**Kate:** Good morning. This is Kate Moore for the National Park Service. Today is the 6th of July, 1994. I’m in Rock Springs, Wyoming at the home of Mary Berlogar Harris who came from Slovenia in 1912 when she was two years old. Why don’t you begin by giving us your full name and date birth please?

**Mary:** Mary Berlogar Harris. I was born in November the 20th, 1910.

**Kate:** How do you spell your maiden name Berlogar?

**Mary:** B-E-R-L-O-G-A-R.

**Kate:** What was it before you came here?

**Mary:** B-R-L-G-A-R.

**Kate:** Where you born?

**Mary:** Skofaloka.

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

**Mary:** S-K-O-F-A-L-O-K-A.

**Kate:** What size town was Skofaloka that you’re family came from?

**Mary:** It was a mining town.

**Kate:** What did the town look like? Do you know? You were so small when you came?

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** Did they ever describe it to you.

**Mary:** They just said it was lot of vegetation, really beautiful place.

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

**Mary:** Frank.

**Kate:** What was his occupation?

**Mary:** A miner.

**Kate:** What did your father look like?

**Mary:** To me, he was a good looking man. He was on the blonde side, had big blue eyes, and he had a voice that he could really sing and really carried.

**Kate:** What about his personality and temperament?

**Mary:** He was strict.

**Kate:** How tall was he? You said-

**Mary:** He must have been 5’11.

**Kate:** He was strict with the children.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Kate:** Was his strict in general?

**Mary:** Strict … He was the boss. Everything had to have been his way than his way.

**Kate:** Is there a story about your father that you associate with your childhood at all? Anything he ever did.

**Mary:** I know he was good to me. I don’t remember getting any … I never was in trouble I guess, but my brothers were.

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

**Mary:** Mary.

**Kate:** Mary.

**Mary:** It’s P-A and over the A is a hyphen like C-H-A-R.

**Kate:** What was her occupation if any?

**Mary:** Just a housewife.

**Kate:** What did your mom look like?

**Mary:** She was on the heavy side, real heavy.

**Kate:** How tall?

**Mary:** Short.

**Kate:** How short.

**Mary:** Maybe … I don’t know. Let’s see, she must have been 5’4 maybe.

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

**Mary:** She had nice features I thought: blue eyes, just fat, just a fat face, a round face.

**Kate:** What about her personality and temperament, your mom?

**Mary:** She was a little strict too.

**Kate:** Was she social at all?

**Mary:** Yes, they were. She was more social than my dad. When my dad served wine … We always had wine. They always made their own wine. Mama made the wine. He’d bring out and people would … He never drank with the people. He’d always go to the solar and get his little drink of wine and then [inaudible 00:04:29]. I thought that was strange.

**Kate:** And would your mother drink wine with people?

**Mary:** No. I have never seen her drink it, not with the company. We had it at the table. It was second wine, you know.

**Kate:** What about brothers and sisters? How many brothers and sisters-

**Mary:** I had two brothers.

**Kate:** Were they younger?

**Mary:** I was the oldest. Harry was a year old when he came here with us and then I had a brother born in Den, Wyoming after we were here for a while.

**Kate:** What were their names?

**Mary:** Frank and Harry.

**Kate:** Frank and Harry. Did they tell you anything about your house that you lived in Slovenia? No.

**Mary:** They never.

**Kate:** What about religious life in the old country? Did they talk about that at all?

**Mary:** Yes, they did. My dad had to work on the farm and he wasn’t able … The priest would come and have catechism, teach him religion. If he didn’t know his catechism, the priest really got mean with him or slapped him around.

**Kate:** You mentioned earlier that your mother did farm work as well.

**Mary:** She did what?

**Kate:** Farm work.

**Mary:** Yeah, she did.

**Kate:** In the field. So both of your parents did agriculture work?

**Mary:** Yes. She helped the parents because they had no other help.

**Kate:** Your grandparents on your mother’s side.

**Mary:** On the father’s side.

**Kate:** On the father’s side, not the mother’s side.

**Mary:** No. My mother was born in what they called trebolla.

**Kate:** Your father’s family had a farm?

**Mary:** Mm-hmm.

**Kate:** And that your father and your mother did work on that farm.

**Mary:** Yes. Of course, after they were married, my dad went to work in the mines, but she would walk. I think she said it took her two or three hours to get there. Then she spent I don’t know how many hours working and then come back to Skofaloka to have the evening meal ready for my dad.

