke Visser.

**Kate:** How is that spelt?

**Irene:** V-I-S-S-E-R, the V is pronounced F in Holland.

**Kate:** How was it spelled here in the United States? The name was changed wasn’t it?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** To what?

**Irene:** I started to work for a family, Dr. Hendricks in Martinsville Indiana and I have to give them my name. He said, “Spell it,” and I said R-I-E -“Oh that’s Irene.” That’s how I got my name, I didn’t go any further.

**Kate:** What were you called in Holland? What was your name in Dutch? What is your real name in Dutch?

**Irene:** I told you Rimke Visser.

**Kate:** Can you spell that.

**Irene:** R-I-M-K-E .

**Kate:** They called you Irene here?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative)

**Kate:** Where were you born?

**Irene:** Arum.

**Kate:** Could you spell that please?

**Irene:** A-R-U-M.

**Kate:** What size town was that? How big was that town?

**Irene:** Over 1,600, small town.

**Kate:** What did the town look like?

**Irene:** It was a clean town.

**Kate:** What type of industry? What kind of town was it? Was it farming or what was the major industry in that town?

**Irene:** The what?

**Kate:** What was the major industry in that town, do you remember?

**Irene:** The biggest was the church and [inaudible 00:02:14] and the clock on top.

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

**Irene:** Robert.

**Kate:** What did he do for a living? What was his occupation? What did he do for work? What was he?

**Irene:** Farmer.

**Kate:** What did he look like? Could you describe what he looked like your father?

**Irene:** When he was in the Netherlands he wore a beard and he looked like a Jew. Then he shaved himself, he didn’t even know who he was.

**Kate:** Was he a dark haired man? Did he have dark hair?

**Irene:** He shaved before we come. When he know he was coming to the United States he begun to look like a gentleman more than a farmer.

**Kate:** What about his personality and his temperament? What kind of person was he?

**Irene:** Grumpy.

**Kate:** Grumpy?

**Irene:** Yeah. You had to do it now and his way, he was very much sound that way, because we all grow up and had our own ways about things but then he was the boss.

**Kate:** Was there any story about your father you remember the best? Any story you have about your father do you remember? What do you remember most about him?

**Irene:** No, I can’t tell. He used to be a soldier in the army and I guess he knew how to command more than ask. It was, “You do this and you do it right,” that was my dad.

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

**Irene:** Bertha Andela.

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

**Irene:** A-N-D-E-L-A.

**Kate:** That’s her maiden name Andela?

**Irene:** That’s her maiden name.

**Kate:** What did she do? What was her occupation?

**Irene:** She was housewife.

**Kate:** What did she look like?

**Irene:** She was a very nice looking person. I got pictures of her so I know. She was a good looking young woman.

**Kate:** What color hair and eyes did she have?

**Irene:** Her hair was medium dark and eyes I don’t know.

**Kate:** What about her personality? What do you remember about your mother her temperament?

**Irene:** She had to be bossy with so many kids. She was a good mother.

**Kate:** What were her chores around the chores? What did she do at home?

**Irene:** She what?

**Kate:** What did she do at home?

**Irene:** With so many kids what do you do at home?

**Kate:** Do you have any stories about your mother or anything you associate with your mother? If you were going to tell a story about your mother what would you say?

**Irene:** She always was on time with the meals. She was very clean, everything had to be clean. We had a [inaudible 00:05:26] don’t worry if she would tell me to go -I was the oldest almost, she would tell me, “Go out and play but take a couple of kids.” That was my play time. It gives her little chance to read.

**Kate:** You had how many brothers and sisters? How many did you have?

**Irene:** My mom had three brothers and two sisters.

**Kate:** How many children in your family? How many were you? How many children were you? You were one of 14 children? How many children in your family?

**Irene:** Me? I had six.

**Charlie:** Our family.

**Kate:** How many kids did you have?

**Irene:** 15. The baby, the only little [inaudible 00:06:17] died here. Oldest brother was here and my oldest sister stayed there. 12 of us come with the parents.

**Kate:** Could you name all your brothers and sisters? What names?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What names could you give them to me?

**Irene:** Milden, the older one Garret, my oldest brother he [inaudible 00:06:44] a trail here, he come …

**Kate:** How do you spell Garrett? How is Garrett spelt?

**Charlie:** G-A-R-R-E-T-T.

**Irene:** He comes around …

**Kate:** G-A-R-R-E-T-T? Garrett?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** Who was next?

**Irene:** He won a scholarship in his school and my dad sold his scholarship so Garrett could come to the United States to play the trail for the game. That’s Garrett, he did a lot for the family.