**Kate:** Did your parents tell any stories about the old country? You came at two years old [inaudible 00:07:26].

**Mary:** Well, I don’t know. I don’t think I was ever interested in any of their stories, but I wish I had been.

**Kate:** Why did they come to the United States?

**Mary:** Just for a better life.

**Kate:** Did they tell you ever that they …?

**Mary:** They said that it was a free country and the streets [inaudible 00:07:55] was free, and the streets were lined with gold. Have you heard that?

**Kate:** Yes. They thought that before they came.

**Mary:** That’s what they thought.

**Kate:** Who told them this? Do you know?

**Mary:** I don’t know. They didn’t say.

**Kate:** They heard that this was a land of plenty.

**Mary:** That’s right.

**Kate:** Did your parents ever go hungry in the old country?

**Mary:** Yeah. My dad did. I heard my dad say that. They would slaughter their animals in the fall and the best part of the meat would go to the priest, really.

**Kate:** They gave the best part-

**Mary:** At Easter time when they did a lot of baking, it went to the priest too.

**Kate:** Who came first to the country?

**Mary:** My dad.

**Kate:** Did he come before your mom?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Do you remember them saying how he came or when he came, what year?

**Mary:** Uh-huh.

**Kate:** He came first-

**Mary:** He was here about a year I think.

**Kate:** Where did he go?

**Mary:** He went to Pittsburg.

**Kate:** To do what?

**Mary:** To mine, to mine coal, work in the mines.

**Kate:** Do you know who his contact was in this country?

**Mary:** No, I sure don’t know. I wonder sometimes if it was John Murrack because he was their banker, because they didn’t know their money, these men that came. My dad used to say, “I know I was cheated but what could I do?”

**Kate:** He went to Pittsburg and he had an American banker.

**Mary:** No. John Murrack was the banker. He just took their money and said he’s going to put it in the bank for them but they didn’t have what they thought they should have had.

**Kate:** Did your father speak any English before he came?

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** Did your mother speak any English?

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** He came for a year to Pittsburg. What happened after that? Tell me how-

**Mary:** John Yusick came with him. The two of them came together. They knew each other back there. They were buddies here. I don’t know … They met John Murrack and he told them, “I’ll be your banker.” They give their whole pay check or keep some, whatever they needed maybe. I don’t know. Then when they got enough money to send for us then we came.

**Kate:** Did your mother talk about leaving, anything? How she felt about leaving home? Did she want to come to the United States?

**Mary:** Sure, she did. She wanted to be with my dad. My grandmother I guess she got attached to me and she begged him to leave me there. Then later on, if anything happened to her then they could send for me. My dad says, “No,” to bring them both.

**Kate:** Your brother was alive then?

**Mary:** Yeah. He was a year old when he came.

**Kate:** Your mother came with two little ones?

**Mary:** Me and brother.

**Kate:** Frank.

**Mary:** No, he was Harry.

**Kate:** Harry was older. You and Harry came on the boat with her.

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did she talk about getting ready to leave at all? Ever tell you any stories about leaving home?

**Mary:** It did break her heart to leave because she hated to leave her folks back there. She had two brothers. They were in 1918 war, both lost their lives. My dad’s brother, he had to go into the service and he was killed but it was just lately that I found out that he was married and had a son. I’ll show the pictures of him. I’ve got pictures of him. He wrote me this letter and I wish I could have it Americanized, but I don’t know where to go from here.

**Kate:** You can’t have people here put it in English.

**Mary:** That’s what I want.

**Kate:** You can’t have somebody in the community here like Mary, or Fred, or somebody translate it for you.

**Mary:** I don’t know if Fred could do it. I could ask him maybe because I see him all the time.

**Kate:** You came with your mom and with Harry. Did your mom say it broke her heart because she was leaving behind her family?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Did she talk about the voyage though? What it was like?

**Mary:** We came steerage. She said that they brought food. She thought it was what was left from on top of the boat from the elite people maybe.

**Kate:** Leftover food.

**Mary:** That’s what she thinks it was. She thought it could have been because a lot of times it wasn’t meat. It was just vegetables and potatoes, but we made it I guess. I guess it was-

**Kate:** Did she mention of being voyage condition like what the seas were? Did she say anything about being-?

**Mary:** Yeah, seasick.

**Kate:** She was seasick. She [crosstalk 00:13:42]

**Mary:** She was seasick and she counted the days on her fingers I guess when she left.

**Kate:** Did she bring with her anything? Did she take with her anything that was valuable?

**Mary:** Trunks. She had trunks. I still have one here.

**Kate:** What did she put in those trunks? Do you know?

**Mary:** She put scarves, some lines, and clothing mostly I guess. I don’t know.

**Kate:** Do you have anything left from the family now? Do you have a bible or any religious artifacts? No, just the trunk itself.

**Mary:** I did have a rosary of hers.

**Kate:** That she brought with her.

**Mary:** I don’t know if I have that yet or not. I think I do but it’s in Slovenian, but it’s just to keeps sake.

**Kate:** What was your mother bound for? Where were you three of you going to at that point when you came off the boat?

**Mary:** We were detained there for customs for two or three days.

**Kate:** Did your mother ever talk about Ellis Island?

**Mary:** Just an island and she remembers seeing the Statue of Liberty. She said that everybody hollered, were so glad that we were here, got here.

**Kate:** But then she got into Ellis Island and she was detained, for what reason?

**Mary:** We had to have shots and everything before we could go into New York, but I don’t know what boat we came on. I noticed some of them have mentioned the boat that they sailed here. Then she was standing in line there like I seen on TV. That’s the way maybe we looked too.

A fellow went down with the [inaudible 00:15:51] and on an impulse she run out there and lifted her apron up and start filling her apron with oranges. The man finally made her understand that she’s got to pay for it. She just dropped that apron and the oranges, run down the incline and the man after the retrieving. I thought that was cute.

**Kate:** Did she mention the inability to speak English was a problem at all?

**Mary:** Later on, for years after, I think in the late 20s she tried to … Because all the ladies she associated with spoke their Slovenian language.

**Kate:** You were detained in Ellis Island. Did they feed you? Did she say anything about how you-

**Mary:** She never said, but I know she was hungry because she run out for these oranges.

**Kate:** Did anybody come to the boat to get you? How did you get-?

**Mary:** We must have run on a … What kind of boat did they take you to New York harbor? I don’t know. Just so many people or try to keep the families together.

**Kate:** You were bound from what city then by train?

**Mary:** No. I don’t know how we got to Philadelphia.

**Kate:** You went to Philadelphia?

**Mary:** Mm-hmm.

**Kate:** Then what happened?

**Mary:** We went into a building, she said. It was I don’t know how many stories and I don’t know whether she had to climb stairs or did they have elevators? I don’t know. When we got up to the room where my dad batched, lived, the windows were facing another building that was really close together so she couldn’t see. She said, she swears we were up over top of the smoke stacks, high up there.

**Kate:** What was your father doing in Philadelphia then?

**Mary:** He was working in the mines.

**Kate:** But Pittsburg and Philadelphia are kind of far.

**Mary:** Isn’t Pittsburg in Philadelphia?

**Kate:** No, they are two different cities.

**Mary:** Is it?

**Kate:** Yeah.

**Mary:** How stupid of me.

**Kate:** No, that’s okay. You think it was …

**Mary:** Pittsburg.

**Kate:** Pittsburg was the name of the town. It was in Pittsburg. He lived and he had his own little room in [crosstalk 00:18:32].

**Mary:** I guess he waited till we had more money to come into Wyoming.

**Kate:** What age did you … You were so young. Do you remember any of this time at all in Pittsburg?

**Mary:** No, I don’t remember anything about Pittsburg. I don’t remember anything about Reliance.

**Kate:** That’s where you came to.

**Mary:** Yes. We came to Reliance and she said there were two three houses and some places, dug in places where people lived and tents. She said no trees, no nothing. The water was hardened. She said, “And the sand, the wind blew terrible up there.”