**Kate:** Who was the next person?

**Irene:** Then my sister Joe, she didn’t want to come she had a boyfriend. Had no argument from dad or anybody, if she didn’t want to go she didn’t want to go. She stayed there in [inaudible 00:07:29], had a good husband, she married her boyfriend too. They raised a nice family.

They still keep in contact. I wrote a Dutch letter the other day to my nephew, most of them cannot read English but she’s [inaudible 00:07:47] Holland language yet. I still can write to them.

**Kate:** After Joe, your sister’s name was Joe?

**Charlie:** Dieuwke [inaudible 00:08:01] in America.

**Irene:** Holland is Dieuwke D-I-E-U-W-K-E, Dieuwke but we shortened it to Joe here. We called her Joe didn’t we Charlie?

**Charlie:** [Inaudible 00:08:18].

**Irene:** You don’t remember?

**Charlie:** Joe, had to be [inaudible 00:08:22].

**Kate:** Who was after Joe you were next? Who was after Joe?

**Irene:** I was. I was number three.

**Kate:** After you?

**Irene:** Otto, my brother, he came with us.

**Kate:** Who else was after him?

**Irene:** After Otto came Jenny. After Jenny came John. After John came Alice. After Alice came Pete. After Pete came Francis. Then Elizabeth and then Sadie. After that came Robert and then Leo, and finally Charlie.

**Charlie:** This was [inaudible 00:09:06].

**Kate:** Describe your house in Holland? Do you remember your house where you lived in Holland as a child?

**Irene:** Where we lived or where I worked?

**Kate:** Where you lived?

**Irene:** It was brick. It was four homes under one block. I don’t know [inaudible 00:09:33] call it here but we had one of them every …

**Kate:** Row houses?

**Irene:** Brick, they were brick. We had one room and one kitchen, and a hall and upstairs.

**Kate:** How many rooms where there in that house do you remember?

**Irene:** That’s it.

**Kate:** How many all together bedrooms did you have for example?

**Irene:** In Holland, the front room and the living room has built in beds. Our place had two built in beds and then the rest was upstairs. We had, like they have here.

**Kate:** How was it heated, the house?

**Irene:** Stoves then.

**Kate:** Was there a garden? Did you have a garden?

**Irene:** My dad was a great gardener.

**Kate:** What did he grow in his garden?

**Irene:** Potatoes first of all, cabbage, carrots and onions, name it.

**Kate:** In Holland?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** When you were a young child?

**Irene:** That's in Holland yeah.

**Kate:** How about flowers, did he grow flowers too?

**Irene:** He didn’t have very much room for flowers but there were, I don’t know whether it was a dallier dilder, they called it. They had some of them there.

**Kate:** When you look back at this house, what about the furniture? Do you remember what type of furniture was in your house in Holland?

**Irene:** The room had a big table and a lot of chairs and usually a baby bogi or two. The kitchen had a table, two chairs and cook stove.

**Kate:** Was that house in town or out of town? The house that you lived in was in town or was it out of town?

**Irene:** It was a little bit out of town.

**Kate:** Did you keep animals at all? Did you have any animals?

**Irene:** Dad kept pigs, a couple of pigs and chickens.

**Kate:** Who else lived in that house? Just your family lived there?

**Irene:** Just us, yeah.

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

**Irene:** Guess?

**Kate:** Your mother?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did you help?

**Irene:** No not too much. She was the best cook for what she had to cook. You never tasted soup, or anything like it here, like my mom used to cook. She didn’t have the things to do with their either like we have here.

**Kate:** What was your favorite food?

**Irene:** We liked potatoes. She could make the best pea soup.

**Kate:** Pea soup?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** You didn’t help her cook very much then?

**Irene:** What?

**Kate:** You didn’t help at cooking?

**Irene:** No, that was her job.

**Kate:** What was meal time like? What was the meal like? Did you eat together the whole family or?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Every meal? When you had breakfast did you all eat together?

**Irene:** Yeah, that is a problem now I don’t know how to answer that, because the little ones were fed first. They had something like oat meal or [inaudible 00:13:05]. The older ones just got rye bread and cheese and [inaudible 00:13:10], that was our breakfast.

**Kate:** What about dinner for example? What about supper?

**Irene:** Dinner was a main meal, potatoes and vegetables and meat, if they could afford meat. They usually had a pig butcher so we had a lot of bacon.