**Kate:** Your father then went from Pittsburg, took the family out to Reliance, Wyoming.

**Mary:** Uh-huh.

**Kate:** Because he was going to work where.

**Mary:** He worked in the Reliance mines.

**Kate:** In the Reliance mines. Where did you leave then in Reliance? Did you have a house?

**Mary:** I don’t know how we lived there. I don’t know. I know in the fall … I don’t know what year, if we were out there a whole year or not, but in the fall we went to Grace Creek, Utah.

**Kate:** For what reason?

**Mary:** To work in the mines.

**Kate:** You moved from Reliance to Grass Creek, Utah.

**Mary:** We were there all winter. We were snowed in. Mama said that the snow must have been like five, six feet, and my dad had to shovel a path into the outhouse and the cool house. Maybe somebody had to deliver groceries. We had no car, nothing. Somebody bought us groceries.

**Kate:** What’s your first memory yourself without your mother telling you? What do you remember first?

**Mary:** The first thing I remember is going to Grass Creek. I don’t remember the train ride but I do remember the sleigh ride from the depot to the house where we were going to live. I remember that.

**Kate:** You went by sleigh ride and it was pulled by what?

**Mary:** Her horses. Because it was cold I remember and they’d give us a robe and we covered up with the robe.

**Kate:** How old could you have been then?

**Mary:** I must have been four.

**Kate:** Was Frank born yet?

**Mary:** No, just Harry and I were there. I don’t know how she entertained us but she said that she did roll … Throw a rug and wrapped it up and that was my doll. She said there is a stray kitten that I was crazy about. She let the kitten stay with us.

**Kate:** Do you remember the house in Grass Creek.

**Mary:** Uh-huh. I just remember we couldn’t see out of the windows because of the snow. It was covered up.

**Kate:** From there, where did you go?

**Mary:** We stayed there till that spring and mama said she can’t take another winter there, so we’d come back to Reliance. That’s where I started school.

**Kate:** How did your mom react to these moves every time?

**Mary:** She cried. I don’t know how many times she cried day and night. My dad really was disgusted with her I think.

**Kate:** Was she ever homesick?

**Mary:** Yes, she wanted to go home.

**Kate:** Did your father want to go home?

**Mary:** No, he said, “You’re stuck here now.” He said, “You got to stay. No money,” he says, “To send you back.” They argued. She said what would she do if … How could she exist there or something?

**Kate:** Where? Back home?

**Mary:** Yeah. In Yugoslavia, in Skofaloka.

**Kate:** Is there any point where she got used to life here, your mother?

**Mary:** Yeah. See years after we moved to Blairtown from Reliance, we went to Gunn.

**Kate:** What years were that? When where you there?

**Mary:** I don’t know. It must have been maybe in the 20s.

**Kate:** You went to Gun, Wyoming.

**Mary:** I had already started school in Reliance.

**Kate:** Back up a little bit, when you went to school in Reliance, what language did you speak at home?

**Mary:** Slovenian.

**Kate:** Did you know any English before you went to school?

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** At school, were there other kids in the same boat as you?

**Mary:** Yes. We all spoke Slovenian every one of us.

**Kate:** In Reliance. How big was the school in Reliance? Do you remember?

**Mary:** I don’t know that either.

**Kate:** All right. Do you remember learning English?

**Mary:** Not that year that I started school. I had a friend, Fanny Kovach that took me back and forth. I do remember when we had recess we went out. I was told this after. I didn’t know at the time. I went home. I thought school was out.

**Kate:** Did anyone ever call you any names for being Slovenian as a child, any bad names?

**Mary:** If they did, I didn’t know they were calling me names.

**Kate:** Later in life, did anybody ever-

**Mary:** Then Fanny starts telling me a few words. I kind of remembered those or grasped them.

**Kate:** Do you remember the first words were?

**Mary:** No, I don’t know.

**Kate:** How about religious life in this country? Did your parents go to church?

**Mary:** My mother did but not my dad. I had to go. When we lived here in Blur town, we went to catechism and Father Shifler was the priest.