**Kate:** Did you all eat together supper?

**Irene:** Yeah, we tried.

**Kate:** 15 children.

**Irene:** Some of them had to sit in the kitchen but meal all the time was together. That’s how we used to do it.

**Kate:** Were there other family members who lived nearby? Did your grandparents live near this house?

**Irene:** They what?

**Kate:** Did you have family members? Other people, cousins, grandparents?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Who lived nearby you? Who loved near that house in Holland?

**Irene:** The [inaudible 00:14:05].

**Kate:** Grandparents? Did they live near you? Your grandparents?

**Irene:** They had [inaudible 00:14:12] families.

**Charlie:** Where did Beppe grow up? Where was she living? Where did Beppe live?

**Irene:** Who?

**Charlie:** Beppe.

**Irene:** Yeah grandma, you’ve talked my grandma. They had what they called in my town, the widowed row, there’s one string of houses are all under one roof. Its [inaudible 00:14:37] but the same, she had one room and a little pantry and upstairs.

**Kate:** Nearby?

**Irene:** Yeah, not too far away. On the way to school.

**Kate:** Who were you closest to in the family? Who were you the closest to you?

**Irene:** That is hard to tell. Charlie is here he might remember.

**Charlie:** [Inaudible 00:15:05].

**Irene:** Jenny, my sister Jenny and I. We were together a lot when we were little. Later on we got married and lived not too far apart, we sticked together pretty good.

**Charlie:** They married brothers.

**Kate:** You married brothers?

**Charlie:** No, two sisters’ married two brothers.

**Kate:** Two sisters married two brothers? In Holland do you remember did you go to the church at all? What was religious life like in Holland?

**Irene:** Presbytery is as close as I can tell you. We were not a church going family, not strictly so. Our church, [inaudible 00:15:52] call it, was a big brick church.

**Kate:** Nearby? Was it near your house?

**Irene:** Right at the center of town.

**Kate:** Did you have any religious persecution or prejudice of any sort when you were a child? Religious persecution, did you have any problems with your religion?

**Irene:** Not so much that I know. The minister would come to see us and mom would say, “Behave yourselves the minister is coming.” His daughters would make reservations once in a while.

**Kate:** When you were younger back in Holland what was your favorite holiday? What type of holidays did you have?

**Irene:** Sinterklaas.

**Kate:** Santa Claus?

**Charlie:** That’s tonight.

**Irene:** That’s tonight yeah. Tonight is a big night in Holland.

**Charlie:** Hot chocolate.

**Irene:** I’d love to be back. They served hot chocolate …

**Kate:** What was it like?

**Irene:** Had social gathering and have good stuff to eat and Sinterklaas is coming.

**Charlie:** That their Christmas. Christmas is religion there, the 5th and 6th of December.

**Kate:** The 5th and 6th of December? That’s tonight?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What would happen when you were little? What happened when Sinterklaas?

**Irene:** We were supposed to put a basket or something around the chimney. If we were good children Sinterklaas would put something in it. That happened of course, we always got a little something.

One time I was in kindergarten, I had a teacher’s blouse was in the back fastened in the back and nobody could do it. She asked me and I was lucky enough to do it, she said, “You bring a basket tonight and Sinterklaas will bring something in it for you.”

I brought my basket and the next morning in that basket was a beautiful doll and a piece of goods for a [inaudible 00:17:50]. I had to call, “Thank you Sinterklaas,” up the chimney.

**Charlie:** Sinterklaas Kapoentje.

**Irene:** Yeah. Leg wat in mijn schoentje.

**Kate:** What’s that mean?

**Irene:** We had to sing that as little children. Sinterklaas Kapoentje, Leg wat in mijn schoentje, Leg wat in mijn laarsje, Dank je Sinterklaasje!

**Charlie:** Yeah I remember that I didn’t sing it [inaudible 00:18:17].

**Irene:** You remember that?

**Charlie:** I remember you singing it, I wasn’t [inaudible 00:18:20] yet.

**Irene:** That was the teacher I guess.

**Kate:** Little Christmas was your?

**Irene:** That was more religion. What were you call them? [Inaudible 00:18:38] first Christmas day, church. The second was for visiting and we had two Christmas days. In that respect we have no gifts, they got them from Sinterklaas.

**Charlie:** A black horse was seen.

**Kate:** Yes Sinterklaas came in a black horse, is that true?

**Irene:** Yeah, a little [inaudible 00:19:03] I translated Sinterklaas Kapoentje and they think that’s kind of cute. Sinterklaas comes in a big [inaudible 00:19:14]. Sint-Nicolaas on his white horse, his [inaudible 00:19:19] as black as soot.

He rides through the whole white world and spreads a lot of good. He haunts naughty children too. I’m really scared should he take me away from mom, Sint-Nicolaas feast [inaudible 00:19:36] I’m really surprised at you, you’re usually such brick.”