**Kate:** Did Father Shifler help your family come to the United States at all?

**Mary:** Not that I know of. I don’t remember them ever saying that.

**Kate:** What do you know about Father Shifler?

**Mary:** I don’t know. I liked him.

**Kate:** Was he well liked?

**Mary:** Yeah. He loved kids. He really took to the children.

**Kate:** We have heard that he helped a lot of families, Skofaloka for example.

**Mary:** Maybe he did, I don’t know.

**Kate:** You went to school Reliance. Do you remember any teachers? Were teachers nice to you there?

**Mary:** I didn’t know how to tell them when nature called. My sister, Fanny, she said, “There’s got to be some way that she should understand … The teacher could understand that I had to live.” She told Fanny … She said for me to raise my hand and if she went this way, I can’t go. I wet myself a lot, but it didn’t take long for me to … When Fanny told her that I needed help that way.

**Kate:** How did Fanny know English?

**Mary:** They lived here before. They were one of the-

**Kate:** You didn’t go to the bathroom because you didn’t know how to tell the teacher.

**Mary:** Yeah. I couldn’t tell her. Mama says, “There is got to be a way that we could communicate.” Fanny told as to how and she says, “Well, just tell her to raise her hand. Put her elbow on the table.” She said, “Raise her hand.” If she says that I can go well then I’d get up and go but I came back. The first recess we had I thought that was over with, school was over and I went home. Isn’t that awful?

**Kate:** No. Were your parent’s friends with … You said social with other Slovenians.

**Mary:** Mm-hmm.

**Kate:** Did you have non Slovenian friends?

**Mary:** I don’t know that.

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

**Mary:** They spoke Slovenian.

**Kate:** Did they switch to American.

**Mary:** My dad decided he would Americanize all of us. Go to … What is it? He had to go to Green River I know. There must have been an interpreter there to tell him what to study or-

**Kate:** For citizenship.

**Mary:** Yeah, for citizenship and that was in ’24, 1924. I remember that.

**Kate:** When did your mother’s attitude sort of change? You said she cried day and night a lot and she wanted to go home.

**Mary:** She cried when we got to Ellis Island because she didn’t see my dad in no place. She didn’t know that … I don’t what she thought or where she was going from Ellis Island, but she thought my dad should have been there. Then when we got to Pittsburg she cried to leave in that apartment house or whatever it was. She couldn’t see nothing.

All she’d seen was the smoke stacks. It was a dirty place. She said it had … It smelled bad too I guess. When we moved to Reliance, she cried. When we went to Grace Creek, Utah, it was in the fall and it was still a little bit green. She liked it there but not the way that it snowed. We went back to Reliance. She said she cried again. Oh dear, my dad said something about her crying all the time. He said, “You’re just going to have to stop it.”

**Kate:** How did it affect you as a child at all?

**Mary:** It didn’t bother me. I didn’t know any better. I was just with them.

**Kate:** Now tell me where you finally settled down. Was it in Blair?

**Mary:** In Blairtown.

**Kate:** Blairtown. Where is that in relation to Rock Springs?

**Mary:** It’s West of town.

**Kate:** What was that like there? What house did you live in?

**Mary:** That was nice for me. I liked it because I could talk American then. Can you believe it? I lost the language.

**Kate:** You lost Slovenian?

**Mary:** I cannot carry on a conversation.

**Kate:** When did that happen?

**Mary:** After I got married. My mother died in ’36, 1936.

**Kate:** What did she die of? Did you know?

**Mary:** High blood pressure and diabetes.

**Kate:** When did your dad die?

**Mary:** My dad died in ’70.

**Kate:** Did he remarry?

**Mary:** No, he was 71 when he died but let’s see when did he die? I’m confused.

**Kate:** That’s all right. Did he remarry?

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** In Blairtown, tell me about the house you lived in there?

**Mary:** The highway used to go through there and going into Blairtown, we lived on the right hand side of the road, the third house.