**Kate:** I’m really surprised that you what?

**Irene:** You’re really such a brick.

**Kate:** You’re really sort of brick?

**Irene:** Such a brick.

**Kate:** Soot a brick? Such a brick?

**Irene:** That’s the nearest you went out. Something like boss, you’re always so bossy, you’re such a brick.

**Kate:** You’re such a brick. What about school life back when you were in Holland? Do you remember your school?

**Irene:** Yes.

**Kate:** Tell us about that school? Where you went to school in Holland?

**Irene:** [Inaudible 00:20:24] too, we wore wooden shoes. We had put our wooden shoes up in the rack, each had his number. We weren’t allowed to come into the classroom with our wooden shoes. Then we had, like here too, reading, writing, arithmetic.

**Kate:** Where was the school that you went to? Where was the school was it … ?

**Irene:** Arum.

**Kate:** Near home? Was it near your house?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** Did you walk there?

**Irene:** Yes.

**Kate:** Was it crowded in your school? Were there many children? The school was it very big school or?

**Irene:** It had four big rooms yes, it was a very big school.

**Kate:** Do you remember any of your teachers? Do you remember teachers?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Who was your favorite teacher?

**Irene:** One teacher, we called her [inaudible 00:21:13], she was understanding, she understood kids. Then we had an old teacher, [Mr. Debull 00:21:22], he was a bore, he was terrible.

**Kate:** What was your favorite subject?

**Irene:** I always liked to read and write.

**Kate:** Did you learn English before coming to the United States? Did you know English before you came here? Did you learn English in school?

**Irene:** No we didn’t. All we know was ‘Yes sir’ ‘No sir’ but we didn’t know when to say it.

**Kate:** What did you for fun for entertainment when you were a child in Holland?

**Irene:** We jumped rope, we played jacks and marbles and something like here.

**Male:** Watch television.

**Kate:** No you didn’t …

**Irene:** What did you say?

**Male:** Watch television?

**Irene:** No, no television.

**Kate:** Do you have any childhood stories? What do you remember best about your childhood days in Holland? What’s your most favorite story if you could tell one?

**Irene:** I don’t know. I like to embroider [inaudible 00:22:32], you mean games or?

**Kate:** No just anything you remember. Some funny story when you were a child, something you did wrong or do you remember anything?

**Irene:** I used to play marbles like here. When you have 10 or so, you could sell 10 for a penny. I had a sack full of marbles, I was lucky that day so I had some pennies among my marbles. I come home with my marbles and I was so proud I had, I don’t know if it was five or six pennies, I sold [inaudible 00:23:07]. “Well their mine.” Mom wanted those three, they didn’t go in my bank. [Inaudible 00:23:19].

**Male:** Irene, did you ever skate under canals?

**Irene:** Skate? We did a lot of skating, I loved to skate.

**Kate:** On the canals?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative). They called it 13 cities, [inaudible 00:23:36] skates.

**Kate:** How many cities?

**Irene:** 13.

**Kate:** 13 cites on skates?

**Irene:** My dad was the best skater.

**Kate:** Skate a lot?

**Irene:** My grandma was really a good skater and my dad was. He would take my brother Otto and me on these skating trips. Yeah I like to skate.

**Kate:** Do you remember when your family decided to come to the United States? When your family decided to come here to America? Do you remember when they prepared to come or when they decided?

**Irene:** Yeah. I had been working in the city with a family. I come home, mom said, “Just stay home we may go to America and we have to get ready.” “In April or in August.” She said August was impossible, I didn’t know why not but anyhow April suited me fine too. They didn’t ask me anyway, anyhow [inaudible 00:24:56]. We left in a hurry.

**Kate:** What did you think about that when she told you? Do you remember your reaction when she said?

**Irene:** I said, “Hurrah I don’t need to go back to the city.” I didn’t like the place I stayed. I come home just in time to help put clothes in shape and everything like that.

**Kate:** Who was in the United States, your brother, older brother?

**Irene:** My brother was here. We had relatives, but I never met them before. When we arrived in Martinsville, it was a family called Van Dyke who helped mom get settled in her home. I helped where I could, but this Dr. Hendricks, his wife wanted me right then.

We arrived at Friday and I start to work on Monday and I didn’t know a word of English. They said, “If the phone rings you say doctor’s in or doctor’s out.” I would say that much. When no one else was around I had to answer the phone, “Doctor’s in and then doctor’s out.”

**Kate:** Let’s go back a bit to when you decided to come to the States. What did you have to do to get ready to come? How did you decide what to take and what not to take, do you remember?