**Kate:** What was the address?

**Mary:** I don’t know what the address would have been.

**Kate:** Is the house still standing?

**Mary:** Yes.

**Kate:** What was the house made of?

**Mary:** Wood. My dad was pretty good with the hammer.

**Kate:** Hold on. I’ll take a break right here for the tape. What about the house that you lived in, how big was it?

**Mary:** It had high ceilings I remember, the kitchen, and two bedrooms I think. That’s all … Three roomed house.

**Kate:** Where did you get the water for the house?

**Mary:** It was in the house but-

**Kate:** Indoor plumbing.

**Mary:** Just water.

**Kate:** How about in terms of toilet facilities?

**Mary:** No, we had outhouse. Everybody had an outhouse.

**Kate:** What about lighting?

**Mary:** Just one ceiling light with a 40 watt globe.

**Kate:** There was electricity.

**Mary:** Uh-huh.

**Kate:** How was your house heated?

**Mary:** With the stoves.

**Kate:** What types of stoves were they?

**Mary:** Coal Stoves.

**Kate:** Did your parents ever try to learn English formally?

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** Did your brother learn Slovenian?

**Mary:** I don’t think so. I think he must have … Because he was just a year younger than I. when he started to get out with the kids, I think he picked up the American language.

**Kate:** When was Frank born?

**Mary:** He was born … Let’s see. I’m seven years older than he is. He was born in the 20s I know. I think we came to Blairtown in 1922.

**Kate:** Was he born yet?

**Mary:** Yeah, he was born. He was maybe a year older or two then.

**Kate:** What about church life? You went for catechism. Did you go to church in [crosstalk 00:33:12]?

**Mary:** Yeah. We went to a mass too.

**Kate:** Every Sunday?

**Mary:** Uh-huh.

**Kate:** Did your father go?

**Mary:** Sometimes, but he usually worked a lot too you know.

**Kate:** What about before meals? Did you say any prayers before meals?

**Mary:** No, we didn’t say that.

**Kate:** How about at night?

**Mary:** Yeah, we had to say our prayers at night.

**Kate:** Did your parents ever discuss how they felt about coming to this country later in life?

**Mary:** They were disappointed at first because of what they left behind, because where they lived. It was so beautiful.

**Kate:** Did they slowly come to feel that it was [crosstalk 00:33:56]?

**Mary:** Yeah. My dad bought a vineyard through the mail, through one of the Slovenian papers. It was up in the mountains. He thought when he got enough money on retirement I guess that they would go back there. My mother said, “No.” she has no desire to go because her folks were gone. All her family was gone.

**Kate:** Your father had an idea about eventually going back.

**Mary:** He did have.

**Kate:** He bought a vineyard.

**Mary:** Uh-huh.

**Kate:** What happened to that Vineyard?

**Mary:** Hitler over run the place and he lost it.

**Kate:** He lost it in the Second World War.

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Kate:** Finally when your father made a move to be able to go back, your mother didn’t want to anymore.

**Mary:** That’s right. She used to be in here then because she did have a garden. They had water in the house and everything. She was good at that.

**Kate:** Did your mother cook any particularly Slovenian foods?

**Mary:** Yes. She made petizzas and she made straddles, what everybody else did … Donuts [inaudible 00:35:16].

**Kate:** What was your favorite food as a child?

**Mary:** All of those. I had lettuce and potatoes, pickle, lettuce, and potatoes. My dad build an oven, outside oven. I can still see her, that beautiful bread she made. She had it rising on a slab with a handle on it and she’d throw the flour in the oven to test it. If it’d browned in such a time then it was ready to put the bread in there. She had a big knife. She cut three slits through it, round loaves of broad. When there was an epidemic …

**Kate:** Of what?

**Mary:** Like whooping cough or measles or whatever then she would put garlic on it. We had sausage all the time.

**Kate:** Homemade?

**Mary:** Yeah. Homemade sausage, homemade cured hams. They were so salty. I didn’t like them. She had a few chickens. She really made real good chicken soup which you can’t today. I don’t care how you doctor up that soup. It never tastes right with bouillon cubes and stuff.

**Kate:** Did she have any other animals growing? Where did you get the sausage from?

**Mary:** They was a slaughter house up from us where we lived, down the road somewhere. I don’t know about a mile maybe. She got all her meat there.

**Kate:** What schooling did you have?

**Mary:** I went about three months in the ninth grade.

**Kate:** Then what did you do?

**Mary:** My mother believed in the man getting an education but not the girls because I was going to be married anyhow. That’s what she said. I didn’t need it, but I needed a job. I wished I had had some education.