**Irene:** First thing to do is [inaudible 00:26:34] your clothes in, which are fit are to go and which had to be worn until you go.

**Kate:** Was it a big deal getting ready, do you remember?

**Irene:** No, it wasn’t a small deal. We had so many kids to get ready, trunks to be filled, what to take. We wanted to take the feather bed and they did mention that.

**Kate:** Did they take the feather bed?

**Irene:** Put a lot of dishes in the same trunk.

**Kate:** Did you help pack everything? Did you help?

**Irene:** I had to check the clothes, see if they need buttons or hooks.

**Kate:** Do you think everyone wanted to come? Did your family want to come?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What did you know about America before you came?

**Irene:** All we knew was what we heard from, my dad had a cousin in [inaudible 00:27:35], they had a farm there. That’s where my brother went to. Telling us how cheap everything was. It sounded like heaven to us. America is a land of all dreams all right.

**Kate:** How did your mother feel about coming?

**Irene:** She was anxious to come too, but in her condition I guess she was glad to get here too.

**Kate:** What condition was she in?

**Irene:** She was expecting Charlie, Charlie little brother, and the one who died here too.

**Charlie:** Theodor.

**Kate:** Theodor yeah. How did your father feel about coming?

**Irene:** He’s the instigator, he wanted to go on the farm. He didn’t know how to work [inaudible 00:28:34] way it was there.

**Kate:** Before you left did you have a party? Did anyone give you a goodbye party? The night before you left?

**Irene:** No. I had to stay with a cousin. We all had to go somewhere and I happened to stay with my cousin that night and had to sleep three in a bed. Next morning she said, “Time to go.” We had to meet at my grandma’s house for the person who would drive us to the train. She didn’t give me a bite to eat or anything.

**Kate:** How much did you pack? How many things were you carrying with your family? You had 12 children and how many suitcases? Do you remember what you took?

**Irene:** No, I don’t remember. My grandma packed one box and she said that’s for the babies, all mom needed to do is soak whatever she got in a little milk for Charlie and Leo and the little ones. When the food was gone, we just had to do [inaudible 00:29:44] except there was enough for the little ones.

**Kate:** Did you take food with you?

**Irene:** Yeah, rye bread and cheese mainly.

**Kate:** What did you take? Did you take anything personal when you packed your bag? You were about 17, what did you take with you?

**Irene:** A few things as you could, but the best of what you had.

**Kate:** What was the best that you had, what was it?

**Irene:** My dress, my other things. You couldn’t take anything but what you absolutely need.

**Kate:** Was there anything special the family took? Was there anything that they brought? You said the feather bed and they brought some dishes, what else did they bring? Anything special that belonged to your grandparents or anything?

**Irene:** We had mainly rye bread and cheese and some kind of a [inaudible 00:30:51] and the major things.

**Charlie:** [inaudible 00:30:51] diapers for me.

**Irene:** My grandma fixed up two boxes for us, till we got to Rotterdam and then we could eat something. The …

**Kate:** Where did you leave from? What port did you leave from?

**Irene:** Rotterdam.

**Kate:** How did you get from home to the port?

**Irene:** We had to take a train to, what you call Harlingen and from there we changed trains to Leeuwarden. Leeuwarden is a capital of my state there. My sister Joe lives in Leeuwarden, she was supposed to come to the train to say bye to all of us, she never showed up. Then from the train we went to Rotterdam.

**Kate:** Is this too tiring for you, are you tired?

**Irene:** It’s all right.

**Kate:** You left from Rotterdam?

**Irene:** That’s where the guide was supposed to take us to the boat. He come and he pointed us to a certain hotel where we had a couple of rooms. We made the best of what we had there, very little to eat till we got to the boat. This guy took us to the boat and when he saw that we couldn’t believe it was that big. We were assigned three cabins. We divided us as good as we could.

**Kate:** What was the name of that ship, do you remember?

**Irene:** It was Ryndam.

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

**Irene:** R-Y-N-D-A-M.

**Kate:** Once you got to the port, did you have to wait overnight for the ship? Did you wait or did you go directly?

**Irene:** We had to wait in Rotterdam overnight.

**Kate:** Where did you stay?

**Irene:** That I don’t remember, some hotel that goes with the boat.

**Kate:** Did any family members see you off? Any other family members come with you or was it just your family who left?

**Irene:** Just our family.

**Kate:** When did the ship depart? Do you remember what day and year, when did it leave the boat?

**Irene:** No, I don’t know.

**Charlie:** 31st of March.

**Kate:** 31st of March?

**Charlie:** That’s what my records say.

**Kate:** What was it like on the ship? What do you remember about the ship?

**Irene:** I remember we had good food and all we needed, we were hungry when we got there. At one time they were serving macaroni and cheese, mom says, “We don’t like that.” The helper said, “Lady, what do you like?” She said, “We like potatoes.” We got potatoes in our table while others got macaroni.

**Kate:** What class were you traveling? Were you in first, second or third class, do you remember?

**Irene:** Third.

**Kate:** How about the dining room, how did you eat in the dining room? What was the dining room like?

**Irene:** That was quite a dining room, There were some people from all different nations. All these boys, somehow they told me they come from Belgium. They didn’t like that macaroni and cheese they just threw it through the ceiling.

**Kate:** What was it like eating with your family? You had so many small ones, you had so many children, how was it eating with the whole family there?

**Irene:** I guess we managed. Mashed potatoes goes a long way with the Dutch.

**Kate:** Were you allowed to go up on deck?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What did you see when you go on deck? What was it like when you went on deck? How was it?

**Irene:** You go that way and then you are on deck. All you see is the ocean all around you.

**Kate:** Was it a rough trip or a smooth trip? What kind of voyage was it?

**Irene:** It wasn’t too bad, the front was too windy we weren’t allowed on the deck. One day we were on the deck and one of these young sailors was going to hoist a flag on top. It got caught I guess, he went to untangle it and he fell down right in front of us. I don’t know if he died, I don’t know anything about that, but I can still see that fall.

**Kate:** Did any of you get sick? Were any of you ill from that voyage? Did you get sea sick? Did anyone get sea sick?

**Irene:** I wasn’t sea sick.

**Charlie:** Alice was.

**Irene:** My sister Alice was very sick. She wouldn’t leave the bed. Then the doctor comes around get initiated, he says, “If you can’t get out of the bed, you got to stay in the boat and you got to go back.” Alice jumped out of bed and she was fine.

**Kate:** How long was that trip? How long was the boat trip, do you remember?

**Irene:** It [inaudible 00:36:22], I don’t know how long.

**Charlie:** 9th of April.

**Kate:** 9th of April you arrived. Do you remember seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time?

**Irene:** Yeah that was a site. We would stay on the deck and we would see the Statue of Liberty come up out of the waves. I’ll never forget that.

**Kate:** What was it like? Were people screaming, were people cheering?

**Irene:** I guess we did, but anyway I remember we saw it rise up from this ocean.

**Kate:** Were you with your whole family? Was your whole family there to watch?

**Irene:** I don’t think so, my sister and a few of the older ones were on deck. I do remember that Statue of Liberty, my own.

**Kate:** Did you see New York City? Did you see the city skyline too? Did you see New York? Besides the Statue of Liberty, did you see anything else?

**Irene:** You mean when we are on the boat yes?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Irene:** You could see the buildings, but because that Statue of Liberty commotion, that took all of our attention.

**Kate:** Do you remember Ellis Island, going to Ellis Island?

**Irene:** In my memory it was a dark place. We were sitting on benches with our [inaudible 00:37:51]. We had to go to bathroom places, we didn’t know where to go.

**Kate:** How did you get from the ship to Ellis Island, do you remember? When you were on the big boat, how did you get in that big hall do you remember?

**Irene:** No, I don’t remember how that went.

**Kate:** When you went inside the building then were you frightened or what reaction would you have to the darkness, that building?

**Irene:** We were in America and that's all that matters.

**Kate:** What were you wearing? What were the family wearing then?

**Irene:** I wore a dark blue suit and blouse. The kids all wore dresses or pants.

**Kate:** Was it crowded when you got there? Ellis Island when you got in there, was it crowded with lots of people -When you went into that dark place?

**Irene:** No, I don’t remember. There was a big crowd into the inner room, my dad was called into the inner room and he stayed away so long. Mom said, “Wonder where father is and for how long.” I [inaudible 00:39:18] wonder why he stayed so late, they might think he is a Jew. The Jews were popular those days to come to the United States. [Inaudible 00:39:32] out for saying that.

**Kate:** By your mom?

**Irene:** Yeah. My dad had a black beard and he was dark.

**Charlie:** Father had a black hat too.

**Kate:** Did you have a medical examination? Did the doctors give you an examination?

**Irene:** Yeah they all got initiated. Before we left the boat we got that.

**Kate:** Once you are in that hall, that dark place did they give you?

**Irene:** No, I don’t think we got anything done.

**Kate:** Did you have to stay overnight at Ellis Island at all? No? All right. Was there any entertainment for the children? What happened in that room basically, you just waited for your father?