**Kate:** What job did you get then?

**Mary:** Just housework, being a nanny, taking care of kids.

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

**Mary:** My friend and I were walking down the road to go home to get ready for the Labor Day dance. My husband and his friend … His friend knew my friend so they were going to give us a ride home but they took us on … Never got to the dance either.

**Kate:** Great story.

**Mary:** That’s the way it happened.

**Kate:** Was he Slovenian?

**Mary:** No, he was American. I was going with him too. I went with him about a year and mama says one day she said, “Is he going to marry you?” I said, “Mama, we don’t talk about getting married.” She said, “I’m going to tell him to either marry you or leave you alone.”

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

**Mary:** 15 or 16. I was working. I went out to work when I was 12.

**Kate:** You were working from 12 to 16 already.

**Mary:** I was working for Grandma O’Donnell and going to school too. Then in the summer she went to live with her family and then I was out of work.

**Kate:** What was your favorite subject when you did study? What did you like best?

**Mary:** Writing and reading. I’m a still a book worm. I still like to read. I just used to love to write.

**Kate:** What happened then? Did your mom say that to the boy?

**Mary:** No, I met him on the highway. I was afraid she might say something to him.

**Kate:** How long did you go with him, before you got married?

**Mary:** About a year and a half or something like that.

**Kate:** How old were you when you’re married?

**Mary:** 19.

**Kate:** His family-

**Mary:** But we fought. We’d break up and we’d go back together again. Where I worked for [inaudible 00:40:18] they were sheep people. I worked in the winter for them, but in the summer they would go up on their ranch. The year before I married, I went on the ranch with him. She said I could have a friend and we did go out there. It was really nice. When George would come for him … She said I would run out. She says, “That’s poor etiquette. You can’t do that.”

**Kate:** Who said that?

**Mary:** Mrs. Drew. She said a gentleman should come in and meet them, and take me out. A couple of times he did that. He wasn’t used to that either.

**Kate:** What background did he have?

**Mary:** He comes from a poor background.

**Kate:** What about his ethnic background. You said he wasn’t Slovenian. What background did he come from?

**Mary:** He was Welsh Irish. His father was a policeman and he was killed. This happened in 1915 and George was 10 years old then … No, five. He was born in 1905, George was. His dad died, yeah, 10 years old. He was 10 years old when his dad died. His mother was left with five children to raise and she said$150 to her name. She had to go out and make a living.

**Kate:** Did you have children, you and your husband?

**Mary:** Yes, we had seven.

**Kate:** Seven kids?

**Mary:** Seven children.

**Kate:** Could you name all?

**Mary:** Sure. George William was the first one. I don’t know why I said William because William went good with George. I shouldn’t [inaudible 00:42:22] George Coleman. That was his full name. He was premature and we had to keep in a basket and not handle him any … Now today they would have had him in the incubator. Then we couldn’t get nothing to agree with him. I wanted to nurse him and I couldn’t.

We couldn’t find anything to agree with him. Dr. Rowe was the doctor and he said, “Why don’t you go up to this lady, Mrs. Murrack?” she had cows. She was up over the hill here and let us save milk from one jersey cow. He’d come out of it. I agreed with him and his resistance was still low. Here we had a whooping epidemic. He’d come running over here and he says, “Don’t take your baby out. Don’t let anybody near him.” How did he get it? He got whopping cough and it took him six and a half months older.”

**Kate:** You lost your first baby.

**Mary:** Uh-huh. Then we had Bob Robert. He was Robert Coleman. Then we had Dick Richard Wayne. Then I had a cesarean, the next one and then …

**Kate:** What was the baby’s name?

**Mary:** Jim. George named him. He just named him Jimmy. Then I had Marilyn. She was born in ’41. Then I had Rooney in ’43. Then I had Jeanie in ’51.

**Kate:** Is that seven?

**Mary:** Uh-huh. We lost Bob with cancer in ’88. He was 56 years old. George was ailing too and he died in ’90.

**Kate:** Of what?

**Mary:** Sorry. Why do I do that?

**Kate:** George in ’90 of-

**Mary:** He had a heart problem.

**Kate:** Is your husband still living?

**Mary:** No. That was George my husband. My husband died in ’90.

**Kate:** Did you speak Slovenian to your children at all?

**Mary:** Yes, I said things to them. I know when we went to visit Bob in Texas, his daughter said, “Grandma, I’d like to learn something in Slovenian.” I thought, “Let’s see, what will say?” I said, “[Foreign language 00:45:23], what time is it?” then Bob hollered something out and I thought, “Yeah, that too.” Let’s see, what was it he said? I forgot what he said now.