**Irene:** I don’t know that, but I remember we met a family later, they had a cabin in our quarters there. We had three other cabins and they had the fourth one. They had only one child while we had so many. They’d come around the table, they were [inaudible 00:40:53] when my [inaudible 00:40:53] got there.

**Kate:** Where did you go after you went through Ellis Island? What did you do after that? Where did the family go?

**Irene:** Left with train.

**Kate:** You went on train.

**Irene:** We got ride to Martinsville.

**Kate:** In Martinsville, Indiana?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Charlie:** We left Hoboken.

**Kate:** What did you expect about America? What did you think you were going to happen to you when you went?

**Irene:** I think we were in paradise.

**Kate:** Did you remember seeing things that you never saw before? When you got there was anything new? Was everything new?

**Irene:** It was completely different. My mom had no help, not until the Van Dyke’s come to calling. They helped her get started in the house but, like I said, I was over at that doctor’s place already, I don’t know how long it took to get settled.

**Kate:** You got there on a Friday and you started work on a Monday?

**Irene:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Kate:** Describe the house you went to in Martinsville, what house did you go to?

**Irene:** It had no lights, it had no running water. That wasn’t a house.

**Kate:** Your whole family lived there? How big was it the house?

**Irene:** I don’t remember how many rooms it had upstairs. I remember downstairs had the kitchen and of course the living room. There was another room.

**Kate:** How did you like the house? What lights did you have?

**Irene:** When we were in America we could take a lot of knocks, that’s all there is to it, but it must have been hard on the folks though.

**Kate:** It was a step down from Holland? Was the house not as nice as in Holland?

**Irene:** That comes later when you get to know everything better.

**Kate:** Did you get along well with your neighbors there?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** What job did your father get when he got there?

**Irene:** The reason we went to Martinsville, there was a big, what they call Van Camp Dairy and they needed four families. We were one of them then and the Van Dykes were number two. Number three was a Dutch family by the name of [inaudible 00:43:53]. I don’t know who the other one was, but it’s the Van Dykes who helped my mom get straightened. Get her fire started and get her to see that she get a cup of hot tea.

**Kate:** Did you go to school or did you got to work then? You went to work?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did you go to school?

**Irene:** Not then, no, that come later.

**Kate:** When did you go to school?

**Irene:** I went to Nappanee and I went to Coldwater, mainly night school.

**Kate:** How did you learn English then?

**Irene:** You learn that mighty fast, nobody else [inaudible 00:44:33] speaks anything.

**Kate:** Was it difficult? Was it hard to learn English?

**Irene:** I suppose it was. I had things backward a little bit but everything was so wonderful.

**Kate:** How about your family members, did your brothers and sisters learn English pretty quickly? Did they learn English fast your brothers and sisters? Did everybody learn English? Everybody in the family, did everybody learn English?

**Irene:** Yeah. The younger ones went to school here. I went to night school where I learned my English. In Holland I went to a night school to finish eighth grade.

**Kate:** Did you find anybody being prejudiced against you for being foreign? Did anybody think any badly of you for being Dutch?

**Irene:** It was your own countryman more than the Americans that make fun of you.

**Kate:** The other Dutch made fun of you? What about religious life, did you go to church here when you came here?

**Irene:** Yeah I went to Nappanee to the Presbyterian Church with the lady I stayed there with. She was a Sunday school teacher, I went to Presbyterian Church in Nappanee, Indiana.

**Kate:** Was that near your place where you lived? Was it real close?

**Irene:** Martinsville was south of Indiana and Nappanee is north. We had to take this to this street car.

**Kate:** Were your mother and father religious at all? Did your mother and father go to church?

**Irene:** No, I think mom did, my dad didn’t.

**Kate:** Did they learn English your mother and father? Did they learn to speak English your mom and your dad?

**Irene:** Yes they learned a little bit.

**Charlie:** A little.

**Irene:** Not too much is it?

**Charlie:** I couldn’t talk with them.

**Kate:** How did everybody adjust to living in America? Did everybody adjust pretty well to living?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did anybody return to Holland to live? Did anybody go back?

**Irene:** I have been back for visit.

**Kate:** For visiting? Everybody stayed here basically?

**Irene:** I wouldn’t want to go back to live.

**Kate:** How would you feel the family was either satisfied or dissatisfied with living in America? Do you think your parents were happy they came here?

**Irene:** Yeah, mom said she never had it so good. She showed a little to do with, that milk was cheap and butter was cheap. Later on my dad worked in a creamery, he brought back home cracked eggs and butter milk. Mom said, “I never had it so good.” Do you remember that?