**Kate:** Did your mother speak to your children?

**Mary:** Slovenian. She said they should learn the language first before the American, but they didn’t want to do that because they had friends and played with them. They all talked American.

**Kate:** Did any of your children marry Slovenians?

**Mary:** Mm-hmm. Jeanie is a married to … He’s not Slovenian. He’s Croatian, Damisculine. The rest of them were all American.

**Kate:** When you look back now in your life, your came over here at two years old in your parent’s decision. What’s your attitude about coming to the United States? What type of decision … Would you think it was good, bad, or what?

**Mary:** I think it was good from what I heard about how they lived back there. I really do.

**Kate:** Did you ever think yourself of going there to live?

**Mary:** Yes. When my dad said about going to the vineyard to sell it, he was going to sell it. They were discussing it when I went down to the house. I said, “Pa,” I called him Pa. I said, “I’ll go with you.” I said it and then I looked at my mother, I said, “If you keep my baby” that was Bob. My dad says, “You got this money to go.” “No, I don’t have the money to go.”

**Kate:** At one point you were ready to go.

**Mary:** I would have went with him if he’d went. I did want to go with my nephew but my husband was ailing then and I didn’t want to leave him.

**Kate:** How do you identify yourself nationality wise? What do you think of yourself as?

**Mary:** I don’t know.

**Kate:** Do you see yourself as an American?

**Mary:** Yeah, really.

**Kate:** Do you think of yourself as a hyphenated American or?

**Mary:** I don’t know. We got our citizenship through my dad. That man really studied, but he had other men there. Some of them could speak American like John Murrack. He kind of helped him too.

**Kate:** Do you think your family had any regrets at all about-?

**Mary:** I don’t think so.

**Kate:** Do you personally have any?

**Mary:** No, I don’t.

**Kate:** Basically you’re pretty content with-

**Mary:** I’m contented here.

**Kate:** I’d like to thank you on behalf of-

**Mary:** I just wish I had my husband too and my son. He really suffered.

**Kate:** Your husband?

**Mary:** No, my son.

**Kate:** Your son.

**Mary:** With that cancer. He was the superintended of some company, Builders Building. He remodeled a lot of the schools.

**Kate:** What was your husband’s vocation?

**Mary:** Vocation? He was a miner.

**Kate:** He was a miner too. Your husband was a miner. Did any of your children become miners?

**Mary:** Ronny is. Ronny works at Sweet Water.

**Kate:** Mining has stayed in the family.

**Mary:** Yes, Danny and all these other kids, not David so much … Here I go again. David is a grandson. He works with Windustrial. His brother Billy, he works at one of these mines, surface mining. Dick and Danny works at FMC. It’s outside. They are not mining. They are not in the mines.

**Kate:** What about life as a miner? How would you describe it in your father’s time?

**Mary:** In father’s time? He walked to Sweet Water over the hill in the mines to work.

**Kate:** How far was that?

**Mary:** I bet it was two miles. He would sweat in the mine and then he’d get out and come walking in, my mother have to throw his clothes off on him so she could get him off.

**Kate:** Was your father ever involved in any accident?

**Mary:** Mm-hmm, no.

**Kate:** None of your family had that.

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** Mining experience.

**Mary:** No.

**Kate:** What would you advice to the young people [inaudible 00:50:23]? You’ve lived a long life.

**Mary:** I don’t know, to get along, to meet everybody halfway. I think that’s what I would do.

**Kate:** I’d like to thank you on behalf of Ellis Island for helping us and telling us your story.

**Mary:** I was thinking when I talked to you yesterday, “Gee, I hope I tell it good. I hope I tell it right.” I don’t know how I did but-

**Kate:** This is Kate Moore signing off from Rock Springs, Wyoming on July 6th, 1994 for the Ellis Island Oral History project.