**Charlie:** I remember.

**Kate:** Did you have any family tragedy that occurred? Anything that happened in the family [inaudible 00:47:58]?

**Irene:** My brother Pete drowned trying to save a little boy. That was years later, he was married then. The tragedy what we first encountered was when the baby died. That was terrible because mom found him dead in his bed, in his bogie.

**Kate:** They don’t know why?

**Irene:** She found him dead the next morning, she said, “Oh I guess he’s done.”

**Charlie:** I heard he had open spine. We were [inaudible 00:48:45].

**Irene:** He was ever a well baby, is that what you mean? That we never expected this either. That night my sister Jenny and I we stayed home, it must have been around Christmas time.

An Uncle John from Iowa he was there [inaudible 00:49:06] that time. He said he heard a baby cry loud for a long time, but Jenny and I we slept on a davenport and we never heard that baby cry.

He just died in his sleep. We named that baby Teddy, my dad liked President Theodore Roosevelt so well so we named him for that. He was buried in Nappanee.

**Kate:** When you finally married what happened? You worked for that doctor and then you moved to Coldwater?

**Irene:** I worked for another doctor. First Dr. Hendricks next Dr. [inaudible 00:49:57]. Then I lived in other place, in Nappanee and Coldwater, Indianapolis I worked for a Dr. Adams. I had hay fever so bad they advised me to go north. Went to Grand Rapids, went to work for another doctor, but that was a dentist.

**Kate:** How did you meet your husband? You were married? When did you marry?

**Irene:** In 1918.

**Kate:** Who did you marry someone Dutch?

**Irene:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Because your last name is Dyke.

**Irene:** He’s a Van Dyke. His sister Elsie helped my mother so well getting started when we still lived in Martinsville.

**Kate:** You married one of the Van Dyke boys?

**Irene:** Jennie married one too.

**Kate:** How did you meet him, do you remember well?

**Irene:** I worked in Indianapolis and the Van Dykes were farming outside the city. John, that my husband’s name, he was home to help his dad. That’s how we got acquainted, then he went to Iowa, a lot of the Dutch went to Iowa those days. We kept writing to each other. Later on we got together again.

**Kate:** Did you have children?

**Irene:** Six.

**Kate:** Six kids?

**Irene:** The older daughter died, but I got three daughters first. It’s funny, when my third daughter was born my husband said, “We got to move to Indianapolis to get the boys.” His dad had a farm there, John could get to work with his dad. We moved to Indianapolis and sure enough 10 months later I had a big boy.

**Kate:** Your children live near you now? They live here in this area?

**Irene:** One lives, the one who had passed away lived in West Virginia. One lives in [inaudible 00:52:26], the rest live around here.

**Kate:** Do they speak Dutch at all? Did you teach them to speak Dutch?

**Irene:** No, we weren’t in favor of that because we know it’s a handicap. We didn’t teach them Dutch, but they learned anyway.

**Kate:** Did you talk to your husband in Dutch?

**Irene:** Sometimes.

**Kate:** Was it a secret language for the children?

**Irene:** They understand it, most of it. You can’t fool them.

**Charlie:** In Holland, when you go to school you learn Dutch, when you go home you speak Fries.

**Kate:** Different languages.

**Charlie:** [Inaudible 00:53:09] they learned Fries.

**Irene:** When I was in Holland I had to go to night school to finish eighth grade. My brother, Otto and I, we walked home one time and it was dark. I said, “Look at that.” You’ve heard of the Halley Comet? We saw that thing drop down to the earth. It was scary but I saw it anyway.

**Kate:** In conclusion, are you happy that you came to America?

**Irene:** Sure.

**Kate:** You think your family and your parents were happy their whole lives?

**Irene:** No regrets.

**Kate:** Do you have any story or anything you want to add? Anything more you’d like to say? Anything else you’d like to say before we end?

**Irene:** No, I don’t know about that. We make some crazy mistakes.

**Charlie:** Dad was a great prohibitionist. He didn’t like liquor [inaudible 00:54:16].

**Kate:** He was a prohibitionist your dad? You dad was a prohibitionist? Your dad was against liquor?

**Irene:** He was against it.

**Kate:** We’ll get to that later.

**Irene:** No drinks. You remember that don’t you?

**Charlie:** Either coca cola.

**Kate:** That’s a good place to end this interview. I’d like to thank you on behalf of the Ellis Island project for your experiences and for letting us talk here. This is Kate Moore, signing off on the 5th of December 1993 with Irene Van Dyke for the Ellis Island Oral History Project.